

# A Different Narrative on “Industrial Homework”: The Sewing Machine in Domestic Space and Its Promotion Under the Communist Regime

**Cassandra Pop, Cosmin Anghelache**

PhD students, “Ion Mincu” University of Architecture and Urbanism, Bucharest, Romania  
contact@cassandrapop.ro | contact@cosminanghelache.ro

**Keywords:** *Tehnum* magazine; DIY; amateur builder; 1970-1990; Romania

## *Tehnum* 1970-1990

*Tehnum*<sup>1</sup> was a Romanian monthly publication launched in December 1970, dedicated to electronics, technology enthusiasts, and amateur builders. Edited by Știință și Tehnică [Science and Technology] magazine, *Tehnum* embraced do-it-yourself (DIY) culture by offering step-by-step instructions for building everything from electronic devices, modeling small-scale planes and boats,<sup>2</sup> as well as creating furniture and other household items. In addition to encouraging the construction of one’s own furniture as a form of creativity and learning, readers were advised on how to improve their homes and repurpose everyday items. This section underwent numerous name changes over the years; among the most common were *Confort Casnic*, *Pentru tinerele gospodine*, *Interior ’80*, and *Locuința noastră*.<sup>3</sup> Besides these dedicated sections, other related articles were occasionally scattered throughout the magazine, appearing alongside practical, electronics-engineering-focused content. Although the print edition remained in circulation until 2006,<sup>4</sup> this study focuses on issues published between its December 1970 launch and the early 1990s.

During this period, *Tehnum* went through three stages. The first began with the question “De ce *Tehnum*?” [Why *Tehnum*?], through which the magazine affirmed that “scientific research is becoming a widespread activity,”<sup>5</sup> thus outlining both its mission and the profile of its intended reader. Young people were invited to participate actively by sending letters about what they were interested in building and were encouraged to use their free time in a pleasant, yet practical and

1 In Ilie Mihăescu’s view, the magazine’s title, while carrying no political undertone, signaled creativity, technical expertise, and openness to all readers, regardless of experience. Ilie Mihăescu, *Thoughts and Recollections about TEHNIUM*, published online on Emil Matei’s blog, accessed April 2025, [emil.matei.ro/mihaescu1.php](http://emil.matei.ro/mihaescu1.php). Reflecting on the potential benefits of the political “thaw” in Romania under the communist regime, Mihăescu’s notes — particularly his account of his first day working at *Tehnum* — takes on added significance: “I was awaited (at the office) by numerous technical magazines, both from the communist countries and from capitalist Europe and America.”

2 Alexey Golubev and Olga Smolyak position this practice within the “Soviet collective imaginary,” contrasting it with other more practical DIY projects. Alexey Golubev and Olga Smolyak, “Making Selves through Making Things: Soviet Do-It-Yourself Culture and Practices of Late Soviet Subjectivation,” *Cahiers du Monde Russe* 54, no. 3/4 (2013): 517-41.

3 *Interior ’80* (used in 1980, with subsequent versions in 1981, 1982, 1985, etc.); *Confort Casnic* [Household Comfort]; *Pentru tinerele gospodine* [For Up-and-coming Housewives]; *Locuința noastră* [Our Home]. All translations from Romanian sources, including *Tehnum*, are by the authors unless otherwise noted. The titles are extracted from various *Tehnum* issues, accessed via Cristian Copcea’s blog, [blog.copcea.ro](http://blog.copcea.ro), and Arcanum Newspapers, [adt.arcanum.com](http://adt.arcanum.com) (accessed April 2025).

4 After it was discontinued, the publication transitioned into an online forum format, where its DIY and electronics community continued to thrive.

5 Ion Popescu, *Tehnum 70* (1970): 1. “Cercetarea științifică devine o activitate de masă.”

purposeful way.<sup>6</sup> Developing practical skills was considered a means of promoting technical education and manual labor, with the aim of shaping a disciplined and productive individual. Intellectual work was recognized when accompanied by physical effort. The second phase, centered around the 1977 earthquake, came with a sharp increase in DIY articles on home repair and maintenance. Toward the end of the 1980s there was a noticeable decline in articles dedicated to interior design, and by 1989, they had disappeared entirely, despite the prior commitment to continue them. In the first issue after the revolution, the *Tehniium* editorial staff reaffirmed their intention to continue their trajectory, recalibrating both their message and their relationship with the audience through an editorial titled “Prietenie cititor” [Dear reader]. The article illustrated how expressions such as *amateur builder* were not abandoned, but instead redefined, shifting from a form of individual responsibility toward collective needs to a release from the meanings dictated by communist ideology.

This selection of DIY projects focused on furniture, household items, and home upkeep is analyzed through the identity of the sewing machine, considered an indispensable part in making them. The study considers how such an object was integrated into the socialist standardized home and what influence it had on spatial configuration. As for the challenges of setting up a workshop in a small-sized apartment, at *Tehniium*'s suggestion, the sewing machine took priority as a tool for home maintenance and interior improvement through DIY activities.

#### *Amateur builder*

The sewing machine enabled the expansion of light industrial labor into the household,<sup>7</sup> allowing small-scale production such as sewing clothes and simple textile items for everyday use. Under the communist regime, which prioritized the economic participation of everyone regardless of gender, it was sometimes tolerated to continue unfinished work at home in order to complete tasks that could not be accomplished at the workplace within an optimal timeframe. However, the woman, seen as a “political actor,”<sup>8</sup> was expected to take part in industrial production outside the household. Among the alternatives proposed as part of the “Reduced Work Program for Women,”<sup>9</sup> led by the female workforce in the light industry, was the possibility of carrying out work from home. One such proposal came from employees of the Aurora Textile Factory in Bucharest,<sup>10</sup> who suggested that tasks like hemming handkerchiefs could take place at home. In an effort to persuade a hesitant leadership, the *conventional apartment*<sup>11</sup> was presented as a “new productive space.”<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, Alexandra Kollontai's writing from 1920 shows that this transformation could not be seen as something new. In her portrayal, the family was seen as having become solely a space for

6 During the Arts and Crafts Movement, the term “hobby” shifted from being seen as improper to a respectable and meaningful activity, especially for young people who had previously been discouraged from such pursuits. Steven M. Gelber, *Hobbies: Leisure and the Culture of Work in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 28. While Gelber links DIY culture to the movement that evolved as a reaction to mass-production methods brought by the Industrial Revolution, Boris examines how its principles intersected with industrial homework. Eileen Boris, *Art and Labor: Ruskin, Morris, and the Craftsman Ideal in America* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986).

7 Eileen Boris, *Home to Work: Motherhood and the Politics of Industrial Homework in the United States* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 13.

8 Adrian Cioroianu, *Pe umerii lui Marx: O introducere în istoria comunismului românesc* [On the Shoulders of Marx. An Introduction to the History of Romanian Communism], 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Bucharest: Curtea Veche Publishing, 2007), 92.

9 *Femeia* 3 (1974): 24. Issues accessed via Arcanum Newspapers, [adt.arcanum.com](http://adt.arcanum.com) (accessed April 2025).

10 “AURORA? a beautiful name”, *Almanah Cinema* (1970), 224. Promotional material of the Aurora Textile Factory, which operated in Bucharest at 240, Calea Rahovei — a location that, since at least the interwar period, housed several textile enterprises (*Monitorul Oficial*). In 1991, the factory was renamed Modcotton Aurora SA, and was closed in the 2000s.

11 The *conventional apartment* (a two-room flat) was used as a reference unit for official measurement of collective dwellings. Ana Maria Zahariade, *Architecture in the Communist Project: Romania 1944-1989* (Bucharest: Editura Simetria, 2011), 44.

