

# THE CHALLENGE OF TRANSITION IN ROMANIAN SOCIETY AND SOCIOLOGY

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*The post-communist Romanian transition to a democracy and market economy came about with significant challenges in understanding people's attitudes, opinions and beliefs, in poverty development and ineffective institutions. This paper explores the responses of sociology to these challenges, presented as research topics grouped into five families). a) Development and transition sociology is concerned with clustering of social problems, resources and actors development. The concepts and ideas like entrepreneurship as a special form of human capital, survival society, regional culture and development reveal mechanisms which are generating low orientation towards entrepreneurship, underdevelopment, poverty, marginalization, isolation. b) Civil society sociology deal with the cultural mix of reform analyzed in three areas: attitudes towards market economy and democracy, voting behavior and migration behavior. c) Family sociology covers the profound changes during the past decades in family patterns: family-society relationship, single youth behavior, family behavior. d) Sociology of institutions and social policy explores the post-communist projects of social policy, the ambivalence of institutions, changes in management practices. e) The internal reconstruction of sociology is related to pre-transition traditions, recapture the past of sociological thinking, theory building, and validation.*

## **Societal challenges and sociological answers**

Romanian sociology moved by waves initiated and stopped by deep societal transformations. Its emergence in the 19th century was an answer to the problems and controversies related to capitalist development. Liberal and conservative ideologies had a consistent sociological component. After the First World War, the focus of Romanian sociology was on the reform of reorganising society of the newly constituted unitary nation-state .The sociology promoted between the two world wars by the Gusti school was more than an academic approach. It was a social movement with cognitive and action components oriented to understanding rural and regional life for modernising its course. As everywhere in Central and Eastern Europe,



communism was a break in sociology as part of critical culture. Late in the 1960s started a captive revival of sociology. The most valuable path of this revival was that under the light of continuity with the Bucharest School of Sociology developed between the two world wars. It was Henry H. Stahl, a former disciple of Gusti, who took the lead in the scientific arena.

His *Traditional Romanian village communities* (Stahl, 1980) was published initially in French in 1969 and was rapidly translated in other foreign languages. It had a large circulation. The old school got a new shape as “Gusti-Stahl” school.

The bulk of sociological work during the 1960s up to 1989 had to pay, with some notable exceptions, a large tribute to communist ideology. The dominant pattern of practicing sociology was that of empiricism more or less mixed with ideological clichés. Even in such conditions sociology and other social sciences continued to be perceived as a threat to official ideology. That is why university teaching in sociology and psychology was practically stopped in 1977. It is from this context that three negative challenges to the Romanian sociology emerged after 1989 revolution, namely a small number of sociologists, a rather isolated national sociological community, and a rather large practice of empiricist sociology.

The family of changes labelled as post-communist transition to market and democracy came about with new challenges. First of all, a huge pressure to answer the question of “what is our state as a society after the break of Ceausescu’s regime”. It was necessary to come from falsified macro-figures closer to real people, to their hopes, faiths and worries. Building democracy was a largely accepted social desire. But how to do it without any feedback mechanism connecting decision-makers and ordinary people? Starting from this question, the first direct challenges to sociologists emerged. They concerned the understanding of people’s attitudes, opinions, beliefs. Another urgent task was that of charting a social map of social problems and disparities: Who are the poor, how many are they, where do they live, why are they so poor? Could there be an escape from poverty by means of participation? How to stimulate it? These questions brought about the second great challenge for post-communist sociology. The third one was the challenge of institution building. Why did the old institutions not work? How to build new ones? Who are the actors of institution building, etc.?

he responses to these three challenges might be presented by research topics grouped in four families (*Table 1*): a) development and transition sociology



b) civil society sociology, c) family sociology d) sociology of institutions and social policy .

**Table 1.**

**Challenges and responses in post-1989 Romanian sociology**

Challenges				Sociological responses	
Unknown public mentality	Poverty development	Ineffective Institutions	Pre-transition challenges	Domains	Sub-domains
*	**	**	*	Development and transition sociology	Transition as family of changes Revolution Reform Development Modernization Transition as clustering of social problems Poverty Survival society Regional development Migration Development resources and actors Community development Entrepreneurship
**	*	*	*	Civil society Sociology	Public opinion Satisfaction-dissatisfaction Optimism-pessimism Ideologies of development Social capital Electoral patterns Ethnicity
*	**		*	Family sociology	
*	*	**	*	Sociology of institutions and social policy	Social policy Corruption Management
*		**	**	Internal reconstruction of sociology	Recapturing the past of sociology Cleared sociological ideas

\*\* main challenge; \* secondary challenge

A fifth area of research is directly related to pre-transition challenges of ideological bias, empiricism and the lack of strong sociological institutions. The cognitive answer here was that of re-capturing the past of sociological thinking without the bias of communist ideology. There are also signs of concerns for theory building and for systematic validation of theory by empirical analysis.

The internal reconstruction of sociology means an expansion of sociological research centers like the Quality of Life Research Institute (ICCV), the Institute of Sociology of the Romanian Academy, the Social Theory Institute of the Romanian Academy and Social Science research centers in Cluj, Timisoara and Iasi. Numerous polling agencies were established: Center for Urban and Regional Sociology (CURS), Institute for Marketing and Polls (IMAS), METROMEDIA Transilvania, the Romanian Institute for Public Opinion Polling (IRSOP), the Center for Market and Opinion Investigation (CSOP), and Princeton Gallup branch in Romania. New departments of sociology were set up in state and private universities in Bucuresti, Iasi, Timisoara, Brasov, Cluj, Craiova and Constanta (See Annex).

### **Development and transition sociology**

The family of themes grouped under this label is concerned with transition as families of changes, as clustering of social problems, and with resources and actors of development.

*Revolutions* are the turning points, the beginning of transition. The construction of post-totalitarian societies started by a series of unplanned social movements: the revolutions from 1989, characterized by “diversity, lack of homogeneity, absence of grand technological projects” (Tismăneanu, 1997: 18; Tismăneanu ed., 1999:10). This is a point raised also by Ralph Dahrendorf, Vaclav Havel, Daniel Chirot, Ernest Gellner, etc. The methodology used by V. Tismăneanu to support it combines historical analysis, content analysis, interviews, stakeholder consultations. The main idea is that “the revolutions have succeeded in their most important purpose: they have cancelled the Leninist regimes and gave the citizens of these countries the liberty to involve totally in shaping their own destinies” (Tismăneanu ed., 1999: 23). The fundamental concept formulated in the given context is that of “reinventing politics”. It has the meaning of “strategy of building a parallel, opposition culture, of a counter-culture for the institutionalization of an alternative of breaking away from a self-destructing



geopolitical reality” by the civil society. It resets politics “outside the matrix of totalitarian power against the unique communist party, which overlaps the whole society” (Tismăneanu, 1997: 7). The main characteristics of “reinventing policy” by the civil society can be systematized as “the struggle against fear and the emergence of independent initiatives” by the state-party, the “collective effort to cut down the requirements and prerogatives of the authoritarian state”, the “creation of a multiparty system” after the success of the 1989 revolutions (Tismăneanu, 1997: 159). Thus, the focus of the analysis is on the decisive role of critical ideas and intellectuals in the social change. The subsequent evolution of the post-communist societies proved to be more complex and sinuous. The conclusion are more realistic than the hypothetical premises from where the analysis started: the 1989 revolutions, far from being over, “translate a characteristic of the modern times: diversity, lack of homogeneity, absence of grand ideological projects” (Tismăneanu, 1997: 256).

A somehow different image on the significance of the 1989 revolution and of the civil society resulted from the analysis of the historian Stelian Tănase. He found out that in Romania, the myth that the power belongs to the mass of people persisted even after the “mirage of the governing masses” was shredded by the repression in other Eastern European countries (Berlin – 1953, Budapest – 1956, Poland – 1956). In these countries, counter elite developed, which replaced in 1989 the communist elite. The evolution was different in Romania where the myth of the “state of workers and peasants” was influential until December 22, 1989. Only as the institutions were recreated, the mass started transforming gradually into a civil society (Tănase, 1996: 29). The fundamental idea of this analysis is that of the failure of the elite “unable to govern by political means, unable to transform and to adapt to an increasing complexity of the domestic and foreign factors”. This is also a failure of Romanian society, which did not succeed to create mechanisms of defense against the neo-Stalinist regime and which did not develop intellectual, union, civil, political alternatives to the dictatorship system during the ‘70s – ‘80s (Tănase, 1996: 133). Complaining about the weakness of the Romanian civil society, Tănase offers a sociological explanation based on the historical preponderance of the relations of kinship, neighbourhood, of the personalized, or status society (in Weberian terms) that favour the dominance of the state over society.

*Reform* is the key term in all transition approaches. Post-communist religious, political and economic reforms are considered as changes resulting



from projects conceived by the elite and implemented by the interaction between elites and followers on the basis of contagion, persuasion or constraint mechanisms. Post-communist reform is a form of modernization with speeds, problems and patterns which are path dependent and connected to constructive dynamics. Path dependency and constructivist theories could explain the different speeds of transition in Central and Eastern Europe, in Romania in particular (Sandu, 1999b). The author considers post-communist reforms as a special case of re-modernisation. The point is that they include restructuring of social, human, material and symbolic capitals. Concepts of Bourdieu and Becker are integrated as to get an appropriate view of micro-level reform resources. Microlevel trends and structures are considered in conjunction with macrolevel constraints and trends. The various forms of capital are considered under the broader concept of "social space" (defined by reference to Bourdieu's and Becker's ideas). The analysis integrates information from surveys funded by Open Society Foundation , World Bank and other international institutions in Romania in the period 1990-1999.

