SOCIOLOGISTS AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE

PEASANTRY IN ROMANIA, 1925-1940

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I, Raluca Mușat, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the role of sociology in producing visions of rural transformation in interwar Romania. Focusing on the Bucharest School of Sociology, led by Dimitrie Gusti, whose studies in many ways shaped broader academic, social, and political views of the peasantry, it traces the establishment of the discipline as a reputable source of knowledge about the countryside and examines the ways in which sociologists conceptualised and sought to influence the ongoing transformation of rural Romania. The theme of transformation therefore runs through the various stages in the production of sociological knowledge, from the encounter between sociologists and the peasantry, to the intellectual debates over their findings, and to the various blueprints for rural transformation the School produced, considering how sociology shaped and was in turn shaped by its relationship with both the rural world and the state. It explores the constant shift between the lament over social and cultural change in the countryside and the desire to manage its modernisation scientifically.

Examining the Bucharest School of Sociology challenges existing conceptual divisions used to understand the politics of interwar Romania. The thesis argues that the School's ethos drew in intellectuals of both the right and the left, all of whom believed that scientific knowledge harnessed to the power of the state was the only solution to Romania's 'agrarian question'. Moreover, this study makes an important contribution to the existing literature on the role of social sciences in state-building and modernisation processes by placing Romanian sociology in a wider interwar intellectual effort of finding the perfect balance between rurality and modernity. It complements and casts new light on studies concentrating mainly on Western states, colonial regimes and the Soviet Union, by looking at how the intellectuals of an independent agrarian state sought to aid its modernisation and integration into the world capitalist system. Finally, it uncovers issues that are very relevant for current debates about the fate of the peasantry in developing countries.

CONTENTS

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

ABBREVIATIONS

Arh. Naț.	Arhivele Naționale Istorice Centrale	The National Historical Archives - Central Branch
ASTRA	Asociațiunea Transilvană pentru Literatura Română și Cultura Poporului Român	The Transylvanian Association for Romanian Literature and the Culture of the Romanian People
BSS		The Bucharest School of Sociology
CNSAS	Consiliul Național pentru Studierea Arhivelor Securității	The Romanian Secret Service Archives
FCR-PC	Fundația Culturală 'Principele Carol'	The 'Prince Carol' Royal Cultural Foundation
ISR	Institutul Social Român	The Romanian Social Institute

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

SOCIOLOGY AND TRANSFORMATION IN RURAL ROMANIA

Fig. 8. — Vorniceii nunții populare în forma lor actuală

Fig. 1: The *vornicei* of the folk wedding in their contemporary appearence. Source: Henri H. Stahl, *Tehnica monografiei sociologice* (Bucharest: Ed. Institutului Social Român, 1934)

This image of a traditional wedding procession appeared in *Tehnica Monografiei Sociologice* (The Technique of Monographic Sociology), published in 1934, as an illustration of the use of photography during sociological fieldwork. Commenting on the photograph's special ability to capture the very essence of a transforming countryside, the author of the textbook, the sociologist Henri H. Stahl, remarked:

How could we use words to describe the atmosphere in the photograph which shows the old *vornicei* of the traditional folk wedding in their current guise: some on bicycles, some on horseback and some in a motorcar?[1]

Indeed, as Stahl pointed out, the camera recorded an amusing aspect of rural transformation in late 1920s Romania. Focused on the *vornicei,* whose role was to lead the procession and announce the marriage to the rest of the community, the photograph captured the locals' cunning idea of replacing the horse as the traditional means of transport with bicycles (front) and with a motorcar (back). At the same time, its reproduction in the methodology textbook made this method of mechanical reproduction into a tool for field sociology and made rural transformation itself into a sociological object of study.

Being just as difficult to express in words as the *vornicei* cyclists, the relationship between sociologists and the transformation of the peasantry in the specific context of interwar Romania is the object of this study. Focusing on the ideas, methods, and practices of Romanian sociology as pioneered by the Bucharest School of Sociology, this thesis offers a new insight into the history of social sciences by looking at the way this discipline emerged and evolved in relation to its specific object of study, the rural world and its transformation, seeking to provide an answer to the challenges of modernisation in an agrarian state. The theme that runs through this study is that of transformation, which encompassed both the social change affecting the rural world as a consequence of (national and international)

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[1] Henri H. Stahl, "Tehnica monografiei sociologice," in *Monografia - teorie și metodă* (Bucharest: Paideia, 1999), 209.

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historical shifts and the attempts to manage rural change through social engineering

projects. [2] Starting with the historical context in which Romanian sociology

developed into a 'science of the nation', this chapter introduces first the characters

and then main themes of this research.[3]

The peasant in the brave new world
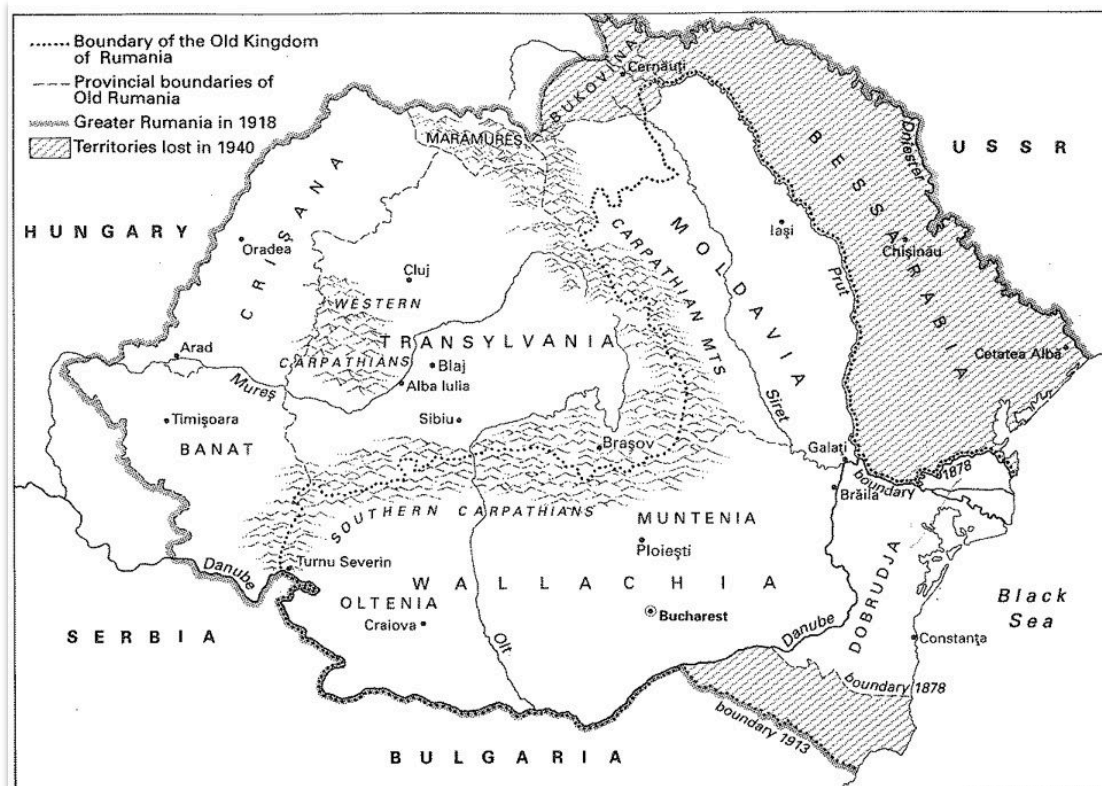
Fig. 2: Map of Romania with territorial changes 1878-1940. Source: Keith Hitchins, *Rumania 1866-1947* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994)

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[2] This use of the term transformation has been mentioned and used by Alina Mungiu-Pippidi in her study of rural modernisation during the Communist period. Alina Mungiu-Pippidi, *A tale of two villages : coerced modernization in the East European countryside* (Budapest: CEU Press, 2010), 7.
[3] Dimitrie Gusti, "Problema națiunii," *Arhiva pentru Știință și Reformă Socială* I, no. 2 (1919): 577; Dimitrie Gusti, "Știința națiunii," *Sociologie românească* II, no. 2 (1937): 49-59.

The end of the First World War and the creation of a new greater Romanian state through the 1918 unification marked the beginning of a series of important social, political, economic and cultural transformations. The addition of three new territories, Transylvania, Bukovina, and Bessarabia to the Old Kingdom (Wallachia and Moldavia) almost doubled the territory and population of the country. Crucially, it also caused a significant change in its ethnic composition, with an increase in the size and number of minority groups.[4] This led to a reordering of Romanian society along new divisions (regional and ethnic) and a re-definition of the old ones (urban-rural divide). However, underneath these socio-political changes, greater Romania remained an 'eminently agrarian state' with a majority of around eighty per cent of the population living in the countryside and belonging to what could be broadly called a peasant society.[5] Transforming the agrarian nature of the Romanian state and negotiating the rural-urban divide that characterised its society was to become one of the most important and difficult challenges for the modernisation of the country throughout the interwar period, which involved finding a new balance between rurality and modernity.

The 'end of neo-serfdom' triggered by the fall of the great European empires and the establishment of independent nation-states across Eastern Europe meant

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[4] Emphasized by many authors, the territorial change had many consequences, especially in the realm of ideology, where the idea of the nation was invoked at every step to discuss and resolve the challenges of Greater Romania's multiethnic society. Keith Hitchins, *Rumania: 1866-1947* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 333-338; Irina Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania: Regionalism, Nation Building and Ethnic Struggle, 1918-1930* (Cornell University Press, 1995), 8-9.

[5] Most of the demographic data about interwar Romania comes from the 1930 census published in Sabin Manuilă and D.C. Georgescu, *Populația României* (Bucharest: Imprimeria Națională, 1937). This data is used by Henry Lithgrow Roberts, *Rumania: political problems of an agrarian state* (Yale, London: Yale U,P; Cambridge U.P, 1951); Hitchins, *Rumania: 1866-1947*; Daniel Chirot, *Social Change in a Peripheral Society. The Creation of a Balkan Colony* (New York: Academic Press, 1976).

the rapid erosion of the old latifundia-based mode of production fuelled by the agricultural labour of quasi-enserfed peasant masses.[6] This economic order had been dominant in most Romanian provinces, both old and new, for the greater part of the nineteenth century and, despite the heated debates about the wretched state of the Romanian peasant, nothing was done to alter this unfair but stable social order.[7] In the period after the First World War and after the 1917 Russian Revolution, Romania and many other states of the region faced the challenges of modernising their political systems, of adapting their economies to the modern capitalist mode of production, and, at the same time, of restoring their internal

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[6] The term *neoiobăgie* (neoserfdom) was coined by the Romanian socialist Constantin Dobrogeanu Gherea in his *Neoiobagia. Studiu economic-sociologic al problemei noastre agrare* (Bucharest: Editura Librariei Socec, 1910). His theory, inspired by the works of the Russian populists and by Marxism directly, posited that the penetration of capitalism in the Romanian Principalities in the second half of the nineteenth century had the unexpected consequence of enserfing the peasantry who, although *de jure* free, became dependent *de facto* on the large landowners. Gherea's term has been broadly used by historians to analyse the processes of economic, political and social modernisation in Eastern Europe. The best analysis of the Romanian successive land reforms is still David Mitrany, *The Land and the Peasant in Rumania: the War and Agrarian Reform (1917-21)* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press; O.U.P., 1930). The same author discussed the end of neoserfdom in Eastern Europe after the First World War and its consequences in David Mitrany, *Marx against the peasant: a study in social dogmatism* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1951).

[7] The literature on the Romanian 'agrarian question' is extremely vast. The following selection of titles indicates several attempts to tackle it through direct studies of peasant life and of agricultural practices. These authors represent the local precursors of Romanian sociology as it was pioneered by Dimitrie Gusti and his school. Ion Ionescu de la Brad, *Agricultura Română din Judetiulu Dorohoiu* (Bucharest: Imprimeria Statului, 1866); P.S. Aurelian, *Terra nostra* (Bucharest: Tipografia Academiei Române, 1880); A.V. Gîdei, *Monografia comunei rurale Bragadiru-Bulgar din județul Ilfov, plasa Sabaru*, Ministerul de Interne (Bucharest: Imprimeria Statului, 1904); A.V. Gîdei, *Chestia țărănească. Recensiune și studiu asupra scrierii lui Spiru C. Haret* (Bucharest: Tipografia "Voința națională", 1905); A.V. Gîdei, *Programul monografiei unei comune rurale si monografia comunei rurale Bragadiru-Bulgur din plasa Sabaru, județul Ilfov* (Bucharest: Institutul de Arte Grafice si Editura Minerva, 1905); G.D. Creangă, *Proprietatea rurală și chestiunea țărănească* (Bucharest: Tipografia "Voința națională", 1905); G.D. Scraba, *Starea socială a săteanului. După ancheta privitoare anului 1905, îndeplinită cu ocaziunea ezpozițiunii generale române din 1906 de către secțiunea de economie socială* (Bucharest: Institutul de Arte Grafice "Carol Gobl", 1907); George Maior, *România agricolă. Studiu Economic*, 2nd ed. (Bucharest: Editura Tipografiei Universală Iancu Ionescu, 1911); Petru Poni, *Statistica răzeșilor* (Bucharest: Librariile Cartea Românească și Pavel Suru, 1921).

social order.[8] This had a great impact on the rural population whose multiple roles as economic producers, political actors and citizens had to be utterly redefined.

As David Mitrany pointed out, the interwar period was dominated by a new 'peasant problem', which resurfaced as a consequence of the greatest redistribution of land ever to take place in Europe in the early 1920s.[9] According to Mitrany, the result of the reforms was to '[strengthen] enormously the ancient peasant everywhere', to give the state a 'controlling function in the economic and social fields' and to 'make the whole region overwhelmingly one of small individual peasant holdings'.[10] In Romania, the legal transformations that affected the peasantry in the early 1920s served only to emphasise the 'awkward' situation of this social group in the modernising Romanian state.[11] The 1921 land reform turned peasants into landowners[12] and the new 1923 constitution, which established universal male suffrage, enabled them to participate in politics.[13] However, due both to internal political and to global economic factors, these reforms had a series of unexpected and perverse effects. In economic terms, the land reform did not make peasants into independent agricultural workers. Firstly, the redistribution of land

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[8] The fear of the spread of a Communist Revolution spreading westwards played a key role in the reformist discourse of Eastern European intellectuals such as the sociologist Dimitrie Gusti, "Comunism, socialism, anarhism, sindicalism şi bolşevism. O clasificare a sistemelor privitoare la societatea viitoare," *Arhiva pentru Ştiinţă şi Reformă Socială* II, no. 4 (1921): 295-353. On this topic, see also Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics*, 248-255.

[9] For a more detailed discussion of Eastern European land reforms, see: L.S. Stavrianos, *The Balkans since 1453*, 2nd ed. (New York: Rinehart & Company, 1959), 593-4; 619-20; 647; 677-8; Elizabeth Kontogiorgi, *Population Exchange in Greek Macedonia: the Rural Settlement of Refugees 1922-1930* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006); Nikos Mouzelis, "Greek and Bulgarian Peasants: Aspects of their Socio-Political Organisation during the Interwar Period," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 18, no. 1 (1976): 85-105.

[10] Mitrany, *Marx against the peasant*, 92-99.

[11] Teodor Shanin, *The awkward class: political sociology of peasantry in a developing society, Russia 1910-1925* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972).

[12] The most detailed and clear analyses of Romanian rural politics are still: Roberts, *Rumania*; Mitrany, *The Land and the Peasant*.

[13] David Mitrany, "The New Rumanian Constitution," *Journal of Comparative Legislation and International Law* 6, no. 1 (1924): 110-119.

from the large landowners to peasants was plagued by loopholes, which allowed the

rich to stay rich and condemned the poor to remain poor.[14] Secondly, freeing the

peasants from their landlords made them even more dependent on markets or,

conversely, isolated them completely, thus forcing them to return to subsistence

farming. In political terms, instead of empowering the peasantry directly, the new

constitution made it the object of a fierce competition between the old and the new

political parties over the votes of the new peasant electorate.[15] This unresolved

economic and political picture was reflected in an unsettled social order, which

became the centre of attention for both intellectuals and the state.

This was the context in which Romanian sociology developed as part of a

wider initiative to build specialized knowledge about Romanian society as a base for

future state reforms. Faced with the great transformations that affected Romania

and Europe more generally in this period, Romanian scholars of different disciplines

felt the need to address the future challenges of the post-war transition by

contributing to building a new modern state fit to respond to the needs of a new

social order. A pioneer of this initiative, the sociologist Dimitrie Gusti (1880 - 1955)

defined this sociology as a 'meta-discipline' able to bring together the various angles

provided by other social sciences and to shed new light on Romania's existing social

problems.[16] Since Gusti's career evolved in a tight relationship with the

development of his discipline, the brief overview of his main initiatives and projects

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[14] Stephen Fischer-Galati, "The Interwar Period," in *Romania : a historical perspective* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 293 – 319.
[15] Hitchins, *Rumania: 1866-1947*, 386.
[16] Dimitrie Gusti, *La Science de la Réalité Sociale* (Paris: Alcan. Presses Universitaires de France, 1941), 39-40.

below serves as a way of introducing the main moment and the actors of this research. [17]

Dimitrie Gusti and the Bucharest School of Sociology

Born in Iași, where he received his early education, Gusti left the University of Iași to go to study in Germany. Disappointed with the distracting atmosphere and academic life of Berlin, he moved to Leipzig, where he completed his doctorate in 1904. In this initial period of study at one of the most vibrant European universities, he became interested in the social sciences taking courses in a variety of subjects including philosophy, sociology, economics, psychology, and law, with some of Germany's leading academics. His thesis, *Egoismus und Altruismus - Zur soziologischen Motivation des praktischen Wollens* (Egotism and Altruism – the sociological motivation of practical will) was completed under the supervision of the economist Karl Bücher and the social psychologist Wilhelm Wundt. Gusti later left Leipzig returning to Berlin, where he completed a second thesis in law on

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[17] The sources on Gusti's work and career are quite uneven, following the rise and fall of academic and political interests. The biographical sources produced by his contemporaries provide brief overviews of various aspects of Gusti's academic and public life: Gheorghe Vlădescu-Răcoasă, "Profesorul D. Gusti. Viața, opera și personalitatea lui," *Arhiva pentru Știință și Reformă Socială* XVI (1936): 1070-1092; Mircea Vulcănescu, "Dimitrie Gusti - Profesorul," *Arhiva pentru Știință și Reformă Socială* XVI, no. 1910 (1936): 1198-1287. The second text has been republished as Mircea Vulcănescu, "Dimitrie Gusti - Profesorul," in *Mircea Vulcănescu. Opere. vol.II* (Bucharest: Ed. Fundației Naționale pentru Știință și Artă; Ed. Univers Enciclopedic, 2005), 929-1078. The biographies and studies from the Communist period remain the most thorough sources so far, including Gusti's complete works (six volumes) edited by Ovidiu Bădina in the late 1960s. See Ovidiu Bădina and Octavian Neamțu, *Dimitrie Gusti. Viață și personalitate* (Bucharest: Editura Tineretului, 1967); Henri H. Stahl, ed., *Dimitrie Gusti. Studii critice* (Bucharest: Ed. Meridiane, 1980); Pompiliu Caraioan, ed., *Sociologia Militans* (Bucharest: Ed. Științifică, 1971). Dimitrie Gusti, *Opere* (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Republicii Socialiste Romania). Despite the renewed interest in sociology, there have been very few works devoted to Gusti in the post-Communist period. The most recent analysis of his theories can be found in Vintilă Mihăilescu, "The Monographic School of Dimitrie Gusti. How is a "Sociology of the Nation" possible?," *Ethnologia Balkanica* 2 (1998): 47-55. The more recent interest in the Bucharest School of Sociology and its main members has also added to our understanding of Gusti's role as organiser and leader of research. Zoltán Rostás, *Atelierul gustian* (Bucharest: Ed.Tritonic, 2005); Zoltán Rostás, "The Gusti Empire. Facts and Hypotheses," *Martor. The Museum of the Romanian Peasant Anthropology Review* 3 (1998): 10-27; Sanda Golopenția, "Introducere," in *Rapsodia Epistolară II* (Bucharest: Ed. Enciclopedică, 2009), 21-46.

Grundberiffe des Pressrechts (published in 1908).[18] Whilst in the German capital, he met with other Romanian expatriates and students including the playwright Ion Luca Caragiale, who encouraged him to return to his home country rather than take up an offer to pursue and academic career in Germany.[19] Finally, to complete his academic training, Gusti spent a year in Paris studying with Emile Durkheim, another of Wundt's former students.

On his return to his home town, Iași, in 1910, Gusti was appointed Assistant Professor in History of Classical Philosophy, Ethics and Sociology at the Faculty of Letters of the city's university. There he affirmed his desire to apply his accumulated theoretical knowledge to social issues in his own country.[20] In the inaugural lecture presenting his academic interests and intentions, he singled out the agrarian question as a potential object of research for sociologists and stressed the importance of modern and practical study methods and techniques.[21] As the First World War made Iași the temporary capital of Romania, Gusti's home and library became the base of great intellectual ferment. In the spring of 1918, together with a group of famous Iași academics, he set up the *Asociația pentru Știință și Reformă Socială* (the Association for Social Science and Reform) as a forum of specialists prepared to study and debate the country's social problems and inform its future

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[18] Dimitrie Gusti, *Opere*, vol. 2, 7 vols. (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Republicii Socialiste Romania, 1968).

[19] Vlădescu-Răcoasă, "Profesorul Gusti," 1073.

[20] As a student in Leipzig, Gusti presented a paper on the agrarian problem in one of the political economy seminars. Bădina and Neamțu, *Dimitrie Gusti. Viață și personalitate*, 49-50.

[21] Dimitrie Gusti, "Introducere în cursul de istoria filosofiei grecești, etică și sociologie," in *Sociologia militans* (Bucharest: Fundația Culturală Regală 'Regele Mihai I', 1946), 30-47.

reforms.[22] Two years later, Gusti moved to the University of Bucharest to become professor of Sociology, Ethics, and Politics at the Faculty of Letters and Philosophy. This move marked the beginning of his multifaceted career at the heart of Romanian public life.

As professor of Sociology, Ethics and Politics at the University of Bucharest, Gusti was one of several famous professors (e.g. Nicolae Iorga, Vasile Pârvan, Tudor Vianu, and Nae Ionescu), who attracted many students to their lectures and seminars.[23] In the first five years at Bucharest, his seminar developed from an academic activity into a research group, finally becoming what was known as the *Școala de Sociologie de la București* (the Bucharest School of Sociology, henceforth BSS) or *Școala Românească de Monografie Sociologică* (the Monographic School of Sociology).[24] This early period coincided with the great social turmoil that had seized Romania's student population, transforming the universities into arenas of violent social and political confrontations.[25] One particular episode, which marked the encounter between theoretical knowledge and social reality, illustrated Gusti's ability to seize the opportunity to engage his sociology seminar with contemporary

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[22] In 1919, the ARSS became *Institutul Social Român* (the Romanian Social Institute). Dimitrie Gusti, "Aniversarea Institutului. Zece ani de la înființare.Cuvântarea Președintelui Institutului Social Român, D-l Dimitrie Gusti," *Arhiva pentru Știință și Reformă Socială* VIII, no. 4 (1929): 527.

[23] On Gusti's attitude to teaching, see his student's article, Vulcănescu, "Dimitrie Gusti - Profesorul," 947-955.

[24] The first term has been used by Romanian sociologists after 1965 to refer to this group. Pompiliu Caraioan, "Profesorul Dimitrie Gusti și Școala sociologică de la București," in *Sociologia Militans* (Bucharest: Ed. Științifică, 1971), 35-154. The members of the School used the second denomination to refer to their research group. Henri H. Stahl, "Școala monografiei sociologice," *Arhiva pentru Știință și Reformă Socială* XIV (1936): 1130-1165; Henri H. Stahl, *Amintiri și gânduri* (Bucharest: Ed. Minerva, 1981). I use the first term and its acronym (BSS) to differentiate between Gusti's group and other Romanian sociological schools and associations.

[25] Irina Livezeanu has discussed the rise of extreme nationalism among university youth in the immediate post-war period, as an effect of the socio-economic and political transformations of the peasantry and of the Jewish minority. 'The two emancipations, that of the peasants through the land reform and universal male suffrage and that of the Jew by mass naturalization, resulted interalia in a social transformation of the school population.' This in turn affected the universities, which expanded to accommodate both peasants and Jews, a change that led to great nationalist tensions materialised in the 1922-1923 student revolts. Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics*, 203.

events. In the winter of 1922 students occupied the University of Bucharest, declaring a general strike. The leaders of the student protest were inciting their fellows to fight not only for better living conditions, but also against the 'foreign' students of non-Romanian ethnic origin, claiming a perpetuation of the *numerus clausus*.[26] While the university roared with the rage of the protesters, barging into classes, throwing students out and beating them up, Gusti led his group of sociology students to continue their seminar in a different building, where they discussed the possible causes of the student uprising and proposed a sociological investigation of the revolts.[27] They drew up a questionnaire about student life in 1920s Bucharest and the following year conducted interviews with all new students registered at the University. The questions, published in *Arhiva pentru știință si reformă socială,* the publication of *Institutul Social Român* (the Romanian Social Institute, henceforth ISR), showed an interest in the social and economic causes of the revolt, and thus a trust in reason and scientific knowledge and its power to restore order in social chaos.[28] Moreover, this demonstrated Gusti's efforts to counter-balance the increasing politicisation of university life, by rescuing scientific knowledge from its destabilizing effects, and his desire to form new generation of specialists, whose

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[26] The *numerus clausus* policy was meant to limit the number of minority, especially Jewish, students admitted to Romanian universities'.Ibid., 243. Also see p.280 about the student agitations in 1924.

[27] Zoltán Rostás, *Monografia ca utopie. Interviuri cu Henri H. Stahl (1985-1987)* (Bucharest: Paideia, 2000), 41-43.

[28] *Arhiva pentru știință și reformă socială*, vol.1-2, anul V, 192 (Bucharest: Tip. "Reforma sociala", 1923)

experience would go beyond the academy and the library and instead become rooted in the real contact with the social world.[29]

Three years later, in the summer of 1925, the seminar went out on the first of a long series of research expeditions to different villages across Romania, which transformed the students of sociology into future members of the BSS. From then onwards, Gusti and his students concentrated their attention to the study of rural life, which became their main interest and defining object of research. Their approach to understanding and potentially solving the still unsettled agrarian question involved studying rural life through 'monographic fieldwork studies', that required direct observation primarily and only a subsequent recourse to theory. By the mid-1930s, Gusti and his school had established sociology as a discipline concentrating mainly on the rural world, which became both one of the country's main sources of expert knowledge about the peasantry and an influential way of seeing the Romanian social world, one that went beyond the academic sphere alone.

Alongside his academic career, Gusti occupied other public positions and was actively involved in the political life of the time. In the 1920s, he was president of *Casa Autonomă a Monopolurilor* (The State Monopolies Commission), president of *Societatea Română de Radiodifuziune* (The Romanian Broadcasting Service) and of

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[29] The materials on the BSS are very varied covering the methods, theory and even some aspects of the participants' private lives. Of these sources, which will be used throughout this thesis, I will only mention: Dimitrie Gusti, "Sociologia monografică. Știință a realității sociale," in *Monografia - teorie și metodă* (Bucharest: Paideia, 1999), 5-75; Traian Herseni, *Teoria monografiei sociologice* (Bucharest: Editura Institutului Social Român); Stahl, "Școala monografiei sociologice"; Traian Herseni, "Șapte ani de monografie," *Arhiva pentru Știință și Reformă Socială* (1932); Stahl, "Tehnica monografiei"; Rostás, *Monografia ca utopie*; Zoltán Rostás, *Sala luminoasă. Primii monografiști ai Școlii Gustiene* (Bucharest: Paideia, 2003).

the *Oficiul Național de Cooperație* (The National Cooperative Bureau). In 1932, he was briefly appointed Minister of Education under the Peasant Party government, a position he had to leave after only a year.[30]

In 1934, Gusti became director of *Fundația Culturală 'Principele Carol'* (the 'Prince Carol' Royal Cultural Foundation, henceforth FCR-PC), an institution funded by the populist King Carol II (1893-1953, reigned 1930-1940), a great supporter of the former's socio-cultural agenda. Gusti used this opportunity to organise *Echipele Regale Studențești* (the Royal Student Teams) and launch *muncă culturală* (cultural work), a project meant to use the energy and knowledge of university students for the modernisation and reform of the countryside. Funded by and organised under the aegis of the King, Gusti's project was also meant to counteract the political activities of the fascist grass-root organisation known as *Legiunea Arhanghelului Mihail* (The Legion of the Archangel Michael), which had been using voluntarism to raise support by organising work camps that brought urban intellectuals to the countryside in order to create a spiritual community based on new values and bonds.[31] Whilst seeking to fight it with its own weapons, the underlying principles of Gusti's cultural work, unlike the Legion's religious mysticism and revolutionary spirit, were science, reason and order. In 1938, the first year of the royal dictatorship,

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[30] Dimitrie Gusti, *Un an de activitate la Ministerul Instrucției Cultelor și Artelor: 1932-1933* (Bucharest: Tipografia "Bucovina", 1934).

[31] Of the vast literature on Romanian fascism, I draw mainly on the following works: Armin Heinen, *Legiunea 'Arhanghelul Mihai'* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2006); Rebecca Haynes, "Work camps, commerce, and the education of the 'new man' in the Romanian legionary movement," *Historical Journal* 51, no. 4 (2008): 943-967. The name of the Romanian fascist organisation has been used in different ways in the scholarly literature. Initially set up as *Legiunea 'Arhanghelul Mihail'* (The Legion of the Archangel Michael), the organisation later added a new political wing known as *Garda de Fier* (the Iron Guard). In this study, I will use the original name and the shortened variant 'the Legion' to refer to this organisation.

Gusti was able to transform this voluntary project into the Social Service, a programme of compulsory work experience in the countryside for all university students, graduates and civil servants. Although lasting only a year, this offered a clear indication of Gusti's goals and ambitions. The unique nature of Gusti's project was its attempt to transform cognitive sociology into a militant tool for modernisation in the specific context of an agrarian state.

With the advent of the Second World War and the changes in Romanian politics, Gusti was forced to retreat from the forefront of public life and to confine himself to academia. Although he remained active as a scholar during and after the war and in the early years of the Communist regime, being named President of the Romanian Academy in 1946, as the Communist government settled in, he was forced to retire, dispossessed, and died as a lodger in one of his students' houses in 1955.

Although his name dominated the entire interwar era, his academic and political personality has received little scholarly attention, especially outside of Romania. In his home country, he has been recognised mainly as the founding father of sociology, whereas his political career is less well known.[32] Unlike those of other figures of the interwar era, Gusti's complete works, published in the late 1960s, have not been republished. Also, no monograph has been devoted to him since the

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[32] The most recent work on Gusti's political career is Antonio Momoc, "O istorie politică a Şcolii Sociologice de la Bucureşti" (unpublished PhD Thesis, Universitatea din Bucureşti, 2008). Also, Rostás's books also offer details of his political engagement especially with King Carol II. Rostás, *Atelierul gustian*.

fall of communism.[33] Outside of Romania even less is available on this fascinating

scholar and public person, his works and projects being mentioned only as asides in

discussions of other authors or movements.[34] This thesis rectifies this gap by

shedding more light on the central position that Gusti played both in Romania and

on the wider international sociological arena. Within this research, Gusti's main role

is that of leader of the Bucharest School of Sociology and Director of the FCR-PC

(1934-1939). He is therefore not the leading but an important secondary character

in this thesis, who most of the time remains in the background, but whose ideas and

projects allow and inspire the other characters to action. In this sense, Gusti still

awaits his monograph to be written, although this work is devoted to some of his

major accomplishments in the field of sociology and social reform.

Gusti's initiative of organising the sociological study of the Romanian

countryside and his later attempt to use academic knowledge to reform peasant life

made sociology into much more than just an academic discipline. In marrying both a

scholarly and a political interest in the countryside with the young student

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[33] The only monograph on Gusti is Bădina and Neamțu, *Dimitrie Gusti. Viață și personalitate*. Apart from this, an important discussion of both Gusti and the School was published in the edited volume Caraioan, *Sociologia Militans*. Just before his death, Henri H. Stahl also wrote several articles on his professor's theories. Henri H. Stahl, "Geneza sistemului de "sociologie, etică și politică" al profesorului Dimitrie Gusti," *Sociologie românească. Serie Nouă* I, no. 1 (1990): 13-29; Henri H. Stahl, "Premizele Școlii Românești de Sociologie," *Sociologie românească. Serie Nouă* II, no. 5 (1990): 325-335. Finally, the most recent reassessment of Gusti's theory is Mihăilescu, "The Monographic School."

[34] At the time, Gusti and his School had gained international recognition, as proven by the frequent mentions of their research in the American sociological academic press. American Joseph S. Roucek, "Sociology in Roumania," *American Sociological Review* 3, no. 1 (1938): 54-62; Philip E. Mosely, "The Sociological School of Dimitrie Gusti," *The Sociological Review* XXVIII (April 1936): 149-165. That the School was also well-known in France, Germany, Czechoslovakia and Hungary can was shown by the list of foreign language articles compiled in "Lucrări apărute în limbi străine referitoare la Școala Sociologică de la București," in *Sociologia Militans* (Bucharest: Ed. Științifică, 1971), 210-214. More recently, Gusti has been mentioned by Maria Bucur and Vladimir Solonari for his remote connection with the interwar eugenics movement and with the population exchange initiative during the Second World War. Maria Bucur, *Eugenics and Modernization in Interwar Romania* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2002); Vladimir Solonari, *Purifying the nation: population exchange and ethnic cleansing in Nazi-allied Romania* (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2010).

generation's desire of 'going to the people', this 'new science' became the main framework of experiencing and interpreting the rural world and its on-going transformation.

Born out of Gusti's seminar, the BSS offered an institutional umbrella for students and scholars with diverse backgrounds, objectives and political views interested in studying rural life.[35] Its wide range of activities included organising research trips and fieldwork in the countryside, publishing academic and non-academic writings, collecting, and exhibiting material culture. Between 1925 and 1931, during the first phase of research, the BSS and its affiliates spent around a month each summer in a village thus covering all provinces of Greater Romania, both old and new.[36] The great success of these trips, illustrated by the increasing numbers of participants, from ten in 1925 to eighty in 1929, lay not only in the appeal to study rural life, but also in the experience and atmosphere these expeditions offered. On the one hand, for the young students, mainly urbanites, the trips were an opportunity to travel, explore and live amongst the peasantry as well as a chance to exchange ideas, draw up plans and theories and thus contribute to the consolidation of Romanian sociology. On the other, they were also chances to meet new people and spend time with other young educated people as well as with established scholars. By the early 1930s, the School had reached its maturity, having

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[35] Rostás, "The Gusti Empire. Facts and Hypotheses," 10-11.

[36] The most detailed accounts of the monographic trips are: Stahl, *Amintiri*; Zoltán Rostás, *O istorie orală a Școlii Sociologice de la București* (Bucharest: Editura Printech, 2001); Rostás, *Monografia ca utopie*; Rostás, *Sala luminoasă*; Herseni, "Șapte ani de monografie"; Stahl, "Școala monografiei sociologice." For a thorough bibliography of the school, see Lucia Apolzan, *Sate, orașe și regiuni cercetate de Institutul Social Român* (Bucharest: Institutul Social Român. Institutul de Cercetări Sociale al României, 1945).

developed a core group of leaders who became its most prominent representatives. Henri H. Stahl (1901-1991), Mircea Vulcănescu (1904-1952), and Traian Herseni (1907-1980) were recognized as the senior members of the School, who worked closely with Gusti on developing the methodology and theory of 'monographic sociology' and who were trusted to organise the research during the field trips in his absence. The younger Anton Golopenția (1909-1951), who joined the expeditions only later, was recognized as a prodigy, and became a leading member of the school in the late 1930s, after completing his doctoral studies in Germany.

The main characters of this thesis belong to two main generations of students who formed the BSS or whose views were informed and shaped by Gusti's and the BSS's sociology. At times, the School is treated as a single character, whereas at others the focus lies on individual members, whose voices and viewpoints shape the narrative. In a certain sense, the first generation of students who, by the end of this period, contributed to the rise of the discipline and were able to appropriate, criticise and transform Gusti's ideas into their own sociological positions, were the only ones who could truly call themselves sociologists, whilst their younger peers remained sociologists only at heart since the discipline was eliminated from the curriculum in 1948. I will introduce the members of the School starting with its leaders, who play the main roles in this study followed by those that play secondary or group roles.

The leaders of the Bucharest School of Sociology

Henri H. Stahl is one of the most important characters in this thesis, whose voice is often heard from a variety of sources. A student of both the Faculty of Law and of Letters, he joined Gusti's field trips in 1926, and remained the Professor's faithful student, assistant and collaborator throughout his career. Influenced by earlier studies of the Romanian peasantry by the *Sămănătorist* movement[37] and the socialist Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea (1855-1920), Stahl developed his own research interests during the field trips, focusing on the social history of the Romanian *răzeși* communities (traditional villages founded and organised by free peasants).[38] As one of the leaders of the school, he developed and published the first methodology for monographic research, followed by a long series of other textbooks of the school aimed both at students and amateur researchers. Stahl was actively involved in the debates of the well-known 'young generation' of the 1930s, being part of the *Criterion* group and contributing to its conferences and homonymous publication.[39] Although often seen as an Austro-Marxist[40], his political

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[37] This intellectual movement, named after the review *Sămănătorul* (The Sower), was 'the most dynamic of the agrarian currents burgeoning' in Romania at the beginning of the twentieth century. The movement, which combined the conservative ideas of the earlier *Junimea* (the Youth) movement with nationalist and anti-capitalist agendas, centred on the reform and enlightenment of the Romanian rural population. Unlike the other agrarian movements, like the Romanian *Poporaniști* (populists) and the socialists, the *Sămănătorists* were against social conflict, proposing a programme of peaceful reform based on culture and education. Hitchins, *Rumania: 1866-1947*, 67-68. One of the most famous representatives of this movement was the historian Nicolae Iorga (1871-1940), who Stahl acknowledged as one of his earliest sources of inspiration. Stahl, *Amintiri*, 14-15. The most thorough work on *Sămănătorism* remains Zigu Ornea, *Sămănatorismul* (Bucharest: Ed. Minerva, 1971).

[38] The *răzeși* were free peasants who owned and worked land communally in a traditional organisation called *obște*. Henri H. Stahl, "Organizarea socială a țărănimii," in *Enciclopedia României*, vol. 1 (Bucharest: Imprimeria Națională,, 1938), 563-566.

[39] The *Criterion* group was established by a group of young Romanian intellectuals as a platform for debate. In the early 1930s, its members organised series of public debates on the most controversial figures of the time, such as Lenin, Mussolini, Ghandi, and Freud. In 1934, the group also set up the short-lived *Criterion* journal. Some of the most famous members of the group were Mircea Eliade (1907-1986), Petru Comarnescu (1905-

affiliation remained unclear, Stahl seeking to remain faithful to scientific objectivism and to negotiate a middle way between right and left.[41] After working for several years as Gusti's unpaid assistant at the University of Bucharest (1929-1933), in 1934 he accepted the professor's invitation to become the Director of Research at the FCR-PC. In the mid to late 1930s, he was actively involved in the organisation, monitoring and research of *Echipele Studențești Regale* (Royal Student Teams), publishing several methodologies on cultural work. Alongside his job at FCR-PC, Stahl pursued his own research interests both individually and as leader of the Nerej research trips, which resulted in the publication of the three-volume edited monograph of this village in Vrancea County.[42] After the abolition of the Social Service on the 12th of October 1939, he left the FCR-PC and went to work for the *Institutul Central de Statistică* (Central Institute of Statistics). In 1943, he was appointed Assistant Professor of the newly created Rural Sociology course at the University of Bucharest. After the communist takeover, he disappeared from the public and academic scene for more than a decade, to be rehabilitated (together with the discipline of sociology) in the mid-1960s. His memoirs, which gave a detailed and vivid description of the BSS's activites, were published in 1981, creating

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1970), Henri H. Stahl, Emil Cioran (1910-1995) and Mircea Vulcănescu. See Mircea Vulcănescu, *Tînăra generație* (Bucharest: Ed. Compania, 2004), 189-197; Hitchins, *Rumania: 1866-1947*, 317-319.

[40] In his memoirs, Stahl mentioned the influence of his half-brother, Gaston Boeuve, better known under the name of Şerban Voinea (1873-1972), a well-known Romanian Marxist. Stahl came in contact with different schools of Marxism through his brother and his group of friends. Stahl also went to Otto Bauer's public lectures during his six months' stay in Vienna in 1922. He later acknowledged the influence of Austrian Marxism on his own work. Stahl, *Amintiri*, 19-22; Rostás, *Monografia ca utopie*, 32-34.

[41] Stânga, "Stânga sau dreapta?. În cumpăna unei atitudini," *Stânga* II, no. 9 (1933): 1.

[42] Henri H. Stahl, *Nerej, un village d'une région archaïque* (Institut de Sciences Sociales Roumaines, 1939).

the base for many future studies of the School.[43] Stahl lived to see the 1989 revolution and died in 1991 aged 90.

Mircea Vulcănescu[44] is best known as one of the representatives of the young generation of intellectuals who adopted a critical stance towards the transformations occurring in their country as an effect of modernity and of Western influences.[45] However, despite his spiritualism and philosophical affiliations with his well-known professor Nae Ionescu, Vulcănescu was also one of the leaders of the BSS and Gusti's assistant at the University of Bucharest. A student in Letters and Philosophy in the early 1920s, he was one of the few participants in the first study trip to Goicea Mare in 1925, where he became acquainted with rural life and its rapid transformation. In the later trips, Vulcănescu played a key role in systematising the theory of monographic research and became particularly interested in rural spirituality and the economics of peasant households. Although he did not write any full-length monographs, he published extensively in the cultural and political press of the time. His articles covered a great variety of topics and domains, ranging from sociology, philosophy and economics, to art, religion, and politics.[46] He was also a

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[43] Stahl, *Amintiri*.

[44] Less mentioned during communism, Vulcănescu was revived after 1989, when his works were republished first partially. A few years ago a two-volume edition of his complete works was published by the Romanian Academy. A great part in his restoration within the Romanian academic canon was played by Mircea Diaconu, researcher who devoted much time and attention to the editing of Vulcănescu's work. His annotations provide a thorough reading guide to this author's published and unpublished texts. Mircea Vulcănescu, *Opere*, 2 vols. (Bucharest: Editura Fundației Naționale pentru Știință și Artă, 2005).

[45] Vulcănescu, *Tînăra generație*. This edited volume brings together most of the newspaper articles and conference papers Vulcănescu wrote on this topic. In the English-language literature, the Romanian 'young generation', corresponding to the intellectuals born towards the end of the first decade of the twentieth century who reached maturity around the 1930s, see Philip Vanhaelemeersch, *A generation "without beliefs" and the idea of experience in Romania (1927-1934)* (Boulder: East European monographs, 2007).

[46] Vulcănescu was 'an encyclopaedist lost in parentheses that open and close onto infinity.'Eugen Simion, "Prefață," in *Mircea Vulcănescu. Opere. vol.I* (Bucharest: Ed. Fundației Naționale pentru Știință și Artă; Ed. Univers Enciclopedic, 2005), VIII.

member of the *Criterion* group and a supporter of a new spiritualism centred on the Orthodox faith. In the 1930s, Vulcănescu took a more critical stance towards the BSS and Gusti's project of social reform for the countryside. He was therefore not part of the FCR-PC's cultural work project and instead held several leading positions in *Direcția Vămilor* (The Customs Office) and *Direcția Datoriei Publice* (The Bureau for Public Debt)*,* within the Ministry of Finance, until the end of the Second World War, and taught at the University of Bucharest as Gusti's honorary assistant. He was arrested in 1946, tried as criminal of war in 1948 and sentenced to eight years imprisonment. He fell ill and died in the Aiud prison on 28 October 1952.

The third in the initial group of BSS leaders, Traian Herseni[47] joined Gusti's third expedition to Nerej in 1927, where, although still a student, he 'found his own topic, the sociology of shepherding'.[48] After graduating from Faculty of Letters at the University of Bucharest he went on to specialize in sociology at the University of Berlin (1929-1930). He was a prolific writer on sociology and social issues from the late 1920s, publishing many articles in the Cluj and Bucharest press. Also engaged in the political turmoil of the time, his position shifted from the left in the early 1930s to the right towards the end of the decade, culminating in an overtly pro-fascist

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[47] Traian Herseni remains more of a mystery for the contemporary reader. His works have not been collected yet, so the vast materials produced by the sociologists both before and after the Communist regime can only be accessed and read piecemeal. For a chronology and brief overview of his life, see Marin Diaconu, "Traian Herseni - Centenarul nașterii," *Revista Română de Sociologie. Serie nouă* XVIII, no. 1 (2007): 7-20. Also, different insights into his private life appear in Rostás's interview with his wife, Paula Herseni Zoltán Rostás, "Paula Herseni 'Erau oamenii mai apropiați unii de alții'," in *Sala luminoasă. Primii monografiști ai școlii gustiene* (Bucharest: Paideia, 2003), 197-223. Finally, the Romanian Secret Services Archives (*Consiliul Național pentru Studierea Arhivelor Securității* - CNSAS) holds rich materials on Herseni's years in prison during the Communist regime and on his life after his release, when he was being watched by the Secret Police. Ion Pașcan, "Notă informativă privind pe Traian Herseni," February 24, 1964, I/163318/3/97-101, CNSAS; "Traian Herseni," n.d., Dos. R 243772, CNSAS; "Traian Herseni," n.d., Dos. I 163318/vol.1-3, CNSAS.
[48] Stahl, *Amintiri*, 52-53.

stance during the short-lived Legionary regime (1940-1941), when he was appointed Secretary of State for Education. These political affiliations did not affect Herseni's collaboration and affiliation to the BSS throughout the interwar period. Together with Vulcănescu, he was one of the School's main theorists and unlike the latter, a prolific sociological writer. In 1934, he published *Teoria monografiei sociologice*, which, alongside Stahl's *Tehnica monografiei sociologice,* was one of the first works explaining the ideas and methods of this new type of sociology. His approach was influenced by phenomenology and he was particularly interested in the study of the Făgăraş region, leading the large-scale group research of the area in the early 1940s, which resulted in the publication of six edited volumes. Herseni also refused to join Gusti's cultural work project, although he continued his research and collaboration with the BSS. Despite a strong drive for professional affirmation, his academic career did not live up to its early promise, as he was only appointed lecturer at the University of Cluj, temporarily relocated to Sibiu, in 1943, to be then arrested in 1945, released and then finally sacked in 1948, when he had become suspect to the new government. He was imprisoned between 1951 and 1955, after which he made a slow return to academic life with the help of some friends who had the right connections in the new regime. Between 1960 and his death in 1980, he conformed with the ideological currents of the time, writing extensively on the sociology of industry, social psychology and various other topics.

Anton Golopenția was a late-comer to the monographic trips organised by the BSS, only taking part in the 1931 trip to Cornova.[49] After graduating in Law at the University of Bucharest in 1930, which he studied alongside Philosophy and Philology, he gave up the first career path, deciding to specialise in Sociology. He was immediately adopted by Gusti and Stahl, being trained by the latter in the methods of field research over the spring of 1931.[50] In his first monographic expedition, he concentrated on the process of urbanisation in the Bessarabian village of Cornova. After the brief appointment as Gusti's private secretary at the Ministry of Education, he left to pursue his doctoral studies in Germany on a Rockefeller Foundation bursary. On his return in 1937, he became the editor of the BSS's own journal, *Sociologie Românească* and joined the cultural work project as leader of the Royal Student Teams. After elaborating his own methodology of monographic research based on a combination of brief ethnographic descriptions and statistical data, Golopenția coordinated two major research projects which used some of the work of the Royal Student Teams and that of a new generation of sociology students. During the Second World War, as an employee of the Central Institute of Statistics, he coordinated and led the extensive project of identifying the ethnically Romanian population in the Soviet Union east of the River Bug in present

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[49] Anton Golopenția's work has benefitted from the dedication of the author's daughter, who has collected, and republished her father's academic writings and has published a significant amount of his private correspondence. Anton Golopenția, *Anton Golopenția. Opere complete. Sociologie* (Bucharest: Ed. Enciclopedică, 2002); Anton Golopenția, *Anton Golopenția. Opere complete. Statistică, Demografie și Geopolitică* (Bucharest: Ed. Enciclopedică, 2002); Anton Golopenția, *Ultima carte: text integral al declarațiilor în anchetă ale lui Anton Golopenția aflate în Arhivele S.R.I.*, ed. Sanda Golopenția (Bucharest: Ed. Enciclopedică, 2001); Anton Golopenția, *Ceasul misiunilor reale*, ed. Ștefania Golopentia (Bucharest: Ed. Fundației Culturale Române, 1999); Sanda Golopenția, ed., *Rapsodia Epistolară* (Bucharest: Ed. Albatros, 2004); Sanda Golopenția, ed., *Rapsodia Epistolară II* (Bucharest: Ed. Enciclopedică, 2009).
[50] Sanda Golopenția, "Cronologie," in *Anton Golopenția. Opere complete vol.I* (Bucharest: Ed. Enciclopedică, 2002), LIII.

day Ukraine.[51] After the war, he continued his work for the same Institute, then for *Institutul de Conjunctură Economică* (lit. The Institute for Economic Affairs). As the political times became more unsettled, he continued working on various as a researcher and statistician, but was finally forced to resign in 1948 and was arrested in 1950. He died in prison on 26 May 1951 before being brought to trial.

The four men whose careers I briefly summarised above formed the leading core of the BSS, who played the important role of shaping and developing its research agenda. If Gusti's contribution did not evolve much further than his initial theoretical framework of monographic sociology, his students and collaborators allowed sociological research to grow and branch out in new directions. In this thesis, I pay uneven attention to these main sociologists because of the different roles they played in the social and political life of the School and because of the positions they adopted in relation to social change. As this project's main focus is the transformation of the peasantry both as an object of study and as a target of social reform, one of the key players was Stahl, who was involved in the development of the methodology and theory of monographic fieldwork as well as of cultural work. Moreover, Stahl's main study interest was directly related to a process of rural transformation, namely the dissolution of the ancient village communities of *răzeși*. Golopenția appears in the second key role as leader of the second generation of aspiring sociologists on several research projects, which revolutionised the sociological project and produced a very different vision of social

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[51] Anton Golopenția, *Românii la Est de Bug* (Bucharest: Ed. Enciclopedică, 2006); Solonari, *Purifying*.

change in the rural world. Vulcănescu and Herseni appear more in the context of the establishment of the discipline, in the 1920s and early 1930s, marking divergent positions with the School, especially on the issue of rural transformation. Another crucial factor at play in the relative prominence of certain characters has been the availability of sources. None of the sociologists mentioned above have personal archives accessible to researchers. However, Stahl's memoirs and interviews, together with Golopenția's published correspondence, have allowed much deeper access to their academic and even private lives.[52]

The students and affiliates

Apart from the main figures of this research, there are a multitude of secondary characters who defined and shaped the personality of the BSS across its over two decades of existence. Within the School, two main generations of sociologists have been identified: that of the mid to late 1920s, corresponding to the first phase of yearly monographic field research trips to various Romanian villages, and the second generation, who studied with Gusti and his younger assistants at the University of Bucharest and were formed by the cultural work project that lasted from 1934-1938. For both groups, sociology was a formative experience of their academic years, which, although it did not become their career, nevertheless shaped their professional development and transformed their way of seeing the social world and its issues.

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[52] Stahl, *Amintiri*; Rostás, *Monografia ca utopie*; Golopenția, *Rapsodia Epistolară*; Golopenția, *Rapsodia Epistolară II*; Golopenția, *Ceasul misiunilor reale*.

The students and researchers of the first generation, who called themselves *monografiști* (monographists) after the research method devised by Gusti and his collaborators (*monografie sociologică*), brought a great variety of interests and approaches to the sociological study of the countryside, which in turn shaped their future development. Amongst the key participants in the 1925-1931 trips were: the ethnomusicologist, folklorist and composer Constantin Brăiloiu (1883 – 1958), who also collaborated with Stahl on various individual projects; Xenia Costa-Foru (1902 – 1983), who went on to co-found and manage the Romanian Graduate School of Social Work; the ethnologist Mihai Pop (1907-2000); the painter, illustrator and sculptor Mac Constantinescu, who organised the collecting of objects and the temporary exhibitions of the School; the musicologist Harry Brauner (1908-1989) and his future wife, the visual artist Elena Constante (1908 – 2005), the ethnographer and museum curator Marcela Focşa (1907 – 2002); the sociologists and future dissidents Ernest Bernea (1905 -1990), Dumitru C Amzăr (1906 – 1999), and Ion Ionică (1907 – 1944). Alongside the researchers, Iosif Berman (1859 – 1941) became the BSS's official photographer until the late 1930s, capturing not only images of rural life, but also the activities of the teams.

In the mid 1930s, after the launch of the Royal Cultural Teams and the cultural work project, the group that remained close to Gusti changed. Alongside Stahl and later Golopenția, the main cultural workers at the Royal Foundations were Octavian Neamțu (1910 – 1976), the writer Victor Ion Popa (1895 – 1946), and Emanoil Bucuța (1887-1946). Amongst the second generation of activists and

sociologist were: Gheorghe Focșa (1903-1995), the future director of the Village Museum, and the younger Miron Constantinescu (1917 – 1974), Gheorghe Retegan (1916 – 1998), and Gheorghe Serafim (1912-?), and many others. Amongst the volunteer members of the Royal Student Teams, many names remain unmentioned or even unknown, forming a varied chorus whose writings and notes on the rural world showed how the sociological ideas of the BSS leaders were interpreted and put into practice.

Sociology between rurality and modernity

My research places Romanian sociology in a wider interwar intellectual effort of finding a balance between rurality and modernity in the interwar years.[53] As Jeremy Burchardt has recently pointed out, this period was dominated, in one way or another, by questions about the 'three-way relationship between the countryside, modernisation and national identity' which 'seemed to be prominent almost everywhere' in Europe and beyond.[54] Burchardt mentions several common themes that I also touch on in my thesis: firstly, the central place rurality occupied in

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[53] More bodies of literature can be cited in relation to this topic. The first was produced by Mitrany and Roberts, mentioned earlier, who grappled with change in the agrarian societies of Eastern Europe during the interwar and shortly after the Second World War. Mitrany, *Marx against the peasant*; Henry Lithgrow Roberts, *Rumania: political problems of an agrarian state* (Yale: Oxford University Press, 1951). The second came from scholars influenced by dependency theory, like Daniel Chirot, who investigated social change in the peripheral states of Eastern Europe and South America. See the edited volume Daniel Chirot, ed., *The Origins of Backwardness in Eastern Europe: Economics and Politics from the Middle Ages Until the Early Twentieth Century* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1989).Finally, more recently, the journal *Rural History* has published an issue devoted to rurality, modernity and national identity. The articles in this issue cover a wider geographical area, from Britain to Hungary and to China, showing the many common debates and political initiatives regarding the transformation of the rural world between the two World Wars. Jeremy Burchardt, "Editorial: Rurality, Modernity and National Identity between the Wars," *Rural History* 21, no. 2 (2010): 143-150.
[54] Ibid., 143.

debates about national identity, secondly, the 'pervasive sense of rural crisis' and the anxieties that the waning of tradition would 'estrange the nation from itself', and thirdly the debates about 'modernisation in the guise of agricultural development', which 'paradoxically were seen as a way of saving the countryside from social, economic and cultural disintegration'.[55] This resonates with what other authors have shown, namely that improving living conditions in rural areas, addressing questions about rural under or over-population, rural-urban migration and social mobility more generally became an important point on national and international agendas. The League of Nations and charitable foundations such as Rockefeller and Carnegie sought to address the problems of the countryside on a global scale, thus circumscribing the rural as a site of political intervention with specific problems and needs.[56] Rurality therefore attracted the interest of both national and international forums, institutions and intellectual associations, who placed it high on their various economic, political, and cultural agendas. Returning to Burchardt's conclusions, the results of this wide interest were 'contradictory attitudes to rurality, [which became] intrinsic to interwar nation-building'.[57]

The paradoxes and ambiguities, which defined the attitudes towards the ongoing transformation of the countryside, were part of a wider struggle to understand and manage modernity. As historians of the discipline have pointed out,

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[55] Ibid., 146.

[56] Aureliu Ion Popescu, "Fundațiile Rockefeller și Carnegie din Statele Unite ale Americii," *Arhiva pentru Știință și Reformă Socială* VI, no. 3 (1926): 347-375; Violeta Emilia Plosceanu, *The Rockefeller Foundation in Romania: For a Crossed History of Social Reform and Science*, Rockefeller Archive Center Research Reports Online (Rockefeller Archive Center, 2008), www.rockarch.org/publications/resrep/pdf/plosceanu.pdf, (Accessed 20 November 2010) ; Iris Borowy, "International Social Medicine between the Wars. Positioning a Volatile Concept," *Hygienia Internationalis* 6, no. 2 (2007): 13-35.

[57] Burchardt, "Rurality and Modernity," 146.

sociology was born as a science investigating modernity and, according to Mazlish, the 'breakdown of connections' between 'Man to God and the Cosmos, of Man to Nature, and of Man to Man' and the advent of a new world order based on two new links: the cash nexus and the nation state.[58] (Western) Sociology brought together a wide spectrum from 'lamenting' the disappearance of traditional ways of life, to a desire to 'break' with the backwardness, pre-modern nature and the chains of the past.[59] In Romania, the fact that this breakdown of connections was most apparent in the countryside meant that modernity had to be negotiated through the encounter between this 'new science' and the peasantry. Like Western social scientists before and after them, Romanian sociologists responded to this in different ways, on the one hand lamenting the loss of the old connections, and on the other trying to invent new connections that would plug the countryside into the circuits of modernity without totally transforming its nature.

Sociology and transformation: from cogitans to militans

> The world cannot be changed through a system of ideals, no matter how perfect or ingenious. A future society cannot be invented; it has to be discovered, through the study of social reality, which contains the germs of the future society (…) It is therefore pointless to make plans for a future social organisation since the [present] social reality expresses everything, it is both a plan and a future.[60]

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[58] Bruce Mazlish, *A new science: the breakdown of connections and the birth of sociology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 4.

[59] In this thesis, I use Mazlish's terms 'breakers' and 'lamenters' to describe the often-ambiguous attitudes of Romanian sociologists towards the transformation of the countryside. However, having taken these terms out of their original context, I tend to use them in a slightly different way, which I explain later. Ibid., 12.

[60] Dimitrie Gusti, "Cunoaștere sociologică și acțiune culturală," *Sociologie românească* I, no. 4 (April 1936): 2.

This quote expressed Gusti's view of the relationship between sociology and transformation, clarifying the two interrelated facets of the discipline: knowledge (*cogitans*) and 'militant' action (*militans*). After identifying Romania's most acute social problems as those relating to the rural world, the BSS proceeded to scrutinise them from a wide array of disciplinary angles (politics, economics, medicine, demography, social psychology, etc). As leader of this movement, Gusti claimed that sociology could provide the widest aperture and the sharpest focus on peasant society through its interdisciplinary methods and its scientific approach. Seen as a 'micro-cosmos of the nation', the village was also an open-air laboratory for social research, where scholars could best experiment with methods and techniques without suspending the rhythm of social life.[61] In this way, sociologists engaging in a cognitive activity would immerse themselves into the realities of everyday peasant life and come out not only with an understanding of its issues, but also with the seeds for its future betterment. '*Sociologia cogitans'* therefore consisted of an interaction between methods, theory and reality, at the same time paving the way towards social action and reform.[62] However, the role of sociology did not stop there, its final goal being the realisation of a future society. The transformation implied in Gusti's term '*sociologia militans'* was that of social reform or even social engineering. Understanding social reality would naturally lead towards the realisation of the ideal society, which, unlike the utopian socialist version, was not an invention but a process of discovery. This second phase of the Professor's project

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[61] Gusti, *La Science*, 41.
[62] Dimitrie Gusti, *Sociologia militans* (Bucharest: Fundația Culturală Regală 'Regele Mihai I', 1946).

developed organically in a loose interplay between theory, practice and the political context. After the earlier 1920s phase of *sociologia cogitans*, which resulted in studies of rural life based on field research, the next decade was devoted to the project of cultural work, as a form of *sociologia militans.* This engaged young people (predominantly students) in the reform and modernisation of rural Romania. Although not embraced by researchers from the BSS, this second phase relied and built on their earlier studies to act upon rural life in an effort to transform it.

