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Applied Social Sciences: Sociology

Edited by

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and Mihai-Bogdan Iovu

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FOREWORD

One simple definition states that sociology is the study of how society is organized and how we experience life. Changes in our social world have required sociologists to focus attention on new emerging topics. For instance, some sociologists research macro-structures that organize society, such as race/ethnicity, social class, gender roles, and institutions (e.g. family, schools, workplace). Other sociologists study social processes that represent the breakdown of macro-structures, including deviance, crime, and divorce. Additionally, some sociologists study micro-processes such as interpersonal interactions and the socialization of individuals. It should also be noted that recent sociologists have now expanded their interests to include the myriad online social activities and behaviours to which these technologies have given rise.

In this complex reality of studying different structures and processes, the International Conference of Applied Social Sciences (ISSA) emerged as a multidisciplinary scientific forum. Professionals, specialists, theoreticians, and practitioners from different social science fields were given the opportunity to share their ideas and experiences. The papers included in The Volume of Applied Social Sciences: SOCIOLOGY were presented at the first ISSA Conference held in Timişoara on June 18–20, 2012 and organized by West University of Timişoara together with the Social Work Department (Faculty of Sociology and Psychology) and with the Faculty of Political Sciences, Philosophy and Communication Sciences. This volume offers the reader a wide collection of quantitative and qualitative studies from different research areas like sociology of migration, sociology of education, sociology of communication, sociology of population, medical sociology, political sociology, sociology of culture or urban sociology.

This volume is structured in six main chapters, helping the reader to construct a specific image on the topics covered.

Culture and Identity offers the reader ten articles within the broader frame of sociology of culture. Generally speaking, culture consists of the beliefs, behaviours, objects, and other characteristics common to the members of a particular group or society. The selected articles discuss topics like confessional and ethnic identity, depopulation, social anthropology, anthropology of body, and rituals. The results they offer help

us understand how, using culture, people and groups define themselves, conform to society's shared values, and contribute to society.

The section dedicated to Emigration and Immigration contains six studies within the frame of sociology of migration. Recent years have brought to our attention new patterns of migration. As this is a growing phenomenon in Romania, we need to reach a better understanding as to how these forms of migration are embedded into the life plans of migrants, but also their effects on a local and regional level as well as on a national or EU-level. Therefore, the selected articles address the issues of internal migration, external migration (with a focus on the medical profession), and feminisation of migration.

Sociology of education has emerged as a research area interested in examining how social institutions and individuals' experiences within these institutions affect educational processes and later social development. Education systems are embedded in regional and national social systems. Within every education system, social inequalities "persist" regardless of the differences in systems and social backgrounds. Do we face the same inequalities? Can we use the same (or even one single) theory to explain continuing patterns of inequality or do we need to adjust our theories according to national or regional contexts? These are some key-questions sociologists have struggled to answer. The six articles included in the section School Organisation and Educational Opportunities examine and discuss organisational and institutional aspects in creating educational (in)equalities. Topics cover the educational aspirations of youth, educational paths and school success, children's rights, education and the labour market, and organizational cultures in higher-education.

Vulnerability results from an interaction between the resources available to individuals and communities and the life challenges they face. Therefore, it may arise either from individual, community, or larger population challenges and requires different types of policy interventions. The topic dedicated to Vulnerable People, Groups and Populations is an extensive one containing nine articles. Authors analyze different types of vulnerabilities in both adults and youths. The conclusion they reach is that addressing the needs of the most vulnerable people and communities is not an easy task, not only because of ideological differences in assessing responsibility but also because many of these groups are low in the public's awareness and priorities. Nevertheless, the lack of real opportunities for these segments of population exacerbates problems for the entire society.

Communication and Social Relations represents a constant area of interest for sociologists. Communication studies in Europe have mushroomed

in recent decades. Furthermore, the globalization of communication and the enlargement of the European Union have forced researchers to constantly broaden their horizons and adjust their approaches. The five articles included in this chapter deal with two main topics: new communication technologies and human relations and social capital.