12 *Femeia* 3 (1974): 24.

consumption, losing its productive role, as capitalism gave rise to a form of collective labor driven by factories.<sup>13</sup> In general, this kind of manual labor performed at home, a practice historically associated with lower costs and often carried out by women expected to remain in household roles, is characterized by efforts over time to minimize the material compensation offered. Belinda Leach discusses the nature of industrial homework<sup>14</sup> as discreet, largely unnoticed, and easily mistaken for other domestic activities, making homework hard to distinguish from housework.<sup>15</sup>

Building on this unclear distinction between the two, and given the presence of the sewing machine, this paper shifts more toward housework in an effort to explore DIY activities as a type of work less frequently addressed. Miriam Glucksmann, seeking to systematize existing research, argues that its fragmented form limits a clearer view of consumption work, which should not be mistaken for consumption or housework. The author suggests that this confusion increasingly contrasts with the position a consumer holds especially in practices such as self-assembly, self-service, and others.<sup>16</sup> In this process, Glucksmann draws on Raymond Edward Pahl's research on DIY to highlight it as another important element in how division of labor should be understood.<sup>17</sup> From the outset of the book "Divisions of Labour," published in 1984, Pahl addresses the mistaken perception of work within the domestic space, asserting that an activity carried out in the household, even if not compensated, can still be considered work.<sup>18</sup> The active participation of the consumer in the production process, along with the recognition of reward as not only material but also psychological, has become a discussed research theme. As previously mentioned, ready-to-assemble furniture is one example that stands out for reshaping the connection between producer and consumer, with the latter becoming involved in the final stage of production. In this context, IKEA is recognized not for initiating, but for popularizing the idea of flat-pack furniture in the 1950s, designed to remain unassembled for easy and cost-effective transport. The consumer becomes responsible for putting together the furniture by following an instruction manual provided by the manufacturer. The authors of the 2012 experimental study "The IKEA Effect: When Labor Leads to Love" analyze how personal involvement in making an object for one's own use increases emotional attachment, emphasizing how this form of labor adds a sense of achievement and personal satisfaction.<sup>19</sup> Unlike the assembly process, in DIY practice the consumer takes on many more stages of the production process, leading to a deceptive sense of autonomy and distance from the type of labor under analysis.

Research on DIY underscores the variety of backgrounds from which it has grown and evolved, along with the different types of rewards it is known to offer. *Tehnum* often referenced other

13 Alexandra Kollontai, "Communism and the Family," 1920, in *Selected Writings of Alexandra Kollontai*, trans. Alix Holt (London: Allison & Busby, 1977).

14 *Home work* is defined by the *International Labour Organization* (ILO) in its 1996 Convention (No. 177) as paid work, assigned by an employer and performed at home. This encompasses what is commonly understood as *industrial homework*, with the distinction that industrial homeworkers are commonly involved toward the end of a product's manufacturing process. See also ILO, *Working from Home: From Invisibility to Decent Work* (Geneva: International Labour Office, 2021). Eileen Boris notes that industrial homework should be understood not only as a stage of industrialization, with its history revealed less through Industrial Revolution and more through regulatory frameworks that reflect widely accepted ideas about gender, family, and domestic labor. Boris, *Home to Work*.

15 Belinda Leach, "Industrial Homework, Economic Restructuring and the Meaning of Work," *Labour / Le Travail* 41 (Spring 1998): 110.

16 Miriam A. Glucksmann, "Formations, Connections and Divisions of Labour," *Sociology* 43, no. 5 (2009): 889.

17 Miriam A. Glucksmann, "Working to Consume: Consumers as the Missing Link in the Division of Labour," *CRESI Working Paper* 2013-03 (Colchester: University of Essex, 2013).

18 Raymond Edward Pahl, *Divisions of Labour* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984), 17. The author connects the nature of DIY and other informal work to the idea of self-provisioning.

19 Michael I. Norton, Daniel Mochon and Dan Ariely, "The IKEA Effect: When Labor Leads to Love," *Journal of Consumer Psychology* 22, no. 3 (2012). The authors begin by discussing instant cake mixes, introduced in the mid-1950s, which were criticized for excluding the cook from the process. This led to modifications in the recipe that required personal involvement, such as adding an egg.

international DIY publications, especially by directly reproducing projects featured in them. Among the magazines mentioned were *Practic* (German Democratic Republic), *Modelist-konstruktor* (USSR), *Do It Yourself* (UK), and *Selbst* (Federal Republic of Germany). However, in some cases, the simple adoption of projects developed within a different economic context than the one into which they were meant to be integrated only served to emphasize the discrepancies between the two. For instance, a point raised by Andrew Jackson in his analysis of post-war DIY culture in Britain, regarding how the building materials market geared itself toward amateurs by offering more user-friendly products, sold in smaller formats suitable for individual projects, illustrates a kind of accessibility unfamiliar under the communist regime.<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, a correlation between the amateur's identity and the use of leisure time remains consistent, despite the different and often contradictory meanings it has accumulated. The amateur builder identified in this framework is more likely to stem from the one formed within the Soviet sphere.<sup>21</sup> For example, Alexey Golubev and Olga Smolyak discuss how DIY culture grew as an underlying tool for absorbing the values promoted by the Soviet state. Describing this process as a form of subjectivation, the authors examine how this practice was seen also as a means of distinguishing between genders: women were persuaded to evaluate themselves in terms of fashion, while men, when not engaged in the realm of complex constructions, found their place at home, at the workshop table.<sup>22</sup>

The amateur under study, among those addressed by *Tehnum*, is not detached from home, but rather approaching the cold season and seeking ways to improve heating and energy consumption from a designer's standpoint. For a better understanding of this profile, it can be examined through analogy or within a wider context. Analogously, the "amateur" may be linked to the meaning of another term also used in a contradictory sense: "volunteer work" understood as a mandatory practice imposed by the state to fulfill mechanisms of control and economic objectives. This activity involved the participation of school and university students in harvesting activities, and by the 1980s it had spread beyond agricultural labor, taking on other forms such as "patriotic work."<sup>23</sup> While volunteering represents a consumption of time that intentionally leaves no room for other uses of it, within home, free time becomes fertile ground to be filled with DIY projects. The amateur builder engaged in adapting their living space, cannot be seen merely as a person passionate about a certain activity, but also as someone who possesses free time necessary to create household items or make improvements to their home. From one perspective, this approach was promoted by the regime as a way to compensate for the lack of available products.<sup>24</sup> This type of activity can also be understood as a way of delegating responsibilities to family members. Moreover, when it comes to the use of the word "amateur," its role within propaganda discourse cannot be overlooked. It was a construct of the regime that gradually developed, culminating in the national festival *Cântarea României*, whose objective was to elevate the amateur in a process that implicitly dismantled the figure of the professional.<sup>25</sup> The amateur is described by Mircea Martin as a presence that could be easily manipulated ideologically.<sup>26</sup>

20 Andrew Jackson, "Labour as Leisure: The Mirror Dinghy and DIY Sailors," *Journal of Design History* 19, no. 1 (2006), 59; see also Paul Atkinson, "Do It Yourself: Democracy and Design," 19, no. 1 (2006): 3. Atkinson outlines four categories to better understand the complexity of the practice: pro-active DIY, reactive DIY, essential DIY, and lifestyle DIY.

21 See Susan E. Reid, "Makeshift Modernity: DIY, Craft and the Virtuous Homemaker in New Soviet Housing of the 1960s," *International Journal of History, Culture and Modernity* 2 (2014): 87-124.

22 Golubev and Smolyak, "Making Selves through Making Things," 517-41.

23 Vladimir Tismăneanu, coord., *Raport final. Comisia Prezidențială pentru Analiza Dictaturii Comuniste din România* [Final Report. The Presidential Commission for the Analysis of Communist Dictatorship in Romania] (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2007), 607.

24 Golubev and Smolyak, "Making Selves through Making Things," 527.

25 Monica Lovinescu, *Seismograme – Unde scurte II* [Seismograms. Short Waves II] (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1993), 186; see Cristian Vasile, "Mișcarea artistică de amatori la începuturile regimului Ceaușescu, 1965-1971" [The Amateur Artistic Movement at the Beginnings of the Ceaușescu Regime], *Studii și materiale de istorie contemporană* 1 (2012): 126-42.

26 Mircea Martin, "Cultura română între comunism și naționalism (III)" [Romanian Culture Between Communism and Nationalism], *Revista* 22 (2002).