I use these two facets of sociology (*cogitans* and *militans*) to structure both the content and the theoretical framework of my research, which examines the way rural transformation was recorded, interpreted, and represented in the production of sociological knowledge and how the discipline was used in designing blueprints for social reform. Gusti's categories therefore map onto the theme of transformation, adopted in this study. The inherently contradictory character of this theme allows me to engage not only with the practical programmes for change, but also with their unexpected consequences. Furthermore, these two facets are also helpful in grappling with the three-way negotiation between the actors in the sociological project: scholars (who observed and wrote their ideas about the peasantry), the villagers (who, as the objects of knowledge, provided information about themselves and the village) and the state (who sponsored and benefited from the interaction of the previous two groups). In the rest of this introduction I will discuss the two processes of transformation my research deals with and the actors involved in the negotiation of social science and social reform.

Sociologia cogitans: *knowing, being and becoming*

In an article published in the famous intellectual review *Criterion* in 1934, Henri H. Stahl, by then one of the established representatives of the BSS, wrote:

> The land reform brought only a factual solution to our social problems, but not a spiritual one. The violent destruction of the old relations of neoserfdom in favour of the peasant classes under the terror of unstoppable [historical] events, was by no means preceded by an understanding of the village. On the contrary, it was proof of how little we know about the problems of the countryside. Once again, the solution written on paper with legal principles, seemed to be able to replace an economic organisation of social reality as it truly was. The problem of the countryside remained still open and still acute. It is only today that we have the possibility to truly understand village life. Universal suffrage has turned the peasantry into the most important factor from an electoral point of view (…) The problems of the countryside appear now clearly as our own duty.[63]

The article, entitled simply *Satul* (The Village), affirmed the national duty of intellectuals, politicians, and urbanites more generally, to learn about and to seek to understand the countryside and its problems. 'The village is the characteristic form of life of the Romanian people', Stahl argued, and thus knowing 'what the village is and could be for us, as a psychological and spiritual structure, (…) is the only way towards constituting ourselves as a modern nation'.[64]

Pointing to the unresolved problems of the rural world after the two major legal reforms of the early 1920s, Stahl reasserted the central place the 'rural' occupied in the debates about the nation and its future amongst the 'young generation' and in the Romanian public sphere more widely. Read outside its

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[63] Henri H. Stahl, *Pentru Sat* (Bucharest: Fundația Culturală Regală "Principele Carol', 1939), 73.
[64] Ibid., 70-72.

context, Stahl's definition of the village did not differ greatly from those of the chorus of intellectuals who spoke about the peasant as national 'common denominator'. As Irina Livezeanu argues, between the two World Wars, 'the peasant became the symbol of the nation and the ally of the state'.[65] Alongside her, other scholars of Romania, like Katherine Verdery and Catherine Durandin, have examined the underlying discursive link between the peasantry, the idea of the nation, and social change that intellectuals from different domains created in an effort to secure a role as the educators of the rural population and thus instruments of the state.[66] Looking at the BSS, who moved the locus of research out of the academy and into the village, this research examines the specific desire to create a scientific understanding of rurality as part of a wider effort of intellectuals to take an active part in Romania's state-building and modernisation processes.

Although this thesis does not deal directly with the theme of nationalism, it does take into account the contradictions and ambiguities the idea of the nation created in the sociological writings of the BSS. When Gusti talked of a 'science of the nation' based on the study of the village defined as the 'sanctuary where the manifestations of the people had found a refuge', he spoke the lingua franca of nationalism, which the majority of Romanian intellectuals recognised and used.[67] However, neither Gusti nor his students were interested in creating an idyllic image of rural Romania. On the contrary, the work of the School brought forth vivid images

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[65] Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics*, 11.
[66] Katherine Verdery, *National Ideology under Socialism. Identity and Cultural Politics in Ceaușescu's Romania* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 56-59; Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics*, 10-11; Catherine Durandin, *Histoire des roumains* (Paris: Fayard, 1995), 244-246.
[67] Gusti, *La Science*, 41.

of the real problems in the countryside.[68] For Gusti, 'the nation is not a symbol, but

a tangible reality, a fact of social experience, an object of precise observation, it is a

complex of rapports and relations, a synthetic unit and not simply a sum of

individuals. It is *totum* and not a *compositum.*'[69] These words expressed the very

nature of his positivism. For him, neither the nation nor the peasant were mystical

or metaphysical entities; instead, they were 'tangible realities' amenable to scientific

investigation.[70] I therefore take the term 'science of the nation' literally, as a way of

investigating 'social reality', placing the stress on the first word in both phrases. This

thesis therefore looks beyond the common theme of nationalism, which overarches

all debates about the peasant in interwar Romania, and instead focuses on the

specifically social scientific nature of the School's practices and writings.

In examining Gusti and the BSS's *sociologia cogitans*, the first part of this

research analyses the practices and processes constituting the production of

sociological knowledge about the rural world (observing, recording, writing about,

and ultimately representing) concentrating on two main sets of actors, the

sociologists and the villagers, who met and impacted upon each other in different

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[68] Similar populist and agrarian movements sprung up across Eastern Europe marking an advance from a romantic view of the countryside to a 'more realistic (one) based on the intimate knowledge of the village life and problems'. The Bucharest sociologists' understanding of the peasant resonated to some extent with what Mitrany called the 'green rising' paradigm, a political movement caught between right and left. Nevertheless, this institutional umbrella allowed many different voices to express their understanding of the reality in the countryside and their attitude towards change. In this respect, the school's ideas and positions about the Romanian countryside mirror the entire political spectrum of the time. Mitrany mentions professor Franciszek Bujak at the University of Lwow in Poland, Rudolf Herceg in Croatia, as well as the 'village explorers' in Hungary in Mitrany, *Marx against the peasant*, 132.

[69] Gusti, "Problema națiunii," 563.For a later definition of the 'nation' see Gusti, "Știința națiunii."

[70] This contrasted with the better-known view of the countryside as a place of the mind and of the soul rather than a real socio-economic and geographical unit. As Blaga famously noted in 1937, 'the "village-as-an idea"(*satul idée*) is the village that thinks of itself as "the centre of the world" and that lives within a cosmic horizon, extending into myth.' Lucian Blaga, "Elogiul satului românesc," in *Izvoade: eseuri conferințe, articole* (Bucharest: Ed. Minerva, 1972), 40.

territories, the village and the academy. These spaces defined the field of Romanian

sociology, allowing me to explore the similarities between the fieldwork practices of

the BSS and those used in other social sciences such as social and cultural

anthropology. The project of organising regular yearly trips to the countryside for

university students situated the BSS between an earlier romantic ethos of 'going to

the people', most notably represented by the Russian Narodniks, but also by the

social reformist spirit of exploring the lower classes either in urban slums as

experimented by the British or in the countryside as pioneered by the French

Frédéric Le Play, and the more recent establishment of fieldwork as a scientific

research practice of social and cultural anthropology.[71] Referring to the BSS, Mitrany

described their travels as infused with 'a spirit of pilgrimage', noting:

> There was in all this however, much more than academic interest in the group of students. These young people went into the villages not merely to study their culture and problems, but in a spirit of pilgrimage (…) They got their knowledge not from statistics and questionnaires, but by living and working as a team in some village for months at a time.[72]

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[71] On Russian thought, including Russian Populism and Socialism see Andrzej Walicki, *A History of Russian Thought: From the Enlightenment to Marxism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980). On the work of Frédéric Le Play, see Catherine Bodard Silver, ed., *Frédéric Le Play on family, work, and social change* Chicago : University of Chicago Press , 1982., n.d.; Michael Brooke, *Le Play: engineer and social scientist* (Harlow: Longmans, 1970); Philippe Périer, "Le Play and his followers: over a century of achievement," *International Social Science Journal* 50, no. 157 (1998): 343-348; Antoine Savoye, "Frédéric Le Play à la découverte de la société russe. L'expédition en Russie méridionale (1837)," *Genèses. Sciences sociales et histoire* 31, no. 31 (1998): 119-137. On British social work, especially 'slum travels' see Ellen Ross, ed., *Slum travelers : ladies and London poverty, 1860-1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007); Mariana Valverde, "The Dialectic of the Familiar and the Unfamiliar: `The Jungle' in Early Slum Travel Writing," *Sociology* 30, no. 3 (August 1996): 493-509. Finally, on the development of fieldwork in social and cultural anthropology, see Patricia A. Adler and Peter Adler, "The Past and the Future of Ethnography," *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 16, no. 4 (1987): 4-24; George W. Stocking, *Observers observed: essays on ethnographic fieldwork* (Madison, Wis: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983); George W. Stocking, *Colonial situations : essays on the contextualization of ethnographic knowledge* (Madison, Wis: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991); Jack Goody, *The expansive moment: the rise of social anthropology in Britain and Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).
[72] Mitrany, *Marx against the peasant*, 132.

Inspired by this affirmation, I consider the role of experience in the production of knowledge and employ the concept of 'practice' formulated by Pierre Bourdieu and reinterpreted by James Clifford to examine the interplay and tensions in creating the rules of the discipline.[73] Also drawing on Clifford's definition of the 'field' as 'a habitus rather than a place, a cluster of embodied dispositions and practices', I pay special attention to the way travel to and dwelling in the countryside shaped the research experience and later influenced the written visions of the rural world. I argue that this experience of the 'field'(work) contributed both to the sociological ways of seeing change in the Romanian countryside, and to the written accounts of it.[74]

The second aspect of producing Gusti's *sociologia cogitans* involved the 'translation of the field' into written accounts. The processes of representation, writing and interpretation situated the Bucharest sociologists in the wider context of intellectual debates on the peasantry, in which they used their first-hand experience of 'being there' to legitimise their vision of countryside and its transformation. In considering sociological writing(s), my study adopts the shared view that, in answering 'the question "Who is the peasant?" intellectuals embarked on a process of self-definition, both individual and national, aiming to answer who they were and

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[73] For Pierre Bourdieu's definitions of the term 'habitus' see Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: a social critique of the judgment of taste* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986); Pierre Bourdieu, *The logic of practice* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1990); Jeremy F. Lane, *Pierre Bourdieu: a critical introduction* (London: Pluto Press, 2000). For Clifford's application of the term to anthropological fieldwork, see James Clifford, *Routes. Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press, 1997), 64-76.
[74] Ibid., 69.

what their nation was'.[75] As Susan Carol Rogers pointed out with reference to post-WWII France, studies on the peasantry reflect not so much the reality of the countryside as the desired outcome of a crisis perceived by the intellectual elites.[76] Drawing on this scholarship allows me both to examine how the rural world acted as a barometer for wider issues, such as urbanisation, the development of capitalism, and the waning of traditional ways of life, and to engage with the process of objectification of the peasantry implied in the production of knowledge about them. Always written in the third person, the peasant has been defined as 'a class – object' or a 'subaltern group' by Bourdieu and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak.[77] The two terms are useful in thinking how different views about the peasantry have been used to structure discourses of reality that have ultimately reproduced the structures of social power defined by the authors. In the Romanian case, I examine if and how the making of the peasantry into an object of sociology placed them in a subaltern position in relation both to the sociologists and to the state. Drawing on Verdery's statement that,

> The discursive interest in the peasantry accomplished several things, I suggest akin to the discursive interests in women (…): it distanced and

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[75] Original quotation: 'The question "Who is the Russian peasant" was deeply embedded in the larger questions "What is Russia?" and "What will Russia be?" in a period of broad cultural self-definition'. in Cathy A. Frierson, *Peasant icons: representations of rural people in late nineteenth century Russia* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 7.

[76] Susan Carol Rogers, "Good to Think: The "Peasant" in Contemporary France," *Anthropological Quarterly* 60, no. 2 (April 1987): 56-83. In her article, Rogers refers to the famous work of Henri Mendras. See Henri Mendras, *La Fin des paysans. Changement et innovations dans les sociétés rurales française* (Paris: A.Colin, 1970). Interestingly, Stahl was present at Mendras's doctoral viva, whereas Mendras was also aware of the Romanian sociologist's research. Henri Mendras, "L'invention de la paysannerie. Un moment de l'histoire de la sociologie française d'après-guerre," *Revue française de sociologie* 41, no. 41 (2000): 545.

[77] Pierre Bourdieu, "Une classe objet," *Actes de recherche en sciences sociales* 17, no. 1 (1977): 2-5; Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?," in *Modernism to Postmodernism. An Anthology* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 319-342.

silenced them, and it rendered them an open field for the intellectuals and the state to colonize.(…) The forms of distancing varied from one group to another, but nearly all had the effect of inviting the state in and giving it work to do, and of widening the chasm between the peasants and those who claimed to speak in their defence.[78]

my research questions the idea that sociologists and the state simply 'colonised' the peasantry, investigating instead the relations between each of them in terms of set agendas, common interests, but also of resistance and dissent. I argue that if the term colonise is to be employed, the investigation should be similar to that proposed by Talal Asad when scrutinising the encounter between cultural anthropologists and the colonial state.[79] Asad argued that 'it is a mistake to view social anthropology in the colonial era as primarily an aid to colonial administration, or as a simple reflection of colonial ideology' and that one should take into account the discipline's 'profound contradictions and ambiguities – and therefore the potentialities for transcending itself' and 'to examine the ways in which it has been dialectically linked to (…) practical conditions.'[80] Drawing on Asad's comment, I also believe that Romanian sociology reflected the contradictions and ambiguities specific to its country's geopolitical position, semi-democratic regime, and uneven development.

Sociologia miltans*: acting and transforming*

The specific relationship between sociology, the state and the peasantry that developed as part of Gusti's and his School's activities lies at the intersection

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[78] Verdery, *National Identity*, 57.
[79] Talal Asad, "Introduction," in *Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter* (London: Ithaca Press, 1973), 17.
[80] Ibid., 19.

between *sociologia cognitans* and *sociologia militans*. If the first conceived of the transformation of the peasantry as a 'natural' phenomenon to be studied, the second referred to the 'artificial' process of intervening to change the rural world. These two conceptions of transformation posited different relations between knowledge and power. The first could be limited to the intellectual, academic and scholarly debates, whilst the second required the cooperation of the state and thus access to power. If in Western Europe, the emergence of social sciences was connected to the rise of what has been called biopolitics, in Eastern Europe and in Romania specifically, the origins and relations between the two were complicated by the different speeds at which academic knowledge and the form of government evolved.[81] Conversely, in the East, academic disciplines evolved as part of a constant dialogue with and exposure to Western ideas, fuelled by a steady stream of scholars training abroad, state modernisation developed towards a new mixture of coercive and disciplinary state power applied to an unevenly developed socio-economic reality, in which the role and importance of knowledge about society varied greatly.[82] Sorin Alexandrescu has recently drawn attention to the 'paradoxes of simultaneity' of Romanian modernity, contrasting the desire to speed through historic time in order to catch up with the more advanced countries fuelled by the

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[81] 'History, geography, climate, and demography of a particular country became more than mere curiosities. They were crucial elements in a new complex of power knowledge. The government, particularly the administrative apparatus needed knowledge that was concrete, specific, and measurable in order to operate efficiently. (…) The new political rationality of bio-power was therefore connected with the nascent empirical human sciences.' Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, *Michel Foucault. Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1982), 137.
[82] Laura Engelstein, "Combined Underdevelopment: Discipline and the Law in Imperial and Soviet Russia," *The American Historical Review* 98, no. 2 (1993): 344.

uneven development of knowledge with social reality.[83] In this context, intellectuals and other producers of knowledge played active roles in promoting their disciplines as useful tools for governance, seeking to become the eyes with which the state could see its social reality.

The end of the First World War appeared as a great opportunity to shift the balance between knowledge and power to their advantage. In the early 1920s Gusti pleaded for the immediate need to 'organise the competence of disinterested specialists (the scientists), [who are] solely driven by the constant and general needs of the nation'. 'Organised competence', he argued, 'places science in the service of legislation, of the systematization and rule of the general social will', making it the 'real motor of social reform based on rigorous scientific knowledge of the present social reality.' [84] His call pointed both to the social mission of the scientist intellectual and to the new role academic knowledge was to occupy in the modernisation of the Romanian state and society.

Sociologia militans belonged to a wider trust in the power of 'scientific knowledge to improve the human condition'.[85] Gusti's new project of activist cultural work launched in 1934, which transformed the village from a site of research to a site of intervention, was meant to manage the ongoing transformation of the rural world and hasten its adaptation to modernity. Like many similar initiatives elsewhere, the project made the peasantry into the targets of a 'civilising

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[83] Sorin Alexandrescu, *Paradoxul român* (Bucharest: Ed. Univers, 1998), 34-35.

[84] Dimitrie Gusti, "Realitate, știință și reformă socială. Câteva indicații asupra metodei," *Arhiva pentru Știință și Reformă Socială* I, no. 1 (1919): XXV.

[85] James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven and London: Yale U.P., 1998).

mission', combining an interest in the health, hygiene and reform of the countryside with efforts to stop or even reverse the disappearance of 'good traditions'. The goal was to find the perfect balance between the old and the new by preserving the traditional order of village life whilst improving its living standards and quality.

For Gusti, the transformation of the rural world was part of an effort to inspire Romanian governance with a general 'logic of improvement', which James Scott has called 'high modernism'. Inherent in the development of social sciences, the vision of society as perfectible through manipulation has often been adopted by authoritarian regimes as part of bold social and national reform schemes.[86] In 1930s Romania, as the country was slowly drifting towards authoritarianism, the populist King Carol II became interested in using social sciences to buttress his power and appeal to the rural population. Sponsored by the King, Gusti's *sociologia militans* involved the state in the project of ordering and shaping rural life. The project of cultural work and the bolder Social Service initiative, alongside the building of 'model villages' represented the integration of sociological knowledge and state power.

Theories, terms and definitions

This study of the BSS challenges the crude dichotomies between the European centre and periphery by showing the prominent position Romanian monographic sociology occupied in the most prestigious international academic arenas of the

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[86]According to Scott 'The scope of intervention was potentially endless. Society became an object that the state might manage and transform with a view towards perfecting it'. Ibid., 92.

time. During these two decades, Gusti and his students became actively involved in international exhibitions and conferences discussing the fate of the rural world on a global scale, and presenting their own theories and findings.[87] Some of their publications were also published in French, which made them accessible to a wider Western academic public.[88] Moreover, the BSS became a European sociological hub, their research projects attracting the attention and interest of students and scholars from Germany, Hungary, the United States, Britain and France.[89] As pointed out by an American contemporary, Romania dominated the region in terms of interest in, publications and institutions for sociological research.[90] This reveals part of the vast still unexplored territory of Central and Eastern European sociology that could contribute to a better understanding of the discipline's development on a global scale.[91] Ignoring the scholarship produced in this region, and the connections and

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[87] The BSS started organising sociological exhibitions in the late 1920s, and were present at the Barcelona International Exhibition (1929), the International Hygiene Exhibition in Dresden (1930), and later at the Paris (1937) and New York (1939) World Fairs. Of these, one of the most best known exhibition that presented Gusti's and the BSS's vision of Romanian society was the 1937 Paris World Fair, where Gusti was the main organiser of the Romanian pavilion. Laurențiu Vlad, *Imagini ale identității naționale. România și expozițiile universale de la Paris, 1867-1937* (Iași: Ed. Institutul European, 2007). Moreover, the fact that Romania was to host the 14th International Congress of Sociology in 1939 is also telling of the central place the BSS occupied on the international academic arena. The Congress had to be cancelled due to the start of the Second World War, but the papers sent in for the event were published as Institut International de Sociologie, *Travaux du XIVe Congrès international de sociologie, Bucuresti: communications.* (Bucharest: Luceafărul, 1939).

[88] For example, Gusti, *La Science*; Stahl, *Nerej, un village d'une région archaïque*; Dimitrie Gusti, Nicolae Cornatzeanu, and George Banu, *Rural life in Rumania. An abridged English version of a monograph 'La Vie Rurale en Roumanie'* (Bucharest: Fourth International Congress of Sociology, 1940).

[89] Throughout the period, the BSS functioned as a hub for researchers and artists from Britain (Hugh Seaton-Watson, David Mitrany, Lee Miller), the United States (Philip Mosely), France (Jacques Lassaigne), Belgium (Guillaume Jacquemyns), Hungary (Gábor Lükö), and Germany (Helmut Haufe). These travelling intellectuals are often mentioned in the interviews with both generations of researchers attached to the BSS. Rostás, *Sala luminoasă*; Zoltán Rostás, *Parcurs întrerupt. Discipoli din anii treizeci ai Școlii gustiene* (Bucharest: Paideia, 2006); Rostás, *Monografia ca utopie*.

[90] The American scholar Joseph Roucek pointed out that Romania had the most institutions devoted to sociology in the area and had produced some of the best-known research, alongside Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia. Joseph S. Roucek, "Sociology in Roumania"; Joseph S. Roucek, "The Development of Sociology in Yugoslavia," *American Sociological Review* 1, no. 6 (1936): 981-988.

[91] The works on Eastern European sociology have generally included single country studies which, although informative, do not show the academic networks the region was part of during this period. An example of this

dialogues between Eastern and Western academics obscures the wider network of which sociological ideas and theories were part.

The terms modernity, modernisation, and high modernism are often used in this thesis in different contexts. Both the theme of rural transformation and that of sociology relate to different meanings and aspects of modernity, which were then in turn shaped by the particular context of interwar Romania. Following Bucur's approach, I do not wish to settle on a particular definition of modernity, but to use the term as a context and a particular way of experiencing and interpreting the world. The 'body of experience' that modernity presupposes often includes both the desire to transform oneself and the world, and the fear of the loss and the possible 'breakdown' transformation can produce. In the context of states and societies, I take the term 'modernisation' to include both the social, economic and political processes affected and engendered by this new 'state of perpetual becoming' as well as the projects and visions which sought to drive, manage or shape it.[92] As Peter Wagner has pointed out, 'modernity is both conceptual and historical'.[93] My research addresses both aspects through the interplay between rural transformation and sociological thinking. This places my thesis between two directions of research that I have touched on above. On one level, it reconnects with a body of literature on Eastern European societies produced in the 1940s and 1950s, which examined the attempts of these states to modernise whilst finding a middle

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type of study is Mike Forest Keen and Janusz Mucha, eds., *Eastern Europe in transformation: the impact on sociology* (Westport, Ct: Greenwood, 1994).
[92] Marshall Berman, *All that is solid melts into air : the experience of modernity* (London: Verso, 1983), 15-16.
[93] Peter Wagner, *Theorizing modernity: Inescapability and Attainability in Social Theory* (London: Sage, 2001), 4.

way between right and left and between socialism and capitalism.[94] Also, it draws on

the later works of American sociologists like Daniel Chirot who treated Eastern

Europe and Latin America as comparable areas of dependency whose modernisation

was shaped not only by domestic factors, but also by the expansion of capitalism

from the Euro-Atlantic core to the rest of the world.[95]

On the second level, this project connects the literature on social change in

the rural world to the substantial intellectual history of interwar Romania, where

modernity and modernism constituted and defined a world of ideas, projects and

visions.[96] The literature dealing with the different projects of building,

conceptualising or adapting modernity to fit the Romanian nation, culture and

society constitute two major dominant 'classical themes': the opposition between

'modernising Europeanist' and 'anti-Western traditionalist' intellectual groups, and

that between the democratic and the fascist projects.[97] Like Alexandrescu and

Bucur, I challenge these themes by showing the image of a group that was in a

constant state of flux between cultural models, solutions, and political positions. In

this sense, like Bucur, I propose a rethinking of the labels and an attention to the

meaning that the actors involved attached to the world around them. As Carmen

Popescu argued, 'rurality' was commonly proposed as the 'a locus of modernity',

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[94] Mitrany, *Marx against the peasant*; Roberts, *Rumania*.

[95] Chirot, *Social Change*; Chirot, *The Origins of Backwardness*.

[96] Sorin Alexandrescu provides a clarification of the terms 'modernism' and modernity' in the Romanian context (1877-1989), arguing that the two represented often contradictory yet coexisting aesthetical and ethical directions. Writing on Romanian literature, he seeks to disentangle the modernist aesthetics, which writers of the time experimented with in their works, from the modern and anti-modern ethical ideals conveyed by them. Sorin Alexandrescu, *Privind înapoi, modernitatea* (Bucharest: Ed. Univers, 1999), 5-16.

[97] Alexandrescu refers to Zigu Ornea, *Anii treizeci. Extrema dreaptă românească* (Bucharest: Ed. Fundaţiei Culturale Române, 1995); Leon Volovici, *Nationalist ideology and antisemitism: the case of Romanian intellectuals in the 1930s* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1991). See Alexandrescu, *Paradoxul*.

since 'modernity could not be achieved without conceptualizing and integrating the rural dimension'.[98] Popescu's work on Romanian architecture shows the common empathy and attraction of social scientists and of artists to the rural world as a source of inspiration, and an object of study and of representation.[99] My research builds on this scholarship to account the rise of a new vision of the countryside which, like many artistic representations of the rural world, used modern methods and techniques to negotiate a local, rather than a universal version of modernity.

Apart from modernism and modernity, I use the term 'high modernism', formulated by Scott, in relation to Gusti's projects of cultural work and of building model villages. Used in a pejorative sense by Scott, this term refers to a particular extreme form of modernism which takes the 'ethos of planning, ordering and improving both nature and society' to its extreme in an effort to produce 'rational designs of natural and social order'.[100] Scott argues that the process of creating ideal visions of nature or society based on complex scientific knowledge involved a simplification of reality and a thinning of the knowledge that eliminated some of its essential features and thus resulted in disaster. Although only indicative, this term and the cluster of notions associated with it are useful in conceptualising the transformation of sociological knowledge into social reform projects both in terms of ideas and in their visual application (in the case of the model village of Dioşti). Therefore, I adopt a more neutral position to 'high modernism' than Scott does.

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[98] Carmen Popescu, "Rurality as a locus of modernity: Romanian inter-war architecture," in *Rural and Urban: Architecture between Two Cultures* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), 145.
[99] A connection noted in other contexts by James Clifford, *The predicament of culture : twentieth-century ethnography, literature, and art* (Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press, 1988), 120-122.
[100] Scott, *Seeing*, 9-11.

Sources

> Such is history. A play of life and death is sought in the calm telling of a tale, in the resurgence and denial of the origin, the unfolding of a dead past and result of a present practice. It reiterates, under another rule, the myths built upon a murder of an originary death and fashions out a language of the forever-remnant trace of a beginning that is as impossible to forget as to recover.[101]

This thesis started as a process of negotiating my own place in between a past and a present that corresponded to different spatial and historical spaces: my country of birth, Romania, and my country of residence, Britain. This practice of searching and collecting the sources for, and the writing of this history of the BSS has involved therefore a series of travels though time and space and a series of dialogues both with the living and with the dead. It is therefore important to clarify that this narrative is as much about the author as it is about her characters, although it is based on a desire to create a plurivocal interpretation of the past. In this sense, this project brings to clear focus only a few characters, whose voices I could reconstruct from the sources available.

My choice and deployment of sources represents a new approach to intellectual history of interwar Romania and to the history of sociology. This thesis brings together a thick collage of memoirs, personal correspondence, archival documents and oral history in an effort to place sociological ideas about the rural world in a context of lived experiences, which in itself was ambiguous and manifold. This has been made possible in a large part by the oral history projects conducted by

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[101] Michel de Certeau, *The Writing of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 47.

the Romanian sociologist Zoltán Rostás since the mid 1980s, who has recorded the memories of Stahl, and of other BSS members from both generations, as well as of several leaders of the Royal Student Teams. Shortly after the publication of Stahl's memoirs in 1981, Rostás initiated his first daring project of collecting the voices of the first generation of sociologists during what would be the last decade of communism. This first series of dialogues with the representatives of this discipline, which had been banned repeatedly by the regime, occurred at a time when writing was a potentially dangerous practice and was motivated by Rostás's desire to supplement the vast written material produced by the School with the undocumented accounts of its members' 'everyday lives and mentalities'.[102] Continued to include the second generation and several student volunteers, his projects not only achieved this initial goal, but also provided a moving image of the political life of the discipline itself, from its dawn in the 1920s to its troubled existence during the Communist regime. Alongside the oral history, the second set of sources used were the few existing memoirs of the School's most significant members and several collections of published correspondence. These reflected different points of view on the history of sociology during the interwar period, seen both retrospectively and at the time. The third set of sources included the various publications of the ISR, of the School, and of the FCR-PC (journals, monographs and textbooks), alongside a variety of periodicals of the time. Fourthly, in contrast with the lack of archival materials related to the activities of the first generation of BSS, I

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[102] Zoltán Rostás, "În loc de evocare," *Sociologie românească. Serie Nouă* III, no. 5 (1992): 506.

have been able to use the rich documentation produced by the FCR-PC, which is kept at the Romanian National Archives in Bucharest. This includes not only official documents and correspondence of the Foundations, but also a great variety of fieldwork materials from the cultural work expeditions organised between 1934 and 1938. The importance of this set of sources was two-fold: it alerted me of the need to accommodate the student volunteers' voices amongst those of the established sociologists, and expanded my working definition of sociology from an academic discipline to a 'civilising mission' understood not only as a set of principles, but also as a self-assigned personal duty of these young activists. Finally, the last set of sources was provided by the Romanian Secret Service Archives (*Consiliul Național pentru Studierea Arhivelor Securității* - CNSAS), where I located several personal files of the BSS members compiled by the Security Services of the pre-Communist and Communist regimes. Although they do not occupy a central role in this work, they allowed me to understand better the highly politicized role sociology played during both these periods. In helping to locate and analyse these sources I have benefited from the help and advice of several Romanian academics, researchers and archivists in Bucharest and from the information gathered in several trips to some of the villages mentioned in this project. My encounter with the villagers in Drăguș, who had garnered significant experience in talking to researchers and social scientists, helped me relate the work of the BSS to my own experience, whereas the trip to the model village Dioști placed the information I had collected on its past in its current

post-Communist context, indicating a new set of conclusions for the chapter centred on its rebuilding in the late 1930s.

The absence of sources on certain subjects and people has prevented me from touching on certain aspects of my initial plan, whereas the discovery of others, such as the FCR-PC's archives, has allowed me to cover new ground and thus taken my research in a different direction. The Village Museum archives, for example, are not open to external researchers, thus making the collection of fieldnotes from the earlier trips almost entirely inaccessible. Moreover, the personal archives of the most prominent researchers are not held by public institutions and the archive of the ISR has disappeared from either the basement or the attic of the Academy for Economic Studies in Bucharest.

Organisation

This thesis is organised chronologically in five main chapters that follow the activities of the School and of the student volunteers according to Gusti's two faces of sociology: *cogitans* and *militans*. Each chapter corresponds loosely to a particular space – the country or the city – and to a type of practice – fieldwork or writing – thus tackling the central theme of rural transformation from different angles. This approach has allowed me to anchor my research within both the existing multiple chronologies of the interwar period, and within those of the BSS. Following Stahl's memoirs, I start with the fieldwork expeditions of the School (1925-1931) and end at the beginning of the Second World War (1940), although sociology continued to exist for eight more years, until 1948 when it was banned by the Communist regime.

I have however chosen these boundaries since they designated, as Stahl mentioned, a specific set of social issues and a particular type of rural transformation, which the war and the new world order that followed disrupted and finally abolished. Moreover, this timescale also follows the lives of two generations of intellectuals that arose in the twenties and flourished in the thirties, then taking different paths during and after the war.

The first two chapters therefore concentrate on the development of the discipline and the process of making countryside into an object of sociological study. This included two main aspects: the fieldwork experience, corresponding to the period between 1925-1931, and the writing up and publication of the first works of the School in the early 1930s. Drawing on anthropological theory, the first chapter examines the encounter between the sociologists and the peasantry, their research practices and the role fieldwork as a complex set of written and unwritten practices played in developing the discipline and its methods. I argue that the theme of transformation emerged from the field experience and that this phase of field studies allowed the students to call themselves sociologists and established sociology firmly in the countryside. Set against the socio-political background of the early 1930s, the second chapter concentrates on the first writings of the School which integrated the sociologists' different positions within the heated intellectual debates of the time also reflecting the internal dissent inside the BSS which followed the data collection and fieldwork expeditions. Although mainly focused on the theme of rural transformation and its various interpretations, this chapter also looks

at the relationship that stylistic choices created between the discipline's subjects and objects, pointing to the ambiguities between the literary and the scientific writing devices. The separation between fieldwork and published writing reflected in these initial chapters, although somewhat artificial, allows me to explore the prolix nature of sociological texts, in which the efforts to build a 'sociological authority' for this new discipline became evident. Furthermore, exploring the different conversations these texts engaged in allows me to understand how the 'new science' of sociology became involved within and altered the political debates around the future of the peasantry.

A different vision of transformation emerges in chapter three, which concentrates on Gusti's project of cultural work launched after he was placed in charge of the FCR-PC. The theme of transformation is approached in two ways: firstly as a goal of academic and political agendas explicitly expressed and indirectly underlying this sociological project and, secondly as formulated in the volunteers' own vision of the countryside and of their role in influencing its future. In its first guise, I consider Gusti's project a manifestation of Scott's 'high modernist ethos', analysing its main goals and solutions for reforming the countryside. I go on to contrast the theory with the practical experience of the students, examining how the agents of change interpreted, applied and often criticised these principles. This provides an insight into how the new young generation of the mid-late 1930s used a sociological vision to understand and relate to the rural world.

Although apparently diverging from academic sociology, the cultural work project indirectly aided the continuation and expansion of the BSS's research through funding and manpower. Chapter four focuses on the published results of three research projects led by Stahl and Golopenția, to examine the new directions these scholars opened for Romanian sociology and the visions of rural transformation that underpinned them. These diverse approaches and opinions about social change shed new light both on the state of the Romanian rural world on the brink of war and, more importantly, on the conclusions these prominent sociologists had reached about the past, present, and future transformation of the Romanian peasantry.

Finally, chapter five provides a corollary of all the themes discussed in the thesis by examining the reconstruction of Dioști as a 'model village' between 1938 and 1940. Based on the ideas developed in the BSS and the principles of activist sociology that formed the base of Gusti's cultural work project, the rebuilding of Dioști as a model village represented a concrete example of reshaping rural life according to sociological principles. Retracing the story of the model village, the chapter examines the project's various intellectual roots and its realisation that transformed sociological ideas into architectural form. Moreover, by relating it to the principles of 'high modernism', it considers the interplay between scientific knowledge and state power, as well as its limits.

Chapter 1

THE EXPERIENCE OF FIELDWORK

SOCIOLOGISTS IN THE COUNTRYSIDE 1925-1932

> (…) today we take pride in our professional abilities: we know how to make people feel good around us, to remember what they least expect, to cry and sob almost on command, or laugh and dance as we like. Today we can do all this because we know that our love for the everyman is contagious and we know that we possess the craft to make it contagious. [1]
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> Henri H. Stahl, 1936

In 1936, when Henri Stahl published these thoughts in the renowned *Arhiva pentru Reformă și Știință Socială* (Archive for Social Science and Reform)*,* the Bucharest School of Sociology seemed to have conquered the countryside and transformed the peasantry into the tame objects of its research. In Stahl's view, eleven years of field encounters with villagers from across Romania had resulted in a close relationship based on 'professional abilities' and genuine emotions. However, Stahl's description hardly corresponded to the general expectations of a professional sociologist's aptitudes. He spoke of social skills rather than scientific or theoretical principles, of love instead of reason, and crowned it all with the reference to professionalism. This constituted the new ethos of the sociologists' engagement with their field, the Romanian countryside.

Between the first trip to Goicea Mare in 1925 organised by Gusti and a small group of his students and Stahl's article published eleven years later, this ethos had grown from an academic experiment combined with the students' desire to 'go to

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[1] Stahl, "Școala monografiei sociologice," 1143.

the people' into a profession and an influential way of seeing both the rural world and social reality more generally. The late 1920s and early 1930s corresponded to the rise and affirmation of the first generation of Bucharest sociologists. This period also corresponded to the development of the two main sociological practices: fieldwork and writing. The first included seven yearly trips to various Romanian villages, which lasted about a month and brought an increasing number of students and researchers from different disciplines face to face with the peasantry. This immersion into the rural world was followed by a return to the city and an intense period of writing, which resulted in a variety of points of view, directions of study, and also in certain misunderstandings between the members of the School.

By examining these two distinct phases of field sociology, the experience of fieldwork and writing up for publication, the following two chapters trace the process of sociological knowledge production across the different spaces of the country and the city, concentrating on the ways in which the BSS observed, recorded and represented the ongoing transformation of the Romanian countryside. Starting from the assumption that sociological knowledge was produced before, in and beyond the field, using a combination of pre-existing ideas and theories, of individual or group experiences, and of the writing styles, I analyse the practices, processes, and products of sociological research focusing on two main aspects: the experience of fieldwork, and the act of writing for publication.

This analytical separation between the field and writing is helpful for several reasons. To start with, there was a long gap between the fieldwork trips (1925-1931)

and the publication of the articles and regional monographs (only after 1932 and more frequently between 1936 and 1943) based on this research. At the time Stahl published the article quoted above, only a handful of articles that used the data collected in the ten years of fieldwork had been published and no stand-alone monograph. Other factors also reinforce the rationale for this separation: the fieldwork was conducted collectively, whereas the writing up was generally an individual process; the former stressed the ability to interact, converse, and observe the people around, while the latter relied on a voice, a style and a hypothesis. Therefore, while the writing and publication of sociological texts will be dealt with in the following chapter, the current one looks at the fieldwork practices of the Bucharest sociologists as they established and developed a relation to the 'field' and its people.[2] Drawing on James Clifford's definition of the 'field' as a 'contact zone'[3], where the encounter between the subjects and the objects of social knowledge takes place, my assumption is that the real contact with the countryside and the experience of 'being there' played a major role in shaping the researchers' attitudes towards the countryside, focusing their attention on its transformation, and contributed to the subsequent professionalisation of the discipline.[4] Retracing the way the young sociologists experienced the countryside will therefore illuminate the

[2] My approach has been informed by the extensive literature on anthropological fieldwork, which engages with different ways this practice has shaped the relationship between scholars and their objects of study (Bourdieu), that between scholars and the wider academic arena (Clifford) and points to the important role of this experience in the making of academic truths (Clifford, Borneman and Hammoudi). Pierre Bourdieu, "Participant Objectivation," *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 9, no. 2 (June 2003): 281-294; Timothy Jenkins, "Fieldwork and the perception of everyday life," *Man, New Series* 29, no. 2 (June 1994): 433-455; Clifford, *The predicament*; John Borneman and Abdellah Hammoudi, "The Fieldwork Encounter, Experience and the Making of Truth," in *Being There:The Fieldwork Encounter and The Making of Truth* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008).
[3] Clifford, *Routes*, 192.
[4] Borneman and Hammoudi, "The Fieldwork Encounter, Experience and the Making of Truth," 19-20.

ways fieldwork shaped their views, clarified or confused their ideas and empowered them to speak about and on behalf of the people.

This chapter covers the first stage in the formation of the BSS, from 1925 to the early 1930s, in other words from the trip to Goicea Mare (1925) to the Cornova expedition (1931). This follows Henri Stahl's chronology of the School that separated this first phase of monographic research from the following two years (1932-34), when the School experienced what he called 'a growth crisis' that resulted in some researchers leaving the main group.[5] In 1932, the fieldwork research was formally suspended and replaced by two 'writing-up trips' to the village of Drăguş (1932) and to the town of Făgăraș (1933), also indicating a break between two phases in the life of the School. The first section of this chapter circumscribes the ideas and the people that fed into the fieldwork experience, starting with an overview of Gusti's theoretical framework on which the School based its empirical studies followed by a survey of the first generation of sociologists.[6] The second section concentrates on the embodied and spatial experience of fieldwork, travel and dwelling. Its underlying argument is that the basics of how research was organised and performed affected and shaped the scholars' way of seeing the rural world. This pre-empts the following section on the development of the methodology as a means to systematise the reality under observation, marking the passage to the conscious reflection on the best practice of research. How to contact, observe, and record data will be discussed by comparing and contrasting Stahl's methodology with what 'really happened' in

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[5] Stahl, *Amintiri*, 195-273.
[6] Zoltan Rostás's oral history of the School's first generation of students provides a vivid picture of this group. Rostás, *Sala luminoasă*.

the field. The last section considers the field experience as a factor of change in the lives of the researchers and as a framework for observing and recording the transformation of the countryside. The final argument is that fieldwork constituted a formative experience in the lives of both university students and professional researchers, who subsequently brought the rural world and its transformation into the centre of public attention.

The experience of fieldwork

Preparations

Going out of the seminar rooms, into the countryside was a daring step for Romanian academic sociology. Although used in many other disciplines like history, archaeology, and geography, fieldwork was not widely employed by sociologists, either foreign or Romanian, who preferred to look at their objects of study and theorise about them from a distance.[7] Gusti's proposal to conduct direct studies of social reality aimed to overcome the limitations of 'armchair sociology' by using methodologies drawn from other disciplines within his own sociological framework.[8]

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[7] In an interview, Stahl commented that he did not think Gusti had been influenced by the historian Vasile Pârvan and the geographer Simion Mehedinți in undertaking field research, noting that Wundt's influence had been crucial in the Professor's methodological choices. Fieldwork, Stahl thought, 'was one of Gusti's older ideas, which came to him because he was Wundt's student, who knew that (…) social reality was the 'sociologist's laboratory'. Rostás, *Monografia ca utopie*, 45-6. Moreover, Gusti was aware of Frédéric Le Play's (1806-1882) travels and studies, and was also influenced by the famous geographer Friedrich Ratzel (1844-1904), who had also travelled extensively.

[8] The beginning of academic fieldwork research in social sciences is generally situated at the turn of the century, with the anthropologists Franz Boas's first interest in 'ethnographic' sources, Malinowski's first field expeditions, and British and American social researchers' studies of the poor in their respective societies. See Patricia A. Adler and Peter Adler, "The Past and the Future of Ethnography," *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 16, no. 4

An extension of the university seminar, field research brought the students into the

midst of village life, directing their attention towards the concrete issues of the rural

world. In post-1918 Romania, the peasantry occupied a very delicate position in the

new social order, as a group that needed special attention in adapting and

contributing to the modern world. The political, social and economic changes that

had affected the country since the end of the Great War also influenced the

innovations in the practices of sociology. Apart from being a crucial object of study,

the village offered a perfect 'laboratory of social research', with its self-contained

universe of human life that one could access and observe uninhibitedly. Although

Gusti first mentioned monographic research in his 1910 inaugural lecture at the

University of Iași, his plans for fieldwork were realized only fifteen years later.[9]

The student revolts of 1922 were the catalyst for sociology's involvement

with social reality, first in the academic world and later in the countryside.[10] In

response to the young generation's xenophobic requests for the perpetuation of

restrictions on non-ethnic Romanians, the sociology seminar organized a survey

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(1987): 8-9. However, the use of fieldwork and of direct observation in social studies dates form the early to mid-nineteenth century, when studies of the poor and of the working classes were conducted in Britain and in France, both in urban and rural areas. Frédéric Le Play, a widely-regarded scholar who had an important influence on Gusti (see above), conducted research in French mining communities, but later expanded his studies to other European countries and even to Russia. Philippe Périer, "Le Play and his followers: over a century of achievement"; Savoye, "Frédéric Le Play à la découverte de la société russe. L'expédition en Russie méridionale (1837)." In a speech at the Romanian Academy, Gusti mentioned, apart from Le Play, two other contemporary uses of sociological field research, the case studies and rural planning initiatives (the Tennessee Valley project) based on the research of American rural sociologists and the sociography pioneered by the Dutch Sebald Rudolf Steinmetz. Dimitrie Gusti, "Monografia sociologică. Planul de lucru," in *Sociologia militans* (Bucharest: Fundația Regele Mihai I, 1946), 150. In Romania, field-based research in the countryside had been used since the nineteenth century, in folklore, ethnography, agronomy and land economics. In his research, Gusti referred to Bogdan Petriceicu-Hasdeu, Alexandru Odobescu and Ion Ionescu de la Brad amongst others as influences on his work. Gusti, *La Science*, 93-95.

[9] Gusti, "Introducere în cursul de istoria filosofiei grecești, etică și sociologie."

[10] Irina Livezeanu's book discusses the student revolts in relation to the rise of Romanian fascism in Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics*.

amongst students aimed at understanding the causes of the student revolts. This first engagement with concrete social issues then seems to have stimulated the interest in another burning issue of Romanian society – the transformation of the countryside. Gusti's seminar assistant at the time, Gheorghe Vlădescu-Răcoasă, later claimed that he was the one who reminded the professor of his early-career plans to study the countryside.[11] Whether this is true or not, the sociology students followed the initiative with enthusiasm.

The first trip - to Goicea Mare, a village in the South-Western province of Oltenia - was planned for over two years in the sociology seminars at the University of Bucharest. It finally took place in the spring of 1925. Although it marked the beginning of the School's field research, this ten day long expedition constituted only a dress rehearsal for both Gusti and his students.[12] After lengthy debates over field methods caused by the first outdoor experience, the seminar organised yearly trips to a series of villages in all provinces of Greater Romanian (both old and new): in Wallachia, they visited Rușeţu, Brăila in 1926; Nerej, Vrancea (1927) in Moldavia; in Bukovina, they chose Fundul Moldovei, Câmpulung (1928); in Transylvania, Drăguș, Făgăraș (1929); then returning to Oltenia they visited Runcu, Gorj (1930); and finally, in Bessarabia, they went to Cornova, Orhei (1931).[13] Throughout this period the importance of fieldwork grew, the methods, interests and participants

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[11] Vlădescu-Răcoasă, "Profesorul Gusti," 1076.

[12] There are very few sources that talk about the trip to Goicea Mare. The only participant interviewed by Rostás was Vlădescu-Răcoasă. Rostás, *Sala luminoasă*, 366-367.

[13] In a more recent article, Stahl mentioned that the villages had been chosen to represent the new Romanian nation, with all its provinces. Stahl, "Premizele," 329-330. On the first series of monographic trips, see: Stahl, *Amintiri*; Rostás, *O istorie orală*; Rostás, *Monografia ca utopie*; Rostás, *Sala luminoasă*; Herseni, "Şapte ani de monografie"; Stahl, "Şcoala monografiei sociologice."For a thorough bibliography of the school, see Apolzan, *Sate, orașe și regiuni cercetate de Institutul Social Român*; Rostás, "The Gusti Empire. Facts and Hypotheses."

changing from one summer to the next. From Nerej onwards, the standard duration of the research trips was set at one month. A senior group of researchers comprising of Stahl, Traian Herseni, and Mircea Vulcănescu affirmed themselves as the leading core of the School, around Gusti, often conducting the field trips without him. The fame and appeal of these summer research outings went beyond the sociology course and the Faculty of Letters, spreading to students and even professional researchers from other disciplines. The largest trips of 1928 and 1929, to Fundul Moldovei and Drăguş respectively, reached an average of eighty participants. To understand how fieldwork gained such importance in the mid to late-1920s, we need to take a step back and look at the theoretical ideas that lay behind this new academic enterprise. I will start with a brief overview of Gusti's ideas to then consider their reception amongst his apprentices.

Dimitrie Gusti's theory and its uses

Gusti's sociological thought developed in the midst of and as a response to the international debates over the definition, methods and the role of social sciences both inside the academy and in relation to politics, especially in Germany, the country of his academic formation.

Gusti's sociological theory was important in the development of the BSS, since it offered the conceptual and methodological starting point for his followers' different individual approaches. His system of thought, developed mostly during his

university years in Germany and France, and improved throughout his teaching career at Iași and Bucharest, proposed a voluntarist approach to the social world, understood not as something above, beyond or outside individuals, but as 'a reality *sui generis*', 'the base of the objective culture and the institutions of a certain epoch'.[14] Central to his thought, the concept of 'social will' appeared as the unifying principle and main motor of social life, both in its static from – what is – and in its dynamic form – what will, may, could or should be. Social will, according to Gusti, could be manifested by different social units of various sizes and forms, from tribes and village communities to nations and humanity as a whole. In terms of organisation, Gusti thought the social world was made up of 'sets of units interacting amongst each other and thus producing social processes'.[15] Social reality as a whole and each unit in turn were conditioned by specific determining factors (cosmological, psychological, biological, historical), which he called *'cadre'* (contexts). The negotiation and adaptation of each unit, through its social will, to these factors produced a variety of social creations, known as '*manifestări*' (manifestations) (e.g. economic, spiritual, political and juridical).[16] In his view, this constituted the 'law of social parallellism', later also known as the 'law of social equilibrium', which stated that each society, guided by its social will, tended towards equilibrium by balancing all its contexts and manifestations. Gusti gave equal weight

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[14] In a presentation of his sociological theory in a French-language text, Gusti explained his use of the term *cadru* Gusti as follows: 'The social is primarily the result of an interplay between spatial, temporal, biological and spiritual circumstances, which form the *cadre* (…), that is what we call the *milieu*, which some sociologists since Spencer and Taine, have mentioned without elaborating it further'. Gusti, *La Science*, 21.
[15] Ibid., 49-50.
[16] Ibid., 21.

to all contexts and manifestations, and posited that disregarding one or another would lead to a social disequilibrium. In Vintilă Mihailescu's words, 'the law of social parallelism states the co-existence of all these components and the obligation of taking them all into consideration when describing social reality'.[17] Gusti's vision of the social was dynamic, stating that 'social reality is not something immutable, but in continuous activity, in continuous transformation.'[18] This theory, which sought to bring together many different viewpoints on the evasive concept of 'the social', posited sociology as an overarching and systematising science able to bring together the results of other partial disciplines dealing with social life. Furthermore, Gusti's theory of 'sociological parallelism' or 'equillibrium' clarified the importance of his discipline in diagnosing the problems and unbalances of social life and in potentially helping each unit to use its social will to restore its equilibrium.

This theoretical framework combining holism and voluntarism allowed a great deal of interpretation and adaptation, since Gusti encouraged his students to experiment with it when studying the realities of rural life through direct observation. The very principle of organising observational teams was reliant on the '*cadre și manifestări*' scheme bound together in the law of sociological parallelism, as the participants were assigned to investigate each of these aspects and to collect their material on the same basis. Gusti's holistic and dynamic vision of society therefore shaped not only the field methods but also his students and collaborators' way of seeing rural life. The scheme gave the scholars a grid to apply when looking

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[17] Mihăilescu, "The Monographic School," 51.
[18] Gusti, *La Science*, 67.

at their living objects of study. In an interview with Zoltan Rostás, Stahl commented

about the flexibility of Gusti's framework:

> Gusti would often say: this is how many [*cadre și manifestări*] I found, if you
> find a fifth *cadru* (context) or a fifth *manifestare* (manifestation), then we can
> introduce them straightaway. And it is hard to find it (…) I didn't agree with
> him on the psychological context (…) but apart from that I find his organising
> system perfect. Even today, in 1985, if I had to solve a problem, I would think
> in terms of *cadre și manifestări* (…) Whether I agree or not with the Gustian
> system, the inventory of categories it established still stands. (…) I confess
> that, as a Marxist, I am not bothered by this at all.[19]

Despite its flexibility and adaptability, his theory contained a contradiction noted by

Mihăilescu, that between the empiricist approach to social reality reflected in the

method of direct observation and the seemingly idealist concept of social will.[20]

Therefore, if the contexts and manifestations scheme seemed extremely useful in

field research, concepts like sociological parallelism and social will proved less

productive and caused controversies amongst Gusti's main followers. This would

affect the outcome of monographic research and eventually lead to the appearance

of different and often opposing positions within the School and its disciples. The

very idea of parallelism, on the one hand, gave rise to two main directions – a more

'materialist' left (Stahl and Golopenția), and a 'spiritual' right wing, who focused on

different prevailing features of rural life (Herseni, Vulcănescu, and the *Rânduiala*

group).[21] Voluntarism conceptualized as social will, on the other hand, played a

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[19] Rostás, *Monografia ca utopie*, 44-45.
[20] Despite the common readings of 'social will' as an idealist concept, Stahl interpreted it as follows: '[the issue of social will] has been misunderstood. (...) It is said that it is an idealist attitude of his. Not at all. He thought that political action was very important in social life. I don't know wether he was right to place so much weight on politics, but there is no doubt that it constituted action (...), social will. Ibid., 44.
[21] The *Rânduiala* group, formed by Ernest Bernea, Ion Ionică, Dumitru Amzăr and Ion Sămărineanu, was set up around 1935, when the four rejected Gusti's enterprise and published their own homonymous review.

greater role in Gusti's political career and militant sociology than in the first phase of research.

In this context, the fieldwork experience was crucial for the development of the School's theoretical and consequently political positions. Building on the empiricist part of Gusti's theory, which held direct observation to be the best and only way to produce sociological knowledge, his students and collaborators gradually elaborated both the methods of research and refined Gusti's contexts and manifestations, adjusting them to the constraints and realities of the field. The rest of this chapter will therefore be devoted to understanding how the practice of fieldwork shaped the habitus of the Bucharest sociologists and contributed to their ways of seeing the peasantry and of making sense of rural transformation in the period between 1925-1931.[22] I will start this section with an overview of the participants in the fieldwork trips and then concentrate on the spatial practices of getting to and being in the field, travel and dwelling.

The monographists: background, age, gender, class

The official photos of the BSS on their 1925 and 1926 trips show two groups of men wearing three-piece suits complete with ties and fedora hats that set them in stark

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Rânduiala: arhiva de gând și faptă românească (eds. Dumitru C. Amz[r; Ernest Bernea; Ion I. Ionică; Ion Sămărineanu) was published between 1934-1938. In his interview with Rostás, Bernea recounted the story of this publication. Zoltán Rostás, "Ernest Bernea. 'Eram mai puțin năist decât alții'," in *Sala luminoasă. Primii monografiști ai școlii gustiene* (Bucharest: Paideia, 2003), 34-36.

[22] Synthesising the different definitions provided by Bourdieu, Jeremy Lane notes: 'The *habitus* describes the process whereby a set of norms and conventions becomes sedimented into a structure of dispositions and expectations, of 'practical taxonomies', of ways of seeing and doing in the world that are neither entirely conscious nor wholly unconscious but rather 'practically' oriented towards certain implicit goals.' Lane, *Pierre Bourdieu: a critical introduction*, 195. For one of Bourdieu's own definitions of the term, see: Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 170.

contrast with the rustic background. Unlike these early photos, Iosif Berman's reportage-style pictures taken from 1927 onwards captured groups of young modern men and women in action around the village (the team at dinner, in carts, on a raft, and other such activities).[23] Both groups represented sociological fieldworkers, who came to be known as *monografiști* (monographists) after the written account (the village monograph), which they were meant to produce. These different scenes of research represented both an adaptation of the fieldworkers to being out in the rural landscape, amongst the villagers, and the generational divide between the older students and those belonging to the young generation born in the first decade of the century that entered the expanding Romanian universities.[24]

The age, social background and gender of the first generation of fieldworkers offer some indication of their position in the intellectual landscape of interwar Romania. Apart from the 'veteran' monographists, like Stahl, who was born in 1901, followed by Mircea Vulcănescu and D.C.Georgescu, both born in 1904, most of the other participants were in their early 20s at Nerej (1927) and Fundul Moldovei (1928). Herseni, for example, was only 20 when he joined the teams in 1927. As Stahl explained, they were all part of a generation that did not experience the war as recruits, but who felt they were responsible for the future of their country.[25] Unlike the older students of the previous generation demonstrating in the Romanian

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[23] These photographs were printed as part of Stahl's article on the activities of BSS. Stahl, "Şcoala monografiei sociologice," 1165. Also, many of Iosif Berman's photographs have been republished in Ioana Popescu, *Iosif Berman. A photo album. Supplement of Martor - The Museum of the Romanian Peasant Anthropology Review* (Bucharest: Museum of the Romanian Peasant, 1998).

[24] 'The number of students enrolled at the University of Bucharest rose from 4,380 in 1915-1916 to 6,272 in 1918-1919, and to 22,902 in 1929-1930' in Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics*, 235.

[25] Stahl, *Amintiri.*, p.40-1

universities in 1922, the monographists chose another type of social engagement, one in line with Gusti's reformist social values.[26] Their optimism and enthusiasm had initially little in common with the attitude of their protesting colleagues. The sociology students went to the countryside neither to escape their modern urban lives, nor to embrace a peasant lifestyle. Instead, they went as explorers, taking their modern attitudes with them to the villages.

The presence of women in the field reflected another change in urban Romanian society. Despite failing to receive the right to vote in 1923, the 1920s saw a dramatic increase in the number of women entering higher education.[27] Young Romanian women manifested a preference for the Faculty of Letters and Philosophy, hence their participation in monographic fieldwork (sociology was one of the compulsory courses on their curriculum). On the one hand, this marked a democratisation of specialised studies, although the leadership remained in the hands of the older male students.[28] On the other, gender-mixed fieldwork added the opportunity of romance to the academic experience.[29]

In terms of social background, the first generation of sociologists was mostly dominated by urban middle-class students. Taking just a few examples, Stahl was

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[26] Philip Vanhaelemeersch sets out the difference between the war-children generation to whom the fascist leader Corneliu Zelea-Codreanu belonged to and the 'generation without beliefs' of those who were only children during the war, like Mircea Eliade and Petru Comarnescu. Vanhaelemeersch, *A generation*, 16-8.

[27] Roman Cressin's study shows the steady increase of women's enrolment in Romanian universities from 1922 to 1930. If in the year of study 1922/3, women made up for 17% of the academic population, in 1929/30 it reached 30.2%. Roman Cressin, "Ancheta sociologică aspura vieţii studenţeşti. Rezultatele statistice ale anchetei întreprinse în toamna anului 1930 la Facultatea de Filozofie şi Litere a Universităţii din Bucureşti," *Arhiva pentru Ştiinţă şi Reformă Socială* (1936): 644-5.

[28] Rostás, *Monografia ca utopie*, 87.

[29] Zoltán Rostás, "Harry Brauner şi Lena Constante," in *Sala luminoasă. Primii monografişti ai şcolii gustiene* (Bucharest: Paideia, 2003), 71-86; Zoltán Rostás, "Marcela Focşa 'Pe vremea mea fiecare era altfel'," in *Sala luminoasă. Primii monografişti ai şcolii gustiene* (Bucharest: Paideia, 2003), 109-196; Rostás, "Paula Herseni."

born in Bucharest, to a family of highly educated intellectuals. Vulcănescu, one of the School's oldest members who became Gusti's assistant at the University of Bucharest, also grew up in a middle-class family in Bucharest (his father was a financial inspector and his mother was a housewife). Of the School's later recruits, Golopenția and Ștefania Cristescu, his future wife, also came from the provincial *petite bourgeoisie*.[30] Paula Herseni was also from the capital and so were most of the other women involved in the monographic project: Elena Constante, Marcela Focșa, Xenia Costa-Foru, and others.[31] Of course there were also some counter-examples such as Herseni, who came from a rural family background.[32]

Unlike the subsequent groups of students who went to do research or voluntary work in the Romanian countryside in the mid and late 1930s, the participants of the 1920s trips had grown up in a different environment from that of the people they met and studied. They were university students in their early twenties, who came from a predominantly urban middle class background, interested in breaking down, at least in theory, the class and gender barriers imposed by the previous generations. They related to rural life with the ease and naturalness characteristic of their generation's sense of modernity, integrating fieldwork into the experience of belonging to an emerging intellectual elite.[33]

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[30] Golopenția, "Cronologie."
[31] Rostás, *Sala luminoasă*.
[32] Diaconu, "Herseni," 3.
[33] Vanhaelemeersch, *A generation*, 19-22.

Travel

The relationship of the BSS with the 'field' was in the first instance a travel experience. Unlike armchair sociologists, Gusti's students were trained to go out and collect their own first-hand data about social reality for their writings. Their practical apprenticeship started on the platform of the Bucharest main railway station. The journey to the villages they visited should therefore not be excluded from a study of their research practices since it played an important role in setting the mood, expectations, and initial contacts amongst the participants. Moreover, travel contributed to the spatial framework of the research, in which the two parties were situated - one mobile, the scholars (those who go to do fieldwork) and one fixed, the peasantry (those who inhabit the field). Thus, an examination of their travel can help us reconstruct the habitus of the first generation of Romanian rural sociologists.

To unpack the fieldwork practices the School developed over the years, I will draw on Clifford's discussion of the 'fieldwork experience' as one of 'travel and dwelling'.[34] These non-academic practices reveal two often forgotten dimensions of research: space and the body. According to Clifford, Western anthropology privileges dwelling over travel, since, by immersing themselves in the culture they study, anthropologists become 'homebodies abroad'. Looking at travel eliminates the bias for considering the 'field' as a finite, clearly defined location and draws attention to the flows and in-between spaces that anthropology and field-based sociology also presuppose. In dealing with travel, I will also consider the importance

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[34] Clifford, *Routes*, 64-76.

of the 'style' and the 'technology of travel' as conceptualised by Judith Adler.[35]

These concepts clarify why the School opted for collective travel by train, for instance, and the implications of this choice. Also, looking at the other means and types of travel will clarify the way the 'field' was perceived, constructed, and experienced spatially.

