Karin E. K. Dawidson

Property fragmentation

Redistribution of land and housing during the Romanian democratisation process
Dissertation presented at Uppsala University to be publicly examined in Auditorium Minus, Gustavianum, Uppsala, Friday, November 26, 2004 at 10:00 for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. The examination will be conducted in Swedish.

Abstract

In the context of democratisation in the early 1990s, the governments in Central and East Europe (CEE) had to decide how to deal with property that had been confiscated under state socialism. Nationalised housing and collectivised land were to a varying extent returned to former owners and their heirs by means of restitution, as well as being distributed to other citizens who were in possession of the users’ rights to such properties.

This thesis examines the spatial impacts, in terms of ownership patterns, of the way the redistribution of nationalised housing and collectivised land has been dealt with politically and at the local level in post-socialist Romania. It also locates the Romanian property reforms in relation to those of the rest of CEE. The impact of political directives on the property redistribution is analysed in relation to both structural influences, such as democratisation and antecedent property regimes, and implementation patterns in varied place-contexts. The thesis demonstrates that restitution was stifled due to disagreements between leftist and rightist political blocs, with the latter arguing for restitution whilst their opponents wrote the first restitution laws. A re-privatisation law allowed for the public sale of nationalised housing to tenants and thereby blocked the implementation of a restitution law, thus constituting a dilemma for constitutional democracy. In liberal place-contexts in West Romania, these obstacles to housing restitution were in part avoided. By contrast, land restitution was most widespread in the east, a stronghold of the left. This was because the legislation gives priority to restitution in areas of this kind, where smaller land-holdings dominated prior to 1945. The left-wing government pursued an electoral strategy of distributing small properties to a large number of citizens, and to current users in particular. This resulted in a fragmentation of historical property.

Keywords: Romania, restitution, re-privatisation, democratisation, political geography

Karin E. K. Dawidson, Department of Social and Economic Geography, Box 513, Uppsala University, SE-75120 Uppsala, Sweden

© Karin E. K. Dawidson 2004

ISSN 0431-2023
ISBN 91-506-1777-X
urn:nbn:se:uu:diva-4646 (http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:uu:diva-4646)
List of Papers

This thesis is based on the following papers, which will be referred to in the text by their Roman numerals.


III. Dawidson, K. E. K. Property transformation in post-socialist space and place. The case of nationalised housing in Romania. *Political Geography* (accepted)


Reprints were made with the permission of the publishers.
## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preface</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PART ONE</strong></td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction to the field and research design of the thesis</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter 1. Introduction</strong></td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Re-privatisation of land in CEE: The state of current knowledge on rural property reform</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Re-privatisation of housing in CEE: The state of the knowledge on urban property reform</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recapitulation: Rural contra urban property reform</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-socialist ownership reform in the light of political geography</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarification of a number of theoretical definitions and concepts</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>employed in the thesis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research objectives and thesis outline</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter 2. Methodology: A critical realist approach</strong></td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collection of background data</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selection of cases</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identification of objects and selection of cases within Timișoara and</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iași</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small questionnaire surveys</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unstructured interviews</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantitative questionnaire surveys</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi-structured and structured interviews</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On the generalisation of the results of this thesis</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PART TWO</strong></td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Property fragmentation</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter 3. Results and reflections</strong></td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>References</strong></td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unpublished sources</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photographs</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Appendix</strong></td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Note on pronunciation

București has its own proper name in English, Bucharest. But the names of the Romanian field study cities selected for this thesis, Timișoara and Iași and one of the areas selected within Iași, Căprița, have no English equivalents. Therefore the pronunciations of these geographical names, which occur throughout the thesis, are briefly described here. Ş as in Timișoara and Iași is pronounced as sh in shave (read Timishoara, Iashi). ˘A in Căprița is roughly pronounced as a in cats and ğ as ts in cats (read Capritsa).
Preface

They returned one piece of property here, one piece there,
I received just a fragment (o bucată).

(Former owner of a nationalised house referring to restitution, Iași 2004)

The idea that forms the basis of this thesis was conceived in Timișoara in 1999. Ten years after the anti-Ceaușescu-revolution, I had come to study Romanian culture and language in this city. My first encounter with Central and East Europe (CEE) had been through Croatian, Russian and Hungarian friends on a language course in England, which I followed having finished upper secondary school. As a student of politics and geography at Uppsala University I later took a special interest in political developments in CEE following the demise of state socialism. This interest led me to travel in Hungary, Russia and Estonia. During my time as an Erasmus student at Durham University in England I was proposed to participate in a student exchange with Timișoara in the summer of 1999. In Timișoara, I had the chance to discuss the political developments witnessed in Romania subsequent to 1989 with Romanian students and intellectuals. One thing that particularly caught my attention was the ways in which property had first been redistributed under the Soviet-type system and then once again, following the collapse of that regime. People told me about the nationalisation of family housing. I heard about the forced evictions of former owners and the difficulties involved in trying to have confiscated property returned. Apparent conflicts between current users of nationalised housing and former owners made me curious to find out how the Romanian government had dealt with the issue of restitution.

I started writing a thesis on the matter in 2000, under the supervision of Professor Göran Hoppe who had himself conducted research on re-privatisation and restitution in the Baltic States. As my fieldwork continued, my understanding of why restitution is often viewed with scepticism in Romania improved greatly. The reality of post-1989 Romania, with decreasing salaries and increasing levels of unemployment, is such that the ownership of a parcel of land or an apartment may be the only economic means available to many. In areas where nationalised apartments and collectivised land are in the hands of the less well off, the social effects of restitution can be quite severe. This is one side of the story. On the other side we have situations where nationalised palaces and fertile farming
lands are in the hands of the *nomenclatura* and party apparatchiks from the old Ceaușescu regime. For former owners, though, restitution is often viewed as a symbolic act of psychological, rather than financial, value. Having suffered as a result of the injustices committed under state socialism, former owners have had to fight hard to have properties returned to them subsequent to 1989. In interviews, former owners often told me they had received *numai o bucată*, a fragment only, of family property, be it a piece of land or one apartment in the old family house. There is one word that describes the post-socialist repartition of land and housing in Romania very well: fragmentation.

*Iași and Bucharest, March 2004*
The accomplishment of this Ph D project has been made possible by the formal and informal encouragement and support of a large number of people. First of all I am greatly indebted to Professor Göran Hoppe for having shown an interest in the initial proposal for this research project and for his critical comments on earlier drafts of the papers included in this thesis. I thank University Lecturer Irène Nilsson for her generous and useful advice and assistance throughout the work with this dissertation. The awakening of my interest in research was due to the encouragement of Dr. Dominic Power, my college tutor Mrs Valerie Clark and my university tutor Dr Ian Evans during my time as an Erasmus student at Durham University in 1998-1999. During that same year, thanks to the excellent teaching of Professor Joe Painter my interest became particularly focused on political geography. Professor Lars-Erik Borgegård, who sadly passed away before this Ph D project could be completed, was the person responsible for my final decision to opt for a career in research. Professor Borgegård employed me as a research assistant while I was a student, and I remain grateful to him.

The collection of empirical data for the thesis was made possible thanks to the very kind assistance in the field of the university lecturers Sorina Voiculescu and Ionel Muntele, and the students at the geography departments of the Universities of Timișoara and Iași. Vă multumesc frumoși. Thanks are also due to Professors Ioan Hategân, Gheorghe Ianoș, Victor Neumann, Alexandru Ungureanu and to Mr Theodor C. Nicolescu and Mr Gabriel Simion, whose advice greatly facilitated my collection of Romanian secondary sources, and to the officials at local and regional administrations who gathered restitution data for the thesis. The fieldwork was financed by the Swedish Institute, the Swedish Society for Anthropology and Geography and the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences.

I am particularly indebted to all of you in Timișoara and Iași who took the time to answer my questions when I came as a stranger and knocked on your doors with my questionnaires. Your assistance is proof of great generosity and courage. Although you remain anonymous to me, you have contributed a great deal to my understanding and appreciation of Romanian society. I thank D-nul Prefect Radu Cătălin Mardare, County Governor of Bacău, D-nul Primar Gheorghe Ciuhandu, City Mayor of Timișoara, and Director Eugen Dogariu, for 1 None of the people mentioned in the acknowledgements bear any responsibility for the arguments expounded in this thesis, nor for any possible errors that may appear. These are entirely the responsibility of the author.
all the time they devoted to explaining restitution-related problems in Romania. Thanks also to Mr Vasile Lupu, Prime-Vice President of the Party of Popular Action, and D-nul Primar Traian Băsescu, General City Mayor of Bucharest and President of the Democratic Party, who both put aside valuable time when I arrived in Bucharest in the middle of the electoral campaign period in 2004. Mihaela Jurca, Camil Peia, Ionela Ionescu, Elena Baran, Adrian Teodorescu, Elena Farca, Izabela Banu and Ana Sandu have all been indispensable to the creation of the network of contacts needed for the collection of data in the field. By their encouragement and friendship, University Lecturer Coralie Ditvall and Ada-Irina Rădulescu contributed enormously to my understanding of Romanian language and culture.

My sincere thanks go to the Romanian embassy in Stockholm, and in particular to Mr Ambassador H.E. Dr. Adrian Constantinescu, Mr Daniel Ioniță and Mr Cristian Niță, and also to Her Majesty Princess Margarita of Romania, for having shown a keen interest in my work. I thank Professors Béatrice Giblin, Yves Lacoste and Stéphane Yérasimos for having introduced me to the intriguing world of geopolitical research during my Ph D studies at the Centre de Recherches et d’Analyses Géopolitiques in Paris, in 2001-2002. All the interesting discussions with, and the support provided by, Yoan Defenouilliere, Leticia Kipiolee, Jacqueline Cousseau and David Vincenot were of great help when I wrote my mémoire of research that year.

Thanks go to Professors Hans Aldskogius, Jan Öhman, Lars Rudebeck, Per Ronnäs, Tommy Book, Örjan Sjöberg, to University Lecturer Aida Aragao-Lagergren, to the anonymous referees who have commented on my articles in Europe-Asia Studies and Eurasian Geography and Economics, to Ph D Sigrid Hedin, Ph D Michael Gentile, to Charlotte Hedberg and to Danielle Van der Burgt for their comments on various parts of this thesis. Associate Professor Lena Magnusson and Assistant Professor Urban Fransson provided statistical advice during my time as a Ph D candidate. Elisabeth Dawidson and Barbro Torvaldsson at Regis and University Lecturer Göran Hammer taught me how to apply GIS in my spatial analyses. David Shannon has helped to improve the English in my articles. The practical advice and assistance provided by Professor Anders Malmberg and Ph D Ann Grubbström has proved to be a valuable asset in many different ways in the process of finalising this thesis. When things have been difficult, Sandra Vesterdahl and Ylva Johansson have always lit up my everyday existence with their optimistic view of life. Thanks to all of you.

With all my heart I thank my parents Jan and Annika Dawidson for always having encouraged me, and for having provided me with the means to do what makes me happy, and my sisters Elisabeth and Josefin, for their ceaseless support and friendship in all situations. My grandparents Anna-Lisa and Ivar Dawidson have always shown that they care and my grandmother Inga-Britta Lygner, with her love and encouragement, has contributed to making me confident in my work. Thank you Paul Gaujat for believing in me.

Lickedarve, Gotland, July 2004
PART ONE

Introduction to the field
and research design of the thesis

In East Romania one could rarely retain evidence of private ownership. Iași was so controlled by the communists. We were right next to the Soviet border.

(Tenant renting a nationalised dwelling from the state, Iași 2004)

It was one big machination (șmecherie). My family property
was given to people who had never owned land before.

(Former owner of collectivised land referring to restitution, Timișoara 2001)

The fundamental problem (viciul fundamental)
with the laws dealing with restitution is that they were formulated in a political spirit that did not aim at reconstituting property.

(Gheorghe Ciuhandu, City Mayor of Timișoara, Timișoara 2002)
Chapter 1. Introduction

Re-privatisation of property has constituted part of the political and economic reforms witnessed since the demise of the Soviet-type systems in CEE in 1989/91. Under state socialism, private property had to a varying extent been confiscated, nationalised and collectivised since it was believed to lead to the accumulation of wealth among prioritised groups in society (Marcuse, 1996:125-129). Post-socialist re-privatisation has thereafter been aimed at recreating social justice, by compensating former private owners, and at advancing economic development by re-establishing private property markets (Stark and Bruszt, 1998). At the beginning of the process of property reform, a substantial proportion of the historical housing stocks in the larger cities of CEE consisted of nationalised dwellings (Székely, 1999; Sýkora, 1999; Blacksell and Born, 2002:210). In rural areas, ownership of farming land had been centralised to a varying extent (Turnock, 1998:14-24). Nationalisation had also touched upon economic enterprises such as banks and firms, as well as cultural and religious institutions. But the nationalisation of urban dwellings and the collectivisation of farming land were the property reforms that affected the largest number of individuals. The question of how to transfer property from the state to the citizens thus primarily related to housing in the cities and land in the countryside.

The models chosen for the re-privatisation of land and housing in CEE in part depended on existing property distributions. Governments of countries where all land had been nationalised, such as Russia and Albania, opted for distribution policies whereby they ignored pre-socialist ownership and made land available to most of their rural inhabitants (Lemel, 1998; Wegren, 1998). By contrast, where former owners had retained their ownership titles to collectivised land, as in Bulgaria for example, restitution became the main feature (Swinnen, 1999). Further, restitution was emphasised by the most liberal-conservative regimes, such as those of Germany and the Baltic States (Feldman, 1999; Blacksell and Born, 2002; Hedin, 2004). In countries where national politics were influenced by left-wing coalitions at the time when the re-privatisation laws were formulated, as was the case in Hungary and Romania, there was an emphasis on the protection of the usership rights of current property users (Dawidson, 2002, 2003, 2004a). The types of property policy adopted reflected the ideologies of the post-socialist regimes. As has been pointed out by Offe (1997: 29-49), the ownership reforms constituted part of broader societal transformations that simultaneously redefined citi-
zenship rights, constitutional practices and the economic order in CEE. De-
centralisation of ownership was imperative for the transition from a planned
to a market economy. In order for privatisation to follow democratic, consti-
tutional practice, however, clear juridical rules for how the property was to
be redistributed had to be established and implemented. As Dahl (1971:7-9)
emphasises, a proper democratisation process should be characterised by an
acceptance of political opposition, of the rule of law and of the non-
discriminatory representation of different groups in society. However, re-
privatisation in CEE was often coloured by general problems of democrati-
sation, such as an unwillingness to compromise between old and new politi-
cal elites and the display of favouritism towards specific political clienteles.
For example, the retention of power by ex-communists in Romania resulted
in a redistribution of land and housing that privileged their political clientele,
namely the current users of this property (Durandin and Cazacu, 1998:172;
Turnock, 1998:205). All over CEE, those benefiting from the public sale of
housing to tenants were above all the members of the *nomenclatura* since it
was they who resided in the highest quality housing under state socialism
and who were now able to buy it cheaply from the state (Stark and Bruszt,
1998: 51-105; Székely, 1999:88-92). Moreover, local officials in charge of
the implementation of re-privatisation exerted an important influence on the
redistribution of property. In the mountain areas of Albania, for example,
local leaders implemented restitution in a way that stood in conflict with the
per capita basis of the national distribution policy (Cungu and Swinnen,
1997:6). In Romania, leaders of local land commissions often gave land to
friends and political clienteles in order to strengthen their political positions
(Verdery, 2002). Academic scholars have nonetheless frequently ignored
both the political and the local dimensions of the property reforms in CEE.
Studies of these land reforms have focused on the economic impacts of dif-
ferent ownership models (see Wegren, 1998; Turnock, 1998; Csaki and
Lerman, 1999; Davis and Gaburici, 1999; Mathijs and Swinnen, 1999;
Swinnen, 1999), on social justice (see Swinnen, 1999; Feldman, 1999), on
property patterns (as in Swinnen, 1999), on social and demographic trends
(see Kideckel, 1995; Turnock, 1998) and on property rights (see Wegren,
1998; Swinnen, 1999). In the area of housing reforms, research has empha-
sised the impacts of privatisation on residential mobility (see for example
Struyk, 1996; Sýkora, 1999; Gentile, 2003), the social and economic effects
of restitution and privatisation (see Jaffé et al., 1995; Struyk, 1996; Marcuse,
1996; OECD, 2002), and also their impacts on property rights (Jaffé et al.,
1995; Marcuse, 1996; Blacksell and Born, 2002) and social justice (see Mar-
cuse, 1996; Feldman, 1999).