The last chapter of our volume, Perceptions, Attitudes, Values, includes four articles discussing topics related to the transition process in post-communist countries, social representation and stereotypes.

We believe the articles fit together well within the public face(s) of sociology, but this representation is multi-faceted. Each article has been selected on its merits, but the result is a volume in which the whole is undoubtedly greater than the sum of its parts. As editors, we have enjoyed reading the chapters and putting them together as a collection. We have also been intrigued and surprised by the unintended conversations that occur across them. By its interdisciplinary approach, this volume addresses both sociologists and the general public. By sharing it, Romanian sociological research will gain a wider visibility and acceptance.

—Mihai-Bogdan IOVU

CHAPTER ONE

CULTURE AND IDENTITY

LOCAL IDENTITY, REGIONAL IDENTITY AND SOCIAL COHESION: EVOLUTION AND ROLE IN LOCAL DEVELOPMENT (A CASE STUDY: TIMIŞOARA, ROMANIA)

CĂTĂLINA ANCUŢA
AND CLAUDIA MUŢULESCU

Introduction

The gap between the development level of Romania and other European countries explains why the issue of development is a core subject for both political and academic discourse. The transition from a totalitarian, communist society implies the replacement of the discretionary decision of a dictator with the rational decisions of public authorities and territorial actors. For half a century, during the communist regime, the former was reduced to the role of executants and the latter to the role of assisted—these two factors had to regain their place and role in the process of development. The generalized character of the problem and the impossibility of its occurrence on a national scale show there is interest in the problem and justify the analysis at micro-scale levels.

Premises of the Problem

The seeds of evolution are, thus, at the local scale (Ianoş & Heller 2000). The perpetuation and even increase of disparities proved, over recent decades, that the virtues of the exogenous, top to bottom development models were limited. The alternative is given by ground development (Aydalot 1985), endogenous development, and local development (Sotelo Navalporto 2000; Bottazzi 1995). Local development, more an approach method than a model, has as a strong influence on the recovery of the territorial dimension of development. Thus, territory is considered a factor

of development through the specific accumulation of the historic, social and cultural factors. All these make up the superstructure of the territory which explains why areas with similar geo-economic potential reached different levels of performance during the long course of history.

The socio-cultural specificity of the territory includes heterogenic elements such as shared identity, a sense of belonging, community ties, spirit of cooperation, and spirit of innovation. The efficiency of revaluation and valuation of the resources of a territory depend, consequently, on the quality of the above-mentioned elements. Identity represents a premise of development, of group solidarity for the implementation of development strategies. In the classic acceptance, local and regional identity refer to the distinct features of a group at micro- and medium-scale, represented by the perpetuation of language, traditions, peculiar customs, and the circulation of a collective imagination; the sharing of these elements generate a sense of belonging to a certain group. The validity of these definitions changed with the increase of the strong modernization process, which, within the context of globalization, intense mobility and de-territorialisation, led to the fragmentation of traditional communities and identities. Local and regional identities, strictly delimited territorially, are replaced by multiple identities.

The sense of belonging to and solidarity with the group is no longer built through traditional cultural means such as religion, customs, traditions, language, garments, collective memory, shelter and use of the territory. In the postmodern society, favourable premises for local and regional development are ensured by developing a sense of belonging and social cohesion focused on the place of residence and by making the inhabitants interact through rallying practices and collective participation. It is a first rank process for political actors involved in generating cooperation rather than conflict situations within the population. The concept of "community," defined as a group of persons with a chance of having uniformity in values (Sandu 2005), becomes central, as does the concept of "sociability," defined as a kind of positive social relationship with existing or potential advantages for all those involved (Sandu 2003).

Totalitarian, communist societies, in which the traditional mechanisms for the perpetuation of identity are oppressed and eliminated from the public space, finding refuge in the family space, had, without doubt, a specific evolution. In the post-totalitarian period, local and regional identities, profoundly diminished (considered undesirable in a totalitarian context) were exposed, especially in endo-dynamic spaces with centripetal demographic fluxes, to the context of democratization and globalization. By what means can we define, in present-day Romania, local and regional

identities and how do they act as suitable premises for the process of local identity? This is the central question to which the present study aims to provide an answer.