The Romanian monographists travelled in many different ways during their repeated visits to the Romanian countryside in the 1920s. They travelled to get to and from the city to the country, and also travelled in and around the villages. The most striking aspect of their travels was its collective nature. Unlike modern anthropologists, the Bucharest sociologists travelled 'in packs', recruiting more and more members from one trip to the next.[36] The emphasis on the team and on collective work has influenced the development of Romanian social sciences to this day. The monographic legacy was present during communism in other disciplines, such as ethnography and folklore. Mihai Pop was one of the continuators of a sociological approach in ethnography.[37] Moreover, it not only influenced the results of their work at the time, but it also had a great social importance for the relationship between the peasantry and the intellectuals (university graduates) during the interwar period.

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[35] Judith Adler, "Travel as Performed Art," *American Journal of Sociology* 94, no. 6 (May 1989): 14.

[36] The number of participants grew from eleven at Goicea Mare in 1925 to seventeen at Rușețu in 1926 to forty-one at Nerej in 1927 to sixty at Fundul Moldovei in 1928 and reached eighty-nine at Drăguș in 1929, to then decrease to sixty-seven at Runcu in 1930, then fifty-five at Cornova in 1931. Rostás, "The Gusti Empire. Facts and Hypotheses," 20.

[37] Zoltán Rostás, "Mihai Pop. 'Arhiva de folclor... la șura de fân'," in *Sala luminoasă. Primii monografiști ai școlii gustiene* (Bucharest: Paideia, 2003), 261-360; Ioana Fruntelată, Adrian Stoicescu, and Rodica Zane, eds., *Centenar Mihai Pop 1907-2007. Studii, evocări* (Bucharest: Ed. Universității din București, 2007).

Overall, collective travel was predominant for this group, although a minority of the researchers also travelled on their own.[38] The divide between travelling as a group and travelling alone mirrored a divide within the School between the senior members and the rest. The few instances of solitary travel were the scouting trips and other expeditions undertaken outside of the group fieldwork for more in-depth data collecting and research. I will return later to this type of travel, concentrating now only on the choice of the location and the role of the scouting trips for the rest of the fieldwork.

Scouting out the territory

The scouting trips determined the relevance and appropriateness of the place to be investigated and created the initial local contacts in the villages. At first, research agendas were not directly related to particular locations. Despite being the first field trip, Goicea Mare (1925) was chosen rather randomly: one of the students, Gheorghe Popescu-Goicea was from the region and had already started to work on the village monograph.[39] This facilitated access and simplified some of the organisational arrangements. There is also no clear information as to why Gusti chose Rușețu either. Yet, after the 1926 Rușețu expedition, the next villages were scouted out before the research team went there. Gusti rarely intervened in the decision over the locations, leaving the choice to his closer collaborators amongst whom Stahl developed the clearest personal research agenda. Thus, the trip to

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Nerej in 1927 was directly related to his interest in the dissolution of the *răzeși* communities (traditional village communities). Another principle of selection was regional, preference being given to villages in the newly united provinces (Bukovina in 1928 and Bessarabia in 1931).[40]

Once the region or area was set, the scholars proposed a particular locality for scouting because either they had been there themselves (Nerej, 1927) or they had read a pre-existing monograph or travel narrative on it (Runcu, 1930).[41] The decision to go to the Transylvanian region Țara Oltului, near Făgăraș In 1929, was therefore influenced by Herseni, one of the newer but very active members of the team, who was from the region. As a consequence, Stahl organised a scouting trip with the statistician D.C. Georgescu, going from village to village in search of the best location for the collective summer expedition.[42] By 1931, the scouting trip had gained great importance in the practice of fieldwork, becoming a well-documented way to determine the most appropriate location within a region, gather initial statistical data and set a hypothesis for the research to follow. The report on the Orhei region in Bessarabia produced by M. Cotescu and D.C. Georgescu illustrates the proceedings of the scouting trip and the criteria employed in narrowing down

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[40] Stahl, "Tehnica monografiei," 299-300. In the first decade of research, the Bucharest sociologists did not venture into rural Transylvania, partly since their colleagues based in Cluj were undertaking sociographic studies there, and partly since the older and well-established *Asociația pentru literatura română și cultura poporului roman* (The Asociation for Romanian Literature and for the Culture of the Romanian People) had been the main cultural institution dealing with the Romanian peasantry in the region for more that fifty years. For a recent study of ASTRA, see Valer Moga, *"Astra" și societatea: 1918-1930* (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2003).

[41] About Runcu, Stahl noted: 'After Bukovina and Transylvania, we decided to return to a Wallachian village. We were tempted to chose the Gorj region because of Ștefulescu's book *Gorjul pitoresc și istoric*.' Stahl, *Amintiri*, 152. The book Stahl referred to is Alexandru Ștefulescu, *Gorjul pitoresc și istoric* (Târgu Jiului: Tip. N.D. Miloșescu, 1904).

[42] Stahl, *Amintiri*, 118.

the choice to Cornova. Setting off from Bucharest to Chișinău, and from there to the smaller town of Orhei, the two scouts contacted the local officials who 'immediately put a car at [their] disposal'.[43] After a short visit to the southern part of the Orhei, they produced a report, which proposed Cornova as the next research base, arguing that this rather remote village was 'characteristic of the entire region' and was less urbanised than Ulmu, the other candidate location.[44] The conclusions of this report show the main aim of the trip: finding the best place to conduct research on the *răzeși* and their institutional organisation. This necessitated identifying and eliminating the most urbanised villages, as well as those considered too large or too ethnically mixed.[45] The choice of Cornova in 1931 illustrated firstly the interplay between academic interests and the spatial dimensions of research. The interest in traditional communities required physical isolation, which was marked by the distance from the transport network. Secondly, it highlighted the important role of the scouting trip that could produce a snapshot of an entire region with support from the local authorities and by means of the fastest available vehicle, the motorcar.

Technologies of travel

Once the location was set and all logistics preparations were finished, the rest of the team embarked on the train and set out on their journey. Of all 'technologies of

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[43] Stahl, "Tehnica monografiei," 300-304.

[44] Ibid., 305-306.

[45] In Stahl's view, 'the villages near urban centres, the railroad or near large roads had undergone important structural changes. In addition, they have also suffered the process of ethnical mixing in varying proportions with Jewish elements.' Ibid., 303-304.

travel', the train was their preferred mode of transport. As Adler noted, normative values often lie behind the adoption of different modes of transport by specific social or professional groups.[46] Apart from that, roads in interwar Romania were largely unmodernised and travel by them was uncomfortable and time consuming. In the case of the BSS, third class railway travel was provided free of charge to the participants. The railway, symbol of modernity but also of the state, was a democratic and sociable means of travel. Those wishing to travel in a different way or on their own would have to pay for it themselves. The train therefore contributed to formally eliminating the class and gender differences between students in the name of greater national and social ideals. Not only a means of transport, but also a meeting place, the train offered a space where students could socialise free from family rules and interdictions. For example Lena Constante remembers the third class carriage on the night train to Runcu where her life-long love story with Harry Brauner began. 'Leaving in the evening from *Gara de Nord*, in a third class carriage (…) we were not too pretentious – everyone was asleep, except me and Harry (…) So we started to play tag.'[47]

The train however was unable to take the monographists directly to most of their rural destinations, some journeys requiring additional means of transport to get from the train station to the village. In that case, whatever transport could be organised locally was employed, such horse-drawn carts for the inaccessible places. Reaching Nerej was an adventure for Stahl and Romulus Cotaru, the scouts who

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[46] Judith Adler, "Travel as Performed Art," 1378-1382; Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey: The Industrialization of Time and Space in the Nineteenth Century.* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986).
[47] Rostás, "Brauner și Constante," 81.

went ahead and even more so for the team that followed in the summer. The two walked from Odobești and crossed the mountains. 'At that time, the journey would take a day and a night; you had to cross the Putna River on foot for about thirty times'.[48] The team of twenty-two scholars that followed a few days later crossed the mountains - some on horseback, some in horse-drawn carts - from Odobești to Nerej.

In contrast to the slow moving vehicles of the village – carts, horses, rafts – the motorcar appeared as a symbol of urban speed and social distinction. This was the officials' vehicle, used either by Gusti himself or provided by local authorities for surveying an entire region.[49] Also, the car was a vehicle for leisure and adventurous travel, speeding accross the blurred borders between monographic research and leisure. Marcela Focșa recalled such an episode, when the sociologists went on a blitz trip from Draguș to Brașov in Sabin Mănuilă's car without letting the Professor know. The next day, as they were all having lunch, Gusti received a postcard from Brașov signed by the people sitting next to him.[50] This little farce is indicative of the students' mobility across the borders between the urban and the rural as opposed to that of the villagers whose experience of car ownership was restricted to the very few who had been migrant workers in the United States.[51]

These additional modes of travel clarify the implications of the fieldwork spatial practices. Firstly, the distance between the capital and the field was not only

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[48] Stahl, *Amintiri*, 47.
[49] Rostás, "Mihai Pop," 275.
[50] Rostás, *Sala luminoasă*, 115.
[51] Rostás, "Marcela Focșa," 114-5.

spatial, but also temporal. Despite the apparent geographic proximity, some of the villages were in reality very remote since getting to them took almost as long as reaching Budapest, Belgrade or even Vienna. This also points to the sociologists' preference for traditional, less urbanised locations where ancient forms of social organisation could still be found. Secondly, the distance from the centre to the furthest provinces was also cultural. Fundul Moldovei (1928) and Cornova (1931) belonged to provinces that had joined Romania only after 1918, offering very different versions of rural life. Travel therefore played an important role in linking together and in centralising knowledge about the old and the newly acquired Romanian territories. Thirdly, these travel experiences shaped the habitus of the researchers, offering them an opportunity to meet, socialise and to feel like daring explorers. This went beyond the novelty of the countryside itself, which was not the same for them all. Since, although some of them had grown up in a village, and others were used to hiking for pleasure, for most of them, these were first-time experiences of 'authentic' travel practices in rural Romania and they added value and weight to their later professional identity.

Travel in the field

Within the village, travel blurred into dwelling. Collective travel remained the norm even after their arrival, as the researchers were generally required to walk in groups around the village and only once the territory became more familiar, could they moved freely on their own, visiting people's homes or following them to the field, the forest or the pastures. The group also defined them in the eyes of their hosts, as

the monographists could hardly have made themselves invisible in the villages they occupied temporarily. The sheer size of their groups made them look like invaders who brought with them unknown machineries and utensils for measuring and recording everything. However, by returning to the villages on their own after the group had left, some of the researchers grew closer to the locals, becoming 'homebodies abroad' rather than a short-term visitor.

Stahl's experience of the Vrancea region amounted to a total of three years during which he became the blood-brother of the locals, taking part in their secret meetings, and even being involved in one of their sabotage attacks on one of the private companies (*societăți anonime*) operating in the area.[52] The 1927 trip to Nerej offered the young researcher an insight into the legal, social and economic problems the region was experiencing. The passage from the unwritten traditional law of land use to a modern property law, which made land a transferable good (after the 1921 land reform), allowed private logging companies to enter into the area, accumulate land and thus initiate a rapid process of deforestation. Fascinated by the region's dramatic transformation and beckoned by its people who wished for their voice to be heard, Stahl immersed himself in the study of the case, becoming 'a real participant' in villagers' lives.[53] This led him to write:

> The direct contact with the joys and sorrows of peoples' lives, as man and not researcher, greatly overweighs all theoretical endeavours (…) the "field" – by which I mean living amongst the people you wish to understand and to

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[52] Stahl, *Amintiri*, 63.
[53] Ibid., 62-5.

help – is what makes the sociologist not just an *érudite*, but a man that finds in understanding human beings the great joy of his life.[54]

In Vrancea, Stahl crossed the border between participant observation and real participation. After he 'swore brotherhood to the *vrânceni* according to the traditional ritual', he gained access to the secret resistance organisations operating in the area. In this way, he not only assisted, but also participated in the planning of an attack on one of the local sawmills and was close to being arrested by the local authorities.[55] Saved by the silence of the villagers who refused to reveal his name, the sociologist discovered the highest level of trust that participant observation implied. Eager to penetrate deeper into the intricacies of social problems, the researcher went beyond the safe environment of group observation, immersing himself into the world of the 'observed'. Moreover, he took risks and found himself reliant on the goodwill of his objects of study. This shows the double-binding effect the countryside had on one of the senior members of the BSS who, despite producing the first methodology, experimented with a wider variety of practices than those he proposed for the School's students and affiliates.

Dwelling

Alongside travel, the other side of the fieldwork experience was dwelling. 'A concrete place of professional activity', Clifford defined the anthropologist's field as 'a site of displaced dwelling and productive work (…) a home away from home, an experience of dwelling, which includes work and growth, the development of both

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[54] Ibid., 62.
[55] Ibid., 63.

personal and "cultural" competence (…) The field as spatial practice is thus a specific style, quality, and duration of dwelling'.[56]

For most monographists, dwelling was in reality almost an extension of the travel practice as the longest trips lasted only one month. However, some scholars returned on their own to continue their studies. It would thus be incorrect to characterize the dwelling practices of the BSS in the same terms as those of Western anthropologists travelling overseas to remote locations where they spent one or more years. The monographists slept only temporarily in local homes during their research, full immersion in the community was never considered necessary.[57] It is likely that the main explanation was that their object of study was geographically and culturally closer than the anthropologist's and thus, living for extended periods of time in a village was not part of their methodological strategy. Nevertheless, the importance of temporary dwelling should not be ignored.

Sleeping, eating and co-habiting in the field were ways in which the village acted directly on the researchers' bodies. Like travel, living – even for a short time – in the village was not only a practical necessity, but was also part of the adventure of study and the practice of research. It both allowed access into the life of the community and it provided the discipline of sociology with a certain intellectual distinction, that of 'being there' and of witnessing the social processes they wrote about later. Yet, these aims were discovered and developed over the years, after a

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[56] James Clifford, *Routes. Travel and Translation in the late 20th century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997) p. 21
[57] As mentioned previously, Stahl's adventurous research was always the exception and never the rule for the entire groups.

series of trials and errors. As Herseni explained, the monographic teams experimented different options of housing before they settled on one. In 1927 at Nerej the teams experimented by staying in military-style tents, whereas later they returned to local houses. Once a discipline was established, the importance of living with the locals fed directly into the research. In his methodology of fieldwork, Stahl explained it as a 'means of reaching into a family's intimate life'.[58] By gaining the trust of their hosts, living with them became an opportunity for close-up observation and a means to collect valid and truthful information.

In their articles about the fieldwork activities, Stahl and Herseni presented their stay in various villages as a formative stage in the monographist's profession.[59] As Herseni noted,

> Monographic research requires sacrifices in this regard. The rules are clear: the monographic researcher must be content with the lodging that has been found for him, no matter how poor (…) Without this severe discipline nothing could be achieved.[60]

His personal experiences are telling of the ways the body of the urban scholar had to adapt to the different lifestyles of the people they were studying.

> In Nerej, we slept three in a dirt-floor room, on beds without mattresses and covered ourselves with our coats. In Fundul Moldovei, I got a very good bed in a double room. We had to move out after two nights because of bedbugs, a much-feared enemy of monographic research. In Drăguș we had beds with straw mattresses, hard but very good.[61]

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[58] Stahl, "Tehnica monografiei," 306.
[59] Herseni, "Şapte ani de monografie"; Stahl, "Şcoala monografiei sociologice"; Stahl, "Tehnica monografiei."
[60] Herseni, "Şapte ani de monografie," 576.
[61] Ibid.

This temporary adaptation to the rural environment was not only a sacrifice, but also as an initiation practice that added distinction to the work of the teams. The different types of beds Herseni slept in can be seen as a direct embodied experience of the places studied. Thus, the field worked on the unconscious sleeping body as it did on the body awake. During the day, the village provided food and drink, which also became part of theoretical considerations. Stahl warned prospective sociologists that:

> Going from house to house as a visitor, you may be forced to sit at table repeatedly and to eat out of pure professional obligation. Also, at a wedding [you will have to] to drink from the communal flask, regardless of the risks that implied, or to listen shamelessly to the pornographies said at *șezători* [social gatherings].[62]

In retrospect, eating or drinking too much may hardly seem a sacrifice, especially in the countryside, since, although they used to sometimes eat in peoples' homes, the School had its own canteen, which catered for the teams during their stay. For example, Mihai Pop remembered that, in Draguș, 'we ate well, because the local provisioning was good, we had our own cook; slaughtering pigs and calves was not a problem'.[63] Eating separately and according to their own menus indicates the limits of the team's integration into village life.

The final aspect of the embodied experience of dwelling I will discuss is clothing, which made up the first visible layer of the researchers' presence in the village. The group photo of the 1925 expedition to Goicea Mare showed eleven men

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[62] Stahl, "Tehnica monografiei," 184.
[63] Rostás, "Mihai Pop," 265.

in fedora hats, suits, and ties looking more like a short official visit to the country,

rather than travelling sociologists. As the monographic research expanded and

included both genders, the later photographs show a relaxation of the dress code

from the formal academic style to a more casual, explorer-like style. Adapting one's

body for outdoors rural research evolved in parallel with changes in fashion. In the

late twenties, although it remained representative of the city, the research dress

code varied more, to include shorts, open collar shirts, and even swimwear.[64] Such

outdoors wear signified a modern, relaxed body combining work and leisure, able

feel at home in the open countryside.

How to dress while doing research was discussed in the School's

methodology, alongside other tactics of adapting to and blending in the field.

Although Stahl urged his colleagues to make themselves invisible to be able to

communicate with the locals, it is hard to imagine how a group of eighty people

accompanied by measuring and recording utensils, cameras, medical instruments,

could really remain unnoticed. However, the physical discipline of the field and its

taboos became part of the disciplines' prerequisites. These were often quoted to

prove the value and validity of the sociologists' theoretical arguments.[65]

As a preliminary conclusion, the travel and dwelling practices of the School

illuminate certain aspects of the production of knowledge and acquisition of

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[64] In an interview with Rostás, Marcela Focşa recounted a telling episode on this theme.'MF: Vulcănescu came to Drăguş, or maybe to somewhere else, dressed like a boy scout. He wore shorts, that wide brim hat, and I don't know what shoes. He was so incredibly funny! (…) ZR: And what did the peasants say when they saw someone wearing shorts? MF: Well, they did not react. We were doing monographic research, Gusti was there, we were an institution.' In Rostás, "Marcela Focşa," 174; "Mircea Vulcănescu - Număr Special," *Manuscriptum* XXVII, no. 1 (1996): 175.
[65] Herseni, "Şapte ani de monografie."

intellectual authority, of the relationship between the subjects and objects of research, and of the place of the Romanian research within a wider tradition of fieldwork studies. Firstly, in building the discipline of sociology as a field-based one, the experiential side of the research was crucial for collecting reliable data, for recruiting new members amongst students and specialists, and placing the centre of social studies in the village rather than the city. Going to the countryside, as a combined work and leisure experience, attracted more and more participants and thus brought prestige to the discipline. Secondly, these research practices defined the countryside as a space separate from the city, whose culture and rules did not apply. This in turn would fix the locals on a map as spatially defined objects of study, in opposition to their mobile visitors. Also, this spatial relationship produced hospitality-related social roles for the participants involved: the scholars became visitors, while the villagers were hosts, the latter doing their best to welcome and provide the former with the best of what they had. This further relates to the fact that research marked the selected villages as places of visibility and thus opportunities of affirmation for the locals. In 1934, the villagers from Nerej wrote a letter to King Carol II to ask for more land. Although not directly related to the work of the sociologists, the presence of this letter amongst the other archival documents of the FCR-PC, whose director at the time was Gusti, can be read as the locals' appropriation of the halo of visibility generated by monographic research. [66] Cooperation with the scholars was therefore the product of a tradition of

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[66] "Scrisoare a locuitorilor din Nereju către Regele Carol II," 1934, FCR-C/1934/30/75-76, Arh. Naț.

hospitality, personal interest, fear or hope. Thirdly, within the tradition of social sciences fieldwork, despite the differences mentioned above, the methodology of the Bucharest School aimed towards the Western anthropological ideal of the 'homebody abroad', where the countryside was treated as a place geographically and spiritually closer than a foreign land, but socially, culturally and economically distant.

Strategies and tactics of fieldwork

After five years of consecutive summer field trips, the first book-length publications of the new group of sociologists were not monographs, but methodologies written by two the senior researchers, Herseni and Stahl. Herseni's book *Teoria monografiei sociologice* dealt with the theory of the sociological monographic, whereas Stahl's *Tehnica monografiei sociologice* concentrated on its techniques.[67] In what follows I will examine the rules and realities of the fieldwork experience by contrasting these methodologies with the School's archival materials and the memories of the participants both from the time and in later accounts. Since Herseni dealt less with the methods of research, concentrating mainly on contextualising the Romanian discipline within the global field of sociology, the main source for this section will be Stahl's step-by-step guide to fieldwork. Written for the new recruits of field-based sociology, it was a way of making sense and of structuring the experience of

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[67] Herseni, *Teoria monografiei sociologice*; Stahl, "Tehnica monografiei."

previous research into a textbook for the next generation. In contrast with the order

of the methodologies, the fieldwork 'reality' recorded in the texts recounting or

documenting the expeditions (memoirs, letters, interviews, transcripts of meetings

and fieldnotes, etc.) appears more messy and unrefined. Bringing out these

differences will shed more light on the process of standardising the new discipline

and its most rebellious practices.[68] Particular attention will be given to the

techniques that defined the rules and boundaries of the relationship between the

subjects and objects of research (establishing contact, observing, approaching and

speaking to people, participating in social events). Also, I will examine the processes

of recording data and writing in the field as intermediary stages in the production of

sociological knowledge. The aim is to reveal how the relationship between

researchers and villagers influenced, fed into and in turn was defined by the

fieldwork experience. Finally, I will reflect on how a particular vision of the

countryside and its transformation was born out of the fieldwork encounter.

Breaking the ice

Like most social researchers, Stahl considered establishing a contact with the

informants to be 'the most difficult part of monographic work'.[69] How to address the

villagers, how to overcome their doubts, get them to open up and to say the truth

were the first skills a researcher needed to acquire in the field. According to Stahl,

these skills required time, experience, and, above all, 'respect and even love for the

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[68] My methods were inspired by Clifford's interest in 'how the unruly experience is transformed into an authoritative written account.' James Clifford, "On Ethnographic Authority," in *The Predicament of Culture. Twentieth Century Ethnography, Literature and Art* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 25.
[69] Stahl, "Tehnica monografiei," 183.

informants'.[70] To make things even harder, despite this call for empathy, the scholar had to contain all feelings, judgements and emotions that could influence the informant's discourse and actions. Finally, the role of the researcher was that of a silent observer and conversation partner whose chameleonic presence was meant to attract as little attention as possible in the village.[71] Such ideals were rarely met in the yearly collective trips across rural Romanian, when large groups of urbanites armed with various types of equipment (such as photographic cameras, phonograph, moving camera, medical and anthropometric equipment, and various catering utensils) descended upon their chosen rural destinations.

The procedure of entering the village was by no means the private matter of individual researchers. Instead, establishing contact with the locals was a public ceremony that started at the very top of the local political structure. Firstly, the village officials (typically the mayor, the prefect and the priest) openly welcomed the group of scholars, informed the community about their aims, and asked for their cooperation. Secondly, the teams organised their own public events for the villagers as well as participating in the usual rural celebrations (e.g. folk dancing, weddings, christenings, funerals).[72] Gusti played an important role in appeasing any conflicts and befriending the village by acquiring funds to set up rural libraries and organise folk art contests. On the one hand, these events helped create an image of the

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[70] Ibid.

[71] Ibid., 183-6.

[72] For example, the chronicle of the plenary meetings from the Runcu trip (1930) contained the following entry: 'Prof Gusti asked the mayor to organise a *horă* (dance) in the village.' in "Monografia satului Runcu, jud.Gorj. Cronica ședințelor plenare," 1930, FCR-C/1923/19, Arh. Naț. (This chronicle, whose original dates have been erased, has been incorrectly filed in a folder labelled 19/1923).

monographist as a generous urban missionary, different from the well-known corrupt state-bureaucrats whose sole wish was to raise taxes, and whom the villagers detested.[73] On the other, during these public ceremonies, the monographists lost their cloaks of invisibility, and could only get them back in their private interactions with the peasantry.[74]

Although Stahl prescribed friendliness and professionalism towards the locals as the way to gain their trust, this did not always work in real life. As the teams were organised according to the theory of contexts and manifestations, their experience of interacting with the villagers differed according to the type of information they had to collect and to the questions they had to ask. Some researchers had a much harder time than others in convincing people to tell the truth. For example, in collecting information on wealth, the economic team encountered people who would either lie by downsizing their income and profits or by boasting of having more than they really possessed.[75] As Vulcănescu noted,

The work of the economics team is different (…) It happens that, unlike in other disciplines, where the peasant is happy to talk, as soon as you mention economic issues, he frowns and falls silent, or answers with anything but the truth. Yet, this truth needs to be extracted from them there and then. For us

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[73] Throughout the years, the tactics of establishing an initial contact with the village changed. Yet, from 1927, at Nerej, the team was also preceded by a prospection group who sourced and prepared the census data for the locality and by a few scholars who arranged the accommodation and initial contacts. These groups were sent ahead, also acting as the ice-breakers. The rest of the members followed shortly, (seemingly) ready to start working straight away.
[74] Rostás, *Atelierul gustian*, 63.
[75] Stahl, "Tehnica monografiei," 184-5.

it is not like for the folklore team, where the informant can be made to sing

with *țuică* [a local type of brandy], tobacco or sweets (…) or the customs

team, where you write everything down word by word and later, by

comparison, you judge if what they said was true (…) Here, if you have not

got the truth on the spot, you are lost. Hence the need to repeat a question

like: 'How much do you pay for a *pogon* [an area equivalent to half a

hectare]' in a million different ways.[76]

In contrast, the linguistic and ethnographic teams used other tricks apart

from simple friendship to buy knowledge from their informants – candy, tobacco

and brandy. Such inadvertencies between the research ethics and the practices

could not be theorised, but relied on experience, intuition, and sometimes an

infringement of rules for the sake of immediate and accurate results.

Observing - ways of seeing

All monographists considered observation as the best means of doing sociological

research.[77] As the main theorist and promoter of 'scientific observation', Gusti

stated that 'observing is not just seeing (…) it is a matter of exercise, of educating

the eye, of creating a new sense, the internal eye of the scientist', clarifies the role

and quality of the gaze in the research process.[78] Developing 'a new sense', opening

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[76] Mircea Vulcănescu, "Raportul secției economice (Runcu, 1930)," in *Opere*, vol. 2 (Bucharest: Ed. Fundației Naționale pentru Știință și Artă; Ed. Univers Enciclopedic, 2005), 612.
[77] Gusti, *Sociologia militans*; Traian Herseni, "Metoda monografică în sociologie," *Societatea de mâine* VI, no. 16 (1929): 251.
[78] Gusti, *Sociologia militans*, p.73.

this 'internal eye' of the scientist implied more than simply witnessing and being there. Although this required discipline and the researcher's mindfulness of him/herself in relation to the world outside, the aim of this training was to repress one's subjectivity and become more like a socio-scope, a machine that unmistakeably identifies the patterns, frameworks and rules of society. The characteristics of the scientific gaze (truthful, objective, exact, complete, controlled, verifiable, collective, informed, and intuitive) relate to the idea of the village as an open-air laboratory and to his inspiration from medical and experimental sciences. Nevertheless, Gusti never undertook such research himself. His students, Herseni and Stahl, also thought that observation could produce the most trustworthy and appropriate sources for sociology, a discipline that had previously relied only on second-hand materials.[79] They drew up the rules of direct observation as a fieldwork practice.

The systematisation of research methods occurred during the trips to Nerej (1927) and Fundul Moldovei (1928), resulting in a combination of two instances of observation: the birds-eye view of the village - in the form of statistics produced through door-to-door surveys - and detailed qualitative methods that explored deeper, into the body and mind of the informants. Costa-Foru, one of the few women to participate in the theoretical debates of the School, stressed the importance of combining the two types of focus available for observation: 'the big picture provided by statistical data, cartography, genealogies, etc and the close-up

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[79] Herseni, "Metoda monografică în sociologie," 251.

view offered by the interviews and daily observation.'[80] The first reflected the holistic desiderata for the observation to be general and generalisable, whereas the second would provide the particularities and richness of individual cases. Thus, in an initial phase, the researchers would work systematically, searching for quantifiable similarities, typologies and differences between certain social phenomena. Helped by the statisticians who had joined Gusti to do rural fieldwork, they gathered general data about the village and its inhabitants ranging from age, occupation, health, trades, etc. The second phase of research resembled what modern anthropologists call 'participant observation'. As Pierre Bourdieu has noted, this practice presupposes 'an immersion into a different universe, taking part in certain local activities whilst keeping an observing distance both from oneself and the people around'.[81] Although they fluctuated between a more or less deep immersion in the lives of the villages they studied, the Bucharest fieldworkers employed similar practices to those of British and American social or cultural anthropology.

The collective nature of research called for intensive rather than extensive observation, which reduced the scholars' lonely participation in the routine of everyday life. This meant that close-up observation was facilitated by the practical aspects of living in the village, such as dwelling in locals' houses. Living with the villagers brought the subject and the object of research in a more intimate zone, where participation became possible. The results were detailed accounts of various

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[80] Xenia Costa-Foru, *Cercetarea monografică a familiei* (Bucharest: Tritonic, 2005), 47.
[81] Bourdieu, "Participant Objectivation," 281.

aspects of a household's daily life.[82] For example, while living with the Jurcovan family in Drăguș, Herseni was able to analyse the socio-economic aspects of their pub from an insider's viewpoint.[83] As mentioned in the introduction to his article, the scholar took advantage of his host's trust to monitor their daily work and thus obtain trustworthy and 'reliable' data:

> I use the most reliable method, observation. I lived with the pub-owner and I could witness and control in detail most of the data that I am hereby publishing. I was present both at the purchasing and selling of goods and I won the full trust of the pub-owner. I could thus also find out certain data that are generally falsified regarding taxation and official controls.[84]

Outside their temporary homes, the scholars sought to take part in the other social activities around the village. Following Gusti's prescription, observation was mostly done collectively, in teams of two and more. These involved going to the field, dancing the *hora*, taking part in the evening *șezători* (social gatherings). For example, Herseni based his series of articles about 'social units' on intensive observation of children playing, the activity of pubs, life and work in a *stână* (a remote sheep farm), the discussions and activity in *Clubul Husarilor*, a mens' social club in Drăguș.[85] Floria Capsali watched and danced with the villagers on Sundays to then write about folk dancing in Fundul Moldovei, while Dumitru Amzăr spent his evenings at the *șezători* whose crafts and lively discussions he described in his

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[82] Costa-Foru's *Cercetarea monografică a familiei* was based on her experience of living with the Toader Popa family in Runcu, in 1930. Costa-Foru, *Cercetarea monografică a familiei*, 345.

[83] Traian Herseni, "Cârciuma lui Jurcovan," *Arhiva pentru Știință și Reformă Socială* XV, no. 1 (1937): 99.

[84] Ibid.

[85] Traian Herseni, "Ceata feciorilor din Drăguș," *Sociologie românească* I, no. 12 (December 1936): 1-14; Traian Herseni, "Clubul husarilor," *Arhiva pentru Știință și Reformă Socială* XII, no. 3 (1935): 437-461; Traian Herseni, "Stâna din Munții Făgărașului," *Boabe de Grâu* V, no. 6 (November 9, 1934): 336-359; Traian Herseni, "Cârciuma lui Jurcovan," *Arhiva pentru Știință și Reformă Socială* (n.d.).

published work.[86] For bigger events such as weddings, funerals, traditional celebrations, etc, a larger group of researchers worked at the same time on different aspects of the manifestation.[87] The products of such work reflected the multi-sensorial experience of the group's 'being there', each member arranged like cameras on a film set, recording different layers of the event, from small details to the overall counting of participants.

Apart from collective observation, there were other occasions when the researchers worked alone. Stahl, influenced by his friend and colleague the ethnomusicologist Constantin Brăiloiu, adopted a style of deeper immersion into the village life. After the departure of the teams, he would embark on lonely trips around the mountains, meeting people and getting to know them outside of the slightly rigid boundaries imposed by the team visits. In these circumstances, the experience, the knowledge, and the observation mixed into one, created a specific type of identification that was reflected in Stahl's writings on Vrancea.[88] In choosing to pursue the research questions further, outside of the group, these scholars went further than the rest of the participants and Stahl later admitted that Gusti thought his solitary expeditions and work with Brăiloiu on folk culture meant betraying the monographic institution.[89] This reinforces the idea that the monographic gaze was by definition collective, aimed at providing a holistic and objective view of rural life.

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[86] Floria Capsali, "Jocurile in comuna Fundul Moldovei," *Arhiva pentru Știință și Reformă Socială* X, no. 1 (1932): 413-37; D.C. Amzăr, "Sociologia șezătorii," *Arhiva pentru Știință și Reformă Socială* IX, no. 4 (1931): 416-474.
[87] Stahl, "Tehnica monografiei," 240.
[88] Henri H. Stahl, *Nerej, un village d'une région archaïque*, vol. 1, 3 vols. (Institut de Sciences Sociales Roumaines, 1939).
[89] Stahl, *Amintiri*, 98.

The main rules of observation were non-intervention and direct access.[90] Stahl commented: 'the art of observing an informant is apprehending them exactly when they are living one of the social facts you are interested in'.[91] Observing therefore resembled hunting: waiting to catch people in the act and looking for clues to read the social meaning hidden in their 'behaviour, habits, and life style' of which they are mostly unaware.[92] Initially, these were often more telling than speech, since they reflected the ordinary, whereas 'if you ask the peasant to tell you about his village, they will tell you all that he finds out of the ordinary'.[93] Nevertheless, at a later stage, the observed were also asked to comment or explain their actions.

Aware of the obstacles present in the reality of research, Stahl himself admitted some caveats to the best practice of patient observation. Thus, it became acceptable for the sociologist to cause some of the events, emotions, or manifestations they wished to study.[94] Magical beliefs and practices, for example could thus be provoked. Due to the temporary nature of their stay monographists not only had to hurry around chasing important events in the life of the village (weddings, funerals, baptisms, etc), but sometimes had to work together to create opportunities for certain social actions to be performed. Stahl set out rules of what could and could not be provoked or set up, stating that 'any reconstruction that one

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[90] Stahl, "Tehnica monografiei," 189.
[91] Ibid., 190.
[92] Ibid., 188.
[93] Ibid.
[94] Ibid., 190.

can take part in is banned'.[95] Thus, ceremonial event such as weddings, funerals, baptisms, etc were only to be directly observed by the researchers. Instead, the monographists did not respect this interdiction and often organised or tried to hasten the life of the villagers in their effort to capture all its aspects. At Runcu, for example, the Gusti asked the mayor to arrange the village dance (*hora*), but he also pressed for a wedding to take place before the team left the locality.[96] Observation was therefore not totally innocent.

Peasants as informants

More difficult than observation was the art of talking to the villagers. According to Stahl's methodology, this involved different degrees of interaction between the subjects and objects of sociology, from the scholars passively listening to how people spoke (with a focus on language), to witnessing conversations as a third party, to asking simple queries about personal data, and finally to having lengthy conversations resulting in life stories or extended narratives. Each of these practices required different skills and sharpened other senses than just the monographic eye.

In their attempt to include 'particular disciplines' such as ethnography and folklore under the wider sociological umbrella, the monographists manifested great interest in recording language for its linguistic or folkloric value. Since the BSS was part of the Faculty of Letters, many students like Mihai Pop were interested in

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[95] Ibid., 190-1.
[96] "Monografia satului Runcu, jud.Gorj. Cronica ședințelor plenare," 24. FCR-C/1923/19, Arh.Naț.

language or wished to combine linguistic with social aspects.[97] Thus, listening to the way people spoke stood at the border between observation and interviewing. The linguists associated with the trips researched language on a formal level, whilst the sociologists looked for the information and social meaning behind the words uttered. Stahl, for example, was interested in the meaning of old legal terms that could clarify the previous land demarcations used before the land reforms.[98] Golopenția recorded 'trendy words' (*cuvinte la modă*), to illustrate Cornova's urbanisation process, whereas Cristescu researched the language of magic.[99]

Getting the peasants to express their opinions, tell stories or answer the scholar's queries meant initiating the real communication. According to Stahl, the key to the art of conversation was naturalness. Since 'only in a natural conversation, following exactly the way the villagers talk to each other, would the villager feel at ease to tell you what interests them.' Thus, the researchers had to learn about the 'way villagers speak to each other', looking for the right settings (e.g. 'on the porch in the evening', 'at crossroads', 'by the gate'), even recreating them if necessary, and only then starting a conversation.[100] Following this winding route, they also had to hide their real interest in theoretical matters and start with questions about material things (objects, tools, and work), simulating ignorance and a childish curiosity. As with observation, the students were expected to be subtle in making

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[97] In the minutes of the meetings at Runcu, Mihai Pop explained his view of the language as 'a means of expressing all other manifestations.' He proposed collecting materials regarding the spoken and the written language of the village. This required the work of two teams: a linguistic and a folkloric one.' Ibid., 8.

[98] Sanda Golopenția, "Fișe de teren din Campania monografică de la Cornova (1931)," *Fonetică și dialectologie* XIX (2000): 149-153.

[99] Ibid.

[100] Stahl, "Tehnica monografiei," 187-188.

their interlocutors speak, at the same time directing them towards what interested them most. As Stahl pointed out,

> (…) the natural conversation is not a conversation that you are not in control of, the informant should not be allowed to speak about what they think fit; instead, their discourse should be directed towards the issues that interest you [the researcher].[101]

The lengthy uncensored interviews - commonly known as *'convorbiri'* (conversations) - are the published proof of the students' art of talking with the peasants. Often conducted in the field or in people's homes, these conversations relied on a questionnaire that would keep the discussion on track and allow subsequent comparison amongst the results. In his article reproducing and briefly analysing such a *convorbire* (conversation) with the villager Grigore Loghie from Runcu, Gorj, Gheorghe Focşa explained the role of this method: '*Convorbirea* is one of the methods of monographic research used in the study of beliefs, opinions, ideas, i.e. of the elements that constitute the rural mentality'. Clarifying the technique, he added:

> (…) The researcher's art lies not in creating an atmosphere of chatter that would prevent them [the informant] from seeing the aim of the study, but in making them fully relive all the aspects of the problem that you are researching, so that their answer contains all they could possibly think of the issue.[102]

Focşa's text for example reproduced Loghie's views about the creation of the world, about good and evil, morals and responsibility, about politics and society.

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[101] Ibid., 188.

[102] Gheorghe Focşa, "Contribuţie la cercetarea mentalităţii satului," *Arhiva pentru Ştiinţă şi Reformă Socială* X, no. 1 (1932): 159-174.

Such seated interviews aimed to collect the voice and mind of the village, as expressed by the most respected and opinionated members of the community.[103] Yet, despite the local reputation, the villagers still felt intimidated by their Schooled visitors and thought 'they were going to take another exam'.[104] This points to the power positions that these interviews created, with the researcher 'in charge' of the questioning and the villager doing their best to answer. Nevertheless, this should not be exaggerated since a certain degree of empathy between the interviewer and the interviewee was necessary for the conversation to yield any results, as Focșa's statements indicate. Moreover, complete reversals of the power positions did occasionally occur, as revealed in Stahl's conversations with Father Neculai in Vrancea in 1927. Hearing about the studies of the region and particularly those of the traditional legal system, this distinguished monk, who lived in a retreat in the Vrancea Mountains, sent out for Stahl offering to be interviewed on the matter. After his first long ride in the mountains, the sociologist arrived at the priest's house where he was told 'to sit down and write'. In his memoirs, he recalled that: 'pacing heavily about the room, father Neculai dictated to me all night long'.[105] These conversations represented the most vivid examples of the villagers' own voices. By

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[103] I use the term 'seated interview' in the same sense as Sanjek, who distinguishes between 'speech in action' as a product of participant observation and 'interviews with seated informers'. The two relate to different degrees of power held by the informant or the scholar and to the performative context of the speech act. Roger Sanjek, "The secret life of fieldnotes," in *Fieldnotes. The Making of Anthropology*, ed. Roger Sanjek (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1990), 210.

[104] Focșa, "Contribuție la cercetarea mentalității satului," 162.

[105] Stahl, *Amintiri*, 55.

being recorded and published without editing or corrections, they represent manifestations of the dialogic mode of fieldwork as discussed by Clifford.[106]

Despite the similar theoretical lenses they looked through, the researchers' views differed, creating a rich source material about the countryside. The variety was the direct product of the their ability to make sense of the rural world by using their own imagination, in other words, developing what Asad has called the 'ethnographic gaze' – the 'researcher's ability to observe, then to imagine a meaningful world around what is witnessed, and finally to present a verbal image corresponding to that partly-imagined, partly-witnessed world'.[107]

Overall, observation set the village in a constant and often inescapable halo of visibility. Being watched, listened to, visited and questioned objectified the villagers to some extent. Yet, as seen above, this presupposed a negotiation (between the subjects and objects of the knowledge being produced) in which the former accepted to be observed. Moreover, as their everyday life and actions acquired meaning and became interesting for their temporary visitors, the villagers were often happy to 'perform' themselves and volunteered to participate in this exchange.

Recording everyday life

Knowing how to see, watch, and listen was only one side of fieldwork; the other was recording these observations for further use. Mostly a backstage part of research,

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[106] Clifford, "On Ethnographic Authority," 42-44.
[107] Talal Asad, "Ethnographic representation, statistics and modern power," *Social Research* 61, no. 1 (Spring 1994): 67.

the 'secret life' of how everyday life in the field is immortalised through various

processes, from note-taking to photography and film has partly revealed the

improvised scaffolding that sustained apparently seamless studies of different

cultures.[108] The tactics and practices of recording contribute to better understanding

the relationship between the reality observed and the School's theoretical

categories. The way scholars order the unruly facts and opinions gathered into

labelled files is telling of how the field is interpreted. This section examines the

labels, notebooks, cards and folders the sociologists, musicologists, ethnographers

and anthropologists used and debated over. It also looks at the practice of writing in

the field and the production of what is generically defined as 'fieldnotes'.

Having said little on how to note information in the field, Gusti left the

organisation of data to his apprentices and collaborators. Stahl, Herseni, and

Vulcănescu elaborated a system of cataloguing field-notes, minute taking and

reporting that was later employed in the wide-range activities of educating the

village of the 1930s. This process was written up in the methodology books

published and republished in the 1930s and 1940s, of which Stahl's was the first.[109]

According to Roger Sanjek, the documents produced in the field can be

classified into several types: work-tools (such as questionnaires, statistics, maps,

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[108] Sanjek, "The secret life of fieldnotes." I employ the term 'backstage' with reference to Dean MacCannel's work on the experiences of the modern tourism. Dean MacCannell, *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1999).

[109] The school published similar textbooks for fieldwork aimed at different audiences, from students and researchers to local intellectuals and local authorities.*Îndrumător al muncii culturale la sate: 1936* (Bucharest: Fundația Culturală Regală "Principele Carol', 1936); *Îndrumări pentru monografiile sociologice* (Bucharest: Institutul de Științe Sociale al României. Biroul Cercetărilor Sociologice, 1940); Henri H. Stahl, *Monografia unui sat. Cum se alcătuiește, spre folosul Căminului Cultural*, I. (Bucharest: Fundația Culturală Regală "Principele Carol', 1937); Stahl, "Tehnica monografiei."

etc), field-notes proper (scratch notes, records, diaries, drawings, photos, etc), and documents that recorded the work of the teams as such (chronicles, minutes, etc). Drawing on this indicative classification, I will discuss each category and its own role in the fieldwork of the BSS. Since most of the fieldnotes and materials of the School from the 1920s and early 1930s trips have disappeared, I will often refer to other sources to reconstruct and discuss the types of documents produced in the field.

Work-tools

During their trips, the Bucharest sociologists developed a wide range of work-tools, including questionnaires, statistics and maps. The first questionnaires appeared as a direct result of the pilot trip to Goicea Mare and the heated debates that it followed within the seminars at the University of Bucharest. They consisted of twenty-five hectographed sheets of paper containing questions based on the Schools' sociological theory.[110] The following trips, to Rușețu (1926) and Nerej (1927) relied on these methodological tools. In the same period, the teams produced forms for peasant budgets, drew up maps of the regions and devised statistical models.[111] In 1928, in response both to the development of new ideas within the 'old group' and to the growing number of newcomers, the senior monographists re-examined both the theory and methods used thus far, issuing new questionnaires and introducing the fiche system of collecting data and collective files for archiving it.[112]

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[110] Stahl, "Şcoala monografiei sociologice," 1139.
[111] Ibid., 1140.
[112] Stahl, "Şcoala monografiei sociologice," 1147; Stahl, *Amintiri*, 105.

Most of the work tools were produced 'in the field' rather than 'at home', showing the researchers' constant need to adapt them to the materials they were used for. These work-tools constituted the backstage of research – where the brainstorming, identifying theoretical categories and classifying the expectations and questions about the field happened. Although they were produced in the village, the work-tools remained invisible to the locals. Even the questionnaires, otherwise acceptable during the interviews, were kept 'in the sociologist's pocket'. As Stahl noted, 'you could never dream of taking it out [of your pocket] and asking the questions featured inside one by one. Questionnaires exist so you always have a mental inventory of the issues you wish to address'.[113] Researchers therefore were meant to act without a script and improvise as they went along, which did nevertheless presuppose an intensive preparation and backstage activity that the villagers were not aware of. The chronicle of the plenary meetings at Runcu and the excerpts of minutes from the plenary and team meetings in Drăguș shed some light on how the administration and logistics connected to the monographic research.[114]

Stahl played an important role in systematising the process of recording information in the field. Arguing against scholars taking notes in their personal diaries, a practice used at Goicea Mare and Rușețu, he introduced the system of recording data on index cards during the trip to Fundul Moldovei.[115] These would then be archived in collective files organised by category, rather than by researcher. To understand Stahl's system and its implications, I will draw on Sanjek's further

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[113] Stahl, "Tehnica monografiei," (old) 13.
[114] "Monografia satului Runcu, jud.Gorj. Cronica ședințelor plenare." FCR-C/1923/19, Arh.Naț.
[115] Stahl, "Școala monografiei sociologice," 1147-1148.

classification of fieldnotes according to the various stages of writing in the field used in anthropology.[116] Only part of Sanjek's taxonomy is relevant to the Bucharest sociologists, i.e. (1) 'scratch notes', written during the interaction with the informants, jotted down while in 'action', (2) 'fieldnotes proper', copied and systematised notes typed in the privacy of one's room, (3) and fieldnote records. These categories map loosely onto Clifford's instances of writing in the field (inscribing, describing and transcribing) that define a specific relationship between the writer and the informants.[117] The first, inscription, refers to the collection of scratch notes and marks a 'passage from experiential phenomena to writing'. Arguing against the previous view of scratch notes that held them to be original, pure or raw data, Clifford argues that inscription is instead 'intertextual, figurative, and historical'.[118] The values, grids and interests the researcher brings along into the field affect this very first writing-oriented moment of their study. Transcription, the second phase, involves writing down fully formed discourses that already exist in the culture under observation, thus fixing another voice into one's own writing. According to Clifford, this phase reveals the polyglossia of the final ethnographic account and the hidden difficulties of translation. Finally, description represents the retreat from the field to produce thick notes, i.e. 'cultural interpretations' that make sense or recount moments, events and experiences after they happened. These

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[116] Roger Sanjek, "A Vocabulary for Fieldnotes," in *Fieldnotes. The Making of Anthropology*, ed. Roger Sanjek (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1990), 92-122.

[117] James Clifford, "Notes on (Field)notes," in *Fieldnotes. The Making of Anthropology*, ed. Roger Sanjek (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1990), 47-70.

[118] Ibid., 56.

categories are helpful in understanding how the recording process affected the way the monographists saw the village and ordered it in their imagination.

Both the way the Bucharest sociologists pursued their field writing and their prescriptions on how to gather data were similar to their fellow Western anthropologists. For scratch notes, they used the 'monographist notebook' also handy for recording regional linguistic terminology. This often featured in the imagery of the School, defining the relationship between the teams and the villages, one representing the written culture, the other the oral one.[119] Yet, the presence of the notebook in the photographs is often deceiving, and possibly staged, since Stahl talked about the shyness of the peasant in front of the writing scholar:

> Writing down everything in front of the peasant (…) insults the informer (…) Often imprudent researchers have caused panic in the village. (…) For example in Nerej, the rumour appeared that the end of the world was approaching, since the book of the Apocalypse said that one of the signs was that all would be written down in chronicles.[120]

Thus, inscribing practices required, in Stahl's methods, prudence and even secrecy.[121] His advice was that researchers should work in teams of two, one

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[119] The photographic records of the school are split between the Village Museum Archives and the Peasant Museum Archives in Bucharest. Some of the photographs were published in *Sociologie Românească* and in *Arhiva pentru Reformă și Știință Socială* and recently republished in commemorative editions of the school's fieldtrips. Paula Popoiu and Ion Cherciu, *Nerej un sat din străvechiul ținut al Vrancei* (Bucharest: Ed. Enciclopedică, 2007); Paula Popoiu, *Fundu Moldovei, 80 de ani de la prima campanie monografică 1928 - 2008* (Craiova: Ed. Universitaria, 2008).

[120] Stahl, "Tehnica monografiei," 223.

[121] This resonates with the episode recounted by Claude Lévi-Strauss involving the strange understanding of writing the Nambikwara had. 'That the Nambikwara could not write goes without saying. (...) I distributed pencils and paper to them (...) their leader asked me for one of my notepads; and when we were working together he did not give me his answers in words, but traced a wavy line or two on the paper and gave it to me as if I could read what he had to say.' This experience inspired the anthropologist to note: 'Of all criteria by which people habitually distinguish civilization from barbarism, this should be the one most worth retaining: that certain peoples write and others do not. The first group can accumulate a body of knowledge that helps it to move even faster towards the goal that it has assigned for itself; the second is confined within limits that the memory of individuals can never hope to extend, and it must remain prisoner of a history worked out from day to day, with

speaking to the villager, while the other took notes. Only once the trust of the villager was won, could the notebook come out and could writing become an evident and acceptable practice.[122]

In Nerej individual index cards were introduced to research. Before, there is no record of the data being copied from one notebook to another. Previously, fieldnotes were not recorded on index cards, but in a daily diary kept by each member.[123] The direction given to fieldwork in the later trips followed the trajectory from individual researcher to collective teamwork. As the practice became collective, the need for the notes to be index-able and legible required the transcription of scratch notes to a 'clean' form. There is little evidence of when, where, and how this process took place, but we know that the 'clean' fieldnotes were both handwritten and typed-up.[124]

Although the format of the cards was supposed to be fixed according to Stahl's methodology, the few surviving field-notes relating to the 1929 trip to Drăguș consist not only of index cards, but also of large A4 sheets written on one side. Generally, these all contain the name(s) of the researcher(s), the informant's name and occasionally their age and house number.[125] In contrast to the majority of her colleagues, Cristescu's fieldnotes showed the rigour of the professional researcher. Most of her notes contained the informant's name, their age, education – at the top

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neither a clear knowledge of its own origins nor a consecutive idea of what its future should be.' Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes tropiques* (New York: Criterion Books, 1961), 288-92.

[122] Stahl, "Tehnica monografiei," 224.

[123] Stahl, "Şcoala monografiei sociologice," 1139.

[124] Personal conversation with Sanda Golopenția, Bucharest 1 July 2009.

[125]"Culegere de date, anchete şi inspecţii administrative privind Comuna Drăguș in jud. Făgăraș," 1929, FCR-C/1929/6, Arh. Naţ.

– and the informant's name repeated, the researcher's name and the date at the bottom.[126] Similarly, Costa-Foru's notes for her research the family also contained the complete referencing system indicated by Stahl.[127]

The thematic filing system was also introduced during the Fundul Moldovei (1928) trip. If at Nerej (1927) the research moved from individual notebooks to index cards, a year later these cards became collective property. The newer filing system required ordering all fieldnotes in accordance with Gusti's theory of contexts and manifestations. The teams were assigned to a context (cosmologic, biologic, historic, psychological) or manifestation (spiritual, economic, juridical, and political) and placed in charge of collecting the relevant material and organising it in a file. Other individual researchers could also bring in their notes and deposit them into topic-specific files other than their own. Each of the main categories was further sub-divided into smaller issues determined by the site, its specificities and the material itself. As Stahl mentioned, there were two main types of sub-categories: fixed, as the issues they dealt with were always the same, and variable, when the content of the file was the product of the actual observation process. For example, the *cosmologic* file almost invariably featured the same sections (i.e. geography, climate, flora, fauna, etc), whereas the sub-categories of the history file took shape during the collection of fieldnotes, rather than before (according to what was relevant in each individual village or area studied). Finally, there were also hybrids like the economic file, which was a combination of the two. Thus, creating file

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[126] Ștefania Cristescu, *Descântatul în Cornova-Basarabia* (Bucharest: Paideia, 2003).
[127] Costa-Foru, *Cercetarea monografică a familiei*.

records constituted a creative process in itself. As Stahl himself noted, 'the stage of data collection corresponds to its initial critical interpretation.'[128] Each evening, the monographists met to report, debate and assess what had been done during the day. As the material was confronted with the theory, the categories used to order the reality observed were questioned and re-negotiated. At the same time, the filing process reinforced the collective character of monographic research. Although during the collecting process the researchers worked both individually and in small teams, once they indexed their fieldnotes in shared files, their work was fed into that of the team. Copyright was instituted to protect individual materials that had to be quoted if used as sources for individual articles.[129] Nevertheless, the problem that arose was that quantitatively more was collected, but less was being analysed. This was partly due to the filing system that would have required analysts specifically designated to process the vast and uneven quantities of material.[130]

These administrative changes of method and technique revealed the practices that contributed to a sociological vision of the rural world. By refining the categories, the format and the indexes of the so-called raw data collected in the field, the scholars tried to formalise and unify their notes according to common theoretical notions. This meant making their notes readable and useful for others, creating an open-access archive from individual research experiences. The prevailing collective

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[128] Stahl, "Tehnica monografiei," 192.
[129] "Regulamentul Seminarului de Sociologie, Etică și Politică," 1931, FCR-C/1931/2/1, Arh. Naț.
[130] In his memoirs, Stahl mentions the problems that appeared when the trips had got too large and even with a filing system in place it was impossible to force the newcomers to deposit their notes systematically at the end of each day. Stahl, *Amintiri*, 105.

effort towards standardisation of qualitative data affected each step in the recording, writing, and translation of the field.

Facts versus opinions

The content of fieldnotes was also a matter of strict regulations. The idea of simply amassing everything one saw and heard was heavily criticised by Stahl. Recording was the essential practice that captured and fixed the fleeting instances of social life observed by the scholars, a weapon against the tricks of memory and the dangers of forgetting. Moreover, unlike other disciplines where experiments could be rerun and data verified, sociology had to deal with unrepeatable events happening in real time.[131] Thus, only correct rigorous recording could produce reliable and authentic data. As a general rule, Stahl proposed specific techniques for recording facts (what can be seen objectively, without the need for interaction) versus recording opinions (the locals' interpretation of facts). Description, measuring, mechanical recording (phonograph, photography or film), sketching and collecting were used to record facts and objects, whereas opinions were to be collected during short interviews and longer conversations transcribed verbatim. I will start with a short overview of fact-related techniques.

Description was a technique of recording in detail a fact in the form of an eye-witness report. The aim was to provide direct access to the observed reality, rather than an opinion or an interpretation of it. The note provided a verbal photograph of

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[131] Stahl, "Tehnica monografiei," 191-192.

the social fact and could, if possible be supported by a visual proof.[132] This type of notation, situated somewhere between inscription and description in Clifford's terms, stressed the importance of eye-witnessing as the starting point of the research.[133] At this stage, the details and accuracy of the social fact corresponded to a clue in a detective story – nothing was presumed before further investigation was undertaken.

Counting and measuring introduced statistics to monographic research, in an attempt to place the facts it described in a numerical context, dealing not only with individual cases, but also with comparable, quantifiable cases. Following Stahl's example, any social fact identified by a scholar was counted and measured (how many times did it occur, where, and in which households?). Quantitative methods were used to indicate the variations in the trends of social life (church and market attendance, changes in the performance and change of folk songs and dances as well as changing patterns in customs and mentalities).[134] The importance of quantifiable data depended on the qualitative data it supported, thus maintaining a balance between quantitative and qualitative methods. Producing such data was nevertheless a tedious and lengthy work. One simply had to go from place to place and count – people in the church, objects in a house, children playing a game, women wearing specific clothes, etc. However, only this wider context could start answering the question set by the social fact.

[132] Ibid., 195-6.
[133] Clifford, "Notes on (Field)notes," 51-3.
[134] Stahl, "Tehnica monografiei," 197-198.

Mechanical recording was heavily used by the BSS, especially since most of the trips welcomed researchers from other domains. The photographic camera, the phonograph and the moving camera were tools not only in the production of knowledge, but also in making both sociology and its objects of study public. The talented professional photographer Berman joined the team at Rușețu, in 1926, producing a grand visual archive that provided the illustrations for many sociological publications and material for the School's public exhibitions.[135] Visual records were produced for study purposes in most of the domains present in the field, from art and architecture to medicine and anthropometry; the records ranging from photos of head measurements to aerial photographs of fields.

Apart from the camera, these interdisciplinary expeditions used the phonograph and the moving image camera for scientific purposes. For sociology, these technical innovations provided authenticity, objectivity and realism.[136] Stahl talked about the superiority of such instantaneous reproduction – the song that could be heard again as an indivisible unit (not just part lyrics, part music) or the photograph of an event capturing and communicating its entire meaning at once; such was the case with a photograph of a wedding in Nerej showing a cortege led by the *vornicei* (village criers) - some riding on bicycles, some driving in a car. In a similar scientific spirit, visual recordings were banned from seeking the picturesque. This reiterated the objective and realist desiderates of the School. With regards to

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[135] Popescu, *Iosif Berman. A photo album. Supplement of Martor - The Museum of the Romanian Peasant Anthropology Review*.

[136] Stahl, "Tehnica monografiei," 206. See also Ioana Popescu, "The Documentary Photograph. Questions with and without an Answer," *Martor. The Museum of the Romanian Peasant Anthropology Review* 3 (1998): 73-81.

film recording, the School stated a preference for the realist style documentary, producing 'films that had real people instead of actors, where the studio was the village itself and no usual deforming aesthetics were employed'.[137] Beyond the specific uses and benefits of the modern technology, the records produced were to be also treated as field-notes, undergoing the same classification rules as written information.[138]

Similar and often complementary to photography, drawing was employed to capture what the latter obscured – the technical detail. Heavily used in the past in many scientific fields, drawing was also employed by the BSS in describing crafts, objects and machinery, architecture, or dance.[139] Stahl explained the complementarities between photography and drawing as follows: 'The photograph provided the real atmosphere, while the sketch, the precision of detail.'[140] For this reason, drawing was often used in reproducing artistic and decorative motifs. The constant presence of artists who associated themselves to the School or simply worked alongside the monographists added to the importance and the quality of the sketches produced. Of the associates, Mac Constantinescu and Lena Constante contributed to the study of decorations, icon-making and folk art, as well as to developing the School's collecting and displaying practices.

[137] Gusti, "Sociologia monografică. Știință a realității sociale," 65.
[138] Photographs were to be accompanied by a special sheet indicating the author, the date, the relevant file, the object photographed, the scene and the fieldnotes it was going to be an annex of. At the moment, although many of the photographs of the school still exist, there is no trace of these accompanying information sheets.
[139] Capsali, "Jocurile in comuna Fundul Moldovei."
[140] Stahl, "Tehnica monografiei," 214-5.

For the BSS, collecting objects was not only an attempt to rescue existing heritage, but constituted an act of note-taking proper, since the object acquired value mainly through the information accompanying it. The methodology stipulated that a special identity form should accompany any objects received or bought from the villages. The form for a door (to a house) bought in Runcu in 1930, constitutes a field-note in itself that provides all the details of the purchasing transaction (the price of the product, the name of the seller and that of the buyer, as well as the date of purchase), details of the object itself (material, dimensions, history and conservation state), plus a short observation that reads: 'The door was ordered by the (owner's) father or grandfather. The owner does not remember, that is how he found the house.'[141] Beyond the description of the object itself, this identity sheet recorded a moment in the life of that door, also inscribing it in a specific economic act of purchase-for-collection.