*Survival society.* The post-December 1989 Romanian society was labeled underdeveloped because of the construction of a survival society. Based on longitudinal and transcultural macrosocial comparative analyses as well as on opinion polls, surveys, stakeholder consultations, document analysis, the idea adds to the tradition of the research on the process of modernization. Taking as standard the principles of the liberal democracy infused into the market economy, the quality of living in developed capitalist countries and in east-European countries too, such as Poland and Hungary, researchers have detected a significant lag between these countries and the Romanian reality. The difference between Romania and the developed and developing Europe is assessed as *structural*, considering indicators of work efficiency, per capita power consumption, resource utilization, export, proportion of population involved in agriculture, food prices, infant mortality, pollution, number of persons per doctor, expenses with education, health, culture etc ( see Pasti, Miroiu and Codiță, 1997). The main contribution of these studies is the elaboration of a theory of post-communist underdevelopment, consisting of (1) an articulated assembly of concepts, (2) explanative ideas of the mechanisms generating underdevelopment and (3) of ideas for breaking away from underdevelopment and transition to modernization according to the principles of the liberal democracy.

The post-totalitarian survival society is regarded as an unintended consequence of the institutional building which took place in Romania after



1989, having the following peculiarities: a) recreation of a premodern patriarchal rural society in the countryside, based on subsistence households and on the isolation of the village from the town; b) preservation of the socialist character of the “hard nucleus” of the enterprises in the extracting industry, power production, refineries, defense industry, partially the transport and communications together with protection of their low productivity and quality and of their inefficient management; c) cohabitation and adaptation of the private sector to the survival society; d) adaptation of the big capital to the conditions of survival by the development of preferential relations with the central administration and by the political polarization of the private companies; e) continuous degradation of the state of health and education, supported by the marginalization of women, children, minority groups, the poor; f) building of the minimal or “show case” democracy, with all institutions of a democratic regime which are used minimally, if at all; g) predomination of the nationalist mentality in the discretionary use of the resources administered by the state administration and the predominance of collectivist mentalities.

The conceptualization of the changes occurring in Romanian society in terms of the survival society reveal mechanisms generating underdevelopment, poverty, marginalization, corruption, listlessness, isolation. Out of what forms the institutions’ ambivalence concerning the change, the researchers have selected with priority the sources of their inertia, limitations, rigidities, inflexibility and less the resources of institutions that make them capacitating instruments (Giddens, 1987: 75). Despite this inconsequence, some coherent interpretations emerged of the elite change, focused on the struggle of interests between different types of elite: the industrial technocracy, the financial technocracy, the administrative bureaucracy, the union leaders and the humanist elite. The winners seem to be the managers of the state enterprises from secondary hierarchical levels allied with the administrative bureaucracy. Thus, Romania follows a pattern similar to other European transition countries, a pattern of “deputies’ revolution” (Rona-Tas).

*Poverty and development.* Poverty is a basic challenge to Romanian society and, implicitly, to Romanian sociology. The topic is being dealt with mainly in a descriptive manner: What are the poverty rates, what was their dynamics, what is its selectivity in social and regional space etc. A pioneering work to answer them, based on official and survey data, was done by the team of Quality of Life Research Institute (Zamfir, 1994). The



analysis reveals vicious circles of poverty: low salaries in state enterprises foster the involvement in shadow economy thus perpetuating the low productivity and low salaries. Poverty increase and expansion of economic inequalities are presented as going together in the Romanian transition. Land restitution is described as favouring survival agriculture and coping with the effects of increased urban unemployment.

More detailed descriptions of poverty and its differentials emerged with the increased access to large data sets of National Commission of Statistics and with an important influx of expertise from the World Bank. In a decreasing order of importance, the most significant factors favouring poverty are identified: the large household size, reduced education stock of adult members of the household, low number of employees in the household, education in interaction with the age for the household head etc. (Tesliuc and Pop, 2000: 296). By using multivariate approach, the fact is being established that for the rural households "Food and non-food consumption... is basically determined by capital stock of the household. Human and material capital that is available at the household level determine in a decisive way the level of consumption ... Rural poverty is maximum in the households formed only by agriculture having a low level of education, headed by divorced or widowed women, oriented especially towards grain production and owning small plots of agricultural land" (Sandu, 1999b:57).

It is not only persons and households that are poor, but also communities. What does "poor village" mean? The answer is given in terms of probability, consumption and capital. A poor community is defined by high probability of low private and public consumption. The measurement of village poverty is accomplished by considering existing data on five types of community capital – human, material, vital, symbolic and regional. Human capital is the most important component of village poverty. For all about 13000 villages of the country an index was constructed allowing for a detailed description of rural poverty and development. Vital capital is measured by age structure and health indicators. Symbolic capital refers to the stock of values relevant for efficiency. Individual modernity is a basic indicator of symbolic capital. Regional capital of the village is given by the distance from the village to the nearest city, central or peripheral location of the village with the commune as rural administrative unit and the development level of the integrating commune (Sandu, 1999c).

*Entrepreneurship.* Entrepreneurial orientation as a special form of human capital of maximum relevance for development is rather low in



Romania due to the slow rhythm of reforms. The exploratory analysis indicates that the process is going by waves, with specific selectivity by stage or wave. The first wave was that of former managers from communist period, having consistent social capital and management abilities. The second wave is less conditioned by communist time experience. The relation between entrepreneurship and social capital is especially analyzed for the case of rural communities. Trust related social capital is rather low for rural entrepreneurs in contrast with network social capital that is very high. Acting in an anomic environment with weakly structured institutions, entrepreneurs are in the situation of high frequency with state institutions but of also of high dissatisfaction due to the corruption behaviour of officers at their level. A typology of entrepreneurship distinguishing among desire, intention and behaviour entrepreneurs is useful to understand the mechanisms of entrepreneurial diffusion in Romanian society. The profile of classical entrepreneur as a risk taking person is obvious especially for the case of intention entrepreneur (Sandu, 1999b: 97-130).

*Regional sociology.* Capital theory is also used to describe regional culture and development. Different combinations of social, human, material and symbolic capital give rise to different types of communities and regions. The basic idea of is that human capital stocks at regional level are fundamental for the regional behaviour in the transition process. A set of 18 cultural areas have been distinguished so as to give a more detailed view of cultural components of historical regions. The validity of the hypothesis about cultural areas of the country was tested by transforming the 18 cultural areas in strata for different opinion surveys after 1995 (Sandu, 1999b, annex 1).

Internal migration - with all its challenging components of return migration, increase in urban to rural flows, dropping of village to city commuting - is presented as a concrete form of transition contradictions. Return migration from cities to countryside is a special type of migration of high relevance for the zigzag path of Romanian transition. As a result of urban unemployment, slow development of private sector, return migration was adopted as survival strategy for large segments of population. "Return migration from urban to rural areas was especially severe in poor counties close to three large urban centers (Bucuresti, Cluj and Iasi)" (Sandu, 1999b:166). The same set of causes brought about a sharp drop of village to city commuting. It is especially this fact that contributed to a very unusual increase of population occupied in agriculture. At least in the early stages of market and democracy transition in Romania, migration appeared to be, to a



significant degree, search behaviour for places with the greatest opportunities in terms of market and democracy returns. The findings of path models suggest that a large number of migrants or potential migrants are "innovators", the early adopters of the re-emerging world of market and democracy (Sandu, De Jong 1996).

### **Civil society sociology**

The cultural mix of the reform is analysed in three distinct areas: attitudes on market and democracy, voting behaviour and migration behaviour. Data analysis and interpretation are focused on sociological concepts like social types of reformism, voting behaviour and migration intentions.

*Transition ideologies.* In line with the idea of identifying the main forms of capital the analysis is being focused on transition ideologies as key forms of symbolic capital. Attitude to change and individualistic versus community oriented values are the two basic dimensions that showed up to be of maximum relevance for transition ideologies of Romanian population. By crossing these two dimensions, six social ideological types emerge: liberal-individualist, community-liberal, community-conservative, community-individualist, pragmatic-individualist, community-pragmatic oriented. These six types have a clear location in the status space. Closed social spaces of low human and material resources are the standard precondition for community conservative orientation. Liberal-individualist orientation is essentially located in the open status spaces of high status and regional resources.

Human capital is analyzed in terms of optimism, pessimism and entrepreneurship. The measures of optimism-pessimism given by survey data for the period 1991-1999 indicate a variation that is consistent with economic and electoral cycles. Elections of 1992 and 1996 have been breaking points in the dynamics of social optimism. An exploratory data analysis for a 1999 data set indicate that there are five types of optimism-pessimism attitude: chronic pessimism ("now is bad and it will be worse"), recent pessimism ("it is good but it will be worse"), reaction optimism ("now is bad but it will be better"), continuity optimism ("it was good and it will be better") and stable continuity attitude ("it will be the same"). These five types of optimism are deeply located in the status space as described by education, wealth, age, gender, residence and government perception. Multivariate analysis indicates that



optimism is part of an open culture, together with risk taking attitude, trust and pro-reform opinions (Sandu, 1999b:47-57).

