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Mihai Varga, University of Amsterdam

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Part 1 – The Absence of Labor Sociology in Ukraine and Romania

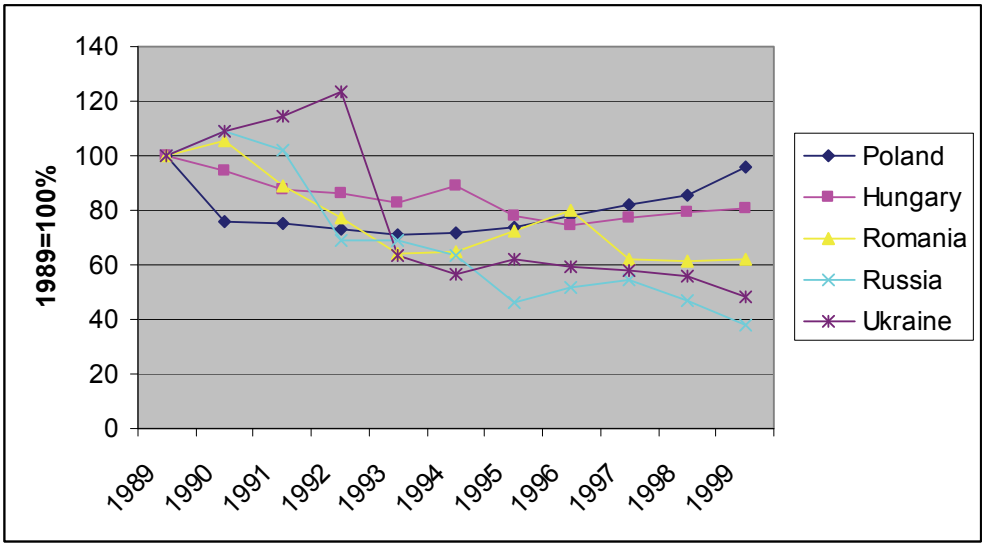
1.1. TRANSITION IN UKRAINE AND ROMANIA

Excluding war-hit economies, no other country witnessed such a deep and prolonged crisis of transition from socialism to capitalism as Ukraine. Industrial workers were particularly hard hit by transition, with steep increases in prices, stagnating wages, and the destruction of millions of jobs. Machine-building and metal-processing in general were at the heart of labor market restructuring in Ukraine, the industrial sector to see the biggest drop in employment, from 3m in 1990 to 1.8m in 1995, and down again to 974,000 in 2001. Millions more jobs were destroyed in farming, the construction sector and in light industry. In comparison to the 7.5m industrial workers in 1985, in 2001 there were only 3.2m left (Simonchuk 2005: 17-18, using data from the State Statistics Office of Ukraine). Did the massive changes in the situation of the working class foster the development of labor sociology? This article shows that far from

accompanying the working class with their studies, sociologists avoided analyzing the new situation of the working class.

In this article I also study the absence of labor sociology in Romania, a country that has seen similar job destruction and steep price increases during post-communism. Keeping in mind the Romanian communist economy's heavy industry dominance, job destruction in the heavy industry after the fall of communism ranged between 60% for mining (Haney and Shkaratan 2003: 4) and 70-80% in steel and machine-building (FES 2006: 10). In contrast to Ukraine, Romania witnessed a trade union movement that often challenged governments and protested against certain aspects of market reforms (particularly price liberalization and privatization). But, as we will see, the dominant attitude among Romanian sociologists was to avoid labor sociology, possibly even to a greater extent than in Ukraine. Figure 1 below offers an overview of a particularly painful development for workers during the transition to capitalism, the sharp decrease in wages relative to 1989 (real wages, not adjusted for cost of living).

Figure 1: Development of wages in selected post-communist countries, 1989-1999



Source: UNICEF reports, various years

For this article I analyzed 993 sociology articles in three leading sociology journals in the two countries. The paper has the following structure. The next section gives an overview of the topics that sociologists studied during transition and shows that labor sociology and also sociology of work were the great absents from the research interests of sociologists in the two countries. Topics such as workers, the working class, and labor movements received very little attention in Ukraine. This is true also for Romania, a country that has seen a labor movement capable of marking the entire post-communist period up until today with its protests (while labor protests were common in Ukraine only during the transition's first six years, 1991-1997, and especially in 1991-1993). By using the Ukraine-Romania comparison, I delimit what I consider to be the big 'absents'

in the two countries' sociological literatures: not only studies dedicated to collective action (possibly an instance of what Levinson called collective anti-collectivism, see Levinson 2006) or instances of collective action initiated by workers (labor protests), but the absence from sociological analyses of workers and the working class even where the working class was at least a vocal actor in transition politics. The paper's second part discusses several explanations for labor's absence from the two countries' sociological literatures. I argue against explanations in terms of ideological legacies – claiming that in post-communist societies, class analysis and the working class are somehow ideologically tainted and for this reason avoided by a multitude of social actors, including academics. Instead, I rely on Kutsenko's (2000a) analysis of Ukrainian society to suggest that for a number of reasons (including financial ones) sociologists have mirrored the state's rejection of class analysis in favor of market-oriented studies.