This thesis aims to analyse the spatial impacts of the political dealing and
local implementation practices associated with the redistribution of national-
ised housing and collectivised land in Romania after 1989. Part of the aim is
also to locate the specificities of the Romanian property reforms in relation
to those of other countries in CEE. Political attributes of the Romanian ownership reforms are analysed in the thesis in terms of how right- and left-wing coalitions influenced the laws regulating the re-privatisation of land and housing during the democratisation process, and what their intentions were in doing so. The way in which property usus, fructus and abusus, i.e. the rights to the use, to the value and to the transfer of property are distributed reflects the ideological core of political systems (for an elaboration of this property concept see Hegel, 1821: 73-114). As Hegel explains (1821:93), ‘the tenant is the owner only of the thing’s use, not of its value’, and under the Soviet system, users’ rights to property often enjoyed better protection than individual rights to property value and transfer (Renaud, 1991: 43; Marcuse, 1996). Accordingly, this thesis analyses the ways in which left- and right-wing political coalitions influenced the re-distribution of the rights to use, to benefit from the value of, and to transfer, collectivised land and nationalised housing in post-socialist Romania. Thereafter, the spatial consequences of the re-privatisation laws focused on such properties are examined in terms of regional and local ownership patterns.

This thesis attempts to demonstrate that by examining the political context in which restitution and privatisation laws were formulated on the one hand, and how they were implemented at the local level on the other, a greater understanding of their spatial consequences can be achieved. As has been pointed out by political geographers, different places within a country are characterised by different combinations of physical structures and social, political and economic relations that exert joint influences over the effects of national politics (Agnew, 1987:27, 31; Staeheli, 2003: 159-161). Within the field of political geography itself, there has been a call for an increased number of case studies of the spatial consequences of political system changes in diverse place-contexts (Brenner et al., 2003; Agnew, 2003). Romania, the country selected as the case study for this thesis, has rarely been used as a laboratory for studies of the political and multi-scalar spatial dimensions of post-socialist property reforms. In Romania, the adoption of housing restitution laws created a heated political debate since most of the nationalised housing stock was inhabited by tenants who feared eviction (Dawidson, 2004a). The increase in the level of the private ownership of housing indicates a rapid reclamation of private property since 1989, from 67 to 95 percent (Comisia Națională pentru Statistică, 1990, 2001), but the Romanian press has indicated that the implementation of restitution has been slow (Surcel, 2002; Georgescu, 2002). As has already been mentioned, the ruling Social Democrats first and foremost sought to protect the existing distribution of users’ rights to nationalised property (Durandin and Cazacu, 1998:172). As regards the Romanian land reform, private ownership has increased from 12 to 88 percent of all farming land since the early 1990s (Von Hirschhausen, 1996:59; Comisia Națională pentru Statistică, 2001). The de-collectivisation process was set in motion by a spontaneous occupa-
tion of land by agricultural workers (Preda, 2002:123; Verdery, 2003:87, 96). In reply, in 1990 the Romanian government enlarged the individual plots used in the collectives for private consumption to 0.5 hectares (Pasti, 1995:178). In 1991, former owners became entitled to have land returned to them via restitution, but only up to a limit of 10 hectares. Thus the land reform was based more on a principle of egalitarian distribution than on the restitution of ownership. It led to a widespread fragmentation of ownership: 9 million hectares in the hands of 5 million owners; an average property size of 1.8 hectares (Von Hirschausen, 1996:56, 63, 64). This thesis will attempt to show that fragmentation has also characterised post-socialist housing ownership in Romania, since nationalised dwellings that had been in the hands of one household prior to nationalisation were partitioned first and foremost among tenants and to some extent former owners (Dawidson, 2004a, 2004b).

The introductory part of the thesis outlines the state of current knowledge in research fields relating to rural and urban property reforms in CEE, as well as the theoretical framework, research questions and structure of the articles, and the methodological approach employed in this dissertation. Thereafter follow the main conclusions and the articles of the thesis.

Re-privatisation of land in CEE: The state of current knowledge on rural property reform

Studies of post-socialist land reforms in CEE have most often focused on the impacts of different reform models relating to ownership structures, economic development, property rights, social justice and demographic trends in the countryside (Swinnen, 1999). As regards the first of these dimensions, the land reform models selected relate to the type of ownership patterns existing at the onset of the reforms. For example, in Russia at the end of the 1980s, 98 percent of all agricultural land was in the hands of state and collective farms (Wegren, 1998:6). Since the land had been nationalised as far back as in 1917, the Russian government did not consider restitution to be appropriate and instead offered land to members of collectives and others interested in farming (Swinnen, 1999).

The Stalinist model of nationalisation and collectivisation had also been enforced in Romania and Albania, albeit by native communist leaders (Swain, 1999). One difference between these two countries, however, was that whereas all the land was nationalised in Albania, in Romania most of the land was collectively owned. Albania opted for a distribution policy similar to that of Russia, while in Romania land was partitioned among former owners and agricultural workers (Lemel, 1998; Turnock, 1998:208). In more reformist centrally planned economies, such as Poland and Hungary,
private ownership had remained far more widespread than in the countries mentioned above (Dawidson, 2002). In Hungary, private landowners had chosen between participating in, or selling their land to, private farm cooperatives while in Poland, family farms had existed side by side with centralized state farms (Swinnen, 1999). In Poland and also in the former Yugoslavia, which were both less centralized than the other planned economies, individual farming had remained widespread since collectivisation was abandoned in the 1950s (Swain, 1999). Today individual farms comprise 82 percent of all farms in Poland and 96 percent in Slovenia (Mathijs and Swinnen, 1999). In CEE as a whole, individual tenure has become most widespread where the land was distributed among agricultural workers, where farming accounts for a substantial proportion of the workforce and where the costs associated with individual farming are low (Mathijs and Swinnen, 1999). In Albania, for example, the land was distributed on an equal per capita basis and virtually all farming land is now private (Lemel, 1998). Individual farming also dominates in Romania, where small properties were distributed to farm workers, former owners and to other citizens interested in land ownership (Turnock, 1998:208). Since Albania and Romania are two of the poorest countries in CEE, one may work on the assumption that people are more dependent on the land in order to make a living and thus land reforms constituted important social policies.

As regards the economic consequences of the land reforms, the widespread distribution of land to farm workers often impeded the development of economies of scale (Wyzan and Sjöberg, 1992; Swinnen, 1999). Immense private cooperatives such as those resulting from the privatisation process in Russia, however, which are characterised by over-employment, and which have retained responsibility for social welfare provision, are themselves just as likely to slow down the development of economies of scale (Lerman, 2002:46). The costs of disruption associated with collective structures were dependent on the overall efficiency of the farms and the governmental support provided to private farming (Swinnen, 1999). As Leonard (2000) demonstrates, a majority of the Russian farmers decided to remain in former collectives in the form of joint stock companies as a result of fears of the economic risks involved in individual farming. While 83 percent of farming land is privately owned in Russia today, a large proportion of this land is held by private cooperatives since farmers have had few other alternatives for assuring their welfare provision (O’Brien and Wegren, 2002:10). Private agriculture in Hungary is considered to be among the most economically viable examples in CEE. This is due to the development of a system of governmental support and to the market adaptation of the farms that already existed prior to 1989 (Csaki and Lerman, 1998:225). By contrast, in Romania a lack of long-term credit has blocked economic development in the predominantly individual farming sector (Meurs, 1996:170, 176; Davis and
Gaburici, 1999). Hence, private ownership *per se* does not ensure economic development.

Other aspects of the land reforms that have been analysed by academic scholars relate to property rights and social justice. What would be most fair, returning land to former owners or partitioning it between agricultural workers who have used the land for years? In Hungary, former owners who had been forced to sell their land to the collectives were given compensation coupons which could be used to purchase properties undergoing privatisation (Csaki and Lerman, 1998:229). By contrast, the Baltic States placed the emphasis on physical restitution. Here the land was nationalised under Soviet occupation in 1940 which, in contrast to Russia where the land had been nationalised in 1917, meant that the tradition of individual farming had been sustained (Kuddo, 1996:160). In Estonia, restitution was also emphasised thanks to a political determination to wipe out Soviet structures (Feldman, 1999). This is where the land reforms relate to ethnic property patterns. The restitution procedures in the Baltic States, for example, excluded from property rights numerous Slavic immigrants who had settled in the region during the Soviet occupation (Swinnen, 1999). Restitution in the former Czechoslovakia, on the other hand, was based on the property situation of 1948 and thus excluded German-speakers and Jewish owners who were widespread in the region prior to that date (Swain, 1999). By recreating the property situation of the spring of 1940, the Estonian restitution policy excluded German properties. Baltic-Germans, who had left the country in 1939-40 in the context of an agreement between Germany and the Soviet Union, were effectively excluded whereas pre-war minorities, such as the Estonian-Swedes, could have property returned to them (Kuddo, 1996:161; Hedin, 2004). By contrast, the Albanian government did not prioritise restitution for a number of reasons. On the one hand, the former Muslim and Turkish estates that used to dominate South Albania had been very large (Lemel, 1998). On the other, an early collectivisation had been followed by substantial in-migration and population growth in such areas so that most of the land was not in the hands of former owners (De Waal, 1996:174). The land reforms have thus reflected the post-socialist governments’ conceptions of social justice. They have all led to the inclusion or exclusion, either of pre-socialist, or current users of the farming land.

The land reforms in CEE also had an important impact on demographic trends. In Russia, as in the rest of CEE, the rural population had aged as a result of the higher standards of living offered by cities under the Soviet system (Turnock, 1998:15). This trend was reversed to some extent by offering farming land to adults of Russian nationality in the FSRs (Former Soviet Republics) who were willing to conduct private farming (Wegren, 1998:23, 24). In recent years, however, there has been an increase in the level of polarisation between the most outlying rural areas, which are being abandoned by the young, and areas close to urban service centres, which are witnessing
increased agricultural production (Ioffe and Nefedova, 2004). Quite the opposite is true of Romania. The distribution of land to former owners, rural dwellers and urban residents, regardless of how they planned to use this land, led to a situation where a large share of the farming land came into the hands of elderly people (Kidesckel, 1995:49). As many as 57 percent of the owners were aged over 65 and only nine percent were under 40 years of age (Verdery, 2003:102). Again, this reflects the perceptions of social justice that provided the basis for the reforms in relation to the economic incentives of privatisation. The Russian reform model protected current users’ rights at the same time as it consolidated agricultural use of the land. In Romania, land ownership rights were distributed merely as a right of citizenship, without obliging the owners to engage in farming.

Re-privatisation of housing in CEE: The state of the knowledge on urban property reform

Along with land ownership, the centralisation of housing ownership had been an essential ingredient of state socialism in CEE. In city centres in particular, the more spacious privately owned dwellings were confiscated and nationalised (Hegedüs and Tosics, 1998:658; Székely, 1999; Sýkora, 1999). At the time, enforced industrialisation and urbanisation had created a need for affordable housing (Harloe, 1996:14). The construction of massive public housing stocks, along with supply-driven allocation and a policy of charging low rents for all income categories led however to problems in the form of high maintenance costs, poor housing quality and housing shortages (Renaud, 1991: 6-9). Just as with land ownership, the Soviet republics were characterised by the highest levels of state-owned housing. In 1990, the public sector accounted for 67 percent of all housing in Russia, and 60 percent in Estonia (Struyk, 1996:204). By contrast, only twenty percent of the housing stock was state-owned in Hungary and nine percent in Bulgaria (Lee et al., 1998:679). Following the demise of state socialism, housing privatisation has been aimed at creating functioning housing markets, cutting public spending and improving government popularity all over CEE (Struyk, 1996:193). The sale of state-constructed dwellings at a reduced price to tenants enabled citizens to acquire capital in a context of increasing unemployment and reduced salaries (Economic Commission for Europe, 1998:1; Coman and Budisteanu, 2000). The restitution of nationalised dwellings to former owners was at the same time intended as a way of coming to terms with the illegitimate confiscations enacted under state socialism (Blacksell and Born, 2002).

Studies of housing privatisation in CEE have generally concentrated on the social and economic impacts of different privatisation models (see
Renaud, 1991; Jaffe et al., 1995; Struyk, 1996; Marcuse, 1996; Hegedüs and Tosics, 1998; Economic Commission for Europe, 1998; OECD, 2002), on property rights (Marcuse, 1996; Blacksell and Born, 2002), on social justice (see for example Jaffe et al., 1995; Blacksell et al., 1996; Offe, 1997:105-130; Feldman, 1999) and on residential mobility (see Struyk, 1996; Sýkora, 1999; Gentile, 2003). The re-privatisation models adopted in relation to housing reflected the political values of the transitional governments (Stark and Bruszt, 1998: 8). Liberal-conservative regimes, such as those of the Baltic States, Germany (in the case of the Former GDR) and the Czech Republic, devoted most of their attention to physical restitution (Feldman, 1999; Blacksell and Born, 2002). The most substantial restitution programme was implemented in Germany’s new Bundesländer (Blacksell and Born, 2002). This was in part a consequence of the adoption of the legal framework of the former West Germany, where the restitution of properties confiscated under the Third Reich had already been undertaken (Blacksell et al., 1996). In Estonia, the emphasis on restitution was in part influenced by the experience that migrant workers from other FSRs had enjoyed advantages in relation to the allocation of housing under the Soviet system (Kuddo, 1996:159). First and foremost, however, it was part of a broader policy of independence from the Soviet Union (Feldman, 1999). By contrast with the restitution schemes of the Baltic States and Germany, which were based on pre-socialist ownership and citizenship, restitution in the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Slovenia was limited to current nationals (Blacksell and Born, 2002:179). The post-socialist redistribution of property was thus tightly linked to the redefinition of citizenship rights in CEE.