*Social capital.* An area of social life that is closely intertwined values and culture is that of social capital as trust and association (Putnam et al, 1993). Social capital was to a large degree absent in communist Romania. Building market and democracy is impossible without re-constructing the social web of social capital. It is being defined as "productive sociability", or forms of sociability that are able to bring material, human or symbolic capital. A two-stage factor analysis tests the hypothesis that social capital is a uni-dimensional phenomenon with distinctive expression in the areas of diffuse trust, institutional trust and network social capital. Comparing urban and rural social capital reveals a more fractured image of rural social capital. As for the roots of trust in institutions, the conclusion is that religious beliefs and interpersonal trust are very important sources of it. People of high interpersonal trust and religiosity tend to have also high trust in institutions. Interpersonal trust, the most diffuse form of social capital, is proved to be part of an open culture marked by co-operation, work orientation, morality and risk taking abilities. Ethnic tolerance is a clear mark of social capital. High ethnic tolerance goes together with high interpersonal trust (Sandu, 1999b).

*Electoral sociology.* Voting is typically regarded as a "trust relation". Trust, definition of the situation and reform ideologies or evaluation of actions proposed by election candidates are the intermediary variables. There is a space of choice for the voters composed of optimism-pessimism, trust in candidates and political institutions, cultural complex of the reform and personal resources. In the period 1991-1996, the left oriented vote was associated mainly "with tradition orientation, work orientation, low economic resources and negative or ambivalent attitude on change. Right oriented vote was adopted mainly by those of high individual modernity, democratic orientation, high status and environment resources" (Sandu, 1996a:197). A cluster analysis with the voting profiles of counties indicate that there have been four types of territorial electoral behavior – vote for power, vote for democratic opposition, vote of ethnic controversy and pro-Hungarian vote. The voting map of the country was to a large degree overlapped with the cultural map. A comparison of causal models for presidency and parliament indicate that symbolic factors associated with ethnicity and the type of locality is more influential for president election than for parliament options.

Another approach to voting behaviour has been developed by the Laboratory of Media, Political Communication and Culture, of the Institute of



Sociology of the Romanian Academy (Dragan, 1996; Dragan et al., 1998; Dragan, 1999). The last volume is the result of the scientific cooperation between Romanian and French researchers in the fields of communication sciences. The theoretical framework of the study is offered by: a) the classical functionalist theories regarding the influence, functions and effects of mass-media, hypothesis of "utilization and gratification" (U and G) developed by P. Lazarsfeld, E. Katz, Ch.R. Wright, R.K.Merton, F.Balle, M.Martin and others; b) more recent theories regarding the mechanisms, contexts and impact of political mediatization, such as: the theoretical pattern "Agenda – Setting Function" proposed in the studies of M. E. Mc.Combs and D. L. Shaw, R. Cobb and C. Elder and developed by D.Wolton, F.Missika and others; c) the "social" pattern of news selection developed by J. Dimmick; the pattern of media addiction based on experiments conducted by S. Ball-Rokeach, M. Rokeach, J. Grube and De Fleur in 1976 and 1985; d) the interactionist-symbolical theory of "The Spiral of Silence" explaining the psycho-social mechanisms of public opinion formation and of mass-media role evaluation within this process, formulated by E. Noelle-Neumann from the Institute of Demoscopy in Allensbach; e) other communicational paradigms from semiotics, pragmatics, rhetoric, literary analyses, all integrated into the sociological approach.

The results of these studies consist in testing theories of authors working in the field of communication studies, elaboration on an analytical framework for the analysis of political and televisual discourses, formulation of definitions of the situation, of typologies of the electoral behaviour, presentation of data and conclusions of a longitudinal survey on the effects of the electoral campaign, of interpersonal communication on the preferences of the Romanian voters. The main achievements of the mentioned study may be summarised as follows:

- Identification of the two types of electoral discourse: *the confrontation*, whose purpose is to defeat the counter-candidate and the *presentation*, which tries to win the electorate over to the speaker; description of the several specific discursive strategies involved; if the direct dialogue between the candidates is dominated by the peripheral argumentation, the complete absence of cooperation, the identification and refutation of the soft spots or the "slips of tongue" on the part of the opponent", then the dialogue with the moderator and the audience relies on detailed explanations;

- Descriptions of the effects of communication on the electoral behaviour, based on the data of the panel study: if in the prior electoral



campaigns (1990 and 1992) media were supposed to have a decisive role in settling or changing the intention to vote, the 1996 data of the panel study showed that voting as an all-encompassing social act depended to a lesser extent on the general situation at the time; it was decisively influenced by the micro-group perceptions of that situation;

- Typological analysis and the identification of the taxonomies of the electoral behaviour, using variables that are essential for the emotional, statutory, communitary, rational, cognitive *mechanisms* and motivations of the options and decision to vote. Two divergent social logics were presented: the “revolutionary” logic and the “electoral” logic, followed by four models of electoral behaviour in the 1990 and 1992 elections in Romania: 1) affectual; 2) legitimist; 3) identitary-communitary and 4) current (of *habitus*). The main structural aggregates of the electoral field were represented by: the “rural” vote, the working class vote, the “ethnic” vote, the cultural and historical voters. In 1994-1996 there was a gradual movement towards identifications with the political collectivities through specific cognitive mechanisms.

- Definitions of the major directions of the reconstruction of electoral space in terms of the process being of a symbolic nature, interactive and cognitive: dissolution of the “voting structures on the unifying basis of the social and cultural communities and areas. The new taxonomic models of the electoral behavior are: 1) rational and cognitive; 2) non-statutory and individualizing; 3) those oriented towards the anticipation and acceptance of the alternating change.

The mentioned studies made a rationalization of the changes in the electoral communication in Romania by connecting the study to the international methodological and theoretical currents.

The phenomenon of the Romanian electorate was studied, almost simultaneously, by another research project (Bulai, 1999) based on recent British sources. As a result, one can meet in this project some significant differences in the delimitation of the research object, of the hypotheses, used methods, conclusions, compared to the projects of I. Dragan and D. Sandu. The theoretical model of the electoral mechanism proposed by A. Bulai is conditioned only by social factors, the other factors (ideological, political connotations of the general system) being deliberately ignored. According to the model, “an electoral system functions on the basis of some processes of political communication and with the support of infrastructures created by the power” by which the electors “express a certain option among the ones pre-



formulated, usually, also by it” (Bulai, 1999: 56-72). The electoral mechanisms that are to be elucidated are defined as those modalities by which attitudes are constructed and certain voting behaviours are determined at the level of the population, based on the characteristics of this population, as well as with the support of the processes of political communication. The proposed model has a double axis of determinants, one including two plans, social and individual (or objects and subjects) and a temporal axis.

In line with previous approach by D. Sandu, the key-concept of the model developed by A. Bulai is the definition of situation that signifies the “process by which the electorate defines the electoral problem, its variants of solutions and implicitly, the preference for at least one of them” (Bulai, 1999: 64). Situation definition is influenced by two factors: subject resources and political communication. The combination of these two factors requires, however, an “objective level” (of the perception of different realities – prices, poverty, fall of the government etc.) and a subjective one (subjective expectations which are the “direct product of subjects’ wishes and not a result of knowing the reality”).

The background of voting as decisional act is identified either in the normativity that regulates the electoral system, or by the persuasive communication, by no means due to a judgement. “Judgement may help in the process of knowing, associated to the process of defining the electoral situation, but it does not lead to the voting option” (Bulai, 1999: 70).

The techniques used for investigation included a survey on a sample representative at national scale, press monitoring and content analysis, focus-groups before and after elections and other qualitative methods

The definition of the electoral situation in Romania reveals the deficit of image of the actors involved in the election process, “that may not yield an electoral and political stability to the extent of the need for stability required by the radical reform of the Romanian society” (Bulai, 1999:259). The conclusion of the study denies the statement on the evolution of the electoral phenomenon in Romania made by I. Dragan, towards the maturation of its democratic mechanisms during the election campaign of 1996.

*Ethnicity.* One of the major challenges of the post-communist transition is the reconstruction of the modern national state, of the ethnic and national identity after years of communist nationalism as a generator of national prejudices and stereotypes with strong ideological load. Answering this challenge, the sociologists, psychologists, social anthropologists and the



historians have adopted after 1989 a constructivist theoretical-methodological attitude, abandoning the older “substantialist” position of mass psychology. The major psycho-sociological and anthropological studies of the past decade regard the ethnic and national identity as a social construct. It is the result of some identity constructing and identity producing processes and not just a simple cultural heritage that yields a given ethnic and national identity, immutable and unproblematic.

Several major studies attempted a sociological diagnosis of the interethnic relations in Romania and the assessment of their change. One of these research projects was conducted by the Center for Urban and Regional Sociology (CURS) in collaboration with psychologists and anthropologists from the University of Bucharest, the Institute of Sociology of the Romanian Academy, the Institute of Psychology of the Romanian Academy, the University “Eftimie Murgu” from Reșița, Hunedoara county and the Ministry for Labour and Social Protection, following the order of the Project on Ethnic Relations (PER) from the United States (WATTS, 1993). The research focused on the ethnic structure (ethnography) of the Romanian population, collective inhabiting (cohabiting) of the territory, interethnic conflicts and social cohabiting in the regions with interethnic communities, determination and assessment of the social distance, images and stereotypes that form within interethnic relations, case studies on Romany population and on the cohabiting relation between the Romany and Saxon populations in villages with mixed profile from Transylvania.