1.2. THE ABSENSE OF A LABOR SOCIOLOGY IN UKRAINE AND ROMANIA

The journals researched for this article are the two countries' three most influential sociology journals, the only ones that can claim an uninterrupted post-communist existence and a national readership. The National Academy of Sciences in Ukraine and Romania each issue a journal. The third one is the journal of Romania's Association of Sociologists, a journal without an equivalent in Ukraine. The three journals are the oldest in each country and are national in terms of the location of contributors (while other sociology journals, based at one or the other university, might serve as outlets for staff members of the respective university only). Furthermore, since there is no thematic specialization in these journals, the journals offer the researcher the advantage of covering all areas of sociology, giving a good overview of the topics studied by sociologists. As I could only study the online archives of these journals, the time frame of my research is limited to the journal issues available online (roughly covering the last ten years of the post-communist period, but I left very little out, since these journals started appearing without interruption only around 1998-1999). Additionally, I rely on articles providing overviews of the first ten years to extend my observations to the entire post-communist period. For coding the journal articles I used the International Sociology Association's list of sociological fields (corresponding to the 55 research committees).[1]

First, I wanted to know how many articles in the Ukrainian journal treat workers or the working class as their central subject, regardless of the theoretical framework (whether Marxist or not). The results were that only 20 articles out of 465 in some way dealt with workers.[2] Out of these only one (Pan'kova and Ivashchenko 2006) dealt with the labor movement in Ukraine. Six were conceptual (Popova 2003; Kutsenko 2000b, 2002; Makeev 2001, 2006; Riabchuk 2007). The remaining articles all make use of empirical data (in all cases quantitative, survey-based or relying on official data from the State Committee for Statistics) to study the class composition of Ukraine (Kutsenko 2000a; Lane 2006; Simonchuk 2005, 2006; Oksamitnaya 2006; Shcherbak 2006; Patrakova 2009; except for the two articles by Simonchuk, none of these studies focus on the working class alone, but study also other classes). One article (Drozhanova 2007) is a study of labor commitment to production. Finally, two studies focus on protest behavior (motivation of Donbass industrial workers, Pan'kova 2006; 'social tensions' in Donbass

mining areas, Gulyaev 2003). It is important to emphasize that the existence of these 20 articles shows that the editors of the journal do not turn down offers on labor, but that instead they receive very few articles in both countries. Respondents who have published about labor in both countries have confirmed that there is no explicit or implicit editorial rejection of articles on labor in the journals under study (field notes, Kyiv, October 2010).

Table 1: The results for the sociology journal of the Ukrainian Science Academy, 1999-2009[3]

ISA Research Committees	Total	Labor
1. Armed Forces and Conflict Resolution	2	
2. Economy and Society	19	
3. Community Research	1	
4. Sociology of Education	2	
5. Racism, Nationalism and Ethnic Relations	12	
6. Family Research	12	
7. Futures Research	0	
8. History of Sociology	13	1
9. Social Transformations and Sociology of Development	6	
10. Participation, Organizational Democracy and Self-Management	4	
11. Sociology of Aging	0	
12. Sociology of Law	1	
13. Sociology of Leisure	1	
14. Sociology of Communication, Knowledge and Culture	34	1
15. Sociology of Health	3	
16. Sociological Theory	37	1
17. Sociology of Organizations	2	
18. Political Sociology	48	
19. Poverty, Social Welfare and Social Policy	1	
20. Comparative Sociology	11	
21. Regional and Urban Development	10	
22. Sociology of Religion	4	
23. Sociology of Science and Technology	6	
24. Environment and Society	4	
25. Language and Society	0	
26. Sociotechnics, Sociological Practice	0	
27. Sociology of Sport	2	
28. Social Stratification	9	3
29. Deviance and Social Control	3	
30. Sociology of Work	13	6
31. Sociology of Migration	6	

32. Women in Society	10		
33. Logic and Methodology in Sociology	29		
34. Sociology of Youth	7		
35. Conceptual and Terminological Analysis	29		
36. Alienation Theory and Research	0		
37. Sociology of Arts	5		
38. Biography and Society	1		
39. Sociology of Disasters	2		
40. Sociology of Agriculture and Food	0		
41. Sociology of Population	2		
42. Social Psychology	14		
43. Housing and Built Environment	0		
44. Labor Movements, Labor Sociology	5		5
45. Rational Choice	0		
46. Clinical Sociology	0		
47. Social Classes and Social Movements	4		2
48. Social Movements, Collective Action and Social Change	3		
49. Mental Health and Illness	0		
50. International Tourism	0		
51. Sociocybernetics	0		
52. Sociology of Professional Groups	8		
53. Sociology of Childhood	0		
54. The Body in the Social Sciences	0		
55. Social Indicators	6		
Other (56): Sociology of Transition, and Public Opinion during Transition	38	1	
Other (articles not covered by any of the above)	36		
TOTAL	**465**	**20**	