As with the land reforms, the methods chosen for the re-privatisation of housing were often related to social justice. Advocates of restitution argued that re-privatisation based on historical ownership was justified, since communist confiscations were invalid and rarely took place on a voluntary basis or involved compensation (Offe, 1997:112). Restitution must not be implemented in a way that creates new injustices, however, such as the straightforward eviction of sitting tenants. On the other hand, as had been the case under state socialism, where the nomenclatura and party apparatchiks had been given priority in the allocation of the largest and the best quality housing (Szelenyi, 1983:67-79), the public sale of dwellings to sitting tenants was first and foremost to the benefit of these categories of citizens (Stark and Bruszt, 1998:51-105). By contrast with the more liberal-conservative regimes in CEE, leftist-oriented countries such as Hungary and Romania sought to protect the users’ rights of sitting tenants. In Hungary, former owners were merely given the opportunity to request financial compensation (European Commission, 1998:5). In Romania, it was initially primarily those former owners who had been able to remain in their nationalised properties whose rights to restitution could be honoured, while tenants were given the opportunity to buy the remainder of the nationalised apartments in
the same way as the state-constructed housing stock (Dawidson, 2004a). The Albanian government, on the other hand, in contrast to the re-privatisation policy adopted for land, opted for the restitution of housing for those properties that had remained intact (Economic Commission for Europe, 2002:49). In Poland, tenants have lifetime tenancy rights and restitution was therefore only possible if tenants voluntarily left properties or in cases of death (Hegedüs and Tosics, 1998). In the year 2000, although there still was no official Polish restitution policy, approximately 2,667 properties had been returned to their former owners by means of civil law proceedings (Blacksell and Born, 2002). In Bulgaria, although restitution has been applied, it has been limited by the fact that tenants have been able to buy nationalised dwellings from the state since the 1950s (European Commission for Europe, 1998:5; Chelcea, 2003: 717). Hence, the re-privatisation policies introduced in the housing sectors of CEE were to a varying extent influenced by housing policies dating from state socialism and post-socialist perceptions of property.

Along with Russia, Hungary, Slovakia, Slovenia and Lithuania, Romania conducted what has been referred to as ‘give-away’ privatisation. This involved state-owned housing being sold to tenants at a price of less than fifteen percent of the market value (European Commission for Europe, 1998:1). As regards the social and economic consequences of this policy, although flats were sold at reduced prices, privatisation was followed by an unstable price formation, the under-utilisation of run-down housing and poor maintenance (Jaffe et al., 1995:15-18). In addition, give-away privatisation created small and low quality public rental sectors. The smaller the remaining rental sector, the higher the concentration of low-income families and the less rents could be increased and quality improved (Hegedüs and Tosics, 1998; Székely, 1999). Public sale to tenants at extremely low prices also meant that large sections of the poorer population were faced with high costs for housing maintenance and renovations that they could ill afford. This particularly became a problem in Bulgaria, Hungary, Slovenia, Albania and Romania as a result of extensive privatisation schemes (Economic Commission for Europe, 2001:4, 2002). Today, owner-occupied housing accounts for about 90 percent of the housing stock in Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, Romania and Slovenia (OECD, 2002:21). In Poland, local governments retained their responsibility for housing maintenance in communal spaces in blocks of flats where some of the dwellings had remained state-owned. In buildings where ten or more units are in mixed ownership, it is compulsory for the owners to form condominium associations (Blunt and Muziol-Weclawowicz, 1998). By contrast, in Romania and Albania, although owners are obliged by law to jointly take care of renovations, multi-family housing is fast on the decline as the owners are not accustomed to joint management (Economic Commission for Europe, 2001:47-49, 2002:17, 49, 69). Hence, the new
ownership rights involved not only receiving capital, but also substantial economic responsibilities.

In order to create functioning housing markets, the socialist tenure system, whereby the users’ rights of tenants were stronger than private ownership rights, had to be transformed in all CEE countries (Renaud, 1991:43). This could have severe social effects. In the former East Germany, for example, the implementation of restitution created a difficult social and economic situation for tenants, since in contrast to the former public sector landlord, former owners do not guarantee rent or maintenance levels (other than for an initial period) (Blacksell, Born and Bohlander, 1996). Similar problems have been witnessed in the FSRs, although restitution has not been applied here. In the privatised housing sector in Russia, rents are on the increase and the eviction of tenants has been made more easy (Lee et al., 1998). As regards residential mobility, the effects of privatisation in the form of the creation of miniscule rental sectors and the retention of privatised dwellings within families have made it difficult for households to move house between and even within cities (Struyk, 1996: 206). This does not mean that post-socialist cities are free from residential segregation. On the contrary, there has been an increasing trend towards a situation in which the most well-off groups buy up the best quality housing, upgrade and gentrify historical upper-class areas, or move into less central, newly constructed luxury housing (Sýkora, 1999; Székely, 1999). In addition, as a result of the alleviation of the Soviet policy of restricting individuals’ rights to move house, in-migration from rural to urban areas has intensified. The limited purchasing power of rural inhabitants has tended, however, to reinforce the patterns of residential segregation and rural-urban commuting that existed in the FSRs under state socialism (Gentile, 2003). As with post-socialist landownerships, then, residential patterns in CEE have thus developed in the intersection between property distributions dating from state socialism and post-socialist privatisation ideologies.

Recapitulation: Rural contra urban property reform in CEE

It appears that the urban property reforms present both similarities and dissimilarities with the rural reforms witnessed in post-socialist CEE. In both cases, right-wing oriented countries have given priority to restitution, whereas their left-wing counterparts have first and foremost privatised the existing distributions of users’ rights. With regard to social effects, widespread privatisation has been conducted without sufficient alternatives having been introduced to replace the former public management of housing, or the welfare services formerly provided by farm collectives. The privatisation models selected have been rooted in the type of property pattern existing at the onset of the reform process. In Bulgaria, for example, restitution automatically became the solution in relation to the reprivatisation of land since a
majority of former owners and their heirs had continued using their own land in the collectives. By contrast, in Romania, both nationalised housing and collectivised land were often also in the hands of users other than former owners and their heirs. It was thus less obvious that physical restitution would constitute the most socially just solution. The redistributions of land and housing mirrored to a large extent the political perceptions of property rights and social justice among the various post-socialist regimes. Post-socialist property distributions also reflect the way re-privatisation has been implemented at the local level. Post-socialist liberalisation and democratisation has involved local officials being assigned an increased responsibility over local resources. The ways in which they shape their local policies in this context depend, however, on inherited cultural, social and legal conditions that vary between places (Dingsdale, 2002: 177, 181-183). Most research on ownership reform in CEE has nonetheless focused on the social and economic effects of restitution and privatisation at the national level. With the exception of a number of geographical and anthropological studies (see for example Sampson, 1995; Von Hirshhausen, 1996; De Waal, 1996; Verdery, 1996, 2001, 2002, 2003; Dingsdale, 2002; Chelcea, 2003; Hedin, 2004), the impact of the local implementation of re-privatisation on post-socialist ownership in CEE has largely been ignored.

Post-socialist ownership reform in the light of political geography

This thesis argues that political, spatial, national and local aspects of the post-socialist property reforms in CEE are highly interdependent and should thus not be analysed as if they were separate from one another. The employment of this approach locates the thesis within the research field of political geography. The term ‘political geography’ was used for the first time by Turgot in 1750 as he analysed relationships between physical geographic facts, land use, the characteristics of human settlements and political organisation (Agnew et al., 2003:2). Up until the last few decades, the focus of political geography was directed at political and socio-economic characteristics and power relations within and between states whose boundaries were viewed as determined by the physical landscape (Hartshorne, 1964:59, 60). Today, political geography is a diverse research field focusing on human claims to and influence over territory on various geographical scales, and on the use and the partitioning of this territory (Muir, 1997:5). Broadly speaking, political geography ‘involves the application of geographical perspectives and concepts to political issues of various types with an emphasis on the geographical’ (Agnew, 2003:604). Within political geography, electoral geography and geopolitics constitute two classic research fields. Electoral
geography is the study of the reasons underlying differences in political behaviour between spatial entities (Muir, 1997: 149). Voting behaviour, for example, can be examined in relation to the kinds of residential areas in which electorates live and form their political opinions (Johnston and Pattie, 2003:346). The term geopolitics, on the other hand, was coined by Rudolf Kjellén who, inspired by Friedrich Ratzel’s view of the state as a living organism, searched for imperial relationships between politics and knowledge across the surface of the globe (Lacoste, 1995:11). At the present time, geopolitics are discussed in terms of political, economic and social practices that are coloured by ideological convictions and that give rise to spatial power relations (see for example Lacoste, 1995; Ó’Tuathail, 1997; Ó’ Tuathail and Agnew, 1998; Ó Tuathail, 1998). One classic example of a geopolitical order is found in the cold war division of Europe between socialist influences in the East and liberal influences in the West.

One of the central concepts in political geography that relates both to electoral geography and geopolitical analysis is that of place-context. Studies of place-contexts examine how social and political practices and relations develop in relation to the myriad of physical, historical, cultural, social and economic structures and practices that characterise different places (Painter, 1995; Agnew, 1987). A place can be defined as a context in which social and physical relations are shaped by their connections to physical and social structures whose reach may extend to the local-national, the local-regional or the local-global (Agnew, 1987:19; Staeheli, 2003:159).

This thesis applies the concepts of geopolitics and place-context in order to reflect upon how and under what circumstances property has been re-shaped in post-socialist Romania. With regard to the geopolitical perspective, the thesis illustrates that geopolitical structures are explicitly reflected in the ownership practices and structures of society. For example, throughout history, Ottoman, Austro-Hungarian and Russian interests have dominated political and economic developments in CEE and the Balkans, with each having transformed property regimes, from feudalism to collectivism, in order to sustain broader geopolitical power-relations (for a geopolitical overview see Yerasimos, 1993:29-79). As Agnew (1987:32) emphasises, spatial power relations are reproduced by everyday practices. Accordingly, during the period of Soviet-type socialism in CEE, the nationalisation of property constituted an efficient means of curbing traditional transfers of wealth within family networks. Nationalisation and the subsequent public distribution of welfare cut individuals’ economic ties to their families and made them dependent on the state (Chelcea, 2003). In the countryside, the system of cooperative farming was an important means of creating a rural working class. With the exception of the former East Germany and Czechoslovakia, which already possessed an advanced industrial sector, socialist agriculture was intended to provide input to industry (Wädekin, 1990:326). Emphasis on productivity constituted part of the competition between the Soviet and anti-
Soviet markets (Collier, 1999:88). Housing was constructed for factory workers and welfare provision became based around the workplace in the countryside just as it was in the cities (Turnock, 1998:25-27). In Romania, dwellings were first of all allocated to those who moved to a new job, and people had to obtain residence visas from the police in order to move town. Moreover, flats were exclusively offered to couples while single persons lived in dormitories (Ronås, 1984:79). As Verdery (2001) explains, the socialist system changed the very meaning of property, from a good that gave rise to incomes and political influence, to a form of capital that was manipulated and used by the state in order to control the citizenry. Figure 1 illustrates structural interrelations of geopolitical change and property reform in Romania over time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Property reform</strong></td>
<td><strong>Land reform</strong></td>
<td><strong>Collectivisation</strong></td>
<td><strong>Nationalisation of housing</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enlargement of the Romanian Kingdom with provinces where Romanians constitute majorities.</td>
<td><em>Political and economic decentralisation.</em></td>
<td><em>Preparations for EU enlargement.</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establishment of the Romanian People’s Republic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establishment of the Romanian Democratic Republic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Russian revolution, 1917</em></td>
<td><em>End of World War II, 1945</em></td>
<td><em>Fall of the Berlin Wall, 1989</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>End of World War I, 1918</em></td>
<td><em>Division of Europe into “communist” and “liberal” zones of influence.</em></td>
<td><em>Soviet disintegration, 1991</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Disintegration of Austria-Hungary.</em></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>European integration</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1. Geopolitical changes and concurrent property reforms in Romania, 1917-2001.²

Each of the periods of geopolitical change illustrated in Figure 1 was characterised by a change in the ideological foundation of property. For example, the Romanian government decided to introduce universal voting rights and to redistribute land to peasants and those without land in 1917 in order to avoid the spread of the Bolshevik movement into Romania (Durandin, 1995:226, 227). By contrast, after the Second World War, nationalisation and collectivisation were implemented in line with the Soviet ideology. This occurred at a time when 80 percent of the agricultural land area was individually owned (Durandin, 1995:371). Under state socialism, Romania was turned into a highly centralised economy with strict control of land use. In the 1970s, urban and rural localities were assigned well-defined functions in relation to national production in order to eliminate urban-rural disparities, to enhance economic growth and thereby to produce Romanian economic self-reliance (Sampson, 1984:76). In line with this policy, referred to as sistematizare, some villages were to develop into towns and increase their productivity, while a large number were simply phased out of existence in order to clear space for a more intensive land use (Ronnås, 1989). According to the Romanian communist plan, agricultural work was to be equal to any industrial job, and the rural lifestyle identical to the urban mode of living (Ronås, 1984:12). This contrasts sharply with the post-socialist rural reform, which was to transform collective workers into individual owners with substantial responsibility over agricultural production.

Just like the land reform of 1918-21, the current privatisation process has occurred in a context of democratisation in Romania. This time it constitutes part of the integration of Romania into West European economic and political structures. In contrast to the Soviet-type property system, this implies that private ownership should be ‘the right to receive income from productive assets; the right to negotiate the sale price of output in private, voluntary transactions; the right to make decisions about their use; and the right to dispose of property through sale, transfer, or inheritance’ (Renaud, 1991:22). The ways in which individuals respond to structural opportunities to participate in restitution or privatisation in different place-contexts, however, determines which ownership structures are produced. This is where place-contexts play an important role. As has already been mentioned, studies of place-contexts emphasise the way in which different places are characterised by different combinations of structures and social practices through which national policies are mediated (Painter, 1995:20, 21; Agnew, 1987, 1996; Shin and Agnew, 2002). Hence, the effects of central political directives may vary considerably between local places. Geopolitics and studies of place-contexts have both been influenced by the emphasis in the French geographic tradition on la longue durée. This perspective accentuates the view that political and territorial changes occur through different combinations of political, social and economic structures and practices, which evolve and transform at different rates over time (see for example Reclus, 1869;
Vidal de la Blache, 1903; Braudel, 1990; Lacoste, 1995 and Claval, 1996). Accordingly, national decision-making has different effects in places with different combinations of structures and practices from the past and the present. This perspective permeates all four articles included in this thesis.