The basic theoretical marks of the investigation were circumscribed by the typology of ethnic self-identification – ethnic hetero-identification supported by the general thesis according to which “the ethnic group is created by itself and is the creation of others”, contributing to the “collective shaping of those with which it comes into contact” (Badescu and Abraham, 1994: 140). On this theoretical background the authors specify their constructivist approach in terms of ethnomorphology, treating cohabiting as a phenomenon of ethnic interaction, in opposition to the old clichés of ethnic monads. The graphic representation of the balance of ethnic relations in the territory according to the index of the dominant opinion or to the index of attitude intensity was used as main investigation method. This approach was named “ethnoscropy” by the authors. Other used methods are the opinion polls representative at the national level, case studies on ethnic groups (Romany, Saxons), comparative data analysis, and calculation of the social distance using the scale of Bogardus, and the development of an index of intensity of



bipolar attitudes. The main results of the study may be summed up in a few thesis, concepts and methods:

- The identity determination strategies adopted by the ethnic groups within an interaction framework are decisive for the success or failure of ethnic groups cohabiting. The ethnic problems are thus freed of the infertile perspectives of the “dominant majority” and “dominant minority” of the ethnic monads (Badescu and Abraham, 1994: 142-143).

- The revealing concepts of the ethnic issue are: “area of cohabiting”, “interethnic relation”, “identity determination strategy”, “area of cohabiting”.

- Cohabiting is both a process and the result of people “negotiation”, having an ethnic-cultural and ethnic-historical dimension (Badescu and Abraham, 1994: 143).

- The ethnic self-image is conditioned by traditional and historical factors, by the residence environment and by status characteristics (gender, education), which denotes its flexibility (Chelcea, 1994a: 203).

- Confirmation of the hypothesis of endowing the in-group members with more favourable characteristics, and of the hypothesis of the “positive/negative asymmetry” of assessment judgments (Chelcea, 1994a: 203).

- In the provinces with ethnic heterogeneity (Transylvania, Banat, Dobrugea), the etiology of cohabiting conflicts does not have an ethnic basis in the populations, but rather a social basis (ownership, interpersonal relations, etc.) (Abraham and Badescu, 1994: 220).

Such a conclusion may be looked upon as rather a hypothesis to be validated by more complex investigations, which could answer questions concerning the ethnic stereotypes degree of flexibility, the criteria for individualization, the trends of accepting or rejecting as “regulator” of the relations of interethnic interaction, etc. The findings of successive investigations on the interethnic relations between the Romanian and Romany (Constantin, 1996: 131-141; Constantin, 1998: 267-288) brought some clarifications in this respect. The relation between the “social” and the “ethnic” in the generation of interethnic conflicts seems to be variable according to the reference ethnic composition.

The issue of multiculturalism was the subject of investigation of the Research Center for Interethnic Relations (C.C.R.I.T.), financed by the European Community through a Phare-Tacis Program, between 1997-1999 (Culic, Horwath, Stan eds., 2000). The study continues the idea formulated by the theoreticians of multiculturalism representing a pragmatically oriented



synthesis. The idea of multiculturalism is treated as a possible change of discourse paradigm since the meaning of an ideology of managing diversity was considered by the authors to be inappropriate for the time being because it requires a gradual implementation. The book is a unitary corpus of texts that include complementary approaches: empirical-analytical, historical-institutional and interpretative analyses. The main results of the investigation may be synthesized in a few general statements:

- the absence or presence of a political integrative community, transcending ethnic boundaries, is of a crucial importance to the implementation of multicultural policies;

- the double identity (civic and ethno-cultural) of the Hungarians living in Romania generates tensions within the interethnic and intercultural relations;

- increasing teachers' interest in the development of a positive self-image of pupils belonging to minorities facilitates a more efficient integration;

- the main causes of interethnic conflict are the lack of adequate decision policies and the ignoring of the legal acts and norms, which brought about an authority crisis and activated ethnic sensitivity at the local level ;

- the division of people and especially of communities into "civilised" and "barbarous" or "tribal" categories is reproduced at all levels in the Balkans; like any stereotype "it conceals reality to a very great extent, simplifies and falsifies it" (Mihailescu, 2000: 121).

Romany ethnic groups have formed the object of several important programmes of psycho-sociological research, stimulated by the revival of ethnicity after 1989. In fact, the Romany ethnicity poses a complex social problem, with marked ethnic characteristics, within the theoretical framework of ethnic self-identification/hetero-identification (Zamfir and Zamfir, 1993: 217, 55-56). The authors mainly used a questionnaire which was administered to 1804 families representative at the national level (12,000 persons) plus additional interviews and a case study on the evolution of interethnic relations in the commune of Mihail Kogalniceanu, Constanta district. The results of the study provided a diagnosis of the current situation of the Romany population concerning the family type and marriage, birth rate, children health, medical and family care, housing conditions, household facilities, trades, qualifications, incomes, standard of living; it also determined the variations of this situation associated to different factors. The social problems of the



Romany population are considered as part of the present process of transition. They consist of some fundamental generalizations and of a number of derived propositions (Zamfir and Zamfir, 1993: 218-229):

A fundamental generalization says that the most serious process affecting a large part of the Romany population is a dramatic reduction of the opportunities to obtain the necessary resource for living. The derived proposition reads that the crisis in the traditional way of getting resources is marginalizing together with the traditional trades because of the modernization process.

Another fundamental generalization says that the dramatic decline in economic possibilities for a significant part of the Romany population is very likely to deepen poverty and criminality. The derived propositions reads that the pressure towards deviance is increasing because of the precarious socio-economic situation, as well as because of the emergence of illegal opportunities to get rich quickly. Moreover, the growing deviance amplifies the negative stereotypes of the majority population and increases discrimination, including collective manifestations against the Romany.

A third fundamental generalization says that most Romany are in an extremely disadvantaged situation. The derived propositions concern the lack of training, low level of education, traditional way of life that hinders their effective integration into a modern society, the negative stereotypes of the majority population, the development of pockets of chronic poverty and criminality where people are gradually deprived of any chance of getting out of it.

The authors formulated a set of active measures in support of the Romany population, at both national and local level.

Starting from the above-mentioned results, T. Constantin used other research techniques in his study on the Romany-Romanians interethnic relations such as the "semantic differentiator" (Osgood), the scale of social distance (Bogardus), the technique of filling in phrases to observe the "verbal clichés", the stereotypes of perception and assessment of the Romany and Romanian ethnic groups, the criteria of personalization, etc. The generalizations that were formulated are nuanced, revealing the existence of a strong negative pattern in the perception of Romany population by the majority population, which acts as a "regulator" of the situation of ethnic interaction, functioning as a "reading grid" of the interethnic relations (Constantin, 1998: 286). The same author observed that the existence of perception stereotypes bearing a strong negative character towards the



Romany population by the majority population is not accompanied by attitudes and behaviour of aggressive, active or categorical rejection. When individualizations are made within the ethnic group, criteria are adopted which refer to character values: involvement/noninvolvement in work, moral attitude, degree of integration, etc. (Constantin, 1998: 273-279).

Within the same context of the theoretical explanations on the negotiation of identity and alterity one should mention a metatheoretical anthropological approach of the general-human construction of the differences (Mihailescu, 1999: 245-257). The starting point of the author was the empirical observation of disparities between two sets of attributes present in the two social categories of a rural community. Using the terminology of Georges Devereux (choices, assignments), the author identified an empirical contradiction between choices (what someone does or says) and assignment (what someone usually considers to do or say). The theoretical solution offered to explain the contradiction consists in the formulation of a “law”, which governs the “dynamic typologies” of the characteristics: “the majority choices of a population yield compensatory assignments in most of the individuals of that particular population. Otherwise said, the significant frequency of some homogenized choices within a population is accompanied dynamically and in its trends by compensatory and reactive heterogenizing assignments; and vice-versa, in the case of eterogenizing choices; any excess of homogenization will be accompanied, sooner or later, by a contrary assignment reaction” (Mihailescu, 1999: 253). By this generalization, the author synthesized several existing points of view, such as the conception of V. Turner on the interaction structure – antistructure, or the idea of S.Abou on the concomitance of the movement of uniformization and of that of differentiation, as well as the current trends of globalization and regionalization.

### **Family sociology**

The family patterns suffered profound changes during the past decades. Developing older theoretical preoccupations regarding the sociology of communities, I. Mihailescu carried out a comprehensive theoretical analysis of the main changes occurring in family patterns during the past decades both in Europe and the rest of the world (Mihailescu, 1999). The theoretical context of the book is the contemporary debate on family pattern evolution, natality, fertility, role of women in family and society, family solidarity etc., published mainly in the review “Population” and also in other several



volumes by J. Szczepanski, M. Kozakiewicz, G. Becker, etc. The methodology consists in the comparative-historical analysis of long statistical data series at macrosocial, zonal and local level, personal field work in several areas from Romania, and secondary analyses of demographic surveys. The main achievement of the project is the elaboration of a formal theory of the dynamics of family patterns. The meaning given here to the term of formal theory is the one conferred by R. Boudon, consisting of “statements of possibilities”, whose terms must, though, be specified by statistical socio-historical references. He gives us, in other words, “a formal framework that just be stated if we wish to use it to interpret actual situations” (Boudon, 1990: 358). In itself, the statement do not apply to actual situations, but it can yield empirical conclusions, predictions that can not be faked in the meaning of K. Popper.