Taken together, the uniting feature of these recording methods appears to be realism and objectivity. Like in realist art, the aim was to convey reality with all its minute details, according to clear-cut categories, whilst maintaining an omniscient point of view. The use of technology follows in the same direction, stressing the real-to-life, almost transparent quality of the photograph. Beyond each of their particular uses and benefits, these methods identified facts (defined as witnessed performances of everyday life) with material objects (to be counted, described, or collected that were either produced in the field – photographs, drawings or

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[141] Ibid., 220.

removed from it), thus reifying reality not in an iconic fashion, but as *'tableaux vivants'*.[142] In this way, the field-note, the photograph or the sketch became substitutes for real things and for the facts of social life. Finally, these methods show the way social facts were not only collected, but also constructed in the hybrid combination of writing, counting, measuring, photographing and recording.

Inextricably linked to the factual side of social reality, opinions 'constituted only part of the problem to be solved' according to Stahl.[143] The beliefs and explanations linked to a custom or event were to be recorded alongside the 'fact' and given the same weight in the later analysis. According to him, opinions were not the explanation of facts observed in peoples' lives, but a partial, subjective meaning given to them. They were predetermined by factors mongraphists could assess and compare at a later stage of their research, such as age, social status, education, beliefs and gender.

Since recording opinions entailed conversations, narratives or interviews, Stahl prescribed the method of word-by-word transcription. When faced with the peasants' resistance to being 'recorded', the sociologists were advised to try to gain their trust, although, for lack of time, they often had to trick the villagers and get their information or images before they left. Stenography successfully substituted the lengthy and tiresome practice of writing to dictation. Shorthand was not only simultaneous, but could also deceive the informants who did not notice that all they

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[142] The 'tableau vivant' also represented the main exhibiting style used in Europe at the time. As Clifford pointed out, this style, also employed by the social anthropologist Franz Boas, represented culture 'in context', the exhibitions seeking to convey an 'ethnographic present' for the visitor. Clifford, *The predicament*, 228.
[143] Stahl, "Tehnica monografiei," 221.

said was being recorded. Yet, although Stahl used this technique, not many others could master it. In those cases, many used their own shorthand notation, especially since they wished to keep the phonetic transcription of regional dialects. The importance of maintaining the peasant's oral style and the linguistic specificities of their speech was part of the quest for authenticity.[144]

Apart from the rules of transcription, Stahl mentioned the use of 'moral statistics' in the validation of data in the case of opinions. To compile them, a different informant was chosen to talk about the people in the village, who were then assessed on a special card according to their vices (wife-beating, infidelity, theft, etc). These special forms, called '*fișe de informatori*' (informant identification forms), recorded the identity of the informant specifying their name, age, marital status, age, social status, literacy, occupation, language, and mobility.[145] The card would then determine who the future informants would be and their moral status. Some of these identity cards also had pictures, like those published in Brăiloiu's work on Drăguș.[146] In this way, people became fieldnotes alongside their activities, objects and beliefs in this thorough recording and archiving the sociological present.

The recording of facts, objects and opinions often dealt with complex events, which were relevant for more than one disciplines. In researching and noting these social manifestations, the objective of the Bucharest sociologists was to capture this complexity from a variety of scientific angles, in the vein of what Geertz called 'thick

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[144] Ibid., 231.
[145] Ibid., 237.
[146] Constantin Brăiloiu, *Vie musicale d'un village : recherches sur le répertoire de Drăguş (Roumanie) 1929-1932* (Paris: Institut universitaire roumain Charles Ier, 1960).

description' many decades later.[147] For such cases, a group of scholars participated in the event, each recording a different aspect of what they were experiencing. The fieldnotes relative to the wedding in Drăguş illustrate these 'thick' layers of writing that construct a plurivocal picture of the event.

In guise of conclusion, the overarching rule of recording was that the writer of fieldnotes had to suppress their own 'voice', by reducing their interpretation of what they observe, see or hear to the minimum. For, as Stahl mentioned, only in this way would the data become the equivalent of a historian's archive, rather than a traveller's personal impressions.[148] Being faithful to the objects that appeared in reality, be it facts, material objects or people's opinions, was the sole guarantee of authenticity of this future archive of the present. The authorship of fieldnotes was thus ambiguous. Each note held the names of the scholar and of the informant who interacted to produce the data, and, although all fieldnotes were to be used collectively, the name of the 'fieldnote author had to be quoted' in published works. This indicated a spirit of positivism as well as a concern with 'hardening' the data produced through fieldwork.

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[147] Geertz employs the term 'thick description' referring to the multilayered nature of ethnographic description, which contains the first keys to interpreting the facts and events observed by the anthropologist. Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 6-10.
[148] Stahl, "Tehnica monografiei," 192.

Life in the field

In 1932, after seven years of fieldwork in the Romanian countryside, Herseni noted: 'monographic research itself constitutes a social reality'.[149] Beyond all propagandistic intentions, his affirmation reflected the importance this extra-scholarly activity had gained and, more importantly, how much it had affected its participants' lives. Apart from the professional researchers from disciplines other than sociology, most monographic researchers were recruited from among University of Bucharest students.[150] Since the latter had already embarked on a career path, I will refer mainly to the students, who were still at the stage in their lives of making a professional choice. For them, monographic research opened up the way towards that 'something different' that young people aspire to. The impact of the village fieldwork experience on the professional future of its participants varied greatly. For Stahl, Golopenția, Herseni, Focșa, Bernea, and Pop, the countryside became a vocation. Moreover, for the senior members of the Schools, fieldwork constituted an opportunity rather than just a direction since it helped them accede, at least for a period of time, to positions in the state bureaucracy. Vulcănescu became Director General of The Customs Office within the Ministry of Finance and then and Director of the Bureau for Public Debt in the same Ministry; Golopenția worked as Gusti's Cabinet Secretary in the Ministry of Education, Culture

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[149] Herseni, "Șapte ani de monografie."

[150] The best known professional researchers who joined Gusti and his teams on his trips were: Constantin Brăiloiu, ethnomusicologist, Francisc Rainer, physical anthropologist, George Banu, doctor and social hygienist.

and Art, whereas Herseni and Bernea held similar positions during the fascist government, Herseni in the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Information, and Bernea in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. For others, like Focșa, Costa-Foru, Cristescu, this research experience played an important role in their choice of a career. For the rest, monographic research provided if not a career, at least the hope of one, as unemployment of higher education graduates was on the rise.

Monographic research was a formative experience for the generation of those born around the period 1904-1910.[151] Often ignored in the literature on this generation, the social vision of rural life was also amongst the defining factors that shaped the 'young generation', which reached maturity in the 1930s. The fieldwork trips of 1925-1931 were also an opportunity for many of the future *Criterion* group members to meet and exchange ideas, for the future members of the *Rânduiala* group to shape their views against Gusti's mainstream direction, and, more generally, for political, cultural and social views to be expressed and to ferment into form.[152]

On a much smaller geographical scale than their contemporary Mircea Eliade's travels to India, fieldwork was in line with his experiential ethos of adventure.[153] At the end of their first decade of fieldwork, Vulcănescu wrote about Goicea Mare (1925): 'this 10 day expedition in search of the Golden Fleece of

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[151] Nicolae Constantinescu, "Născuți în '07: generație și destin," in *Centenar Mihai Pop 1907-2007. Studii, evocări* (Bucharest: Ed. Universității din București, 2007), 10-12.
[152] The most comprehensive account of the intellectual 1930s Romania can be found in Ornea, *Anii treizeci. Extrema dreaptă românească*, 147-181.
[153] For a recent and comprehensive biography of Mircea Eliade see Florin Țurcanu, *Mircea Eliade, prizonierul istoriei* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2005).

Romanian reality inaugurated a new epoch'.[154] His metaphor indicates the common perception of fieldwork as an adventure involving exciting travel, heroic teamwork and uncertain yet glamorous rewards. Similarly, Herseni's account of the sacrifices and compromises the teams had made on living and hygiene conditions during the trips stressed the adventure motif.[155] Although maybe not as glamorous and full of dangers as the two scholars made it, fieldwork still involved a spirit of togetherness that went beyond the mere aims of their studies. Leisure and extra-research activities therefore also played an important role in the formative experience of the Bucharest sociologists. As the interviews with the members of the School show, the summertime academic life also offered a chance to have fun, meet people, make friends or even get married. For Marcela Focşa, the leisure time that came with the research made the greatest impression on her, her account thus bringing out a less known part of monographic fieldwork. A Philosophy student at Bucharest, she took part in the 1928 Fundul Moldovei, 1929 Drăguş, 1930 Runcu and the 1931 Cornova trips, studying various aspects of folk life. Talking about the first trip to Bukovina, she remarked:

> We had meetings in the evening and in the afternoon (…) They were fascinating (…) Those were not about sociology anymore! They were fascinating because it was an amazing social experience, of meeting and knowing people, of relationships between individuals – camaraderie and friendship. Sociology was during the day. But we were free in the evenings. Each of us performed according to what their talent was. Mac Constantinescu had various amusing preoccupations. Floria Capsali used to dance. There was another girl who studied gymnastics, who also danced;

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[154] Vulcănescu, "Dimitrie Gusti - Profesorul," 1051.
[155] Herseni, "Şapte ani de monografie."

they all put on shows. Others recited poetry. Costin had a record player that he would bring along (together with records). Mind you, it was proper music, Beethoven. These evenings were very cultured, not sociological, but cultured, you see?[156]

This bubbling atmosphere described by Focșa reflected the modern habitus of these young people who came to study the village. Although somewhat separate from their worklife as such, the ease and openness exhibited in their leisure time fed into their attitudes towards the rural world. Since many of the students were used to going abroad, especially for study, domestic travel became the new exotic, providing distinction to the members of the group. This could explain the attraction of these trips for artists like Mac Constantinescu, Floria Capsali, Lena Constante, Margareta Sterian, and others. Part of a trend that rediscovered the countryside as a new source of inspiration for a new modern national style, they recuperated and re-inserted folk art into urban tastes.[157]

Fieldwork and rural transformation

For most monographists, the contact with the village mediated by fieldwork shaped their perceptions and expectations of the countryside. Almost the entire School acknowledged and engaged with - even if just collaterally - the processes of change that were transforming the Romanian countryside in the first decade of the interwar period, between the 1921 land reform and the impending world economic crisis.

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[156] Rostás, "Marcela Focșa," 111.

[157] See Erwin Kessler, ed., *Culorile avangardei. Arta în România 1910 – 1950* (Bucharest: Institutul Cultural Roman, 2007), 15.

Apart from the inescapable reality they experienced directly, this perceptiveness to social change was also the product of the shared academic background provided by Gusti's sociology course, the theoretical scheme they used, and their own expectations and previous knowledge. The different views of rural transformation covered a wide range between the two poles of 'breaking with and lamenting the past', without ever totally identifying with the breakers, but rather producing different intensities of lament.[158] On the extremes, the perception of change contributed to the crisis of the School of 1932-33 that also marked the shift to the right and eventual break-off of the *Rânduiala* group from monographic research.

Overall, the lament of the past was to some extent inevitable and general. For all those who went to the field, the erosion of the old ways of life, of traditions, crafts, and of what could be called 'authentic' folk culture under the pressure and influence of modernity, capitalism and the urbanization was evident. By going to very different locations, they gained a more sophisticated view of how, why, and where the rural world was most affected. Yet, although none of them really thought that the breakdown of the old ways of life was a positive thing, some chose to engage with the hybrid present of the country, containing both the old and the new, whereas others, refuting the emergent (and unpleasant) forms of life, desperately looked for the authentic, often disappearing traditions. Also, some portrayed capitalist and urban influences as moral degenerating factors, whereas others

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[158] Mazlish, *A new science*, 12.

concentrated on the reaction of the village to change in terms of opposition or adaptation.

Correlating social and economic change to morals and spiritual life marked the first level of lament. During the 1925 trip to Goicea Mare, Vulcănescu chose to study the spiritual life of this Oltenian village. His notes reflected the categories used to understand the transformation of this rural locality. Looking at how rural life was affected by the new capitalist market relations gave rise to his interpretation of change as mainly moral degeneration. The transformation of village life consisted in 'a process of disaggregation of the domestic mode of production and a move towards a small-scale petit bourgeois capitalist mode of production'. At the same time, from the cultural perspective, the 'primitive way of life' was dissolving under the influence of the 'suburbia on the one hand and of the *petite bourgeoisie* on the other'.[159] The population of Goicea Mare and Goicea Mică, which had grown considerably in recent years, was showing 'obvious signs of physical degeneration', according to the sociologist. Correlating the socio-economic situation to individual character traits, Vulcănescu sketched a psychological typology of the *goicean* consisting of three types: the 'primitive', 'the emancipated', and the '*adventist*' (the latter representative of a Neo-Protestant sect).[160] Of these, the 'primitive type', whose life was defined by traditionalism, subsistence economic activities, superstitions and political opportunism, was disappearing, making way for the

[159] Mircea Vulcănescu, "Câteva observațiuni asupra vieții spirituale a sătenilor din Goicea-Mare (psihologice și culturale)," in *Opere*, vol. 2 (Bucharest: Ed. Fundației Naționale pentru Știință și Artă; Ed. Univers Enciclopedic, 2005), 564.
[160] Ibid.

ascent of the other two. Scattered with nominal examples, his notes on the 'emancipated' type mentioned the influence of the city, consumption of urban products and production for an external market as defining traits of this new rising social group. The consequences of change were revealed in 'cases of non-adaptation to village life'.[161]

Other researchers judged rural transformation in aesthetic terms. Focșa recalled that she had discovered the 'real village, real popular culture' at Drăguș, in the Făgăraș county, where she had found the best-preserved folk art and customs.[162] Unlike Runcu or Cornova, where the process of urbanization had penetrated deep into the villages, eroding the internal artifact market and substituting home-made objects and clothes with cheap mass-produced ones, Drăguș could satify her interest in folk art with plentiful study materials. 'Compared to the Transylvanians, who have rich and beautifully organised interiors,' she found 'the Oltenians' (…) much poorer, mixed and somewhat urbanised'. Her disappointment with the transformation of material culture was strengthened by the Bessarabian experience. 'The Cornova interiors were very urban, with white linen sheets, white valance pillowcases, with photographs on the walls (…) They used glasses, plates, and cutlery bought in town!'[163] Under those circumstances, she had to study the Molodvan *scoațe* (decorative woven rugs), a craft that had persisted in the region. Her comments were telling not only of the great cultural

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[161] Ibid.

[162] Rostás, "Marcela Focșa," 112.

[163] Ibid., 171.

variety of different villages, but also of their different stages of evolution and transformation.

Unlike Focşa, who avoided the confrontation with new cultural forms and looked for the remaining authentic materials to continue her research, Golopenţia engaged with the transformation of Cornova in a different way, analyzing the adaptation of local taste to a new supply of material goods and to external influences. For his article about the 'process of urbanization in Cornova', he brought together information both about traditional objects and about new, imported ones, in an attempt to monitor their gradual substitution, its causes and implications.[164] The fieldnotes he used (produced both by him or by his colleagues), reproduced the villagers' memories about how things used to be, how they were made and consumed, as well as opinions about contemporary fashion, practices, etc. The section on fashion relied on descriptions of past and present styles of dress provided by older (60 years old) and younger (15-16 years old) informants of both genders. This source material showed an interest in fashion as a system of social difference - since most fieldnotes carefully record whether it was the *mazili* (well-to-do peasants) or the *ţărani* (ordinary peasants) who dressed in a particular way - and the attempt to find the break point between the Moldavian traditional home-made style and the subsequent urban styles.[165] Photographs of old and young women respectively illustrated the contrast between the old and the new fashion trends.[166]

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[164] Anton Golopenţia, "Aspecte ale desfăşurării procesului de orăşenizare a satului Cornova," *Arhiva pentru Ştiinţă şi Reformă Socială* X, no. 1-4 (1932): 544-572.
[165] Golopenţia, "Fişe de teren," 164-5.
[166] Golopenţia, "Orăşenizarea satului Cornova," 304-5.

The same process was used to illustrate changes in housing, interior decoration and icon making. The ways change was questioned and addressed in the field show an interest not only in illuminating the past, but also in clarifying the present. It can be argued that the objectivity imposed on fieldwork meant that more was recorded about change as reflected in the present than was formalised in writing.

Finally, returning to Stahl, his work in Vrancea illustrated yet another attitude towards change. Approached from a legal point of view, although the situation in this unique location was presented in somber terms, as a tragedy, the disintegration of the community, and even a plague or curse, the lament was not about moral degeneration. An admirer of the free peasantry of Vrancea, Stahl sought to shed some light on the totally ignored traditional laws of communal land tenure and on the ways they had been mis-used to the advantage of the logging industrialists and with the state's support. According to him, capitalism and the legal framework that allowed it to penetrate the region were two sources of evil that initiated not an inevitable change, but one that could and that had to be fought against. His involvement in the peasant actions against these private companies showed an active, engaged attitude to change in the countryside that appeared as a direct consequence of fieldwork.

To sum up, most researchers confronted rural transformation in their collecting practices, but interpreted it in different ways. Vulcănescu linked the capitalisation of peasant economy with moral degeneration, Stahl also linked it to the penetration of capitalism in a remote traditional community, but also to the

failure of the state to adapt its legal system to the pre-existing traditional one. Focşa only saw urbanisation as an aesthetic loss, whereas Golopenţia read it as an adaptation of taste to the supply of new consumer goods. Overall, they all shared the sense that traditional culture (both material or spiritual) was disappearing and being replaced by town-made surrogates. Despite the different interpretations given to social change, this joint lament was expressed as a call for the preservation of the remaining rural culture.[167] This was best represented by the School's interest in collecting and exhibiting material culture from the villages they visited, which in turn reflects a conflicting view of the countryside as both the repository of a dying heritage and a living laboratory of social experimentation.

Conclusion

Returning to Stahl's initial comment, it seems that making informants laugh and cry on command affected the researchers' own perception of the countryside, at the same time influencing their own emotions towards it. Although Stahl's message was that emotions and their 'professional' use became refined tools in the production of social knowledge, I consider that the emotive side of research affected the sociologists themselves and shaped their ideas. Before going on to discuss the reflections of the countryside in sociological writing, a few preliminary conclusions need to be drawn. This chapter has dealt with the role of fieldwork in the formation

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[167] Henri H. Stahl, *Cultura satelor cum trebuie înţeleasă* (Cluj: Editura Revistei Satul şi Şcoala, 1935), 22.

of the Bucharest sociologists and in the transformation of the countryside into an object of sociological study. The discussion of the different stages and practices of fieldwork have shown how the direct engagement with the rural world produced the habitus of the monographist that included not only a way of seeing and of relating to the peasantry, but also a collective set of work and leisure practices and an ethos of being in the countryside. By stressing the importance of the empirical aspects and practical experiences of research, I have analysed the embodied gaze, formed and affected not only by what the researchers saw, but also by their preconceptions, by their group experiences (both leisure and work-related), and by the direct impact of the trips on their own bodies and minds. The first section clarified how Gusti's theories provided a framework for research that was flexible enough to allow many different angles, approaches and positions, but at the same time trained the eye to be rigorous in scrutinising reality. This flexibility and variety determined the multi-vocal type of research conducted in the field. Exploring the identities and spatial practices of the researchers who went on these trips, I have argued that fieldwork provided a new mobility, which allowed young intellectuals to explore the 'different culture' of the village, also drawing academic and social connections between the capital and the countryside. Contrasting the techniques and methods of the School with examples of when the rules of research were broken, revealed the many artifices that lay behind its 'objective' and 'scientific' practices. Since ultimately, observing, interviewing, and recording were social practices conceived to produce the raw data for social studies, a conflict between

the ethics of research and the pressure to meet one's aims appeared. Additionally, this chapter has explored the many similarities between doing research in one's own country and the experience of anthropologists working overseas. One of the common consequences of both situations was that fieldwork practices bound the observers to the observed in a relationship that transcended the spatial boundaries of the field. The Bucharest sociologists became inescapably bound to the fate of the rural world whose representatives they chose to be. This is clearest in the short sections that deal with how the monographic trips affected the lives and careers of the researchers and in the discussion of the way social change in the countryside was recorded in monographic fieldnotes. Reflecting the existing preoccupation with this topic and indicating its various interpretations in the early phase of collective research, this discussion paves the way to an examination of how the monographists represented the rural world and presented their ideas about its transformation in the wider intellectual debates of the 1930s.

Chapter 2

LAMENTING SOCIAL CHANGE

SOCIOLOGICAL WRITINGS IN THE EARLY 1930S

> The best society is one that provides the kind of happiness people want.[1]
>
> Mircea Vulcănescu, 1933

In the winter of 1932-1933, a fierce journalistic debate concerning the role of sociology in understanding the countryside and its future broke out between two friends, the sociologist Mircea Vulcănescu and the writer Petru Comarnescu. Although they were both influenced by monographic research, the authors reached opposing conclusions about the relationship between sociology and the rural world. In his article entitled *'Puțină sociologie'* ('A little sociology'), Vulcănescu used sociology to explain why Romania's future lay in the village.[2] In response, Comarnescu accused his friend of mis-using the discipline by 'applying a preferential treatment to different social units' (in this case, the city and the village), arguing that, since the urban and the rural were interconnected, the future lay in their convergence into a 'human unification above all differences'.[3] In retort, Vulcănescu wrote the article containing the quote above, in which he defended his use of sociology in relation to the crucial role the countryside played in the country's future. In his view, the discipline was to determine what 'kind of happiness people

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[1] *Cea mai bună societate e e cea care asigură celor mulți fericirea asa cum o vor ei'* Mircea Vulcănescu, "Şi puțină axiologie antropologică," in *Opere*, vol. 2 (Bucharest: Ed. Fundației Naționale pentru Ştiință și Artă; Ed. Univers Enciclopedic, 2005), 720.

[2] Mircea Vulcănescu, "Puțină sociologie," *Dreapta* II, no. 4 (December 25, 1932): 3.

[3] Petru Comarnescu, "O confuzie periculoasa. Unitate umană și romantism rural," *Stânga* II, no. 12 (January 29, 1933): 7.

want' and then propose the 'best society' accordingly.[4] To support his argument, Vulcănescu used concrete examples from his fieldwork experience, indicating that his views mirrored the people's desires for the future, not his own. This debate illustrates the important role sociology played in supporting different positions in intellectual debates about the transformation of the countryside and about the country's future more widely. The epigraph of this chapter indirectly highlights the new role the sociologist was to play in representing the 'people' and in designing models of 'happiness'. Moreover, the argument between the two friends also indicates the variety of models proposed and the competition over what constituted 'the best society', reflecting the greater lack of unity within the BSS and in the wider intellectual arena.

On their return from the countryside to the city, the monographists were expected to write up their experiences and to communicate their findings to the world. Although their work was intended to form comprehensive monographs on the villages studied, the first publications were articles and research methodologies. It was only towards the end of the 1930s that the Nerej monograph took shape, alongside the less unitary collection on Drăguș, and other variants of collective monographic works that diverged from Gusti's model.[5] Nevertheless, despite this initial failure to produce comprehensive monographs on the villages studied

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[4] Vulcănescu, "Și puțină axiologie antropologică," 720.

[5] Stahl, *Nerej*, vol. 1; *Drăguș, un sat din Țara Oltului* (Bucharest: Institutul Social Român, 1944); Anton Golopenția and Dan Corneliu Georgescu, *60 sate românesti: cercetate de echipele studentești în vara 1938 : anchetă sociologică condusă de Anton Golopenția și dr. D. C. Georgescu* (Bucharest: Institutul de Științe Sociale al României, 1941); Anton Golopenția and Mihai Pop, *Dâmbovnicul : o plasă din sudul județului Argeș : câteva rezultate ale unei cercetări monografice întreprinse în 1939* (Bucharest: Institutul de Științe Sociale al României, 1942); Ion Conea, ed., *Clopotiva. Un sat din Hațeg: monografie sociologică întocmită de echipa regală studențească 1935 sub conducerea lui Ion Conea* (Bucharest: Institutul de Științe Sociale al României, 1940).

between 1925-1931, both the Bucharest sociologists and the other participants in the fieldwork trips wrote and published intensively both in academic journals and in the general press. Alongside the specialist publications, the monographists used their newly acquired knowledge to engage in wider public discussions about the countryside and its future that were taking place in newspapers and non-academic journals.[6] In the troubled context of the early 1930s, their voices fed into the heated political debates about the state of the nation, the economic crisis and Romania's fate more generally. Consequently, the articles informed by monographic research became politicised, leading to differing positions regarding the meaning and the future of rural life. At the heart of this dissent were the transformation and/or reform of the countryside.

This chapter examines the debates over rural transformation in the writings of the Bucharest School of Sociology in the early 1930s. My main aim is to understand how sociologists engaged with the transformation of the rural world in their writings and what positions their visions of change occupied in the contemporary intellectual arena. A second aim of this chapter is to explore how the various styles of writing employed by the members of the School constructed different relationships between the authors and the countryside. Following on the previous chapter, I will examine the way the fieldwork experience fed into and was

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[6] The main academic journal in which the monographists published was the ISR's *Arhiva pentru Știință și Reformă Socială* (Archive for Social Science and Reform). Apart from this, Traian Herseni published in Ion Clopoțel's publication *Societatea de Mâine* issued in Cluj, whereas Stahl, Vulcănescu, Golopenția and many others published widely in the dailies and weeklies *Stânga, Dreapta, Cuvântul, Timpul, Universul, Sfarmă-Piatră,* etc.

shaped in the process of writing, and the many ways it affected the authors' style

and voice.

In understanding how the experience of the field created opposing groups of

positions that either mourned for the loss of tradition and the inevitability of change

or accepted it and tried to influence it, I employ Mazlish's terms 'breakers' and

'lamenters' and draw on his observations about the intersection between literary

and sociological texts.[7] My argument is that in engaging with different academic and

non-academic audiences, the monographists translated their personal and collective

experiences and used them to formulate their positions in the context of wider

public debates. Overall, their different interpretations of social change constituted

variants of a general 'lament' over rural transformation, which sometimes tended

towards a breaking position, but never settled on it.

This chapter will start by examining the external context that shaped the

publications of the Bucharest sociologists and the internal pressures that brought

the School to a crisis point. Set against the background of the international

economic crisis and the national agricultural one, the radicalisation of politics and

debates about the role of the 'young generation', the sociologists' writings about

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[7] For Mazlish, the 'breakers' were the representatives of individualism, such as Adam Smith and Charles Darwin. They had 'smashed all existing links, leaving the world, both natural and supernatural, all in pieces, all coherence gone.' Yet, 'to the eye of the breaker, (…) what others have seen as connected, he has seen as in chains; and in breaking the chains, he has prepared the way for freedom and independence, to be enjoyed by each individual'. The 'lamenters' ('philosophers, poets and novelists' like Burke, Rousseau, Carlyle, Wordsworth, etc.) believed that 'an almost irreparable breakdown of connections has occurred' and deplored it in different ways. Mazlish further argues that 'the lamenters came to dominate the cultural response to the changes in modernism'. Finally, his main argument is that 'by the second half of the nineteenth century, the effort to deal with the omnipresent sense of disconnection (…) took the form of an attempt at a new science, sociology'. Although Mazlish uses the pair 'breakers-lamenters' to describe the situation prior to the rise of sociology, I consider that, in the Romanian case, these terms can be usefully applied to the rise of the 'new science' and to exploring the intersections between literary, journalistic and academic texts. Mazlish, *A new science*, 12.

the peasantry offered not a common unitary vision of the rural world, but a series of different positions which reflected both their opinions and personal views and those of the various factions within their contemporary public sphere.[8] The second section of this chapter will engage with the School's publications, concentrating on the way social change was defined and formulated in a variety of styles and formats, ranging from academic to non-academic articles. Analysing academic and non-academic texts, I examine the categories through which rural transformation was conceptualised and the emotions and opinions that underpinned the scientific works. My conclusions will firstly consider the new power positions between the subjects and objects of knowledge constructed in the process of writing, and the distance between the countryside experienced during fieldwork and that presented in the scientific and public debates. Secondly, by relating the findings about the Bucharest sociologists to the wider intellectual debates of the time, I will consider how the 'new science' of sociology became involved in the political discussions around the future of the peasantry and how it fundamentally altered them.

Dissent within the School

The general image of the early 1930s is one of crisis and discontent across the entire Romanian political, economic and intellectual scene. The enthusiasm brought about by the victory of *Partidul Național Țărănesc* (The National Peasant Party) in the 1928 elections, promising great changes, especially for the rural masses of Romanian

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[8] On the 'young generation' and the 1930s in Romania more generally, see Ornea, *Anii treizeci. Extrema dreaptă românească*, 147-181; Mircea Vulcănescu and Mihai Manoilescu, *Tendințele tinerei generații: două conferinț e* (Bucharest: Universul, 1934). Republished in Mircea Vulcănescu, *Tînăra generație* (Bucharest: Ed. Compania, 2004), 110-140.

society, was short-lived.[9] The return of King Carol II to the throne in 1930 and the impact of the international financial crisis on the whole of Eastern Europe marked a downturn in the Romanian economy with severe consequences for agriculture and a general disillusion with democracy and capitalism as political models for Romania's future.[10] Of the two events, the return of the 'playboy king'[11]- soon to become the 'peasant king' - created tensions amongst Gusti's close collaborators, some of whom distrusted the new monarch.[12] The long-term consequence was Gusti's new wave of social action and research in the countryside started in 1934, conducted under King Carol's aegis and funded by FCR-PC.[13] Not all the old members would join the professor in his new enterprise, with some instead criticising his new ideas.[14]

The Great Depression was a crucial factor in the fragmentation of the School and its internal strife. The international economic crisis manifested itself in Eastern Europe primarily as an agricultural crisis, making the peasants its first victims.[15] The period between 1930 and 1934 was also one of great political instability when, under the persisting influence of the National Peasant Party, efforts were made to

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[9] The National Peasant Party, which ruled between 1928 and 1930, has been seen as 'the test-case for a democratic regime'. However, as Fischer-Galati noted, 'the general consensus is that [Iuliu] Maniu failed to realise the great expectations placed in his regime by the Romanian people'. Fischer-Galati, "The Interwar Period," 302-305; Hitchins, *Rumania: 1866-1947*, 414-417.

[10] Heinen, *Legiunea 'Arhanghelul Mihai'*; Roberts, *Rumania*, 130-9; Fischer-Galati, "The Interwar Period," 305-308; Hitchins, *Rumania: 1866-1947*, 416-425.

[11] For one of the few monographs in English on King Carol II, see Paul Quinlan, *The Playboy King: Carol II of Romania* (Westport, Ct: Greenwood, 1995).

[12] In an interview, Stahl admitted he was happy to work for King Carol II although he was not an enthusiast of his rule. Rostás, *Monografia ca utopie*, 110-112.

[13] Gusti became the director of FCR-PC in 1934. Rostás, *Atelierul gustian*; Apostol Culea, "Raport cu privire la Fundația Culturală Regală 'Principele Carol'," n.d , FCR-C/1923/46/26-41, Arh. Naț.

[14] Stahl mentioned Vulcănescu's clear refusal to participate in these activities and Herseni's indirect 'retreat into the academic world and theoretical deates.' Stahl, *Amintiri*, 277.

[15] As prices of agricultural goods on international markets plummeted, Western European buyers turned down Eastern grains to protect their own internal markets and foreign capital vanished, the Romanian peasant fell deeper and deeper into debt, and thus into misery. Roberts, *Rumania*, 176-8.

improve the peasantry's situation and fight the crisis.[16] However, the results were poor and could not appease either the rural population or their main representatives, the intellectuals. The latter had in turn been affected by the economic crisis and faced another sombre future – unemployment.[17]

Discontent amongst intellectuals appeared in two ways: they complained about their own situation and took on the mission of voicing the troubles of the peasantry at the same time.[18] This concerned the monographists directly who, due to their first hand experience of rural life, claimed to understand the problems and needs of the peasantry. Nevertheless, even within this rather small group, opinions on the economic crisis and on an apparent deeper national crisis differed greatly, reflecting the divergent and often conflicting positions its members occupied within the highly politicised intellectual arena of the time. Therefore, despite their shared experience of fieldwork and common knowledge about village life, the mongraphists put forth what appeared to be radically different visions for the future of the countryside.

The 'internal crisis of the monographic project', as Stahl later called it, reflected the turmoil across the entire Romanian society. Firstly, due to a lack of employment opportunities in the field of sociology, many of the students left to find other jobs after graduating.[19] Secondly, the intellectual atmosphere was hostile to positivist, social projects, having rather sunken into a spiritual and reflexive mood

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[16] After the return of King Carol II in 1930, the several governmental offices succeeded each other in seeking to deal with the economic depression. Hitchins, *Rumania: 1866-1947*, 416-417.

[17] Vulcănescu, *Tînăra generație*, 86-87; Ornea, *Anii treizeci. Extrema dreaptă românească*.

[18] Verdery, *National Identity*, 58-9.

[19] Stahl, *Amintiri*, 210-3.

fuelled by the thought of the young generation.[20] Thirdly, the rise of the right and the gulf that opened between the two political extremes also contributed to the break up of the initial group of sociologists.[21] Finally, Gusti himself played a role in the crisis by abandoning his position as the School's leader while he was Minister of Education.[22] Each of these factors affected the sociological research project marking the end of its first stage.

The previous chapter discussed the impact fieldwork activity had on the professional careers of the participants. Despite being a formative experience, sociology could not become a profession for most of them. As Stahl later pointed out, 'sociology could only be a career for those who held one of the limited number of existing academic positions as either teaching assistants or librarians'.[23] Gusti's close collaborators, Vulcănescu, Herseni and Stahl, entered academia only on teaching assistant positions, which, not being remunerated, required them to hold another job at the same time.[24] Part of this group also gained positions in the state bureaucracy (Vulcănescu, Golopenția, Herseni, amongst others).[25] Another section of the School pursued diplomatic careers (Brutus Coste, Gheorge Vlădescu-Răcoasă).[26] For the women who participated in the field expeditions, social work appeared as one of the few ways they could apply this experience in a new career.

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[20] Vulcănescu described the period between 1929-1932 as a 'non-spiritual moment or spiritual (…) a time of defeat, disappointment, uncertainty'. Mircea Vulcănescu, *Tînăra generație*, 66.

[21] Stahl, *Amintiri*, 219-21. ZIgu Ornea also described the initial division between right and left and the 'rhinocerisation' of the generation between. Ornea, *Anii treizeci. Extrema dreaptă românească*, 181-220.

[22] Stahl, *Amintiri*, 195; Golopenția, *Rapsodia Epistolară II*, 42-46.

[23] Stahl, *Amintiri*, 211.

[24] For example. Stahl continued his job as a stenographer for the Parliament until 1938. Rostás, *Monografia ca utopie*, 131.

[25] Diaconu, "Herseni."

[26] Momoc, "O istorie politică a Școlii Sociologice de la București," 9.

Școala Superioară de Asistență Socială "Principesa Ileana" (The 'Princess Ileana'
School of Social Work) set up by Veturia Manuilă in 1929 recruited one of the
prominent female voices of Bucharest sociology, Xenia Costa-Foru, who would
otherwise have found no place in the male-dominated worlds of academia and
politics.[27] Similarly, Cristescu, Golopenția's fiancée, became a school teacher despite
her prolific portfolio of publications.[28] Many other participants dispersed, taking jobs
in public administration, in various research institutes (the Central Institute of
Statistics, the Institute of Demography) and in secondary education (Ion Ionică, D.C.
Amzăr).[29] These different paths, although inspired by sociology, drove the
monographists away from the School's headquarters at the University of Bucharest,
and allowed less time for research, meetings and discussions.[30] Nevertheless, many
of those mentioned here continued to write, either for academic purposes, for the
press or for public research. Monographic research thus led to very different
careers, rather than to a common project for all. This period therefore marked the
bifurcation between a pathway that led to the professionalization of sociology and
one that led towards positions in which this discipline constituted a secondary
interest or an inspiration. However, in a wider picture, this also reflects the

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[27] According to Bucur, this institution offered a career only to urban middle class women and was adverse to
feminist ideas in general. Maria Bucur, "Mișcarea eugenistă și rolurile de gen," in *Patriarhat și emancipare în
istoria gândirii politice românești* (Iași: Polirom, 2002), 130-1.

[28] Ștefania Cristescu, *Sporul vieții. Jurnal, studii și corespondeță* (Bucharest: Paideia, 2007).

[29] Both Marcela Focșa and Roman Cressin worked for the Central Institute of Statistics and the latter also for The
Institute for Economic Affairs. Zoltán Rostás, "Roman Cressin. "Cel mai plăcut concediu pe care l-am avut în
viață'," in *Sala luminoasă. Primii monografiști ai școlii gustiene* (Bucharest: Paideia, 2003), 95-6; Rostás, "Marcela
Focșa," 109.

[30] Rostás, *Monografia ca utopie*, 153.

penetration of a sociological way of seeing into a great variety of workplaces and institutions.

The 'young generation'

Tendințele tinerei generații ('The tendencies of the young generation')*,* published by Vulcănescu in 1934, was a manifesto for the young Romanian intellectuals who wished to break with the materialist 1920s and to take on the task of rediscovering 'true Romanian spirituality'.[31] Seeking to find unity in the oppositions that had broken his generation, Vulcănescu announced that these signalled 'a spiritual crisis' and a disruption of the moral order stemming from 'two [coexisting] Romanias', one urban and the other rural.[32] The book bore a humorous dedication to Stahl - 'to Ricu for fulfilling a brotherly duty, although the matter is of no interest to him'- since the latter had chosen to keep a certain distance from these heated debates and remained faithful to his own ideas and to Gusti's projects.[33] Stahl saw Vulcănescu's differences with monographic research as philosophical, in contrast with the political hostility of the Legion's supporters.[34] Inspired by one of the most charismatic academic figures of the time, Nae Ionescu, the young generation also included Mircea Eliade, Emil Cioran, Herseni, Paul Sterian and others, all announcing a spiritual crisis of Romanian urban society.[35] Although part of the same age group, Comarnescu and Stahl represented a more optimistic position which sought to look

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[31] Vulcănescu and Manoilescu, *Tendințele tinerei*.

[32] Ibid., 4-23.

[33] Stahl, *Amintiri*, 215.

[34] Ibid.

[35] For different accounts of the Romanian intellectual arena and the place of the 'young generation'. Ornea, *Anii treizeci. Extrema dreaptă românească*, 147-181; Vanhaelemeersch, *A generation*; Hitchins, *Rumania: 1866-1947*, 292-334.

beyond the crisis to its practical solutions.[36] Alongside writing in the existing

publications like *Gândirea, Vremea, Stânga, Dreapta, Cuvântul*, the members of the

young generation also set up their own forum for debates, the *Criterion* group and

the journal of the same name. Their main criticisms were directed towards Western

capitalism and its materialist values, inspiration being sought instead in the 'new'

forms of European politics emerging in Italy, Germany, and Russia.[37] However, the

Criterion members were interested more in spiritual and cultural renewal that in

socio-economic or political solutions. Rejecting democratic politics, the young

generation aimed towards ethereal goals such as 'ensuring the unity of the

Romanian soul', 'expressing it through universal forms' and creating the icon of the

'new Romanian man'.[38] These goals often distanced the Romanian peasantry and

defined it as a site of spirituality and renewal, rather than a contemporary social

group. For the BSS, these new ideas brought distrust for positivist research, a great

deal of internal strife, and the abandonment of the project by some of its members.

Politics of right and left

The shift towards the extremes was directly linked to the change of mood among

Romanian intellectuals and their criticisms of Western democracy. What

characterised this period was not one direction, but a continuous to-ing and fro-ing

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[36] Vanhaelemeersch, *A generation*, 275-294.

[37] The Criterion group organised a series of public debates united by the theme of the 'Idols', which discussed Lenin, Mussolini, Ghandi, and Freud. Although showing the vivid interest in these figures, the debates are representative of the great schism in the Romanian intellectual scene between left and right, as the debates were the scene of heated and often violent confrontations, which resulted in the police intervening and evacuating the halls.

[38] Vulcănescu, *Tînăra generație*, 73. This text collates an article written for the cultural review *Criterion* in November 1934 and another text published posthumously.

between opposing positions. The spiritual turn of the generation marked the rise of a new type of politics based on activism and extremism.[39] As Zigu Ornea noted, despite their contempt for practical politics in the early 1930s, 'their debates did not lack a political dimension'.[40] This is clearly illustrated in the names of the papers these young intellectuals rote in: *Stânga* (The Left), *Dreapta* (The Right) and the more extremist *Axa* (The Axis). After a moment of profound turmoil when everything was questioned and scrutinised, when the boundaries between the right and left were still fluid and blurred, towards the mid 1930s, the positions solidified with many intellectuals turning to the extremist Legion of the Archangel Michael.[41] However, only a small faction of the BSS joined the Legion, namely the *Rânduiala* group. Breaking with Gusti's sociological movement, Ernest Bernea, Ion Ionică, Dumitru C. Amzăr, and Ion Sămărineanu set up their own homonymous journal that criticised Gusti's approach to the village. However, legionarism was almost never the sole grounds for excluding a scholar from monographic research. Unlike Herseni, who embraced the Legionary ideology in the late 1930s but remained associated with the School, the *Rânduiala* group attacked Gusti's theory and approach and thus excluded themselves from the entire project.[42]

Overall, both the spiritual and the political turns in the intellectual world affected not only the social group, but also the individual styles, format and content of the monographists' writings. The formal objectivity of the academic articles

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[39] Ibid., 96-7.
[40] Ornea, *Anii treizeci. Extrema dreaptă românească*, 172.
[41] Ornea, *Anii treizeci. Extrema dreaptă românească*, 181; Heinen, *Legiunea 'Arhanghelul Mihai'*, 170, 203; Rostás, *Monografia ca utopie*, 222.
[42] Rostás, *Atelierul gustian*, 127.

contrasted with the journalism of the School members, allowing an insight both into what agendas and opinions lay behind scientific research and how the knowledge gained in the field was used to support different arguments in the fierce political debates. Finally, these processes affected the treatment of the object of monographic research, the peasantry. Inserted into the frame of these political debates, the peasantry became one of the stakes of an intellectual game. Bigger questions about democracy, politics, capitalism, and the economic crisis, on one hand, and spirituality, the nation and cultural renewal, on the other, were rephrased into questions about the state and transformation of the peasantry.[43]

Gusti's leadership

Gusti's role in the break up of the first monographic research group points to its lack of internal cohesion. Pre-existing fissures added to the crisis and inability to produce the monographs that were initially promised. Between 1925 and 1932, apart from his academic post at the University of Bucharest, Gusti had held other several prominent positions in various public institutions: he was president of *Societatea Română de Radiodifuziune* (The Romanian Broadcasting Service), of *Casa Autonomă a Monopolurilor* (lit. The Autonomous Monopolies Commission) and of *Oficiul Național de Cooperație* (The National Office of Cooperation).[44] At the same time, he was Dean of the Faculty of Letters and directed the national census of 1930. Between 1932-33, Gusti was Minister of Education under the National Peasant Party

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[43] In her analysis of the interwar intellectual debates, Verdery notes the central role played by the peasantry not only in sociology and politics, but in most other fields. Verdery, *National Identity*, 58-9.
[44] Bădina and Neamțu, *Dimitrie Gusti. Viață și personalitate*, 90-2; 230-1; Golopenția, *Rapsodia Epistolară II*, 42-46.

Government. All these positions, of which the latter required a full-time commitment, meant less and less time devoted to the organisation and leadership of the monographic research project. Although the Professor cultivated a spirit of collegiality with his students, charging them with great responsibility, his style remained essentially paternalistic. As Rostás has pointed out, Gusti was unable to appoint any one of his collaborators as leader of the project in his absence.[45] This affected the atmosphere of the writing up campaigns in 1932 and 1933.[46] Stahl noted 'the [writing-up campaign in Drăguș] was (…) a more anarchic and individual mechanical repetition of what had been done before. (…) Each researcher used their own file to collect the materials that documented the issue of interest to them.'[47] Gusti's absence at the crucial transition from fieldwork to writing hastened the failure of the synthetic monograph and the fragmentation of sociological research on the Romanian countryside. Moreover, his involvement in politics and pro-Carol attitude from 1930 onwards also created animosities between him and some of his students.

The Habitus of the sociologist

The writing-up process started with individual articles, published in the main academic journal of the ISR, *Arhiva pentru Știință și Reformă Socială.*[48] Alongside academic writing, the leading members of the School wrote for numerous

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[45] Rostás, *Atelierul gustian*, 102-10.
[46] Stahl, *Amintiri*, 195-209.
[47] Ibid., 196.
[48] In 1936, monographic research received its own publication, *Sociologie Românească,* under the aegis of the same institute.

newspapers and journals, thus integrating their knowledge and opinions about the countryside in a wider political frame. The following section investigates the different styles of writing used by the sociologists in an effort to understand how the transition of monographic research from the field to the academic and public spheres shaped the School's discourse on the rural world and its transformation.

The distinction of fieldwork

As shown retrospectively in the members' memoirs and interviews, despite the success of the expeditions, the School's own crisis appeared as a failure to produce collective monographs on the villages studied in the previous years. Instead it built an impressive archive of social life, consisting of fieldnotes, photographs, films, and objects, many of which were not written-up. Aware of the impending need to transform the product of fieldwork into sociological writing, Gusti and his close collaborators decided to organise two summer trips for the sole purpose of writing up the existing materials into monographic accounts. The two trips to Drăguș in 1932 and to Făgăraș in 1933 were documented in Stahl's memoirs and Golopenția's recently published correspondence with his fiancée, Ștefania Cristescu. These allow access into the otherwise unseen process of turning the 'raw' material into processed form.[49] Both give vivid accounts of the difficulties and dissent within the writing-up teams, whose members, instead of working together, completed their

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[49] Stahl, *Amintiri*; Golopenția, *Ceasul misiunilor reale*; Golopenția, *Rapsodia Epistolară II*.

individual projects and wrote their own articles without coordinating their efforts

towards a common goal.[50]

Retrospectively, Stahl explained the failure of the monograph through the

lack of a cohesive theory shared by all participants.[51] Despite the common object,

location and methodology of research, the scholars' disagreement lay in the

theoretical approach, Stahl working from a Marxist socio-historical perspective,

Vulcănescu, Herseni, and Bernea from a phenomenological one. Nevertheless, the

desire to achieve intellectual distinction and professional success was also a factor

that influenced the fate and results of monographic fieldwork. This motivation

appeared clearly in the letters exchanged by the couple Cristescu and Golopenția in

the summer of 1933.[52] After a study year in Paris, at the Sorbonne, Cristescu

returned to Romania ready to join the writing-up trip to Făgăraș organised by Gusti

in absentia and unofficially led by Stahl.[53] Held up by his job at the Ministry of

Education and thus unable to attend, Golopenția wrote to his future wife both

before (when Ștefania was preparing to return from France) and during the trip

(when she was working on her materials together with the other monographists).

Pre-empting the future problems of the trip, Golopenția wrote:

> The monographic field trip will in fact start in July – a campaign to write up
> the Drăguș materials set either in Făgăraș or in a monastery. But the
> Professor [Gusti] delays the meeting with the monographists that would
> decide the date of the departure and the destination. In the meantime, they,
> tormented with various dissatisfactions, are waiting in a sort of rebellion. We

[50] Stahl, *Amintiri*, 199, 205-8.
[51] Ibid., 208.
[52] Golopenția, *Rapsodia Epistolară II*, 97-217.
[53] Stahl, *Amintiri*, 205.

must definitely publish, so you must write up. (…) We cannot expect that either monographic research or the Professor will ease the way for any of us. Therefore, no one can miss the chance to consolidate what one has managed to achieve to far.[54]

The tensions amongst the sociologists affected the writing up campaign, transforming it into an unpleasant experience for Cristescu. Caught between the two parties – Stahl and Brăiloiu on the one side and Herseni, Bernea, Gheorghe Focșa and Amzăr on the other – she wrote to her fiancée, confused and outraged.[55] Stahl and Brăiloiu were going out drinking and partying with the villagers, whereas the other group stayed clear of such temptations, working hard on their research.[56] At first, she sided with the second group, but Golopenția's reply made her change her mind by presenting the situation in a very different light:

> I am on Ricu's [Stahl] side, you see… Herseni, Bernea and Focșa are people who want to become someone. Herseni is about to; the others feel hard done-by and wish to prove better than those acknowledged so far, through number of pages, importance, originality, zeal, friendliness and such other merits. They want to show to those higher up that the current leaders are drunks, that they like to party and to chat, that they enjoy nice days, (…) and other things – not serious enough in the eyes of other arrogant scientists.[57]

In his words, writing up appeared as a competition for academic distinction - 'becoming someone', and as a battle between the 'leaders' and the 'followers', the latter criticising the others' morality in the field. Unlike earlier trips, the Făgăraș one

[54] Anton Golopenția, "Anton Golopenția către Ștefania Cristescu (25.06.1933)," in *Rapsodia Epistolară II* (Bucharest: Ed. Enciclopedică, 2009), 158.

[55] Ștefania Cristescu, "Ștefania Cristescu către Anton Golopenția (10.08.1933)," in *Rapsodia Epistolara II* (Bucharest: Ed. Enciclopedică, 2009), 168; Ștefania Cristescu, "Ștefania Cristescu către Anton Golopenția (08.1933)," in *Rapsodia Epistolara II* (Bucharest: Ed. Enciclopedică, 2009), 171-173.

[56] 'Led by Stahl, the boys and the two girls have partied all night long in various local pubs.' Cristescu, "ȘC către AG (08.1933)."

[57] Anton Golopenția, "Anton Golopenția către Ștefania Cristescu (05.08.1933)," in *Rapsodia Epistolară II* (Bucharest: Ed. Enciclopedică, 2009), 173-174.

seemed to have higher stakes, which made the atmosphere very tense. Yet, in his

assessment made from outside the situation, Golopenția pointed to the direct

relationship between the experience and writing up of fieldwork.

> Ștefania, you should leaf through Ricu's file and read his articles and only then you will understand the behaviour of people like Bernea and Focșa. (…) Ricu Stahl immerses himself in work; his is the voice of the ancient *răzășie,* of, some would say, his own *răzășie*. However, in reading him you will certainly taste the pleasures of science, you will be taken back in time to relive a moment of the local commune's life. For the others, the object is a means to show their knowledge, to prove their personal importance; you will read them out of bibliographical obligations.[58]

These observations present the difficult conditions of the writing-up process, in

which the monographists transformed the field from a shared experience of

collaboration into one of competition for personal distinction. This indicates some of

the relations of power that influenced some of the ethnographic texts discussed in

this chapter.[59] Moreover, Cristescu and Golopenția also commented on the process

of writing itself as an extended relationship between the scholar, their object of

study and their audience. In the excerpt above, Golopenția explained his opinions

both on his colleagues' work and on the criteria for judging it. For him, Stahl's value

lay in the clear focus, originality, and empathy with his subject, the *răzeșie*. These

qualities resulted from a relationship with his object of study that, although maybe

less orthodox and rigid, made the field come alive for the reader, giving it a voice. In

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[58] Ibid., 173-4.

[59] Commenting on the analysis of travel-writing, Wendy Bracewell mentioned the relations of power as one of the necessary ways of understanding such texts. '(…) looking at travel writing involves both an understanding of literary genre and textual strategies and an analysis of the material circumstances (and particularly the relations of power) within which travel texts were produced' I use this as guidance in analysing the writings of the BSS. Wendy Bracewell, "East Looks West: East European Travel Writing in Europe," in *Călători români în Occident, secolele XVII-XX* (Cluj-Napoca: Institutul Cultural Român, 2004), 13.

contrast, the other scholars, thought Golopenția, used 'the object' as a tool for achieving public recognition, thus producing an academic yet sterile work.

This insight into the writing-up of monographic texts opens the way to discussing the early publications of the School as products of a complex and uneven negotiation between authors, materials, and audiences, which resulted in the birth of individual voices and of different genres. In negotiating the writing up process, researchers had to find a balance between their preferred theoretical choices and the 'raw' data available. If initially Gusti's versatile and apparently widely-accepted theory had brought many people together working in similar ways, this new stage resulted in different participants proposing their own reading of the social facts and processes they had observed as a group. Apart from the different theoretical standpoints, even more pressure was exerted by the need to publish and subsequently by the literary genre their texts would become part of and the audiences they would address.

In what follows I will analyse the two main types of writing produced by the monographists around the years early to mid-1930s – academic and non-academic – focusing primarily on the authors' visions of the countryside and its transformation. Using Frederic Jameson's definition of genres as 'social contracts between a writer and a specific public, whose function is to specify the proper use of a cultural artifact', I will compare the arguments, style, voice, and claims to objectivity

different genres imposed on the authors.[60] This analysis will bring out the writers' positions both in relation to their objects of study and within the academic and public debates.[61] Thus, if academic publications and their readers imposed specific standards of objectivity, realism and theoretical engagement with the object of writing, non-academic ones exchanged objectivity for personal opinions, political stance and emotional engagement.

Gradually moving from specialist journals to general interest publications, this chapter opens with an analysis of the first issue of the academic journal *Arhiva pentru Știință și Reforma Socială* (The Archive of Social Science and Reform), which published a wide range of monographic research, followed by a discussion of social change as reflected in these articles. The following section will look at Vulcănescu's academic writings and at the debate in the press about rural transformation his journalism generated. Finally, the last section will deal with the 'fictionalisation of the peasantry' as it appeared in the general interest magazines or newspapers that published the monographists' articles.

The Academic journal

After the Drăguș expedition in 1929, in which eigthy students and researchers took part, the seminar of sociology was formally integrated into the prestigious ISR, as 'The Monographic Section'. There, the monographists organised public conferences

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[60] Frederic Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2002), 92.

[61] Much of my inspiration for this approach has come from the debates about anthropological writing led by George Marcus, James Clifford, Talal Asad and others in the 1980s. James Clifford and George E. Marcus, *Writing Culture. The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986); George E. Marcus and Dick Cushman, "Ethnographies as Texts," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 11 (1982): 25-69.

and later were offered space to publish their research in their academic review,
Arhiva pentru Știință și Reformă Socială. Access to this prestigious academic journal
opened one of the highest forums of intellectual debates in Romania to the young
scholars, providing them with instant recognition and distinction. At the same time,
it also imposed a style and agenda of writing that corresponded to that of the
publication.

Set up by Gusti, Virgil Madgearu, Vasile Pârvan, and others in the early
1920s, the journal published research on various aspects of social and political life in
Romania by renowned scholars from wide range of subjects: sociology (Gusti, Petre
Andrei), economics (Virgil Madgearu, Gheorghe Ionescu-Sisești), politics (Ștefan
Zeletin, Calypso Botez), urbanism (Cincinat Sfințescu, Willy Pragher, Duiliu Marcu),
culture (Sextil Pușcariu), and others, alongside reviews of the latest foreign
publications in these areas. The section *Arhiva Monografică* (the Monographic
Archive) appeared at the heart of the journal in 1932, aided by funding from the
Rockefeller Foundation.[62] The minutes of the meeting where Gusti proposed this
new section show the importance given to this new area of research.[63] According to
Mihai Manoilescu, taken to the lack of suitable statistical methods, monographic
research was the only way to build knowledge about rural areas.[64] The young

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[62] On the activities of the Rockefeller Foundation in Romania, Popescu, "Fundațiile Rockefeller și Carnegie din Statele Unite ale Americii." More recently, Violeta Plosceanu has written a short report based on an archival study of the Rockefeller Archives Plosceanu, *The Rockefeller Foundation in Romania: For a Crossed History of Social Reform and Science*. [Accessed: 20 November 2010]

[63] "Buletinul Institutului Social Român. Darea de seamă a Adunării Generale de la 11 noiembrie 1929," *Arhiva pentru Știință și Reformă Socială* VIII, no. 1 (1929): 446.

[64] Manoilescu's criticism was that monographic research lacked a regional dimension, the only area proposed for publication being 'a village in the Făgăraș county (…) whereas the Wallachian plain represents our greatest interest.' Ibid.

monographists were therefore introduced to the highest academic circles by virtue of their cutting edge research, 'proven scholarly distinction', and in the hope of bringing a breath of fresh air to the life of the Institute.[65]

The 1932 volume of *Arhiva* is indicative of the School's general vision of the countryside and its transformation. The wide range of topics covered was organised around Gusti's 'contexts and manifestations' theoretical scheme. For the cosmological context, the geographer Ion Conea discussed the geo-physical coordinates of the Runcu village (1930)[66]. Under the biological context, D.C. Georgescu wrote on the demographics of Cornova (1931).[67] Continuing his historic investigations on the *răzeși* (free peasants), Stahl published his research on Cornova's *vatra satului* (the historic boundaries of the village).[68] Within the 'psychological context', Bernea discussed the calendar reform in Cornova, Gheorghe Focșa analysed the village mentality with reference to Runcu, Herseni addressed the theoretical relationship between individual and society in Fundul Moldovei (1928), whereas a younger member of the teams, P. Ștefănucă, published a villager's war correspondence, followed by Stahl's transcript of an interview with Father Zama, Cornova's village priest.[69] The *manifestări* sections included: for economics, two

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[65] Ibid.

[66] Ion Conea, "Determinări geofizice în așezarea satului Runcu," *Arhiva pentru Știință și Reformă Socială* X, no. 1 (1932): 59-73.

[67] D.C. Georgescu, "Evoluția demografică a satului Cornova 1817-1930," *Arhiva pentru Știință și Reformă Socială* X, no. 1 (1932): 74-87.

[68] Henri H. Stahl, "Contribuții la problema răzășiei satului Nerej (I)," *Arhiva pentru Știință și Reformă Socială* VIII, no. 4 (1929): 570-615; Henri H. Stahl, "Contribuții la problema răzășiei satului Nerej (II)," *Arhiva pentru Știință și Reformă Socială* IX, no. 1 (1930): 201-244; Henri H. Stahl, "Vatra satului Cornova," *Arhiva pentru Știință și Reformă Socială* X, no. 1 (1932): 118-134.

[69] Ernest Bernea, "Contribuții la problema calendarului în satul Cornova (I)," *Arhiva pentru Știință și Reformă Socială* X, no. 1 (1932): 191-205; Traian Herseni, "Individ și societate în satul Fundul Moldovei : câteva aspecte," *Arhiva pentru Știință și Reformă Socială* X, no. 1 (1932): 135-158; P. Ștefănucă, "Scrisori de răsboiu," *Arhiva*

articles on the village industries of Runcu – brandy (*țuică*) production and milling –

by Emil Buznea and Adrian Negrea, an article on indebtedness of the peasants in the

same village, a survey of the use of household budgets as a research method by

Roman Cressin, and a theoretical article on the sociological theory of economic life

by Vulcănescu.[70] Under the spiritual manifestations section, the scholars published

an even wider range of articles – Nicolae Argintescu discussed the issue of popular

taste, Brăiloiu analysed the mourning tradition in Drăguș from an

ethnomusicological perspective, Capsali wrote on the folk dances in Fundul

Moldovei, and Mac Constantinescu on the art of ceramics; Cristescu and Dochia

Ioanovici concentrated on magic practices, whereas the linguist Mihai Pop analysed

Cornova's constructed languages.[71] To conclude this section, Emil Turdeanu

published an anonymous manuscript found near Cornova.[72] The one article on

political manifestations discussed the Great War in Nerej by Nicolae Conț.[73] Finally,

three other separate sections included: on social units – Domnica Păun's article on

the gypsies in Cornova and Ion Zamfirescu's study of a household in the same

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pentru Știință și Reformă Socială X, no. 1 (1932): 183-190; Henri H. Stahl, "Despre Inochetie și Inochentism," *Arhiva pentru Știință și Reformă Socială* X, no. 1 (1932): 175-182.

[70] Emil Buznea, "O industrie țărănească," *Arhiva pentru Știință și Reformă Socială* X, no. 1 (1932): 266-79; Roman Cressin, "Datoriile agricultorilor din Runcu," *Arhiva pentru Știință și Reformă Socială* X, no. 1 (1932): 240-250; Mircea Vulcănescu, "Teoria și sociologia vieții economice. Prolegomene la studiul morfologiei economice a unui sat," *Arhiva pentru Știință și Reformă Socială* X, no. 1 (1932): 206-222.