Post-modernist conceptualisations such as that of Massey have been highly influential in the understanding of the place-context in political geography. Massey (1994) stipulates four main characteristics of a place: social interactions tie it together; it has no clear boundaries since it always has extra-local ties; it has multiple identities; and it is characterised by some unique feature that is continuously subject to modification. This conceptualisation contests an orthodox geographical conception of places as homogeneous units, but it contributes no explanatory insights. It is also normative in character. Massey argues for a ‘progressive sense of place’ (1994:151). Influenced by Massey, Taylor (1999) distinguishes between space and place by describing the relation between them as a tension: space is produced, general and disenabling; place is consumed, particular and enabling. Space would thus provide a background to traditional geographical questions of where and what whereas place would help understand why. But the boundaries between the structures of spaces and practices in places are not clear-cut.

Critical realism offers a conceptualisation of the place-context that provides a feasible basis for the understanding of how a certain event may come about through the interaction of human agency and localised structures. According to critical realist thought, places are characterised by the influences of elements and events at play within different structures, not all of which are human constructs (Sayer, 1992:26, 1993; Collier, 1999:84). Human activities are enabled and constrained by societal structures that provide resources, rules and norms, and which in turn are reproduced or modified by social practice (Bhaskar, 1989:3,4). In order to understand how a certain event comes about, one thus has to identify interrelations and mutual influences between the actors and structures in the context in which they take place. As Agnew (1996:138) argues, place is where ‘causes come together in diverse ways.’ From this standpoint, objects and people have causal powers (Agnew, 1987:22). Causality is about how something happens (Danemark et al., 1997:69). Whether causal powers and propensities are activated depends on the nature of enabling conditions in different places. Such conditions may take the form of certain types of reasoning or of structural constraints to individual action (Agnew, 1987:23). As an illustration, work by Sampson (1984:123-136) on sistematizare in Romania showed that, notwithstanding the central directives, planners’ relations to local party activists and communities, as well as their individual characteristics, influenced implementation at the local level. A dominating urban identity among the planners could lead to them ignoring local needs for the sake of large-scale building projects. In other situations, local planners were able to depend on local support in order to go ahead with their plans.
On the basis of the political-geographical and critical realist perspectives outlined above, a theoretical model is presented below that combines a number of explanatory factors underlying the effects of the property reforms in CEE. Figure 2 points to a number of structural and contextual factors that have been identified by students of the post-socialist land and housing reforms in CEE. The boxes in which the place-related and action-oriented variables are fitted into the model have been left empty, however, in order to illustrate the lack of research in these fields.

![Diagram](image)

**Figure 2.** Interrelated influences of structures, contextual relations and human agency on the redistribution of land and housing in CEE.

Micro-mechanisms, or human agency as they may also be referred to, comprise the capabilities of individuals to affect structures and practices in society (Painter, 1995:2). In Figure 2, micro-mechanisms relate to individuals’ claims to property at the local level. Individual action is always constrained by combinations of structural factors. To take one example, restitution is not possible in places where nationalised housing was demolished or where agricultural land was absorbed in the construction of public sector infrastructure during the period of state socialism. One illustration can be drawn from the Russian experience, where the early implementation of nationalisation in 1917, meant that both the physical traces and the habit of individual farming
had been as good as wiped out by the time of re-privatisation (Swinnen, 1999). Accordingly, as is emphasised by critical realist thought, there is a need to look for links between structures and objects by asking whether a certain event would have occurred without the existence of another event with which it is associated (Sayer, 1993). The following argument by Spinoza (1677/1985: 23, 24) illustrates this standpoint very well: ‘I call a thing impossible whose nature implies that it would be contradictory for it to exist; necessary whose nature implies that it would be contradictory for it not to exist; and possible whose existence, by its very nature, does not imply a contradiction – either for it to exist or for it not to exist.’ As an illustration, without state socialism, widespread nationalisation would probably not have been introduced in CEE. Without glasnost and perestroika, on the other hand, there would probably have been no restitution.

As is demonstrated in Figure 2, at the macro-level, the privatisation models in CEE reflect power relations among the post-socialist elites which developed in the context of democratisation. As has been argued, priority was given to historical ownership in countries led by post-socialist liberal-conservative parties (Blacksell and Born, 2002). In Russia, objections from conservatives (in this case communists and other left-wing parties) to the land reforms introduced by reformists, led to a large number of restrictions being placed on the market for land, and to the adoption of this market taking a long time (Wegren, 1998:9). The adoption and implementation of restitution and privatisation laws reflected the more or less pronounced alterations in power relations that had resulted from the democratisation process (Dawidson, 2004a). The more totalitarian a regime had been at the end of state socialism, the slower and more difficult the consolidation of political pluralism, the rule of law, and in particular, the divorce between public and private interests in politics (see Linz and Stepan, 1996: 55-66, 244-254). As regards the concept of democracy, whereas some measure outcomes of democracy in terms of social and economic rights (see Przeworski, 1991), others examine whether constitutions are written in a democratic fashion (see Dahl, 1971; Morlino, 2001; Nilsson, 2002) or the constitutional practice of democracy (such as Linz and Stepan, 1996a, 1996b; O’Donnell, 1996; Carothers, 2002). Constitutional democratic practice involves the parliamentary passage of national laws and the effective implementation of such laws without the interference of private interests (Carothers, 2002). From this perspective, all the articles included in this thesis analyse the adoption and implementation of the laws dealing with re-privatisation of land and housing in Romania.

At the meso-level of society, the actions of local officials, including amongst other things their propensity to engage in clientelistic practices, have had an important impact on the distribution of property throughout CEE (Kideckel, 1995:59). To take one example, a survey covering 800 families and 3,500 properties in Albania indicated that one-third of the partici-
pants considered local land commissions to be corrupt (Lemel, 1998). Similarly, research has shown that the winners in the Romanian land reform were usually village elites, local politicians and officials responsible for implementation, all of whom acted in their own self-interests (Turnock, 1998:205). In stressing the ‘gap between new laws and reality’ Abrahams (1996:9) emphasises that the impact of post-socialist property legislation has varied across different local contexts. Since the collapse of state socialism, the citizens of CEE have frequently tested the limits of new economic and social regulations (Sampson, 1995). In Albania, for example, the government opted to distribute land on an equal per capita basis, but local leaders nonetheless implemented restitution in the mountains (Cungu and Swinnen, 1997:6). In South Albania, the earlier date of collectivisation (which here took place in the 1950s, as compared to 1966 in the mountains), together with a history of unequal property patterns meant that restitution was less of an issue (De Waal, 1996:174, 175). There were also other structural barriers to restitution. The socialist land reform of 1945-1946 had been used for political ends, there was a lack of adequate pre-socialist property registers and rural areas had been subject to an enforced, and substantial, in-migration and population growth subsequent to collectivisation (Wyzan and Sjöberg, 1992). In Bulgaria too, restitution became most widespread in the mountains, again partly for structural reasons; this is where the land had been least affected by changes in land use under state socialism (Davidova et al., 1997: 49, 50). Hence, the spatial consequences of national restitution and privatisation programmes in CEE need to be understood in relation to the place-contexts in which they have been shaped and implemented.

Clarification of a number of theoretical definitions and concepts employed in the thesis

The societies in CEE that have moved away from centralised political and economic systems are often referred to as post-socialist societies. Since such societies were governed by communist parties during the Cold War they are also often called post-communist societies. Romanians themselves often speak of timpul comunismului, ‘communist times’, when referring to the period between 1945 and 1989. For the purpose of this thesis, terms such as state socialism, Soviet-type system and centrally planned economy are applied and used as synonyms. Another concept that requires clarification is restitution. In a broad sense restitution means compensation for historical injustices (Barkan, 2000). In CEE restitution is often discussed in terms of the return of possessions that were either confiscated or transformed into collective property under state socialism (Bönker et al., 1993:11). However, physical restitution in itself does not imply the recreation of social justice. The eviction of current property users for the sake of restitution may just as easily create new injustices, which is why compensation in the form of
equivalent property or financial compensation may be employed instead of physical restitution (Barkan, 2000:112-156). Where the term re-privatisation occurs in the thesis, it refers both to restitution and to the sale of property that has initially been privately owned. Redistribution, on the other hand, is understood to refer to all kinds of property transfers.

This thesis often refers to structures. Structures are here defined as combinations of objects and practices that are internally related (Sayer, 1992:92). This means that they incorporate physical objects and social practices that presuppose one another. For instance, social practices may be global, as in the case of a geopolitical structure, but may affect the use of physical objects at the local level. On the one hand, the Soviet order presupposed collective property. On the other, a liberal economic structure presupposes the existence of private property. Private property, private owners and the market all constitute part of the same economic structure. Similarly, free elections, voting rights and citizens all constitute part of democratic political structures. Subsequently, objects derive their meanings from their practical contexts within structures. When property structures are discussed in this thesis they are sometimes related to ethnic structures. Ethnic background is defined as comprising the linguistic and religious characteristics of individuals. In order to constitute an ethnic minority, an ethnic group must be less numerous or have a less dominant position than other ethnic groups in society (Hedin, 2004). In the surveys and interviews employed in this thesis, the participants defined their religious and linguistic backgrounds themselves.

Research objectives and thesis outline

The majority of scholars of the post-socialist property reforms in CEE have focused on the impacts of privatisation on economic and social relations and on property patterns. As was mentioned in the introductory section, this thesis aims at analysing the spatial impacts of the way the redistribution of collectivised land and nationalised housing has been dealt with in post-socialist Romania at the political and the local level. Part of the aim is also to identify the specificities of the Romanian property reforms in relation to those in the remainder of CEE. These broad objectives can be divided into three main research questions:

1. What spatial outcomes, in terms of ownership patterns, have been produced by the redistribution of nationalised housing and collectivised land in post-socialist Romania, and what are the specificities of the Romanian property reforms compared to the rest of CEE?

This question refers to rural Romania in the case of land reform, and to urban Romania in the case of housing re-privatisation. Ownership patterns here comprise tenancy (public/private), historical ownership and socio-economic
and ethnic property structures. By examining socio-economic property patterns the thesis touches upon the issue of the social and economic effects of re-privatisation, albeit in terms of spatial effects. Due to a lack of official ownership data in Romania, tenancy alone could be examined at the national level. Restitution data collected at the regional and local levels have enabled the author to analyse the extent to which historical ownership has been recreated at these levels of aggregation. Socio-economic and ethnic property patterns have been analysed at the local level on the basis of data collected in the field (see the methods section). The first and the third articles presented in the thesis examine ownership patterns at the national, regional and local levels while the remaining two focus on the local level. The question of the spatial effects of the property reforms leads on to the question of the political motivations behind them. Consequently, the second question posed in this thesis is:

2. What were the political motivations behind the laws on restitution and the privatisation of land and housing, and how do these relate to the democratisation process in Romania?

The political motivations underlying the re-privatisation laws are examined by looking at how and why right and left-wing political coalitions sought to redistribute the rights to the use, value and transfer of nationalised housing and collectivised land in post-socialist Romania. These motivations are related to the democratisation process by looking at how political elites influenced the post-socialist property legislation in the post-1989 context of increased political competition. All of the articles relate to this issue but it is examined most explicitly in article four. All four articles examine the third research question posed in this thesis, namely:

3. What has been the combined impact of structural influences, such as antecedent property regimes, and individual action in different place-contexts on the redistribution of land and housing in Romania after 1989?

The structural influences considered here comprise the post-1989 democratisation process and property patterns and practices prior to, during and subsequent to state socialism. One place-context that is analysed comprises Romania as a whole. Other place-contexts referred to are based on case studies located in Timișoara in West Romania and Iași in East Romania.

The thesis includes a total of four articles whose contents and structure are briefly outlined in Table 1. Each paper focuses on the objectives of the thesis from different perspectives. The first article analyses the case of the Romanian land reform, while the others refer to the redistribution of housing.
Table 1. Outline of articles included in the thesis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Article</th>
<th>Aim</th>
<th>Data and method</th>
<th>Conclusions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The redistribution of land in post-socialist Romania. Eurasian Geography and Economics, in press, forthcoming 2004 (or 2005).</td>
<td>To examine how land ownership has been reshaped by structural and local contextual factors, and individual action, in post-socialist Romania. To compare the Romanian land reform to those in the remainder of CEE.</td>
<td>Literature on post-socialist land reform in CEE. Romanian national statistics. Romanian regional unpublished restitution data. Interviews with 2 central and 5 local officials, and 205 landowners from Iași and Timișoara.</td>
<td>The land reform was a populist distribution of small properties. Restitution was enhanced in the east where pre-socialist holdings had been small, limited in the west where properties had been large. Unconstitutional practices among local land commissions distorted restitution further in the plains of the west.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Redistributing nationalized housing: Impacts on property patterns in Timișoara, Romania. Eurasian Geography and Economics, 45:2, 2004, 134-156.</td>
<td>To analyse the spatial effects, in terms of property patterns, of the post-socialist redistribution of nationalised housing in Timișoara, West Romania.</td>
<td>Review of housing restitution in Romania and the rest of CEE. Survey covering 524 nationalised houses and 524 nationalised apartments. Four interviews with 2 key informants.</td>
<td>Restitution is estimated at 8.4% of nationalised housing. Restitution produced a return to multietnic property patterns while the public sale that dominated re-privatisation restricted this. The highest quality housing was sold or returned via restitution. Retirees benefited from public sale, gypsies from private sale.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Property transformation in post-socialist space and place: The case of nationalised housing in Romania. Revised and re-submitted to Political Geography.</td>
<td>To examine the combined effects of structural impacts and human agency on the redistribution of nationalised housing in diverse place contexts in Romania after 1989. To relate the Romanian re-privatisation policy to those in other parts of CEE.</td>
<td>Background to re-privatisation of housing in CEE. Interviews with 2 central and 4 local officials, and 40 residents in nationalised dwellings in Timișoara and Iași. National statistics. Regional and local restitution data. Survey of 524 nationalised apartments in Timișoara and 212 in Iași.</td>
<td>Restitution has been limited due to a lack of political will and changes in the use of housing. The highest quality housing was sold or returned via restitution. Restitution was enhanced due to action from the political opposition and the EU. In liberal areas, structural obstacles to restitution were partly avoided and gypsies received a share of nationalised housing in addition to tenants and former owners.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Conflicts of interest in the restitution and privatisation of housing since the fall of socialism: The case of central Timișoara City - a problem of democracy? Europe-Asia Studies, 56:1, 2004, 119-141.</td>
<td>To analyse the impact of the implementation of restitution on housing ownership and constitutional democracy in Timișoara.</td>
<td>Theoretical overview of impacts of geopolitical change and democratisation on housing ownership in CEE. Interviews with 5 local officials and 113 owners of former nationalised housing in Timișoara, West Romania.</td>
<td>As a result of legislation that evolved during democratisation, and despite existence of a restitution law, restitution has been blocked in Timișoara, as in Romania as a whole. Since implementation of national legislation is a requirement of democratic rule, the blocking of the restitution law constitutes a problem of democracy.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

3 The article can be found at http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals.
Chapter 2. Methodology: A critical realist approach

Method is nothing but a reflexive knowledge, or an idea of an idea.