If we follow the author and we fill this formal framework with historical, demographic, economic, juridical, politic, psycho-sociological data on family behaviour and relations, on family – society relations, on family solidarity, on the social problems confronting the family, we would obtain a suggestive interpretation with a high degree of credibility of the dynamics of family patterns, of the factors determining the change of these patterns and of the solutions offered by social policies. The framework of intelligibility for the changes occurring in the family patterns focuses on four levels of analysis (Mihailescu, 1999: 132-134).

a) *Relationship family – society*. The changes in family patterns are systematized in general propositions such as decrease of the economic importance of the family, family loss of church affinities and partial deinstitutionalization, a stressed social mobility of the family members, intensification of women integration in extra familial activities, state overtaking some of the family functions, less kinship, neighbourhood relations, less community control on the demographic behaviour, increased tolerance to the new demographic behaviour, increased family preoccupation for the quality of life and for the social problems.

b) *Single youth behaviour*. Generalizations are approached here concerning the expansion of premarital sexual experiences, fertility control, expansion of premarital cohabitation, higher number of persons not getting ever married, expansion of families with single parents, increase of sexual tolerance to premarital behavior.

c) *Nuptial behaviour*. The propositions refer to the loss of the sacred character of marriage, to the importance of economic motivations given to



marriages, increase marriage heterogamy, the trend to achieve equal positions for men and women within the family, the diminished role of the relatives in young people's marriage, decreased nuptial rate and its effects on birth rate.

d) *Family behaviour*. The formulated propositions concern the increased importance given to emotional-affective relations between partners with the decrease of the economic function of the family, intensified concern of the spouses for the quality of family life, diversification of cohabiting forms, the trend of achieving equal positions of authority for both spouses, women emancipation, importance of communion of preoccupations, mentality, attitudes, interests, family concentration on offspring quality, increased divorcing rate and its increased social acceptance.

Suspecting the existence of antinomy between society and family, the author makes a fundamental analysis of the social policies concerning the population and family (Mihailescu, 1995: 161-199; 1999: 136-185): the types of demographic and social policies (pronatalist, antinatalist, neutral), measures for the control and regulation of demographic behaviour, measures concerning deviating sexual behaviours, economic and social reform, social assistance by specialized services, costs of social practices, obstacles to social policies concerning the family. The sociological vision of the author on family behaviour led him to a realistic attitude towards the efficiency of the social policies. Thus, he claims, in line with the ideas of V. Pareto, that the demographic attitudes and behavior have their own rationality, which does not coincide with the societal rationality, or with the political one. Thus, in order to measure the effects of the social policies we need a long-term analysis of the demographic evolution.

When trying to develop an ideal type for the changing relations of Romanian families with education, E. Stanciulescu goes through three major analytical stages. In the first stage, she makes a critical analysis of European and American sociological theories which are significant for the definition of the concept of education: functionalism (Durkheim, Parsons, symbolic interactionism, phenomenology, dramaturgy pattern, ethnomethodology, cognitive sociology, constructivist structuralism). The interpretation of the mentioned theories leads the author to the redefinition of education as a "continuous process of (self)construction of the self" in the meaning of the reflexivity of human action (Stanciulescu, 1996: 10). Thus, the classical notion of education defined as the assembly of systematic forms and means by which society intervenes in the formation of the "social being" (Durkheim) of the individual becomes "a particular species" of the concept of self



construction. The definition of education proposed by E. Stanciulescu overlaps that which Simmel gave to the concept of “socialization” (“enter social connection”). The construction of the self is understood as the “dynamic assembly of social connections (institutional, moral, face to face etc.) by which the subjective structures making the individual become able to initiate and cultivate in turn future social connection in its quality of autonomous personality, are shaped and reshaped” (Stanciulescu, 1998: 20-21).

The second stage of the author’s approach consists in a synthesis of recent Western European and North American empirical studies on educational processes involving parents and children as actors. The study gives an answer to the key question: which is the place of the contemporary families within the assembly of educational agents? The answer is the definition of the concept of “educational strategies of contemporary families” expressing the “presence of classes of regularities which the researcher highlights observing the singular configurations of the behaviour of some families in particular situations” (Stanciulescu, 1997: 29).

In the third stage, the author has the objective to test the classical concept of intergenerational transmission of some empirical problems in order to see how they knit the “logic of identity and alterity, the reproduction and change, the internationalism and liberalism in the family educational strategies”. Another objective is the empirical assessment of the “manner in which the dialectic identification/differentiation, reproduction/change, intervention/liberty affects the dynamics of Romanian families” and society, to build up in the end an ideal type of the evolution of family strategies (Stanciulescu 1998: 26- 27). She uses qualitative-interpretative methods, consisting in content analysis of the Romanian documentary sources between the early 18<sup>th</sup> century and middle 20<sup>th</sup> century, together with the historical-bibliographical method helping to correlate the macro-social evolutions with the different forms of social discourse. Still another information source are semi-structured interviews with families selected with the sociability networks.

Synthesizing the hypothetical generalizations obtained from the content analysis of documents and biographies in the context of the structural transformations of Romanian society, the author builds an ideal type of the evolutions of knowledge and educational practices of the families belonging to different social categories (Stanciulescu, 1998: 360-361):



- “the high and middle-high categories from the late 17<sup>th</sup> century and early 18<sup>th</sup> century (three states of Moldavian boyars) characterized by the identity: status of free owner, distance from productive work, relation with the power (position towards the ruler, power-holders);
- “higher education categories, most in urban areas” of the fighters for national independence and social progress (19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries), defined mainly by the “book” (school instruction plus diploma), distance from work, relation with the power and bureaucracy;
- “some rural categories: from former free peasants, to old and new households of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and of the inter-war period, whose main source for class distinction is the identity complex house-patrimony-free work-family-children/education-respectability in community, faith in God”;
- “the post-war middle rural and urban categories formed of commuters and migrants from rural areas practicing non-agricultural activities and trying to valorize the identity resources of the education (school instruction and diploma), distance from agricultural hard working, closing up to power center and (or) bureaucratic positions, identity complex house-family-children/education-respectability-faith; the essential characteristic is the presence of an identity project of social ascension”;

Using an interpretative and constructivist approach, E. Stanciulescu succeeded to avoid ideological, conjuncture determinism and to highlight the scientific legitimacy of the educational processes having the family as their support. But she idealized the virtues of the qualitative-interpretative methods and overlooked the quantitative methods (ROTARIU, 1998:16). The qualitative and quantitative macro-social analyses used in the study of I. Mihailescu on the evolution of the European and Romanian families show the utility of combining the qualitative and quantitative methods

### **Sociology of institutions and social policy**

*Social policy.* The fall of communism in 1989 raised a crucial question to social sciences: what is to be preferred - the process of institutional building by human projects or the process of spontaneous restoration by the invisible hand? An edifying answer to this question was given in terms of sociology involvement in the social change of the post-communist societies as “sociological paradigm of the social policy”. The theoretical context of the sociological approach to social policies is the one set during the past 15-20 years by the studies on social policies conducted in Sweden, the Great Britain, USA and by the international organisms such as the World Bank, UNICEF,



the European Union. The main thematic dimensions of social policy sociology are: diagnosis of social problems and of their dynamics, social policies assessment by the development of complex methods for measuring their efficiency, identification and measurement of social policies side (pervert) effects, social policy design, identification of alternative solutions, empirical analysis of the social mechanisms of social policy adaptation and change (Zamfir ed., 1999: 17-19). The above generalizations have their foundations in the of systematic analysis of social policies conducted by the Quality of Life Research Institute (ICCV), established in 1990, in cooperation with the Department of Sociology and Social Work of the Bucharest University.

The post-communist projects of social policy were shaped by the communist inheritance of the “socialist welfare state” (Zamfir ed., 1999: 35-52). It presumed the “provision for a homogenous collective welfare” obtained under political and ideological pressure, an active policy of compensation for the gap between the requirements and the sources by social benefits, preference for social services rather than cash transfers, etc. After a period of moderate success between the 1950’s and the 1970’s during the fast industrialization, the collective welfare started to stagnate, followed by a steep deterioration of the standard of living during the 80’s. This was manifested by the continuous decrease of the real individual income, the graduate increase of scarceness of goods, emergence of hidden unemployment, profound deterioration of the system of social security, fast increase of marginalized categories – unemployed, families with many children, homeless families, institutionalized children. This historical inheritance is treated with nuances both as an obstacle in the way of change and constraint on what followed, but also as source used by the social agents of change and as an important pattern affecting the individual options on what is possible, acceptable and desirable. C. Zamfir may thus formulate a credible theory of the political initiatives during the first half of 1990, defining it as having a *reparatory orientation*. The main component of this policy is the building of legislative projects offering retroactive compensations in order to terminate goods scarcity, to eliminate the hidden unemployment, to increase the wages, to allow additional expenses for the disfavored categories, for the political victims, repossession of land within the limit of 10 ha by the termination of the former agricultural cooperatives.

