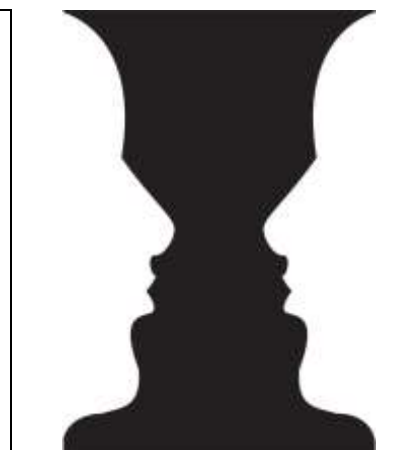

JOURNAL OF COMPARATIVE RESEARCH IN
ANTHROPOLOGY AND SOCIOLOGY

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Volume 3, Number 2, Winter 2013
ISSN 2068 – 0317
<http://compaso.eu>



Issue Number 11-12 of the Journal “Transilvania”, Sibiu, 2013

Journal Review

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My review presents a special double number of the journal “Transilvania”, focused on alternative ways of presenting the Sociological School of Bucharest. The coordinator on this issue was professor Zoltán Rostás.

This issue of the publication has a twofold aim: firstly, and in a declarative way, is to give a more realistic and detailed view of the founder and leader of the Sociological School of Bucharest, Dimitrie Gusti, but also of his main disciples and collaborators. This detailed view gives a more accurate understanding of the characteristics of the scientific life in the interwar period regarding the applied social sciences. This accurate presentation of the period and the characters has a declared aim: to clarify, to demystify and to rationalize the role of each member participating in the theoretical and institutional construction of the Sociological School of Bucharest. Furthermore, in the opening article, professor Zoltán Rostás argues that as the current, meaning post 1989 social history, has succeeded to give a distorted picture about the members of the Sociological School of Bucharest, the aim of this volume is to present these persons through their activities, putting away the churn today’s desirable values.

The second aim, while not explicit, but, to my mind was also an important aspect of the presented volume, was to show the diversity of the social phenomena that were analyzed from a sociological perspective by the members of the Sociological School of Bucharest.

The main characteristic of the articles in the volume is to argue with one particular concept or idea of the existing cliché regarding the Sociological School of Dimitrie Gusti and to argue in which point they are correct or, on the contrary, irrelevant.

In his article entitled “Regional thinking in the Gustian movement of uplifting villages” Dumitru Sandu proves the fact that the concept, according to which the

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sociology promoted by Gusti was at the first instance considered monographic, is in need of correction if we take in consideration the whole period of creation, as the main idea behind the selection of a particular village for a total monography was the regional aspect, and after this consideration came the pinpointing of a particular village, which had to be as archaic as possible, meaning to have had the less impact of the modern day life on its way of life, in order to preserve the characteristics of the selected region in the purest way.

From a totally different approach Theodora-Eliza Văcărescu, in her article, searches “Among Dimitrie Gusti’s Sources of inspiration: Women’s and Feminist Organizations as (possible) precursors of Gustian monographic and interventionist activities”. As the title reveals, Văcărescu identifies in the organizational field of the late XIX. and the first decades of the XX. century, those organizations which were led by women, in order to present the great number of voluntary activities that generally aimed the emancipation of women, but were also very receptive for different kinds of social problems. The author argues that the possibility of interference between these feminist- and woman-led organizations and Dimitrie Gusti is quite imminent, due to the spatial and personal closeness and interaction, and so, as a conclusion, they could somewhat inspire Dimitir Gusti’s visions about social intervention which was embodied by the Social Service Law.

In her article, Sanda Golopenția is seeking the answer put in the title “Was «Sociologie românească» Published Informally?”. This approach is quite a new one, as the “common knowledge” about “Sociologie românească” (=Romanian sociology) is that the founder and chief-editor was Dimitrie Gusti. Also it is considered that the published materials were the result of a common debate, as H. H. Stahl states, without any precise editorial coordination. This was possible due to the fact that – according to the author’s arguments – the chief-editor position which was fulfilled by Dimitrie Gusti was merely a formal one; as the Professor, due to his uncountable activities and projects, could not effectively contribute in a coherent way to the edition of the journal.

The paper presents the determinant role of Anton Golopenția, who was the assistant editor between 1937 and 1942, in the journal’s evolution. This well documented article presents the huge effort put in by Anton Golopenția to coordinate the editorial work in many ways: (1) to create those rubrics which are considered necessary for a professional sociological journal, (2) to create thematic issues, (3) to assure the sufficient volume and quality of the articles in order that the journal could appear on schedule, (4) the fundraising activity, necessary for every publishing activity.

As a conclusion, the author proves the fact that the journal was not published informally, but to reach its high level of professionalism it needed a well contoured editorial conception which was represented by Anton Golopenția, certainly helped by a few collaborators like G. Focșa, D. Dogaru, S. Popescu.