Is 20 out of 465 a little, or is this a lot? I argue that this is very little, and that the proportion of worker studies among the total number of studies presented in Table 1 serves as evidence for the general absence of labor from the Ukrainian sociologists' research agendas (I use the terms worker and labor interchangeably). Even though industrial workers are the key social category negatively affected by market reforms, their fate sparked little interest among Ukrainian sociologists. I coded separately in row 56 the articles that in some way or the other thematize transition – study how the transition to capitalism impacted on various areas of society in Ukraine. It is striking that the only study out of 38 doing this for workers comes from a British author (Lane 2006), while most of the Ukrainian studies of transition broadly focused on public opinion issues, and specifically on the issue of the impact of transition on public values. Furthermore, while most studies above focus on social structure, there are no studies of the consequences of

market reforms for worker lifeworlds, a striking fact given that we are talking of a reduction by ten million in eleven years (1990-2001) in the number of formally employed workers (counting all worker categories, not only industrial workers; Simonchuk 2005: 17). And last, what also stands out is the lack of ethnographic studies of workers in the journals studied. Such a lack is again telling of the little interest that the fate of workers sparked among sociologists, although it could be that the journal itself might be biased against ethnographic research (there are no ethnographies on other topics either).

Ukrainian sociologists publishing in the journal under study have taken the most interest in the impact of transition on public values. As we will see, this topic has not been equally present in the Romanian journals discussed below. What could explain this preference in the Ukrainian journal is the journal editor's own research agenda centered around this topic (Golovakha and Panina 1996). Furthermore, one respondent in Kyiv – the head of a sociology institute – suggested that the interest in public opinion might be related to data availability, given that many sociologists work in public opinion institutes that mainly carry out surveys on behalf of the media, political parties and private companies (field notes, Kyiv, July 2010). Other topics that have drawn the attention of Ukrainian sociologists are studies in social psychology (also close to the editors' specialization), sociological theory, methodology, sociology of communication, and most of all political sociology (with most work here also based on public opinion surveys).

In this article I also present the results of a similar study carried out on two Romanian sociology journals. There are two reasons for including the two Romanian journals in the study. First, one could argue that the decrease in jobs in Ukraine took place silently, with the few worker protests over worsening living conditions concentrated in the first three years after Ukrainian independence, and also geographically clustered in Eastern Ukraine's mining areas. Romania, however, has seen – in post-communist regional comparison – repeated and extended industrial conflict (Crowley 2004; for overviews see Keil and Keil 2002; and Bush 2004). The peak was around 1999 and 2003, and strike waves engulfed not only the mining sector, but also steel and machine-building, and the employees in the state sector, particularly in transport and education (Varga, 2011). Second, Romanian sociology has strong ethnographic roots in the 1930's 'monographic school' of sociology, and this can be seen from the large number of articles especially in the journal of the Sociological Association that use ethnographic research. However, the data in Table 2 show an even smaller percentage of studies of workers – 1.5% – than the 4% in Ukraine.

Table 2: The results for two Romanian sociology journals (**The Romanian Sociology Journal** ***(RRS) 2002-2009, and*** **Romanian Sociology** ***(SR) 1999-2009)***[4]

ISA Research Committees	RRS Total	RRS Labor	SR Total	SR Labor
1. Armed Forces and Conflict Resolution	11		0	
2. Economy and Society	6		7	

3. Community Research	1		24	
4. Sociology of Education	3		3	
5. Racism, Nationalism and Ethnic Relations	3		13	
6. Family Research	0		13	
7. Futures Research	0		0	
8. History of Sociology	44		23	
9. Social Transformations and Sociology of Development	0		4	
10. Participation, Organizational Democracy and Self-Management	1		1	
11. Sociology of Aging	0		0	
12. Sociology of Law	2		0	
13. Sociology of Leisure	0		2	
14. Sociology of Communication, Knowledge and Culture	25		23	
15. Sociology of Health	2		1	
16. Sociological Theory	4		2	
17. Sociology of Organizations	7		6	
18. Political Sociology	4		27	
19. Poverty, Social Welfare and Social Policy	2		4	
20. Comparative Sociology	0		8	
21. Regional and Urban Development	5		22	
22. Sociology of Religion	8		8	
23. Sociology of Science and Technology	1		0	
24. Environment and Society	0		0	
25. Language and Society	0		0	
26. Sociotechnics, Sociological Practice	0		0	
27. Sociology of Sport	0		0	
28. Social Stratification	0		5	1
29. Deviance and Social Control	53		5	
30. Sociology of Work	1	1	2	2
31. Sociology of Migration	0		22	
32. Women in Society	1		4	
33. Logic and Methodology in Sociology	2		3	
34. Sociology of Youth	17		0	
35. Conceptual and Terminological Analysis	5		5	
36. Alienation Theory and Research	0		0	
37. Sociology of Arts	0		0	
38. Biography and Society	0		1	
39. Sociology of Disasters	0		0	
40. Sociology of Agriculture and Food	0		1	
41. Sociology of Population	1		5	
42. Social Psychology	5		19	
43. Housing and Built Environment	0		3	
44. Labor Movements, Labor Sociology	1	1	2	2