The explanations provided by C. Zamfir on the reparatory policy reveal three types of social factors: a) the population’s state of spirit, which involves



a *moral* and *pragmatic* reason for the urgent restoration of the standard of living; b) the excessively optimistic assessment of the short-term perspectives of the Romanian economy; c) the existence of at least two social-political mechanisms for the development of reparatory social policies, namely the labour unions and the post-December political mechanism.

The institutional building of the new system of social policy that followed the reparatory stage was confronted with a dilemma often highlighted by the sociological literature, namely the ambivalence of the institutions, which are both resources and obstacles of the change. Observing this character of the change by human projects, C. Zamfir introduces ideas about the social costs and uncertainty of the effects of social policies developed by specialists, the interference of politics within social policies and the limits of knowledge within the process of social design.

No matter how important the social reforms, they are not the only cause of the social change. Once instituted, they are further negotiated and interpreted by the multitude of individuals, groups, organizations involved in the process of enforcement. The analysis of the wage policy during transition (Zamfir ed., 1999: 408-411), of the social insurance policy (Marginean, 1999: 181-185; 188-193), of the marginalized social groups (Preda, 1999: 337-341) etc., reveal a range of uncertainty concerning anticipated and unexpected effects of the strategies developed by the experts, as well as the *public* dimension of the projects of change. As a consequence of institutions' ambivalence and of the uncertainty characterizing the human projects, C. Zamfir resorted to the "strategy of satisfactory" as alternative to the "strategy of trend optimality" (Zamfir, 1999: 346-363). While in the strategy of trend optimality the uncertainty of decision is assumed explicitly, the strategy of satisfactory consists in the adoption of the first satisfactory solution. The strategy of satisfactory yields equivalent results to the strategy of trend optimality because it avoids some stages hard to achieve under conditions of high uncertainty.

*Corruption.* It is considered one of the major risk factors of the process of institution building. Corruption was approached by sociologists, historians, and lawyers. Two types of studies can be identified according to the manner of approaching corruption. First, projects in which the sociological view of the phenomenon is predominant. Second, an approach dominated by the cultural-historical point of view.

The sociology of social problems is the theoretical and methodological framework for the studies on corruption conducted by D. Banciu and S. M.



Radulescu. They highlight the issue using concepts of social disorganization, anomy, organizational deviance, law fetishism, labeling process, etc. Synthesizing viewpoints from the relevant literature, the authors proposed a multidimensional definition of corruption. It is understood as the “functional substitute of a reform that was not taken to its end”, not just a mere excrescence, “a foreign body that may be eradicated by normative radicalization”, but a phenomenon that articulates within a new system of negotiations or transactions, the contradictory elements of a non-system in which reform was not taken to its end” (Banciu and Radulescu, 1994: 26, 27, 79). The main dimensions of the corruption phenomenon selected for empirical study take into account the complexity of the political, social, economic, juridical and institutional factors that generate and amplify corruption. The research methods include the analysis of official documents, of reference texts and opinion surveys. The major hypothesis orienting the survey states that the “social perception and the reaction of the public opinion” to the acts of corruption is an indispensable component of the institutional building in the post-communist society. This is because an efficient action against corruption is not possible if there are distinct differences between the legal (juridical) and the public opinion definition of corruption” (Banciu and Radulescu, 1994: 24). The survey results in several definitions of the situation, opinions, and assessments on the corruption acts:

- Perception of the intensity and seriousness of the corruption shows that the population defines it as the main obstacle to reform since it favours the interests of certain private persons and affects the collective interests by breaking the moral and juridical norms.

- Identification of factors determining corruption like the crisis of institutions at all social levels which is manifested by the decrease of social control, the crisis of authority of state institutions, the poor pressure of norms on the individual behaviour, etc.

- Definition of situation by an excessive accent on normative factors and mechanisms of social control fostering corruption. The view is supported by the “paternalist” mentality according to which the state and its institutions are responsible for breaking the limits admitted by the law and morality by the absence of the control on the individuals.

Another less visible aspect of the above study on corruption is what T. Luckmann and P. Berger called reciprocity of institutional typifications. The stress on reciprocity means attention granted to history, reciprocity being the result of repeated interactions. Any institution has a background history that



excludes the possibility for sudden institutional changes. The institutional change may be initiated by a project, but it will be completed by the repeated interactions of individuals.

The importance of the cultural-historic context for the determination of corruption is underlined by the sociologist M. Dogan in his study on the political regime and political class of Romania between the two world wars (Dogan, 1999: 139-206). The theoretical context of the study is configured by the fundamental ideas developed by H. Rogger and E. Weber, G. L. Mosse, F. A. Hermens, M. Weiner and E. Ozbudun. The methodology consists in historical documents analysis and in the statistical analysis of the Romanian parliamentary democracy. By processing the votes for the majority parties in power and in opposition between 1919-1939 and using the electoral statistics as well as data concerning the composition of the Romanian Parliament, the author formulates concepts and typologies concerning the political regime and the political class of the époque:

- A major concept is that of minimal democracy, which is a historical variant of the concept of show case democracy (Pasti, Miroiu, Codita, 1997: 129-164). M. Dogan shows that the Romanian political system apparently had, during the inter-war period, all the defining traits of a modern democracy: periodical elections, proportional representation, multiparty system, legitimate Parliament resulting from a quite high pool participation of the population, independent justice, respect for the civil liberties, etc. But the system has systemic traits that single it. If in the parliamentary democracies the government results from the parliament as the representative of the electoral body, in the minimal democracy the chronological order is reversed. First the government is being dismissed, than the chief of state appoints another government, then the Parliament is dissolved, new elections followed and the parliamentary majority for the new government is already appointed.

- The concept of electoral corruption (deficient electoral commissions, no vote confidentiality, limiting the liberty of opposition candidates, sanctioning of those who voted "badly" etc.) as unexpected effect of the political system.

- The essential idea of the social and geo-political context that favoured the appearance and proliferation of electoral corruption. Herewith the following factors are meant: the high proportion of illiteracy, the preponderance of poor agricultural population, the weakness of the middle classes, the low level of industrialization and urbanization, the geo-political influence of two totalitarian empires – Russia and Germany, etc.



- The idea of the reversed pyramid as expression of the social and professional composition of the Romanian Parliament compared to other European parliaments. The seven elections during the inter-war period showed that the first three categories holding two thirds of the two chambers of the parliament were formed of lawyers, land owners, university owners, while the most numerous social categories – peasants, workers, employees, manufacturers – were not actually represented.

- The author observes that the electoral oscillation, despite the effects of corruption, also had a functional consequence for the system. Under certain circumstances, fiction is unavoidable and even necessary in order to solve the democratic puzzle.

A similar viewpoint on the importance of the socio-historical context in the generation and development of corruption is developed by the historian St. Tanase (Tanase, 1996: 86-90). Referring to the proliferation of corruption during the period of post-communist transition, the author identifies a novel correlation between the relation that has existed for centuries and the new phenomena. He refers to the kinship, neighborhood, clan, owner-client relations, which form a traditional pattern of Romanian society and which give a specific dimension to corruption under favourable conditions, such as the ones characterizing the monopoly on property and power. The historical analysis leads the author to the fundamental idea that: “far from being a marginal phenomenon, corruption is today the result of three factors acting in the Romanian society: a) the pattern of kinship connections, generating the owner-client structures; b) the communist legacy, materialized in the hegemony of the state over societies and the existence of a numerous bureaucracy that is interested in achieving its own interests to the detriment of state and society interests; c) the specific conditions of the economic and political transition (conflict between different groups of interest for the redistribution of economic resources and political power)” (Tanase, 1996: 90).

Focusing the attention on the valorization of identity and traditions within the post-communist institution building leads the analysis to a skeptical position, which stresses the instrumental value of the “moral goods”. Following the line of the above-mentioned analysis it is clear that the well rooted patterns of kinship relations cannot be ignored in the new process of institution building. So, must the institution building be doubled by a moral building in which the population should take part? Can we talk of a neo-



institutional exigency of the public participation in directing the reform in Romania by local initiatives and experiments?

*Management.* Change in management practices and constraints are the topic of a series of studies in Romanian sociology (See Zamfir, Matauan and Lotreanu eds., 1994: 25-29, 33-25, 39, 42-45). Some major results of these studies could be summarized as follows:

- The socialist managerial tradition includes “strong points” like cleverness to identify solutions in critical situations, technical improvisation, ability to manage the lack of motivation and discipline of the employees, etc., that can be supported now. However, it also includes “weak points” like the inability to analyze market demands, lack of habits for autonomous development of the production, lack of knowledge on the development strategies, etc. The latter lead to faking performance, ignoring quality as the main condition for competitiveness, lack of responsibility for the destiny of the enterprise, the belief that things can be arranged by connections, bribery, etc., that are to be corrected.

- The political events of 1989 led to the fall of the hyper-centralized management of the economy and generated a disorganization of the inter- and intra-economic relations.

- The “genetic” flow of the new managerial behaviour is influenced by the “political hiatus” from December 1989, by the inherited type of economic and managerial experiment and the inertia characteristic to such a system. These are the explanations for the impact of state paternalism, for the struggle for survival of the large state-owned economic organizations based on a monopoly strategy, for the simplification of the managerial activity under the conditions of economic and financial limitations, the degradation of authority and of the grid for appreciation and recognition of the personal value, the existence of intergeneration gaps within the managerial population, the instability of the leading styles, etc.