[71] Nicolae Argintescu, "Contribuții la problema gustului popular," *Arhiva pentru Știință și Reformă Socială* X, no. 1 (1932): 428-442; Constantin Brăiloiu, "Despre bocetul dela Drăguș," *Arhiva pentru Știință și Reformă Socială* X, no. 1 (1932): 280-359; Capsali, "Jocurile in comuna Fundul Moldovei"; Ștefania Cristescu, "Practica magică a descântatului de strâns în satul Cornova," *Arhiva pentru Știință și Reformă Socială* X, no. 1 (1932): 371-380; Dochia Ioanovici, "Considerații statistice asupra vrăjitoriei satului Runcu," *Arhiva pentru Știință și Reformă Socială* X, no. 1 (1932): 370-370; Mihai Pop, "Contribuții la studiul limbilor speciale din Cornova: limba păsărească," *Arhiva pentru Știință și Reformă Socială* X, no. 1 (1932): 443-446.

[72] Emil Turdeanu, "Un manuscris miscelaneu necunoscut," *Arhiva pentru Știință și Reformă Socială* X, no. 1 (1932): 381-404.

[73] Nicolae Conț, "Nerejul în război - Un fragment," *Arhiva pentru Știință și Reformă Socială* X, no. 1 (1932): 465-479.

village; on social relations – Herseni's discussion of Cornova social relations; and on social processes – Golopenția's article on Cornova's urbanisation.[74]

These titles show the great variety of angles and styles used in monographic research. Some of the economic studies relied on quantitative data (demographics in Cornova, indebtedness in Runcu), whilst others engaged with and assessed contemporary theories of the peasant economy (the article on peasant budgets discussed the different types of budgets that could be used to quantify the productivity of peasant households).[75] At the same time, the qualitative studies of rural psychology, spirituality, and law also used statistical data to build their arguments (all of Stahl's articles relied on quantitative data, combined with oral history that reconstructed the old land ownership through toponyms, old legal terminology, and family trees; also, Bernea's study attempted a correlation between social group, education and attitude towards the calendar reform).[76] Many articles were illustrated with photographs or sketches used in more or less analytical ways. Floria Capsali, for example, used sketches to explain the details of the specific choreographic sequences that could then be integrated into the photographic images of the dance ensembles.[77] Apart from images, musical notations appeared in Brăiloiu's analysis of the mourning ritual in Drăguș.[78] Moreover, the primary

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[74] Dominica Păun, "Ţiganii în viaţa satului Cornova," *Arhiva pentru Ştiinţă şi Reformă Socială* X, no. 1 (1932): 521-527; Ion Zamfirescu, "Contribuţii la cercetarea unei gospodării ţărăneşti în satul Cornova," *Arhiva pentru Ştiinţă şi Reformă Socială* X, no. 1 (1932): 480-520; Golopenția, "Orăşenizarea satului Cornova."
[75] Georgescu, "Evoluţia demografică a satului Cornova 1817-1930"; Cressin, "Datoriile agricultorilor din Runcu"; Nicolae Cornăţeanu, "Bugete ţărăneşti," *Arhiva pentru Ştiinţă şi Reformă Socială* X, no. 1 (n.d.): 223-39.
[76] Stahl, "Contribuţii la problema răzăşiei satului Nerej (I)"; Stahl, "Contribuţii la problema răzăşiei satului Nerej (II)"; Stahl, "Vatra satului Cornova"; Bernea, "Calendarului în satul Cornova (I)."
[77] Capsali, "Jocurile in comuna Fundul Moldovei."
[78] Brăiloiu, "Despre bocetul dela Drăguş."

materials collected during the fieldwork trips added to the variety and originality of the writings reflecting multiple ways of seeing and studying the countryside.[79] However, the articles did not convey any other shared message beyond the need to learn more about the countryside. The studies did not complement each other according to Gusti's scheme – the determining contexts appeared as separate from the manifestations, without a way to connect them. The conclusions added to the difference and diversity, which made this collection of texts truly look like an archive rather than components of future cohesive monographs, reflecting of the School's internal lack of unity and harmony.

Rural transformation in Arhiva Monografică

One central theme, rural transformation, did emerge from this collection of monographic studies, but this represented the researchers' multiple points of view, which in turn reflected their very different interpretations and attitudes to change. The main categories employed to address the theme of rural transformation were: modernisation, capitalism, urbanisation and regional diversity. Modernisation appeared either as top-down state reforms, as the influence of capitalism on the peasant economy, or as the response of the rural communities to global change. Capitalism worked both as a factor of social change and an economic challenge for the peasantry. Urbanisation treated the influence of the city on the countryside and its culture, and was often seen as a degenerative factor. Finally, regional diversity

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[79] Turdeanu, "Un manuscris miscelaneu necunoscut"; Conț, "Nerejul în război - Un fragment"; Gheorghe Focșa, "Contribuții la cercetarea mentalității satului. Convorbire cu Grigorie Loghie din Runcu-Gorj," *Arhiva pentru Știință și Reformă Socială* X, no. 1 (1932): 159-174.

addressed the different stages of development of the various Romanian rural regions. In spite of all differences, the articles shared a tone of 'lament' in presenting the transformations affecting the rural world.

Modernisation through state reforms: The first category through which change was conceptualised was modernisation through state reforms, addressed differently by Bernea and Stahl. Bernea's article on the calendar reform in Cornova illustrated the disruption of the local community's life caused by the state.[80] In 1924, six years after Bessarabia's declaration of union with Romania, the Romanian state finally voted to bring the calendar of this province over to the New Style, thus readjusting it by thirteen days. Despite a progressive parish priest who tried to convince the community of the logic and benefits of the reform, the result was a schism of the village into a group of old-style adherents and one of new-style followers. Thus, the reform disrupted not only people's lives, by changing the date of holidays, traditions and rituals, but also shook up their trust in the priest and national government, also creating animosity within the community itself. The article's conclusions lamented both the poor application of the reform and the social and spiritual disruptions caused by it. Bernea's attitude seemed rather ambiguous over the importance of the reform, focusing more on the disruption of traditional spirituality. Thus, psychologically, change was shown as a cause of moral distress, instability and dissent. When imposed by the authorities, change (as reform) came into conflict

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[80] Bernea, "Calendarului în satul Cornova (I)."

with the local traditions, producing a moral crisis. The result was disorder as shown by Cornova's confused sense of time.

Using a theoretical framework that analysed the present from a historical perspective, Stahl concentrated on the transformation of the *răzeșie* (ancient village community) in the Moldovan village of Nerej and in Bessarabian Cornova.[81] Studying the ancient laws and organisation of the *răzeși* as they had resisted in some areas up until the interwar year, Stahl examined the penetration of capitalism supported by the state legal framework into this isolated traditional community where communal land tenure and ancient forms of common law had resisted until the twentieth century. He explained the perverse effects that the adoption of liberal capitalist laws had had for rural areas where the regime of private property was inexistent, by tracing the first legal changes affecting Nerej to the creation of the modern Romanian state in the mid-nineteenth century.[82] He then pointed out that the earlier blindness and ignorance of the state had been repeated with the 1921 land reform, allowing private logging companies to buy into the communal property of Nerej and to transform its inhabitants from shepherds into illegal loggers.[83] Similarly, Stahl used the same regressive technique to understand the secret behind Cornova's 'absurd winding streets'. Recreating the initial land demarcations and the entire legal code that enforced them through interviews, toponymy and collective memory, he showed how, by abandoning and forgetting the ancient unwritten code

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[81] Stahl, "Contribuții la problema răzășiei satului Nerej (I)"; Stahl, "Contribuții la problema răzășiei satului Nerej (II)"; Stahl, "Vatra satului Cornova."
[82] Stahl, "Contribuții la problema răzășiei satului Nerej (I)."
[83] Stahl, "Contribuții la problema răzășiei satului Nerej (II)."

of land division, people had abused all public spaces and built houses in an unplanned disorganised manner.[84] Mourning the loss of the ancient local knowledge within the community itself, the author also indirectly blamed the state, whose laws had never considered the existence and importance of ancient unwritten law systems.

Capitalism and the peasant economy: Economically, change was mainly linked to the forces of capitalism and industrialisation that worked both from the outside and the inside of the community. The article on peasant indebtedness by Roman Cressin grappled with the effects of the urban international crisis in the village, thus showing the interconnections between the local and the global economy as well as the capacity of the former to adapt and react to change.[85] Monographic research also showed the unexpected ways and different meanings capitalist institutions like credit acquired when applied to the rural context, leading not to increased productivity, but to consumerism and waste.[86] As proved by Cornățeanu's work on peasant budgets and by Vulcănescu's theoretical study of rural economics, there was a great gap between the authorities' expectations and the villagers' interpretations of profit and development.[87]

Above all, the studies showed how the land reform and its legal framework had attached the family production units to the capitalist market without any

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[84] Stahl, "Vatra satului Cornova," 131.
[85] Cressin, "Datoriile agricultorilor din Runcu."
[86] Ibid.
[87] Cornățeanu, "Bugete țărănești"; Vulcănescu, "Teoria și sociologia vieții economice. Prolegomene la studiul morfologiei economice a unui sat."

consideration of the potential side effects. Firstly, these studies showed the resistance of the traditional mentality to modern capitalist principles such as profitability and investment. Instead of being re-invested or used to its maximal potential, surplus and credit were often wasted or used for consumption (building houses, buying more land, etc). When combined with the international economic crisis, the result was disastrous both for the state and the peasantry. Secondly, monographic research recorded social differentiation in the countryside as the combined effect of capitalism and of state intervention through the land reform. Three main social categories were mentioned in most economic articles hereby discussed: the rich peasantry (*chiaburi*), the middle peasants (*mijlocași*) and the landless peasants or rural proletariat (*proletariat rural*).[88] As shown by Cornățeanu, these social types evolved into different types of economic relations and had to be approached differently: the *chiaburi* became integrated into the capitalist mode of production, the middle peasants remained part of a self-sufficient economic style whereby the family had to produce enough for its own needs, and, finally, the proletariat who also belonged to the capitalist system as the hired producers who worked for money.[89] Thirdly, the articles recorded the importance of psychological factors in the adaptation and resistance to change in the rural world. Even in the case of local industries producing for the market did not always constitute a priority,

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[88] The socio-economic divisions within the peasantry varied greatly, some authors using them to rank the economic efficiency of the locals and some to reflect the different categories of land-ownership. In his article, for example, Roman Cressin used the first type of division, mentioning '*codași, mijlocași, fruntași and întreprinzători*' (literally, peasants at the 'back', 'middle' and 'front' of the social pecking order and 'entrepreneurial' peasants). Cressin, "Datoriile agricultorilor din Runcu."
[89] Cornățeanu, "Bugete țărănești."

as shown by Buznea and Negrea in their investigations of the *țuică* (a local brandy) and milling industries.[90] In the first case, only the *chiaburi* operated within the brandy industry as capitalist producers buying the primary product from others, hiring workers and selling for the market, while the others only produced for their own consumption.[91]

Urbanisation and regional diversity: Other articles showed the different ways in which change affected the various Romanian provinces and highlighted the specifics of the newly unified areas, especially Bessarabia. In this case, Bernea's article on the calendar reform discussed the locals' resistance to change, whereas Stahl's work on the *vatra satului* and Golopenția's article on the urbanisation process reflected the opposite direction, towards the dissolution of old ways of life and a rapid adaptation to the modern ones.[92] Golopenția showed how geographical connections led to social ones, and eventually to the adaptation of rural life to urban habits. Although the overarching theme was one of cultural hybridisation and economic transition, the approach to change differed greatly between Bernea and Golopenția. If the former deplored the spiritual crisis created by the calendar reform in Cornova, the

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[90] Buznea, "O industrie țărănească"; Adrian Negrea, "Industria morăritului la Runcu," *Arhiva pentru Știință și Reformă Socială* X, no. 1 (1932): 251-265.
[91] Buznea, "O industrie țărănească," 279.
[92] Bernea, "Calendarului în satul Cornova (I)"; Stahl, "Vatra satului Cornova"; Golopenția, "Orășenizarea satului Cornova."

latter concluded that change was normal and inevitable due to the villages' proximity to a large urban centre, the town of Orhei.[93]

Like Cornova, the Oltenian village of Runcu posed similar problems regarding change. Situated on the Oltenian side of the Făgăraș Mountains, Runcu stood in stark contrast with the autarchic Drăguș, a village on the Transylvanian side of the same mountains. Runcu was connected to the Oltenian markets and like Cornova showed signs of urbanisation, social differentiation, and cultural change. This comparison singled out the autarchic life-style of Drăguș, a village where the culture, spirituality, and economic production had been most accurately preserved.

As a preliminary conclusion, the academic research published in the early 1930s in *Arhiva* indicated some major themes and directions of monographic research, whilst also reflecting its unevenness and lack of unity. Underlying the scholarly articles lay very different interpretations of the reality observed within the teams, and even more different opinions of how the transformation of the Romanian countryside was to be dealt with in the future. This was reflected in a certain attachment that authors appeared to develop towards particular research locations. Even in the early formative stage, 'favourite' villages revealed specific study interests, indicating the scholar's attitudes towards the theme of rural transformation. For example, Stahl favoured Nerej as the living site of the old *răzeșie*, Vulcănescu became attached to Drăguș for its well-preserved traditions and cultural purity, and, despite Golopenția's reduced experience of monographic

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[93] 'The prevailing process of urbanisation in Cornova's life over the recent decades is not too abnormal. The penetration of urban aspects is accelerated there because of specific circumstances that linked people's lives differently then in places further away from urban centres.' Golopenția, "Orășenizarea satului Cornova," 297.

research, his interest in Cornova showed his curiosity about cultural hybridisation and urbanisation of rural areas.

Vulcănescu – Comarnescu – degrees of sociology

Despite the chance to publish in the *Arhiva*, the young sociologists also hoped to set up their own publication. In a letter to his future fiancée, Golopenția mentioned discussing the possibility of a new review, *Anteu – Revistă lunară pentru înfățișarea și apărarea realității românești*' (Anteu – Monthly review for the presentation and defence of Romanian reality) with his colleagues. Designed especially for the young monographists, the review would not even publish Gusti's writings.[94] This clarifies the group's need for independence and self-assertion in a context where a generational conflict was under way.[95] At the same time, that this review never came out also shows the lack of coordination of a group whose disintegration was imminent. Only a few months later, in February 1933, in another letter to Cristescu, Golopenția complained: 'There is now a tension amongst the young ones that makes everyone use any opportunity to vehemently and ruthlessly attack even their oldest friends. (…) The monographists also suffer from this anxiety.'[96]

Lacking a publication devoted solely to monographic research, the group turned to the existing opinion and general interest press, bringing rural

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[94] Anton Golopenția, "Anton Golopenția către Ștefania Cristescu (26.12.1932)," in *Rapsodia Epistolară II* (Bucharest: Ed. Enciclopedică, 2009), 95.
[95] In the same letter, Golopenția wrote 'Here, since you left, a great fermentation of the young has begun.' Ibid.
[96] Ibid., 95-96.

transformation to the heart of wider current debates.[97] In entering the highly politicised press, the monographists' writings about the countryside turned the products of their scientific endeavours into polemic issues that included and reflected their own political views on the state of the nation and its future. This genre both transformed and widened the scope for debating the rural world and its fate.

I will start by looking at the porous boundaries that separated the academic and non-academic genres. By contrasting Vulcănescu's works on peasant economy with his journalism on issues such as the urban moral crisis, I will consider the two-way relationship between sociological research and political debates.[98] This section will first look at the main themes of his academic work and his general opinions about the state and future of the Romanian countryside, focusing on the specific nature of the peasant economy as one of the main themes of his writings. Secondly, turning to his press articles, I will concentrate on the way his scientific ideas developed in and away from the field and fed into inflammatory texts that announced the moral crisis of the city and called for a return to village spirituality and economics. As these articles fed into a heated debate between him and Comarnescu, an admirer and associate of monographic research, I will devote the final part of this section to their exchange of opinions. The debate reiterated the

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[97] The review *Sociologie Românească,* first published in 1936, was the first review in Romania solely devoted to monographic research and run by Gusti's former students. As Stahl explained, the journal could only be published because of the generous funds provided by FCR-PC, which supported the School from 1934 onwards.Rostás, *Monografia ca utopie*, 155.

[98] A similar exercise can be made with the works of the other monographists, like Stahl, Herseni or Golopenția.

effervescence of the intellectual scene at the time, showing how sociology played a key role in supporting both progressive and traditionalist arguments.

Despite his leading role in the fieldwork expeditions, Vulcănescu did not published much in *Arhiva*, being more prolific as a journalist.[99] In both areas, his articles conveyed his encyclopaedic spirit, covering a great variety of interests.[100] These ranged from sociology, philosophy and economics to art, religion and politics. Vulcănescu started his research in the countryside at Goicea Mare, where he became interested in rural spirituality. His unpublished notes on this village reflect his interest in the influence of economic changes on the spiritual life of the locals. He interpreted a fascination with the city and economic pressure as the main factors in the transformation of the rural community and the disintegration of the culturally 'primitive *goicean*'.[101] The author also noted the need for further investigation of transformations such as: 'for fashion – no more folk costumes are made, peasants wear city clothes, children wish to become tailors, etc; for economics – the saving ethos is underdeveloped; the bank has given up commerce with cereals; the commercial spirit is underdeveloped'.[102] These initial notes and findings constituted the core of Vulcănescu's research and writing agenda for the years to come. They indicated two interrelated aspects of his study of the countryside – the peasant economy and rural spirituality.

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[99] Vulcănescu played a key role in systematising the theory of monographic research. Rostás, *Monografia ca utopie*, 129.
[100] Vulcănescu was 'an encyclopaedist lost in parentheses that open and close onto infinity.'Simion, "Prefață," VIII.
[101] Vulcănescu, "Câteva observațiuni," 564.
[102] Ibid.

After completing his doctoral studies in Paris, Vulcănescu returned to do fieldwork in Fundul Moldovei in 1928. In the meantime he had published various articles on Orthodox spirituality in Romanian magazines such as *Gândirea* and *Vremea*, developing a concept of the 'spiritual', which brought him close to the Orthodoxism and *trăirism,* currents also embraced by Nichifor Crainic (1889-1972) and Nae Ionescu (1890-1940), who manifested distrust towards modern culture and a belief in the moral crisis of contemporary society.[103] Returning to sociological research, Vulcănescu was able to pursue further his interests in the spirituality and the economics of the countryside during the Drăguș (1929) and Runcu (1930) fieldtrips. The unpublished findings of the Runcu economic team shed some light on the evolution of his interest in the peasant economy. The problems posed by the specific economy of Drăguș, an 'autarchic village' isolated from external markets and operating a non-monetary exchange system, determined him to move from research on economic efficiency to one focused on the morphology of the local economy.[104] Unlike Drăguș, which was disconnected from outside markets, Runcu was dependent on them for imports (corn), exports (fruit), and seasonal work.[105]Also, like the first village studied by the monographists, Goicea, it was undergoing a fast process of change due to internal and external factors. Following from these fieldwork findings, he wrote several articles and conference papers for *Cuvântul* and

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[103] Vanhaelemeersch, *A generation*, 113-142. However, despite the similarities between Vulcănescu and the movements led by members of a previous generation, the former was part of a new rising group of young intellectuals influenced by wider European ideas about the moral crisis of civilisation and adhering to a return to truer Christian beliefs. During his stay in Paris, for example, Vulcănescu was actively involved in the events and activities organised by the World Student Christian Federation of South-Eastern Europe. Vulcănescu, *Tînăra generație*, 25.

[104] Vulcănescu, "Raportul secției economice (Runcu, 1930)," 610-11.

[105] Ibid., 619.

an article in *Arhiva* comparing the peasant family to the capitalist economy.[106] The main argument of these articles was the particular nature of the peasant economy and the need to preserve it from the corrupting forces of capitalism. According to him, self-sufficiency was the specific feature of the peasant economy, oriented towards satisfying family needs rather than towards pursuing profit. Underlying this argument was a disillusion with modern capitalism, profit-making and urban values and an exaltation of the peasant's simple and minimalist way of life. In *Teoria și sociologia vieții economice* ('The theory and sociology of economics') published in 1932, Vulcănescu noted that the fieldwork experience called for a total rethinking of the theories used in conceptualising the economic life of rural communities. For the 'economist who "descends" into the village determined to apply the formulas of theoretical economy he knows, (…) becomes frustrated by the "meatiest" part of his research'.[107] His point was that one could not apply the same categories used to study a market economy to the peasant economy and that only a sociological explanation could reveal the meaning behind the locals' economic life and choices. The article drew on the work of Virgil Madgearu (1887-1940), the well-known Romanian economist, who also argued for a specific treatment of the peasant economy as a non-capitalist production unit. However, Madgearu did not share

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[106] Mircea Vulcănescu, "Gospodăria țărănească și economia capitalistă," in *Opere*, vol. 2 (Bucharest: Ed. Fundației Naționale pentru Știință și Artă; Ed. Univers Enciclopedic, 2005), 625-74; Mircea Vulcănescu, "Burghezie, proletariat și țărănime," in *Mircea Vulcănescu. Opere*, vol. 2 (Bucharest: Ed. Fundației Naționale pentru Știință și Artă; Ed. Univers Enciclopedic, 2005), 622-4; Vulcănescu, "Teoria și sociologia vieții economice. Prolegomene la studiul morfologiei economice a unui sat."

[107] Vulcănescu, "Teoria și sociologia vieții economice. Prolegomene la studiul morfologiei economice a unui sat," 211.

Vulcănescu's anti-modern convictions.[108] Unlike his younger colleague whose 'economic medievalism' idealised the simplicity of peasant life and argued for its isolation, Madgearu promoted cooperative-based agrarian policies arguing that the role of the Romanian agrarian state was to respect and protect the peasant producers in their commercial relations with external capitalist markets.[109]

Vulcănescu's vision of the countryside appeared in a different light in his newspaper articles, some of which caused a heated debate with Comarnescu in 1932-33.[110] The articles Vulcănescu published in *Dreapta* (The Right), a short-lived publication with a nationalist agenda, announced the imminent moral crisis of Romanian society that accompanied the economic one. In an article entitled' *În ceasul al unsprezecelea* (The eleventh hour), he wrote:

> Where are we with our state of mind? Where are we with our economic organisation? Where [are we] with the cultural, juridical, political and administrative unity? Where are we with the spiritual and physical defence of this country. With the conflict between debtors and creditors, with the opposition between industry and agriculture and the city's scorn for the village will we face spiritually what may come? (…) With a capital outside the natural citadel of the nation and an industry in foreign hands? (…) With a demoralised administration and an intellectual proletariat left prey to all temptations?[111]

The response was suggested in the title: the eleventh hour was not too late to turn things round and find the way out of the cul-de-sac described in his

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[108] Virgil Madgearu, *Evoluția economiei românesti după războiul mondial* (Bucharest: Editura Științifică, 1995); Virgil Madgearu, "Capitalismul în Estul Europei (I)," *Arhiva pentru Știință și Reformă Socială* VI, no. 3 (1927): 265-281.

[109] Madgearu, *Evoluția economiei*.

[110] Vulcănescu, "Puțină sociologie"; Mircea Vulcănescu, "Cele două Românii," *Dreapta* II, no. 2 (December 11, 1932): 1,3; Mircea Vulcănescu, "În ceasul al unsprezecelea," *Drepta* II, no. 1 (December 4, 1932): 1,2; Mircea Vulcănescu, "Fatalitate sau altceva?...," *Drepta* II, no. 5 (January 29, 1932): 3; Vulcănescu, "Și puțină axiologie antropologică." These articles have been republished in Vulcănescu, *Opere*, 688-724.

[111] Vulcănescu, "În ceasul al unsprezecelea," 3.

rhetorical questions. Further articles explained the central issues that constituted

the economic and moral crisis, in his view. '*Cele două Românii*' (The two Romanias)

discussed the gap between city and countryside, pleading - from an autochthonist

position - for a Romanian nationalism centred on the rural.[112] Using the classic

opposition between urban culture as foreign to the Romanian national identity and

rural culture as its true primordial nature, Vulcănescu exposed himself to

Comarnescu's accusation of preaching 'rural romanticism'.[113] In his following

articles, the contradiction between the positivism of monographic research and

Vulcănescu's spiritualist idealism strengthened. The article '*Puțină sociologie*' called

upon sociology to support his argument in favour of a return 'through the village to

the new economic Middle Ages'.[114] The article opened with a characterisation of the

opposing rural and urban cultures. On the one hand, the vocabulary used for the

first included an elaboration on the concept of an 'organic', 'natural' culture, that

'sprung from a closeness to the land, blood-kinship, life experience in the

community, a father-to-son inheritance of the language, dress, mysteries of

knowledge and rules of behaviour.' On the other, the city was described as 'an

artificial, hallucinating, unnatural' civilisation, 'sprung from the thirst for profiteering

and an avid desire for gain', 'a civilisation of paranoiacs' and of God hating

individuals.[115] To conclude, the two social and spatial dimensions corresponded to

'the nation' (the village) and 'Babylon' (the town). The 'small dose of sociology'

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[112] Vulcănescu, "Cele două Românii."
[113] Comarnescu, "O confuzie periculoasa. Unitate umană și romantism rural."
[114] Vulcănescu, "Puțină sociologie."
[115] Ibid., 1.

helped dismiss two arguments against a return to the countryside: the evolutionist argument 'that there was no alternative way except for a fatal and natural evolution (towards the urban culture)' and the progressive one 'that such a transition was desirable'.[116]

Writing for the equally ephemeral newspaper *Stânga* (The Left), Comarnescu responded vehemently to Vulcănescu's articles. Accusing him of 'a false fatalism' and 'a dangerous confusion', Comarnescu criticised his friend's political Orthodoxism and 'bizarre sociology that applied a preferential treatment to social units, such as the village and the city'.[117] Only a part-time member of the sociological teams, but an admirer of monographic research, Comarnescu criticised Vulcănescu's city-countryside dichotomy by stressing the strong interdependence between them and indicating a general tendency towards their future convergence. Playing with the same rhetorical arms, he retorted that 'if a little sociology can make you only see difference, enmity and isolation amongst people, a lot of sociology leads to unity, interdependence and the need for a correct organisation of the permanent relations between individuals.'[118] This questioned Vulcănescu's sociological way of understanding reality itself and its political correctness. Although the rhetoric played on the degree of sociology used to judge the relationship between city and countryside, the debate showed that, whatever the amount, the discipline could produce conflicting views on the matter according to the point of

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[116] Ibid.
[117] Petru Comarnescu, "Falsa atitudine a celor de dreapta," *Stânga* II, no. 11 (January 22, 1933): 3.
[118] Comarnescu, "O confuzie periculoasa. Unitate umană și romantism rural."

view adopted. It also showed that sociology had become a powerful and politicised rhetorical device.

In an unpublished article that would have further prolonged the dispute, Vulcănescu dismissed any trust in progress and in urban superiority. Using more sociological findings, he sought to illustrate the city's bad influence on the countryside (syphilis, migration, and proletarianisation) and on the human spirit itself. Against leftist projects of proletarianising the peasantry 'for their own good', he argued that the 'the best society is the one that provides the kind of happiness people want', therefore not that of utopian theories.[119] He thus reversed the relationship between village and intellectuals pleading for social reform, saying that the former could heal the latter, rather than the opposite. Therefore, Vulcănescu preached a return to the village as a return to innocence that alone could offer the troubled urbanites a route to self-redemption, since 'the village [was] the most appropriate type of settlement for humaneness'.[120]

The Vulcănescu - Comarnescu strife over the role, future and fate of the peasantry transformed the rural world into a passive, timeless, and immobile object of intellectual debate, lacking any meaning of its own. The appeals to general concepts like 'humanity', 'humaneness', 'unity', etc desperately attempted to re-centre arguments from the left or from the right making them universally valid. The process of objectification was gradual – from the concrete to the abstract, from the particular to the general, from the descriptive to the dialogical form. The authors'

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[119] Vulcănescu, "Şi puţină axiologie antropologică," 720.
[120] Ibid., 723.

attitudes to change in the countryside ultimately reflected their own emotions and attachment to the urban or rural worlds, their hopes for the future rather than those of the peasantry. Thus, with the change of style, the distance between the subject and the object of writing also changed, bringing the author into the centre of attention.

Fictionalisation of the village

As Sanda Golopenția has noted, the BSS used a variety of writing genres apart from academic sociology, creating what she has called a 'hybrid literature' that melted field research into literary forms such as 'the diary, the travel account' and the magazine article.[121] Dominated by a specific 'ethnographic realism', this literature flourished throughout the entire decade, perpetuated by the students who went to work in the country with the support of FCR-PC.[122]

These publications shed new light on the monographists' differing opinions about the transformation of the countryside, the subjectivity behind research, and the objectification of the peasantry through writing. Released from the constraints of the scientific style, the newspaper and magazine articles signed by Stahl, Vulcănescu, and Golopenția presented personalised impressions of the villages they studied and became emotionally attached to. Their texts appeared in reviews and magazines of different political orientations. Stahl published in the *Criterion* review, a renowned intellectual forum that welcomed both sides of the political

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[121] Stahl, Vulcănescu, Golopenția, and Herseni wrote for the press and radio, whereas Bernea was also a poet. See Sanda Golopenția, "Literatura experienței de teren," in *Cornova* (Chișinău: Ed. Museum, 2000), 451.
[122] Ibid.

spectrum.[123] His work also appeared in *Dreapta* and in one of Vrancea's local newspapers, *Milcovul.*[124] Similarly, Vulcănescu's texts appeared in *Realitatea ilustrată*, a general interest magazine that published illustrated reportages on exotic topics such as primitive life in the colonies. This placed the countryside in relation to a readership that favoured a writing style that displayed the author's emotions and subjective views. Drawing on their knowledge and experience of three different villages, Nerej, Cornova, and Drăguş, the authors communicated their personal visions of the rural world and its transformation.

Three more lyrical texts about the countryside, written by Stahl, Golopenția and Vulcănescu, give a sense of the school's non-academic writing of the early to mid-1930s. Focused on each of the scholar's preferred study location, the former's transcript of a radio show and his colleagues' magazine articles could be widely defined as travel-writing, as they opened the places of research for a wider audience by recounting the authors' own experience and emotions of being there. Stahl's text written for the radio show *Universitatea Radio* (The Radio University) and aired in May 1934 invited the listeners to embark on a trip to Vrancea county, the author's preferred research location.[125] *Drumuri vrâncene* (Vrancean trails) touched on the same issues present in Stahl's academic work, the life and transformation of traditional rural communities, the isolation and specific nature of the *răzeşi* villages

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[123] Two of Stahl's articles published in *Criterion* in 1934 appeared in the volume of collected articles Stahl, *Pentru Sat*.

[124] Ibid.

[125] Henri H. Stahl, "Drumuri vrâncene," in *Microfonul vagabond. Publicistică literară radiofonică din Arhiva Societății Române de Radiodifuziune (reportaje, însemnări de călătorie, eseuri) vol.I 1932-35* (Bucharest: Societatea Română de Radiodifuziune, 1998), 204-208.

and the resistance of their ancient forms of socio-political organisation, whilst leaving out the negative aspects which presented the dissolution and gradual erosion of its current ways of life. Written in the first person and addressing its (urban) audience directly, the script constituted an invitation for 'the increasingly numerous travellers interested solely in the pleasures of travel' to consider exploring 'the hidden and mysterious life of the villages lying in the valleys'.[126] Criticising their exclusive interest in nature, especially mountains, Stahl exposed what he had come to consider the 'good practice' of travel. Without clearly stating it, he drew on his own experience of fieldwork expeditions, proposing its precepts for a wider mass of tourists interested in exploring their country and its beauties. Explaining that travel was not only a physical, but also a social and spiritual experience, he noted:

> Real travelling means leaving for a new world. However, this new world is not only the road, but also the people you meet on the way. It is a journey of understanding with the mind and the soul, often more difficult than walking and climbing, but at the same time richer (…). [127]

Resonating with Stahl's methodologies for fieldwork research, the script presented the countryside and its people as a 'new world' to be discovered and explored and understood with 'the mind and soul'. Unlike the easily accessible trails in the Bucegi Mountains, a well-known and fashionable destination for urbanites at the time, the author explained that discovering Vrancea and its people would not be attractive for the impatient traveller, as it required more time and more subtlety. Recounted in his

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[126] Ibid., 204.
[127] Ibid.

memoirs many years later, the difficulties of getting to the villages of this region were presented as a journey of initiation for the group of fieldworkers wandering for the first time, in 1927, into the natural citadel of Vrancea.[128] In the radio show of 1934, the author guided the potential future explorers, as to the best access route into the region: 'I would advise the traveller to start off following the Odobești way, up the Milcov river towards the mountain.'[129] Drawing closer to the destination, his voice turned from second person to first person plural, as if in guiding his imaginary companion, he had also been drawn back into the places he spoke of. In blurring the boundaries between the author and the audience, the journey appeared to bring out the almost magical nature of this particular destination and its utter difference from the present-oriented life of a travelling urbanite (like Stahl). Shifting back to his role as guide, the author described the people of Vrancea, marking the different feelings and emotions this encounter would engender in the mind and soul of the imaginary guest. 'What will strike you at first are the people', Stahl noted, going on to explain the particular nature of the locals, the *răzeși*. As in his field research and journalism, he stressed the difference between the proud, self-secure *răzeși* and the (formerly) enserfed *clăcași* (land-bound peasantry), who were 'obedient-looking, shrewd, fearsome, and discontented to the point of revolt'.[130] The journey to Vrancea appeared in this way as an occasion for meeting the real peasantry, which Stahl had elsewhere defined as 'a homogenous group with a great creative force',

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[128] Stahl, *Amintiri*, 46-48.
[129] Stahl, "Drumuri vrâncene," 205.
[130] Ibid., 205-6.

178

whose 'leading principle is that of the creative commune'.[131]At the same time, the

exploration of the region was a journey back in time to the social memory of the

ancient independent Vrancea, which was kept alive through custom and through the

'stubbornness and resistance of the locals' even against modern state power.[132]

Recreating a version of his method of social archaeology, the author invited his

guest to follow his footsteps across this site of memory, showing how people's

present actions and habits corresponded to and recreated the experience of the

region's past. The constant interaction with the audience through direct address,

rhetorical questions and exclamations resulted in a very personal recreation of the

author's research site, which he was ready to share with a wider public. His closing

confession that 'speaking of Vrancea made him realise he missed it' added to the

intimacy between narrator and audience, ready to share the countryside as a place

where 'people (…) live together under the enchanted star (*zodie*) of a distant past of

a long-forgotten age'.[133]

This text stood in stark contrast with one of Stahl's earlier articles published

in a local newspaper *Milcovul,* which addressed the local population in Vrancea in

1928.[134] Entitled *O datorie a Vrancei* (A debt to Vrancea), the text called for an

awakening of the locals inciting them to rediscover their forgotten past and to stop

the ongoing dissolution of the ancient community. Although touching on the same

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[131] Stahl, *Pentru Sat*, 78-9.

[132] Maria-Elena Negoescu and Horia Pop, eds., *Microfonul vagabond. Publicistică literară radiofonică din Arhiva Societății Române de Radiodifuziune (reportaje, însemnări de călătorie, eseuri) vol.I 1932-35* (Bucharest: Societatea Română de Radiodifuziune, 1998), 207.

[133] Stahl, "Drumuri vrâncene," 208.

[134] Henri H. Stahl, "O datorie a Vrancei," in *Pentru Sat* (Bucharest: Fundația Culturală Regală "Principele Carol', 1939), 11-14.

theme of memory and forgetting, the author spoke on behalf of the locality's past

heroes, seeking to become the 'voice of the ancient *răzeșie*', as Golopenția noted.[135]

The article therefore also spoke of the pride and inner beauty of the *răzeși*, yet

lamented the disappearing memory of the past noting that forgetting local heroes

indicated 'the death of Vrancea's soul'.[136] The contrast between Stahl's two texts

discussed above shows the importance of the audience and context of writing.

Although both papers had the same goal – rescuing and discovering the memory of

ancient Vrancea, the radio show obscured the process of forgetting announced four

years earlier in the text addressing the local community, which on the contrary

spoke of the imminent loss of the past under the influence of the present. Engaging

with these different audiences, Stahl indirectly spoke of the essential role of the

researcher who, in seeing beyond the appearances, could both guide the local

community back towards its natural roots and identity and show the urban outsider

the hidden treasures of rural life.

Also meant to allow the readers to partake in the 'great love that the

immersion into the everyday life of the village awakens in the passionate

researcher', Golopenția's earlier article on Cornova described the village as

experienced by a monographist over two issues of the *Curentul* newspaper in 1931.

After some brief information about the 1931 Cornova field trip, Golopenția set out

to pre-empt the academic studies meant to 'illuminate in turn the faces of the

village under research' with a brief presentation of 'the village's main features'. In

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[135] Golopenția, "AG către SC (05.08.1933)," 173-4.
[136] Stahl, "O datorie a Vrancei," 15.

academic writings this feeling of personal engagement would have to be contained; in Golopenția's words, 'the studies could at the most vibrate with it without being able to express it'.[137] This first point highlighted some of the academic style restrictions imposed on the scholars alongside their need to express emotions and not just the facts of the research conducted.

The article continued with an arrival scene describing the entry of the researcher - 'the stranger' – in the village.[138] This was followed by a section in which the same stranger engaged with the history and transformations of the village. The visitor's presence was felt indirectly, in the third person, allowing the author and the reader to remain on the same side, outside the landscape described. Moreover, the geographical description in the entire first section constructed an image of Cornova as a secretive, unexpected place full of surprises: 'Cornova is hidden from the rest of the world - with its roads and railways – in a sheltered valley', the challenging roads and walkways, the many wells and winding roads all add to the 'stranger's amazement'. The second section, opened by the statement 'the people are like the places', added to the village's maze-like appearance.[139] Like the nature surrounding it, the spectacle of village life offered many contradictions to the outsider, who was faced with a 'bizarre coexistence of the old and the new'.[140] The entire section was

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[137] Anton Golopenția, "Cornova - satul ultimei campanii monografice," in *Anton Golopenția. Opere complete* (Bucharest: Ed. Enciclopedică, 2002), 97.
[138] In discussing the difficult relationship between personal narrative and the impersonal scientific account in anthropological fieldwork, Pratt has concentrated on the 'arrival scene' as a point of mediation that 'inserts the authority of personal experience out of which the ethnography is made'. Mary Louise Pratt, "Fieldwork in Common Places," in *Writing culture: the poetics and politics of ethnography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 33.
[139] Golopenția, "Cornova - satul ultimei campanii monografice," 98-9.
[140] Golopenția, "Cornova - satul ultimei campanii monografice," 99.

devoted to a brief historical overview of the process that had transformed the village over time, making it into what it was when the author visited it. In this article, he mentioned the same factors of change discussed in his later academic study: the railway built 'about sixty years ago' had connected the village to the commercial routes both east and westwards, allowing in influences from both sides; more recently, the army meant that the 'lads brought in another array of new things' such as dances, songs and expressions. Nevertheless, not all the routes were open to change. The lack of medical education, for example, meant that magic beliefs and healing practices persisted even amongst the youth. Also, the same resistance towards state-enforced reforms such as the calendar persisted, this time rooted not in ignorance, but in an informed distrust in the government.[141] This attentive description of the contradictions hidden in the village's local history was counterposed by the short conclusions stating that 'perceived only through the senses, (Cornova) is just like any other village: insalubrious, too poor and uncomfortable, with old bearded men who, like the young ones, often wear ragged town clothes; with women similar to those in the slums of any big city, whose inhabitants are mostly drunk during the harvest and rather inactive throughout the year.'[142] Breaking with the rest of the article, these lines expressed what the village must have looked to the scholar at first sight, whilst reinforcing the importance of empathy and patience in judging a place like Cornova. Like Stahl, Golopenția used the lens of empathy and love in recording change in the countryside, taking time to

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[141] Golopenția, "Cornova," 99.
[142] Ibid., 101.

182

inspect the history behind the smelly rags of the 'old bearded men', unimpressed by

the foreign dances but shocked by the lack of medical care in the village. Also like

Stahl, his article spoke of his passion for travel, and confessed to the prejudgements

he had taken along and had had to fight against.

Vulcănescu's article *Satul românesc* (The Romanian village), published in the

review *Realitatea ilustrată* in 1929, contrasted strongly with Golopenția's

description of the Cornova village. Although based on the village of Drăguș, the text

attempted, through a lyrical description of a generic village, to clarify the attraction

of 'today's refined intellectual' to the rural world in relation to 'the moral crisis of his

generation'.[143] Partly, the text constituted, like some of Stahl's articles and

Golopenția's *Cornova*, a travel account. Yet, the dreamy description made it more of

an imaginary journey rather than a real one. The opening few paragraphs set the

tone for an *illo tempore* of fairytale-like journeys:

> The village! What long-muted chords awaken in the depths of our souls and
> start rustling and vibrating at the sound of this word? What murmur arises in
> the ear and what visions appear before our eyes, as soon as we allow our lips
> to utter this wonderful and enchanted word: the villages…[144]

Thus, the idea of the village appeared for the author as an 'enchanted world', full of

premonition, expectations and magic even before he set out on his imaginary

journey towards it. The feeling came, as he explained, maybe from the remains of 'a

rural romanticism', but more certainly from 'the connection the word awakens

between us and one of those ancestral ideas that lay in the depths of our psyche

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[143] Mircea Vulcănescu, "Satul Românesc," in *Opere*, vol. 2 (Bucharest: Ed. Fundației Naționale pentru Știință și Artă; Ed. Univers Enciclopedic, 2005), 509.
[144] Ibid., 507.

constituting the vigour of our personalities.'[145] Vulcănescu's village was a mental

and an emotional space in the Romanian collective psyche and thus travelling to the

countryside, regardless of the pace or means of transport, was an experience of self-

discovery. Yet, unlike him, many urbanites had lost this connection to this village of

the mind – 'for them, the village is nothing more than a homogenous group of

people who look alike and have - at the most - a sort of picturesque way of being

about them'.[146] It was for them, for his readers, that Vulcănescu described his own

travels in the magical world of the village.

The article consisted of two main parts: a description of some geographic

and historical features common to most villages and the organisation and life of a

peasant household. The first section, similar to Golopenția's geography of Cornova,

offered a bird's eye view of different rural landscapes ('scattered along riversides, up

in the mountain or gathered tightly together, at a crossroads, down, in the plains') in

relation to a common past of communal land ownership 'in those times, the land

was owned communally (devălmaș)'.[147] In this, Vulcănescu referred to Stahl's work

on the traditional village communities, whilst taking the terms out of their historical

chronology and placing them in a mythological timeframe. Similarly, the second

section that told the story of a peasant family, created the illusion of fictional human

types living a circular narrative. 'In this household, that by itself constitutes a closed

unit, the peasant leads his life from the cradle to the grave.'[148] The characters (the

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[145] Ibid., 508.
[146] Ibid.
[147] Ibid., 509.
[148] Vulcănescu, "Satul Românesc."

man, the woman, the child) and the present tense used in the narrative reinforced the nameless and timeless aura of the text. Furthermore, the life of the peasant was presented as a series of rites of passage from birth, to marriage, to parenting and finally death. It is not clear why the author chose this style since the illustrations that accompanied the text could easily identify the village as Drăguș and the peasant family as the Sofoneas. Partly, this may have fitted the publication the article appeared in, *Realitatea ilustrată* being a general interest magazine. Yet, such a radical fictionalisation of the author's scientific work in Drăguș contrasted with his colleagues' slightly ornate realism.

Social change in non-academic writing

A few preliminary conclusions can be reached from the comparison of these three visions of the countryside. Although sharing an experience of fieldwork in the countryside, Stahl, Golopenția and Vulcănescu reached different conclusions on rural life, its transformation and relation to the city. Common to all three was the authority claimed in presenting their views acquired through their personal experience of travel to the countryside and dwelling amongst the locals. Writing as urbanites for an urban public, they criticised all those who had disregarded or forgotten the countryside. Thus, a common call for intellectual distinction lay underneath the omniscient voices that spoke in the articles of all three scholars. Despite this shared agenda of bringing the countryside into the attention of the urban public, the authors disagreed on the role and fate of the rural world, providing

different attitudes towards social change in the Romanian countryside. On this matter, their opinions differed most, a fact also reflected in their writing style.

As in their academic articles, the three authors used similar categories to conceptualise change. All three contrasted, directly or indirectly, the countryside with the city using travel as a way of connecting and transgressing these differences. Another general theme and common starting point for all three was the theme of understanding and self-discovery through the encounter with the village. To this, each found different answers in the description and interpretation of village life, leading to different visions of rural transformation. For Vulcănescu, the countryside was the land of salvation that had to be preserved and whose model should be followed by the city. Thus, his village of choice, Drăguș - the most traditional and well-preserved amongst those visited by the teams – seemed to exist in a different time, similar to that of myths and legends, disconnected from the speed of the modern world. Change was disregarded in the text since it did not fit with the ideal 'Romanian village'. This corresponded with Vulcănescu's economic medievalism and Orthodox views, at the same time contrasting with his academic work on the more urbanised villages like Goicea and Runcu.

Unlike him, Stahl engaged with the countryside's historical evolution, trying to engage different publics into the discovery of the *răzeși* villages. If in his research he drew the public's attention to the destructive effects of capitalism, and uninformed state reforms, his journalism played on with his readers' emotions, trying to engage them in the rediscovery of the countryside as a place where the

past could be revived. In contrast with this ideal, Stahl presented the contemporary

transformations of the countryside as processes of degeneration and hybridisation

by describing the emerging 'national folk' and the '*mitocan*' (riffraff) cultures. If the

national style reflected the uninformed aestheticization of peasant culture, through

the imitation of folk culture by the elites, the *mitocan* style was the result of

tasteless innovations brought into the countryside by the villagers themselves. Both

were thus the effects of uninformed artificial change – one from above, the other

from below, resulting in a deformation of the true spirit of the countryside. Stahl

expressed his view of positive change in an article for the *Criterion* review in 1934,

which formulated his generation's mission for the countryside.[149] The remark that

'the commune possesses a creative force that the urban areas sick with the

torments of too strong individualism do not have' clarified the role of the village in

dealing with the moral crisis debated throughout the Romanian intellectual forums

of the time.[150] Faced with the damaging and degenerating effects of urban culture,

the village could offer a model of 'an unbreakable continuous link to the community'

for the alienated individual.[151] Thus, the mission of the young generation was to

understand the village and formulate the appropriate reforms that would make the

best use of the villages' potential and strengths.

In contrast with both Stahl's and Vulcănescu's attitudes to change, writing

about the village that had been most affected by urbanisation, Cornova, Golopenția

sought to look underneath its rustic appearance to understand this process of

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[149] Stahl, *Pentru Sat*, 70-84.
[150] Ibid., 80.
[151] Ibid.

change. His work aimed to show the value of science and the importance of empathy with the object of study in the research process.

Conclusion

The second set of conclusions for this chapter require a re-consideration the texts discussed above within the wider intellectual debates of 1930s Romania. Most intellectual historians of the period have identified two main themes that dominated the public sphere in the interwar years: the opposition between modernists and traditionalists, and that between democrats and far right movements.[152] Although slightly artificial, these coordinates can help map the sociologists' positions onto a complex but well-known cultural field. At the same time, in doing this I will point to the limitations of such clear-cut boundaries, since, in bridging the right and the left, the modernisers and the traditionalists, the sociologists' arguments indicated the need to adopt a different angle from which to examine these debates. The debate between Vulcănescu and Comarnescu for example showed the use of sociology to support arguments both for a dialogue between the city and the countryside and for an unequivocal return to rural traditions.

On a modernist-traditional axis, the writings of the BSS appeared to occupy a place closer to the traditionalist groups. None of the Bucharest sociologists joined the supporters of the two modernising models, the liberal one represented by Ştefan Zeletin (1882 - 1934), who saw the bourgeoisie as the driving force of

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[152] Alexandrescu, *Paradoxul*, 16.

Romanian society, and placed their faith in the industrialisation of the economy and the urbanisation of Romanian culture and politics, and the socialist one, represented by newspapers like *Era nouă*, which saw no possibility of returning to agrarianism and saw rural proletarianisation as the inevitable future of the Romanian countryside.[153] Most scholars reviewed above agreed with one of the many traditionalist groups spanning from the radical groups *Gândirea* and *Trăirism,* who rejected Western style capitalism and proposed a return to a mythical pastoral past, to the moderate populists and Peasantists who, without denying the need for modernisation, proposed reforms meant to adapt capitalism to suit Romania's agrarian economy and rural population.[154]

The academic writings dealing with different aspects of the peasant economy show Madgearu's influence. A Peasantist thinker, Madgearu held that the 'peasant economy as a noncapitalist mode of production constituted the specific nature of the national economy'.[155] Both Stahl and Vulcănescu, despite their different opinions, wrote about the specificity of the rural economy and legal system and its demise in the face of the forces of Western capitalism. Stahl's work also bore the influences of the earlier traditionalist *Sămănătorism* although combined with Austro-Marxist elements and Romanian socialism.

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[153] Ştefan Zeletin, *Burghezia română : originea şi rolul ei istoric* ([1925] Bucharest: Humanitas, 1991) and Eugen Lovinescu, *Istoria civilizaţiei romane moderne* (Bucharest: Ed. Ancora, 1924-1925) For a more nuanced view of Zeletin's ideas, see Daniel Chirot 'Neo-liberal and social democratic theories of development: the Zeletin-Voinea debate concerning Romania's prospects on the 1920s and its contemporary importance' in *Social Change in Romania, 1860-1940* edited by Kenneth Jowitt (Berkley: Institute of International Studies, 1978), pp. 31-52 For an insight into the opinions of the socialist press and their criticisms towards Gusti's sociology, see the collection of press articles written and edited by Ştefan Voicu, *Pagini de istorie socială* (Bucharest: Ed. Politică, 1971), 15-88; 127-136.

[154] For details about these groups, see Mitrany, *Marx against the peasant*, 123-4; Hitchins, *Rumania: 1866-1947*, 391-393.

[155] Keith Hitchins, "Romania," *American Historical Review,* 97, no. 4 (1992): 1076.

In their writings on peasant culture and spirituality, the sociologists' split grew wider across this spectrum. On an Orthodoxist-*trăirist* position, influenced mainly by Nae Ionescu, Vulcănescu called for a preservation of the peasant, who as his mentor believed, 'stood in direct communion with the essential nature of things' and thus maintained his spiritual purity.[156] In a similar vein, the right-wing dissidents who left the Gusti team to set up the *Rânduiala* review also saw the harmful effects of modernisation and reform on peasant spirituality. Unlike them, writers like Stahl and Golopenția preferred a more nuanced approach to the matter, taking into account the peasants' agency in adapting to the market economy and imitating urban culture. Nevertheless, although they lamented the rapid erosion of local traditions, they called for the safeguarding of folk culture, and the adaptation of state reforms to its specific nature. Furthermore, although in avoiding old-style Western liberalism and supporting the common nationalist cause they all shared a desire to transcend the divisions between right and left, most sociologists were drawn into the continuous flux of the interwar political spectrum, many navigating from left to right. Therefore, when seen in the wider context of interwar intellectual debates, the sociologists seem to lose their common identity as a group, often speaking the language of other groups. This was the effect of different internal and external factors that eventually led to the redefinition of the school and its role. This moment of crisis overlapped with their first written sociological accounts, partly explaining the failure of the monograph as an academic genre. Their lack of unity

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[156] Hitchins, "Romania," 1075.

was compensated by the single focus of their attention, the peasantry, whom they had met and scrutinised attentively in the field. This provided them with the necessary distinction to make their voices heard in the deafening debates of the time. The peasant's indirect presence in their writings gave them personal credibility and importance. At the same time, as shown by the comparison of the different genres, the imagined peasant was different from the one encountered in the field.

This indicates some of the final set of conclusions that place this period in the context of a history of sociological engagement with the rural world. Using their direct experience of the peasantry, the scholars produced a variety of academic and non-academic articles that showed often conflicting interpretations of rural life. In Mazlish's terms, there were no 'breakers' amongst the sociologists, only 'lamenters'. Looking at the context of the intellectual debates surrounding the sociologists clarified the crisis within the School and the character of the different factions, which developed in this period. Shifting attention to the various genres employed to express individual ideas, positions, and interpretations of the rural world and its transformation further illuminates these differences. The academic texts engaged with social change in the countryside by analysing its causes and effects, and employing a wide range of themes to conceptualise it, such as: modernisation, capitalism, urbanisation, and state reforms. Although these texts expressed only partial conclusions about the future, they did bring out the great complexity of a transforming rural world and thus integrated it into the academic field of social sciences and into the wider sphere of 'the social'. At the same time, the rules of the

academic genre shaped the ways in which rural transformation was discussed and represented. In contrast, the non-academic texts expressed not only facts, but also strong opinions about change, ranging in tone from vehement alarm bells about the urban moral crisis and rural degeneration to lyrical impressions of an imaginary countryside. Taken together, these different genres showed how the discipline of sociology and its objects of study were negotiated between the constraints of objectivity and the outbursts of subjectivity and between the academic and the public spheres of debate. Moreover, whilst present in the background of all the published texts, the fieldwork experience and the relation between scholars and the peasantry were deeply altered. Writing for and about the rural world, the sociologists used their experience of 'being there' and the close contact with the locals to build an academic and 'public authority' both for their discipline and for their individual, often conflicting, political positions.

CIVILISING THE COUNTRYSIDE

ECHIPELE REGALE STUDENȚEȘTI AND CULTURAL WORK, 1934 - 1938

> Send all my love and my soul to these villages. I hope that the love I have for the country and for our peasants will radiate in the heart and soul you will put into the work that I ask of you.[1]
>
> King Carol II, 1936

After his return to the Romanian throne in 1930, King Carol II became a great supporter of the Bucharest School of Sociology. Partly as a result of his support and partly because of other political circumstances, monographic research in the countryside was doubled by sustained cultural work. Designed and launched by the sociologist Dimitrie Gusti, the project *Echipele Studențești Regale* (The Royal Student Teams) involved marching large numbers of university graduates into the countryside to meet the peasantry and volunteer their academic knowledge for its modernisation. Although still connected to the scientific approach of their predecessors, the student volunteers experienced the rural world not only as explorers or researchers, but also as unpaid professionals. The work of the teams was a combination of unpaid labour, social activism and research, aimed at reforming specific aspects of rural life. The time spent in the countryside was devoted to observation, participating in development projects and working within their own professions (as doctors, priests, vets, etc). Thus, the activists fulfilled a three-fold role. As observers, they continued the work of the monographic

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[1] "Cuvântarea Majestății Sale Regale către Echipele Studențești," *Căminul Cultural* I, no. 1 (November 1934): 2.

researchers, producing data about the villages they visited. As volunteers on development projects they engaged in unskilled community work for and with the villagers. Finally, as professional workers, they undertook unpaid labour with the aim of improving the physical and moral wellbeing of the countryside. This complex of activities was framed as state-funded voluntarism, conceived not as philanthropy but as a duty towards the rural community.[2]

This chapter investigates the new vision of rural transformation proposed by Gusti's project of voluntary cultural work in the Romanian countryside from the mid to late 1930s. Unlike the earlier fieldwork activities of the monographic teams, which were mainly concerned with studying the countryside, the Royal Student Teams reinterpreted sociology in terms of activism and reform of the countryside in the name of the state, not only studying rural life, but also working towards its improvement. This project was based on the precepts of Gusti's *sociologia militans* (militant sociology), which reformulated his social theory into a set of measures and principles to be tested and directly applied on designated villages across Romania in an effort to aid their modernisation. The enactors of these reforms were student volunteers specialising in professions that were seen as vital to the improvement of life in the countryside (human and veterinary medicine, agronomy, physical education, domestic science, and theology). At the same time, their work in the countryside was subsumed under the umbrella of sociology, seen as the 'science of

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[2] In Romania, Gusti defined this project as *munca culturală*, translated into English as 'cultural work'. I will use the direct translation rather than an adaptation of the phrase to preserve its original character and reference to the two main concepts underlying it: culture and work. Nevertheless, the project could be understood as a combination of social work and voluntary action concerned with rural development. I thus often refer to the participants as 'activists', 'volunteers' or 'student (teams)' rather than 'cultural workers'.

the nation' able to mobilise and oversee all these other disciplines.[3] The new project

presented a vision of change that, although still sociological, subordinated both the

subjects and objects of cultural work to the state dominated by King Carol II. By

analysing the political context of the new project, its theoretical base and the

practical experience of these teams, the chapter examines the different agendas and

visions that conceptualised and attempted to enact the reform of the Romanian

countryside in the years leading to the outbreak of the Second World War. Drawing

on Scott's concept of 'high modernism', I examine Gusti's cultural work initiative as a

milder representative of a wider ethos to 'improve the human condition' by

transforming both nature and society according to scientific principles of rationality

and order. Scott has employed the term 'high modernism' to explain why a wide

range of landscape planning and social engineering schemes across different

geographical and cultural areas have eventually failed.[4] As part of this investigation,

Scott looked at the scientific knowledge used as the basis of various projects such as

nineteenth century forest planning, Soviet collectivization, the building of new cities

in South America and villagisation in Africa in the post-war period, and at the

common process of reducing the complexity of science to simple and easily

applicable models. He argued that, in most cases, the planners and 'civilisers'

ignored local practices and knowledge or deemed them as old-fashioned and

inefficient. However, in the long-run, this ignorance back-fired, exposing the gaps

and problems in the modernising models. Although Scott often essentialises or

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[3] Gusti, *La Science*, 40.
[4] Scott, *Seeing*, 9-11.

shows states and other agencies running these projects in positions of total control, the term 'high modernism' and the range of concepts related to it are useful in examining the underlying rationality and process of simplification in a variety of models of transformation, from the brutal and coercive to milder and more humane ones. I employ this concept in my analysis of Gusti's projects of cultural work and model village building (Chapter 5), which belonged to the second category mentioned above, at the same time pointing to a potential wider applicability of Scott's theory and its to its limitations. In line with the statement that 'high modernism was about interests as well as faiths', the chapter uncovers the different interests that went into the launch, planning and realisation of the project, as well as its undermining factors.[5] An analysis of the project's guidelines and its main directions of reform follow this. In the last section, I turn to the student teams' experience and practice as it was reflected in the reports produced during their visits to various villages from 1934 to 1938. This reveals the way the project's guidelines were internalised, negotiated or criticised by the participants and engages with the way they understood their own roles in the transformation of the Romanian countryside.

The politics of cultural work and the birth of the 'Royal Student Teams'

In 1934, King Carol II placed Gusti in charge of the *Fundația Culturală Regală 'Principele Carol'* (The 'Prince Carol' Royal Cultural Foundation), making them the

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[5] Ibid., 5.

headquarters of his new project of cultural activism in the countryside.[6] After the 'crisis years' of the Bucharest School of Sociology and an abortive political career within the Peasant Party government, Gusti reasserted his leadership of Romanian sociology by widening its scope and aligning it with the aims of the King.[7] For the monarch, the project offered both an opportunity to promote himself as 'King of the Peasantry' and a means to compete with the rising influence of the Legion over the youth and the peasantry.[8]

Carol II, 'King of the peasants'

In Carol's own words, rural cultural work was 'a way of offering the peasantry a better standard of living, a better understanding of their needs and obligations'.[9] In this he acknowledged the importance of the rural masses both as a political power and as crucial to the state's future. At the same time, the project matched Carol's distrust of political parties and his populist tendencies, offering him direct access to the masses that he wished to win over through the charitable work of young

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[6] The Romanian monarchy set up a range of (Royal) Cultural Foundations to promote and fund various cultural activities. The oldest and best known such institution, *Fundația Culturală Regală* 'Carol I' (The 'Carol I' Royal Cultural Foundation) was set up at the end of the 19th century engaging mainly with the promotion of high culture. The *Fundația Culturală Regală* 'Principele Carol' (The 'Prince Carol' Royal Cultural Foundation) was set up by Carol II in 1922 and was aimed particularly at the enlightenment of the rural population. As Gusti was in charge of this latter institution, I will mention it either with its acronym, FCR-PC, or simply as the 'Foundation'. For a brief history of these institutions, see Zoltán Rostás, "Fundația Culturală Regală "Principele Carol" sau mișcarea echipelor studențești voluntare," in *Strada Latină nr.8. Monografiști și echipieri la Fundația Culturală Regală "Principele Carol"* (Bucharest: Curtea Veche, 2009), 11-23.

[7] Both Stahl and Rostás mention the circumstances that brought Gusti back to the monographic project. Forced to leave the Ministry of Education in 1933 by the change of the political leadership, Gusti was offered a position as Director of *Fundația Culturală Regală „Principele Carol"* (The 'Prince Carol' Royal Cultural Foundation) in 1934. This was, as Stahl commented, 'a chance to organise a smaller-scale social action within a non-governmental organisation (…). in Stahl, *Amintiri*, 273.

[8] Rostás, "Fundația Culturală Regală," 16.