Case Study: Timişoara (Banat, Romania)

Evolution of the Identity-Building Processes

The city of Timişoara is the main urban pole in Western Romania and, thus, in the cultural-historical region of Banat.

In the collective mind of the Romanians, Timişoara is a cosmopolitan city, and a standard for success, as it has known two centuries of economic and urban development similar to that of other cities of Central Europe since, from the eighteenth century, it was the capital of the Habsburg province Banat. Its particular history ensured the city its surname of Little Vienna and a multi- and intercultural character specific to the entire region.

"*Interculturalism* defines the exchange instance of cultures by reverberating differences" (Buzărnescu 2004, 64). A *sine qua non* element of the economic experiment of the imperial administration, the inhabitants of the region worked side by side in the various projects of the region. Plurilingualism was demanded by "the need to communicate, the economic interests, the need to understand the values of the other" (Neumann 1997), and had a pivotal role in the minorities learning of tolerant behaviour of the majority (Buzărnescu 2004). Permanent communication in the global competitive context, imposed by the production objectives of the Habsburgs, determined the making up of a common axiological field marked out by work, commitment in activity, responsibility, professional capacity, and self-control. This intercultural model was characterized by civic complementarity born of the "concern to find in common practical solutions to identical community problems, which led to the definition of a *natural social cohesion*, without the intervention of institutional rules" (Buzărnescu 2004, 64).

It is worth mentioning that Banat was the only region in Romania where capitalism in the eighteenth century resulted in the early emancipation of the individual, with a specific value assigned to its life, and freedom of movement in the economic field of material achievement (Popa 2008). All these contributed to the emergence of a "Banatian identity," with no ethnic barriers, emphasising priority to shared interests (Gavreliuc 2003).

The population of Timişoara, pole of modernity for the entire region, was characterized by an entrepreneurial spirit, openness to progress, flexibility, and a culture of development.

The communist regime after 1960 promoted nationalism and the amplification of national virtues and achievements as a guarantee of territorial integrity (Boia 2010). Those from the extra-Carpathian space were traditionally open towards Central Europe, and therefore undermined the communist ideology, yet most communist leaders appointed in the counties of Western Romania were from this region, and the communists inoculated the idea that the inhabitants of these regions opposed the regime and represented a stronghold of spiritual strength.

The attack on regional beliefs and identity was carried out at the level of the young generation, politically enrolled, against their will, from young ages. Their education focused on promoting the cultural identity of the country (Neumann 1997). Holidays were the holidays of the country: August 23, the national day, was the day of the insurrection (in 1944 it was the day of turning against Hitler's leadership and joining the USSR); December 1 (celebrating the proclamation of the Romanian unitary national state on December 1, 1918); December 30 (the day of the Proclamation of the Romanian Popular Republic); January 24 (in 1859, the voting of a unique head of the state meant, in fact, the union between the two Romanian principalities, Moldova and Wallachia); January 26 (birthday of Nicolae Ceauşescu); May 1 (international labour day); May 9 (Victory day of the allied troops over Hitler's Germany), and; October 25 (the day of the Army).

What means and what chances did regional identity have for perpetuation in Banat? The people were restricted to socializing within the family if it included a third generation person who preserved the oral history of the region. Books on the history and geography of Banat disappeared from the resources of the public libraries. Tradition did not serve anything anymore; moreover, it prevented social ascension. The profound industrialization of the country after 1960 determined the rapid quantitative and oversized increase of some industrial branches in the city of Timişoara, which determined huge flows of people from the exterior. The flows from other regions, such as the east and west of the country: Moldova and, respectively, Oltenia, were preferred and encouraged. The result was undoubtedly the gradual diminution of the identity heritage of the city population under the condition of repression of the identity processes.