- The managerial behaviour is dominated by opportunism, particularly in the small private companies, by conservatism that prevails in the autonomously managed enterprises and in many trade enterprises with state capital, by the trend of following western patterns in the joint companies and in young managers, by the trend to give political traits to the managerial behaviour, having as expression the relations with the authorities that have a rank similar to their own managerial training or to the managerial culture.



- The promotion of a new managerial culture proceeds on three levels: cultural change which is regarded as the “priority level”, organizational change and individual change;

The reflections on the status of the Romanian enterprises in transition led O. Hoffman to formulate the hypothesis that the “institutionalization of the global societal innovation” is the optimal solution for industrial reorganization (Hoffman, 2000: 22-27). It is just the matter of using the instruments of the democratic power and of the civil society (new democratic parties, labor unions, non-governmental organizations, etc.) in order to introduce, strategies, programs and measures which ensure a double transition, namely a macro-societal passage from communism to market economy, concomitantly with the transition to the computerized, science-technological post-industrial society. The indispensable requirement for this institutionalized mechanism of structural innovation is the joining the economic reorganization with modernization by using science, technology and the other elements of culture. Enterprise reorganization, in this vision, is preceded by a “reorganization of the factors of change”, by putting science, technology and education in the center of the societal innovation” (Hoffman, 2000: 26-27). The context of these ideas is the current debate on the crisis of Taylorist management and the orientation towards the management centered on man, negotiated competence and the new social space of enterprise building. Analyzing the Romanian enterprises, O. Hoffman reached some fundamental generalizations (Hoffman, 2000: 193-204):

-Almost all Romanian industrial enterprises are conceived and function according to the Taylor-bureaucratic principles.

- The economic crisis is expressed, at the enterprise level, by a strong motivational crisis.

- There is a managerial crisis generated by the lack of autonomous social actors, responsible for their decisions, because state ownership was maintained in many enterprises.

- The crisis of the institutional system of the Romanian enterprises affects the crisis of other institutions, such as the school, family, etc.

- The break out of crisis requires the solving of the macroeconomic crisis by privatization and of the management crisis at enterprise level by the elaboration of strategies which to define the type of their evolution.

Thus, the author puts a diagnosis, which has economic, political and managerial aspects. The success of reorganization is being connected with the success of experts to develop viable projects. But the field research has shown



that experts are just one category of persons involved in making reforms. Furthermore, their projects are subsequently negotiated and interpreted by multiple individuals, groups, and organizations. Other constraints can be added, which act in the process of enterprise reorganization (Vlasceanu, 1999: 121-125, 130-134, 193). Some of them derive from the transition costs, from the adaptation of organizations to the environment in which they act, from the delimitation of functional alternatives representative for the existing experiences. Starting from the mentioned theoretical reflections on the status of the industrial enterprise during transition, several field works were conducted focusing on the impact of industry reorganization on the individuals and groups that form the economic organizations.

A comprehensive survey during July – August, 1991, on a sample representative at the national level (2153 individuals cases), from 19 enterprises (large, medium and small) belonging to different areas of activity and distributed in different cultural areas, yielded an image of peoples expectations at the beginning of the reorganization process (Danciu et al., 1994). The work was supported by the Laboratoire de sociologie du changement des institutions, C.N.R.S., Paris. The main results of the investigation consist in descriptions (sociography), formulation of ideas with low degree of generality, of concepts and classifications regarding the expectations in 1989 and the realities as perceived by the subjects, the collective perception on enterprise reorganization, satisfaction – motivation – work climate, union perception, as negotiation partner of the enterprise board. Following are some observations of the investigation:

- The correlation of post-December aspirations with the perception of reality shows a state of pessimism and concern of most of the investigated population regarding the quality of life, the economic development, the change of old mentalities and of the criteria for appreciation and promotion.

- Population's state of spirit regarding the possible type of the future society may be characterized by confusion, lack of precision and ignorance.

- The majority of the industrial workforce rejected the idea of privatization because of the reform costs and because of the persistence of old mentalities.

- The costs of reform (amplification of corruption, illicit trade, price increase, unemployment, poverty, are perceived as very difficult to cope with, provoking the boomerang effect.

Subsequent investigations have supported some of the findings of this survey, denied and clarified other findings.



The World Bank has initiated and financed a social assessment study on the restructuring the mining industry in Romania. The theoretical context was set out by the World Bank researchers. The study was carried out by using a sample survey covering Gorj, the Jiu Valley and Deva, a random sample of 1002 households; qualitative household studies of 500 households in the target regions; family budgets and biographical case studies (100 households from the above 500); 10 focus group meetings with different subgroups of affected populations; 6 stakeholder consultations with trade unions and organizations of ex-miners representatives, staff of autonomous administrated enterprise etc. Setting as its goal a comprehensive analysis of the redundancy process's consequence, the authors formulated the following objectives of the study (Larionescu, Rughinis and Radulescu, 1999: 251-252): "to assess the awareness of mining sector workers (and other public sector workers) about their options of continued employment or entitlement in the form of passive and active measures; to assess the implementation progress and social impact of restructuring and related social protection measures in the mining areas, identify their social problems and recommend new ways to improve these measures; to identify and analyze the specific social characteristics of the people who voluntarily declared themselves redundant"; "to identify different actions of the affected populations" and "reveal patterns of coping behaviours, adjustment constraints"; to visualize the subject's view "regarding possible improvements in the restructuring process, job placement or job creation and provision of social services", etc. The main findings of the book are general and specific propositions on mining sector restructuring and redundancy process, social problems that the mining areas are confronted with, attitudes towards institutions, coping strategies, evaluation of existing social mitigation measures including a list of key indicators for monitoring the social impact and effectiveness of the mitigation measures:

- The mining sector restructuring process was not sufficiently prepared and did not benefit of preceding analyses and strategies.
- It amounted mostly to personal reductions without any previously established criteria and viable alternatives of workforce retraining.
- The specificity of the mining areas was not taken into account, that is, the fact that there were not other important economic sectors that would absorb the redundant workforce.
- Although the redundancy process was mostly transparent, people's perception was that they were insufficiently informed on the consequences of their decision.



- The passive social protection measures prevailed compared to the active ones. Social mitigation measures were not implemented in the affected areas and therefore redundancy payments were not used productively.

- The redundancy process dramatically worsened the mining areas' social problems – the rise of unemployment rate, the sudden and serious worsening of life quality, the faulty housing conditions, pollution, alcoholism, the poor health status of most of the population.

- The public opinion index for entrepreneurs is rather high. It is probably that people who are more community oriented are the ones who have a bad opinion of entrepreneurs. Most people with entrepreneurial initiative are not sufficiently prepared to design a business project on their own.

- The redundant people have feelings of frustration “due to their believe that the trade union leaders “betrayed” them by not informing them properly on the consequences of their decision to abandon mining”.

Based on the results of this investigation, the World Bank together with Romanian governmental bodies, elaborated a program of continuous monitoring of the process of mining sector restructuring in 2000.

*Risks and reconstruction policies.* Michael M. Cernea edited, in a World Bank context, a book about risks, safeguards and reconstruction (Cernea, McDowell, 2000), based on a experience of studies on development, social change, population resettlement, social forestry, grassroots organizations and participation. The book considers, for the first time in the international literature, the two large groups of displaced populations, resettlers and refugees, in a systematic comparative way. The main contribution of this project is the definition of the conceptual model in terms of the impoverishment risks and reconstruction (IRR) model for resettling displaced populations. The IRR model continued the several conceptual frameworks, as Chamber's and Nelson's models focused on the experience of planned settlement processes, the Scudder-Colson framework applied to voluntary as well as to involuntary settlement processes and to Emmanuel Mark's theory of “the social world of refugees”. The core of the IRR model consists of three fundamental concepts, risk, impoverishment and reconstruction, which are further split into a set of specifying concepts: landlessness, joblessness, homelessness, marginalization, food insecurity, increased morbidity, loss of access to common property resources, community disarticulation. The IRR model accomplishes the four interlinked functions: predictive capacity, resulting from in-depth knowledge of past



processes; a diagnostic (explanatory and assessment) function; the problem-solving function and the research function. The internal logic of the model suggests that preventing or overcoming the pattern of impoverishment would require risk reversal. In further examining the components of the reconstruction, the authors combined the basic economic variables – land and employment – with those referring to community reconstruction, housing and social services. The outcome is a dual emphasis on risks to be prevented and on reconstruction strategies to be implemented: from landlessness to land-based resettlement, from joblessness to reemployment, from homelessness to house reconstruction, from marginalization to social inclusion, from increased morbidity to improved health care, from food insecurity to adequate nutrition, from loss of access to restoration of community assets and services, from social disarticulation to networks and community rebuilding. The IRR model has been increasingly used in the last several years by researchers and practitioners.

### **Recapturing the past**

Sociology, cybernetics, genetics were most affected during the communist regime. The biases knew two major instances. The most serious one is the repression of some personalities and of their work (total or partial), according to some sources, about 8000 titles were banned. The second instance was the truncated, partial and falsified representation by censoring some fragments of biographies and work that did not “harmonize” with the normative requirements of the Marxist conception. This practice was observed everywhere in the work of scientific valorization during the years of communist dictatorship, even in the case of reputed Marxist theoreticians such as C. D. Gherea.