Fig. 1: *Tehnium's* DIY interior design section: variations in naming and visual identity

“Do you know what industrial beauty is?”<sup>27</sup> is one of the two articles Iulian Crețu<sup>28</sup> published in *Tehnium* in 1974 that suggests an amateur way of reading. Iulian Crețu, an active figure within state structures, played a role in spreading the notion of *industrial aesthetics* with a stress on beauty<sup>29</sup> — a circulation strategy highlighted by Mirela Duculescu as contrasting with the specialized approach of design professionals.<sup>30</sup> To familiarize readers with the subject announced in the title, Crețu offers a definition of industrial aesthetics, with reference to the dictionary of aesthetics as well.<sup>31</sup> Additionally, parts of the text have been identified as excerpts from his other writings, such as the passage on uniformity found in his book *Util și Frumos pe scurt despre Estetica Industrială* [Useful and Beautiful. A Brief Overview on Industrial Aesthetics].<sup>32</sup> Even so, substantial content on industrial aesthetics or on the distancing from industrial design as a term is largely overlooked. Without a solid basis to support a deeper theoretical understanding, the amateur builder is left to recontextualize the information and engage with it in a more intuitive manner.

The first article sets out two directions: the integration of industrial beauty into everyday life and the “balancing of excessive technologization and narrow specialization.”<sup>33</sup> This second objective can be understood in terms of specialized knowledge or as an invitation for the reader to

27 Iulian Crețu, “Știți ce este frumosul industrial?” *Tehnium* 4 (1974): 20.

28 Iulian Crețu is known for holding positions such as Scientific Director of *Institutul de Creație Industrială și Estetica Produselor* [Institute of Industrial Creation and Aesthetics of Products] and President of *Comisia de Estetică Industrială* [Industrial Aesthetics Commission].

29 For example, in October 1972, *România Liberă* published a brief interview in which Crețu announced that a selection of light industry products would receive the “Industrial Beauty” label, following the example of similar competitions abroad, like Bulgaria’s “Golden Hands.”

30 In the context of the founding of the Department of Industrial Forms in 1969 at the “Nicolae Grigorescu” Institute of Fine Arts in Bucharest, Mirela Duculescu emphasizes the distinction between official and professional discourse, while stressing the need to explore their points of convergence. Mirela Duculescu, *Designul românesc între problematica designului democratic și practica socialistă (1970-1990)* [Romanian Design Between the Problems of Democratic Design and Socialist Practice (1970-1990)] (Bucharest: Editura UNArte, 2018), 101. Mirela Duculescu, “Indefinite Faces of Modernism: Notes on Design in Interwar and Socialist Romania,” *studies in History and Theory of Architecture* 7 (2019): 137-56, 144.

31 *Dicționar de Estetică Generală* [Dictionary of General Aesthetics] (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1972), 174. Ionel Achim notes that “industrial aesthetics” was chosen as a term instead of “industrial design.” Mirela Duculescu mentions how industrial aesthetics in socialist Romania aligned more closely with the Soviet notion of *tekhnicheskaya estetika* than with Jacques Viénot’s *esthétique industrielle*.

32 Iulian Crețu, *Util și Frumos pe scurt despre Estetica Industrială* (Bucharest: Editura Tehnică, n.d.), 13-14.

33 Crețu, “Știți ce este frumosul industrial?”, 20. “Echilibrarea excesului de tehnicizare și specializare îngustă.”

view industrial beauty as part of their own creative process. This encouragement, directed toward the amateur builder to consider the notion from a producer's perspective, is reinforced through the use of first-person plural verbs, such as: "when we create something — be it a big or small product, simple or complex..."<sup>34</sup> DIY practice, perceived as a way of reclaiming the relationship between the individual and the product of their labor, weakens the process of alienation as outlined by Marx: from the product, the labor process, others, and oneself.<sup>35</sup> When asked, "Are you a communist?" Enzo Mari replies: "If by 'communist' you mean refusing work as alienation and asserting one's labors as transformation, then I'm a communist."<sup>36</sup> In 1974, Enzo Mari created *Autoprogettazione*, an initiative through which he encouraged individuals to build their own furniture using simple, accessible, and easy-to-assemble elements, based on technical drawings and an instruction manual. This project served as a clear design statement resisting the capitalist system of mass-consumption. It outlined a critique of passive consumerism, emphasizing that anyone could build and prompted individuals to share images of their creations.<sup>37</sup>

Another significant aspect in conveying industrial beauty is its definition in the article in opposition to industrial ugliness, which Iulian Crețu characterizes as wasteful of materials or unnecessarily costly.<sup>38</sup> Such a contrast resonates with the amateur's way of engaging with the text, indirectly reflecting the underlying orientation of DIY projects, as exemplified by *Tehnum*: using readily available resources in object-making. This leads the reader to make an association with the routine of creating and repairing with whatever is at hand, in response to economic constraints. Subsequently, in his second article, Iulian Crețu introduces the idea of uniformity, questioning its place in the discussion of industrial beauty.<sup>39</sup> This kind of uniformity, critically examined during a time when everyday conformity could not be disputed, cannot go unnoticed throughout the text. In offering an outlook, the author points to several studies suggesting that, starting in the 2000s, industrial production would begin to generate objects that resemble one another without being identical. Diversity, framed as a kind of promise, is reinforced by the statement that "everyday objects will not invite man into uniformism."<sup>40</sup> This distinction in the product's design, while not implying complete differentiation, takes on a different form in the case of the amateur. It echoes the earlier observation on material waste, and the encouragement to combine and make use of whatever was available for each interior project. An approach that brings renewed attention to the sewing machine as an instrument valued for its ability to easily integrate leftover fabrics into unique compositions.<sup>41</sup>

### There Is Room for a Sewing Machine

#### *Monochrome Background. Between domestic and industrial decor*

"Once NICOLETA enters our home, it turns into a real mini-factory for making garments, using it clearly stimulates our skill, dexterity, and inventiveness,"<sup>42</sup> is an example of a striking

34 Ibid. "Atunci când realizăm ceva — un produs mare sau mic, simplu sau complex."

35 Karl Marx, "Estranged Labour," in *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, trans. Martin Milligan (New York: International Publishers, 1964), 70-81.

36 Juli Capella and Enzo Mari, "Either Design Is a Cultural Plus-Value or It Isn't Design": Dialogue with Enzo Mari," *Domus*, no. 791 (March 1997).

37 Enzo Mari, *Autoprogettazione?* (Mantua: Corraini, 2002).

38 Crețu, "Știți ce este frumosul industrial?," 20.

39 Iulian Crețu, "Frumosul industrial. Forma produselor" [Industrial beauty. The Form of the Products], *Tehnum* 5 (1974): 16.

40 Ibid.

41 Doina Silvia Marian, *Obiecte utile din resturi textile* [Useful Objects Out of Textile Leftovers] (Bucharest: Editura Tehnică, 1986), constitutes one of many publications that illustrate how utility, leftover materials, and uniqueness come together; see also Viorel Raducu, *O comoară din... nimicuri* [A Treasure Out of ... Nothing] (Bucharest: Editura Albatros, 1983).

42 *Almanah Femeia* (1985), 166.

phrase that could be read on posters promoting sewing machines at the time. The words “home” and “mini-factory” are paired in a commercial way, emphasizing garments while overlooking the overlap between the two. The promotional image of the sewing machine manufactured by the Cugir Mechanical Plant<sup>43</sup> can be broken down into five compositional elements: the product, a female figure, a name, a description, and a monochrome background. Visual literacy, built on a vocabulary composed of minimal elements, is not examined for any particular specificity, but rather seems to dissolve into the broader commercial landscape. It cultivates visual awareness of how the sewing machine integrates into a standardized apartment setting.<sup>44</sup> The background, devoid of any reference about location or context, creates a state of isolation and detachment. The absence of decor becomes a chromatic preference in the visual composition. The monochrome palette and the lack of instant visual cues that might suggest the nature of the workspace lead to an emphasis on the relationship between the woman and her sewing machine, two figures lifted out of their everyday environments and united under a single name: *Ileana, Sanda, Veronica, Rodica, Camelia*, and so on. While the names of earlier models made by Cugir, *Casnica* or *Casnica Super* suggested a connection to the household, this new series of names shifts from a home narrative focused on a productive space to one centered on productive leisure.<sup>45</sup>

At first glance, the spatial neutrality, rendered through a single vivid color, does not rule out the presence of a domestic or industrial space, or even an overlap between the two. The sewing machine becomes an autonomous object, apart from a specific context, yet simultaneously present in both of them. On closer inspection, however, the way the woman is dressed, accessorized, and styled suggests an environment that is neither domestic nor industrial, but one of identity affirmation. Her fashionable appearance disconnects the sewing machine from household chores or work, highlighting two aspects: the experience of leisure<sup>46</sup> and adoption of modern style trends. Both of these could be considered persuasive in promoting the purchase of such a product. Thus, time spent at home remains productive, while fashion diverts attention from uniformity, upkeep, and other domestic tasks traditionally tied to the sewing machine.