After 1989, the liberal and progressive nature of the population of Timişoara, affirmed in the initiation of the 1989 Revolution and the

general desire to reassume the social-economic processes existing before the communist regime, offered the background for the process of recovery of the identity and traditions of community life. Among traditional events are: The Banatian *Rugă*; open-air concerts of the most influential bands of the region and the city; projects such as "Don't mess with the citizens of Timişoara!"; slogans such as "*Timişoara—Little Vienna*"; increase of the situations in which the geonym Banat is used, and various other initiatives meant to revaluate material and spiritual cultural patrimony (and interculturalism, multiculturalism, civic and entrepreneurial spirit). To this, we can add the establishment of structures and mechanisms for the stimulation of civic involvement: consultative councils of the districts and organization of public debates concerning the strategic plans of the Mayoralty.

Local and Regional Identity of the Population of Timişoara as a Premise of Development

The study consists of conducting a questionnaire regarding the attachment to the city and the region, perceivable by the understanding of historical data, of the local and regional symbols, of the problems and solutions, and also of the structures and processes of democratic participation and involvement in the development. Starting from the progressive circumstances mentioned above, we embraced the hypothesis of differentiating those born and raised in the city and newcomers. This is why the sample consisted of twenty-two people from the former group (locals) and twenty-five from the latter category (new comers). The analysis of the questionnaires revealed the following:

- When the subjects had to mention five attractions of the region, those born and raised in the region (36%) showed a better understanding of naming cultural-historical objectives among the regional tourist attractions of the region; the newcomers offered several non-answers (28%) or mentioned only regional tourist attractions (40%).
- The most prestigious event in the history of the city is considered the 1989 Revolution both by most people born in other regions (76%) and newcomers (36%), as they know and appreciate other historical events—such as inclusion in the Habsburg Empire (18%)—or other defining moments of local and regional progress, such as the introduction of electric public lighting or early industrialization (22.5%).

- The history of the region is even less known by the newcomers, and they gave non-answers of 52%. Locals also had a high percentage of non-answers (38%), which confirms the negative impact of the communist regime in undermining regional identity processes. The most highly appreciated historic reference is, in their case, the Habsburg period (27%).
- The question regarding the problems of the city had the lowest percentage of non-answers, with 4% of newcomers, and 0% of natives. The new comers mentioned the standard of living (56%), the problem of the gypsies who have illegally occupied houses from the centre of the city (20%), and the degradation of historic buildings (12%). The locals commonly mentioned the standard of living (72%), some aspects concerning the morale and attitude of newcomers (23%), and the breakdown of representative buildings (5%).
- 52% of newcomers and 27% of locals do not recognize the problems of the region. Besides the overall economic and social problems mentioned by newcomers, the locals consider the evolution of the social content following the departure of the German minority and the arrival of new comers to be a serious problem (13.5%). Other problems are the marginalization of the region whose interests are not supported at governmental level (9%).
- The real interest for these problems has been evaluated by looking for solutions to the identified problems. The newcomers gave 69% non-answers; the locals proved more interested, giving only 23% non-answers. Real solutions are offered by only 31.5% of the newcomers and only 20% of the locals. Authorities are considered responsible for solutions in 31.5% of the newcomers and only 8% of the locals. The involvement of the civil society is considered necessary by 18% of the locals and 23% of newcomers.
- Regional identity is defined remarkably similarly by the two subgroups: attachment to the region (12% and 13.5%) and the determination of the inhabitants to be involved (8% and 9%). The relatively high percentage of non-answers is worth mentioning: 48% in the case of the newcomers and 45% in the case of locals.
- In a similar way, regional identity is defined as an attachment to the place of residence (32% of the locals and 20% of newcomers) and specificity of the place (13.5% of the locals and 12% of newcomers); 14% of newcomers consider local identity by referring to their place of birth.
- When asked to mention a few words describing their regional identity, 50% of both categories did not answer; 8% of newcomers declared that

they identify themselves with their regions of origin; about 39% of locals and only 7% of newcomers mentioned features recognized as specific for the Banatian identity profile: "tolerance," "wealth," "ethnic diversity," "freedom," "development," "respect," "work," etc.