45. Rational Choice	0		0	
46. Clinical Sociology	0		0	
47. Social Classes and Social Movements	0		0	
48. Social Movements, Collective Action and Social Change	0		1	
49. Mental Health and Illness	2		0	
50. International Tourism	0		0	
51. Sociocybernetics	0		0	
52. Sociology of Professional Groups	0		1	
53. Sociology of Childhood	0		1	
54. The Body in the Social Sciences	0		0	
55. Social Indicators	0		3	
Other (56): Sociology of Transition, and Public Opinion during Transition	3		12	1
other (articles not covered by any of the above)	7		15	
TOTAL	**227**	**2**	**301**	**6**

Out of the eight studies that have a labor-focus (with 'workers' or 'employees' as their central subjects), two of the three that fall under labor sociology (one in each journal) were written by the same American anthropologist (Kideckel 1999, 2007). They are the only instances of ethnography of worker life-worlds, with the exception of the study of gentrification and exclusion of workers in one Romanian city (Petrovici 2007). The topics covered in the eight studies are worker living conditions, employee commitment to production, and working class relative positioning in relation to other classes. No study deals with the labor movement, with trade unions or with any form of worker collective action. What the sociology journals in both countries share is, however, more than just a lack of labor studies – it is also a more general lack of subaltern studies, for instance of retirees, the homeless, the unemployed.

The key developments that sparked the Romanian sociologists' interest in the context of transition are crime (in the first journal, RRS) and migration (in the second one, RS). Studies in rural sociology (coded above as community research and regional and urban development) account for almost 20% of the contributions to the second journal. It would be reasonable to expect a higher percentage of articles to be dedicated to labor sociology (together with sociology of work), given that at least one third of the country's inhabitants perceives itself as belonging to the working class (and another 20% to the 'lower class'),[5] and given the country's post-communist history of labor protests and worker opposition to government reforms. In the remainder of this article I discuss several explanations for the lack of interest in labor of sociologists in both countries.

Part 2 – Reasons for the Absence of a Labor Sociology in Ukraine and Romania

THE COMMUNIST INHERITANCE

When exploring why labor is missing from the sociological journals in the two countries, one probably has to start from mentioning the difficult situation inherited by sociology as a profession from the time of communist regimes. Ukrainian sociology had to establish itself against a Soviet inheritance that did not differ from what was common in other parts of the Soviet Union, most notably Russia: a profession basically in the service of the political apparatus, offering it the information it needed to regulate the workplace. The study of work, the workplace, and their relationships with other aspects of worker lives, were central for Soviet sociology, and sociology in Soviet Ukraine was no exception here. Vilen Chernovolenko's studies of the links between professional orientation and family life represent the starting point in the careers of an entire generation of sociologists. These sociologists still shape the discipline today by virtue of the positions they hold in universities and the Academy of Sciences. However, what would prove problematic for the development of labor sociology was that this growing sociological scholarship largely or completely avoided turning Marxist concepts and class analysis against the Soviet Union itself. Sociology avoided questions of alienation and exploitation in the Soviet Union (Burawoy 2009) and Ukraine (Kutsenko 2000a).

On the other hand, probably in its efforts to obtain data about work and workers, the political apparatus did grant sociology certain autonomy and some limited means to circulate research results. Both autonomy and means came under attack during the transition to capitalism, as soon as authorities no longer had reasons to guarantee that autonomy; furthermore, not all sociologists had enjoyed such autonomy in the first place, leading Ukrainian sociologists to differ widely in their assessments of the Soviet period (for instance, Popova 2008 makes the argument that Ukrainian sociology enjoyed such autonomy while Vil' Bakirov claims that Ukrainian sociology had to operate underground). I am not arguing that sociology became more tied to the state after communism; quite to the contrary, sociology became less tied to the state that during communism had an interest in guaranteeing sociology of work certain autonomy and access to financial means (see Popova 2008; at the same time, other areas of sociology faced censorship).[6] But the point is that Ukrainian sociology was probably slightly better positioned to at least document the vast changes that the working class underwent during the transition to capitalism than Romanian sociology.

In Romania, the situation of sociology was much more difficult, with the communist regime virtually banning the discipline in 1977 (one could become a trained sociologist only after having graduated from the Communist Party's academy (Gheorghiu 2002). Some sociologists carried out research on behalf of the Party, and many others survived in academic positions in philosophy and history departments and could reactivate the discipline as soon as the communist regime fell in 1989, but there was a significant lack of both students and knowledge to catch up in order to develop the capacity to study transition. One should not, however, push the argument about sociology in the two countries being too weak to study transition and its impact on worker life-worlds too far. After all, funding difficulties do not explain why sociologists

devote more attention to some areas of sociology rather than others. We have seen that more than labor sociology, it was the changes in public opinion and the increase in social anomy unleashed by transition that have captured the attention of Ukrainian sociologists, while Romanian sociologists devoted most of their attention to migration and crime rather than to changes affecting the working class.