Information on commercial progress during 1960-1972, specifically regarding the spread of sewing machines in households,<sup>47</sup> can be found in a 1973 study published in *Comerțul Modern* [Modern Trade]. The results of research conducted by a team from I.C.C. [Institute of Commercial Research]<sup>48</sup> showed a growth in sales, albeit a moderate one, attributed in the report to

43 With a long-standing history in armament production, it is one of Romania's oldest industrial establishments, dating back to the late 18th century. Following 1946, its operations were diversified to include the manufacture of household goods. Among these were sewing machines, with the earliest models marketed under the names *Casnica* and *Casnica Super*. In addition to domestic appliances, the factory also produced industrial sewing machines.

44 See also Irina Tulbure's analysis of how a Romanian propaganda apparatus was constructed through images, illustrations, and posters. Irina Tulbure, “Către o arhitectură a viitorului socialist. Măști, propagandă și arhitectură în România perioadei staliniste” [Towards an Architecture of the Socialist Future. Myths, Propaganda and Architecture in Romania During Stalinism], in *Arta în România între anii 1945-2000. O analiză din perspectiva prezentului*, coord. Călin Dan, Iosif Király, Anca Oroveanu, and Magda Radu (Bucharest: Fundația Noua Europă, Editura UNArte, 2016), 53-70.

45 Steven Gelber examines the form of productive home leisure as an effect of industrialization. Steven M. Gelber, *Hobbies: Leisure and the Culture of Work in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).

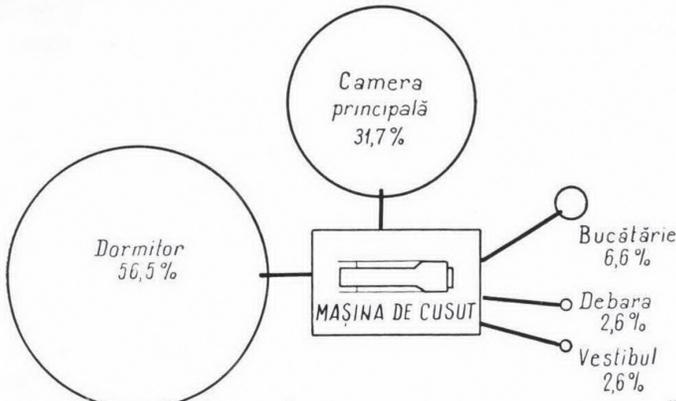
46 In a different framework, Randi Cox examines the shift from NEP (New Economic Policy) advertising, which could not distinguish production from consumption, always presenting them as inseparable, to the Stalinist period, which shown a separation between production and consumption, focusing on leisure time and identity. Randi Cox, “All This Can Be Yours! Soviet Commercial Advertising and the Social Construction of Space, 1928-1956,” in *The Landscape of Stalinism* (University of Washington Press, 2003), 125-162, 128.

47 Having access to a sewing machine offered the possibility of earning additional income from home through repairing, altering, or sewing garments unofficially. Ana Vinea, *Anii '80 și bucureștenii* [The Eighties and Bucharest Inhabitants] (Bucharest: Paideia, 2003), 121-22. Artisanal objects, such as clothing creations, could be sold in state-run spaces like *Fondul Plastic*, which were primarily reserved for UAP members, state-approved artists, and recognized artisans. Caterina Preda, ed., *The State Artist in Romania and Eastern Europe: The Role of the Creative Unions* (Bucharest: Editura Universității din București, 2017).

48 “Piața mașinilor de cusut” [The Sewing Machine Market], *Comerțul Modern* 9 (1973): 29-33.



Fig. 2: Advertisements for sewing machine models produced by Cugir  
Fig. 3: Presence of the sewing machine throughout the house



the increasingly widespread access to a variety of affordable products. Even though the market for ready-to-wear clothing was described as in constant development, the study optimistically reported an increase in the number of sewing machines purchased. Among the identified factors contributing to this growing trend were the replacement of older sewing machines, increased income and free time, a growing desire to keep up with the latest fashion trends — cultivating a sense of self-esteem — as well as a wider variety of sewing machine models to choose from. One in four households owned a sewing machine, with ownership more common in urban areas than in rural ones, and this figure was expected to rise to one in three by 1980, with further growth in the years to follow.<sup>49</sup> (Fig. 2)

49 Ibid.

While visually the poster initially refrains from revealing the setting, the written part works toward constructing it. The text focuses on aspects such as cost, technical performance, and domestic integration. All three directions make use of common and borrowed advertising vocabulary, which, by appealing to different levels of versatility and camouflage, aims to harmonize the sewing machine with the home environment while still retaining its industrial nature. From the electric version that can be stored away like a suitcase, to a table-type model with a metal stand, or built-in furniture designed to remain in plain sight — doubling as a stand for a television, radio, or even a child's desk — these variations emphasize the machine's compact size, allowing for seamless integration into the home. Otherwise, the sewing machine takes on an aesthetic presence through its connection to other handcrafted activities widespread under communism. For example, it used to enhance the home when draped with macramé or lace and adorned with a vase of flowers.<sup>50</sup>

At the same time, its compact size underscores a contrast with the industrial scale typically associated with such an object. Although intended for home use, the *ILEANA 67* sewing machine was marketed with the slogan “A big factory in a small machine,”<sup>51</sup> alongside the product and factory name, all displayed in large font. This seemingly contradictory language used to promote a household product aligns with the spirit of the time. The tension between industrial production, understood as large-scale output, and the idea of shaping individuals to consume only for the satisfaction of essential needs appears more pronounced. It is a reminder that neither consumption nor home can be fully separated from production. (Fig. 3)

Regardless of the purpose for which it is used, the sewing machine is given a place in the apartment that usually remains the same. The corner of a room chosen for homework inevitably becomes the place for housework as well, and vice versa. In search for spatial markers, Belinda Leach dwells on the notion that the separation between work and home, imposed by capitalist industry, has shaped home into a layout that hardly accommodates industrial homework. She describes two types of use of space, both as unobtrusive as possible, aiming not to interrupt or disrupt the domestic rhythm: either positioned at the edge of an open, shared space such as the living room, or fully occupying a closed-off space like a storage room.<sup>52</sup> As the sewing machine shifted between different roles within the household, it was more frequently placed in the brighter, more spacious areas of the socialist standardized apartment. In a 1967 issue of *Arhitectura* magazine, “an inquiry into usage patterns in urban dwellings”<sup>53</sup> was published, focusing on the collective housing projects built after 1963. The study, conducted a year earlier by I.P.C.T. [Institute for Standardized Construction Design], focused on three key themes: the dining area, the bedroom, and storage spaces. Comprising 250 flats, the sample was drawn proportionally from a range of professional categories, maintaining a balanced selection of families with only one working member and those with several. Some of the results, presented in a series of diagrams and tables, revealed that manual labor, particularly sewing, played an important role in organizing domestic space. While in the bedroom it was considered the third most frequent activity, sewing was also ranked as the third most common activity across the entire flat — aside from primary needs such as sleep, food, and hygiene — after reading and listening to radio broadcasts.<sup>54</sup>

At the same time, 30% of the apartments surveyed accommodated a sewing machine, a proportion nearly equal to that of washing machines. Compared with the other analyzed items,<sup>55</sup> its placement (storage location) was more consistent, with less variation, and was most often found

50 Andreea Mureșan and Vintilă Mișăilescu, “Zorzoane și flecușețe în vremea comunismului” [Trinkets and Odds and Ends in the Time of Communism], from the series *Adevăruri despre trecut*, TVR, June 3, 2017.