[9] *Cartea echipelor* (Bucharest: Fundatia Culturală Regală "Principele Carol", 1937), 14. Od. 1935

volunteers recruited 'to spread the royal message to the villages'.[10] In contrast with the 'bad dusty roads, ditches with stale water, no bridges or flower gardens in front of any houses' of Romanian villages at the time, his vision for the future was one of a countryside totally transformed both externally and internally, in the spirit of modernisation and progress.[11] His wish was that villagers be taught the value of cleanliness, order, and beauty. 'Your duty is to teach everyone that fresh air is a friend, not an enemy', he said to the student teams; 'we need to teach them the simplest rules of physical and moral hygiene', he continued. 'Regarding agricultural work, and home management, there are few villages where you find a single chicken coop. All the fowl are out in the street, [often] run over by motorcars (...) This can be easily avoided through the building of small coops so that the chickens are fed in the yard, not in the street'.[12] This advice showed the monarch's interest in the countryside and his detailed knowledge of the work the students were to undertake in order to turn the country folk into rational modern farmers and active citizens of the Romanian state.

Beyond this modernising agenda of transforming the rural world lay the monarch's second political goal: to counteract the Legion by using its own tools.[13] The fascist organisation had become the King's number one competitor for the engagement and transformation of two main social groups: the youth and the

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[10] "Cuvântarea Majestății Sale Regale către Echipele Studențești," 3.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid., 2-3.

[13] Rostás, "Fundația Culturală Regală," 16; Gheorghe Lăzărescu and Zoltán Rostás, "'Ni s-a făcut o primire sărbătorească' - Gheorghe Lăzărescu. (interview 2006)," in *Strada Latină nr.8. Monografiști și echipieri la Fundația Culturală Regală "Principele Carol"* (Bucharest: Curtea Veche, 2009), 60; Constantin Marinescu and Zoltán Rostás, "'Partea forte a gustismului' - Constantin Marinescu," in *Strada Latină nr.8. Monografiști și echipieri la Fundația Culturală Regală "Principele Carol"* (Bucharest: Curtea Veche, 2009), 158-159.

peasantry. It appeared to hold the patent on the work camp as a means of bringing urban intellectuals to the countryside for the purpose of creating a 'parallel society' based on new social values and bonds.[14] The first Legionary work camp was organised at Ungheni in 1924, preceding Gusti's first monographic trip to Goicea Mare (1925).[15] The camp already exhibited the core ideas that underpinned those of the next decade. Re-launched in the 1930s, these had become a successful means of recruiting and spreading the Legionary's ethos.

In this context, Gusti's project was part of a wider initiative to redirect or prevent youth and intellectuals from joining the Legion. From 1934, the Royal Student Teams coexisted and collaborated with *Straja Țării,* Carol's own youth organisation introduced by the newly elected liberal government in the same year.[16] Fashioned on the model of the Scouts and inspired by similar youth organisations in Italy and Germany, *Straja* imitated the Legion in rituals, symbols and denominations.[17] Yet, the *străjeri* did not succeed in competing with the Legion whose appeal sprung mostly from its opposition to the state, its grass-root communitarian precepts, and its religious mysticism.

Aimed at university students, graduates and young professionals, Gusti's project offered them a state-supported form of voluntary activism that combined

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[14] The most recent work on the Legion's work camps is Haynes, "Work camps," 943-44.

[15] Mihai Polihroniade, *Tabăra de muncă* (Bucharest: Editura Ziarului 'Universul', 1936), 1; Heinen, *Legiunea 'Arhanghelul Mihai'*, 210-214; 260-263; Haynes, "Work camps," 946.

[16] Manoilescu Gheorghe, Nedelcu C., and Sidorovici Teofil, "Straja Țării," in *Enciclopedia României*, vol. 1 (Bucharest: Imprimeria Națională, 1938), 485.

[17] The word *strajă* is a synonym of *garda* ('guard') and the denomination of the levels of the organization also reflected further similarities. As in the Legion, the smallest unit of the *Străjeri* was a *cuib* (nest), whereas the largest was a 'legion'. Ibid., 488.

intellectual and manual work.[18] At the same time, it also facilitated the cooperation between the two organisations, the *Străjeri* and the Royal Student Teams, who worked together on development projects (building roads, repairing churches, planting trees, etc). Like the Legion, the Royal Foundations proposed an organised way of 'going to the people', giving the participants the opportunity to do their bit for the countryside, work in teams and get their hands dirty, therefore appealing to the same psychological factors as their competitors: young, sacrificial heroism and the will to change the nation's future. This was spelt out in the King's address to the teams:

> It is true that this work requires sacrifices, but you have to be convinced that it will be deeply fruitful and useful to our country. You are not going there to do work just for show; instead you are going to those remote areas of the country to undertake a painstaking, meticulous labour, yet one that must have a sound effect for each village. My wish is that, on the teams' departure, the village be - as much as possible – transformed. Transformed both externally and internally.[19]

Dimitrie Gusti's theory of cultural work

Cultural work was not a new concept in Gusti's thought, but a practical application of his older idea of *sociologia militans*.[20] In his view, the disciplines of sociology, ethics and politics were intimately related and complemented each other:

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[18] As Haynes has shown, 'beyond the practical aim of the work camp, there was also an "educational mission" which was to "ennoble manual work". Through this, the Legion sought and partly succeeded to erase the shame attached to intellectuals doing manual work, bridging the gap between classes and professions by co-opting them to work together for the creation of a new social order. Haynes, "Work camps," 946.

[19] "Cuvântarea Majestății Sale Regale către Echipele Studențești," 3.

[20] Vulcănescu, "Dimitrie Gusti - Profesorul," 1055; Rostás, "Fundația Culturală Regală," 17.

Sociology is the research of society as it is, consisting of observing and explaining the facts with no other preoccupation. Evaluating this reality in relation to the social ideal, in an attempt to present how it should be like constitutes the science of ethics. Studying the means through which a society can realize its social ideal forms the science of politics.[21]

The new project was therefore not invented under the political demands of the moment, but was already present in Gusti's theories, appearing as a natural progression from cognitive sociological knowledge to scientifically informed political activism. The opportunity offered by the leadership of the non-governmental FCR-PC allowed Gusti to take the step he had first attempted in 1920, when he had proposed a similar project to the monarch. He was able to re-launch it almost fifteen years later, when the political circumstances were more favourable and the spirit of the time had become one of refashioning society and creating a 'new man'.[22]

Central to Gusti's project of social reform was a redefined concept of culture that can be better understood with reference to Norbert Elias and Vadim Volkov's idea of civilising processes.[23] Elias has argued that the creation of modern nation states in Western European relied on and was entangled with an on-going process of transforming their societies through changing people's 'patterns of public behaviour and interaction'.[24] This meant changing 'codes of manners, rules of hygiene, dress-code, forms of conversation, etc.'. Applying Elias's analysis of the 'transformation of medieval knights into courtiers', Volkov has looked at the process of 'transforming

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[21] Gusti, "Știința națiunii," 56.

[22] George Macrin, "O nouă școală românească. Taberele de muncă," *Însemnări sociologice* I, no. 4 (July 1935): 21.

[23] Vadim Volkov, "The Concept of Kul'turnost': Notes on the Stalinist Civilising Process," in *Stalinism: New Directions* (London: Routledge, 2000), 210-11.

[24] Norbert Elias in Ibid., 210.

peasants into Soviet citizens' in 1930s Stalinism, theorised under the term of '*kul'turnost*'.[25] Although different in many ways to Gusti's initiative, the Stalinist 'civilising process' responded to the same desire of Eastern European states to 'discipline' and modernise their peasant populations using a similar concept of culture. Interestingly, the Romanian leaders of the civilising project were aware of Soviet *kul'turnost* and were eager to stress the differences between the two processes.[26] After a short meeting in the village of Șant with Philip Mosely, an American rural sociologist visiting Eastern Europe and the USSR, Stahl mentioned that:

> [Mosely] was returning from a long trip to the villages of Soviet Russia. (The Russians) are also organising campaigns for the cultural enlightenment of the people, they also set up schools and educate the youth in a new spirit. But what a difference! One evening when on the team's ringing of the school bell, the villagers gathered to attend a *șezătoare*, (…) I saw the foreigner's amazement: we had not used the *gendarmes*, we had not forced the people to come to this school organised with love.[27]

The quote shows what the organisers saw as the major difference between the Romanian and the Soviet cultural work: freedom versus imposition, harmony and love between the activists and the participants versus hatred and fear.

In Romania, Gusti's concept of 'culture' as a force for social change was also influenced by ideas from the medical and human sciences that have been recently discussed in the literature of the eugenic movement.[28] Born of the same concerns about the effects of modern life over individuals as in Western Europe and the

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[25] Ibid., 210-11.
[26] Henri H. Stahl, "Impresii din Șanț și Leșu," *Curierul Echipelor Studențești* I, no. 4 (1935): 5.
[27] Ibid.
[28] See Bucur, *Eugenics*.

United States, these ideas entered the field of Romanian social medicine after 1918.

The eugenics movement took slightly different forms in the Old Kingdom and in

Transylvania, where it used the old cultural institution *Asociațiunea transilvană*

pentru literatura română și cultura poporului român (the Transylvanian Association

for Romanian Literature and the Culture of the Romanian People, henceforth

ASTRA) to disseminate its ideas to the ethnic Romanian population.[29] The

integration of the eugenics agenda into this old organisation that had fought for the

preservation of Romanian culture before the Unification created a precedent for this

wider definition of culture, which resembled Gusti's 'cultural work'.[30] At the same

time, this influence was strengthened by his collaboration with leading figures in

social medicine and social hygiene both in academia and in politics, which placed his

ideas in an academic milieu that sought to understand and solve the same problems

of a modernising Romanian society.[31]

Gusti understood culture not as a static set of knowledge or practices, but as

the relationship between man and the world, 'the individuals' ability to find

themselves in the world they inhabit (…) and to build a spiritual world of their own,

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[29] ASTRA was founded in 1861 by Romanian intellectuals in Transylvania and functioned as a cultural and educational institution catering for the needs of the Romanian community. The Association was privately funded by the emerging Romanian middle classes in the region. One of ASTRA's most important goals was the 'enlightening the peasantry' through education and knowledge. For the Romanian peasantry in Transylvania, ASTRA set up schools and public libraries, published and distributed books and journals, and organised ethnographic exhibitions. Having played a major role in the cultural and political life of the region before and after the 1918 Unification, ASTRA remained one of the most important cultural institutions in the area throughout the interwar era to the end of Second World War. Moga, *"Astra" și societatea: 1918-1930*.

[30] Maria Bucur also mentions the village hall as an institution central to the ongoing process of social transformation in which a social hygiene was integrated into a wider cultural agenda. Bucur, *Eugenics*, 74, 210.

[31] Doctor George Banu was one of one of Gusti's famous colleagues at the Romanian Social Institute. The anniversary edition of his academic journal, *Revista de Igienă Socială,* offers an overview of the rural world from the perspective of social medicine. "Problemele sanitare ale populației rurale din România (Număr festiv cu ocazia împlinirii a 10 ani de apariție)," *Revista de Igienă Socială* X, no. 1-6 (1940).

through a dynamic rapport with the cultural goods [available].'[32] His innovation resided in widening the notion of culture beyond the sphere of the intellect and outside the separation between high and low cultures. Unlike his predecessors at FCR-PC, Gusti shifted the focus from a theoretical humanistic knowledge to a practical one, useful in everyday village life. This sociological idea of culture included four main areas: the culture of the body, of work, of the mind, and of the soul.[33] These reflected the social problems that had been identified and were being discussed at length in the Romanian public and academic spheres: illnesses and diseases specific to rural areas, venereal diseases, prostitution, alcoholism, malnutrition, infant mortality, illiteracy, and cohabitation.[34] Therefore, cultural work was a means to 'improve the social and economic living conditions of the rural masses' by making use of the country's intellectual elites and their professional abilities.[35] Specialists from academic disciplines corresponding to these areas of cultural work were recruited to diagnose, treat and transform the peasantry: a doctor and a sports teacher for the body, an agronomist, a vet and domestic scientist for health and work, and a priest and a teacher for the mind and the soul. Alongside these specialised roles, a sociologist was assigned to each team and placed in charge of providing the overall view and interconnectedness of all social dimensions dealt with individually by the other members. This reflected Gusti's

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[32] *Îndrumător 1936*, 28.

[33] Ibid., 163.

[34] A detailed account of these rural issues can be found in the special issue of the academic review *Revista de Igienă Socială* (The Social Hygiene Review), that summs up some of the results of both the student teams and of other professional scholars in the field of medicine, demographics, etc.George Banu, ed., "Problemele sanitare ale populației rurale din România," *Revista de Igienă Socială* X, no. 1-6 (1940).

[35] Stahl, *Amintiri*, 284.

vision of sociology as a meta-discipline able to mobilise and oversee all these other disciplines engaged in the modernisation of the rural world.

Since for Gusti culture '[could] neither be given nor imposed from above, as it had to be acquired freely, from below', the teams' role was to enable the rural population to 'develop their own culture'.[36] Thus, seemingly the relationship between the educated elites and the peasantry was reconsidered, placing an emphasis on the agency of the villagers and their cooperation with rather than submission to the teams. Within the triangle state-intellectuals-peasantry, Gusti introduced the new idea of the villages' 'right to culture', which the government and society had a duty to satisfy. This marked the difference between a philanthropic initiative of 'spoon feeding' the people with 'the cultural values of the time' and the affirmation and fulfilment of a social right.[37] The project's framework, as a civic responsibility rather than a philanthropic activity, reflected its modern aspirations as well as its direct attachment to the authority of the state. Gusti's ideas fit the description of a 'high modernist ideology' that, as shown by Scott, 'constitutes the desire [to shape society]', and which needs the support of an 'authoritarian state [that] provides the determination to act on this desire'.[38] In the Romanian case, Carol's attempt to rule above the parties clearly contributed to the launch and generous funding of this project.

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[36] Dimitrie Gusti, "Idei călăuzitoare pentru munca culturală la sate," in *Îndrumător al muncii culturale la sate : 1936* (Bucharest: Fundația Culturală Regală "Principele Carol', 1936), 27.
[37] Ibid., 29.
[38] Scott, *Seeing*, 5.

Although addressing the same social groups and undertaking similar activities, Gusti's cultural work differed from the fascist work camps in several ways. Firstly, the organisation of the teams within the two projects was visibly different. The Student Teams had fewer participants (five to eight), each specialising in a different discipline, residing in the same village for a period of three months.[39] In contrast, the fascist work camps brought together large numbers of activists who focused on one main activity (such as a construction project or harvesting in summer or autumn).[40] Secondly, for Gusti, the underlying principles of social activism were science, reason and order. The work of the teams was meant to use modern scientific or academic principles to improve rural life, combating the physical, social and spiritual ills within the various communities and thus restoring order and trust in local and national authorities. Although similar in many ways to the fascist work camps, the project was based on trust in progress and in the positive effects of modernisation through reform, whereas the Legion proposed an alternative version of modernity based on a new moral order that required radical change.[41] Furthermore, these principles were directly connected to the role of the state and of the existing bureaucratic power structures that Gusti relied on in his social reform. Thirdly, voluntary work in service of rural development also had different connotations, stressing the importance and prevalence of intellectual work

[39] Private conversation with Zoltan Rostás, 4 February 2009
[40] Heinen, *Legiunea 'Arhanghelul Mihai'*, 268-9.
[41] On the debates about fascism as a variant of modernity, see Roger Griffin, "Modernity, modernism, and fascism. A "mazeway resynthesis"," *Modernism/modernity* 15, no. 1 (2008): 9-24. In the Romanian context, this relationship has been recently discussed by Valentin Săndulescu in Valentin Săndulescu, "Fascism and its Quest for the 'New Man:' The Case of the Romanian Legionary Movement," *Studia Hebraica* 4, no. 2004 (2004): 349-361; Valentin Săndulescu, "Modernism și fascism: repere ale unei evoluții istoriografice," in *Modernism și antimodernism: noi perspective interdisciplinare* (Bucharest: Ed. Cuvântul, 2008), 207-219.

over manual labour. This is turn created a specific power relation between the 'teachers' (young students and graduates) and the 'pupils' (the villagers), something very different from the fascist's sacralisation of manual work. Thus, the essential difference between the Royal Teams and the Legion was that the latter was overtly political and revolutionary, whereas the former had a reformist agenda whilst presenting itself above and beyond specific political interests. This further reinforces Scott's argument that 'high-modernist ideology tends to devalue or banish politics. Political interests can only frustrate the social solutions devised by specialists with scientific tools adequate to their analysis'.[42]

In their own publications, the Legionary members and sympathisers pointed out the same differences, only to show the extent to which their work camps had been copied, thus leading to 'unjustified and useless' parodies. Thus, an article discussing the student teams stated:

> Camps based on wide scientific and nationalist ideas such as the "culturalisation of the masses" have been set up. Well-kept and often well-paid teams of students are being sent to the countryside to study the local situation sociologically and to improve it (…) We welcome the scientific activity of these teams, but we disagree with the type of education these teams impart to the people. A paid ideal cannot save the people. These teachers (…) are raised at the school of politicianism and even if they are sincere, they have an upbringing based on an individualist spirituality. This is the model used to teach the peasant. Actually, I have not even seen any explanation of what worldview and virtues this cultured peasant should have.[43]

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[42] Scott, *Seeing*, 94.
[43] George Macrin, "Taberele de muncă. Aspectul politic," *Însemnări sociologice* I, no. 5 (August 1935): 223.

The 'Prince Carol' Royal Cultural Foundation and the volunteers

As director of FCR-PC, Gusti reorganised the institution from above, profoundly changing its agenda and placing his former close collaborators in leadership positions.[44] In this section I will consider the new institutional framework of sociology – both as research and as activism – showing the intricate relationship between the older generation and the newer one, their legacy and agendas. My main argument is that the School's link with FCR-PC, as a source of power, status and funds, was instrumental in the development of social research and for its integration into the state apparatus. Also, by examining the roles and identity of the students who joined the project, I highlight the different starting points, limitations and predetermining factors that shaped their work, results, and vision of the countryside.

One of a series of institutions founded by the Romanian monarchy for the promotion and funding of culture, the Foundation set up by the then Prince Carol II in 1922 and bearing his name was devoted to the 'enlightenment of the peasantry'.[45] Yet, until Gusti's arrival, it had not achieved much, remaining in the shadow of other more famous royal foundations supporting high culture. At the root of its failure lay an antiquated agenda and an old-fashioned establishment working according to the principles set out by the educationalist Spiru Haret in the previous century.[46] Considering culture as a top-down 'process of disseminating high culture

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[44] Stahl, *Amintiri*, 286-7; Rostás, *Monografia ca utopie*, 197-8.
[45] Rostás, "Fundația Culturală Regală," 12-16.
[46] Stahl, *Amintiri*, 279-283.

to rural areas' for the purpose of improving the spiritual well-being of the masses, the Haretist model employed 'cultural missionaries' meant to bring culture to the countryside, published various educational papers and magazines for the villagers, and encouraged the production of village monographs written by local intellectuals. Although somewhat valuable, according to Stahl, 'the Foundation lacked a scientific grounding of their activities, a systematic record of the social problems of the village (…) that could only be studied by highly qualified specialists'.[47] Institutionally, the Foundation offered Gusti both freedom of decision-making and very generous funds. As Rostás has noted, the relation between Gusti and the monarchy was not an impersonal bureaucratic one, but a paternalist one, similar to that 'between an enlightened monarch and an educated mandarin, (…) based on personal trust, not on rules and regulations'.[48] This meant that within these boundaries, Gusti could do almost anything – increase the number of teams, launch new publications, expand the research, build a museum, and dispose of unlimited funding.[49]

Dissidents, scholars and leaders of cultural work

The new initiative altered the scope and freedom of sociological research, at the same time deepening the existing frictions within the old group of sociologists discussed in the previous chapter. After Gusti's appointment at FCR-PC in 1934, his close collaborators were confronted with the prospect of working on his project. This marked a clear turning point, where some of the old sociologists chose to

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[47] Ibid., 282.
[48] Rostás, *Atelierul gustian*, 57.
[49] Ibid.

remain strictly researchers and others agreed to become 'activists'. Refusing to follow Gusti's call for action, the first group, formed of people like Vulcănescu, Herseni, and Costa-Foru, remained attached to the idea of social research and continued to publish in the ISR's journals. The second accepted this call, forming the new 'management' of the Foundation. The main followers were Stahl and Golopenția, joined by Octavian Neamțu, Emanoil Bucuța and Victor Ion Popa, who had not taken part in the first monographic expeditions. This internal split reflected the sociologists' different political orientations and different visions of the countryside. Criticised both by the (extreme) right and the (extreme) left[50] for its pro-monarchy propagandist agenda, cultural work was also rejected by Vulcănescu, who did not believe in the project of rural modernization.[51] Therefore, the launch of the Royal Student Teams marked a politicisation of Bucharest sociology and a separation between academic research and cultural work.

The sociologists Stahl, Golopenția, and Gheorghe Focșa, the writer Bucuța, and the journalist Neamțu were recruited to manage the new projects of FCR-PC. They were joined in their mission by some of the existing members of the institution, Popa, Alexandru and Lascarov-Moldovan.[52] Unlike the monographic project of the 1920s, working for the Foundation offered a full-time position, a generous salary, a certain social status and access to a secure source of funding. At the same time, this required some compromises, as Stahl admitted in his memoirs: 'I

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[50] For some socialist criticisms, see the article in *Era Nouă* (1936) republished in Ștefan Voicu, "Note asupra mișcării de monografie sociologică," in *Pagini de istorie socială* (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1971), 28-37.
[51] Rostás, *Monografia ca utopie*, 197.
[52] Ibid.

joined the Foundation and became Director of Research motivated by the base reason of being paid for a job that was close to my personal interests.'[53] Nevertheless, unlike Stahl, who felt he needed to trade his passion for research for paid cultural activism, many of the other FCR-PC leaders showed enthusiasm and dedication to this cause. Stahl's friend and collaborator, Neamțu[54], although not trained as a sociologist, found his 'vocation as the organiser of the student teams' at the Foundation.[55] Combining his passion for research with one for activism, Golopenția joined the new project in 1937, only after his return from his doctoral studies in Germany.[56] The letters sent to his future wife showed Golopenția's eagerness to re-enter Bucharest's vibrant sociological environment, despite some doubts about the shape the project had taken in his absence.[57] However, anchoring sociology to the Foundation's ample funds and political power had positive results for most of Gusti's collaborators, engaged both in research and action. Despite the criticism, the royal connection was an acceptable compromise in as much as it facilitated more publications for both researchers and activists alongside the various other public engagement activities at home and abroad.[58]

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[53] Stahl, *Amintiri*, 278.

[54] Octavian Neamțu had a degree in Philosophy (1931) and had taken part in the monographic expedition to Cornova (1931) and in the writing up trip to Drăguș (1933). He became general inspector for FCR-PC in 1934 and editor of the journal *Curierul echipelor studențești* the following year. Elena Neamțu and Al. Singer, "Activitatea socială a lui Octavian Neamțu la ziarul "Ecoul"," *Sociologie românească* II, no. 3-4 (1991): 193.

[55] Stahl, *Amintiri*, 288-90; Octavian Neamțu, *Țara nouă* (Bucharest: Fundația Culturală Regală "Principele Carol", 1939).

[56] Golopenția, *Rapsodia Epistolară II*, letter 1937 Jan.

[57] Anton Golopenția, "Anton Golopenția către Ștefania Cristescu (17.10.1935)," in *Rapsodia Epistolara II* (Bucharest: Ed. Enciclopedică, 2009), 366; Ștefania Cristescu, "Ștefania Cristescu către Anton Golopenția (24.10.1935)," in *Rapsodia Epistolara II* (Bucharest: Ed. Enciclopedică, 2009), 368-370.

[58] This period saw the publication of the new academic review *Sociologie Românească*, the internal paper *Curierul Echipelor Studențești*, the organisation of various exhibitions, the participation in the Paris and New York World Fairs, and the founding of the Village Museum of Bucharest. Stahl, *Amintiri*, 296-308; 356-372.

The student volunteers: background, age, gender, class

Compared to the 1920s monographic researchers and thus to most of their leaders, the 1930s student volunteers were different in terms of social identity, motivation and ethos. The first striking difference was their social background. Unlike their predecessors who were mostly Bucharest-born middle or upper class, the new generation came mostly from rural areas across the country and were children of peasants, village intellectuals or of the petty bourgeoisie.[59] As an article in *Curierul Echipelor Studențești* noted, in the team of Cegani 'the seven team members are all sons of peasants from seven regions of the country. We have an Oltenian, a Transylvanian, a Moldovan and three Wallachians.'[60] This social background affected their encounter with the peasantry both in terms of expectations and of experience. For the first generation, the encounter with the peasantry was one of discovery and translation. They sought to bridge the gap between the country and the city by integrating the peasantry into the public discourse. For the 1930s students, the countryside was not only a space they knew in their childhood, but also a fully formed field of study occupying an important place both in academia and within the public debates.[61]

The other difference between the two groups regarded gender. Although, like the earlier fieldwork expeditions, the new project brought both men and

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[59] Zoltán Rostás, *Strada Latină nr.8. Monografiști și echipieri la Fundația Culturală Regală "Principele Carol"* (Bucharest: Curtea Veche, 2009).

[60] Alexandru Lascarov-Moldoveanu, "La Cegani," *Curierul Echipelor Studențești* II, no. 2 (July 1936): 1.

[61] Many of the student volunteers and 'second generation of monographists' as Rostás called them had their first encounters with monographic research in school. Sociology had been part of the school curricula since the 1920s and the Bucharest School of Sociology occupied an important place in the textbooks. An example of this was Dimitrie Gusti and Traian Herseni, *Elemente de sociologie. Cu aplicări la cunoașterea țării și a neamului nostru. Pentru clasa a VIII-a secundară*, II. (Bucharest: Editura "Autorilor Asociați", 1937).

women into the countryside, it also designated specific roles for men and women with the student teams. Although only two of the main positions were gender-specific, the 'domestic scientist' for women, and the theologian or priest for men, these were representative of a deeper shift in the ethos of sociological activism.[62] In the student teams, the domestic scientist played a double role: she was instructor of the peasant women on household duties and administrator of the teams' own housekeeping, overseeing the cook and keeping the 'key to the team's pantry'.[63] Furthermore, most other roles were dominated by men, with only a few exceptions of female medical students and graduate researchers from the Faculty of Letters.[64] The gender roles within the teams reflected both the values of the project itself, as well as the gender bias in the Romanian higher education system. On the one hand, the project contained an internal social order based on distinct gender roles that was offered as a model for the rural population. In this sense, the domestic scientist was meant to dissuade local women from working outside of the home and instead teach them how to be good housewives and mothers.[65] On the other hand, the project also reflected the gender separation between professions, with almost no women coming from the Institute of Agronomy, the Sports Science Institute or the School of Veterinary Medicine.[66]

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[62] *Îndrumător 1936*, 325-8.
[63] Ibid., 176.
[64] This assumption is based on the reports and publications, which never mention women as agronomists, vets or sports scientists. The role of the priest or theologian was always male, as expected.
[65] *Îndrumător 1936*, 325-330.
[66] "Tablouri cu numele echipierilor din diverse comune," 1934, FCR-C/1934/14/18-72, Arh. Naţ.

With regards to motivation, the student volunteers responded to Gusti's call out of a wide range of interests, from sheer curiosity to personal or professional reasons. For many of them, the rural expeditions were a means of gaining professional experience, displaying their knowledge and skills, and contributing to the 'education of the peasantry'.[67] Others saw volunteering as a step towards a career with FCR-PC as remunerated team leaders.[68] This clarifies the value and meaning of voluntary work in its relation both to study and to future employment. Unlike the fieldwork of the 1920s, the academic aim was practical and applied, whereas the professional ties were much stronger. The volunteers were not meant to become chameleonic scholars of rural life, but were allowed to act within their future professions. This resonated with many of the volunteers' own interests and attitudes. Of course, there were also many exceptions to this rule. Apart from dedicated professionals, there were also people who took advantage of the voluntary nature of the project to simply have a paid-for holiday or even to subvert the aims of the project itself. In one of his articles, Neamțu also warned that 'each year we had people with different thoughts to those of our mission's who sneaked in amongst us'[69], whereas one of the Legionary publications stated that there were two ways to deal with what they called 'paralegionarism': 'one was not to take

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[67] In his interviews, Marinescu mentions two main motivations for joining the teams: the wish to 'establish himself' and the attachment to the cause of 'educating the peasantry'. Marinescu and Rostás, ""Partea forte" C. Marinescu," 130-131.
[68] Gheorghe Macarie and Zoltán Rostás, "'Când am descoperit Fundația, mi s-a luminat fața!' - Gheorghe Macarie," in *Strada Latină nr.8. Monografiști și echipieri la Fundația Culturală Regală "Principele Carol"* (Bucharest: Curtea Veche, 2009), 97-98.
[69] Neamțu, *Țara nouă*, 42.

notice of them, the other to transform them into legionary camps'.[70] Thus, voluntarism constituted a constant negotiation between individual and institutional or organisational interests both in terms of practical work and underlying agendas.

The experience and practice of cultural work in the countryside

The project started in the summer of 1934 radically transformed the idea of fieldwork in the countryside. To start with, the term 'fieldwork' itself requires a new definition in the context of voluntary action and cultural work rather than sociological research. Although it still constituted a 'contact zone' between the visitors and the villagers, this new 'field' of work was based on the different precepts, rules and relations of this encounter. The visitors were not researchers, but specialists in various other professions. Although they employed some sociological methods to assess the local situation, their main goal was not scholarly, but practical. Their activities in the field combined professional and manual labour for the community, thus shifting the focus from observing, understanding and writing to completing tasks and achieving specific goals (treating patients, setting up a choir, delivering classes, repairing roads, churches, etc). The 'field' became a place of action and labour. Yet, at the same time, it was also one of experimentation and voluntarism. These two characteristics show the similarities in the spatio-temporal nature of the field between the two projects. Despite its new characteristics, the

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[70] Traian Brăileanu, "Organizațiile paralegionare," *Însemnări sociologice* III, no. 5 (1937): 2.

field was still a temporary site of 'displaced professional work' for the participants. As on the earlier trips, the activists delved into a new experience that also required travel to and dwelling in a village. In this sense, the expeditions had a great impact on the participants, affecting their understanding of the rural world, and of their own professions in relation to it.

In this section, I will look at the experiential side of the Royal Student Teams' expeditions, on the one side comparing them to the earlier monographic trips, on the other considering the ways the practices of travel and dwelling contributed to the project's general goals of transforming both the countryside and its volunteers. This includes an examination of various fixed and ad-hoc practices, a glimpse into the participants' own views and a brief discussion of the ways the villages reacted to the extended presence of the teams.

A volunteer's everyday life in the village: travel and dwelling

The propaganda film about the fifth cultural work campaign produced in 1938 opened with the arrival of a team into one of the villages chosen for cultural action. After a journey by train from Bucharest, nine young people got on a bus over-loaded with their luggage that took them further to their to destination.[71] As they drove into the village, they were greeted by a group of locals riding horses decorated for the occasion, who escorted them to meet the entire community gathered in the main square.[72] This more or less dramatised scene illustrated the new rapport

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[71] The documentary film *A cincea campanie a echipelor regale studențești*, 1938. ('The Fifth Campaign of the Royal Student Teams') is kept at the Romanian National Film Archives (*Arhiva Națională de Film*).
[72] "Îndrumări de muncă," *Curierul Echipelor Studențești* II, no. 2 (1936): 2.

between the visitors and their hosts.[73] The teams were formed of a few members (seven-ten) who went to a village and remained there for three months, trying to assess its medical, economic, moral and educational situation and then working to improve the life of the locals.

If the number of participants working in a team was reduced in comparison to the previous fieldwork expeditions to a maximum of ten people, on a geographical scale, travel became more extensive turning the countryside into a network of destinations connected to Bucharest as the main hub.[74] The teams left simultaneously for multiple locations, covering more ground each year, from twelve villages in 1934 to twenty-five in 1935, fifty-nine in 1936, seventy-seven in 1937, and sixty-three in 1938.[75] Over the five years, the students visited 114 villages across all regions of the country, from Southern Dobrogea to Northern Bukovina and from Bessarabia to Maramureș. Some villages were visited once, some recurrently, up to four times in a row (such as Pecineaga, Nereju, Regina Maria and Dodești).[76] Thus, cultural work became an orderly, highly regulated institutional project. An entire back-office apparatus recorded the recruits, operated the logistics of their

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[73] Although not all trips had a warm welcome, some organised real village feasts for their guests. Lăzărescu, for example, mentioned his team's festive welcome in Cornova, a village previously visited by the monographic teams in 1931. Lăzărescu and Rostás, ""Ni s-a facut" G. Lăzărescu," 65.

[74] A document from FCR-PC archives recorded the 'distance from the capital' in kilometres, also listing the routes for each team from Bucharest to their final destinations. "Depărtarea echipelor față de București," 1934, FCR-C/1934/14/70, Arh. Naț.

[75] Stahl, *Amintiri*, 296.

[76] "Tabloul satelor în care au lucrat Echipele Regale Studențești în campaniilor 1934, 1935, 1936, 1937 și 1938," FCR-C/1938/58/19-22, Arh. Naț.

transportation, subsistence and technical provisions from the Foundation's headquarters, in Bucharest.[77]

For most volunteers, travelling itself was more exciting than the actual encounter with the local population. Going somewhere new, to different regions of the country or simply escaping the Bucharest dog days constituted the attraction of the campaigns. 'I wanted to know a different world from the one I already knew (…) I liked Slavic culture, especially Russian literature' confessed Gheorghe Lăzărescu, a theology student, who had swapped his destination - Goicea Mare in Oltenia – for his colleague's, Năpădeni in Bessarabia.[78] A similar reason was invoked by the vet in Cuhea : 'I am going to Maramureș because I don't know it and I want to see what I can achieve in an unknown milieu.'[79] Finally, for the domestic scientist in Moișeni, her choice was motivated by the childhood memories of holidays spent in the countryside.[80]

The means of transport were the same as those used in the 1920s, involving many changes, connections, and waiting around. Generally, the first leg of the journeys was by train, followed by a bus, a cart, a coach or a narrow gauge railway train.[81] On the road, the students were advised to respect an etiquette representing the spirit of the project.

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[77] "Tablouri cu numele echipierilor din diverse comune", 1934, FCR-C/1934/14/18-72, Arh. Naț; "Lucrări de organizare și pentru buna funcționare a echipelor," 1935, FCR-C/1935/15, Arh. Naț.; "Inventare de efectele gospodărești distribuite echipelor studențești cu ocazia plecării la sate in campania de lucru din iulie-august-septembrie 1936," 1936, FCR-C/1936/29, Arh. Naț.; "Acte justificative de cheltuieli efectuate cu întreținerea echipelor regale studențești în campania din vara anului 1936," 1936, FCR-C/1936/78, Arh. Naț..
[78] Lăzărescu and Rostás, ""Ni s-a facut" G. Lăzărescu," 61-63.
[79] "Raport general medicină veterinară - Cuhea," 1935, FCR-C/1935/22/118, Arh. Naț.
[80] "Raport Gospodărie 1 iulie-1 octombrie Moișeni," 1936, FCR-C/1936/42/265-267, Arh. Naț.
[81] Miron Radu Paraschivescu, *Scrieri 3. Drumuri și răspântii* (Bucharest: Ed. Minerva, 1974), 15.

> We advise that the team occupy only one compartment in the carriage so they travel the entire way *en familie* so to say (…) The trip should be without much fuss (…) If met by the locals, the students should help with the luggage so they don't seem like young boyars on their summer vacation.[82]

If at the departure end, the train journey was organised by FCR-PC, at the other end, it was the responsibility of the local or regional officials. As missionaries of the monarchy and indirectly of the state, the teams had to enter the villages via the official channels. Thus, their welcome often depended on their cooperation and enthusiasm, sometimes becoming a very unpleasant experience for the participants. Not all arrivals were as impressive as the one presented in the film mentioned above. The students who went to the village of Cuhea, in Maramureș, complained that:

> when we arrived at the Sighet train station, there was no one waiting for us, but an ex-monographist, Mihai Pop (…) As we were not provided with any special means of transport, we had to take an indirect route that turned what would be a two-hour journey into a seven-hour one. (…) Arrived at the local train station, a cart with the gendarme, the mayor and the notary were waiting for us, but no peasants.[83]

This cold, unfriendly atmosphere was not unusual at least in the first year of visiting a village. In the following years, when the students were re-visiting the same places, they were usually warmly welcomed back.

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[82] "Comuncări privitoare la plecarea echipelor," *Curierul Echipelor Studențești* II, no. 1 (1936): 4.
[83] Letter from July 1935 Florea Florescu, "Letter from Florea Florescu (to Prof.Gusti)," July 11, 1935, FCR-C/1935/22/19, Arh. Naț.

During their stay in the village, the key precepts of the Royal Student Teams were 'discipline, team spirit and collaboration'.[84] They reflected the desired atmosphere in the camps and the fears of the organisers. Since the selection process was not very rigorous, the risks were quite high for the leaders. 'The teams were formed of young people we did not know, who were responding to a general call to the entire student body.'[85] Some did have recommendations from their professors or had participated in the earlier monographic trips. Despite making the volunteers sign a document stating their intentions to stay in the village for the entire period of three months and 'to work wholeheartedly and to their full capacity' before their departure,[86] the first year was especially difficult for the organisers, since most of these participants were novices and the tasks they were expected to do were not easy.[87]

Overall, the leisurely spirit of the 1920s was replaced by a more restrictive collective work regime very similar to that of the Legionary work camps. The students had a strict military-like regime that imposed common routines for all – waking up early, eating together, participating in all festive events of the team and of the village, even doing physical exercise.[88] This depended very much on the organisers, who, as in the case of Iacob Mihăilă, a professor at the Sports Science Institute, were sometimes overenthusiastic and wished to impose the newest

[84] Henri H. Stahl, *Echipe studențești la sate: program de lucru și rezultate: întâiul an 1934* (Bucharest: Fundația Culturală Regală "Principele Carol'), 69. Also see Henri H. Stahl, "Etica muncii in echipa," *Curierul Echipelor Studențești* II, no. 1 (July 5, 1936): 1, 4.

[85] Stahl, *Amintiri*, 296.

[86] The archives contain letters of consent and the lists of names of the various members. "Tablouri cu numele echipierilor din diverse comune.", 1934, FCR-C/1934/14/18-72, Arh. Naț.

[87] Stahl, *Amintiri*, 299.

[88] Stahl, *Echipe studențești*, 69.

German innovations in camp disciplines, including having a bath in the cold mountain springs first thing in the morning.[89]

Once they settled in their location, the first month of July was devoted to research. Studying the local conditions had a double function firstly as a way of 'breaking the ice', visit the villagers in their homes and talk to them, and secondly as an assessment of the local problems and of their short-term solutions. The results were written up in plans of action, doubled and followed-up by reports monitoring the team's weekly or monthly activity.[90] The remaining two months were used to put these plans into action in a more or less organised manner. The strategy and tempo of work differed from one profession to the other. If the civic projects were the easiest to plan and monitor, the activities of the individual members depended on the nature of their profession and its applicability to rural life. In theory, the teams were expected to start a new era for the rural world, by working intensively. The goal was to accelerate the time of the rural world and to "bring it up to the speed" of the city and of modernity.[91] In practice, the doctors did frequently see tens of patients a day, the vets did visit all households to neuter, treat or give advice on the locals' animals, and on one occasion a priest married fifteen couples in one ceremony.[92] Such zeal sometimes amazed the villagers, sometimes annoyed the local authorities, raised hopes, and helped the royal propaganda. Ideally, the organisers thought that imposing a sustained pace of work would make the village

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[89] Marinescu and Rostás, ""Partea forte" C. Marinescu," 131-132.

[90] "Various reports Cuhea, Clopotiva, Moișeni (1935 Campaign)," 1935, FCR-C/1935/22, Arh. Naț.

[91] John Urry, *Consuming Places* (London; New York: Routledge, 1995), 19.

[92] Lăzărescu and Rostás, ""Ni s-a facut" G. Lăzărescu," 63; Marinescu and Rostás, ""Partea forte" C. Marinescu," 192.

follow, hastening its own rhythm and adjusting it to the enthusiasm of the teams.

However, these periods of intense activity were balanced out by times when teams'

daily routines were sucked into the everyday life of the village. This is shown by the

weekly reports from the field that recorded the repetitive pattern and slow pace of

the work that involved visits to the locals' houses and workplaces, giving advice and

organising various events. Alert to this, Stahl warned that 'the great danger of

staying in the village is to let ourselves drawn into its sleepy and uneventful

rhythm'.[93]

The rhythm of the teams' activities was closely dependent on their

relationship with the village, since performing their duties required the locals'

cooperation and willingness to take advice and criticism from young 'strangers'. At

the same time, once accepted and trusted, their professional roles allowed them to

take part in the social life of the community. In this sense, the village (as a field of

work) became 'the concrete place of professional activity', and a 'site of displaced

dwelling and productive work' (…), which included (…) the development of both

personal and "cultural" competence'.[94] For Gheorghe Lăzărescu, one of the teams'

theologians, the trips to Năpădeni, Bessarabia in 1934-36 became part of his career

as a village priest in Dobrești, Muscel.[95] There, he continued some of the activities

specific to the cultural activism of the teams: he organised a choir, kept a village first

aid point, and collaborated with the school teacher in organising local cultural

events. Yet, the integration of the teams was never complete, as the scale and

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[93] *Cartea echipelor*, 115.
[94] Clifford, *Routes*, 64-76.
[95] Lăzărescu and Rostás, ""Ni s-a facut" G. Lăzărescu," 80.

intensity of the project contributed to the perception of the student's stay as a state

of exception, disconnected from the real flow of rural time.

The teams' relation with the village was regulated not only by the objectives

of the trips but also by a specific moral conduct of the participants. Above all, the

students were meant to behave in accordance with the very principles they taught

the villagers about. 'Instead of ten speeches about religiosity, better go to church

regularly. Instead of severely preaching against alcoholism, better be restrained

yourself. Finally, instead of revolting against the lack of physical hygiene, better tidy

up the house where you are living in.'[96] In their attitude to the locals, the students

were expected to show interest in and respect for their lifestyle and opinions, and

never talk down to them.[97]

The internal and external documentation of the school showed that the rules

of living in the village were generally obeyed. Yet, there were also cases of

misbehaviour that were either overtly dealt with or mentioned out only indirectly.[98]

In some villages, the students came into conflict with the villagers, but more often

there were conflicts amongst the participants. These had two main causes: morals

and politics. In Sadova, for example, three of the students had formed their own

separatist group, '*Prietenia*', which caused such a scandal in the village that Stahl

had to go over on an impromptu visit to restore order. When he got there, he found

out that these students 'had taken the school director's horse' without asking, two

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[96] *Îndrumător 1936*, 172.

[97] Stahl, *Echipe studențești*, 71.

[98] The teams' paper often contained a column with 'indications and advice' for the teams which pointed to bad practices like 'female team members smoking in the village'. "Îndrumări și comunicări," *Curierul Echipelor Studențești* I, no. 3 (July 1935): 4.

of them 'had gone round the village dressed like women' and they were also thought 'to have behaved inappropriately with their hostess'.[99] As a result, Stahl decided to exclude them from the team.[100] The conflicts generated by politics appeared to be even more difficult. In 1934, in the village of Văcăreni, Tulcea, some of the participants turned out to be members of the Legion. One of them, a student called Traian Boeriu was arrested during a fascist demonstration that he left the village to attend, whilst the leader of the team had started to steer the team's activity in a Legionary direction.[101] Moreover, this guerrilla team abused and threatened to beat up the regional doctor who was sent to help with the medical action in the locality (in particular, anti-syphilis injections). Another similar incident took place in 1934 in the village of Nucșoara, where 'the guardist spirit' of the team spread to the entire local community leading to an 'extremely violent anti-Semitic attack' against the old monographist Harry Brauner.[102] More signs of 'inappropriate behaviour' could be read in between the lines of the teams' newspaper *Curierul Echipelor Studențești*. Some appeared in the 'advice' column of the *Curier,* mentioning that the domestic scientist should not be patronised or taken for the team's cook. This comment indicated a certain hierarchy amongst the positions within the teams had developed.

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[99] Henri H. Stahl, "Raport asupra situației echipei din Bucovina," July 16, 1934, FCR-C/1934/18/242-245, Arh. Naț.

[100] Macarie and Rostás, ""Când am descoperit" G. Macarie," 91; Stahl, "Raport asupra situației echipei din Bucovina."

[101] Emanoil Bucuța, "Referat în chestiunea membrului din echipă, Traian Boeriu," 1934, FCR-C/1934/24/84-85, Arh. Naț.; Traian Budișteanu, "Letter from Traian Budișteanu, the doctor of the team to the Inspector (Stahl?)," August 16, 1934, FCR-C/1934/24/115-116, Arh. Naț.

[102] Stahl, *Amintiri*, 299.

This insight into the everyday life of the teams with its informal practices of travel and dwelling and its more formal research and professional work reveals some of the crossovers between monographic fieldwork and voluntary action as well as the different network of relationships the new project involved. The rules and practical aspects of the project grew out of the experience of the monographic trips adapted to new geographical and temporal dimensions. This meant turning the countryside from a laboratory of research into one of professional experimentation within a state-supported reform programme. The travel and dwelling practices showed the new bureaucratic and infrastructural links between the teams, the village and the state institutions (central, regional and local). These transformed the participants and the peasantry into tools and objects of state intervention respectively. Nevertheless, this subordination of the volunteers meant that the project greatly depended on the good will and cooperation of all parties involved and could be undermined by them at any point.

The guidelines of cultural work – a vision of change

Cultural work in the countryside was based on a detailed reform plan centred on four main areas of change – the body, work, the mind and the soul – reflecting a pre-existing diagnosis of the countryside's situation.[103] Corresponding to these areas

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[103] These branches corresponded to a set of 'ills of the countryside' debated in the political and academic spheres of the time: (the body) rural-specific diseases (syphilis, pellagra, tuberculosis, malaria), malnutrition, hygiene, infant mortality; (work) agricultural backwardness, land fragmentation; (mind and soul) rural illiteracy, 'social diseases' (alcoholism, prostitution and cohabitation) etc. All of these issues were summarised in a publication prepared for the 14th International Congress of Sociology meant to take place in Bucharest in 1939.

of action, the teams were therefore typically formed of: a doctor, a physical education teacher, an agronomist, a vet, domestic scientist, a priest, a teacher, and a sociologist. This assignment of duties combined the cultural agenda of 'civilising' the peasantry with the new scientific vision of preserving, purifying and moulding the rural population as a social, economic and biological asset of the nation state. Moreover, this also confirmed the role of sociology as a discipline sitting above the specialist fields elaborating a synthetic vision of social reality.

As the trips grew from one year to the next, a compendium of regulations, duties and rules of conduct was produced and then further refined. Stahl wrote the first succinct form as an introduction to *Echipe studențești la sate* ('Student teams in the countryside') a book summarizing the results of the project's first year, 1934, and later revised it in the successive editions of *Îndrumătorul muncii culturale la sate* ('Guide to cultural work in the countryside') (from 1935 to 1939), an edited volume containing texts by different team leaders. Drawing on the textbooks produced by the project leaders, the following section will assess how rural transformation was conceptualised by the School and the roles they designated for the student volunteers in this process. In keeping with the order of these texts, I look at each of the main directions of reform proposed by cultural work, examining the underlying principles and conceptual framework the project used to understand and shape the countryside.

Gusti, Cornatzeanu, and Banu, *Rural life*. Another comprehensive study of the rural world and its 'ills' is Banu, "Problemele sanitare ale populației rurale din România."

The peasant body: health and labour

In the introduction to the findings of the first campaign, Stahl defined the villages as 'the biological reservoir of the nation', and talked about the importance of protecting the 'hereditary patrimony' located in the countryside.[104] Reflecting the emerging 'new paradigm' of the social and medical sciences, this language placed the countryside at the core of the social hygiene agenda, making the peasant body – both individual and social – central, as the repository of genetic information, biological strength, sexual potency and racial purity.[105]

The social body was assigned to the medical and physical professions for a variety of preventive and curative treatments.[106] The rules set out in the project's textbook included individual and collective measures. These featured: the diagnosis and treatment of illnesses (e.g. the medical students gave free consultations and treatments to local patients), sanitary education (personal hygiene and that of the home, nutrition, and maternity), and physical education. In the 1935 textbook for cultural work in the countryside, Stahl and the leaders of the school reorganised the structure, categories, and details of these measures to reflect the added experience of the teams in the field.[107] Thus, the collective measures were reorganised under two main headings 'rural sanitary conduct' and the 'social hygiene of the village'. The first included the general infrastructure measures and projects, with added details waste management such as the building of landfill sites and latrines. The

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[104] *Îndrumător 1936*, 196.
[105] Bucur's book discusses this new paradigm in depth with reference to Romanian eugenics. Bucur, *Eugenics*.
[106] Stahl, *Echipe studențești*, 22.
[107] Stahl, *Amintiri*, 303.

'social hygiene' section dealt not only with measures regarding the hygiene of the family, race and, but also with that of education, work, and leisure. Thus, the 1935 textbook marked a clearer separation between the areas of public and private health and hygiene.

The sick body: diagnosis and treatment of diseases

The first measures related to health were diagnosing and treating the different illnesses and diseases, many of which were specific to rural living.[108] Free medical consultations were, according to Stahl, 'the best way to win over the village and the trust of the locals'.[109] Yet, they only covered the illnesses people knew about and were happy to receive treatment for. Apart from these, most rural-specific diseases required a sustained surveillance and detective work, similar to that of the field researcher trying to understand cultural practices. This was the case for spotting contagious diseases 'that the villagers hide' or the early signs of epidemics.[110] Stahl mentioned different strategies of identifying the sick, ranging from asking the priest to disclose 'who came for confession and communion', talking to the local sanitary agent, to asking people about their health during general conversations, to 'furtively examining' people for signs of certain diseases.[111]

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[108] The project proposed a social approach to disease that was in some ways similar to the one adopted by the Italian fascist state in designing the new provisions for the social insurance of workers in the late 1920s and 1930s. David G. Horn, *Social Bodies: Science, Reproduction and Italian Modernity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 43-44. It could nevertheless be argued that this was a more general tendency that was prevalent across Europe and promoted by the League of Nations and other similar international bodies. Borowy, "International Social Medicine."

[109] Stahl, *Echipe studențești*, 26.

[110] Ibid., 26-27.

[111] Stahl, *Echipe studențești*, 26; *Îndrumător 1936*, 217.

Apart for the different indications specific to different illnesses (some requiring isolation of the patients, others the use of vaccines, others immediate medical treatment), dealing with the sick meant introducing changes to embedded cultural practices, customs, and rituals, such as the funeral. Death itself became a medical matter and had to be regulated by the modern rules of public hygiene:

> If a person suffering from a contagious disease, the medical student of the team will see that the funeral be organised according to all the rules of hygiene (…) The cortege, the funeral repast, kissing the deceased, giving his clothes away as charity will be completely stopped. The body will be covered in a sheet imbibed in phenic acid, the body will be placed in a closed coffin and taken straightaway to the cemetery.[112]

The second set of health measures were categorised under 'sanitary education', constituting preventive rather than healing practices. Much harder to impose, these required changes in the life style and daily routines of the villagers, as well as a redefinition of the concepts of 'clean' and 'healthy' against those of 'dirty' and 'sick'.[113] The students had to convince people to wash their hands and bodies, sleep in separate rooms, take their shoes off before going to bed, build showers and use them regularly. In turn, peasants had to 'understand the notion of "infection"' and imagine the millions of germs on their own hands and on those of their neighbours.[114] More hygiene rules were also imposed on households including general cleaning of objects and furniture, pest control, as well as indications of how and where to place the latrine and to keep clean dependencies for storage and

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[112] Stahl, *Echipe studențești*, 27.

[113] As Dennis Deletant has pointed out, the traditional practices regarding the burial of the dead have resisted almost unchanged to this day. The dead person is almost always taken to the grave uncovered and in an open coffin. Personal conversation with Dennis Deletant, 19 December 2010.

[114] *Îndrumător 1936*, 222.

animals.[115] Entering more intimately into the life of the peasants, the students tried to change their diet and eating habits. This meant explaining the negative medical effect of certain foods, of alcohol, promoting the health value of milk, eggs, and meat and finally teaching peasant housewives how to cook.[116] Underlying these measures and advice lay the well-known problems of malnutrition and alcoholism in the countryside.

The third set of sanitary education measures contained advice about the hygiene of birth, maternity and of small children. Seen as the causes of many rural ills, birth, maternity and childcare became priorities on the teams' agendas. The students were instructed to identify all pregnant women, attend to births, and try to correct the malpractices around childbirth and childcare.[117]

Individual bodies and the social body

In the first version of the reform programme, the sections on the treatment of diseases and on sanitary education, together with the one on physical education, fell under the category of 'individual measures'.[118] In the revised version of the book, physical education was moved into the new section on 'the social hygiene of the village' together with new measures for 'organised leisure'.[119] This amendment signalled a transfer of the body's functions from the private to the public sphere. Taken out of the area of individual care for one's body, sports and leisure were

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[115] Stahl, *Echipe studențești*, 32.
[116] Ibid., 33.
[117] Ibid., 34.
[118] Ibid., 35.
[119] *Îndrumător 1936*, 211-14.

230

integrated into the wider context of the 'social body' alongside rules of sexual conduct, of work and of education. These categories reflected a vision of the body as a site of social interest, whose functions acquired social and political meaning and therefore came under the state's area of regulation and control.

The section, identical in both versions, described a range of activities to be organised by the Physical Education student for and with the villagers. These typically included gymnastics, ball games, athletics, folk dances, shooting, swimming, and various exercises from the schedule of military training.[120] On the one hand, this reflected an attempt to democratise sports previously only available in urban areas or to the upper classes. On the other, this shift of categories also marked the re-conceptualisation not only of the body, but also of personal time – both work and leisure – as an area of state control.[121] 'Organised leisure is a state matter given its influence on the physical and moral well being of the population (…) Unlike in the city where leisure should be directed especially towards the physical recovery of the sedentary workforce, in the country leisure should be focused on the mind' stated the authors of the *Îndrumător*.[122] Thus, the programme sought to create and organise a time and a space for the locals to learn while having fun.[123]

At the core of to these measures was the *cămin cultural* (village hall), an older pre-existing institution which Gusti used to re-centre the whole of village life

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[120] Stahl, *Echipe studențești*, 36.
[121] Urry, *Consuming Places*, 19.
[122] *Îndrumător 1936*, 213.
[123] Ibid.

around culture.[124] The *cămin cultural* was an institution born out of a nineteenth century ethos of civilising the peasant masses through culture.[125] Gusti saw this as an opportunity to support his new project of cultural work in the countryside, and proceeded to reinvent and update it to match his goals. The *cămin cultural* was, alongside the school, the church and the village hall, the new village institution meant to 'help and complete them', becoming the 'true home of the village'.[126]

The student teams were thus placed in charge of the setting up or even building a *cămin cultural* in the centre of every village visited.[127] These would include a complex of buildings and play- and sports-grounds devoted to various activities designed for the different age group involved. As the textbook stated,

> [The *cămin*] ideally would concentrate all activities related to culture, work, recreation and health. [It] was to be used by all age groups, helping to improve their health, morals and future life. Provided with a playground for small children, it would also have a sports ground for teenagers and young meant nurture the competitive spirit of their age and keep them away from vices such as pubs, alcohol and card games.[128]

Therefore, with the opening of a *cămin,* leisure acquired a space of its own at the heart of the village, alongside other places of rest and recreation specific to rural areas such as the improvised Sunday *horă* (folk dancing) grounds, the porch, the pub, or the church. It also sought to preserve and include what was considered

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[124] *Ibid., 30.*
[125] In the Romanian Principalities, intellectuals eager to set up such *cămine* were motivated either by an interest in folk culture and/or in the improvement of rural living conditions. In Transylvania, these institutions, called *centre culturale* (cultural centres) were set up and coordinated by ASTRA, and played an important role in the Romanian nationalist movement, preserving the language, culture and traditions at local level and working as part of an extended network across the region.
[126] Stahl, *Amintiri*, 281.
[127] *Îndrumător 1936*, 30.
[128] Ibid., 214.

positive in these traditions, whilst eliminating the places of vice and moral degradation. Furthermore, it also played a socialising and moral role for young adults, allowing the two sexes to meet in controlled conditions, thus preventing immoral and promiscuous behaviour.[129]

Rural Labour

The peasant economy became the target of a wide range of modernising measures seeking to address the major problems of Romanian agriculture by introducing specialised know-how into all aspects of rural work. The programme regarding 'the culture of labour' in the amended version of the *Îndrumător* included: 1) Agriculture, viticulture, and forestry; 2) Zootechnics; 3) Labour associations; 4) Women's domestic work; 5) Civic work. Encompassing both paid and unpaid, productive and non-productive labour activities, this reflected the holistic definition of and approach to 'work' in the countryside and the trust that all these areas could and should be rationally improved.

Agriculture, forestry and animal husbandry. Based on an initial economic survey of the locality and its surroundings, the teams became involved with most summer agricultural works specific to their area from July to September. This included: overseeing all activities in the field and in the village, giving advice on the labour routines, technical matters regarding agricultural machinery, planning and building new modern outhouses for the animals and storage of products. These general

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[129] Ibid., 215.

measures referred to all branches of agriculture, animal husbandry and forestry in the various regions.[130] From an economic point of view, the project brought the theoretical know-how of specialists to the village, trying to change not only the locals' labour practices, but their entire conception of work as a complex economic process. This practical engagement and advice were complemented by a sustained educational programme in the form of organised *șezători* (educational gatherings) and conferences.[131] The aim was to impress upon the peasant the value of rational agriculture, by helping them understand the added value of animal labour and mechanisation in cultivation, redirecting them towards more cost-effective products and more efficient use of land, preaching the benefits of cooperation and in some cases even promoting amalgamation of peasant holdings. These measures sought to address the best-known problems of Romanian agriculture such as the fragmentation of property, peasant indebtedness, technological backwardness, the cultivation of a limited range of non-profitable products (grains, corn), etc.[132] Therefore, the field-based work of the student teams was based on an agenda that promoted cultural change rather than structural reform of the mode of production.

Cooperation and labour associations. In line with the general principle of rationalising agriculture, the textbook also included a section encouraging

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[130] Ibid., 257.

[131] The *șezătoare* was initially a local social gathering where people met to chat while doing light craftwork activities. The monographists and later the student teams found the *șezătoare* to be a good opportunity to influence and educate the peasantry. Joining them in these gatherings or even organising them as new events, the researchers and activists proposed their own educational agenda meant to improve the people's minds and souls. *Îndrumător 1936*, 299; "Îndrumări și comunicări," 1.

[132] Gusti, Cornatzeanu, and Banu, *Rural life*, 20.

cooperation in agricultural labour. The opening paragraph stated that 'peasant agriculture must be first of all directed towards the association of those means of production that place it in sharp inferiority with larger property'.[133] The activities referred to were ploughing, sowing, and threshing, since these required the purchase and use of expensive machinery. In this way, the project attempted to remedy the failures and unforeseen effects of the 1921 land reform.

Founding labour associations would, in the view of the teams and their leaders, greatly improve the productivity of peasant work without any significant additional investment. Such associations could either use their own capital together to rent or buy agricultural machinery or borrow the money from the bank in case they did not have the liquidity.[134] Therefore, the work of the teams consisted in convincing the locals of the benefits of cooperation and association, showing them 'through simple calculations' the profitability of such an enterprise.[135] For this, the students acted as the link between the villagers, the Banks and the state institutions supporting cooperation such as the County Agricultural Committee (*Sindicatul Agricol Județean*) and the National Cooperation Office.