The absence of labor from sociology might be the result of another factor, captured in Alexei Levinson's metaphor of 'collective anti-collectivism' (2006), and in the Western social scientific literature on transition in the phrase 'ideological legacies of communism' (Crowley and Ost 2001). There are two different aspects here, one explaining the absence of studies of the labor movement, and the other explaining the lack of interest in workers and their life-worlds. First, Levinson denoted by 'collective anti-collectivism' the rejection among parts of the Russian public of collective action and of collectivist values in favor of individualism and the belief that one is better off on his or her own (Levinson 2006). Sociologists might themselves share this rejection of collective action, an idea possibly supported by the lack, in the journals researched for this article, of studies of any other instance of collective action (other than labor; for instance, there was only one study of the environmentalist movement in the Ukrainian journal and none of collective action by nationalist groups). Second, the ideological legacies of communism mean that an interest in the working class and its involvement in collective action is somehow ideologically suspect (in the eyes of both post-communist elites and the wider population), as it bears the menace of a rehabilitation of or even a return to a communist regime. Crowley and Ost trace ideological legacies back to post-communist elites that ensure the consensus around market reforms by shaping the ideological space ahead of them by 'destroying the ideological opposition' of subordinate groups, including workers (Crowley and Ost 2001; see also Lane 2007).

However, I did not limit this study to Ukraine precisely because I wanted to show that explanations based on ideological legacies have difficulties tackling the situation in countries where ideological legacies operate selectively, deterring from collective action (or the study of it) only parts of the population, while other parts do not reject it. Romania is precisely such a case. In Ukraine, for instance, ideological legacies could be a good explanation why workers do not engage in collective action (it threatens to return communism) and sociologists do not study the working class (it bears the promise of collective action which in turn threatens to return communism). But in the case of Romania, workers do not refrain from collective action, while sociologists nevertheless do not write about them.

More generally, it could indeed be that the lack of interest in workers during the post-communist period in part goes back to a similar exhaustion of the topic because of its centrality in communist ideology in both of the countries' communist pasts. But one should keep in mind that what was indeed exhausted during communism was a very uncritical analysis of workers and the working class, rejecting a priori the study of the working class in terms of alienation and exploitation (Mandel 2001). The question therefore becomes why a trend of avoiding the study of class with critical concepts continued even after the demise of official censorship. In the reminder of this article, I offer an answer by arguing that sociologists might have more in common with the countries' ruling elites than with workers and other subaltern groups, and therefore might

be reluctant to study workers and their life-worlds (I build here on the work of Kutsenko 2000).

TWO OPPOSING WORLDS: SUCCESS VERSUS SURVIVAL

In order to understand the absence of labor from sociology in Ukraine and Romania, one needs a broader perspective on sociology, one that situates sociology in the political context in which it operates in the two countries. What are the characteristics of this context? In one of her articles, Ol'ga Kutsenko describes what she calls the class system of post-Soviet society, a system of 'alternative social powers, articulating their interests, and finding themselves in a situation of dynamic interaction and able to considerably influence the societal transformation process' (2000a: 30). She distinguishes between two such class formations on the basis of life orientations that the resources at their disposal allow them to follow. Using surveys of Ukraine's Kharkiv area and cluster analysis, she identifies first a 'market-oriented' formation or 'macro-group' (whose members are oriented towards achieving success), relying on a combination of

> […] organizational resources, property, social and cultural capital. The macro-group consists of politicians, civil servants, employers, highly qualified specialists, and parts of the studentship, all people who could profit from the introduction of markets. The members of the other macro-group fight for survival, have less means at their disposal to achieve anything but survival and therefore are subject to exploitation. Workers, pensioners, lower level state personnel all fall under this category. (Kutsenko 2000a: 31)

These are, in the words of Kutsenko, 'opposing social worlds, with varying social power' (2000a: 31; all citations are my translations).

Is it helpful to think of sociologists and workers as belonging to opposing social worlds, and argue that this is the reason why the former ignore the latter in Ukraine and Romania? I think so, as this explanation better explains the near total absence of studies of workers from the work of sociologists, despite a tradition of studies of work (at least in Ukraine), and despite a vocal labor movement in Romania. Furthermore, such an explanation is also suited for explaining another characteristic of sociology in the two countries: the lack of studies of other subaltern groups (pensioners, homeless, the unemployed). Such studies are equally missing, while studies of peasants, despite being highly present in Romanian sociology, tend to focus on peasants as carriers of national culture rather than peasants in the context of the newly introduced market economy.

Why would sociologists and workers end up in such different positions? One possible way to answer this question is to think about what the career of a sociologist in search of employment or funding for his department or institute looked like after the fall of communism, in an academic environment crippled by lacking funds. Coupled with the struggle to find or keep a job in academia, sociologists had to fight to establish institutes or departments (in Romania), or to keep them from being closed as part of the heavy budgetary cuts facing Ukrainian universities throughout the 1990s. Sociologists

also had to fight to secure funding for the institute or department from governments or private companies, and they sought to attract students to the university – focusing on the richer ones in order to further secure, funds as the studies cited below suggest. The point is that there are few possible points of contact between sociologists and workers, and a sociologist's own post-communist transition resembles more the one of private entrepreneurs, and possibly features more points of contact with the latter, and with state officials than with workers. Evidence for this argument above comes from three different sources – existing literature, data on life-stories that I have collected, and one observable implication of the thesis that the weakness of labor sociology can be traced back to the positions sociologists themselves occupy in society.