51 *Almanah Știința*, 1970, 401. “O mare uzină într-o mică mașină.”

52 Leach, “Industrial Homework,” 110.

53 *Ibid.*

54 *Ibid.*

55 The technical objects included in the study, listed here in order of acquisition rate, are: radio, refrigerator, television, washing machine, sewing machine, record player, vacuum cleaner, and tape recorder.

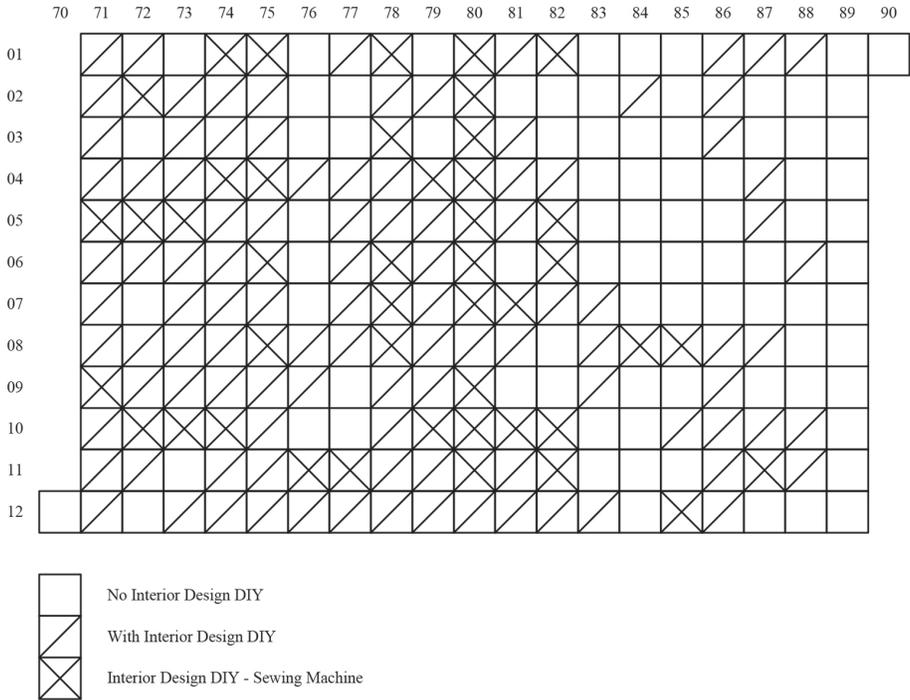


Fig. 4: 230 issues, 148 DIY projects, 44 involving the use of a sewing machine  
 Fig. 5: Tehnium, 1979-1980, selected pages

**PENTRU TINERELE GOSPODINE**

**SUPPORT PENTRU REVISTE**  
**TOAMNA GHERBINA**

Un suport pentru carte si reviste...  
 Pentru a citi revistele si cartile...  
 Acest suport este realizat din...  
 Materiale necesare: 200 cm de...  
 Pentru a realiza acest suport...  
 Se taie din carton sau din...  
 Se lipesc bucatile in...  
 Se adauga un suport pentru...  
 Se poate decora cu...  
 Este potrivit pentru...  
 Pentru a realiza acest suport...  
 Este necesar sa se foloseasca...  
 Se poate realiza in...  
 Este potrivit pentru...  
 Pentru a realiza acest suport...  
 Este necesar sa se foloseasca...  
 Se poate realiza in...  
 Este potrivit pentru...

**COVARAS**  
**MARIA PAUN**

Un covoras...  
 Acest covoras este realizat...  
 Materiale necesare: 100 cm de...  
 Pentru a realiza acest covoras...  
 Se taie din...  
 Se lipesc bucatile in...  
 Se adauga un suport pentru...  
 Se poate decora cu...  
 Este potrivit pentru...  
 Pentru a realiza acest covoras...  
 Este necesar sa se foloseasca...  
 Se poate realiza in...  
 Este potrivit pentru...

**BANCA PENTRU CAMERA COPILOR**  
**KRISTINA FLORIAN**

De ce sa nu ai o banca...  
 Aceasta banca este realizata...  
 Materiale necesare: 100 cm de...  
 Pentru a realiza aceasta banca...  
 Se taie din...  
 Se lipesc bucatile in...  
 Se adauga un suport pentru...  
 Se poate decora cu...  
 Este potrivit pentru...  
 Pentru a realiza aceasta banca...  
 Este necesar sa se foloseasca...  
 Se poate realiza in...  
 Este potrivit pentru...

**COVARAS**  
**MARIA PAUN**

Un covoras...  
 Acest covoras este realizat...  
 Materiale necesare: 100 cm de...  
 Pentru a realiza acest covoras...  
 Se taie din...  
 Se lipesc bucatile in...  
 Se adauga un suport pentru...  
 Se poate decora cu...  
 Este potrivit pentru...  
 Pentru a realiza acest covoras...  
 Este necesar sa se foloseasca...  
 Se poate realiza in...  
 Este potrivit pentru...

**PENTRU TINERELE GOSPODINE**

**GENTI MULTIFUNCTIONALE**

Un suport pentru...  
 Acest suport este realizat...  
 Materiale necesare: 100 cm de...  
 Pentru a realiza acest suport...  
 Se taie din...  
 Se lipesc bucatile in...  
 Se adauga un suport pentru...  
 Se poate decora cu...  
 Este potrivit pentru...  
 Pentru a realiza acest suport...  
 Este necesar sa se foloseasca...  
 Se poate realiza in...  
 Este potrivit pentru...

**USCATOR PENTRU RUFEE**

Un uscator pentru rufe...  
 Acest uscator este realizat...  
 Materiale necesare: 100 cm de...  
 Pentru a realiza acest uscator...  
 Se taie din...  
 Se lipesc bucatile in...  
 Se adauga un suport pentru...  
 Se poate decora cu...  
 Este potrivit pentru...  
 Pentru a realiza acest uscator...  
 Este necesar sa se foloseasca...  
 Se poate realiza in...  
 Este potrivit pentru...

**MASA DE LUCRU PLIANTA**

Un masa de lucru...  
 Aceasta masa este realizata...  
 Materiale necesare: 100 cm de...  
 Pentru a realiza aceasta masa...  
 Se taie din...  
 Se lipesc bucatile in...  
 Se adauga un suport pentru...  
 Se poate decora cu...  
 Este potrivit pentru...  
 Pentru a realiza aceasta masa...  
 Este necesar sa se foloseasca...  
 Se poate realiza in...  
 Este potrivit pentru...

**USCATOR PENTRU RUFEE**

Un uscator pentru rufe...  
 Acest uscator este realizat...  
 Materiale necesare: 100 cm de...  
 Pentru a realiza acest uscator...  
 Se taie din...  
 Se lipesc bucatile in...  
 Se adauga un suport pentru...  
 Se poate decora cu...  
 Este potrivit pentru...  
 Pentru a realiza acest uscator...  
 Este necesar sa se foloseasca...  
 Se poate realiza in...  
 Este potrivit pentru...

in the bedroom, followed by the living room.<sup>56</sup> (Fig. 3) In this scenario, the sewing machine maintains a close connection with the surrounding furniture and objects, helping to repair, preserve, or even produce them. DIY projects build on this proximity, particularly by expanding the variety of proposals involving the use of the sewing machine, from stitching an apron — not for its intended use, but adapted as storage for various tools — to accessorizing objects that don't typically require a textile component. (Fig. 4)