A second paper of Sanda Golopenția entitled “Papers on youth and its magazines in the correspondence between Anton Golopenția and Octavian Neamțu.” The paper is a selection of several personal letters between the two – the whole correspondence will appear in Anoton Golopenția: The epistolary rhapsody IV (Rapsodia epistolară, vol. 4) –

presenting an informal reflection about the contemporary (1934-1936) period regarding the ideals, the ways of publishing sociological scientific writings, and some aspects of everyday life.

In connection with the Sociological School of Bucharest I found interesting the migration from the journal “Dreapta” (Right) to the “Sociologie Românească” (“Romanian Sociology”), a journal in which initially Octvaian Neamțu did not believe, but, at the request of Gusti, became one of the closest collaborators and editor until Anton Golopenția, returned in Romania, took over the editorial work. As a conclusion, this article could be somehow considered to be presenting the antecedence of the article presented above.

In general, Dimitrie Gusti is exclusively connected with Sociological School of Bucharest. Two articles of this double number of journal Transilvania are putting the Professor and the Sociological School of Bucharest in national context.

The first was written by Dumitru Stan is entitled “The Master and Disciple. Hypostases of the relations between two coryphaei of Romanian sociology: Dimitrie Gusti and Petre Andrei” and presents a short history of the relation between the two persons mentioned in the title, which started with a very cordial state, characterized by mutual acknowledgement, of the mentor from a side, and the disciple on the other, and later turned into a cruel opposition between two professors. According to the author, the widely recognized professor (Dimitrie Gusti) tolerated critique badly, as Petre Andrei emphasized two weak points of Gusti’s sociological system: (1) from theoretical perspective, while Gusti promoted the concept of “sociologia militans”, Andrei emphasized the “sociologia cogitans”; (2) from methodological perspective, while Gusti declared that “the sociology will be monographical or it will not exist”, Andrei had the courage to question the hegemony of the monographical method, arguing that this is just one of the possible research methods beside others existing in sociology.

The author argues that Gusti, recognized at national and international level by the 1930’s, was a person who was not a very agreeable with those who dared to fundamentally challenge his visions about sociology. I think that this observation is supported also by the fact that his closest disciples from Bucharest, who maintained a good relation with the Professor, were trying to introduce some innovations or modifications in the sociological system and methods introduced by the Mentor, but they never questioned its basic points.

The second article written on this topic is by Andrei Negru, who presents “The Interwar Perspective of the School of Cluj on the Sociological School of Bucharest”. Contrary with the article presented above, where a single person represents the connection point between Bucharest and Iași, this paper analyses the effect of the mainstream sociological theory and practice in Romania between the two world wars, identifiable by the institutions founded and led by Dimitrie Gusti and the methodology of sociological monography. The connection between Bucharest and Cluj was not as personal as the one with Iași, and as a consequence, the majority of the academic sphere in Cluj, mainly the Romanians, could choose whether they are following the Gustian paradigm or not.

The author brings evidence for both scenarios: regarding the personal level we can find examples from almost a total rejection of the presented mainstream sociology, represented by Virgil I. Bărbat, to the acceptance of the main ideas with critical observations, represented by Gheorghe Em. Marica. At institutional level, the author also identifies two different approaches regarding the acceptance of the monographical method promoted by Gusti. The first was the group around the journal "Gând Românesc" ("Romanian Thought"), which tried to be as independent from Gusti as it possible, but in the meanwhile applying in practice the Gustian model of monography most closely. The other group was of those who were gathered around the journal "Societatea de mâine" ("Tomorrow's Society") which called their field research rather sociology than monography.

As a conclusion from this two articles, we can assume that the Sociological School of Bucharest led by Dimitrie Gusti did not monopolize the field research and the sociological discourse in Romania between the two world wars, but acted as a coordinate for the persons implied in this field, as everyone had to report themselves to it, in order to determine their position in Romanian sociology.

Another aim of this issue of the journal is to present some members of Gustian School, differently as they appear in the mainstream of the "common knowledge". One of the articles is written by Ionuț Butoi who presents "Mircea Vulcănescu: a polemic monographist" from a less known side. The paper analyses two pairs of partially published debates, from which the reader can understand the perspective of a sociologist. The author's intentions were double: firstly he tried – and succeeded – to prove, how hard was, and is still for a sociologist to publish about a social problem or issue and not to be catalogued in some actual political current. Secondly, the author emphasized that being a sociologist is almost the only remedy to avoid the use of the stereotypes in the media designated not only for academic readers.

The article also helps to understand how hard it was for the majority of the monographists to find a mid way in the public debate between two powerful political currents in the 1930's: the Marxism and the fascism.