First, there are several studies that discuss with a focus on Ukraine how lacking funding and problematic legislation pushes academics in general (and in particular in the social sciences) to seek funding by engaging in a variety of corrupt practices with students. (Round and Rodgers 2009; Osipian 2008; Jepherson and Egorov 1997). Round and Rodgers for instance note that academics often start engaging in such practices out of necessity, pushed by the needs of their families, but that later on in the career of academics such practices become so vast that they resemble a business – one in which diplomas are traded for money. Furthermore Ukrainian academics enter political deals with state officials, offering to allow the political mobilization of students in exchange for funds to support academic institutions (Osipian 2008; Jepherson and Egorov 1997). In case such deals fail, tuition paying students become the main source of funding, pushing academics to boost the number of fee-paying students with all possible means, including by actually guaranteeing graduation and high grades in exchange for individual bribes. This probably orients sociologists towards servicing – including by means of research – the career goals of the richer fee-paying studentship rather than of other parts of society (Osipian 2008).

This account is also confirmed by interviews and other data about life stories of academics that I collected in Kyiv. Three sociologists working at the Kyiv-Mohyla Academy in Kyiv explained how funding works in the case of their research areas, business studies for the first of them and labor studies for the other two. All three of them did not have access to the public funds available for Ukrainian state universities. But – simply because he was targeting an audience that has considerable funds in comparison to other societal groups – it was much easier for the first one to set up a business school than for the other two, interested in establishing a labor institute. Support in his case came from the businesspeople interested in studies of management, or human resources (field notes, Kyiv, July 2010). For the labor sociologists funding is a crippling issue, especially since they cannot afford to live from the stipend they receive as PhD researchers from their university (a stipend of roughly 100 Euros a month). One of them receives a Western scholarship, and they have covered the costs of the research institute from their own money so far, but with the present lack of funds the institute has no long-term perspective (field notes, Kyiv, October 2010).

The lack of academic institutes dedicated to labor studies in Ukraine or Romania contrasts with the situation in Russia. In Moscow and other cities sociologists could establish with Western help an inter-regional labor institute – the Institute for Comparative Labor Research – leading to an increase in labor studies in Russia and in

other post-Soviet countries (for an English description of the institute, see http://www.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/complabstuds/russia/general.html, last accessed 29 December 2010). The lack of similar structures in Ukraine and Romania might be part of the explanation for the lack of labor studies in the two countries, although the problem at hand is wider, since, as noted, there is also a more general lack of subaltern studies, not only of labor studies.

Third, further evidence comes from deriving an observable implication of the thesis that the weakness of labor sociology can be traced back to the societal positions of sociologists. The implication of Kutsenko's theory is that if sociologists, by means of career and scholarship, belong to the market-oriented macro-group, then this should be reflected in their choices as to whom they prefer as an audience. Below it will be argued that their work fails to address workers and other subaltern groups as one of the only publics (together with governments) that might actually have something to gain from their work, the only publics vis-à-vis which one could argue that sociologists have relevant informational advantages. Not only do they ignore such an audience, but they – including the editor of the Ukrainian journal under study here – also present the subaltern public as potentially dangerous to the establishment of democracy and free markets. Specifically, the little interest in their work led sociologists in both Ukraine and Romania to decry their status in society. Interestingly enough, such statements of sociologists came in response to the growing debate about public sociology in the United States and elsewhere in the world. In speeches addressing their colleagues in Ukraine's Science Academy and Romania's Sociology Association, Petrova (2007) and Iluț (2007) both underlined that they find it important for sociology to be public. But they decried the public's indifference towards sociology. Petrova even went as far as to claim that sociology was far more public during Soviet times, when the state guaranteed the sociologists' access to assemblies of workers and other citizens and also to specialized state agencies. Iluț condemned the competition stemming from the media, which prefer to invite to talk-shows all sorts of public-appealing but ignorant guests instead of knowledgeable sociologists. In other words, according to these sociologists, the difficulty with developing a public sociology seems to lie with the public and less with sociology; but in their accounts they perceive the public only through those channels that ensure access to it – the state and media – without appearing to be able to think of a role also for themselves in reaching those publics.

Even more problematically, as Riabchuk (2009) points out, some sociologists seem to have reached conclusions fairly early in transition that disempowered or cast as outright dangerous subaltern groups like workers, at least in Ukraine. Those conclusions end up blaming the public for the failures of transition to market economy and democracy. On the one hand, we have the positions of several Ukrainian sociologists criticized in Riabchuk (2009) for 'blaming the victims', claiming that the poor in Ukrainian society simply do not possess the psychological mindsets to allow them to be otherwise than poor. On the other hand, Riabchuk's observation also applies to earlier work in Ukrainian sociology, connecting the psychological mindset of parts of the population (actually of the population's majority in those accounts) to the failure to democratize the country. Thus, key Ukrainian sociologists – among them also the editor in chief of the Ukrainian Academy's sociology journal – formulated very critical points

vis-à-vis the Ukrainian population's capacity of sustaining democracy in the following kind of language: 'The *majority* of the population belongs to the *lowest social strata*, and correspondingly, is not extremely *interested* in stability or active political participation' (Golovakha and Panina 1996: 254; my emphasis). Similarly to some of the positions of key intellectuals behind Poland's Solidarity (Ost 2004, or more generally intellectuals such as former dissidents throughout Central Eastern Europe, Eyal et al. 1998), and in Ukraine too, parts of academia ended up believing that the population is not truly supportive of democracy or capitalism; that it is not 'interested', or psychologically not fit to be interested, in a better world and is therefore longing for socialism.