*An apartment in one room*<sup>57</sup>

Across several issues, *Tehniium* magazine introduces plans for setting up a creative or repair workshop at home. The editorial staff acknowledges in the article “My workshop,”<sup>58</sup> that although such a space, necessary for completing many of the furniture projects published in the magazine, should ideally occupy an entire room, the limited space available in an apartment does not allow for this. Consequently, the article proposes constructive alternatives, such as “arranging a work corner.”<sup>59</sup> Through its recommendations, the magazine encourages readers either to reuse an old table or to build a mobile setup that can easily be folded away. In contrast, the sewing machine could be considered a significant exception. The struggle to accommodate a fully operational workshop within the home highlights the sewing machine as a tool that already possesses all the qualities necessary to fit effortlessly. Therefore, as part of the *Tehniium* interior design project, which often needed access to specialist workshops or hard-to-find materials, the sewing machine became a valuable resource for creating objects that required covering, upholstery, or other textile details — from lampshades to chair covers. A complementary aspect of these objects can be observed in the proposed designs, like as a sofa module that needs extra fabric, and in items like a cassette player cover. It could indeed be argued that this is not confined to this particular context, but extends more broadly, as many pieces of furniture, due to their intended function, require either upholstery or some form of protection. However, some of the magazine's suggestions, such as wardrobe alternatives,<sup>60</sup> indicated a substitution of rigid materials with ones that were easier to purchase. (Fig. 5)

The complementary nature of this relationship implies that creating an object is not solely the responsibility of a single family member but involves the participation of others as well. Although some furniture items were presented as tasks that could be carried out entirely by women, including cutting and assembling parts, in addition to managing the textile elements, other projects emphasized the importance of collaborative effort among family members. The image of putting together an object as a family denotes help, efficiency and productivity, aspects that may resemble task-sharing or industrial homework. In the earlier issues of the magazine, the titles of articles on interior design did not reflect a clear division of labor; however, in 1979, the appearance of a section titled “Pentru tinerere gospodine” [For Up-and-coming Housewives] marked such a distinction. Articles published under this heading became more frequent from that point onward, particularly in 1980, when all twelve issues featured this section. A perhaps more explicit correspondence can be found in “Realizați singure”<sup>61</sup> [Do It Yourself], a column in *Revista Femeia* [The Woman's Magazine] dedicated to interior design advice. When trans-

56 Lupan, “O anchetă privind condițiile de folosire a locuinței urbane,” 25.

57 “Confort casnic. Un apartament într-o singură cameră” [Household Comfort. An Apartment in One Room], *Tehniium* 2 (1971): 10.

58 “Confort casnic. Atelierul meu” [Household Comfort. My Workshop], *Tehniium* 1 (1971): 12, “Atelierul meu.”

59 *Ibid.*, “amenajarea unui colț de lucru.”

60 See Maria Păun, “La cererea cititorilor. Dulap” [At the Request of Readers. Wardrobe], *Tehniium* 7 (1978): 18. “Pentru tinerere gospodine. Genți multifuncționale. Dulăpior practic” [For Up-and-coming Housewives. Multifunctional And Practical Storage], *Tehniium* 4 (1979): 20-21.

61 “Realizați singure,” *Almanah Femeia* (1970): 259. Apart from periodicals, guidebooks were published in collections (series) that distinguished them from other genres (e.g., *Miini Îndemânatică*, *Cristal* and *Ca-leidoscop*), while also limiting their audience through titles that marked gender and age, as seen in *Vreau să devin gospodină* (Editura Tineretului, 1958), *Ghidul micii gospodine* (Editura Tineretului, 1966), *Mica gospodină* (Editura Ceres, 1974) and *ABC-ul gospodinei* (Editura Tehnică, 1983).

Pagini realizate de:  
arh. ANCA IVANOVICI,  
arh. GABRIELA BEREZEANU

# PODIUM MULTIFUNCȚIONAL

Un astfel de podium poate constitui piesa principală a mobilierului dintr-o încăpere; cumulează o serie de utilități cum ar fi:

1. Suport pentru salteaua relaxa, care în ansamblu cu blatul-nopieră (suspendat la nivelul relaxei) poate fi un remarcabil pat de dormit.
2. Suport pentru fotoliile din jurul barului.
3. Depozitarea de obiecte ca: asternut, lenjerie în sertarele dispuse pe laturile libere ale podiumului și în spațiile prevăzute cu panouri rabatabile.

Realizat din elemente constructive de lemn, ușor asamblabile, podiumul multifuncțional poate fi finisat pe suprafața orizontală cu mochetă (ca o continuare a pardoselii) sau vopsit în culoarea predominantă a ansamblului. Pe planurile verticale vizibile se pot aplica elemente decorative.

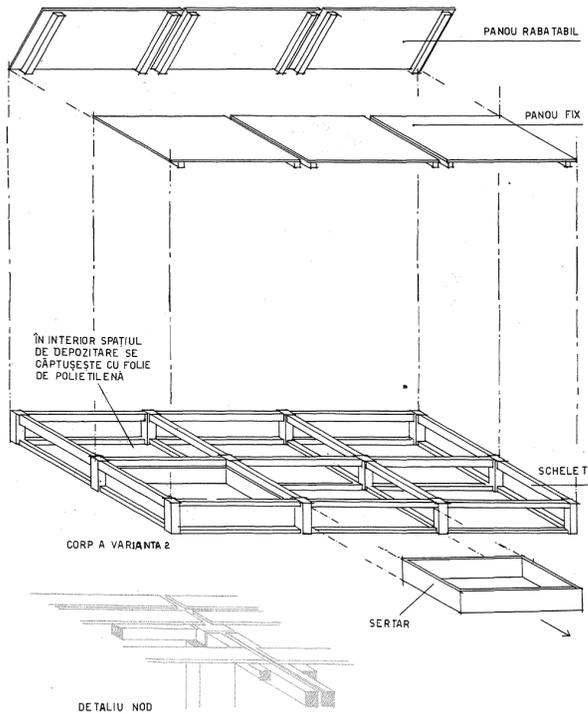
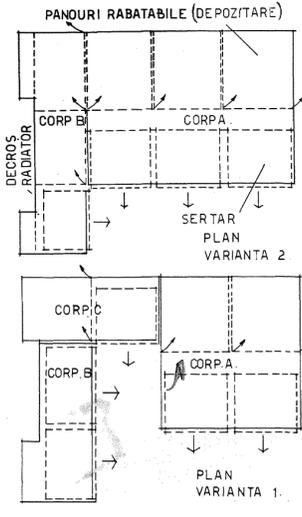


Fig. 6: Anca Ivanovici, Gabriela Berezeanu (architects), "Confort casnic. Podium multifuncțional" [Household Comfort. Multifunctional Platform], *Tehnum*, 1974

lated into English, the title loses its gendered nuance, in contrast to the Romanian version. Its feminine grammatical agreement directly frames women's empowerment at the time. Emphasis on women's active participation in society and their integration into industrial labor served to promote the regime's ideology, ensuring both the consolidation of the workforce and the exercise of social control. The phrase *realizați singure* maintains women's responsibility for domestic activities while also affirming their independence; women were urged to make additional household items on their sewing machines to prepare their homes for winter, while also handling maintenance tasks, such as preserving the quality of the plaster around the windows. "Preparing the Apartment for the Cold Season"<sup>62</sup> was one of *Tehnum's* articles dedicated to *Up-and-coming Housewives*, offering practical advice on keeping homes warm, in line with the energy-saving policies. Among the recommended solutions were installing a second curtain rod to create an additional layer of thermal insulation or placing a textile element at the base of the window to help retain heat. Each suggestion, regardless of its level of complexity, was presented not merely as a simple measure to be taken, but also as a design project accompanied by information on dimensions and implementation, just as placing a textile strip at the window was framed as a type of reversible design.<sup>63</sup> (Fig. 6)

62 "Pentru tinerele gospodine" [For Young Housewives], *Tehnum* 10 (1980): 19.

63 A reversible yet alternative design involved using an expedition tent inside the apartment. Due to the extreme cold, this idea of creating "a room within a room" was seen as a solution. See Petre Popovăț's story in *Anii '80 și bucureștenii* (Bucharest: Paideia, 2003), 118-19. *Tehnum* magazine featured several tent projects.