Domestic work. The section devoted to domestic work addressed the role of the woman as 'manager' of the household.[136] The category itself raised two main apparently contradictory issues: on the one hand, the work of women was

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[133] *Îndrumător 1936*, 266-267.
[134] *Ibid., 332-3.*
[135] Ibid., 330-1.
[136] Ibid., 320.

conceptualised as labour and thus treated equally with that of men, while on the other hand, by defining the woman as domestic worker the project sought to restrict her duties, shape and confine her to the roles of wife and mother.[137] Moreover, the task of training peasant women into expert domestic workers was assigned to the domestic scientist, a position occupied only by women. The latter, young intellectual ladies with a theoretical expertise of cleaning and cooking were in charge of three main sets of tasks: 1) domestic education and home economics 2) nutrition and food preparation, and 3) craftwork. Both made up a programme for modern rational living. This comprised of 'showing housewives how to use the rooms (…) in their homes' efficiently, how to clean - dishes, furniture, and materials, and how to 'manage one's time and household'.[138] Solely responsible for the provision, selection and preparation of food for the entire family, the peasant woman was expected to learn not only how to cook, but also the nutritional value of different foods, their modes of preparation, and serving.[139] The textbook also contained a range of generic cooking techniques and recipes for the peasant woman - from bread making and boiling eggs to complex meat dishes (e.g. jellied goose or turkey with apricots) and what were marked out as 'national dishes' (e.g. *ghiveci, varză cu carne, sarmale, tocana, ciulama, pilaf cu carne*). Finally, the section on craftwork focused on

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[137] In an article focussing primarily on the role of women in the Legion, Bucur mentions the wider context of women organisations in interwar Romania. One of the most prominent, ASTRA's Feminine Section appeared to have a similar agenda to that of the student teams. 'In the 1930s, (…) the organisation focused more on reinforcing women's place in the home, educating them to take better care of their infant babies, keep their house in good order, and raise good sons to ensure the future health of the country.' Maria Bucur, "Romania," in *Women, gender, and fascism in Europe, 1919-45* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 64-65. On the more complex issue of the role played by home economics teachers in American society, see Sarah Stage, "Introduction: Home Economics: What's in a Name?," in *Rethinking home economics: women and the history of a profession* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 17-34.
[138] *Îndrumător 1936*, 320.
[139] Ibid., 322.

teaching her the techniques of making the clothes and linen for her family. This revealed the tension between the modernisation and the preservation of folk traditions. Whilst the peasant woman was expected to become an agent of change for her entire family, she was also expected to continue and perfect rural customs and traditions.[140]

Civic work for the improvement of public spaces. Also included in the culture of labour were measures aimed at engaging the community in the building, maintenance and repair of the public areas in their villages. This included the upkeep of roads, management of water supplies, care for trees in public spaces, and the cleaning of house exteriors, gardens and outbuildings. Apart from the immediate practical results of these works, the organisers wished to infuse the rural community with a civic spirit that was inseparable from further progress in health and aesthetics. As the textbook said, 'all this forms a first stage in the realisation of the plan for civic culture (…) Our goal is to inspire the villager and awaken their desire to improve their house and garden.'[141]

This work was in direct competition with the work camps and building sites of the Legion, who claimed they were being imitated.[142] If their work camps were 'schools of educating the youth in the guardist spirit', the 'building sites' (*șantiere*)

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[140] Ibid., 325.

[141] Ibid., 339.

[142] See for example the articles published in the the Legion's sociological review *Însemnări sociologice* edited by the professor Traian Brăileanu at the University of Cernăuți/Czernowitz. Ion Țurcan, "Tabere și șantiere," *Însemnări sociologice* II, no. 9 (December 1936): 10-22; Leon Țopa, "Taberele de muncă obligatorie," *Însemnări sociologice* II, no. 8 (November 1936): 24-9; George Macrin, "Taberele de muncă," *Însemnări sociologice* II, no. 7 (October 1936): 12-28; Macrin, "Taberele de muncă. Aspectul politic"; Macrin, "O nouă școală românească. Taberele de muncă."

were devoted specifically to the improvement of rural infrastructure. 'Run by peasants (…) these had transformed the villages into true moral communities', helping the locals develop 'initiative, leadership and a spirit of sacrifice' stated an article in the Legionary sociological review *Însemnări sociologice*.[143] According to the same source, unlike these genuine actions that had 'discovered the mystery of the transformation of the villages' based on 'a new life of vigour and creative belief', the 'governmental camps were nothing but a desperate gesture by a frightened establishment'.[144] This hostility was mutual, although not overtly acknowledged by the teams at the time. Retrospectively, several team leaders saw their actions as being in competition with the Legion.[145]

To conclude, all four categories that made up the culture of labour – agriculture, domestic work, associations, and community work – point to a redefinition of the concept of work in rural areas. This involved separating different areas of labour and inventing new ones, redefining the roles of the peasant man and woman, and attaching all these activities to the state. Labour in the countryside did not only mean the economic activity of producing goods, but also the domestic tasks in and around the household, assigned to the woman, and the work of maintaining the infrastructure and public spaces. If the first was remunerated as a commercial activity in most cases, the latter two were unpaid, but sustained by the duty to one's family, community, and the state. This new psychology of labour based on an

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[143] Țurcan, "Tabere," 20.
[144] Ibid., 22.
[145] Rostás, *Strada Latină*, 16; Marinescu and Rostás, ""Partea forte" C. Marinescu," 158-160; Zoltán Rostás, "Coriolan Gheție. 'Erau oamenii care te mirau, nu lucrurile'," in *Parcurs întrerupt. Discipoli din anii treizeci ai Școlii gustiene* (Bucharest: Paideia, 2006), 111-172.

understanding of work as a moral duty was also combined with a strong desire for change. The peasant of the future would transcend his status as a subsistence worker and become a self-reliant commercial farmer. Moreover, he would work in association with his fellow villagers and adopt modern and efficient techniques of production. His household, scientifically managed by his wife, would have the comfort of urban living and the entire village would reflect the prosperity of its inhabitants.

The peasant's soul

The culture of the soul, which included morals and religion, was mainly the responsibility of the team priest or theology student. His role was to strengthen the belief of the local congregation and improve their moral behaviour, working together with the village priest. Based primarily in the church, he seconded the parish priest during the service or even preached himself if allowed.[146] Apart from these formal duties, the theologian was also in charge of bringing the Orthodox faith into people's lives and homes, distributing religious books, icons, and advising them to attend mass, confession and communion. Moreover, all other students were advised not only to attend Sunday mass, but also to set an example by receiving communion in front of the congregation.[147] This reflected the importance of collaborating with the church as a site of local power and status, Sunday mass being the best way to be seen by and to address the entire community. The textbook

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[146] *Îndrumător 1936*, 455.
[147] Ibid., 456.

reflected this pragmatic approach, designating church attendance as one of the participants' tasks, yet describing it more as a social ritual than a manifestation of personal belief.

The social importance of religion can be better understood in the wider context of the project as a civilising mission that operated a selection between the traditions worth keeping and malpractices. Thus, on the one hand, the teams' work extended to the aesthetic improvement of the church, by involving the community in supporting it through the donation of objects. This resonated with the similar civic projects for the entire village, meant to modernise and raise the community's standard of living. On the other hand, the teams engaged in a fight against mysticism, witchcraft and curses, thus aiming to eradicate the bad traditions associated with religious belief. Again, this was in stark contrast with the ethos in the Legionary work camps, where religion was integral to the education of the participants. Moreover, instead of eliminating mysticism and esotericism from their belief, they actively encouraged it and acted upon it.[148]

This wider spiritual agenda was further illustrated by the importance of public monuments. Attending to or even building new public monuments devoted to national heroes was listed as another way to improve the villagers' spiritual wellbeing. If the village did not have one, the students were advised to build a *troiță* (a wooden roadside crucifix). This can be seen as an attempt to transform the rural space by creating new *topoi* that created a link between local and national identity.

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[148] A point emphasised by their supporters. See Țurcan, "Tabere," 21.

Finally, in line with the project's holistic agenda for cultural action, the spiritual measures worked together with those devoted to the mind, the body and even to work. A good example of this was the response to the problem of cohabitation. The teams were encouraged to convince couples 'living in sin' to get married with the support of the teams' priest, yet the justification was as related to the concept of sin in theological terms as it was to a fear of degeneration and moral degradation. This points to the pragmatic importance of the church as a means of preserving the family as a key social glue. Care for the soul thus led to care for moral and social hygiene that in turn was interconnected with health of the body. This eventually brought the traditional figure of local authority, the priest, closer to a newer one, the doctor. Often not welcomed and respected by the locals, the doctor was to be helped and recommended to the villagers by the priest.[149]

Educating the mind

Like all other directions of cultural action, the programme for the education of the mind also combined a modernising agenda with an interest in safeguarding, using, or reviving local traditions. All the activities designed by the organisers took place outside the school, often using unconventional teaching methods such as drama, music, and films. Working together, the teams set up or reorganised the village

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[149] George Ulieru's diary offers a delightful insight into the firsthand experiences of a village doctor in the 1920s and 1930s. His short remarks contrast greatly with the official discourse of the Ministry of Health or even to that of the Royal Foundations, pointing to the differences between a temporary voluntary position and the difficulties of a fulltime medical position in rural Romania. George Ulieru, *Din însemnările unui medic de plasă* (Bucharest: Ed. pentru Literatură și Artă, 1948).

library, convened *șezatori* and courses, projected educational films, set up drama groups and local choirs.

The entire plan for action was informed and directed by the local literacy levels, which the teams first had to determine. As the textbook explained, 'where you find 50-60 percent illiteracy, you will know straightaway that the villagers' interest in learning is much lower than that of a population with less than 20 percent'. [150] The main institution to for the education of the mind was the library organised according to the villagers' own needs and taste.[151] To find out what the locals' preferences were, the teams enquired into what books people owned already. Taste and needs were carefully considered and often criticised. Books 'with a doubtful or even damaging content: serialised novels or detective stories' were discouraged and replaced by 'the book of true culture'.[152] The village library was planned to contain sixty percent books for peasants ('*plugari*'), thirty percent for village intellectuals and the remaining ten percent for children.[153] The first category was to be filled with 'predominantly religious books and literature (stories and *taclale*[154]), then history, economics, etc.'[155] This reflected the central place of the peasantry in the project's agenda as well as the kind of interests and cultural values it tried to nurture. Through their modern design, the new village libraries further

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[150] *Îndrumător 1936*, 348.

[151] Ibid., 354-5.

[152] Ibid., 357.

[153] More details about how books should be divided between different sections. Ibid., 373.

[154] *Taclale* is translated in all Romanian dictionaries as 'conversation', 'chit-chat'. However, in this context, the *taclale* appear to be folk conversations or dialogues that were collected alongside other forms of folklore (stories, legends, poems, etc). Dumitru Furtună, ed., *Cuvinte scumpe: taclale, povestiri si legende românesti* (Bucharest: Librăriile Socec, 1914).

[155] *Îndrumător 1936*, 366.

reinforced the intent to bring the best of urban culture into rural areas, whilst keeping away its damaging influences and temptations.

Apart from reading, the peasant mind was stimulated through drama and music. The most interesting example was the organisation of rural theatre shows based on the model of the *commedia dell'arte*. Either improvised or based on texts collected from the region and amended by a specialist, these were entirely played by peasant actors.[156] Moreover, this dramatic set-up was considered a good alternative to the more didactic conference session for presenting educational topics.[157] Musical education used a similar combination of high and folk culture, drawing on local traditions to set up a choir, organise musical competitions and revitalise local folk dances 'that have started to be replaced by the foreign tango, waltz and polka'.[158] In trying to shape and revive village culture, the teams were encouraged to draw on local traditions, stimulating the locals' artistic talents and transforming them to sustained organised cultural activities.

In the same line, the *șezători* were another informal way to introduce education into existing cultural activities. Traditionally, the *șezătoare* was an informal evening gathering of villagers who met to chat, gossip and had fun together sometimes while also doing craftwork. As the monographic studies of the Bucharest sociologists showed, these discussions were often rude and even considered

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[156] Victor Ion Popa, who worked for FCR-PC, was a well-known playwright who wrote one of the most used texts for these rural dramatic performances, *Cuiul lui Pepelea*. Victor Ion Popa, *Cuiul lui Pepelea: comedie într'un act. Prelucrată după Tudor Pamfile* (Bucharest: Fundația Culturală Regală "Principele Carol', 1935). This genre has also been considered to be an important source of inspiration for modernist European drama between the two World Wars. Martin Green and John Swan, *The triumph of Pierrot : the commedia dell'arte and the modern imagination* (New York: Macmillan, 1986).

[157] *Îndrumător 1936*, 423-5.

[158] Ibid., 434.

pornographic.[159] From the late 1920s, the Bucharest sociologists started to organise their own *șezători* giving them an educational direction, whereas the cultural activists totally transformed them into a pedagogic method. Instead of participating as guests to the locally organised *șezători*, the teams set up their own groups, becoming the hosts and convenors of these social events. The topics proposed were meant to enrich the peasant minds and thus replace immoral trivia with important cultured subjects of conversation. As the textbook mentioned, 'the topics of health, work, mind and soul should always be present, but we should not forget our (main) goal, that of combining the useful with the pleasant.' Thus, the *șezătoare* organised by the Bucuța's team in the village of Stănești in August 1935 included an address by the team leader on the team's activity and achievements, a range of folk songs interpreted by the newly established choir, the reciting of a poem by George Coșbuc, a famous Romanian writer, readings from *Cartea satului* and the showing of the documentary film 'Romania – (folk) dress and costume'. [160]

Working in the field of culture, the organisers placed folk art and customs at the heart of their vision of the future. Aware of the erosion of traditional culture, Stahl mentioned: 'it is true that a part of the old peasant culture is disappearing fatally, under the influence of urban influences and that a new culture will be born out of somewhere', yet he held that 'we cannot expect the student teams to create this new culture'.[161] Their role was only to try to revive and revitalise old artistic

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[159] See for example Amzăr, "Sociologia șezătorii."

[160] *Îndrumător 1936*, 446.

[161] Henri H. Stahl, "Experiența echipelor studențești la sate," *Revista Fundațiilor Regale* 2, no. 1-3 (January 1935): 146.

traditions and fight illiteracy, the most urgent problem of the countryside. It was up to the village itself to develop their cultural future with the guidance of local and national organisations like FCR-PC.

To conclude, if the entire project was aimed at preserving the village and the peasantry by modernising only certain aspects of rural life, each category of cultural work showed how change constituted an act of carefully selecting what could be kept and what had to be changed. Strongly influenced by social hygiene, the project placed great importance on the 'healing and invigorating of the peasant body', seen as the 'biological reservoir of the nation'.[162] Transformed according to progressive scientific principles, the new body – both social and of individuals – was the active locus of change, providing a new resource for the 'high modernist' state. In economic terms, the project was much more limited, since it did not promote any structural change in the system of property ownership or mode of production. All it could offer was advice and know-how on work methods and machinery meant to improve the agricultural output of the existing peasant economy. The culture of work expanded beyond the strict limits of economic activity to the routines of housekeeping and to the maintenance of public areas, in an effort to encourage care for villagers' houses and a civic spirit towards the village as home to the entire community. With regards to the peasants' minds and souls, the project preserved the existing institutions of power and status – the school and the church – yet turned them into sites of modernisation. The villagers' minds were to be improved

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[162] *Îndrumător 1936*, 196.

in a spirit of national belonging that included the revival of local arts and traditions. Similarly, the church was able to provide the moral base for the soul of the reformed peasant and to protect them from the negative influences of urban culture. Overall, the project aimed to selectively introduce modernity into the countryside, at the same time trying to insulate it from its more harmful aspects and thus keeping the peasantry in its place.

Voluntary action and rural transformation

The detailed presentation of the organisers' agenda for cultural action showed only the theoretical side of the project. Set from the top, these norms and ideals were constantly reinterpreted, negotiated and amended by the activists themselves. The latter, although under the supervision of a leader and the close observation of an inspector, did not always agree on a common mission, had difficulties in adapting to village life and came into conflict with the local authorities. Such events belonged to the unwritten side of the project, to the experience of living and working together in the village. It is the aim of the following section to assess what the student volunteers thought of their mission, how they saw themselves and the village as part of this project of social reform.

The cultural activists of the Royal Student Teams had a different relationship with the countryside and its transformation than the monographic researchers who preceded them. As their followers, they inherited a pre-existing vision of the

countryside that included details of the changes affecting the rural world. Told what to expect from the countryside, how to behave there and what to do, this second generation had a predetermined role in studying, influencing and transforming the peasantry. Therefore, their writings from the field reproduced much of their leaders and predecessors' rhetoric. These documents, generally reports or correspondence, formed a dialogue between the organisers and the participants that contained the frustrations, the incidents, and the routines of their daily or weekly activities, also including the underlying questioning and evaluation of the entire project and its goals. Nevertheless, the activists' views also reflected a negotiation between the received ideas and their own experience of the countryside. This added a new layer to the existing discourse on rural transformation, as the activists reformulated the experience of working in the countryside in terms of personal or collective success or failure.

At the end of and during their volunteering expeditions, the participants formed their own visions of the countryside, which they expressed in their reports and work diaries. Filtered through the project guidelines and their own experience of the rural world, the product was a 'medicalised vision', which presented rural everyday life in terms of 'problems' and 'solutions'. Setting the tone for all other participants, the doctors identified the symptoms of illnesses, offered free consultations, treatments and medication to the villagers and, in many cases, successfully healed their bodies. Once accepted and ratified by the villagers, this model of interaction – between doctor and patient – was replicated for most roles

of the teams. In this way, the other participants diagnosed and 'gave consultations'

on non-medical problems, such as lack of hygiene, work malpractices, marital status,

and education. At the same time, while the other participants' language was infused

with medical metaphors, the medical gaze became sociological. Therefore, although

the doctors were the only ones faced with medical conditions and illnesses as such,

the priests, the agronomists, the vets, the domestic and the sports scientists

depicted a suffering countryside and saw themselves as its economic, spiritual and

cultural 'healers'. Their eyes eagerly searched for signs of diseases, degradation and

dysfunction in rural life, leaving little room for the picturesque and natural beauty.

In a student's view, Moișeni was 'a village gifted by God with a wild picturesque

setting', yet most of the villagers' houses were 'deprived of the healthy life-giving

floral breeze'.[163] Therefore even the beautiful landscapes were mentioned just to

contrast the state of hygiene or the health of the population. This new vision of the

countryside informed the students' perception of rural transformation and justified

their own activism.

The medical gaze and the 'illness' metaphor

Although the medical staff set the tone and practices in understanding and relating

to the countryside, their views of it diverged from those of the other participants.

Faced with the reality of illnesses and diseases, the doctors often commented on

their social causes and on the inadequacies of the state medical care system.

Working in the village rather than in a hospital affected the strictly medical diagnosis

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[163] "Raport Gospodărie 1 iulie-1 octombrie Moișeni" FCR-C/1936/42/265, Arh. Naț.

of the local's diseases and influenced what counted as their causes. Since prevalent across the Romanian countryside were what the medical body called 'social diseases' i.e. syphilis, tuberculosis, malaria, and pellagra, the team doctors had to look beyond the individual body to the 'social body' for the causes of these diseases. The interpretation of these causes differed. What some saw as signs of moral and social degeneration others saw as the reflection of poverty and/or lack of education. For example, in a medical report from the 1936 trip to Nereju, the authors concluded that 'the descendents of the renowned Vrânceni, a healthy, vigorous and handsome people, were degenerates that brought shame on the region (cases of complete idiocy, perversion of the senses, a case of encephalocele, etc)' and identified the causes of this poor state of affairs as: 'poor living conditions, alcoholism, lack of education (hygiene, household, administrative), and the lack of rational medical care'.[164] In Cuhea, the doctor concluded that 'the lack of medical healthcare, the lack of interest of the intellectuals, the poor material situation, and the locals' negative attitude to medical treatment' were the major causes of these diseases.[165]

The weekly and monthly reports of the medical teams showed how their own view of these social reforms matched but also often differed from the blueprint set out by the project guidelines. Firstly, most of the field documents confirmed both the urgent need for medical intervention in the rural world and the success their work attracted in the respective localities they were based in and the

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[164] "Raport Nereju 1936 [medical team]," 1936, 188, FCR-C/1936/40/183-189, Arh. Naț.
[165] "Raport despre activitatea medicală pe luna iulie - Cuhea," 1935, FCR-C/1935/22/67-78, Arh. Naț.

surrounding ones. Despite the distrust of both the villagers and the local intellectuals in Clopotiva, the medical intervention 'set the tone', flooding the improvised ward with patients from all over the region.[166] The medical students and professional doctors sent to attend to the health issues of the Romanian countryside discovered not only the diseases and their rural causes they had expected to find, but they also realised the flaws and inefficiency of the state medical services. Although they received free drugs from the Ministry of Health for their mission, in most cases these were not enough to treat all their patients. Many of the villages they visited did not have a local doctor, the sick having to call for or go to the closest medical ward.[167] Moreover, the medical reports also showed that peasants were mistreated or abused by the medical staff in regional hospitals, and had thus developed a 'justified fear' of going there.[168] With regards to their own work, the medical team workers often showed that a short-term intervention was not enough especially in cases that needed sustained and constant treatment. In Sadova, the doctor even pointed out that if stopped, the anti-syphilis medication could damage the state of his patients even more.[169] These participants thus revealed the limitations of the project and the need for state intervention in the form of an efficient healthcare system for the rural population. In all areas, the team doctors considered the health of the population in the wider context of poor hygiene,

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[166] "Raport general pe luna iulie Clopotiva," 1935, 261, FCR-C/1935/22/259-263, Arh. Naț.

[167] Gheorghe Focșa, "Letter of complaint from Gheorghe Focșa to the Director of the Foundations (D. Gusti)," July 20, 1935, FCR-C/1935/25/10-11, Arh. Naț.

[168] Emil Locusteanu, "Raport asupra activității echipei sanitare depe lângă Echipa Regală No.9 Sadova C.lung Bucovina," 1934, 181, FCR-C/1934/18/169-182, Arh. Naț.

[169] Locusteanu, "Raport asupra activității echipei sanitare depe lângă Echipa Regală No.9 Sadova C.lung Bucovina."

malnutrition and illiteracy. Moreover, a comparison of these reports shows the correlation between the economic situation of different areas and the locals' attitudes to health. In the better-off village of Sadova, people wanted to hire a doctor at their own expense, whereas in the poorer Cuhea the relatives often preferred the sick to die rather than spend money on their health.[170]

The peasant in the modern world: cultural and economic backwardness

In contrast with the medical staff, whose vision of health in the countryside was permeated by sociological interpretations, the rest of the team members emulated the doctor-patient model in interacting with the peasantry and employed illness as a metaphor to describe non-medical problems, such as lack of hygiene, work malpractices, marital status, and education. The metaphor of illness was part of a wider vocabulary of modernisation.[171] Most activists described the living conditions in many villages as 'backward' or even 'primitive', contrasting them to ideals of a new rational, modern, and progressive lifestyle.[172] Discussions or mentions of backwardness appeared both in relation to rural culture and the peasant economy. Clopotiva, a remote village in central Transylvania (Tara Hațegului), was 'a

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[170] Ibid. See also "Raport despre activitatea medicală pe luna iulie - Cuhea" FCR-C/1935/22/67-78, Arh. Naț.

[171] For a well-known discussion of the metaphorical use of illnesses, especially of tuberculosis, see Susan Sontag, *Illness as metaphor; and, AIDS and its metaphors* (London: Penguin, 1991). In a historical study of medical interpretations of syphilis in late-nineteenth Russia (including the countryside), Engelstein also indicates a set of assigned meanings that includes backwardness for the rural incidences of the disease. Laura Engelstein, "Morality and the Wooden Spoon: Russian Doctors View Syphilis, Social Class, and Sexual Behavior, 1890-1905," *Representations* 14 (1986): 169-208.

[172] In this regards, more similarities between rural Romania and late imperial Russia can be found in Yanni Kotsonis, *Making peasants backward : agricultural cooperatives and the agrarian question in Russia, 1861-1914* (New York ; Basingstoke: Macmillan : St. Martin's Press, 1999), 4-8.

backwards village that did not have the chance of being enlightened by twentieth century culture'.[173] In Moişeni, another mountain village spread across many hills, the doctor wrote that 'the peasants are backwards in terms of preventing illnesses', whereas the team leader described the village's main road as 'the most primitive you can imagine'.[174] Unlike illness, which presupposed a deviance from a normal state of health and a healthy evolution, backwardness was abnormal only in relation to the speed of progress in the modern world. Yet, for the economic agents sent to the countryside, backwardness was the disease of agriculture and animal husbandry.

The reports of the agronomists and vets diagnosed most villages as backwards in terms of exploitation of the natural conditions, use of technological innovations, and work practices. Their findings on the localities visited illustrated and contributed to the general picture of Romanian agriculture and its shortfalls: 'cerealism', inefficient use of land, lack of product variation and of modern tools, reduced ownership and care of work animals.[175] The veterinary doctors often realised the locals' lack of adequate knowledge of how to breed, use and treat their own animals. Moreover, they also showed that the support from the state had not been complemented by the necessary information on how to make best use of this support.[176] The chronicle of a vet working in the Besarabian village of Năpădeni also mentioned the opinion of the regional administration voiced by the prefect who said

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[173] "Raport general pe luna iulie Clopotiva" FCR-C/1935/22/259-263, Arh. Naţ.
[174] Gheorghe Focşa, "Letter from Gheorghe Focşa to the Director of the Foundations (D. Gusti)," July 12, 1935, 2, FCR-C/1935/25/2-8, Arh. Naţ.
[175] On this see Madgearu, *Evoluţia economiei*, 44-65.
[176] "Cronica zilnică de activitatea secţiei veterinare din echipa regală Năpădeni," 1934, 1-10, FCR-C/1934/17/1-40, Arh. Naţ.

'the population of Năpădeni were proud and stubborn, interested only in viticulture

(…) and were used to get everything free from the State.'[177] This showed that, like

many of their colleagues, working in the village widened the student's

understanding of the problems impeding progress of the peasant economy, showing

not only its immediate specific causes, but also the social, cultural and

administrative ones.

If in some cases the problem lay with the lack of economic means (poverty)

combined with a lack of education, in others these were further complicated by

cultural, social and political issues. In places such as Năpădeni, the research of the

teams showed that not 'backwardness' (either economic or cultural), but tradition

and social status kept part of the local population away from engaging in productive

economic activities. Comprised of *mazili* (upper class urbanised free peasants) and

țărani (lower class, originally landless peasants), the local population was mainly

engaged in viticulture and showed resistance to undertake other agricultural

activities, as viticulture was the only 'noble' line of work the *mazili* saw as

acceptable for their social status.[178] Such examples placed the agricultural situation

in its local context and showed the various regional specificities that complicated the

solutions to the economic problems of the countryside.

Unlike the other team members, the students sent to treat the problems of

the peasant economy had less power to influence their 'patients'. Like the medical

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[177] Ibid., 17.

[178] Pavel Ungureanu and Dumitru Dogaru, "Contribuții la monografia satului Năpădeni," in *Echipe studenţeşti la sate : program de lucru şi rezultate : întâiul an 1934* (Bucharest: Fundaţia Culturală Regală "Principele Carol', 1934), 271.

staff, the agronomists received some state support (from the Ministry of Agriculture) in the form of machinery, animals and seeds, whereas the vet got part of the necessary treatment for the suffering animals.[179] Yet, unlike them, these tools did not work the same miracles of modern medication. Instead, fighting against the practices and culture of peasant economy, the agronomist was left to preach the value of rational agriculture, animal husbandry, cooperation, and in some cases amalgamation, whose end results were long-term and uncertain. Often, this work was met with suspicion and distrust by the locals, who were not easily convinced to change their ways.[180] George Macarie, team leader in the village of Sadova, Bukovina, explained that after three years, the medical intervention had had the best results amongst the population, not the economic help since 'that required the outside intervention of the authorities (…) there is the question if it works or not, if it gets their support or not'.[181]

Moral decline

Seemingly counter-intuitively, the discussion of rural backwardness was doubled by one of moral decline. For the activists in charge of the peasant's soul, underneath the visible rural diseases lay the alarming signs of moral and spiritual degradation caused by the loss of faith and tradition, the influence of the city or of local politics.

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[179] "Activitatea secției veterinare din echipa Nereju pe luna august 1935," 1935, FCR-C/1935/22/184-185, Arh. Naț.
[180] "Raport general asupra activității depuse în cadrul Echipei Regale Olănești de secția agricolă, cooperatistă și silvică 1936 5 Iulie - 5 Septembrie," 1936, FCR-C/1936/39/200-219, Arh. Naț.
[181] Macarie and Rostás, ""Când am descoperit" G. Macarie," 122.

Therefore, alongside the doctor, who looked after the peasant body, the priest took charge of healing their soul. The tandem doctor-priest was the perfect illustration of the link between the moral and the physical state of the peasantry. Using the illness as a metaphor, the theologian of the Nereju team commented that 'cohabitation [was] the plague of the village' and proposed a plan of combating it by officiating mass-marriages for the locals.[182] The family and its preservation were central to the priests' activist agenda that always mentioned the issue of cohabitation as a quantifiable target for the mission. However, little was said about the causes of this 'plague' or of other social diseases for that matter. [183] In the Banat villages, cohabitation was connected to the influence of modernity and its terrible effect on the region's population level caused by a drop in the birth rate. [184] Likewise, in the village of Goicea Mare, in Oltenia, it was connected to a lack of 'social unity' caused by the dissent amongst the local intellectuals and authorities. Finally, in the remote villages of Bessarabia, it was indirectly explained through the lack of material means to pay for a big wedding.[185] Faced with these changes in the private life of the village, the young priests and theologians tried to convince people of the moral value of the family both in their homes and in public conferences and sermons.

For the theologians, as for the project itself, religion appeared as a factor of social change meant to restore order and trust in the rural community. The religious reports spoke more of these themes and less of God. As part of the teams, the

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[182] "Memoriu asupra activității medicale în comuna Moișeni," 1935, FCR-C/1935/25/46-48, Arh. Naț.
[183] Ibid.
[184] "Raport asupra activității secției cultural-religioase Olănești Cet. Albă 1936," 1936, FCR-C/1936/39/328-331, Arh. Naț.
[185] "Monografia satului Purcări Basarabia," 1936, FCR-C/1936/28, Arh. Naț.

priests joined the fight against moral decline in the countryside on a modernising position. Although also trying to restore a lost social harmony, the spiritual activists acted as representatives of the state and of national culture. This meant promoting religion as a state institution, which linked people not only to the local but also to the national community. At the same time, this also meant purging religion of all mysticism and allowing it to coexist alongside the benefits of modern science. Therefore, the reports of the priests often reinforced the ideas about the role of religion in rural change proposed by the project itself.

The cultural lament

Lack of education featured in the activists' lament of the wretched state of the countryside, as a contributing cause to its backwardness. In their findings, a correlation appeared between the degree of literacy and all other findings on the medical, hygiene, and economic situations. Moreover, in individual villages like Cuhea, Moișeni, Clopotiva, and Goicea, low levels of education was often associated with the locals' poverty and unwillingness to cooperate.[186]

In improving the villagers' minds, the students tried to recruit the local intellectuals as potential collaborators. Sometimes helpful and eager to help, the educated men of these villages supported the teams, becoming their entry points and peers in the community. Yet, the students also found out that this social group was often the very cause of problems and lack of unity in the village. If some villages

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[186] "Raport inspecție iulie - Cuhea," 1935, FCR-C/1935/22/31-32, Arh. Naț.; "Raport inspecție Goicea Mare," August 1934, FCR-C/1934/20/1-3, Arh. Naț.; "Rapoarte de ansamblu privind activitatea echipelor regale studențești din vara anului 1936, desfășurată în următoarele comune din Maramureș: Cuhea, Boicocel, Săcel, Moișeni," 1936, FCR-C/1936/42, Arh. Naț.; "Various reports Cuhea, Clopotiva, Moișeni (1935 Campaign)."

simply lacked any intellectuals (Moișeni and Cuhea)[187] or, in others (Clopotiva and Goicea) the strife between the local intellectuals, often caused by politics, became 'the most terrible illness of the village'.[188]

Often the relationship between the cultural activists and the villagers resembled that between teachers and pupils. The educational activities organised for adults (readings of canonical texts from the national literature, learning and performing songs, reciting poems and attending educational lectures) were similar to those devoted to children. Thus, despite the attempt to empower the peasantry, the activists often turned the locals into passive receivers of simplified knowledge.

In relation to social change, the students actively embraced their role as protectors of folk traditions and promoters of national cultural values. Their observations about the countryside repeated, consciously or not, many elements of the earlier lament about social change: the disappearance of folk dress, the prevalence (in some areas) of modern objects, clothes and cultural practices.[189] Confronted with the coexistence of the old and the new, the activists interpreted it as sometimes illustrating generational divides, and other times marking social differentiation. The new style of houses in Cuhea, for example, showed the general move away from a traditional model to a new one, whilst in Năpădeni the use of modern prefabricated clothes and furniture showed the social divide between *mazili*

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[187] "Raport despre activitatea medicală pe luna iulie - Cuhea" FCR-C/1935/22/67-78, Arh. Naț.

[188] "Raport aupra vizitei făcută echipei studențești din Goicea Mare, jud. Dolj, în zilele de 11,12, 12 și 12 august 1934," 1934, FCR-C/1934/15-18, Arh. Naț.; "Raport Iulie-August Prigor," 1938, FCR-C/1937/69, Arh. Naț.

[189] "Raport săptămânal Goicea - secția gospodărie," 1934, FCR-C/1934/20/87-89, Arh. Naț.; "Cronica zilnică de activitatea secției veterinare din echipa regală Năpădeni" FCR-C/1934/17/1-40, Arh. Naț.

and *tărani*.[190] This illustrated different patterns of change in rural areas, occurring either en masse or via specific social groups. To counteract the loss of traditions, the cultural activists proposed a different combination of modern and traditional culture, by creating an interest in reactivating old traditions in modern forms (theatre shows, choirs, organised folk dance, museums) within the community and a fashion for folk dress and craftwork. In their reports, many students took pride in their success in turning the locals away from the pub to cultural activities, seen as a move from vice to virtue.

The new peasant woman

The peasant woman was given great importance in the enactment of positive change in rural life. Sent to teach the locals the virtues of being a good wife, mother, and housekeeper, the domestic scientists took their role seriously, working in the spirit of the project guidelines.[191] In their reports, they often portrayed themselves as agents of change, working towards 'the healing of the village' as the domestic scientist in the village of Moișeni stated.[192] Their views replicated the project's traditionalist vision of gender roles for the countryside that wished to preserve and reinforce the place of women in the family home rather than extending the budding emancipation of women occurring in urban Romania. This resonated not only with the eugenic ideas of gender, but also, to a certain extent, with those of the Legion,

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[190] Ibid. FCR-C/1934/17/1-40, Arh. Naț.

[191] Some of these guidelines were reasserted in several of Aurelia Simionescu's articles, which appeared in the team's paper. Aurelia Simionescu, "Pentru maestrele de gospodărie," *Curierul Echipelor Studențești* I, no. 7 (September 1935): 3; Aurelia Simionescu, "Pentru maestrele de gospodărie," *Curierul Echipelor Studențești* II, no. 9 (August 1936): 5.

[192] "Raport Gospodărie 1 iulie-1 octombrie Moișeni" FCR-C/1936/42/266, Arh. Naț.

who also criticised the 'modern woman' and used the work camps to promote a similar model to that of the student teams.[193] Embracing their role as teachers of peasant women, the domestic scientists found themselves at the meeting point of the themes discussed so far: cultural and economic backwardness, degeneration and moral decline, poverty and lack of education. When reporting on the state of their villages, these young women were shocked not only by the lack of hygiene, but also by the peasant women's lack of care or interest for housework. In Moișeni, for example, the domestic scientist identified ignorance as the cause of this lack, stating that 'the housewives did not understand the benefits [of this] for the health and wellbeing' of the family.[194] Similar to the doctors, the domestic workers connected the lack of hygiene either to the economic wellbeing of the inhabitants, to the lack of education and habit, or to the tendency of women to work in the field.[195] For example, despite her good will in teaching the peasant women how to cook, clean and decorate their homes, the Moișeni activist often found that their students were unable to attend since they were out working the alongside the men.[196]

In line with the project guidelines, the domestic workers sought to turn the peasant women into good housewives, in charge of domestic rather than other types of work, as well as guardians of the health, hygiene and tradition in their

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[193] Leon Țopa, "Familia și statul," *Însemnări sociologice* I, no. 5 (1935): 23-34; Bucur, "Romania"; Bucur, *Eugenics*, 142-144;171-173; .

[194] "Raport Gospodărie 1 iulie-1 octombrie Moișeni" FCR-C/1936/42/266, Arh. Naț.

[195] Ibid. Similar views were expressed in other reports from Purcări and Nereju "Monografia satului Purcări Basarabia"; "Raport Nereju 1936," 1936, FCR-C/1939/40, Arh. Naț.

[196] "Raport Gospodărie 1 iulie-1 octombrie Moișeni" FCR-C/1936/42/265-267, Arh. Naț.

homes.[197] The woman appeared as solely responsible for the poor state of cleanliness of the houses visited by the activists and for the poor nutritional value of the food consumed in the household.[198] Thus, in remedying this, the mothers and wives were convened for women-only theoretical and practical courses meant to benefit their families as a whole. The stress on the knowledge of health, hygiene and nutrition belonged to the general modernising agenda discussed so far. Yet, in parallel to this, the work of the domestic scientists rejected any feminist ideas, often seeking to reverse any urban influence and generally trying to revive the taste for folk dress and traditions. This mixed agenda, fully embraced by the female agents working in the villages, was part of a vision of modernity that wished to keep the woman in her place – both in the home and in the countryside.

Regional perceptions of change

The work of the student teams, unlike the few research trips undertook by the BSS in the 1920s and early 1930s, produced a much more varied and extensive image of the Romanian countryside and its transformation. Although only a few participants had the opportunity to compare one region to another, together they played an important role in revealing the great diversity of the rural world. Furthermore, the newsletter devoted to the voluntary teams and the exhibitions organised at the end

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[197] See for example Simionescu, "Pentru maestrele de gospodărie"; Simionescu, "Pentru maestrele de gospodărie." Alongside these publications, in 1938, the students trained by the more experienced volunteers to participate in the Social Service wrote a series of essays on 'the role of the feminine teams in the Social Service' (*Rolul echipelor feminine in cadrul Serviciului Social*). This further indicates the organisers' desire to continue along this line of gender-specific education and the students' desire to work for the education of the peasant woman specifically. "Lucrări scrise ale echipierilor," 1938, FCR-C/1935/30, Arh. Naț.; "Lucrări ale echipierilor (studenților) din Scolile de pregătire ale Serviciului Social, cu teme legate de munca echipelor regale la sate," 1938, FCR-C/1936/30, Arh. Naț.

[198] "Raport al maestrei de gospodărie Sadova," 1934, FCR-C/1934/18/202-208, Arh. Naț.

of each year of work provided contexts for comparing not only the teams'
achievements but also the various issues and problems of the Romanian rural world.

On the ground, the participants often perceived the regional specificities as
hardships, with teams competing over who had the most difficult situation.[199] In
Moișeni, one of the great difficulties was given by the very nature of the village, with
great distances between houses and bad or no roads at all.[200] In Cuhea, the
problems were social and economic: manifested in the lack of intellectuals and in
general poverty.[201] Clopotiva was also poor, but the main issue was the unfriendly
reaction of the villagers, whereas in Goicea the problem was the politicisation of the
elites.[202] Finally, for the Ferdinand I team, the difficulties were caused by the
multiethnic nature of the village that included Romanians, Germans and Tartars.[203]
These complaints showed that, despite a certain awareness of the hardships of rural
life, the participants' expectations were almost always surpassed by the experience
of working in a village.

For the team leaders who moved between localities or had to oversee more
than one team, the differences and contrasts between localities became obvious.
Gheorghe Focșa for example joined Gusti's project in 1930, during the monographic

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[199] Dimitrie Gusti, "Învățăminte și perspective din munca echipelor studențești," *Sociologie românească* I, no. 2 (1936): 1-3; Traian Herseni, "Cronica. Expoziția de lucru a echipelor regale studențești," *Sociologie românească* I, no. 1 (1936): 35-42; *Cartea echipelor*, 76-237; Dimitrie Gusti, "După a III-a campanie de lucru," in *Cartea Echipelor* (Fundația Culturală Regală "Principele Carol', 1937), 51-57.

[200] Focșa, "Letter from Gheorghe Focșa to the Director of the Foundations (D. Gusti)"; Gheorghe Focșa and Zoltán Rostás, "'Noi, cu echipa și cu satul' - Gheorghe Focșa," in *Strada Latină nr.8. Monografiști și echipieri la Fundația Culturală Regală "Principele Carol"* (Bucharest: Curtea Veche, 2009), 36-41.

[201] "Raport despre activitatea medicală pe luna iulie - Cuhea" FCR-C/1935/22/67-78, Arh. Naț.

[202] "Various reports Cuhea, Clopotiva, Moișeni (1935 Campaign)" FCR-C/1935/22, Arh.Naț.; "Raport inspecție Goicea Mare" FCR-C/1934/20/1-3, Arh. Naț.

[203] F.I. Popa, "Activitatea echipei Ferdinand (fostă Caramurat) - Constanța," in *Cartea echipelor* (Bucharest: Fundația Culturală Regală "Principele Carol", 1937), 202-207.

trip to Runcu, also went to Cornova and Drăguş. After the launch of the FCR-PC

project, he became the leader of the teams working in Moişeni, then in Cuhea. Later

he was appointed *Inspector al Căminelor Culturale* (Inspector of the Village Halls)

and 'visited hundreds of villages'.[204] The two villages he worked in as a team leader

were illustrations of two types of rural poverty due to different economic

conditions, yet both lacking in modern infrastructure. Therefore, he focused the

work of the team on building a road, a bridge and a *cămin cultural*. His colleague

Macarie worked in very different villages – Sadova, in Bukovina and Ghimpaţi,

Muntenia and noted the contrast between them.[205]

> Ghimpaţi 'was a village situated on a plain, with disorganised people,
> strongly influenced by the city, especially by Bucharest, who had a poor
> aesthetic taste compared to the mountain folk of Bukovina where (…) they
> had an entire garden on their windowsills. (…) The level was very low, the
> women could not cook any decent food, did not know how to use their
> products – a hen, a chicken … very low level![206]

On the whole, the student teams contributed to a varied and complex image of the

Romanian countryside and its future, creating or adding to a detailed atlas of the

rural problems and highlighting the specifics of the newly added territories. These

differences and problems were either regional or geographical. Banat for example

was identified as an area suffering from alarming rural depopulation caused by a

diminishing birth rate and an increase in the rate of abortions. In Bessarabia, the

Russian influence often appeared as a tendency towards urbanisation and

proliferation of religious sects. According to geography, a clear differentiation

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[204] Focşa and Rostás, "G.Focşa," 9-10.
[205] Macarie and Rostás, ""Când am descoperit" G. Macarie," 105-110.
[206] Ibid., 107.

appeared between remote especially mountain villages and those close to urban centres. The Maramureș villages of Cuhea and Moișeni suffered from poverty and lack of infrastructure, whilst the Oltenian village of Goicea Mare and the Muntenian village of Ghimpați showed the signs of urbanisation and degeneration due to the influence of the city. In each of these regions, the ethnic mix was often mentioned and discussed, revealing the tensions or influences within these multicultural environments.

Conclusion

In 1938, the first year of the royal dictatorship[207], Gusti was able to transform his project of student voluntary activism into the Social Service, a programme of compulsory work experience in the countryside for all university students, graduates and civil servants. The Social Service Law, passed in October 1938 and revoked exactly a year later, made the 'reorganisation of the countryside' a matter of state, both by mobilising the entire student population to work in rural areas and by placing the leadership of the Service at the heart of the new government; the president of the Social Service was to hold a ministerial position and the running of

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[207] The Royal dictatorship, announced in February 1938, represented Carol II's attempt to deal with the internal threat of the Legion and externally to prepare for the advent of war. Marking the shift from a constitutional to an authoritarian regime, the King dissolved the parliament and the 1923 Constitution, instituting his new 'government above the parties' and a new corporatist Constitution. See Hitchins, *Rumania: 1866-1947*, 420-423; Roberts, *Rumania*, 206-222; Florea Nedelcu, *De la restauratie la dictatura regala: din viata politica a Romaniei 1930-1938* (Cluj: Dacia, 1981); Gheorghe Savu, *Dictatura regală (1938-1940)* (Bucharest: Ed. Politică, 1970).

the project was to involve 'almost the entire cabinet'.[208] The law stipulated that all

university students would obtain their graduation certificates only after completing

a period of social service in the countryside of up to a year. Similarly, one could not

hold a public position and could not obtain a certificate of professional practice

without undergoing this formative experience. In a strong 'high modernist vein', the

project meant subordinating the intellectual elites to the state's goal of refashioning

the countryside, thus turning them into specialised social servants. Moving from

voluntarism to obligation was also part of the same spirit of enlightened

authoritarianism that sought to impose its own morals rather than wait for private

initiative. With regards to the modernisation of the rural world, the programme

continued the same type of cultural work, further stressing the importance of the

Cămin Cultural not only as the new centre of village life, but also as 'the main

executive body' of the Social Service, constituting a 'work unit formed and led by the

locals – peasants, intellectuals and 'sons of the village' - meant to 'help, strengthen

and deepen the work of the Church, the School and the State Authorities'.[209]

Although it lasted only a year, the Social Service offered a clear indication of Gusti's

goals and ambitions for *sociologia militans*.

This chapter has discussed the new visions of rural transformation stemming

from Gusti's project of voluntary cultural work. Launched in a time when

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[208] "Proiect de lege pentru înființarea Serviciului Social," incorrectly filed as 1923, FCR-C/1923/46/64-75, Arh. Naț.; "Organizarea a Serviciului Social," incorrectly filed as 1923, FCR-C/1923/46/75, Arh. Naț.; Dimitrie Gusti, *Principiile și scopurile Serviciului Social* (Bucharest: Fundația Culturală Regală "Principele Carol', 1939); Zoltán Rostás, "Serviciul Social sau obligativitatea muncii culturale," in *Strada Latină nr.8. Monografiști și echipieri la Fundația Culturală Regală "Principele Carol"* (Bucharest: Curtea Veche, 2009), 228-230.
[209] "Proiect de lege pentru înființarea Serviciului Social" FCR-C/1923/46/64-75, Arh. Naț.

voluntarism had become a potent political tool in Romania and in many other European countries, the project's uniqueness consisted in the attempt to transform cognitive sociology into a militant tool for modernisation in the specific context of an agrarian state. Seen as the 'science of the nation' able to mobilise and oversee all these other disciplines, sociology was placed above all other disciplines which appeared vital to the improvement of life in the countryside (human and veterinary medicine, agronomy, physical education, domestic science, and theology) thus maintaining the same attributes in action as it did in research. Marking a politicisation of the discipline, the new project presented a vision of rural transformation that placed sociological knowledge and its practices in the service of the state. Thinking through Scott's concept of 'high modernism', Gusti's militant sociology can appear as a 'way of seeing like a state' born of the King's and the scholars' overlapping interests and common agendas. However, by comparing the project's guidelines with the teams' activities and own assessment of the rural world, I have shown the different ways the project was interpreted, implemented and criticised by its own enactors. This in turn has indicated the mismatch between the state's and even Gusti's visions of change and the students' own way of seeing the countryside and its transformation. On their return from the countryside, the findings of the volunteers fed into public exhibitions rather than official reports and statistics. After each year, FCR-PC organised public displays of the findings and the results of the student teams. Against the alarming numbers of diseases, illiteracy, infant mortality, etc, the displays showed the number of treatments, medical

consultations, civic projects and cooking sessions organised by the teams, alongside displays of folk objects and art. In a sense, these exhibitions perfectly illustrated the awkwardness of the peasant question in late 1930s Romania and the even more awkward solutions proposed. For the King, Gusti's holistic cultural approach constituted a perfect propaganda tool and the exhibitions or fairs appeared as the most appropriate settings for his image as 'King of the Peasantry' and leader of a peasant-loving youth movement. The Legion, their competitors, presented the project as a parody, pointing out both its ideological and scientific flaws. They attacked the moral values (especially individualism) attached to other types of voluntary activism, wondering 'what virtues and views the scientifically culturalised peasant should have'.[210] In contrast, according to them, the Legionary work camps were designed to transform both the urban volunteers and the rural dwellers according to the principles of the 'Legionary spirituality', which 'did not target the peasant's mind or interests, but their soul'. As an article in a Legionary journal noted, 'the mystery of the real transformation of the countryside (…) was a new life based on faith (…), which gives passion and willingness [to act]'.[211]

In relation to Mazlish's attitudes to change of 'breakers and lamenters', the role of the teams and their own views show the difference between activist and academic sociology. Gusti's new project had a predominantly modernising agenda, attempting to partly 'break' some of the old ways of rural life. At the same time, the teams' mission was a response to the existing 'lament' of the disappearing

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[210] Macrin, "O nouă școală românească. Taberele de muncă," 22-23.
[211] Țurcan, "Tabere," 21-22.

countryside, thus including measures of preserving rural culture and traditions.[212] As volunteers on this project, the students and young professionals were at least theoretically the enactors of this mixed reform agenda and were thus also caught between safeguarding the old and selectively introducing the new. In practice, the participants developed their own breaking and lamenting positions, influenced by the field work, by their different professions and, last but not least, by their own political views.

The discussion above has shown the dialectical relationship between the way of seeing the countryside developed by each profession and the project's overall sociological nature, which led to a cross-pollination of ideas and methods between different disciplines. This was further shaped by the conditions of working in villages that resisted a clear-cut separation of different problems, presenting them in their real-world interconnection. Amongst the different professions, the medical gaze provided a model the relationship between subjects and objects of activist intervention, by turning the countryside and its inhabitants into patients in need of healing. However, if the rest of the teams employed illness as a metaphor in their lament of the countryside, the medical participants showed that actual medical treatment required deeper social, economic and political reforms than just experimental action. Firstly, a greater involvement of the state in providing medical care was requested for almost all localities visited. Secondly, the students showed that the locals' attitude to health and to other modern resources meant to improve

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their life and work depended on their economic and educational status and thus deeper changes often had to occur in order to make the population accept innovation. The distinction between real and metaphorical illness indicated how sociological thinking operated in both directions and on different levels, allowing the medical staff to see the social context of illness but also transforming the complexity of rural life into imaginary moral, economic and cultural diseases.

Another way of looking at the countryside was through the modernist dichotomy of progress-backwardness. In this acceptance, the transformation of the rural world presupposed a selection of old, primitive ways of work, life and thinking and their partial or total replacement by new rational tools, techniques and theories suitable for the modern world. Yet, the volunteers' conclusions showed that such innovations were not always simple or straightforward. Resistance to change was not always related to education as expected, but also to cultural status. Moreover, although sometimes useful, the new forms did not always generate new complementary practices. This was shown by the example of toilets built but never used by the villagers and by many other specialised buildings for rational agriculture and zootechnics. The last dimension of the students' vision of the countryside was one of moral decline. Unlike the illness metaphor and the discussion of backwardness, which constituted ways of interpreting their own mission in shaping the countryside, moral decline expressed the lament regarding the transformations that had already occurred as negative effects of modernity. Convinced by the *illo tempore* purity of the rural world, many participants sought to restore the

traditions, customs, and moral values they thought the villages were losing or had lost in their encounter with modernity. The gender dimension of the project showed this most clearly. The transformation of the peasant woman became a metaphor for that of the countryside as a whole. Although essential in the process of change, she was at the same time expected to know her place and not challenge the existing structure of authority. Finally, beyond the individual view points of particular students or teams, the overall project produced a bird's eye view of the Romanian countryside and its regional specificities.

PATHWAYS TO MODERNITY

INTERPRETING SOCIAL CHANGE IN MONOGRAPHIC WRITING

> Today I went to see the Professor in his new house (…) We spoke about the publications for the Congress in 1939. The School's prestige requires numerous publications. So there will be plenty of money; they are also looking for manuscripts to publish.[1]
>
> Anton Golopenția, 1938

In 1939, the BSS was preparing for the 14th International Congress of Sociology that was to take place in the Romanian capital. As illustrated by the excerpt from Anton Golopenția's letter to his fiancée quoted above, the years of 1938-9 were indeed very promising for sociological research. Unfortunately, the Congress was further and further delayed as the war drew closer, until it was finally cancelled.[2] In the autumn of the same year, the Social Service was also suspended, drawing to a close Gusti's ambitions to engage the youth in the transformation of the peasantry. However, although many of the promises of 1939 remained unfulfilled, the publications prepared for the Congress continued to appear throughout the early 1940s, bringing international recognition and prestige to the School and its members. If politically sociology fell from the heights it had conquered, academically it continued its research on the Romanian countryside, producing rival visions of its ongoing transformation.

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[1] Anton Golopenția, "Anton Golopenția către Ștefania Cristescu (14.01.1938)," in *Rapsodia Epistolară II* (Bucharest: Ed. Enciclopedică, 2009), 473.

[2] The papers sent in for the conference were collected and published as a four volume-publication of the International Institute of Sociology. Institut International de Sociologie, *Travaux de XIVe Congrès*. For more details of the preparation for the conference, see Stahl's memoirs. Stahl, *Amintiri*, 368-372.

This chapter will explore these different academic visions of change, concentrating on the fate of the monographic project before the outbreak of the war. In trying to capture the essential characteristics of the School's writings in its 'mature' period, I have decided to focus solely on its main research product, the monograph. Firstly, this will clarify the sociologists' competing visions of the countryside, and secondly it will also allow an examination of the restrictions and parameters that the format imposed on the writing and the different ways in which the negotiation between form, content and purpose was resolved. The three studies discussed in this chapter - Stahl's monograph of Nerj, Golopenția's survey of 60 Romanian villages, entitled *60 de sate românesti,* and the regional monograph of the Dâmbovnic region, also coordinated by Golopenția - were products of collective projects which constituted a corollary between research and action.[3] Led by representatives of the old generation of monographists, they mobilised part of the mass of students already targeted by Gusti's scheme of voluntary cultural work, also using the contacts and network established by the Royal Student Teams.

My choice of sources is mainly informed by the importance of change as an analytical category in these studies. By illustrating very different approaches to the monograph, different scales of sociological research, and different degrees of separation from or dissidence with Gusti's theoretical propositions, they shed new light both on the state of the Romanian rural world on the brink of war and, more

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[3] Stahl, *Nerej*, vol. 1; Golopenția and Georgescu, *60 sate*; Golopenția and Pop, *Dâmbovnicul*.

importantly, on the conclusions these prominent sociologists had reached about the past, present, and future transformation of the Romanian peasantry.

I will start my discussion by looking at the political context, more precisely the royal dictatorship, as a facilitator of sociological research and main funding body of its publications. This will be followed by a glimpse into the backstage of the School with its struggles and competition for power and recognition, setting the scene for the analysis of the monographic project and its versions. After a discussion of Gusti's views of the monograph as a format of sociological writing, I will embark on the detailed analysis of Stahl's and Golopenția's projects, concentrating on the way the style and content of these writings addressed the problems and transformations affecting the Romanian countryside at what was to become the end of the interwar period.

The politics of sociology

The political background against which these studies were produced provides a context for understanding the privileged role sociology (à la Gusti) had acquired and the implications this had for the writings of the School. As discussed in the previous chapter, the leadership of FCR-PC allowed Gusti to launch his new project of cultural work in the countryside, mobilising the youth and the peasantry in an effort to meet, help each other and modernise the countryside. In this, he had the support of King Carol II, who saw the opportunity to counteract the actions of the Legion and boost his public image as 'King of the peasants'. The royal connection became even

more fruitful for sociology during the royal dictatorship. In 1938, after the previous year's elections had compromised the major parties and revealed the alarming popularity of the Legion, the King dissolved the parliament and instituted his authoritarian regime 'governing above the parties'. In the same year, the voluntary cultural work of the Royal Student Teams was transformed into a period of compulsory service for all university students in their final year through the Social Service Law.[4]

The project was Gusti's crowning achievement and signalled the victory of sociology as a meta-discipline with direct applicability in governance. Featuring among the main goals of the Social Service Law, monographic research also gained a prominent role, since 'the work of knowing our country (…) provides the base of the Social Service activities'.[5] This shows the extent to which sociology had become integrated into the state apparatus gaining prime importance both as a tool for efficient governance and for propaganda. The latter aspect should be stressed as the Service has recently fascinated scholars of Romanian history for its 'biopolitical' ambitions.[6] In contrast, I argue that the Social Service was an attempt of the academic elites to accede to and use the state for their scientific project, whereas for the state and its leader it was more a propaganda tool and a political instrument, which was quickly abandoned the moment it appeared cumbersome and unappealing.

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[4] "Proiect de lege pentru înființarea Serviciului Social"; Dimitrie Gusti, "Serviciul Social," *Sociologie românească* III, no. 7 (September 1938): 295-299; Gusti, *Principiile*; Rostás, "Serviciul Social."
[5] "Proiect de lege pentru înființarea Serviciului Social."
[6] Bucur, *Eugenics*, 180-181; Solonari, *Purifying*, 83-85.

As the Social Service Law illustrated, the royal dictatorship allowed Gusti to realise his wildest ambitions related to *sociologia militans*, but also to *sociologia cogitans*. In terms of research, 1938 and part of 1939 were extremely generous and fruitful years, with the launch of a series of major monographic projects, Drăguș (led by Herseni), Nerej (led by Stahl), *60 de sate* (led by Golopenția), and Dâmbovnic (also led by Golopenția and Mihai Pop), which Gusti hoped to have published in time for the International Congress of Sociology. Thus, the political context facilitated wider participation in the sociological study of the Romanian countryside on the one hand and the refinement of different scientific visions of the rural world and its transformation on the other.

The Bucharest Sociologists – between research and activism

Previous chapters have discussed the activism of the BSS, examining the participants' vision of the countryside, its transformation and their own role in this process. I argued that activism created a split in the School, between the members who wished to follow Gusti and his *sociologia militans* and those who preferred to remain purely researchers. Yet, despite this split, most of the 'old guard', including Traian Herseni and Mircea Vulcănescu, continued to publish in the old and the new academic publications of the ISR, the former also participating in the research projects led by FCR-PC in Drăguș (1939).[7] Therefore, sociology as an academic

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[7] Diaconu, "Herseni"; Marin Diaconu, "Cronologie," in *Mircea Vulcănescu - Opere*, vol. 1 (Bucharest: Editura Fundației Naționale pentru Știință și Artă, 2005), LXXVI-CXVII; Traian Herseni, ed., *Drăguș, un sat din țara Oltului (Făgăraș)*, vol. 1, 1944. In the interviews with the younger generation of monographists, whose careers were interrupted or altered by the communist regime, Coriolan Gheție and Nicolae Dunăre recount their experiences of undertaking research under Herseni's leadership. Rostás, "Coriolan Gheție"; Zoltán Rostás, "Nicolae Dunăre.

discipline continued to grow and develop, nurtured by its royal connection, both financially and politically. On the one hand, the study of the countryside gained much from the work of the Royal Student Teams. Alongside cultural work, parallel research campaigns were organised to collect data later used in the School's major publications.[8] The existence of an established theoretical and methodological framework simplified and hastened the collection of materials. Questionnaires, tables, and other research tools were printed, multiplied and given to the teams.[9] Furthermore, their separation by professions allowed them to produce specialised knowledge from a wider range of viewpoints. At the same time, the clear structure and leadership of the teams increased their capacity to produce the raw data needed. By 1937-8, a new generation of sociologists appeared, whose experience of the countryside included three or four campaigns and whose attachment was not to Gusti himself, but to his main collaborators: Golopenția, Stahl, or Herseni.[10] On the other hand, Gusti's leadership of FCR-PC meant that more money was made available for sociological publications, most importantly for the review the monographists had long been talking about.[11]

'Am capacitatea de a fi aproape obiectiv',” in *Parcurs întrerupt. Discipoli din anii treizeci ai Școlii gustiene* (Bucharest: Paideia, 2006), 13-110.

[8] The major 'old style' research expeditions of the 1930s were the trips to Șant, Năsăud in 1935 and 1936. Rostás, "The Gusti Empire. Facts and Hypotheses," 20.

[9] A new textbook was produced for monographic researchers, which included many examples of forms, questionnaires and other tools for gathering and producing data about the countryside. Many of the contributors were part of the first generation of monographists. Institutul de Stiinte Sociale al României. Biroul Cercetărilor Sociologice, *Îndrumări pentru monografiile sociologice* (Bucharest: Institutul de Științe Sociale al României, 1940).

[10] In their interviews with Rostás, the monographists active in the 1930s mentioned their preferences as follows: Nicolae Dunăre and Coriolan Gheție were 'Herseniști', Gheorghe Retegan was a 'Golopenția' and Gheorghe Serafim was a 'Stahlian'. Rostás, *Parcurs întrerupt*.

[11] Anton Golopenția to Ștefania Cristescu (26 December 1932) in Golopenția, *Ceasul misiunilor reale*, 81.