- 76% of newcomers and 36% of locals did not answer the question in which they were asked to describe their local identity; 8% of the locals and 9% of newcomers mentioned spatial elements of the city of Timişoara; 16% of new comers and about 50% of locals defined their local identity by referring to features recognized as specific for this region: "respect," "responsibility," "culture," "tolerance," "openness," "freedom," "multi-ethnical," "civilization."

Conclusion

The hypothesis on the difference between the two subcategories (locals and newcomers) is confirmed. The persons born and raised in the city and/or the region have the elements of the traditional identity profile transmitted by the family and reassured in the years of post-totalitarian transition. They have a more profound understanding of the identity space, are more interested in its problems, at the same without being involved in them or wishing to get involved. The newcomers do not necessarily show an attachment to their places of origin but have not adhered entirely to the traditional local or regional identity. In this context, it is imperative that the authorities be involved in ensuring social cohesion, community development, and promotion of a positive sociability.

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BIRTH RATE IN THE VILLAGE OF BELINŢ (TIMIŞ COUNTY, ROMANIA): A DIACHRONIC APPROACH

GABRIELA-FELICIA GEORGEVICI

Introduction

After World War I, a new trend appeared in social research with a monographic character in Romania—organised, systematic investigation of social reality. Starting in 1933, in parallel with the Bucharest School led by Dimitrie Gusti, the Banat-Crişana Social Institute (BCSI) also conducted sociological research using the methodological research pattern of Gusti's School, but adapted to the local research opportunities and needs. BCSI performed interesting studies related to Banat's depopulation, an issue that was considered a priority at the time, and their first monographic inquiry was made in Belinţ (Timiş County, Romania), because in this village the phenomenon of depopulation was particularly prevalent.

The family, in the theoretic context of the Bucharest Sociologic School, is defined as a social unit: "a number of independent spiritual, economic, juridical and political manifestations, cosmically, biologically, psychologically, and historically conditioned and integrated into a series of social relations and processes" (Costa-Foru 1945, 30–31).

In the view of monographic research, the family was considered a fragment of social organisation, and that is why it was not isolated from the village, but integrated into the "ensemble of social conditions and relations where it manifests ifs functionality" (Stănoiu & Voinea 1983, 51).

Longitudinal Analysis of Birth Rate

From the period of the BCSI organisation, the members' action was directed towards the objectives of identifying the causes of depopulation

and positive presentation of the Banat depopulation process. Opinions were divided: it was claimed that depopulation was due to the "*ein Kind* System" or "*Keine Kinder* System" copied from the Banat Swabians. However, one could not talk about social mimicry because, in the case of Romania, there was a deliberate reduction of births, and a high infant death rate (BCSI 1938).

Starting from the objectives and conclusions of the research conducted by the BCSI in the village of Belinţ, the present research aims at making a longitudinal analysis of birth rate in this village, and sets out to conduct a comparative approach between 1934 and the present in this respect.

If, in the former study, 60 households were selected, this time we chose a number of 120 households in order to investigate part of family life in Belinţ. When choosing the sample, we used unrepeated simple random selection.

The research methods used in the study of birth rate for the analysis of the social determinants of family functioning are study of social documents, a sociological survey based on a questionnaire, and a survey based on an interview. The objective of the research consisted in identifying the causes of the persistence of the depopulation phenomenon.

The hypotheses and questions of the research are the following:

- If, at present, the demographic phenomenon of depopulation is maintained in the locality of Belinţ, the way it manifests itself and the cases producing it are similar to previous ones.
- Past mentality related to the number of children in the family ("*ein Kind* System") will make the pattern reproduction persist to the present.

The population from the rural area is continually aging because of the low birth rate. Thus, from the analysis of the birth rate evolution in the locality of Belinţ between 1931 and 2011, we can observe the phenomenon of depopulation found by the BCSI since the very beginning (Table 1-1).

As a variety of human community, family is defined as a "primary group, with all its characteristics, distinct from the other primary groups due to several features" (Chipea 2001, 24–25). A child represents the fulfilment of a family, an achievement, a reason for joy, a purpose in life. A family feels fulfilled when a child is born and becomes the place that offers room for the child's development.