Golovakha and Panina do take into account in their analysis the extreme deterioration of the population's living standards unleashed by transition in Ukraine. The problem here is that instead of researching the concrete ways in which post-communist policies disempowered parts of the population, they posit that such deterioration combines with psychological mechanisms specific to the Soviet public that make much of the population unfit and unwelcoming of the endpoint of transition. In other words, in the account of the two authors disempowerment seems more an instance of the psychological unfitness of the population than of concrete state policies that made those people poor in the first place. This leads Golovakha and Panina to extreme conclusions: 'One of the most important social characteristics is that psychological quality called "locus of control"' (Rotter 1966). '[…] One who makes outside factors (other people, surroundings, fate, or chance) responsible demonstrates external control. Social paternalism favors externality by shifting responsibility for major decisions to governmental structures. Successful transition to a democratic society cannot happen if the psychological basis for a new society (that is, development of personal responsibility of people for one's own fate, for social decisions, and for public acts) does not change' (Golovakha and Panina 1996: 252). First, such a psychological basis did not prevent the mobilization surrounding the Orange Revolution from moving Ukraine closer to democracy in 2004. Second, the analysis in Golovakha and Panina (1996) actually shifts the focus of academic inquiry away from government actions that result in deterioration of living standards and disempowerment to 'psychological' characteristics of the victims of transition policies. It conceptualizes such psychological factors as a key obstacle to democratization, and not the politics that might have actually constrained the chances of individuals to achieve anything more than survival.[7]

Does such conceptualization of subaltern groups as intrinsically dangerous for democracy and free markets truly indicate that sociologists belong to a different macro-group than the subaltern groups? In this article I argued that this is indeed the case, and presented such conceptualizations as evidence for Kutsenko's thesis. But it could as well be that to the extent that this conceptualization is dominant among sociologists it represents an explanation in itself. It is not that labor is absent from the work of sociologists, it is actually indirectly present as sociologists study it as a danger for the post-communist order.[8] After all, the work of Golovakha and Panina was followed by a flurry of studies dedicated to the relationship between transition and public opinion, documented by the large number of articles in row 56 in Table 1. However, without Kutsenko's theory, it is not clear through which mechanisms sociologists end up sharing psychological conceptualizations of local publics as unfit for the post-communist order. It

should be noted that sociologists do not develop such conceptualizations after the careful study of alternative explanations; for instance, thinking about political explanations for the publics' lack of involvement in the democratic polity is nearly absent from the articles published in the Ukrainian and Romanian journals under study (with the notable exception of the foreign authors – Kideckel 1999; Lane 2006 – and Riabchuk 2007; Pan'kova and Ivashchenko 2006).

One should not be astonished to find in post-communist sociology so little interest for the fate of the working class. The dramatic character of societal changes offers no guarantees that sociologists will study these changes' most fundamental aspects. The heavy toll of the post-communist transition to capitalism on the working class failed to invite much attention from local sociologists, despite their relying on a certain tradition of work-related scholarship (in Ukraine), and despite their being confronted with a very protest-prone labor movement (in Romania). Simply because they claim to study society does not mean that sociologists are always best positioned to (want to) analyze all areas of possible societal change and especially the change around subaltern groups, the groups situated 'under the survival threshold' (Kutsenko, 2000a).

Is the relationship of sociologists towards workers and other subaltern groups in Romania and Ukraine fundamentally different from the same relationship in other parts of the world? How would one distinguish between the class positions of sociologists in Ukraine or Romania and those in, say, the Netherlands or South Africa? Are sociologists in the former countries closely allied to the dominant class – or the market-oriented macro-group, to use Kutsenko's term – and dependent on it whereas sociologists in the latter countries in a more autonomous class position?[9] In the literature on public and labor sociology, one element emphasized as present in many cases where public sociology emerged – and sociologists turned to study subaltern groups, including workers – as the presence and activism of a movement aimed to reform the academia. Such movements fought to ensure that universities' oppose states on certain issues (the US antiwar movement in the 1960s, for example) and thus secured or strengthened autonomy from state influence. In many Western European countries, universities emerged before nation states, so the autonomy of universities was easier to secure than in Eastern Europe (by Eastern Europe I mean those countries whose territories did not fall under the control of the Habsburg Empire). In the Russian Empire the tsar had been the sole initiator of universities (see Osipian, 2008; the same applies to the rulers of the Romanian principalities). In other cases where labor sociology emerged – in South Africa, for example, see Burawoy 2009 – movements went further than securing autonomy and established departments dedicated to the study and empowerment of subaltern groups.