(Spinoza, 1677/1985: p.19)

Provided that the first idea is not fictitious, and all the other ideas are deduced from it, the haste to feign things will gradually disappear.

For example, once we know the nature of the circle, and also the nature of the square, we cannot then compound these two and make a square circle.

(Spinoza, 1677/1985: p.29)

The above quote illustrates the need for empirical observation in research. But, as the realists Shapiro and Wendt (1992:211) have argued, empirical observations are neither theory-neutral, nor theory-determined. The selection of theories and methods employed in this thesis have been inspired by critical realist thought. Critical realists assume that material objects exist regardless of how we perceive them, but they do so without ignoring social constructions (Bhaskar, 1989:190). Critical realism thus offers a third way between the polarities of positivism and post-structuralism (Sayer, 1993). According to critical realist thought, changes to a collectively held idea about an object may lead to changes in the practice associated with this object (Sayer, 1992:62, 1993). To exemplify, property means something different in a context of nationalisation than in a context of privatisation. The reproduction or modification of societal structures therefore needs to be studied in its practical contexts (Bhaskar, 1989:191).

On the basis of critical realist argumentation, this thesis is principally empirical in nature. The lack of data in the field of Romanian restitution, particularly in the housing domain, would make it contradictory to start doing research on Romanian restitution on the basis of a clearly defined theoretical
hypothesis. Theories assist in conceptualising similar patterns but they cannot forecast social behaviour (Sayer, 1992:50, 61). On the basis of earlier research into similar questions in similar contexts one may, however, formulate an initial theoretical framework on the basis of which to analyse new empirical data. The theoretical model presented in Figure 2, which has been used as an analytical framework in this thesis, was constructed in this way. Figure 2 (p.28) suggests a number of explanatory factors underlying the effects of the property reforms in CEE. Firstly, a structural perspective was applied in the thesis as a result of the experience gained in the field that many of the problems connected to the political handling of the restitution issue in Romania and its implementation constituted part of a broader process of democratisation. Secondly, the thesis is related to the discussion on place-context because it was realised that there are important differences in how the reform was perceived and dealt with in different places within Romania.

As Sayer (2000:113) points out, social processes functioning on different scales are often interdependent and different places present contingent (conditional) relations which impact on national politics. Hence, in order to understand the effects of the post-socialist property reforms in Romania, the implementation of the re-privatisation laws in different place-contexts has to be considered. The identification of the causal power of the mechanisms underlying the object of study requires qualitative research (Sayer, 1993). Accordingly, while quantitative data indicate the spatial effects of re-privatisation in this thesis, qualitative data are employed to identify the structural and social mechanisms that caused them.
Table 2. Selection of data according to the type of research question

1. What spatial outcomes, in terms of ownership patterns, have been produced by the redistribution of nationalised housing and collectivised land in post-socialist Romania, and what are the specificities of the Romanian property reforms compared to the rest of CEE?

**Secondary sources**
- Literature on privatisation and restitution in CEE.
- Romanian official statistics (national privatisation data).
- Romanian historical ownership data.

**Quantitative data collected in the field**
- Unpublished regional restitution data for land.
- Unpublished regional and local restitution data for housing.
- Questionnaire, covering 524 nationalised blocks of flats and the same number of apartments in the nationalised quarters of Timișoara and 212 nationalised apartments in Iași.

2. What were the political motivations behind the laws on restitution and the privatisation of land and housing, and how do these relate to the democratisation process in Romania?

**Secondary sources**
- Romanian legislation dealing with the redistribution of nationalised housing and collectivised land after 1989.
- The restitution debate in the Romanian press.
- Democratic theory and literature on political geography.

**Qualitative data collected in the field**
- Structured interviews with two former deputies representing the political opposition in Romania.
- Semi-structured interviews with six local officials from Timișoara and two local officials from Iași responsible for the redistribution of nationalised housing and collectivised land.
- Interview survey conducted with 113 inhabitants of nationalised housing in Timișoara.
- Interview surveys conducted with 71 landowners from Timișoara and 134 landowners from Iași.
- In-depth interviews with 20 inhabitants of nationalised apartments in Timișoara and 20 inhabitants of nationalised housing in Iași.

3. What has been the combined impact of structural influences, such as antecedent property regimes, and individual action in different place-contexts on the redistribution of land and housing in Romania after 1989?

**Secondary sources**
- Unpublished regional restitution data for land.
- Unpublished regional and local restitution data for housing.
- Questionnaire, covering 524 nationalised blocks of flats and the same number of apartments in the nationalised quarters of Timișoara and 212 nationalised apartments in Iași.

**Qualitative data collected in the field**
- Structured interviews with two former deputies representing the political opposition in Romania.
- Semi-structured interviews with six local officials from Timișoara and two local officials from Iași responsible for the redistribution of nationalised housing and collectivised land.
- Interview survey conducted with 113 inhabitants of nationalised housing in Timișoara.
- Interview surveys conducted with 71 landowners from Timișoara and 134 landowners from Iași.
- In-depth interviews with 20 inhabitants of nationalised apartments in Timișoara and 20 inhabitants of nationalised housing in Iași.

The data outlined in Table 2 were collected in order to answer research questions that are both descriptive and explanatory in nature. The data collection was guided by empirical questions as to what post-socialist ownership looks
like in Romania and why. The questionnaire surveys covering samples of 524 and 212 nationalised dwellings respectively are defined as quantitative data in Table 2 since the data can be said to be fairly representative as a result of the randomised distribution of the questionnaires in different parts of areas where the approximate size of the nationalised stocks were known. By contrast, the smaller surveys covering 113 owners of nationalised apartments, and 71 and 134 landowners respectively, are defined as qualitative data since the size of the complete statistical populations of nationalised dwellings and landholdings was not known in these cases, and thus the level of statistical representativeness cannot be estimated. Attempts were nevertheless made to ensure that the samples were as representative as possible by distributing the questionnaires equally in different parts of the areas concerned. The findings from the questionnaire surveys were supported by information attained via a large number of interviews in the field. In contrast to most other studies on re-privatisation in CEE, this thesis builds to a substantial extent on interviews and thus provides Romanian citizens with a voice. It should be emphasised that analyses at the micro-level based on questionnaire surveys and interviews are still rare in CEE. The surveys conducted for this thesis may be seen as pilot studies for future surveys. The aim of the research conducted for this thesis has not been to achieve the highest level of statistical representativeness but to explain how and why property was redistributed in specific ways and what ownership patterns this resulted in. Such a goal is very much in line with the realist perspective, which emphasises that ‘science should be driven by questions rather than methods, and the scientist’s goal should be to describe accurately the causal mechanisms by reference to which his questions about reality can be answered’ (Shapiro and Wendt, 1992: 212).

A collection of secondary sources was required for this thesis in order to formulate an understanding of the processes of collectivisation, nationalisation, restitution and privatisation. At the same time, intensive fieldwork was imperative in order to identify the physical objects that had been subject to such processes.

Collection of background data

Initial knowledge about political directives for the redistribution of nationalised housing and collectivised land was attained by means of an intensive study of Romanian national legislation. In order to understand the way restitution was dealt with politically, familiarity with pre-socialist property structures became essential. Romanian ownership data is unfortunately very limited. The works of Stahl (1958), Adâniloaie and Berindei (1967) and Chirot (2002) on feudalism, free peasant communities and historical land reforms in Romania constituted central sources. Agricultural research by Otiman (2002) about current and earlier land reforms was also of great help. The Geography
Institute of Bucharest provided geographical studies about land restitution (such as the works of Bordânc (1996) and Simion (2004). But the urban property situation both prior to and after 1945 was difficult to trace. Fragments of relevant data could be found in local monographs. Most of the sources employed in this thesis were found in Romania and in France. The field studies conducted in Romania in order to collect material took a total of approximately 3.5 months (the way the field studies were conducted is described in the following section). One year of doctoral studies at CRAG, Centre de Recherches et d’Analyses Géopolitiques, at Université 8 in Paris rendered it possible to attain access to rich sources on political and socio-economic developments in Romania and the rest of CEE. The section for CEE at La Documentation Française was especially helpful (with regard to research on Romania see for example Marrié, 1995; Von Hirshhausen, 1996; Durandin and Cazacu, 1998; Rey et al., 2000; Lhomel, 2001; De Waele, 2001). Studies on rural Romania by Ronnås (1984, 1989), and studies of the Romanian political system by Nilsson (1988, 2002), together with anthropological research on Romanian villages conducted by Sampson (1984, 1995) and Verdery (1996, 2001, 2002, 2003) contributed valuable background information to the fieldwork.

National statistics were employed in the thesis in order to illustrate differences in regional levels of the collectivisation of land and of the privatisation of land and housing subsequent to the demise of state socialism in Romania. While these data indicate that both categories of property have been rapidly privatised, nothing is said about how this occurred. With the aid of prefecturi, i.e. Romanian regional departments, restitution data for land and housing in a large number of counties were gathered in order to develop an idea of the extent of restitution. These data comprised the number of restitution applications received, the number of properties that had undergone physical restitution and the number of compensation payments that had been awarded. Local restitution data referring to housing was ordered from the city halls of the Romanian central towns in the same manner. The information had to be collected at all local agencies involved in registering and resolving restitution claims, such as land registries, city halls and regional departments. This demanded a lot of work on the part of Romanian local and regional officials, particularly in the post-socialist context where professional handling of statistical data was uncommon. On the one hand, statistics were often incomplete under the Soviet-type system. On the other, the collection and display of statistics was focused on the national level and often biased. A review of Romanian statistics from the period between 1945 and 1989 showed that the amount of data devoted to emphasising the increase in

---

4 The prefecturi survey the local implementation of national legislation and their heads, prefecti, are appointed by the government. Prefecturi are referred to in this thesis as regional departments.
productivity in the agricultural and industrial sectors is striking. For this and similar reasons, all the official data employed in this thesis should be regarded with some degree of caution.

The restitution data collected by regional departments and city halls indicated some interesting spatial regularities and irregularities that were to guide the qualitative fieldwork later on. One such pattern was that land restitution had been widespread in mountain and hill areas but restricted on the plains.

Selection of cases
Timișoara was selected early on as a case study location for this thesis since the author knew that levels of both housing nationalisation and land collectivisation had been significant here. As was mentioned above, there are no official nationalisation or restitution data available in Romania. Data on the degree of collectivisation only exist at the national and regional levels of aggregation. It was therefore important to start the research in an area where it was known that nationalisation and collectivisation had actually taken place. However, Timișoara constitutes an interesting case since it is a city located on the western plains where land restitution has been limited. At the same time it is a stronghold of the liberal-conservative opposition that has propagated most strongly for restitution. Timișoara is the ancient capital of the Austro-Hungarian Banat Principality, a factor which has produced an ethnically diverse population in the city (83 percent are of Romanian, nine percent of Hungarian and four percent of German ethnicity, according to Junie, 2001:2) and a relatively large number of ‘bourgeoisie dwellings’ that underwent nationalisation under state socialism.

In order to understand how the property reforms have been implemented and what effects they have had in different place-contexts, Iași was selected as a second case for this thesis. Timișoara, with a population of 334,000, and Iași, with a population of 321,600 (Institutul Național de Statistică, 2002), are equal in terms of size, but Iași contrasts with Timișoara in several ways: it is located on the eastern plateau; it is the ancient capital of the Romanian principality Moldavia and today constitutes a stronghold of the left-wing coalition that has propagated against restitution. Moreover, Iași, with 98.5 percent of the population of Romanian origin (Institutul Național de Statistică, 2002) is a relatively homogenous city ethnically. The largest minority groups today are Gypsies and Russians, constituting 0.6 and 0.14 percent of the population respectively (Institutul Național de Statistică, 2002). Prior to the Second World War, however, approximately 50,000 inhabitants out of a total population of 118,000 were Jews. As a result of a pogrom in 1941 and Jewish out-migration during the period of state socialism, the Jewish community today only counts approximately 400 members (Iosub, 2003:40;
Ungureanu, 2000:400). Figure 3 indicates the locations of Iaşi and Timişoara.

Having been situated next-door to the Russian Empire and subsequently to the Soviet Union, Iaşi has been more affected than Timişoara by Russian influences and the Soviet culture of standardisation in the form of large-scale social blocks of flats. However, Iaşi was also more affected than was Timişoara by both the First and the Second World Wars in terms of physical destruction, economic decline and poor housing quality. While Timişoara’s architects during the period of state socialism insisted on retaining the historical city centre and building socialist housing on the outskirts of the city, most of the pre-socialist housing in Iaşi was demolished. Further, the inhabitants of Timişoara were able to get news of international events and also products from the West (which were not to be found in Romania at the time) in the neighbouring countries of Hungary and Yugoslavia, which constituted more reformist planned economies. The wearing of blugi, blue jeans, was a symbol of Timişoara’s links with 'the West'.
Identification of objects and selection of cases within Timișoara and Iași

Due to the lack of official nationalisation, collectivisation and restitution data in Timișoara and Iași (as in the rest of Romania) the properties that had been nationalised and collectivised in these two cities had to be identified and selected directly in the field. The first cases were identified in the course of a field study in Timișoara in 2001. Discussions with local officials at the City Hall, the cadastral office and with other local people confirmed the location of areas with nationalised housing and collectivised land. The first choice was Mehala, an area located on the outskirts of Timișoara. Mehala was selected as a case study since it is one of the agrarian districts that has remained rural in character and where it was known that restitution had taken place. Thereafter, two central streets with nationalised housing were identified in the same manner and were selected as a case for the study of housing re-privatisation in Timișoara. In general, nationalised housing can be identified in Romania by means of its physical appearance. Since nationalisation was most intense in 1950, most nationalised housing was built prior to this time. Nationalisation had also focused upon the larger and more centrally located properties in Romanian urban centres.

Figure 4. Nationalised housing, central Bucharest, 2004.
Figure 5. Nationalised villa transformed into Gypsy palace, Timișoara, 2001.

Figure 6. Courtyard of less centrally located nationalised dwellings, Iași, 2004.
Figure 7. Nationalised apartments, central Iaşi, 2004.

Figure 8. Detail of nationalised apartments, central Timisoara, 2002.
Figure 9. Nationalised apartments, central Timisoara, 2002.

Figure 10. State-constructed apartments, central Iași, 2004.
As can be seen from Figures 4-11, the physical appearance of nationalised housing contrasts strongly with that of the dwellings that were constructed by the Romanian State subsequent to 1945. Nationalised housing is often esthetically rather more pleasing. However, as is the case with the blocks of flats that were constructed under state socialism, the most centrally located nationalised dwellings are usually of far better quality than those located in less central areas.

