***CENTRAL EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY***

***Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology***

***cordially invites you to the***

***Public PhD Defense of***

**Gergő Pulay**

on

**Street Life, Value and Exchange in a Poor Neighborhood of Bucharest**

***Monday, November 27 at 10 am***

in

**Senate room**

**(Monument Building)**

**Defense Committee**

**Chair: Angela Kocze**,Roma Access Programs, CEU

**Supervisor: Vlad Naumescu**, Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology, CEU   
  
**Second supervisor:** **Violetta Zentai**, Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology, CEU

**External examiner: Tom Slater**, School of Geosciences,University of Edinburgh

**Abstract:**

In states of postsocialist Eastern Europe, the search for local obstacles to the civilizing process took the shape of exposing society’s ‘dirty laundry’ – as a public disciplinary exercise by politicians, the media, as well as by ordinary citizens – and has been conducive to the stigmatization of abject populations. The marginalized and mixed Roma and non-Roma Romanian neighbourhood of Bucharest that provides the field-site of this ethnographic account is known as an ultimate ‘Gypsyland’ (ţiganie) in town, an ‘internal orient’ containing the ‘worthless’ and ‘uncivilized’ of urban society. The dissertation advances the conceptual framework of stigmatization by connecting the urban scale of inquiry to the marginalization that occurs at the level of the EU superpolity, as it details how the historically developed urban inequalities in Bucharest work in tandem with unequal relations between the states of Western Europe and the post-socialist European periphery. The different scales of stigma coalesce when the inhabitants of the ‘Gypsy’ neighbourhood – and by extension Romanian Gypsies in general – are accused of giving ‘a bad name’ to the Romanian nation. In this context, poor neighbourhoods can obtain highly central positions not only as regular suppliers of ’hot issues’ in the public, but also because of the metonymic power by which they allude to the overall plight of the city and the nation at the European periphery. Following the tradition of urban ethnographies, the dissertation focuses on the links between marginality and the livelihood strategies with which inhabitants of the neighbourhood – especially men who regularly hang out and make deals in the street – strive to create material and non-material value in their uncertain environments as a form of place-making. A recent wave of scholarly accounts relies on the notion of precariousness in order to account for the rising uncertainties of work and employment in various domains, especially in the aftermath of the financial crisis. As this dissertation argues, such assumptions would lead us to misunderstandings when it comes to the categories of practice by which marginalized people make sense of the social and economic contexts in which they act, as well as their regimes of accumulating personal worth and material value through production and circulation, or trade and exchange which are all constitutive to their notions of personhood.