Romania and Ukraine remain quite different from such cases: so far, almost no social movements have tried to reform universities since the fall of communism. In Romania, the short-lived organization called the Students' League attempted to take universities into conservative (national-Orthodox) directions, but other students resisted their – and other national-Orthodox organizations' – attempts (Stan and Turcescu 2000). In Ukraine, recently unveiled state repression of the political activities of students (*Economist*, 23 May 2010) might be further isolating universities from pressures from below and strengthening the sociologists' choice of avoiding the study of workers and other subalterns. Universities faced after communism increasingly hard budget

constraints, which only increased their dependence on rich donors and students, and state subsidies from political allies. Under conditions of low rule of law, the opportunity of earning money not only from tuition fees but also from selling diplomas has strengthened the 'market-orientation' of universities and has reinstated somewhat differently than under communism the universities' reliance on a state that tolerates the rule-braking behavior of university personnel (the latter comments might apply more to Ukraine, see Osipian 2008).[10]

Conclusion

This article asked what sociology had to say about the working class and the post-communist deterioration of the material situation of the working class in two of Eastern Europe's most recession-hit societies, Ukraine and Romania. The paper showed by researching three sociological journals of professional associations and Academies of Sciences that topics such as worker rights and living standards, the labor movement, and the fate and outlook of trade unions have been conspicuously absent from the works of local sociologists. The few studies published in Kyiv and Bucharest using notions such as class for other purposes than just describing income categories bear the names of Western scholars. The paper reviewed several possible explanations for why where there so few studies of labor in the two countries' sociological literatures. The answer that the author finds most convincing relies on situating sociology in its wider national context and noting that the current generation of sociologists might have more in common with the countries' ruling elites than with workers and other subaltern groups, and therefore might be reluctant to study workers and their life-worlds.

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NOTES

1. Available at http://www.isa-sociology.org/rc.htm (accessed 14 May 2010).

2. I counted as labor or work sociology (the 'labor' column in Table 1 below) every study analyzing the working class (the material, political, and economic situation of workers, trade unions, and labor collective action, regardless of whether these studies use the word 'class' or not, and regardless of methods, although if there are any empirical studies, they all use quantitative methods). Basically, I counted as studies that have a labor-focus those

studies that have 'workers' or 'employees' as their central subjects. I counted only featured articles, leaving out book reviews, interviews, articles taken over from Western sociology journals (there were some, for instance by Immanuel Wallerstein). Most of the content is freely accessible online.

3. The name of the journal is *Sotsiologiya: teoriya, metody, marketing* (Sociology: Theory, Methods, Marketing). It can be accessed at http://www.i-soc.com.ua/journal/content.php (accessed: 14 May 2010).

4. The names of the two journals are *Revista Română de Sociologie* (The Romanian Sociology Journal, RRS, http://www.revistadesociologie.ro (accessed 20 May 2010) and *Sociologie Românească* (Romanian Sociology, SR), http://old.sociologieromaneasca.ro/ (accessed 20 May 2010).

5. According to the latest World Social Survey data (World Values Survey Association, 2009).

6. As to funding during transition, this became a notorious problem plaguing all areas of science. In a study from 1997, Jepherson and Egorov note that the funding of science in 1996 was 'perhaps one twelfth of that in 1989' (Jepherson and Egorov 1997: 321); they were also writing that 'Many institutions, including the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences, unable to pay even modest telephone bills, have begun to dismiss staff. Buildings go unheated […] Yet another problem is that [sic] fact that in the Russian Academy of Sciences salaries consume slightly less than 50 per cent of budget, leaving modest amounts available for research, whereas in the Ukrainian academy this figure is much higher. Research *per se* cannot be conducted in this environment' (Jepherson and Egorov 1997: 322). The issue is not that even the selective funding available in Soviet times disappeared – but that governments diminished it and changed the ways in which selection took place. According to Osipian (2008), state officials extended funds to those academics that were close to the groups in power, as means to control universities and not so much out of consideration for certain research areas.

7. One does not have to look too far to find also among Romanian social scientists similar approaches to the characteristics of national publics. Again, sociologists cast the problem as one of psychology and culture, rather than of state policies and resources available to the public. What seems to be responsible for the Romanians' unfitness for capitalism and democracy is Orthodoxy. According to an influential Romanian sociologist (a counselor of the liberal prime-minister in power in 2004-2008), Orthodoxy is known for 'peace, inertia, all these things which are not suitable for industry, competition, technology, information, rapid change' (interviewed in Freyberg-Inan and Cristescu 2006).

8. I thank an anonymous reviewer for pointing out the possibility of 'indirect studies of labor protests'.

9. I thank Michael Burawoy for suggesting I deal with this question.

10. There are also other groups that might call for the reform of universities, intellectuals for instance. Eyal et al. (1998) have advanced the argument that at least in Central Eastern Europe intellectuals became critical of the interwar system and universities to the extent the system was no longer capable of offering them career possibilities and the sense of a 'mission' (Eyal, Townsley, and Szelenyi 1998, Chapter 2). This led some of them to turn left and '"longing for a home", become "proletarian"' – Eyal et al. mention the example of the Hungarian-born György Lukács as being archetypical in this respect. Yet, as Karl Polányi has described, the pendulum can swing to the right, and intellectuals in other Eastern European countries found a home in and criticized society from far-right positions, as it happened in Romania and Bulgaria in the 1930s (Şerban 2010; Daskalov 2004).

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

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