A project of recovery and analysis of the values repressed by the communist regime was conceived in nine volumes (Badescu and Ungheanu eds., 2000). The project starts with the definition of the concept of clearing of the Romanian culture of its fundamental values, supported by the analysis of the mechanisms of repression. The concept of clearing signifies the taking out of circulation of the publications with author, without author, periodicals by the editing of prohibitive normative acts and by practices of contesting, minimalization or restitution, revalorization, reconsideration, reediting after political or conjectural calculations. The analytical grid of investigation of the repressed values includes bibliographic references doubled by an analysis of the profile of theories, concepts, ideas taken out of the circuit of culture for



half a century. The two volumes issued so far provide a general picture of the repressed ideas and of the break of the fertile dialogue with the great sociological international traditions. By recovering these sociological ideas, the authors of the *Encycopaedia of repressed values* created the chances for the “reunification” of the Romanian sociology within its natural theoretical, methodological and empirical boundaries and for reconnecting it to the great contemporary sociological traditions and currents.

*History of Romanian sociology.* A fundamental project on the Romanian sociological heritage was developed by a collective at the Institute of Sociology of the Romanian Academy, with the collaboration of researchers from the Cluj-Napoca branch of the Romanian Academy, of didactical staff from the Bucharest University, Babes-Bolyai University from Cluj-Napoca, Spiru Haret University from Bucharest, on the basis of the investigations of history of the Romanian sociology started over two decade ago (Costea, 1995, 1998; Larionescu, 1994, 1996; Costea, Larionescu and Tanasescu, 1996; Negru, 1999; Popescu, 1998).

The theoretical model of the investigations of history of the Romanian sociology is a synthesis product of the main specific sociological models named “sociology of sociology”. The main dimensions of its analytic grid are the representation of sociology as an individual creation, sociology as sociological theory, sociology as institution and sociology as a global social fact. The synthesis is founded on the empirical evidence offered by sociological texts and by other texts, which contain relevant information. The main results are the clarification of the genesis and evolution of Romanian sociology, the place and role of the discipline within the national culture during different historical periods, the national sociological contributions to the international construction of sociology as science. The volumes offer explanations, formulate hypotheses and contain relevant information about the history of the Romanian sociology.

The image of the history of Romanian sociology has lights and shadows. Among the “lights” one can mention the efforts of the authors to capture the development of ideas, to explain the intrinsic and extrinsic causes of sociological theory and research, the mechanisms and stages of institutionalization of sociology, etc. Among the “shadows” one can identify problems concerning the construction of analytical instruments and of syntheses that were produced, or concerning the connection of the Romanian sociology to the classical and contemporary foreign sources and traditions. There were numerous statements about the absolute originality of some



analyzed texts overlooking the more or less visible connections between the national sociology and Western sociological traditions. Few references are made to the history of sociology in the neighbouring countries from Central and South-Eastern Europe, in the Balkan countries.

## Conclusions

This overview of the Romanian sociology during the nineties is not exhaustive. It includes volumes considered to be representative for the main trends in the development of the discipline. Thus, present paper may offer answers, even if not complete, to some fundamental questions. Did Romanian post-communist sociology adequately respond to the challenges of the society in transition? Is sociology a science “of reaction” to events, social problems, social movements etc., or a science of anticipation of processes in social life? What kind of sociology is being currently built in post-December 1989 Romania, as seen from the point of view of its methodological orientations? How advanced is the statistical processing of the empirical evidence? What is the ratio between the quantitative and qualitative methods in sociological research? How are received in Romania “top areas” of the disciplinary research (social networks study, neo-institutional orientation, etc.)? What is its social, cultural impact? Is the Romanian sociology a science of the dialogue with the international sociology, or a provincial science, blocked in its own questions, hopes and worries?

- *Reactive versus anticipating character.* The analyzed studies showed the efforts of sociologists to identify and formulate social problems (poverty, corruption, underdevelopment, deviance, age, gender, ethnic discrimination modalities) and to come up with solutions for their alleviation. The anticipating trends were displayed mainly in certain areas of research, namely in social policy studies and in some attempts for a global assessment of the changes in economy, culture, political regime. There also were some very intuitive scenarios of what “could have been if” (Pasti, Mirou and Codita, 1997: 45-46). Despite the efforts of sociologists, there are still social problems which are insufficiently treated or not even approached by researchers, such as the informal economy and the adaptation of individuals to it, mafia-like networks and their subculture; privatization in industry, agriculture, services, culture, etc.

- *Positivism versus interpretative approaches.* Most studies presented in this paper operated between positivist methodological practices (more or less sophisticated quantitative analyses) and interpretative practices. The



constructivist approach proved its merits particularly in the symbolic areas of sociology of culture, mass-media, political communication, election mechanisms, partially in education, family, school, etc. The interpretative-symbolic discourse proved to be particularly akin to the members of the Iasi school of sociology and social psychology. Given the recent (post-December 1989) history of the constructivist approach in the Romanian sociology, its force of assertion and the hopes invested in this discourse, this orientation is likely to amplify in the future. As the level of quantitative analyses refining is concerned, with some noteworthy exceptions, most papers are quite descriptive. We have too little fundamental and derived sociological propositions articulating a coherent analytical framework which to be reproduced, tested, validated by other researchers as well.

- *Parish-ism versus universalism.* A widespread characteristic of the analyzed sociological studies is their vocation of national representativeness. Even most of the studies on the regional and local development show arguments proving the generality of conclusions beyond the regional and local boundaries. Could this peculiarity signify a sign of discipline immaturity in an époque marked more and more by differentiation, local and regional peculiarities? On the other hand, if we consider the axis national (ethnic) – specificity – universalism, we can observe a more balanced distribution of emphases. The Romanian phenomenon seems most often integrated in the international context of historical eras and periods. As seen from this angle, the most privileged are the investigations on the genesis and development of the modern Romanian society, parallel with the studies on the genesis and development of sociology as science in Romania; the studies of institution building and social policies; sociological analysis of the communist period, of the revolutionary movements of 1989 and of the genesis of the civil society; the studies of human resource management, etc. Despite this opening towards contextualization in most authors, we can also observe situations of centering on the national specificity, on the extreme originality of scientific acquirements ignoring the influences, ties between people, idea, cultures.

-*Disciplinary dialogue versus closing.* One of the most spectacular changes in the Romanian sociology during the past decade concerns the resuming of the dialogue with the regional, continental and international scientific world by means of scholarships, specialization, cooperation, sponsorship, co-authorship, editing foreign books etc. These are just a few manifestations of scientific cooperation widely spread during the past decade. There are privileged areas offered to the East-West dialogue. Among the less



active areas of the interdisciplinary dialogue are those regarding the relations between and with the East-European neighbors from the Balkans. Except the political sociology, most projects ignore the regional and local circuit of ideas. The projects of international comparative research at zonal level may sensitize the scientific world to the dangers of closing and stimulate the options that may lead to the establishment and amplification of a public East and South-East European space which is part of the continental and international public space.

-*Continuity versus discontinuity*. A large set of topic are imposed by the transition context. This is the case of civil society, social movements, restructuring of industrial enterprises, democratization , privatization, etc. But there are also sets of research topics that are common with the old sociological tradition of Gusti-Stahl school. This is the case of regional analysis, social atlas approach, community poverty at village level, promotion of qualitative methods, etc. By reference to communist period one can note a continuation of the descriptive-empiricist trend. A clear break is in the area of ideological statements that are now avoided by scientific papers and works. Marks of a new style of doing sociology are visible especially in the papers of the young sociologists (Berevoescu et al., 1999), or in the numbers of *Sociologie Românească* journal.

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## Annex

### Major Institutions in the Field of Sociology in Romania<sup>1</sup>

#### Research Institutes

- Center for Urban and Regional Sociology (CURS), Bucharest
- Institute for Marketing and Polls (IMAS), Bucharest
- JFK, Bucharest
- METROMEDIA Transilvania – Institute of Social Sciences, Cluj Napoca
- MICROMEGA Opinion Polls and Market Research, Bucharest
- National Institute of Opinion Polls and Marketing (INSOMAR), Bucharest
- Princeton Gallup Romania, Bucharest
- The Center for Market and Opinion Investigation (CSOP), Bucharest
- The Institute of Sociology of the Romanian Academy, Bucharest
- The Quality of Life Research Institute (ICCV), Bucharest

<sup>1</sup> The names of the above institutions are translated into English.



- The Research Centers in Social Sciences of the Romanian Academy, Cluj Napoca, Craiova, Iasi and Timisoara.
- The Romanian Institute for Public Opinion Polling (IRSOP), Bucharest
- The Social Theory Institute of the Romanian Academy, Bucharest

## **Sociology and Related Departments**

### *State Universities*

- The Department of Sociology and Social Work of the Bucharest University
- The Department of Sociology and History of the *Babes-Bolyai* University, Cluj Napoca
- The Department of Sociology of the *Al. I. Cuza* University, Iasi
- The Department of Sociology of the Timisoara *West* University
- The Department of Sociology and Journalism of The National School of Political and Administrative Studies, Bucharest

### *Private Universities*

- The Department of Psycho-sociology of the *Hyperion* University, Bucharest
- The Department of Psychology and Sociology of the *Spiru Haret* University, Bucharest, Brasov and Sibiu