*Tehnum* projects, dedicated to interior design, were presented by authors with different backgrounds: engineers - who were the most prominently featured in the magazine - architects, designers, students, and authors whose professional status was not specified or who remained anonymous. Frequently, most design proposals emerged rather as a rejection of the standardized furniture sets with a uniform aesthetic, which made every apartment feel the same. Expressions such as “the so-called ‘libraries’,”<sup>64</sup> used to describe what was commonly found on the market, highlighted that these products did not necessarily meet the requirements of flexibility and adaptability. Although often referred to as motivation for developing alternative solutions, in some cases they were not set aside but incorporated as a readily available resource and as a basis for new design ideas.<sup>65</sup> The furniture made available through state commerce sought to establish a unified design, whereas DIY projects showed only a fragment of everyday living. Each proposal was typically presented with an axonometric view or a perspective showing only the part of the room where the object was placed. Some of these took the form of clippings from foreign DIY magazines, serving both as a means of escapism and as a reference to modern furniture design. For instance, illustrations taken from publications such as *Selbst* (Federal Republic of Germany) showed the module as a modern element defined by repetition, composition and versatility.<sup>66</sup> These various glimpses turned the apartment, designed and proportioned for optimal efficiency, into a domestic realm without clearly defined boundaries. Meanwhile, the workshop shifts the focus from the home as a whole to specific settings for productive leisure activities. It is shaped only by efforts to minimize disruptions for family members, both in noise and in the space it occupies.<sup>67</sup> Nicolae Bucur clarifies that the corner, titled “The workshop of Fantasy,” should not be seen as a competitive form to industrial production.<sup>68</sup> At the same time, this statement acknowledges the nature of the activity, which, in fact, was encouraged since early school years. From a young age, the corner of a room served as an entry point into designing an interior space. In the chapter “The work corner” from the book *Miini îndemânatică* [Skillful Hands],<sup>69</sup> translated from Russian and published in 1955 by Editura Tineretului, it was stated that every school should provide a work corner for its pupils. This mirrors the domestic setting through the presence of the same architectural element.

### Concluding Notes

Building on this dual representation — a fragment of the interior and a full setup of a work corner — this paper presents a design layout of a Romanian socialist standardized home featuring *Tehnum* projects, brought together in one view. The floor plan depicts a fully furnished two-room apartment, from the pantry and hallway to the balcony, designed as a mini-garden with a lounge chair. The need to make the most of every available space of a small-sized apartment is consistent with the magazine’s goal of showcasing a wide range of design ideas, even if they do not always suit such a compact interior. As indicated in the legend of the floor plan (Fig. 7), certain furniture pieces were chosen based on their level of variation. For instance, the

64 *Tehnum* 9 (1980): 16, “așa-zisele ‘biblioteci’ [the so-called libraries].”

65 *Tehnum* 5 (1973): 21, “Un pat îngust, rabatabil, încorporat într-un obîșnuit modul de bibliotecă (tip “Dana” bunăoară); odată ridicat, biblioteca se întregeste, se recîștigă spațiul.” [A narrow, foldable bed incorporated into a standard bookshelf module (“Dana” model); once raised, the bookshelf is complete, and the space is regained].

66 *Selbst*, no. 11 (1972).

67 Nicolae Bucur, *Atelierul Fanteziei* (Bucharest: Editura Albatros, 1978).

68 *Ibid.*, preface.

69 “Miini Îndemânatică,” translated by S. Albu (Bucharest: Editura Tineretului, 1955), 13. The book’s title, translated from the Soviet manual *Умелые руки* (1953), was used by the publisher to create *Colecția “Miini Îndemânatică”*. In 1971, Editura Tineretului [Youth Publishing House] became Editura Albatros, seeking to reach a wider audience. The title resurfaced with Bucur’s *Miini Îndemnatice Traforajul* (Editura Ceres, 1973) and *Miini de aur* (Editura Albatros, 1986).

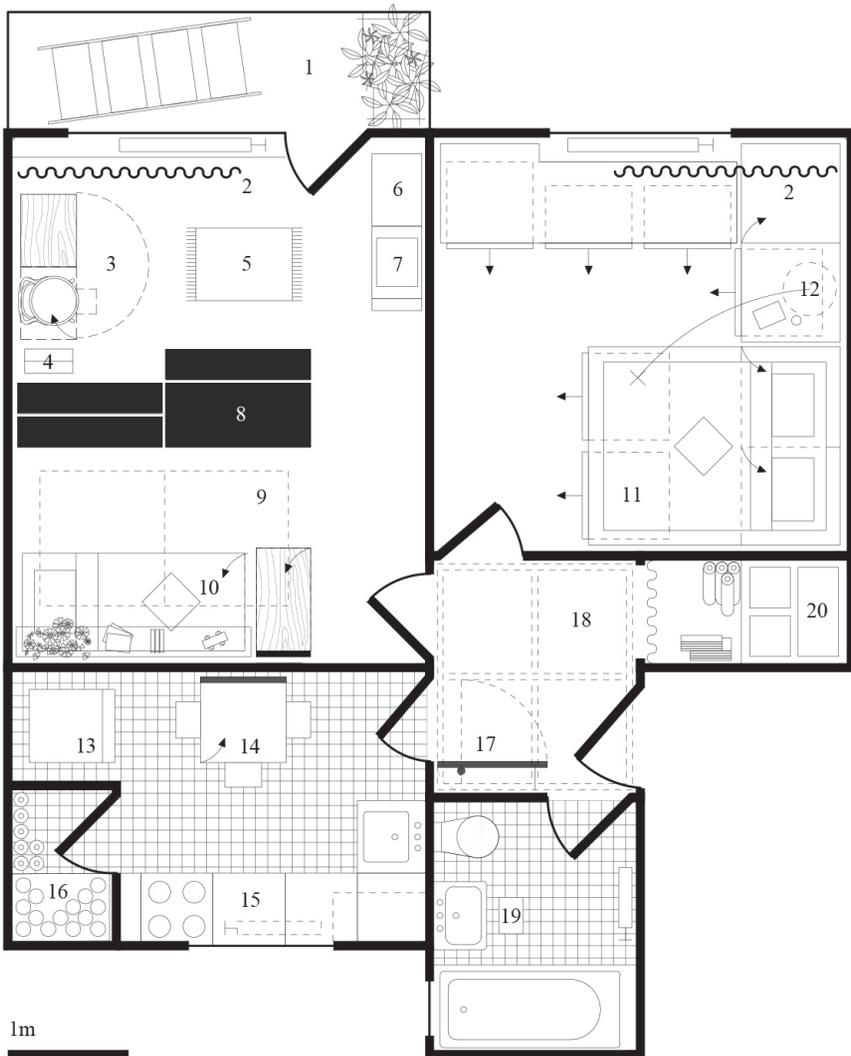


Fig. 7: A study of a standard two-room apartment layout, in a block of flats built circa 1958-1964 in Bucharest and other Romanian cities, furnished according to suggestions published in *Tehnum* magazine. It's important to note that architect Eugen Vernescu, a permanent member of the magazine's editorial staff, was responsible, alongside Leon Garcia, for the I.P.C.T. building [Institute for Standardized Construction Design], built in Bucharest in the 1960s

1. "Pentru tinerele gospodine. Șezlong. Mini-grădină" [For Up-and-coming Housewives. Deck Chair. Mini-Garden], *Tehnum* 6 (1980): 19.
2. E. Vargheș (designer), "Pentru tinerele gospodine. Interior '81. Pregătirea apartamentului pentru sezonul rece" [For Up-and-coming Housewives. Interior '81. Getting the house ready for the cold season], *Tehnum* 10 (1980): 19.
- Filip Krista, "Mocheta - un izolator termic" [Carpet - As Thermal Insulation], *Tehnum* 10 (1980): 19.
- Nacey Bădescu, "Paravan mască pentru calorifer" [Radiator Cover Panel], *Tehnum* 9 (1971): 11  
„Sfaturi utile” [Useful Tips], *Tehnum* 8 (1975): 23
3. Ileana Sewing Machine
4. Tomina Gherghina, "Pentru tinerele gospodine. Suport pentru reviste" [For Up-and-coming Housewives. Magazine Rack], *Tehnum* 1 (1980): 18.
5. Maria Păun, "Pentru tinerele gospodine. Covoraș" [For Up-and-coming Housewives. Small Rug], *Tehnum* 1 (1980): 18.
6. Maria Păun, "La cererea cititorilor. Dulap" [At The Request Of Readers. Wardrobe], *Tehnum* 7 (1978): 18.
7. "Pentru tinerele gospodine. Genți multifuncționale. Dulăpior practic" [For Up-and-coming Housewives. Multifunctional And Practical Storage], *Tehnum* 4 (1979): 20-21.
8. "Confort casnic. Un apartament într-o singură cameră" [Household Comfort. An Apartment in One Room], *Tehnum* 2 (1971): 10.  
  