To give a hint about the amount of information collected during a monographical campaign, the writing of Florentina Țone gives the reader a "Recovery attempt: The sanitary portrait of the village Fundul Moldovei (Bucovina) in the summer of 1928". In comparison with other campaigns, the one realized in Fundul Moldovei remains somehow unjustifiably poorly published, although the details of the reality were remarkably noticed. This gap was somewhat filled by Țone, giving the reader an article which seems to be a complete description of the sanitary situation of the presented village. The more remarkable is the documentation of this article, taken in consideration that probably the vast majority of the original documentation and information were lost, due to the hostility of the former political system, which considered sociology a pseudo-science of the bourgeoisie, and as a consequence something bad that has to be destroyed.

So, even with the help of just a few sources, the author succeeded to give us an idea of how detailed the collected information were, situation which could not have

existed without a proper organization of the data collection. Beside these documents, Ţone uses information from Francisc Reiner's personal letters to give the feeling of a wholesome description of the researched sanitary situation.

From a totally different point of approach, the paper of Ion Matei Costinescu is also playing a gap filling role. The author article "On Modernity and Technologies of Nation-Building in the Projects of the Bucharest Sociological School" gives for the reader an international and theoretical perspective of the main goals pursued by Gusti. As in the "common knowledge" Gust appears as a well-organized, aim-focused person, sometimes seems to be hard to understand his motivations behind his actions or goals, which usually are considered as appeared from nowhere. Placed in geographical, chronological and none the less theoretical context, the main stages of Gusti's scientific and institution-founding career follows a well thought, designed and coherent way of development. In this paper, Gusti appears as a technocrat with a slight influence of "poporanism", who had the privilege to see the modern nation building efforts in action from a dyadic perspective: both the German and the French side. Gusti's ingenuity consists in the fact that he did not copied the western models of nation building, but contrarily, he tried to develop a coherent national culture by intentionally turning to and with the help of science toward the social reality of the village, seeking for the genuine of the Romanian national culture.

The Village Museum is considered by the author the peak of the Gusti's paradigm, as it symbolizes the coexistence of the different cultural parts of national heritage, which together would evolve to a higher level of state of the national identity.

The article entitled "Rehabilitating Romania Sociology – An Unembellished History" written by Zoltán Rostás totally reflects the aim of this double volume, to disperse the mist from the history of Romanian sociology. The article starts when the Sociological School of Bucharest, led by Dimitrie Gusti ends its career due to the suppression of the sociology by the newly installed communist regime in 1948.

The analysis concentrates on a two-decade period (1948-1965), during which the sociology and Dimitrie Gusti were initially abolished, then rehabilitated separately from each other. Rostás goes against "common knowledge" – which considers that the rehabilitation of sociology in 1965 should be owed to the IX.th congress of the Romanian Communist Party and consequently to Nicolae Ceauşescu, persuaded by Miron Constantinescu – and proves that the rehabilitation was a double one. Firstly, the sociology as a science was rehabilitated due to the changes in Moscow after 1953, so it was a process exposed by exterior, in an international context. The rehabilitation of Dimitrie Gusti was the consequence of the rehabilitation of sociology, as with the start of the field research, it slowly reopens the ways toward the past, which inevitable reveals the key role of Gusti in the Romanian sociology. The author reveals the fact that the rehabilitation of the sociology did not happened suddenly, but took longer than a decade (1954-1965), where the first recovery attempt had gone all awry, and only the second attempt could be considered somewhat successful, with the reservation that this second attempt practically did not brought about the total rehabilitation of sociology but its control by the communist regime and the subordination to its aims instead.

Generally speaking, an important aspect of the presented volume is to bring the founder and the eminent members of the Sociological School of Bucharest closer to the reader. In the world where everybody is socializing through social media, where the visual plays an important role, I consider that the current volume, filled with vintage photos really helps in bringing the members of the Sociological School of Bucharest closer by showing them in everyday moments and thus voiding the cliché of intangible, well-dressed academicians. Even the cover picture suggests the “different” character of the publication, were some of the academicians are shown in their swimsuits, sliding down on a water slope of a mill.

I also consider that by its highly visual aspect, the presented publication, in comparison with other publications in the field, can reach a younger generation of readers which can receive a more accurate presentation of the Sociological School of Bucharest.

In conclusion I would like remark two own impressions. Firstly, even if the multitude of the presented themes in this issue of the journal “Transilvania” seem to have a mosaic character, after reading through it leaves the impression of a whole, which praises the highly professional method of volume coordination by professor Zoltán Rostás.

Secondly, I feel that I could somehow argue with the title of this volume, as the proven results in the articles leave the sentiment that this is the genuine history of the Sociological School of Bucharest, and of Dimitrie Gusti, and the currently accepted and “known” is “the different one”.