The procedure employed in Iași was similar to that used in Timișoara. The author asked elderly inhabitants in different parts of the city where housing had been nationalised in order to prepare for a second case study of housing re-privatisation. In addition to Mehala, two further cases of land re-privatisation were also selected for the thesis, Freidorf in Timișoara and Căprița Hill in Iași. Freidorf is an agrarian district that was originally a German village. Like Mehala, Freidorf constitutes part of the Banat plains. Căprița Hill is a winemaking district located a few hundred metres above sea level (Fiscuțean and Fiscuțean et al., 2000:14) and was selected as a case study for the thesis in order to contrast with those located on the plains in Timișoara.
Small questionnaire surveys

The author initially conducted small questionnaire surveys and interviews in the districts that had been selected as cases for the study of re-privatisation of land and housing in Timișoara. The questions in the surveys related to the age and professional and ethnic background of the person in possession of the landholding/apartment, characteristics of the property and how the property had been transferred (restitution/sale/inheritance) (see appendices 1-4). The questionnaires primarily consisted of closed questions, such as whether the properties had undergone restitution. As regards the survey of the land reform, unstructured questions were posed relating to problems associated with the use of, or profit stemming from the property in order to enable participants to provide more subjective commentaries. Attempts were made when designing the questionnaires relating to the re-privatisation of land and housing to ensure that the questions were as simple and straightforward as possible in order to avoid their being misunderstood. All questions were posed in Romanian. They were therefore revised in cooperation with Romanian colleagues in order to ensure that they were understood correctly, thereby improving the reliability of the answers.

Since the question of how nationalised dwellings and collectivised land have been re-privatised is a delicate issue in Romania, a number of impediments to the interview surveys were expected. To minimise obstacles in the field, it was extremely important to explain the aims of the research and to point out who was paying for it. It is understandable that the questionnaire surveys gave rise to concern among those owners and users of formerly collectivised land and nationalised dwellings who were not former owners since there was a fear that former owners had now reclaimed their properties. Another reason that people might be expected to be unwilling to participate in interview surveys in Romania was the recent memory of the everyday surveillance operations of the Securitate, the communist secret police. People naturally become suspicious when a stranger comes to their home to ask questions. The fact that the interviews were conducted in Romanian facilitated communication, encouraged interest and led people to be favourably disposed towards the study. Furthermore, no interviews with ordinary citizens were recorded since this had been a common method employed by the Securitate.

The first questionnaire survey (pilot-study) was conducted with landholders in Mehala, in Timișoara in July 2001. There were no ownership registers available and not all landowners live in Mehala, so the only way to get in contact with the landowners was to consult the inhabitants directly in the field. Within two weeks, 44 landowners residing in different parts of Mehala had been interviewed. On the basis of a comparison with the number of properties on a cadastral map of the area, these owners may be assumed to own approximately 60 percent of the landed properties in this district. The
questionnaire surveys were completed by the heads of the households and the questionnaires themselves were handed out and collected on site by the author.

A pilot-study of the redistribution of nationalised housing was conducted in Timișoara during the same period as that in Mehala. The total numbers of dwellings on the two nationalised streets that had been selected were estimated to 194 and 121 respectively, although the exact numbers were not known. Subsequently, two sets of 194 and 121 questionnaires respectively were distributed along the two streets, where interviews had already been conducted with a number of residents to ensure that the dwellings had undergone nationalisation. The number of responses on the two streets amounted to 73 and 40 respectively. The non-response was due in part to the fact that nationalised housing had sometimes undergone changes in use since nationalisation and was no longer used as residencies, but also to the fact that the residents in these properties were not always willing to participate. Of the 194 nationalised apartments included in the survey on the first street, 33 had been abandoned, thirteen transformed into offices and fifteen into public institutions. A further 24 households were not at home and 36 refused to participate. On the second street, four apartments were empty, 22 households were not at home, fifteen refused to participate and 40 apartments could not be reached as a result of locked gates. One might question whether nationalised housing whose function has changed since 1950 should be counted among the statistical attrition. These properties do constitute part of the initial reduction-base of nationalised dwellings, however, and in addition, any change in the function of the dwellings may explain the limits to restitution.

A second questionnaire survey of land redistribution was conducted in Freidorf in Timișoara in October 2002, and a third in Câprița Hill in Iași, in March 2004. The design of these questionnaire surveys was identical to that applied in Mehala in 2001. Over the course of two weeks in October 2002 the author interviewed 27 landowners in Freidorf. On the basis of the number of landholdings marked on cadastral maps, this is estimated to comprise approximately 77 percent of the landowners in the area. The landowners that participated in Mehala and Freidorf lived in villas concentrated in villages, as is illustrated by the photography of Mehala in Figure 12.
By contrast with Freidorf and Mehala, the owners who were contacted in the field in Câprița Hill usually lived beside their landholdings. The questionnaire survey in Câprița Hill was conducted in March 2004 and included 134 landowners. This time, as a result of workload considerations and knowledge already acquired on methodological problems encountered in the question-
naire survey, the author instructed and made use of assistance in the field. With the aid of University Lecturer Ionel Muntele and Geography students from the Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iaşi, the author interviewed about one third of the owners of the approximately 320 properties included in the cadastral map of Căpriţa Hill (Cadastru Judeţean Iaşi, 2004). Since a large share of the former owners from Căpriţa Hill had sold their land to new owners, in contrast with Mehala and Freidorf, the survey also included landholders who had bought land.

The pilot studies had been indispensable for the identification of obstacles to this kind of fieldwork that should born in mind: widespread refusal to participate among residents as well as substantial changes in the use or appearance of the properties. As a result of such problems, on-site completion and collection of the questionnaires were crucial.

Unstructured interviews
In order to understand how collectivised land and nationalised housing had been redistributed and how individuals had influenced this process in different place contexts, the author conducted interviews with the majority of the participants in the questionnaire surveys relating to land and housing in Timişoara and Iaşi. This produced rich information about the mechanisms underlying the redistribution of collectivised land and nationalised housing. In-depth interviews were also conducted with 20 inhabitants of nationalised housing in Timişoara and 20 in Iaşi, in connection with the more quantitatively formulated questionnaire surveys (which are described in the following section) relating to nationalised housing in the two cities.

Quantitative questionnaire surveys
The discovery of an appendix to the 1950 Act for Housing Nationalisation, which included the addresses of the properties that were nationalised that year in Timişoara, rendered possible a second, more extensive, questionnaire survey of housing at the beginning of the year 2003. Questionnaires were distributed to all addresses listed in this appendix, amounting in all to approximately 955 addresses. The questionnaires were distributed by 32 students in groups of two to three persons under the guidance of the author and University Lecturer Sorina Voiculescu from the Department of Geography at the University of the West in Timişoara. The questionnaires included questions about types of ownership transfer since 1989, housing quality and the background of owners/tenants, and were distributed to the heads of the households, to owners if they inhabited the dwellings themselves, or to holders of rental contracts in other cases. The questionnaire primarily posed closed questions, relating to the inhabitant’s professional status for example and the type of ownership transfer an apartment had been subject to after
1989 (see appendix 1-2). When more subjective questions were posed relating to the quality of the dwellings, the questionnaire explained what was meant by poor, acceptable, high, and very high quality in order to enhance the level of validity. The questionnaires were distributed on different floors during the day and in the evenings. They were filled in and collected immediately. The survey covered 524 nationalised properties and the same number of apartments. Non-response was primarily due to the fact that many streets had had their names changed several times since 1950 and that dwellings therefore could not be identified, or that properties had been demolished or turned into public institutions. Nineteen percent of the dwellings were not identified; the residents refused to participate at seven percent of the addresses; five percent of the properties had been demolished, five percent transformed into public institutions and five percent into private firms.

The same questionnaire survey that had been used in Timișoara was employed in Iași in March 2004. As no addresses of nationalised dwellings were available this time, the questionnaires were handed out in five residential zones of varying socio-economic character where nationalised housing had been identified. These areas comprised the historical city core and the south-eastern city centre, which are middle class areas, Păcurari-Copou, located in the historical university area where a large share of the nomenclatura resides, the industrial area around the railway station and the outskirts of the southeastern city centre, which are clearly working class neighbourhoods. Socialist high-rise blocks of flats dominate most other residential districts in Iași. About 2,300 housing units had been nationalised in Iași.5 During the month of March 2004, 400 questionnaires were distributed by approximately 60 students in groups of five to six persons under the guidance of the author and University Lecturer Ionel Muntele. A total of 212 completed questionnaires were collected. Non-completion of questionnaires was either due to residents refusing to participate or to dwellings having been transformed into public institutions or firms. Of the 400 questionnaires, 18.5 percent were not completed because inhabitants refused to participate and fifteen percent because the inhabitants claimed that their dwellings had never been nationalised. Another 7.5 percent had been transformed into public institutions and three percent into private offices.

Semi-structured and structured interviews

In order to form a deeper understanding of the mechanisms behind the redistribution of land and housing in Timișoara and Iași, there was a need to interview those who had implemented the reforms. Consequently, the author conducted semi-structured interviews with local officials who had been responsible for the implementation of the re-privatisation of land and housing.

5 According to Iași City Hall, 2004.
in these two cities. The aim was to provide the informants with the space to describe wider reflections. The questions posed in the interviews explored the aims of the property reforms, their spatial consequences and the problems encountered in the process of implementation. In Timișoara, interviews were conducted in October 2002 and in May 2003 with Eugen Dogariu, Director at Timiș Regional Department, and Gheorghe Ciuhandu, City Mayor of Timișoara, who receives restitution applications. Additionally, the author conducted interviews with three lawyers at Timiș Regional Department (which survey the implementation of national laws) and with a representative of the cadastral office in connection with the pilot studies in 2001. In Iași, Romeo Chelaru, Director at Iași Regional Department, who handles local restitution, and DorinȘavlovachi, Director of territorial planning and cadastral services, the authority which checks restitution applications at Iași City Hall, were interviewed in March 2004. Both are members of the Social Democratic Party.

An additional goal of the thesis was to analyse the aims of the reprivatisation laws associated with land and housing in Romania. Existing literature often focuses on the intentions of the Social Democrats (see for example Von Hirschhausen, 1996; Verdery, 2003). Interviews were therefore conducted with representatives of the political opposition, in the form of two members of the chamber of deputies from the time when the reprivatisation laws were passed: Traian Băsescu, currently President of the Democratic Party (Partidul Democrat) and General City Mayor of Bucharest, and Vasile Lupu, currently Prime-Vice President of the liberal-conservative party, Partidul Acțiunea Populară (Party of Popular Action). The author of the thesis conducted structured interviews with these representatives since they are professional politicians who possess a lot of inside information. These informants also received the interview questions well in advance. The interviews were conducted in Bucharest in March 2004 and addressed the following themes: the aims and the consequences of the laws guiding the redistribution of nationalised housing and collectivised land; the influences of the right- and left-wing coalitions and of different actors and interest groups upon these laws.

---

6 Prefectura Județului Timiș.
7 Prefectura Județului Iași.
8 When the study in Iași was conducted in 2004, the City Mayor had recently been appointed Ambassador to Cuba. Since the interim Mayor had no experience of restitution, the author decided to interview other local officials with experience from the field.
9 At present Traian Băsescu is General City Mayor of Bucharest and president of Partidul Democrat (Democratic Party) (www.romaniaonline.net/whoswho/BasescuTraian.htm).
10 In 1992-2000 Lupu was a deputy representing Partidul Național Țărănesc Creștin Democrat (the National Peasant Christian Democratic Party). Today Lupu is Prime-Vice President of Acțiunea Populară (Popular Action), a liberal-conservative party established and presided over by Emil Constantinescu (www.romania-on-line.net/whoswho/LupuVasile.htm).
On the generalisation of the results of this thesis

As has been mentioned, the questionnaire surveys employed in the thesis do not allow for comprehensive quantitative generalisations. Scientific conclusions, however, are not just about identifying regularities in events. What is crucial is to identify how the phenomenon under study is produced. Structures and practices identified in one place-context may also be assumed to be possible in other places with similar contexts (Sayer, 1993). By means of retroduction one may reproduce the fundamental conditions on which a certain event depends (Danermark et al., 1997:134). Another way of looking at the results is by means of abduction. This implies that knowledge about a certain event can be achieved by looking at it in a different theoretical light (Danermark et al., 1997:142-151). In other words, abduction is about making inferences to the best explanation that is available at the present time (Shapiro and Wendt, 1992:211). While deduction is about proving how something must be, abduction is saying how something could be (Danermark et al., 1997:146). By means of abduction one may generalise about how certain mechanisms work in a specific structure, about what it is that makes them produce the event under study. Retroduction, on the other hand, is about making inferences about how the structures themselves are constituted (Danermark et al., 1997:151, 152). The theoretical model that was formulated for this thesis (see Figure 2, p.28) illustrated a number of tentative, provisional causes underlying the spatial outcomes of the Romanian property reform. These comprised antecedent property patterns and practices, changes in political power-relations resulting from the democratisation process and the ways in which local officials dealt with the property reforms. The model was based on initial observations made in the field, in combination with existing research on ownership reform in CEE. The task of this thesis has then been to explore further the political, local and place-specific practices that have influenced the results of the re-privatisation of land and housing in Romania. Providing a causal explanation involves using observation and abductive inference to describe how causal mechanisms work (Shapiro and Wendt, 1992: 212). Accordingly, different strategies were employed to identify causal mechanisms underlying the redistribution of property in Romania. These included comparative elements (which involved analysing the political motivations underlying, and the impact of, the local implementation of urban and rural reforms in East and West Romania), quantitative elements (via the measurement of the spatial effects of these reforms), and qualitative elements (which involved identifying practices that gave rise to the spatial effects). In line with critical realist thought, the author argues that the spatial impacts identified in one place may be presumed to exist in other places too, provided that structures and practices similar to those that produced the effects in the first place also exist in these others.
As with all research, the observations presented in this thesis are described using the conceptual framework of the author. Conducting field studies, not only in a foreign country but in a country that has been closed to qualitative research for almost half a century, requires a profound cultural understanding of the research problem. In the field, the author therefore wrote a detailed research journal about how individuals from various sections of Romanian society perceived the re-privatisation of land and housing. Many different types of observations were noted in this research journal: the state of nationalised housing and collectivised land; people’s relations to their property and to other owners; political debates pertaining to restitution and privatisation in the media; insights about political, social and economic issues in pre- and post-1989 Romania formed during informal discussions with concierges, bus and taxi drivers, shopkeepers and intellectuals. These observations contributed with an indirect, but deeper, understanding of the impact of the post-socialist transformation of property in Romania. The quotations presented at the beginning of parts 1-2 of this thesis are taken from this journal.
PART TWO

Property fragmentation

The fragmentation of land property in East Romania is due to the agricultural situation before communism. Rural families were numerous and poor so they owned small properties that time and again were divided between many heirs.