"Pentru tinerele gospodine. Interior '81. Modul" [For Up-and-coming Housewives. Interior '81. Module], *Tehnum* 5 (1981): 20.
9. Liviu Cutcutache, "Week-end în Mai. Cum să confecționăm un cort" [Week-End in May. How To Build a Tent], *Tehnum* 5 (1971): 20.
10. E. Leandru (architect), "Confort casnic. Pat rabatabil" [Household Comfort. Folding Bed], *Tehnum* 7 (1971): 13.  
  
"Construcții - Amenajări. Pat rabatabil" [Construction - Interior Design. Folding Bed], *Tehnum* 11 (1978): 16.  
  
E. Vargheș (designer), "Pentru tinerele gospodine. Amenajări interioare. Masă pliantă" [For Up-and-coming Housewives. Interior Design. Folding Table], *Tehnum* 7 (1983): 20.
11. Anca Ivanovici, Gabriela Berezeanu (architects), "Confort casnic. Podium multifuncțional" [Household Comfort. Multifunctional Platform], *Tehnum* 10 (1974): 21.
12. E. Vargheș (designer), "Pentru tinerele gospodine. Interior '80. Iluminare acentrică" [For Up-and-coming Housewives. Interior '80. Acentric Illumination], *Tehnum* 2 (1980): 20-23.  
  
Viorel Răducu (engineer), "Confecționarea abajurilor" [Lampshade Making], *Tehnum* 8 (1985): 17.
13. FRAM Fridge 110L.
14. From SELBST, "Din revistele de specialitate. Masă rabatabilă" [From Specialized Magazines. Folding Table], *Tehnum* 1 (1977): 23.  
  
"Pentru tinerele gospodine. Masă de lucru pliantă" [For Up-and-coming Housewives. Foldable Work Table], *Tehnum* 4 (1979): 20.
- "Cititorii recomandă. Masă rabatabilă" [Our Readers Recommend. Folding Table], *Tehnum* 9 (1983): 19.
15. D. Gălățeanu (engineer), "Confort și eficiență. Sfaturi pentru amenajarea bucătăriei" [Comfort and Efficiency. Tips on Kitchen Design], *Tehnum* 8 (1972): 16-17.  
  
Maria Păun, "Construcții - Amenajări. Amenajarea bucătăriei" [Construction - Interior Design. Kitchen Design], *Tehnum* 10 (1979): 18.
16. "Construcții - Amenajări. Pentru cămară" [Construction - Interior Design. For The Pantry], *Tehnum* 11 (1979): 18.
17. Mihai Florescu (engineer), "Mobilier pentru hol" [Hallway Furniture], *Tehnum* 10 (1986): 19.
18. From SELBST, "Construcții - Amenajări. 'Pod' în hol" [Construction - Interior Design. "Attic" in the Hallway], *Tehnum* 10 (1979): 18.  
  
19. "Un sfat, o idee... Scăunel - Scară" [An Advice, An Idea... Stool - Ladder], *Almanah Femeia* (1976): 192.
20. Storage for construction materials, appliances and textiles.  
  
Alongside the aforementioned projects, the magazine also featured practical advice on woodworking floors, installing parquet, repairing plaster, and maintaining household appliances. Except for the article on repairing plaster, written by Viorel Răducu (engineer), and the one on maintaining and repairing Albalux washing machines, written by Daniela Munteanu, all other articles were authored by Mircea Munteanu.  
  
"Locuința noastră. Pardoseli de lemn I" [Our Home, Wooden Floors I], *Tehnum* 9 (1986): 20-21.  
"Locuința noastră. Pardoseli de lemn II" [Our Home, Wooden Floors II], *Tehnum* 10 (1986): 20-21.  
"Locuința noastră. Placarea pereților cu faianță" [Our Home, Tiling the Walls], *Tehnum* 11 (1986): 18-19.  
"Locuința noastră. Repararea tencuieiilor" [Our Home, Repairing Plaster], *Tehnum* 11 (1986): 19.  
"Locuința noastră. Refacerea vopselurilor în locuință" [Our Home, Repainting the Interior], *Tehnum* 8 (1987): 16.  
"Pentru tinerele gospodine. Întreținerea și repararea mașinilor de spălat Albalux 9, 10, 11, 12" [For Young Housewives: Maintenance and Repair of Albalux Washing Machines 9-12], *Tehnum* 10 (1987): 21; continued in 11 (1987): 16-17.  
  
"Ventilarea locuinței" [Ventilation of the Home]  
"Montarea și întreținerea geamurilor" [Installing and Maintaining Windows]  
"Consumul rațional de energie: Încălzirea locală" [Rational Energy Use: Local Heating]

foldable bed was selected due to its presence in multiple proposals over time. The interior arrangement is a curated collection of design solutions, including adaptations and ideas that *Tehnium* drew from foreign magazines, as well as opportunities for creative expression, such as the *Multifunctional Platform*<sup>70</sup> project for the bedroom area. Meanwhile, despite the limited space, the work corner is neither overlooked nor isolated, but is part of the household, often concealed by the sewing machine's ability to double as furniture. Seen as a domestic belonging, it turned time spent home — once framed as separate from work and associated with the freedom to cultivate a unique style — into a deliberate strategy for interior design and decoration. The sewing machine holds a dual presence: as a versatile object in itself and woven into the surrounding interior it has helped to create. While the proposed spatial arrangement does not clearly reflect the sewing machine's potential contribution to the making of numerous *Tehnium*'s proposals, a diagram (Fig. 4) alongside the floor plan illustrates this input: out of the 230 issues of the magazine studied, from December 1970 to January 1990, 146 featured DIY projects intended for home improvement, 44 of which involved the use of a sewing machine.

*Tehnium* guided its readers to participate as both producers and consumers in their homes through DIY interiors, with the sewing machine at hand. Being promoted as a way to turn domestic space into a *mini-factory*, it reflected the effort to continually instill a sense of industrial growth within the individual mindset. The February 1989 issue of *Femeia* magazine included a modified loom model that was foldable and suited to urban living. It was depicted as another adaptable piece that could be stored away without taking up space in the apartment. Framed as a way to revive a traditional household object, the loom was reintroduced in the article — alongside the sewing and knitting machines — as an essential tool for either productive use of spare time or industrial homework.<sup>71</sup> The article was titled “Un război de țesut pentru... apartamentul de bloc” [A loom for... the apartment].

70 Anca Ivanovici, Gabriela Berezeanu, “Confort casnic. Podium multifuncțional” [Household Comfort. Multifunctional Platform], *Tehnium* 10 (1974): 21.

71 *Femeia* 2 (1989), 23. As noted, it could serve equally for personal purposes and for work performed at home: “(...) alongside the sewing and knitting machine, it can become an invaluable tool not only for the woman who, in her free time, wants to sew, knit, or weave fabrics and cloths herself, but equally for small-scale artisanal production workshops or for home-based workers in cooperatives.”

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**ILLUSTRATION CREDITS:**

Fig. 1: *Tehnum* (1970-1990).

Fig. 2: *Almanah Scînteia* (1970): 401. *Almanahul Filatelic* (1983): 214.

Fig. 3: *Arhitectura* 3 (1967): 189.

Fig. 4, 7: Drawings by Cassandra Pop, Cosmin Anghelache, 2025.

Fig. 5: *Tehnum* 1 (1980): 18. *Tehnum* 4 (1979): 20.

Fig. 6: *Tehnum* 10 (1974): 21.