

CONFUSION, SECRECY AND POWER: DIRECT PAYMENTS AND EUROPEAN INTEGRATION IN ROMANIA

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This ethnographic article examines the first time “implementation” of the European Union’s Direct Payments policy in Romania, paying particular attention to what happened at the policy-village interface, and illustrating how power differentials, local knowledge production politics and ways of making agreements shape the way in which the policy plays out in significant ways. I apply recent theorising on the state and power to show the discontiguity at work in the Direct Payments policy. In some instances, a dispersed, but highly discontiguous form of power best describes the processes at work; in others, power is manifested through discourses that reify the state reproducing its verticality, its encompassment and reproducing its dislocation from people’s everyday experience. I focus on how policy implementation processes work, in practice, in messy, incomplete ways that are revealed differentially and unevenly to different subject positions within the social field of power. I show how, in practice, “institution-building” took place by way of negotiations between villagers and policy-implementers. Furthermore, I illustrate how the conflicts involved in “oversolicitation” gave differential access to a highly stratified village community. Thus, I show how the Direct Payments policy produces both dissonant and consonant effects in the policy-village interface.

Key words: European Union; Direct Payments; power; institutions.

INTRODUCTION

This article is based on my doctoral fieldwork (October 2006–January 2008) on the effects of European Union (EU) integration on people who had hitherto depended on animal husbandry for their livelihoods. I carried out qualitative, intensive anthropological research living in a sub-Carpathian area in Muntenia for a year – in two valleys I call Luceafăru and Zâmbetu² – but I also worked extensively

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² All names of places and people used in this article are pseudonyms.