(Local official, Iași 2004)

The giving away of land to people who had not previously owned land and the 10-hectare limit on property undergoing restitution were introduced for electoral purposes. It was to the detriment of restitution.

(Vasile Lupu, founder of the Restitution Law 1/2000 and Prime-Vice President of the Party of Popular Action, Bucharest 2004)

The biggest problem with restitution was the government’s lack of will to conduct such a thing. In Romania restitution implies fighting against the state.

(Traian Băsescu, President of the Democratic Party and General City Mayor of Bucharest, Bucharest 2004)
Chapter 3. Results and reflections

Since the demise of the Soviet-type system Romania has witnessed a rapid reclamation of private property. Between 1989 and 2001, private land ownership increased from 12 to 88 percent of farming land. The proportion of housing in private ownership increased from 67 to 95 percent over the same period. Scholars have focused little attention on the ways in which properties confiscated under the authoritarian regime were redistributed in this context however. This thesis attempts to fill this gap in the literature by examining how nationalised housing and collectivised land have been redistributed, and the ownership patterns this has produced in post-socialist Romania. One of the aims of the thesis has been to identify those aspects of the Romanian property reforms that are specific to this particular country in relation to the rest of CEE. On the basis of discussions about post-socialist re-privatisation that were conducted in the course of initial visits to Romania with national politicians, local officials and owners and users of formerly nationalised housing and collectivised land, the author understood that combinations of structural political and economic factors, and social and place-specific practices might provide some tentative explanations for the new property distribution. These factors included the ability of post-socialist political elites to assert influence over the new property legislation in the context of democratisation, the interpretation of this legislation by local officials, the ways in which individuals made property claims in different place-contexts, and their economic ability to make such claims.

Earlier research in the area of post-socialist property reform in CEE has emphasised the embeddedness of the current reforms in ownership practices created under the centrally planned economies, or even under earlier political regimes. The wider aim of this thesis was thus divided into on the one hand a focus on the political motivations behind the re-privatisation laws and how structural factors, such as the democratisation process and post-socialist and antecedent property regimes, affected the post-socialist property distribution, and on the other how this distribution varied locally as a result of individual responses and the ways in which the laws were implemented in different place-contexts. While most studies of post-socialist property reform in CEE have examined the social and economic effects of privatisation at the national level, this thesis has highlighted and combined the political and local dimensions of re-privatisation. The thesis argues that the spatial effects of privatisation and restitution may be better understood by looking at structural, political and local influences on how the property was repartitioned.
Four main structural influences on the urban and rural property reforms in Romania were identified and these will be outlined in more detail here. The structural factors in question comprised antecedent property patterns and practices, the economic possibilities available to individuals to participate in the process of re-privatisation, and Romania’s democratisation process and her geopolitical reorientation towards West European integration. Property structures dating from state socialism exerted important influences on the land reform since the post-socialist return of land to former owners was most restricted in areas dominated by the most modernised collectives, and in particular by state farms located on the plains. Land belonging to state farms was not subject to physical restitution at all. Such farms, along with the most efficient collectives, had often hired labour other than former owners. Thus when an initial privatisation law, Law 18/1991, entitled members of collectives to own small holdings, many former owners were effectively excluded. By contrast, restitution became widespread in hill and mountain regions. Such areas had been characterised by both widespread individual and decentralised collective farming under state socialism. This had produced greater opportunities for the owners to continue using their own land. It also led to fewer changes in land use.

Pre-1989 property practices also played an important role in the re-privatisation of housing. First of all, the most substantial nationalised stocks were found in the largest city centres. Here the most exclusive nationalised dwellings, that had previously been in the hands of the inter-war elites, had under state socialism been taken over by the nomenclatura and party apparatchiks. These are the categories that benefited most from the first law redefining the status of nationalised housing, Law 112/1995. This allowed tenants to buy nationalised apartments that were not reclaimed by their former owners within an initial time limit of six months. At the same time, this law stated that only those former owners who had retained Romanian citizenship and who still lived in their properties could have dwellings returned to them. Former owners who did not fulfil these criteria could ask for financial compensation. Since a large share of the former owners had not been allowed to remain in their dwellings after nationalisation, most nationalised housing was sold to tenants. A substantial share of centrally located nationalised housing was also excluded from restitution due to the fact that it had been turned into public institutions between 1945 and 1989. Such properties were not subject to restitution. In interviews, former owners argued that sale to tenants and the retention of nationalised dwellings in the state domain reflected a lingering communist mentality in Romania. Tenants inhabiting nationalised apartments, on the other hand, were of the opinion that since they had possessed the users’ rights to the property for a long period of time, the labour they had invested in the property should entitle them to own it.

In contrast to centrally located nationalised housing, less central and less attractive nationalised dwellings had often been distributed among the poorer
strata of the population. This is where a second structural factor comes in, the economic resources of the tenants. Although nationalised housing, like apartments constructed by the state, was sold at a very reduced price and was thus available to most people, the least well off still did not have the means to buy their dwellings. The portion of nationalised apartments that remained state-owned consisted of the most run-down dwellings and those inhabited by the poorest tenants.

A third structural factor that affected the ways in which property was re-privatised in Romania was the process of democratisation. The way in which power relations between left- and right-wing coalitions were shaped in the context of the return of political competition subsequent to 1989 exerted an important influence on the very essence of the re-privatisation laws. In the early 1990s, the left-wing government carried out privatisation schemes that to a large extent cemented existing distributions of users’ rights to land and housing. Vasile Lupu, founder of Law 1/2000 on land restitution and Prime-Vice President of the Party of Popular Action, explains that the Social Democrats actively used the old communist propaganda machinery in order to project a negative image of former owners. Former owners were presented as greedy exploiters. In the same vein, Traian Băsescu, President of the Democratic Party and General City Mayor of Bucharest, says that the left-wing coalition affected the legislation in order to limit the recreation of pre-socialist property patterns as much as was possible.

In 1990, all members of agricultural collectives were given the right to use 0.5 hectares each for private consumption. Other rural inhabitants could make claims to users’ rights for 0.25 hectares. The plots of 0.5 hectares were larger in size than those individually used in the collectives, which in practice had rarely exceeded 0.15-0.3 hectares. In 1991, land used for private consumption in the collectives was turned into private property. At the same time, by means of Law 18/1991, former owners were allowed to have parcels of up to 10 hectares returned to them. However, as a result of the earlier transfer of land to farm workers and rural dwellers, a large proportion of the pre-socialist properties had already become the property of someone else. Further, former owners of land that was now in the hands of state farms merely received shares in such farms equivalent to a value of up to 10 hectares. They received the right to a part of the fructus, but not to the usus or abusus of their former possessions. The users’ rights to the land thus remained first and foremost in the hands of those who had benefited from them under the Soviet-type system.

As has been mentioned, existing users’ rights to nationalised dwellings had remained in tact to a large extent as a result of the public sale of housing to tenants. Hence, in reply to the research question posed in this thesis as to how property usus, fructus and abusus were redistributed in Romania, it is obvious that the Social Democrats tried to consolidate the existing distribution of users’ rights by transforming them into full private ownership rights.
The property reform also constituted an electoral strategy designed to gain votes from left-wing supporters such as the nomenclatura, who inhabited the most valuable nationalised dwellings, and agricultural workers, who were in possession of the users’ rights to collectivised land. The actions of the centre-right-wing opposition aimed at introducing restitution were efficiently overruled thanks to the dominant position of the Social Democrats who controlled Romania’s political institutions after the 1989 revolution. Whether the farmers really benefit from their new property rights may be questioned however, since the surveys included in the thesis show that a majority did not have the necessary means to conduct commercial farming.

A fourth structural factor came to redirect the process of re-privatisation in Romania. The shift from political and economic cooperation with the FSU (Former Soviet Union) to integration into the European Union, came increasingly to affect the power-relations between the right- and left-wing political coalitions and served to push Romania in the direction of restitution. In response to pressure from the European Union, the Romanian government changed the land restitution law so that, as is stated in Law 1/2000, former owners could reclaim up to 50 hectares of land. The restitution law for housing was changed in a similar fashion. Law 10/2001 allows former owners of nationalised housing to have their properties returned to them, regardless of their nationality or whether they still live in their properties. This reorientation of re-privatisation was very much a result of effective lobbying on the part of a single member of the political opposition, Vasile Lupu, who served as a deputy representing the National Peasant Christian Democratic Party. His lobbying activities occurred at a time when the governing Social Democrats considered the restitution issue to be over and done with. The land restitution law, Law 1/2000, has been named after Lupu, Legea Lupu. In line with the European conception of human rights, the Romanian government was also asked to facilitate the payment of compensation to former owners who could not have their properties returned. How to find the necessary resources to pay the enormous sums involved in these compensation payments is currently a major headache for the Romanian government.

As regards the specificities of the Romanian ownership reforms, there were both important similarities and differences in relation to those applied in the rest of CEE. As in other countries that were dominated by left-wing political coalitions, such as Russia, Poland and Hungary, the Romanian government first and foremost turned existing users’ rights to land and housing into full private ownership rights. Romanian re-privatisation involved restitution, although it was primarily to the benefit of those former owners who had been able to retain their users’ rights to nationalised housing and collectivised land. Whereas liberal-conservative regimes in CEE at this time, such as those in Germany, the Baltic States and the Czech and Slovak republics, earmarked property for restitution, in Romania the line was frequently blurred between properties subject to restitution and those subject instead to
transfer to current users. This led to difficulties in the implementation of the final restitution laws, Law 10/2001 pertaining to housing and Law 1/2000 (Legea Lupu) which pertained to land. Since democratic constitutional rules state that national legislation has to be implemented, this constitutes a problem of democracy. As was pointed out in article four in this thesis in particular, some of the obstacles to restitution were due to political mechanisms that are typical of processes of democratisation. Such problems include the writing of laws for populist and electoral purposes on the one hand and the intervention of private interests in (what should be) constitutional politics on the other. The first laws dealing with restitution in Romania, Law 18/1991 pertaining to land and Law 112/1995 pertaining to housing, were written for the political clientele of the left-wing government.

In addition to describing general structural impacts upon the property redistribution in Romania, this thesis has also identified a number of contextual, place-related, factors that have influenced the re-partitioning of land and housing in Iaşi, in East Romania, and in Timişoara, in West Romania. In Figure 14 (p.62), these variables are related to structural influences at the macro- and meso-levels and to individual action.

The arrows in the model illustrate the direction of the influences exerted by a number of structural, contextual and action-based factors. For example, on the one hand the preservation of the political influence of the ex-communists contributed to a property distribution that cemented a property distribution dating from state socialism. This property policy, on the other hand, contributed to the maintenance of political support for the left-wing coalitions among its political clientele, i.e. current users of the property. In addition, as the figure illustrates, the wider spatial impacts of the property reforms were influenced by structural and individual mechanisms that varied between local places. For example, the Austro-Hungarian background of Timişoara in West Romania has contributed with both a liberal-conservative culture and a long tradition of cadastral services. These two factors enhanced restitution by ensuring that local public opinion was in favour of restitution and also the existence of official property documentation on which claims could be based. Timişoara’s liberal-oriented City Mayor does not wish to side either with tenants or with former owners, but, he argues that if some property had been earmarked for restitution and the rest sold \textit{from the very beginning}, then the property rights of both tenants and former owners would not have become as distorted as they are today. Although a majority of the nationalised dwellings in Timişoara were sold to tenants in the 1990s as a result of the national re-privatisation law, separate legal proceedings based on civil law enabled many former owners to have their properties returned to them. By contrast, in Iaşi, which is the ancient capital of the Romanian principality of Moldavia in East Romania, and which is now a stronghold for the left-wing coalition, such practices were rare if not non-existent.
In answer to the research question raised in this thesis as to the spatial effects of the Romanian property reforms, these can best be described as consisting in fragmentation. In the rural reform, individual users’ rights to land were initially limited to 0.5 hectares for members of collectives, and 0.25 hectares for other citizens. As has been mentioned, in 1991 the users’ rights to such parcels of land were transformed into private property rights at the same time as former owners became entitled to reclaim properties of up to 10 hectares. By comparison, the limit for private landholdings in the 1945 land reform, which restitution was based on, stood at 50 hectares. When a restitu-
tion law finally allowed for properties of over 10 and up to 50 hectares to be returned to former owners, i.e. with the introduction of Law 1/2000, the owners often had to accept a large number of small properties instead of one coherent property, since most of the land had already been repartitioned.

The repartition of nationalised housing can similarly be illustrated by means of the term fragmentation. To recap, in 1995 only those who were still Romanian citizens and who still possessed the users’ rights to nationalised housing were able to have their dwellings returned to them. At the same time tenants were entitled to buy nationalised apartments from the state. Consequently, the major share of nationalised housing was sold to tenants. Since under state socialism many of the estates that had previously been in the hands of a single household were divided up between several families in the course of nationalisation, those former owners who got property back most often received only a fraction of their former properties. The remainder was purchased by tenants.

As regards the local effects of re-privatisation, one thing that has been characteristic of post-socialist housing in both Timişoara and Iaşi is that restitution, however limited, has led to a return of multi-ethnic property patterns. Timişoara had been characterised by large Hungarian and German minorities and Iaşi had a large Jewish population prior to 1945. While the majority of the tenants who bought nationalised apartments from the state were of Romanian ethnicity in both cities, Germans and Hungarians were over-represented among former owners in Timişoara and Jews in Iaşi. One new ethnic property pattern was noted in Timişoara, however, where Gypsy families are increasingly buying up centrally located and spacious nationalised housing. The families responsible for these purchases are those that are the most well off and that have good contacts with the bulibasha, the local traditional leader of the Gypsy community. By contrast, many Gypsy families inhabiting nationalised housing in Iaşi have neither the economic means, nor the social contacts to participate in the privatisation process. Many of them live in less central nationalised dwellings that are extremely run-down and have not yet been reclaimed by former owners.

Moreover, in Timişoara as well as in Iaşi, the emphasis placed on the protection of existing users’ rights has meant that large sections of the collectivised land and nationalised housing stocks were taken over by elderly people (who had been tenants of the properties for years). One difference between the two cities though, was that holdings had been returned within their historical property boundaries to a greater extent in Iaşi. This is because hilly areas, such as the outskirts of Iaşi, were characterised by smaller properties prior to 1945 and such properties were a) less affected by changes in land use, and b) to be returned to former owners according to the Romanian restitution law. By contrast, pre-socialist properties in the plains of West Romania had generally been large in size. The domination of large-scale collectives and the initial 10-hectare limit of properties undergoing restitution was
an obstacle to the recreation of pre-socialist holdings in such areas. Also, while the re-privatisation law stated that historical property boundaries were to be respected in hill and mountain areas, the land on the plains was to be partitioned by local land commissions and within historical boundaries “if possible”. In Timișoara this opened the way for unconstitutional (and undemocratic) practices, whereby local officials gave land to friends and political clienteles and argued that there was not enough land available to satisfy all restitution claims. Land restitution in Iași was similarly subject to non-constitutional practices. Here though this was due to the fact that many restitution applications were based on private property documentation as a result of the widespread lack of official historical ownership documentation in this part of Romania. However, the intervention of private interests in political processes that ought to be conducted in accordance with constitutional rules is common in countries undergoing democratisation. When examining the Romanian ownership reform it is important to recall that Romania was a dictatorship not long ago. As has already been pointed out, a low level of observance of constitutional principles is an important characteristic of very centralised political and economic systems.

To sum up, the thesis has shown how the redistribution of nationalised housing and collectivised land in Romania has occurred through multifaceted frameworks of structural influences, individual preferences and practices in different place-contexts. Initially, the author was driven by a desire to produce quantitative conclusions, such as the statistical scope of restitution. Due to the lack of official Romanian data relating to restitution this approach encountered great difficulties. By conducting local surveys, a number of quantitative findings were nonetheless produced. But the more the research in the field went on, the more it was realised that what was most interesting was perhaps not the amount of property returned to former owners but how property had been redistributed in the Romanian context of democratisation, and what effects this had produced at the local level. The focus on quantitative results in the articles included in this thesis reflects the initial search for statistical results, but also the continued belief in, and emphasis on, quantitative conclusions in research in the social sciences in general. What is interesting about the findings presented in this thesis is their abductive and retroductive qualities. As was described in the methods section, abduction involves the redescription of an object of study in a different theoretical light. Accordingly, from the perspective of political geography, and in contrast to much of the earlier research on post-socialist property reform in CEE, this thesis has emphasised that re-privatisation is a far from uniform national process. Rather, it represents a structural process that works through place specific combinations of structures and practices and thus produces varying local effects.

The thesis has also highlighted political aspects of the property reforms that have tended to be ignored by academic scholars. By relating the Roma-
nian property reforms to the power relations that developed at a political level in the context of democratisation, new insights were achieved into the mechanisms behind the consequences of re-privatisation. Beside the property distribution dating from state socialism, the retention of political power among an elite of ex-communists contributed with powerful structural obstacles to restitution. As Romania opened up to political competition during the democratisation process, however, actors at the European, national and local levels managed in part to find ways round these structural obstacles. Restitution was enhanced in Romania as a result of lobbying in, and pressure from the European Union. In local liberal place contexts restitution was intensified by means of civil law proceedings.

As regards the contribution of this dissertation by means of retroduction, i.e. the identification of mechanisms that the event of study is dependent upon, a number of place-specific mechanisms have been identified as underlying the spatial effects of Romanian re-privatisation. For example, in the more affluent and liberal place context of Timișoara, in addition to tenants and former owners, a third party that has rarely had much of a voice in Romanian politics, namely the Gypsies, has also acquired a share of nationalised housing. By contrast, in Iași, a large proportion of the Gypsy community has remained as tenants in the most run-down nationalised housing stock. Hence, pre-socialist properties were re-distributed among divergent representatives of Romanian society, from the *nomenclatura* to the socially excluded, but by different means in different place-contexts. This thesis has thus demonstrated that national politics may have quite different impacts in different local milieus. It has been shown that place-specific practices assert an important influence upon broader societal structures. By means of retroduction one may presume that in liberal place-contexts located in the plains in former Austro-Hungarian territories of Romania, the property would be distributed in ways similar to that noted in Timișoara. Moreover, the ways in which local officials implemented the re-privatisation laws in Romania affected national property patterns on the one hand, and local opinion pertaining to national politics on the other. Hence, studies of the mutual influences of national politics and place-related practices may contribute further to our understanding of political, social and spatial developments in post-socialist CEE.
References


Chirot, D. (2002), *Schimbarea socială într-o societate periferică* [The social change into a peripheral society], Bucharest: Corint.

Dawidson, K. E. K. (2004a), Conflicts of interest in the restitution and privatisation of housing since the fall of socialism: The case of central Timişoara City - a problem of democracy? Europe-Asia Studies 56:1, pp.119-141.

67


Spinoza, (1677/1985), Treatsie on the emendation of the intellect and on the way by which it is best directed toward the true knowledge of things, in Curley, E. (ed.), The collected works of Spinoza, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, pp.7-45.


Interviews

Băsescu, Traian, President of the Democratic Party (Partidul Democrat) and General City Mayor of Bucharest. Interview by author, Bucharest 2004-03-17.
Chelaru, Romeo, Director at Iași Regional Department, member of the Social Democratic Party (Partidul Social Democrat). Interview by author, Iași 2004-03-08.
Civil servant at Timiș Cadastre. Interview by author, Timișoara 2001-07-18.
Șâvlovski, Dorin, Director of territorial planning and cadastral services (Șef Serviciul amenajarea Teritoriului și Cadastru), member of the Social Democratic Party (Partidul Social Democrat), Iași City Hall. Interview by author, Iași 2004-03-11.
3 lawyers at Timiș Regional Department. Interview by author, Timișoara 2001.
20 inhabitants in Iași’s nationalised residential area. Interviews by author, 2004.

Unpublished sources

Internet: www.romania-on-line.net/whoswho/LupuVasile.htm (March 2004)
www.romania-on-line.net/whoswho/BăsescuTraian.htm (March 2004)
Interviews and questionnaire surveys carried out by author with 71 landholders from Timișoara, Mehala July 2001, Freidorf October 2002.
Interviews and questionnaire surveys carried out by author with 134 landholders from Iași, Căprița Hill (Dealul Căprița) March 2004.
Restitution statistics provided by Regional Departments (prefecturi) and City Halls in Romania, September 2003-April 2004.
Survey carried out by author in 2003, covering 524 nationalised houses and 524 nationalised apartments in Timișoara.
Survey carried out by author in 2004, covering 212 nationalised apartments in Iași.

Photographs

All photographs are taken by Karin E. K. Dawidson
Frontpage: detail of a nationalised property in central Iași 2004
Individuals appearing in the photographs are in no way connected with the information presented in this thesis.
Appendix

1. Survey questionnaire form, housing (Romanian)

Karin Dawidson, Studentă la doctorat, Dep. of Geography,
Uppsala University, Box 513, S-751 20, Sweden,
Tel: 46(0)18 471 6356, Fax: 46(0)18 471 7418
E-mail: karin.dawidson@kultgeog.uu.se

Întrebări privind locuințele aflate în proprietate privată


(Cheestionarul trebuie completat de soful de gospodărie)

Cartier __________________________ Stradă __________________________
Casa Nr____ din numărul total de ____ case pe această stradă

1.) a) Apartamentul acesta este al Dvs? Da___ Nu___
   b) Dacă nu, este al: Statului?___ Fostului proprietar?___ Unui proprietar privat?_______

2.) Care este numărul persoanelor din gospodaria Dvs? 1__ 2-3__ 4-5__ Peste 6__

3.) a) Sexul proprietarii: Bărbați____ Femei____
   b) Vârsta proprietarii: Între: 0-25 de ani____  26-35 de ani____ 36-45 de ani____
                                     46-54 de ani____  55-64 de ani____  Peste 65 de ani____

4.) a) Profesia Dvs___________    b) Dacă nu lucrați, sunteți: Pensionar___ Șomer___ Student___

5.) a) Națiunălitatea Dvs:_______    b) Limba maternă:_________ c) Religia:_________ 

6.) a) Profesia proprietarului ______________________ Dacă nu lucrează, proprietarul este:___
   b) Națiunălitatea proprietarului_________________ c)Limba maternă:________ d) Religia:_________
7.) Când este construită clădirea aceasta?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Înainte de 1945</th>
<th>Între: 1945-60</th>
<th>1961-88</th>
<th>După 1989</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

_____________________________________________________________________________________

8.) a.) Mărimea proprietății: 1 cameră__ Între 2-3 camere__ Peste 4 camere__

b.) Între 1945-1989, acest apartament a fost...
   a) Mărit__  
b) Diminuat__

c.) Calitatea locuinței e:
   Foarte bună (renovare mare, izolare, apă caldă, electricitate)__
   Bună (renovare mică, apă caldă, electricitate)__
   Acceptabilă (apă caldă, electricitate)__
   Necorespunzătoare (apa rece și electricitate limitată)__

_____________________________________________________________________________________

9.) a.) Cum a obținut locuința proprietarul? Vânzare de la stat__ Vânzare de la proprietar__
   Restituire__ Moștenire__

b.) Când a obținut locuința proprietarul? _________

c.) Proprietarul are alte apartamente retrocedate în această clădire? ___ Câte?_______

_____________________________________________________________________________________

10.) a.) Apartamentul în care locuiește a fost nationalizat între 1944-1989? Da__ Nu__

b.) Se află alte apartamente în clădirea aceasta care au fost restituite? Da__ Câte?___ Nu__

_____________________________________________________________________________________
2. Survey questionnaire form, housing (English)

Karin Dawidson, Ph D Student, Dep. of Geography,
Uppsala University, Box 513, S-751 20, Sweden,
Tel: 46(0)18 471 6356, Fax: 46(0)18 471 7418
E-mail: karin.dawidson@kultgeog.uu.se

Questions concerning dwellings in the private sector

All information collected using this questionnaire will be treated confidentially. Those who are inter-
viewed will remain anonymous. Thank you for your help.
Karin Dawidson, student, Sweden

(The questionnaire has to be completed by the head of the household)

District____________________________________ Street________________________________

House nr___ of a total number of ____ houses along this street
_____________________________________________________________________________________

1.) a) Are you the owner of this apartment? Yes___ No___
b) If not, is it owned by: The state?___ The former owner?___ Another private owner?___
_____________________________________________________________________________________

2.) How many people are there in your household? 1__ 2-3__ 4-5__ More than 6__
_____________________________________________________________________________________

3.) a) Sex of the owners: Man____ Woman____
b) Age of the owners: Between: 0-25 years___ 26-35 years ___ 36-45 years___
    46-54 years___ 55-64 years___ 65 years and over___
_____________________________________________________________________________________

4.) a) Your profession_________ b) If you do not work are you: Retired___Unemployed__ A student__
_____________________________________________________________________________________

5.) a) Your nationality:______________________ b) Mother tongue:__________c) Religion:_________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

6.) a) Profession of the owner of this apartment_________ If he/she does not work, the owner is:
    Retired_____ Unemployed_____ A student_____
b) Nationality of the owner_______________ c) Mother tongue:__________d) Religion:________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

7.) When was this building constructed? Prior to 1945___ Between: 1945-60___
    1961-88____ After 1989___
_____________________________________________________________________________________

8.) a.) Size of this property: 1 room__ 2-3 rooms__ More than 4 rooms__

b.) Between 1945-1989, this apartment was... a) Enlarged___ b) Reduced in size ___
c.) Quality of this dwelling:  
   Very high (major renovation, isolation, hot water, electricity) __
   High (minor renovation, hot water, electricity)___
   Acceptable (hot water, electricity)___
   Poor (cold water and limited electricity)___

9.) a.) How did the owner purchase this apartment?  
   Public sale___ Private sale___
   Restitution___ Inheritance___

b.) When did the owner purchase this apartment?  
   __________

c.) Has the owner purchased other apartments by means of restitution in this building?  
   __________
   How many?____

10.) a.) Has this apartment been nationalised between 1944-1989?  
   Yes___ No___

b.) Are there other apartments that have undergone restitution in this building?  
   Yes___ How many?___ No___
3. Survey questionnaire form, land (Romanian)

Karin Dawidson, Studentă la doctorat
Dep. of Geography, Uppsala University, Box 513, S-751 20, Sweden
Tel: 46(0)18 471 6356, Fax: 46(0)18 471 7418
E-mail: karin.dawidson@kultgeog.uu.se

(Chestionarul trebuie completat de seful de gospodărie)

Cartier ______________________  Stradă ______________________

Casa Nr____ din numărul total de ____ case pe această stradă

Întrebări privind pământul agricol aflat în proprietate privată
Toată informația originală din formularul acesta va fi tratată confidențial. Celor care sunt intervievați îi se va păstra anonimatul.Vă mulțumesc mult pentru ajutor. Karin Davidson, studentă din Suedia

1.) a.) Cum ați obținut pământul în proprietate privată? Privatizare_____ Restituire_____
b.) Mărimea proprietății: Între: 0-0.5 hectare__  0.6-1 hectare__  1.1-5 hectare__
           5.1-10 hectare__ Peste  10  hectare__

2.) Vârsta și sexul: Bărbați Femei
       Între: 0-25 de ani __ __       __ __
       26-35 de ani __ __       __ __
       36-45 de ani __ __       __ __
       46-54 de ani __ __       __ __
       55-64 de ani __ __       __ __
       Peste 65 de ani __ __       __

3.) a) Profesia Dvs. ________________________ b) Dacă nu lucrați, sunteți.....: Pensionar__ Şomer__ Student__

4.) a) Națiunitatea Dvs:_________________ b) Limba maternă:________ c) Religia:________

5.) De când dețineți Actul de Proprietate asupra pământului? Înainte de 1945__  Între: 1945-60__
       1961-88__ După 1989__

6.) Calitatea pământului este: Foarte bună____ Acceptabilă____ Pământul este nefolositor____

7.) Ați avut probleme cu utilizarea sau venitul provenit din posesia asupra pământului? ______

___________________________________________________________________________________
4. Survey questionnaire form, land (English)

Karin Dawidson, Ph D Student
Dep. of Geography, Uppsala University, Box 513, S-751 20, Sweden
Tel: 46(0)18 471 6356, Fax: 46(0)18 471 7418
E-mail: karin.dawidson@kultgeog.uu.se

(The questionnaire has to be completed by the head of the household)

District ____________________ Street ____________________
House No. of the total number of ____ houses at this street

Questions about agricultural land in the private sector
All information collected using this questionnaire will be treated confidentially. Those who are inter-
viewed will retain their anonymity. Thank You very much for Your help.
Karin Dawidson, student from Sweden

1.) a.) How did you obtain private land? Privatisation_____ Restitution_____
b.) Size of the property: Between: 0-0.5 hectare__ 0.6-1 hectare__ 1.1-5 hectares__
5.1-10 hectares__ More than 10 hectares__

2.) Age and sex: Man Woman
Between: 0-25 years __ __
26-35 years ___ ___
36-45 years ___ ___
46-54 years ___ ___
55-64 years ___ ___
Over 65 years ___ ___

3.) a) Your profession__________ b) If you do not work, are you...: Retired_ Unemployed_ A student_

4.) a) Your nationality:___________ b) Mother tongue:___________ c) Religion:___________

5.) From what period does your land property originate? Before 1945__ Between: 1945-60__
1961-88__ After 1989__

6.) The quality of the land is: Very good____ Acceptable____ Poor____

7.) Have you had problems with the use of or the profit stemming from private ownership of land? _____