In 1936, the journal *Sociologie Românească* launched its first issue, announcing its role as the 'forum of Romanian social truth'.[12] Devoted solely to the publication of materials collected during or relating to monographic fieldwork, it was published by the ISR, benefitting from the same publishing conditions and format as the older *Arhiva Pentru Știință și Reformă Socială*. In contrast to the latter, the editorial board of *Sociologie Românească* had total freedom of decision over the content and topics of each issue. In its rather short life, between 1936 to 1943, the journal played its role as a forum of Romanian sociology (rural but not only) by printing both studies by the veterans of the field and articles by many other younger researchers who added their new perspectives on various aspects of social life. The journal and its freedom of academic expression illustrated the relationship between Gusti and the monarchy. While totally devoted to activist goals of the Foundation and aware of its role as royal propaganda, the Professor did not compromise any of the research publications, which remained committed to producing the most accurate reflections and studies of Romanian society.[13] At the same time, *Sociologie Românească* provided the much-awaited forum for the development and expression of both the old and the new generation of monographists, who had almost entire control over its editorial content.[14]

Apart from the main academic journals, both sociologists and cultural workers had access to the activist publications of the Royal Cultural Foundation: *Curierul Echipelor Studențești*, which became *Curierul Serviciului Social* in 1938,

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[12] Dimitrie Gusti, "Sociologie Românească," *Sociologie românească* I (January 1936): 8.

[13] Stahl, *Amintiri*, 356-8; Rostás, *Monografia ca utopie*, 203-4.

[14] Anton Golopenția was the editor of the journal from 1936 to 1942. Golopenția, "Cronologie," LXXIV.

Căminul Cultural, the series *Cartea Satului*, and *Cartea Echipelor*. This panorama of book series and periodicals indicates the vast possibilities of publishing work and impressions from the field, either as a researcher or as an activist. If we add to this the opportunity to contribute to the monographs organised by the ISR for the Congress, we can see the extent sociology had grown, becoming a mainstream discourse for the new generation of the mid to late 1930s.

Producers of knowledge, models for change

New sociological quarrels

After its internal crisis of the early 1930s, the BSS found itself in a new series of balancing acts between researchers and activists, between the ISR and FCR-PC, between the right and the left and between Gusti and his collaborators. Each of these relationships was a potential source of conflict, since sociology had become a contested territory tormented by new ideas and personal agendas. The research presented in this chapter was born in this tense context, as the product of numerous negotiations among the sociologists and with the Professor. Drawing on Golopenția's correspondence, the oral history project and Stahl's memoirs, Sanda Golopenția offers an insight into the discussions behind the scenes in her article '*Mihai Pop la Dâmbovnic'*.[15] Until Anton Golopenția's return from his German doctoral studies in December 1936, the old researchers and/or activists, Stahl,

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[15] Sanda Golopenția, "Mihai Pop la Dâmbovnic. Lunga vară fierbinte a sociologiei românești," in *Centenar Mihai Pop 1907-2007. Studii, evocări* (Bucharest: Ed. Universității din București, 2007), 19-52.

Herseni, Vulcănescu, and Neamțu had dominated the School. While away, his future wife and friends kept him informed of the situation 'at home', often deploring the internal and external politics around Gusti and the School. In the winter of 1934, Ștefania wrote to Anton:

> Last Monday, I looked for the Professor. I admired his beautiful house, but he was not there. I found him at the Foundation on *Strada Latină* 8. We spoke of the monograph(ic project), he confessed that he was still dreaming of a monographic trip under his leadership, with people he could choose himself; that the cultural monographs this summer (more the King's dream – he said) had not succeeded and that he was sorry.[16]

Despite the persistence of Gusti's 'monographic dream' and the attempt to produce an old-style monograph in the Șanț expeditions of 1935-6, the results were far from spectacular.[17] In Bucharest, the atmosphere was tense as Ștefania recounted. Many times she complained of the constant bullying directed against her, especially by Stahl and Neamțu, and described the antagonism between Bernea, Amzăr and Herseni.[18] To this she added the impartial and moody leadership of the Professor whom she often warned Anton against. In a letter from 1935, when Golopenția had been awarded funding for an extension of his doctoral studies but was hassled by Gusti to return and work with him, Ștefania wrote:

> Don't you think you are taking the Professor too seriously again? (…) If you are really tempted by a collaboration with the Foundation, then you should only come back if you are offered a position that meant a real collaboration,

[16] Ștefania Cristescu, "Ștefania Cristescu către Anton Golopenția (9.10.1934)," in *Rapsodia Epistolara II* (Bucharest: Ed. Enciclopedică, 2009), 280.
[17] Golopenția, "Introducere," 38.
[18] Cristescu, "ȘC către AG (9.10.1934)," 281; Ștefania Cristescu, "Ștefania Cristescu către Anton Golopenția (11.11.1934)," in *Rapsodia Epistolara II* (Bucharest: Ed. Enciclopedică, 2009), 291.

according to your merits. Without a doctoral degree title, don't you think your work may risk again to remain anonymous?[19]

The letter showed the constant problem behind sociological research – secure employment and the ferocious competition for prestigious jobs. In this respect, after his return to Romania, Golopenția managed to secure not one but several positions (as Director within the ISR, inspector for the FCR-PC and editor of *Sociologia Românească*), but was met with hostility by the older collaborators. This persisted to a certain degree throughout the period discussed in this thesis, as the newcomer had returned with new ideas and proceeded to refashion Gusti's theoretical propositions. Unlike Stahl who remained one of Gusti's close followers, keeping his dissidence private, Golopenția confronted the Professor, managing to get him to agree to his ideas.[20] In a conversation with Ștefania that she related in one of her letters, Stahl seemed to have said: 'You see, Golopenția fights for something, he wants something and fights to impose his ideas. I don't fight. I am happy if I am left alone and if nobody interferes with my work'.[21] *60 de sate* and *Dâmbovnic* were born out of this struggle, taking advantage of the last fertile years of interwar Romanian sociology.

These conflicts at the top level of sociology were further reflected in the views and attachment of the teams organised by the veterans. Rostás's volume of interviews with the 'School's disciples' often touched on these new divisions within the new generation of Bucharest sociologists. Recruited into sociology either at

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[19] Cristescu, "ȘC către AG (24.10.1935)," 369.
[20] Rostás, *Monografia ca utopie*, 147-148.
[21] Ștefania Cristescu, "Ștefania Cristescu către Anton Golopenția (22.09.1939)," in *Rapsodia Epistolara II* (Bucharest: Ed. Enciclopedică, 2009), 520.

university level or before (Coriolan Gheție adhered while at university, whereas Gheorghe Retegan, born and raised in Căianul Mic, had been confronted with the student royal team that came to his village when he was in his final year of military school), they met and assessed all the old School members at university, where they were teaching their sociology courses.[22] This gave them the opportunity to make their choices, take the offer to work with one or another and shape their views according to their preferences. Thus, although young, the new generation entered the field with a critical eye, formed more by academic debates than by their first-hand experience of fieldwork.

The monograph as a style of sociological writing

In 1910, Gusti had stated that 'sociology had to be monographic or not be at all'.[23] Drawing on a variety of local and foreign traditions, Gusti proposed his own method of monographic description, meant to produce an overall picture of the Romanian national reality. The pre-requisites of this method were objectivity, unmediated observation and collective work. As seen in Chapter 1, it was his students who established the details of monographic research, after the experience of fieldwork in the Romanian countryside. The formula of the monograph was based on the Gusti's principles of holism and social parallelism, as reflected in the theory of contexts and manifestations. According to it, each monograph would contain four sections on contexts (cosmological, biological, historical, and psychological), four on

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[22] Zoltán Rostás, "Gheorghe Retegan. 'La un moment dat eu m-am supărat foc'," in *Parcurs întrerupt. Discipoli din anii treizeci ai Școlii gustiene* (Bucharest: Paideia, 2006), 277.
[23] Dimitrie Gusti cited in Vintilă Mihăilescu, 'The Monographic School of Dimitrie Gusti. How is a Sociology of the Nation possible?' in *Ethnologia Balkanica*, 2 (1998), p.52

manifestations (spiritual, economic, political-administrative, and cultural), and several potential additional sections on social units, relations and processes.[24] Seeking to balance all determinant factors impacting on society with its 'manifestations' or creations, the monograph sought to 'provide a vision of reality as an experiential whole', to use Asad's phrase, which would allow a synthetic understanding.[25] However, as the School and its older members matured, different researchers adapted this holistic vision of society, both by emphasising one of the factors or aspects of social life over the others and by providing different visions of social change. Thus, Stahl became interested in the historical conditions of rural areas, also stressing the importance of the economic and the juridical. In turn, Herseni adopted a phenomenological approach concentrating on the relations between individual and society, Vulcănescu was particularly interested in the spiritual, whereas Golopenția preferred a combined view of economic, legal and cultural processes interconnected. These intellectual differences added to the professional and ideological tensions between the members of the School discussed both in Chapter 2 and in the present chapter.

It is worth noting that after more than two decades of sociological research, the BSS had not yet produced any complete monographs. This failure or delay was caused by a lack of strong coordination, the great freedom of the first trips (of the 1920s) and later by the academic competition and ambitions of the older generation. The relaunch of the old projects (Nerej and Drăguș) and the interest in

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[24] Stahl, "Tehnica monografiei."
[25] Asad, "Ethnographic representation," 1.

new research campaigns devoted to finalising other monographic volumes was triggered by the planned organisation of the 14th International Congress of Sociology in 1939.[26] This prestigious upcoming event mobilised all available forces towards the writing up of existing materials and the collection of others. The role of these publications was to present the School and its projects as applications of Gusti's social theory for an international scholarly public. Two of the monographs, *Nerej* and *Drăguș* were to be published in French and English respectively, aiming almost exclusively at a foreign readership.[27]

This new impetus was an opportunity for the veterans of the School to reassess the monograph 'as instrument of sociological analysis of social reality'.[28] In his memoirs, Stahl noted: 'For me, at least, the research we completed in Nerej was a new chance to be self-critical, to change many of my previous points of view, as well as to come back to many of the thoughts I had had about Nerej of 1927 (…) On both research and activism I felt compelled to go beyond the concepts used by the School and by the Foundation.'[29] This affirmation showed how far away from Gusti's theories and concepts the first group of students had moved, without totally breaking away from them. The monograph of Nerej was proof of this resisting umbilical cord, as well as the affirmation of Stahl's own theories. As for Golopenția, the two projects discussed below were the products of a set of moral obligations: to

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[26] As Stahl mentioned, by this time, the Romanian sociological movement had become world-known and therefore the choice of Bucharest as the location for the International Congress 'was not made by chance. (…) We had five regional Social Institutes, a Village Museum, (…) and five research teams working in the villages of Drăguș, Nerej, Șanț, Runcu and Clopotiva.' Stahl, *Amintiri*, 368-70.

[27] Stahl, *Nerej*, vol. 1; Herseni, *Drăguș*, vol. 1.

[28] Stahl, *Amintiri*, 371.

[29] Ibid.

the Professor, to oneself and ultimately to social science. If Stahl had seconded Gusti

uninterruptedly since the 1920s, Golopenția's doctoral studies in Germany had given

him a new and fresh perspective on sociological theory, methods and writing. This

was reflected in the underpinning theories and methods he adopted in the projects

he led, *60 de sate* and *Dâmbovnic,* where the monographic categories, although

present, were obscured by the focus on issues and on processes respectively.[30] Thus,

unlike Stahl, who worked through and with the framework of the monograph to find

his own voice, Golopenția used the opportunity to coordinate a type of research

that remained only formally indebted to the 'orthodox methods' carefully explained

by Stahl in his 1931 textbook of monographic methodology. In what follows I will

analyse their monographic projects, seeking to understand firstly what their vision

of change in the rural world was but also how they adapted the monograph to

interpret this change.[31]

Nerej, un village d'une région archaïque

The Nerej monograph is probably the best-known finished product of the BSS that

reflected the initial ideas of the monographic project started in the 1920s by Gusti.

Published in French, in 1939, its three volumes were the product of a decade's

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[30] As shown by a letter Anton Golopenția had sent to Gusti from Germany in November 1935, the former's ideas about sociology had suffered significant changes. Golopenția, *Ceasul misiunilor reale*, 278-281. Also see Golopenția, "Cronologie," LXXI-LXXII.

[31] This study does not attempt to discuss all the monographs published by the School in the late 1930s and early 1940s. The study on *Clopotiva* led by the geographer Ion Conea and the five volume-study of *Drăguș*, coordinated by Traian Herseni represented two other significant works of the school. However, I have decided to exclude them from this thesis since they would add little to the topic of social change, which is one of the major themes of my research. Conea, *Clopotiva*; Herseni, *Drăguș*, vol. 1.

research on the village of Nerej in the Vrancea region, initiated and led by Stahl.

Working both as his university assistant and as Head of Research at the FCR-PC since

1934, he had devoted a lot of time to the techniques of social research and later of

cultural work, also writing for the academic and 'activist' press of the School. His

writings often seemed to reflect two Stahls: one devoted to the study of the archaic

traditional village and one always ready to contribute to cultural work and its

propagandistic publications.[32] The present analysis of his major project, *Nerej,* points

to the many contradictions between the two.

In his memoirs and in the interviews with Rostás, Stahl recounted the story

of this monograph, which inspired his theory, work methods and further research on

the *răzeșie*.[33] His interest in the Vrancea region and its unique social history started

during his first monographic trip, in 1927. The articles on the legal and social

organisation of the *răzeși,* published shortly afterwards, announced his main ideas

about the Romanian rural world and its transformation, pre-empting his later

research of the 1930s.[34] In Vrancea, Stahl discovered the 'archaeological' remains of

an ancient form of social organisation, which predated the already known type of

free villages based on a genealogical form of landholding and evolution. His thesis

was that the *răzeșie* in this region represented a non-genealogical form of

communal life and governance with specific features, which resisted unchanged

until the early twentieth century. He was also confronted with the ongoing

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[32] Stahl, "Tehnica monografiei"; Stahl, *Pentru Sat*; Stahl, *Cultura satelor*; Stahl, *Monografia unui sat.*
[33] Stahl, *Amintiri*, 371-87; Rostás, *Monografia ca utopie.*
[34] Stahl, "Contribuții la problema răzășiei satului Nerej (I)"; Stahl, "Contribuții la problema răzășiei satului Nerej (II)"; Stahl, "Drumuri vrâncene."

dissolution of these long-standing ties and forms of social organisation, eroded by the unimpeded penetration of capitalism into the area. In this earlier research, social change in the countryside was seen as a struggle of old pastoral communities with modern capitalism, represented in the region by private logging companies, and with an unsympathetic state trying to force its artificial order upon it. This lament of the clash between the old and the new world was further reinforced by alarm over rapid deforestation across the entire area, which added the destruction of nature to that of social ties. Alongside the unique social phenomena approached in his research, Stahl also developed his own method for analysing social life in its historical dimension. 'Social archaeology' entailed looking at social life as a multitude of historical layers, which could be accessed only through the most superficial one, the present. This diachronic understanding of society shaped Stahl's vision of social change, giving it a historic dimension.

Stahl returned to Nerej in the mid-1930s, when he led the Royal Student Teams on four successive cultural work campaigns. The reports from the successive campaigns presented the region in a cruder light, noting that the locals 'lived in an accentuated promiscuity, far from the most basic hygiene', they were affected by social diseases such as 'tuberculosis, syphilis, and pellagra', and they were stubborn and unwilling to change their ways.[35] This assessment of the village in relation to the project's modernising principles did not produce any relevant research materials

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[35] Monthly medical report, October 1936, "Raport Nereju 1936," 168.

from his point of view. 'There was not even a page I could use from their work', he recalled many years later.[36]

The decision to publish the Nerej monograph for the Congress called for a new study trip, in 1938, which lasted two months and brought together some of the experienced researchers, a team of sociology students, and two foreign visitors, the American Philip Moseley and Frenchman Guillaume Jacquemyns.[37] The publication was based on the rich documentation gathered during a decade of interest in the area, also considering the evolution of the village over this period of time.

In the introductory section of the monograph, Stahl explained the importance of the Nerej as a living proof of an ancient village community in which different stages of social, legal, and land ownership coexisted contemporaneously. The area allowed a study of communal tenure, of the successive genealogical organisation of land (in parallel strips), as well as the negative effects of state reforms, which disrupted this order by breaking the land up into what appeared to be manageable plots.[38]

The study was subdivided according to Gusti's contexts and manifestations theory. The contexts presented the conditions, which had determined the birth of the village and had allowed it to remain almost unchanged until the twentieth century, whereas the manifestations concentrated on the ongoing dissolution of its old ways of life. Each section added to the central interest in the *răzeși*, and their ancient communal organisation, in an effort to exhaust all aspects of its rise and fall.

[36] Rostás, *Monografia ca utopie*, 199.
[37] Stahl, *Nerej*, 1:XXII-XXIII.
[38] Ibid., 1:3-15.

Central to the cosmological *context* was the idea that in the past the village had reached a balance between nature and society. The region's physical isolation had allowed it to resist foreign penetration, maintain an economic and political independence, and develop a complex system of self-governance. People's lives were intimately connected to the forest and the mountains, whereas the roads were still 'not measured in kilometres, but in hours or even days'.[39] The late advent of modernity in this greatly isolated village, combined with geographical conditions, had transformed the locals' shelter into their prison. The penetration of capitalism into this fortress turned the locals against their natural habitat, making them the agents of its destruction.[40] This led to an unbalance between nature and social life, whose consequences were discussed in the following sections.[41]

The biological context included a series of studies written by researchers who provided different perspectives on the village and its population. Francisc Rainer's one on anthropology and D.C. Georgescu's study of demographics cut across Stahl's and his collaborators' approach, breaking the sociological study with interventions from other disciplines. Georgescu's sections added to the general view of the village's inadequacies. His work on nutrition and housing illustrated what appeared to be irrational aspects of peasant living – the lack of care for the self in terms of diet and habitation – problems otherwise well-known for most of the

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[39] Ibid., 1:98.
[40] Ibid., 1:39.
[41] Ibid., 1:103.

Romanian rural world.[42] Contrasting with the aura that Stahl had created around this region, these studies pointed to the very problems the latter was trying to explain in his minute analysis of sociological archaeology.

In the historic context, Stahl gave a detailed account of the birth, survival and decline of the traditional village community with its self-governing bodies and relations with the world outside arguing that this ancient form of social organisation which had resisted almost unaltered throughout many centuries was being undermined by two agencies of change: the penetration of capitalism and the emergence of the modern state.[43] The author commented that: 'Vrancea remained archaic until the 1880s. (…) Capitalism penetrated it not in search of grains but in search of wood. The politics of the logging companies constituted a real colonial invasion.'[44] After the First World War, the companies convinced the locals to provide the wood from the forests themselves in exchange for money or corn. For the village, this ultimately led to the dissolution of the old ways of life, a shift from animal husbandry to working in logging, and to uncontrolled destruction of the forests. Stahl also noted that 'the exploitation of the forest has transformed the village population into a sort of proletariat working at home for the profit of urban traders', a fact the Nerejeni themselves were fully aware of.[45] The second agency of change, the Romanian modern state, established in the nineteenth century, adopted a legal system that could not accommodate traditional forms of property. The state

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[42] Henri H. Stahl, *Nerej, un village d'une région archaïque*, vol. 3 (Institut de Sciences Sociales Roumaines, 1939), 191-207.
[43] Stahl, *Nerej*, 1:368-378.
[44] Ibid., 1:369-370.
[45] Ibid., 1:376-377.

could not protect the locals either in their internal strife or in the face of the capitalist companies. Moreover, the state also contributed to a transformation of local mentality through its institutions: the school, the army, the church and the administration.[46] 'The appearance of the modern state meant the death of Vrancea', lamented Stahl.[47]

With the discussion of the psychological context, the authors moved towards the study of contemporary transformations affecting the community. 'The present crisis in Vrancea is not only social, economical, political and legal, but also psychological'.[48] This short study on psychology interpreted the change from a traditional, free-standing social organisation to a new one, largely dependent on relations with the outside world as a state of crisis. The moral features of the old community, 'social cohesion, a taste for freedom and individual initiative, an *esprit de corps*' had made way for signs of mental instability: 'doubt, incoherence, extreme individualism, the loss of the will to fight for the future'. [49] According to Stahl, the first set of features were representative of all village communities, forming the balance between individual and the social group, in contrast with the individualism present in urban societies. Thus, in this sense, change was lamented as a loss, disequilibrium and a derangement of all reference points for the community.

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[46] This resonates with Eugene Weber's study on the transformation of the French peasantry, which identified similar agencies of change (the army, the transport network, education, and the church). Eugene Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen* (Chatto & Windus, 1979). Also, another interesting correlation is that with the Russian peasantry, as discussed with reference to Weber's aforementioned theory: David Moon, "Peasants into Russian citizens? A comparative perspective," *Revolutionary Russia* 9, no. 1 (1996): 43-81; David Moon, "Late Imperial Peasants," in *Late Imperial Russia : problems and prospects; essays in honour of R.B. McKean* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), 120-146.

[47] Stahl, *Nerej*, 1:378.

[48] Ibid., 1:382.

[49] Ibid.

Moreover, this process of dissolution was accompanied by social amnesia, which made it irreversible. Specific to peasant culture, its perpetuation and survival depended on the constant learning 'by heart' of the rules, traditions, and practices. Once this process was stopped, and the community began to forget, the new generation had lost – along with its past - its internal logic.

These ideas formed the base for the study of the *manifestări* (manifestations) starting with the spiritual ones, which looked first at the influence of modernising institutions (the school and the church) on the local culture and secondly examined a variety of local traditions and customs, many of them about to die out. The authors showed the inability of these state agencies of change to provide a substitute for the disappearing cultural life of the village. The short study of education in Nerej revealed an alarming turnover of teachers, one of the main causes of pupils' poor attendance. The study of local religious traditions and superstitions, on the other, discussed the confusion the church had created in the minds of the locals who were both ashamed and doubtful of their ancient 'primitive' beliefs, but still attached to them.[50] In his memoirs, Stahl also mentioned that the team had to obtain a special approval from the church to allow the villagers to perform traditional customs around the wake of the dead, which had been legally prohibited.[51] Thus, instead of acting as a unifying institution, the local church had added to the general sense of spiritual loss and disequilibrium.

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[50] Henri H. Stahl, *Nerej, un village d'une région archaïque*, vol. 2 (Institut de Sciences Sociales Roumaines, 1939), 48-49.
[51] Stahl, *Amintiri*, 373-4.

The economic, legal, and administrative manifestations further examined the continuous process of change affecting the region. Investigating 'the causes that have provoked the disorganisation of the ancient Vrancea', the analysis of the economic life of Nerej revealed both its specific problems and those common to all other Romanian villages.[52] Particular to the area was the new orientation towards the forest caused by capitalist wood industry. Making a living out of wood-related occupations meant mainly pillaging the forest, transporting and selling wood as well as engaging in other small-scale manufacturing industries, such as cooperage. The careful study of these occupations revealed the same problems of many peasant commercial activities and enterprises – their low profitability due to both external competition and to an internal failure to understand business principles.[53] Moreover, the analysis of peasant family budgets showed that the revenue from agriculture and from the additional occupations hardly met basic needs.[54] In this, Nerej showed the same lack of capitalist spirit as many other isolated Romanian mountain villages. The legal and administrative life of the village was also adversely affected by the disappearance of a local judiciary body operating according to the traditional legal system and its replacement with that of the modern state.

In his conclusions, Stahl discussed the three main directions of the study, two of which were related to his diachronic approach: firstly, the interest in re-defining and explaining the nature of the *răzeșie* as a 'complex social structure' determined by many concurrent factors (rather than simply a community of free peasants);

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[52] Stahl, *Nerej*, 3:13.
[53] Ibid., 3:139-148.
[54] Ibid., 3:234-236.

secondly, the fact that Nerej illustrated the existence of a previous type of 'archaic' village pre-dating the later genealogical one. The third point sought to reinforce the importance of Gusti's 'sociological parallelism', by stating that in the past the social organisation in Nerej was in a state of perfect harmony among all its conditions and manifestations.[55] The causes of its unbalance were numerous, as the author enumerated:

> was it modern capitalism (…) which destabilised the entire social life? Was it the population growth? Was it the psychological revolution, which made people lose their sense of tradition? Are we witnessing the dissolution of these people's mentality? A loss of rigor in legal customs? Or is the State with its new modern forms the only cause of this transformation? [56]

His answer was that all these factors had contributed to Nerej's disequilibrium, leading its people from a balanced integrated social life towards a new individualistic mentality, from a peaceful fruitful relationship with nature to the brink of ecological disaster. These conclusions, and the last point in particular, clarified the understanding of change proposed by Stahl and his team. Greatly influenced by their leader, his collaborators agreed with his search for a blessed 'state of nature' and with his method of looking for the traces of the past in the present. Although not romanticizing the countryside, this vision lamented the past as a lost innocence, seeing the present as a total state of crisis. In their individual or co-authored studies, his collaborators integrated elements from the new modernising discourse of cultural work, often presenting the crude reality of the

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[55] Ibid., 3:392.
[56] Ibid.

village in the present. Although this contrasted greatly with the sections dealing with the past, the constant dichotomy between the old and the new Nerejeni reinforced Stahl's main conclusions. At the same time, identifying the major agents of change, capitalism and the modern state, as the destabilising factors that had led to the crisis of this community contradicted the positive spirit of the Royal Student Teams. Looking back to the research and its findings, Stahl's memoirs mentioned that between 1927 and 1939 the situation 'had got much worse' and that he had by then realised that it 'could not be resolved with libraries and free medical consultations'.[57] Moreover, the locals' political affiliations had also shifted towards extremism. As Stahl noted, 'Vrancea was teeming with supporters of the Legion', a fact he interpreted as a symptom of the locals' desire to take the law into their own hands rather than wait for cultural initiatives and propaganda statements.[58]

Sixty villages studied by the Royal Student Teams in the summer of 1938

Historians of Romanian sociology have noted that Golopenția's research went beyond the boundaries set by Gusti for the monographic study of the countryside.[59] His two major innovations were replacing full-scale village monographs with concise *monografii sumare* (summary monographs) and using statistics in combination with field-based qualitative research.[60] Informed by his recent research in Germany where he completed his doctorate, Golopenția rejected Gusti's plan of producing a

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[57] Stahl, *Amintiri*, 379.
[58] Ibid., 380.
[59] Stahl, *Amintiri*, 359-62; Rostás, *Monografia ca utopie*, 148; Caraioan, "Gusti," 140-1.
[60] Golopenția, "Cronologie," LXXXI-LXXXII.

monographic description for each Romanian village (which would have entailed a staggering 15,000 monographs) and proposed a system of summary monographs, based on a typology of Romanian villages. His goal was to refine Gusti's idea of militant sociology by proposing a clearer plan in which sociological knowledge could contribute to state government. This was directly influenced by the new climate of mid-1930s German academia and in particular by his supervisor at the University of Leipzig, Hans Freyer. Freyer's sociological theory has been defined as representative of 'radical conservatism' in that it sought to adapt conservative concepts of nineteenth-century sociology to modern conditions. Rejecting liberalism and individualism, radical conservatives 'looked to state power to reassert their goals' and reasserted the value of 'collective particularity - of the nation, the *Volk*, race, or the community of the faithful' combined with the state's mastery of modern technology.[61] In his doctoral thesis, Golopenția looked at how governments could benefit from traditional sociology, arguing that, in the twentieth century's new political context, sociological knowledge could become the main source of information for the administration of the modern state and its population.[62]

On his return from Germany, Golopenția proposed a comprehensive programme of studies of rural (and subsequently urban) life meant to provide an overall picture of Romanian society and its future transformation. According to him, the only way sociology in Romania could become science of the nation was by

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[61] See Jerry Z. Muller, "Carl Schmitt, Hans Freyer and the radical conservative critique of liberal democracy in the Weimar republic," *History of Political Thought* 12, no. 4 (1991): 696-697.

[62] Anton Golopenția, "Informarea conducerii statului și sociologia tradițională," in *Opere*, vol. 1 (Bucharest: Editura Enciclopedică, 2002), 17. Golopenția's view of European politics appeared to agree with Freyer's in that he saw liberal democracy being inevitably replaced by authoritarianism and economic planning.

moving away from 'the folkloric study of a few villages' towards research that 'balanced the particular with the general, that faced the acute problems of the state (…) dealt equally with the town [and the countryside], and provided information about the neighbouring states and the great powers'.[63] This new type of research required a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, which built on and improved the monographic technique designed by Gusti. His plan for a 'summary monograph' was officially published in *Curierul Serviciului Social* in July 1939.[64] In it, the author redesigned the monograph to complement statistical analysis by providing concise information on the specificities and details of the rural transformation in each village, which would otherwise be obscured by the quantitative analysis. Opening with the statement 'the Romanian villages are in a process of great transformation', the article placed the entire monographic project under the sign of change.

This new approach was pioneered in *60 de sate*, a five-volume study published between 1941 and 1943. Using the manpower of the volunteer Royal Teams and the future Social Service, material was collected from sixty villages, throughout the summer of 1938. The study covered villages from all Romanian regions as follows: Oltenia three, Muntenia twelve, Dobrogea three, Moldavia nine, Bessarabia ten, Bukovina two, Transylvania twelve, Banat nine.[65] Golpenția and D.C. Georgescu, one of the School's old collaborators, coordinated the teams, composed

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[63] Golopenția, *Ceasul misiunilor reale*, 203-204.
[64] Anton Golopenția, "Monografia sumară a satului," in *Opere vol.1* (Bucharest: Ed. Enciclopedică, 2002), 173-182.
[65] Golopenția and Georgescu, *60 sate*, (I) XIII.

of 850 participants. The main methods of research were the standardised questionnaires and the summary monographs, forming a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. The Central Institute of Statistics led by Sabin Manuilă processed the results of the teams.[66]

The study contained three volumes of statistical data analysis on the demographics, economic, sanitary and cultural state of the rural world, and two volumes of village summary monographs.[67] The authors focused on the major 'problems of rural Romania and their complex causes', examining: 'demographics on birth rate, death rate and the evolution of property ownership, for the previous fifteen years; the extension and use of land; peasant budgets; inventory (livestock and other assets); nutrition; the hygiene of the home; literacy levels; and the access to middle and higher education of rural students' both from a macro and micro perspective. [68] The two approaches corresponded to the two distinct schools of thought involved in this study. Firstly there were the economists, engineers and statisticians who wrote the survey studies based on the statistical data gathered by the teams. The second group was formed of younger authors, part of the new emerging generation of sociologists whose academic careers were later 'interrupted' by the Second World War and the subsequent change of regime. Working on this project, many of them became attached to Golopenția's 'left-wing team', continuing

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[66] Solonari, *Purifying*, 75-80.
[67] The third volume, containing Golopenția's own study, was never published. A shorter version of this did nevertheless appear in 1940 in Gheorge Banu's *Revista pentru Igienă Socială* as Anton Golopenția, "Despre starea culturală și economică a populației rurale din România," *Revista de Igienă Socială* X, no. 1 (1940): 212-63.
[68] Golopenția and Georgescu, *60 sate*, (I) XIII.

to work with him on his later projects, in Dâmbovnic and on his campaigns beyond the river Bug during the war.[69]

The right eye: the synthetic view of the countryside

1. Population and demographics

The first volume contained studies on population and demographics by Athanasie Georgescu and I. Chibulcuteanu based on data collected from only thirty-seven and twenty-one villages respectively, selected according to region (the villages represented all Romanian provinces) and by geography (villages located in the plains, on hills and in the mountains).[70]

The population survey, compiling data on individual families and households, created a reliable base for the rest of the research, following the tradition of the earlier monographic trips. The authors used the 1930 census to compare the changes and illustrate the dynamic trends of Romania's rural population.[71] The study reasserted some of the well-known ills of the countryside, also revealing new tendencies and new problems. By showing how over-crowding led to migration; migration (specifically male) led to more women working in agriculture and to a fall in birth-rates, which then in turn led to an aging of the population in general, the authors highlighted the interconnectedness of the transformations affecting the

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[69] Rostás, "Gheorghe Retegan"; Rostás, "Nicolae Dunăre"; Pompiliu Caraioan, "Școala sociologică de la București," in *Sociologia militans IV* (Bucharest: Ed. Științifică, 1967), 145-146.
[70] Athanasie Georgescu and I. Chibulcuteanu, *60 sate românesti: cercetate de echipele studentești în vara 1938 : anchetă sociologică condusă de Anton Golopenția și dr. D. C. Georgescu*, vol. 1, 5 vols. (Bucharest: Institutul de Științe Sociale al României, 1941).
[71] Manuilă and Georgescu, *Populația României*.

rural population. The demographic survey centred on the issue of infant mortality, a well known problem of the rural world, whose incidence was spread across all the country's regions. The survey of the population by occupation highlighted a new process emerging in the countryside: the high rate of labour, especially agricultural, done mostly by women and children.[72] This in turn was connected to the increasing male rural-urban migration aimed at finding other sources of income apart from agriculture. Another recent tendency discussed in both sections was depopulation, a phenomenon specific to the Banat region and already studied in depth by the Social Institute of Banat.[73] The authors were alarmed by the low birth rates in this region and saw them as symptoms of family 'instability': couples married 'too early', had too few or no children and often separated later on. Unlike in the rest of the country, divorce was much more common in this region, with 'divorced couples preferring not to remarry and entering cohabitation relationships instead'.[74]

2.The peasant economy

The two articles on peasant economy, one written by I. Measnicov and the other co-authored by Petre Stănculescu and C. Ștefănescu, respectively summarised the state of the rural economy since the land reform and examined the current strengths and

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[72] The authors often referred to this work as 'auxiliary'. Georgescu and I. Chibulcuteanu, *60 sate*, 1:34-40. This trend had already been identified by the census in 1930.Manuilă and Georgescu, *Populația României*, 72-75.

[73] Adrian Brudariu, *Depopularea Banatului: cercetări asupra manifestărilor etico-juridice din satul Belinț* (Timișoara: Tipografia Românească, 1934); Petru Râmnățeanu, *Studiu asupra depopulării Banatului: cauzele depopulării* (Cluj: Tipografia "Transilvania', 1935); Ion Grigore, *Depopulare și economie în Banat* (Timișoara: Tipografia Românească, 1940).

[74] Golopenția and Georgescu, *60 sate*, (I) 69.

weaknesses of the rural economy.[75] Like the previous studies, these were dynamic surveys of socio-economic change designed to make the countryside legible to the state and its scholarly elites.

Starting with the land reform as the main reference point, both studies examined the changes and the unforeseen effects this had caused for peasant producers. Measnicov pointed out that the reform had led to a new 'social differentiation of the peasantry' caused by the growth in the property of some and the diminution in that of others.[76] The transfer of land, higher in the plain villages, had led to 'a fragmentation of property in some villages and a concentration of it in others', also influenced by the social structure of these localities before the reform. Overall, the author concluded that those who had land before the reform tended to consolidate their holdings by acquiring new land, whereas those who were given land lost some or all of it.[77]

Stănculescu and Stefănucă analysed the current problems of the peasant economy and the areas of potential improvement. Amongst the various economic ills of the countryside (such as the lack of agricultural machinery especially in the small and medium-sized holdings and the decrease in keeping animals both for labour and for animal products, the disparity between the income from agricultural work of each family and their consumption), the authors concentrated on another

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[75] I. Measnicov, P. Stănculescu, and C. Ștefănescu, *60 sate românesti: cercetate de echipele studentești în vara 1938 : anchetă sociologică condusă de Anton Golopenția și dr. D. C. Georgescu*, vol. 2, 5 vols. (Bucharest: Institutul de Științe Sociale al României, 1941).

[76] I Measnicov, "Evoluția de după război a proprietății agricole," in *60 sate românesti, vol. II* (Bucharest: Institutul de Științe Sociale al României, 1941), 27-8.

[77] Ibid., 41.

side-effect of the land reform, the phenomenon of 'cerealism'. This consisted in a shift from animal husbandry to grain cultivation, which had started in the nineteenth century (especially in Wallachia and Moldavia) and which was perpetuated by the new peasant small holders after the reform, despite the disappearance of the latifundia system. Instead of adopting a more efficient use of land, the locals decided to grow the same crops, grains (mainly wheat) almost exclusively on their recently acquired plots. 'The land reform was understood as an impetus towards more grain cultivation, which led to a decrease in the number of livestock', concluded the authors.[78]

The problems of the peasant economy were contrasted with its signs of transformation in a market-oriented direction. From a social point of view, the authors identified a 'model peasant' belonging to the category of landowners with properties of 'ten to twenty-five hectares' that they advised the state to sustain and encourage. This choice was explained firstly in economic terms by the fact that 'it seems that the larger peasant property [of 10 hectares or more] is better suited to rationalisation and mechanisation, since the landowners seek to procure the inventory they need [themselves]'.[79] Secondly, the authors agreed with the moral virtues of this ideal peasant as Nicolae Cornățeanu, one of the School's oldest agronomist collaborators, described him: 'sensible, measured, willing to intensify his use of land and expand it, without debts and with savings in the bank, distant from the sterile fighting of the state, and concentrating on the future of his children', and

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[78] P. Stănculescu and C. Ştefănescu, "Situaţia economică prezentă," in *60 sate româneşti vol. II* (Bucharest: Institutul de Ştiinţe Sociale al României, 1941), 155.
[79] Ibid., 144.

designated him as 'the agricultural pioneer of the future'.[80] In regional terms, the authors considered the areas of greatest innovation and progress towards rational capitalist agriculture to be the Banat and Transylvania. The Banat peasantry made the best use of land, of agricultural machinery and livestock, and had a higher income from agriculture than all other regions. Moreover, 'in Transylvania and Banat, the growth of the surface for exploitation has transformed the economic structure: agglomerations of peasant households or capitalist-style farms', concluded the authors.[81]

As a preliminary conclusion, these studies examined the profitability of the peasant economy in terms of production for the market. This was not a lament about the disappearance of old practices and traditions, but an incentive to break away from the backwardness of the past. Their macroeconomic vision considered the transformation of the peasant economy from a closed, autarchic unit to a proto-capitalist one. In this sense, the study clarified the ways the rationalisation of agriculture could be hastened and improved, by identifying the most efficient group of peasant economic producers and the most advanced economic regions.

The left eye: the summary monographs

Illustrating the findings of the overall surveys, the selection of summary monographs published in the last volumes of this collection formed a constellation of micro-visions of the countryside that presented the problems discussed above in their local

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[80] Cornățeanu in Ibid., 207.
[81] Ibid., 245.

socio-historic context. The studies formed a typology of Romanian villages organised by geographical unit and predominant economic activity. The first volume dealt with the predominantly agricultural villages in the main Romanian plains of Transylvania, Wallachia, Moldavia, Banat and Bessarabia, as well as two pastoral mountain villages in Banat and Northern Vrancea, whereas the last volume concentrated on villages in hilly areas, where the population was engaged in non-agricultural trades. The underlying principles behind this typology were drawn from Golopenția's plan for a 'summary monograph'.[82] This focused the researchers' gaze on the signs of change, providing them with a framework for analysing the countryside.

Following Golopenția's advice, all monographs started with a socio-geographical description of the locality.[83] Similar to the anthropological arrival scene, these short descriptions used a map of the village, its natural setting or the climate to communicate a strong sense of place and of local uniqueness. 'Today the forests have disappeared' announced Miron Constantinescu, indicating the relation between historical and ecological change. Now a 'ploughmen's village' (*sat de plugari*), Spreuș used to be a forested village centred on animal husbandry.[84] Geography was interpreted differently in Jdioara, a village in Banat, where its place in the midst of a transport network and proximity to towns was telling of its state of development.[85] In turn, Stoenești, seemed as 'hard to find in reality, as on the map'

[82] Golopenția, "Monografia sumară a satului."

[83] Ibid., 175.

[84] Miron Constantinescu, "Spreuș, un sat de agricultori din Câmpia Tisei," in *60 sate românesti, vol. IV* (Bucharest: Institutul de Științe Sociale al României, 1941), 1.

[85] C.G Pavel, "Jdioara, un sat de agricultori din Banat," in *60 sate românești, vol. IV* (Bucharest: Institutul de Științe Sociale al României, 1941), 16.

and, when found, it was 'a desolate sight'.[86] Thus, placing the village in its

surroundings was not a way to isolate and freeze it, but rather to connect it to a

past, to routes or flows. Moreover, since the spatial coordinates contributed to

creating a rural typology, the titles themselves contained a geographical indication,

alongside an economic one: 'Spreuș, an agricultural village in the Tisza Plain', 'Mărul,

a mountain village in Banat', 'Bogații, a village of fruit sellers and of urban migrants

in Dâmbovița', etc.[87]

Following from this short introduction and marking the actual beginning of

the analysis, the authors examined the 'cosmological context', which included the

form of the settlement, the built environment, the climate and relief. Each of these

features constituted an enquiry meant to either designate the type of village being

studied or its stage of transformation. The authors approached this in a

metaphorical or literary style, using the natural settings to indicate the essence of

each locality: Mărul, 'was compressed in between the hills', with 'house after house,

crowded tightly together, along the Bistra Valley'.[88] In contrast, Perieți's setting was

'typical for the Bărăgan plain', spread out, showing that 'the locals' need to feel

comfortable, not crowded or choked', but also 'that the high number of children

made the village expand out into the field'.[89] If the natural settings provided a feel of

the place, the built environment was an indicator of social stratification, economic

[86] Mircea Tiriung, M. Dobre, and Ghenuță Coman, "Stoeșești, un sat cu moșie boerească din Tutova," in *60 sate românești, vol. IV* (Bucharest: Institutul de Științe Sociale al României, 1941), 53-4.

[87] Golopenția and Georgescu, *60 sate*.

[88] C.G. Pavel, "Mărul, un sat de munte din Banat," in *60 sate românești, vol. IV* (Bucharest: Institutul de Științe Sociale al României, 1941), 120.

[89] Gheorghe Reteganul and Ovidiu Bârlea, "Perieți, un sat de muncitori agricoli din Ialomița," in *60 sate românești, vol. IV* (Bucharest: Institutul de Științe Sociale al României, 1941), 27.

and cultural change. In Mărul, the author mentioned that 'when we get to the richer (villages) things change and along with the furniture one finds also urban manners and life style'.[90] While in Mocod, a village devoted to animal husbandry, 'the stables are bigger and better looking than people's houses'.[91]

The 'biological context' assessed demographic, health and ethnicity data in socio-economic as well as moral terms. Discussing birth rates, the authors reached apparently conflicting conclusions. In Banat, notorious for its declining birth rates, one case study showed that 'birth control is voluntary and thus perpetuates a mentality that has become rooted amongst the population of the Banat villages, a mentality born out of the desire for a quiet life, without worries and from the desire to prevent the fragmentation of inheritance'.[92] In contrast, in Chirileni, Bessarabia the high birth rate hid alarming infant mortality. 'The hardships inside the peasant household and its economic life are decisive for the biologic context', commented the author. There, people married early, for economic reasons and had many children many of whom died before the age of one, lacking 'constant maternal care'.[93]

Health issues were mainly interpreted in economic terms or linked to socio-economic issues. If poverty had negative effects on the population's health, the students' conclusion was that the corruption of the medical staff added to the

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[90] Pavel, "Mărul, un sat de munte din Banat," 120.

[91] Gheorghe Reteganul and V. Zinveliu, "Mocodul, un sat de cultivatori de ceapă și de producători de pănură din granița Năsăudului," in *60 sate românești, vol. V* (Bucharest: Institutul de Științe Sociale al României, 1942), 65.

[92] Pavel, "Jdioara, un sat de agricultori din Banat," 21-2.

[93] Gheorghe Meniuc, "Chirileni, un sat de plugari din Bălți," in *60 sate românesti, vol. IV* (Bucharest: Institutul de Științe Sociale al României, 1941), 95.

locals' sufferings. In Jdioara, Banat, 'if you go to the doctor, it's 100 lei, if the doctor comes by carriage, 200 lei, if he comes by car, 400 lei' confessed the locals.[94] Another factor that affected the health and physical well being of the population was the influence of the city. Those who migrated to the city, worked in towns or traded there were perceived as becoming weaker, more prone to illness and often degenerate. In adopting an urban style, the Jdioareni seemed to also 'force themselves to live the wretched life of city workers'.[95] This in turn led to diseases and a loss of cultural identity. In Vrancea, in the village of Bârsești, the high rate of syphilis was explained through 'the contact of the locals with foreigners [Magyars] who had come to work in logging'.[96] Thus, the city was presented as a carrier of diseases, a place of perdition and contamination.

With respect to ethnicity, the third side of the 'biological context', in the few villages with a non-Romanian population studied, the authors voiced strong feelings of nationalism. Regarding Spreuș, Constantinescu commented that 'on the Western border, a few kilometres away from Hungary, a great part of the economic power is concentrated in the hands of seventeen Hungarians and Germans (…) This is a grave matter that calls for an urgent resolution. Only by raising the standard of living and doing justice to the Romanian population will we strengthen the resistance against any aggression.'[97] Writing about the opposite trend in Căianul Mic, in Northern Transylvania, where the Romanians had 'expansive tendencies' towards the

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[94] Pavel, "Jdioara, un sat de agricultori din Banat," 20.
[95] Ibid., 22.
[96] Yolanda Nicoară, "Bârsești, un sat răzășesc din nordul Vrancei," in *60 sate românești, vol. IV* (Bucharest: Institutul de Știinţe Sociale al României, 1941), 154.
[97] Constantinescu, "Spreuș, un sat de agricultori din Câmpia Tisei," 10.

surrounding Magyar areas, Gheorghe Retegan noted that 'foreign to the land, (…) the Magyar is the man that is leaving, losing ground from under his feet. The Romanian (…) plants his foot firmly on the ground, hoping to seize all that the foreigner cannot appreciate'.[98]

The third context, the historical one, concentrated on the recent administrative and government reforms that affected the recent past of each village. Somewhat relativising Stahl's interest in the archaic forms of peasant organisation, Golopenția's plan asked the students to 'see if the old social organisation was still relevant'.[99] The summary monographs gave special attention to the land reform and its application, therefore providing the details for the conclusions of the macro-economic surveys in the first volumes of this publication. The authors concluded that in many villages, social differences based on historic status group distinctions (e.g. free and enserfed peasants), had been overridden by material differences, leading to a new social order.[100] In most areas, the great turning point had been the land reform, which, despite the locals' expectations, had allowed both capitalism and state-related corruption to penetrate into the countryside. For the villagers living on the old (Transylvanian and Banat) borderlands, like Bucșoaia and Mărul, the regulation of forest ownership meant that people lost their right to use either the wood or the pasture, which led them towards different occupations. The author commented that 'logging had become the occupation of capitalists, lessors, and

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[98] Gheorghe Reteganul, "Căianul Mic, un sat de voștinari și strângătoare de lână din Munții Someșului," in *60 sate românești, vol. V* (Bucharest: Institutul de Științe Sociale al României, 1942), 22.
[99] Golopenția, "Monografia sumară a satului," 178.
[100] Gheorghe Reteganul, "Cârligele, sat de podgoreni din Râmnicul Sărat," in *60 sate românești, vol. V* (Bucharest: Institutul de Științe Sociale al României, 1942), 16.

business people, the real beneficiaries of our natural wealth'. This led to 'the tragedy of the villagers having to work as mere tools' for the capitalists, he continued.[101] Corruption and bribery were the other side-effects of the land reform. In Stoenești, designated as the 'village with a boyar tenure', the reform redistributed the better properties to the boyar's descendents, leaving the villagers with the worst areas. This was done with the connivance of state officials, who, as in other places had been 'invited to dine and drink with the wealthier members of the community'.[102] Thus, the discussion of the land reform brought forth the irregularities and corruption of the state and the ability of the rural rich to manipulate the law to their advantage.

The most interesting findings of the summary monographs related to the economic situation.[103] As with the macro-economic analyses, the research questions of these micro-level studies focused on processes (such as impoverishment, enrichment, adaptation to the market, etc), producing a dynamic image of the peasant economy. Following their separation of the villages in two main categories, firstly those where agriculture was the main occupation and the only source of income and secondly those where other trades supplemented the family budgets, I will look at the students' findings on each category, and their interpretation of their social and cultural implications.

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[101] Mircea Tiriung, "Bucșoaia, un sat de muncitori forestieri și industriali din Bucovina," in *60 sate românești vol. V* (Bucharest: Institutul de Științe Sociale al României, 1942), 177.

[102] Tiriung, Dobre, and Coman, "Stoeșești, un sat cu moșie boerească din Tutova," 58; Pavel, "Jdioara, un sat de agricultori din Banat," 22.

[103] According to Golopenția, this section was to include: an assessment of the property and assets of each village (land, animals, machinery), the division of this property, the social stratification it created, the use of this property in each household (internal, for the market), and the extent to which each household could sustain itself from its earnings. Golopenția, "Monografia sumară a satului," 179-81.

The monographs of the agricultural villages formed a picture of generalised poverty, with too many people trying to live off too little land, which they had neither the knowledge nor the tools to cultivate efficiently. Engaging with problems such as land fragmentation, lack of specialised knowledge, and lack of capital, the monographs illustrated the general points made in the economic survey of the second volume. For example, in Spreuș the tendency to focus just on agriculture and to abandon animal husbandry illustrated the issue of 'cerealisation'.[104] The fragmentation of landholdings showed that in the same village land was not enough to feed the population, let alone produce rationally for the market. In contrast, in the Northwestern part of the same historic region, Chirileni was a village plentiful in land, where most locals owned five to ten hectares. Yet, although much better than elsewhere, these landowners 'do not work their land technically and rationally, to its maximum efficiency, since high crop yields were difficult'.[105] In the mountain villages of Mărul and Bârsești, the situation was no different. In the former, the locals had formerly engaged in animal husbandry but had recently become woodcutters because of the seizure of pasture, while the later had suffered the consequences of deforestation.[106] The authors concluded that agriculture was deeply flawed and simply not viable in these conditions of scarcity of land and proceeded to find out if additional trades were able to make the peasant economy more profitable or at least sustainable.

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[104] Constantinescu, "Spreuș, un sat de agricultori din Câmpia Tisei," 7-9.
[105] Meniuc, "Chirileni, un sat de plugari din Bălți," 99.
[106] Nicoară, "Bârsești, un sat răzășesc din nordul Vrancei," 176-8.

The villages dominated by new trades raised very different economic issues. Apart from two success stories, most case studies were dramas or even tragedies of the peasantry's attempt and failure to adapt to the capitalist market economy. The positive example was Mocod, a village in the former border region of Năsăud that had benefitted from the Saxon influence, coupling education with economic initiative. In search for new revenues outside agriculture, the villagers had revived an old local trade: producing a type of wool cloth called *panură* and turning it into a productive commercial activity.[107] The authors appreciated not only an emerging capitalist spirit, but also the villages' adaptation to the modern world whilst maintaining their local traditions. All other examples recorded a certain degree of failure, ranging from Căianul Mic in Transylvania, where, despite making a profit from *voștinărit* (beewax gathering), the villagers could not compete with the local Jewish entrepreneurs who bought it from them and sold it on for a profit, to Vidra, where travelling salesmen and women spent most of the year on the road to sell their goods, but hardly broke even.[108]

Another form of seeking an alternative income led to the proletarisation of the rural population or to migration to the nearby towns. The first tendency was strongest in the villages of Bucșoaia in Bukovina and Târnava in Banat, where the

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[107] Reteganul and Zinveliu, "Mocodul, un sat de cultivatori de ceapă și de producători de pănură din granița Năsăudului."

[108] Reteganul, "Căianul Mic, un sat de voștinari și strângătoare de lână din Munții Someșului"; Florea Florescu, "Vidra, un sat de moți negustori și meșteșugari ambulanți," in *60 sate românești vol. V* (Bucharest: Institutul de Științe Sociale al României, 1942), 86-172.

locals worked in the logging and factories in the nearby towns.[109] Mircea Tiriung, the author of both studies, interpreted their fates very differently. In Bucşoaia, the employees of the local capitalists were perceived as victims as well as heroes since they had resisted urban contamination. 'When these servitudes disappear, this village with industrious workers will become a model of a healthy and prosperous Romanian settlement.'[110] In contrast, the inhabitants of Târnava were depicted as the product of hybridization, who had got the worst of both systems, 'maintaining a primitive mentality, unaltered by the urban civilization'.[111]

The discussion of economics went hand in hand with that of the social and juridical 'manifestations'. For Golopenția, the focal questions of these sections regarded social differentiation and the fight against property fragmentation.[112] Both represented dynamic processes linked to the new economic conditions – one structural and one agent-based. As seen, the findings showed a general accentuation of class differences according to land-ownership alongside the creation of new social groups at the extremes of the spectrum – rural proletarians and rich farmers, *chiaburi*.[113] In studying the legal issue of property fragmentation, the authors found that most peasants made no provisions to stop it, continuing their tradition of dividing the land between their children through inheritance. The only exceptions to this were regulating births or using marriage as a 'business' to fight

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[109] Tiriung, "Bucşoaia, un sat de muncitori forestieri şi industriali din Bucovina"; Mircea Tiriung and Constantin Durdun, "Târnova, Caraş, un sat de plugari - muncitori industriali," in *60 sate româneşti vol. V* (Bucharest: Institutul de Ştiinţe Sociale al României, 1942), 206-218.

[110] Tiriung, "Bucşoaia, un sat de muncitori forestieri şi industriali din Bucovina," 183.

[111] Tiriung and Durdun, "Târnova, Caraş, un sat de plugari - muncitori industriali," 228.

[112] Golopenția, "Monografia sumară a satului," 180-1.

[113] In this context, the term *chiabur* designated a rich peasant who owned between 50-500 hectares of land and who used hired labour to work it.

against it. The authors disapproved of both, seeing the first as a sign of backwardness and the second as a form of biological or cultural perversion.

The final part of the monographs was devoted to culture, where the main question raised by Golopenția was 'to what extent had urban civilisation entered the village'? Looking at external trends in custom, dress, architecture, but also at the influence of education and of the church, the aim was to assess the extent to which a balance between the two cultures had been found.[114] The summary monographs continued the lament of the previous generations over the loss of local customs and traditions, seeing the city as a factor of perversion and degeneration. The authors described the living traditions as providing immunity against the unhealthy contaminating influence of the city.

In relation to social change, a few conclusions emerge from the analysis of the summary monographs. Following Golopenția's directions, all authors recorded change on all levels of their description. However, unlike the quantitative studies, their writings had a strong subjective element, the authors commenting, moralising and advising on what they saw and assessed. These combined existing tendencies to cultural lament with an emphasis on the costs of economic transformation and social change. Agriculture appeared as deeply dysfunctional not only in terms of work culture (as Gusti's projects addressed it), but also as a mode of production. In most cases, villagers simply had too little land even for subsistence farming, let alone commercial production. Moreover, class differentiation appeared to create

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[114] Golopenția, "Monografia sumară a satului," 182.

311

even greater disparities causing the impoverishment of many for the benefit of the few. In the places where additional occupations were used to supplement agricultural income, the authors concluded that, on the whole, the locals were unable to adapt to a capitalist mindset. Thus, for these writers, poverty appeared as the main problem of the countryside, which, caught between the old and the new, tended to preserve the worst of the two worlds.

The monographs also engaged with the two main agencies of change, capitalism and the state, discussed in the first part of this study and in Stahl's *Nerej*, presenting a slightly different overall opinion than both of them. Firstly, unlike the quantitative studies that saw capitalism as the future of the countryside and the peasants' failure to adapt to it as a sign of backwardness, the authors of the monographs stressed the exploitative, individualistic and perverse effects of capitalism over its potential to bring progress and welfare to the countryside. In many ways, the conclusions of the monographs were closer to Stahl's than to those of the other volumes of the same publication. The authors noted that the differentiation between the rich (either locals or outsiders) and the poor (always locals) resulting from the impact of capitalism in the rural world did not benefit the local community as a whole. Secondly, the monographs had a dual and contradictory vision of the state. When referring to the current state enactor of the land reform, and provider of education and health, the authors characterised it as deeply flawed, blind to the reality and to corruption. Conversely, when they spoke of the future, the students described a new state, ruled by moral principles and scientific

knowledge, able to manage the economic and spiritual transformation of the countryside.

The missing volume and the synthetic view

Thus far I have discussed only four volumes of the five promised by the editors of *60 de sate* because the third volume of this survey study was never published. There is a certain 'mystery' around the disappearance of the draft sent for publication.[115] Gheorghe Retegan has claimed this was not published in the 1940s as it contained data on Bessarabia, yet this was only one version of the story.[116] Despite this gap in the series, one of Golopenția's articles published in the Special Issue on the Sanitary Problems of the Romanian Rural Population of *Revista de Igienă Socială* (the Social Hygiene Review) provided the main points of this missing volume.[117] The article, written a year after the research campaigns, corroborated the two visions presented in the other volumes of the *60 de sate*, at the same time seeking to extract from them the key problems of the rural world.

According to the author, the transformation of the peasantry was part of the consolidation of the modern nation state in Romania and in South-Eastern Europe more widely, and was thus vital for the wellbeing of the entire society and its defence against external aggression.[118] Two major issues constituted the focus of his study: the 'duality of rural culture' caught between tradition and modernity and the 'overpopulation of the countryside'. These corresponded to the state policies the

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[115] Private conversation with Sanda Golopenția 1 July 2009.
[116] Rostás, "Gheorghe Retegan," 312.
[117] Golopenția, "Despre starea culturală și economică a populației rurale din România."
[118] Ibid., 212-213.

author recommended for the transformation of the rural world: the enlightenment of the peasantry and the '*descongestionarea' agriculturii*' (literally 'the decongestion of agriculture').[119] A close examination of these issues will provide a clearer understanding of Golopenția's new vision of social change in the countryside. 'Cultural dualism' meant that, on the one hand, modern culture (introduced through state-education), necessary for the progress of the countryside, had made its way into the countryside, whereas on the other, the influx of modern influences into the rural world had led to a crisis of traditional culture. The author discussed the literacy levels in the rural world by sex and by region and considered the ways education was applied in everyday village life.[120] He then briefly presented the destabilising effects modern culture had had for traditional values, mentioning the efforts being made to slow down the dissolution of tradition in the countryside.[121] Turning to economics, the author summarised the main findings of the collections' four existing volumes, adding the issue of rural overpopulation to the situation presented so far. Golopenția saw rural overpopulation as one of the major reasons for the failure of the locals to turn agriculture into a profitable occupation. He posited that 'population growth had not been accompanied by a corresponding increase in workplaces', thus leaving people on an ever smaller plot of land with no hope of employment in industry or elsewhere.[122] Although spread across the country, the problem affected the various Romanian regions differently not only because of their

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[119] Ibid., 262-3.
[120] Ibid., 214-223.
[121] Ibid., 223.
[122] Ibid., 246-247.

geographical features, but also in relation to the education levels and economic skill of the local population.

His conclusions brought culture and economics together, highlighting their interconnectedness. The author showed that the low levels of education (especially practical) of the population combined with its increasing pauperisation, due to overcrowding, had created a crisis that could no longer be solved through education only, since 'these actions are only efficient in free-standing households, with more than 3 hectares of land'.[123] 'What is needed', he stated, 'is a complex action combining all measures and using all the resources and organs of the state for the reorganisation of agriculture and the placement of the surplus of the population'.[124] These measures included the creation of external outputs, the re-organisation and improvement of the internal market, internal colonisation (from overcrowded to more sparsely populated areas), promoting additional non-agricultural trades, improving the situation of the rural proletariat, fixing the moving population (migrant workers) by providing them with cheap housing, benefits, etc, and regulating a permanent travelling salesmanship.[125]

The article presented a slightly revised vision of social change to that of *60 de sate*. In combining three sets of factors: culture, demographics and economics, Golopenția proposed a 'biopolitical' approach to the transformation of the rural world, which was affected by the wider Eastern European problem of agricultural

[123] Ibid., 262-3.
[124] Ibid.
[125] Ibid.

315

overpopulation.[126] The weight given to the state (rather than voluntary action or even a social service) showed his trust in its power to order and control its population. Moreover, the transformation of the peasant economy also involved helping the villagers adapt to the rules of capitalism by plugging them into the circuits of modernity. Finally, from a cultural perspective, the article argued for the need to balance the loss of tradition with the introduction of modern living standards and practices.

The Dâmbovnic Region, a study of social processes

Before the autumn of 1939, another one of Golopenția's projects was completed (although only partially) despite Gusti's opposition.[127] Conducted during the 'long hot summer of Romanian sociology' before the outbreak of the war, the study of the Dâmbovnic area constituted not only 'his third innovation, the regional monograph' but also a new way of seeing the countryside.[128] Although Stahl and Herseni also favoured and partly completed regional studies, Golopenția's study on *Dâmbovnic* stood out for its approach to the rural world and its transformation.

Continuing some of the themes from *60 de sate*, with some of the same members (Miron Constantinescu and Gheorghe Retegan) and some new recruits (Mihai Pop, Nicolae Marin-Dunăre, T. Stoianovici, etc) this study was 'a fairly simple work, following a few essential problems and having an obviously operational goal',

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[126] Mitrany, *Marx against the peasant*, 99-117.
[127] Golopenția, "Mihai Pop la Dâmbovnic. Lunga vară fierbinte a sociologiei românești," 26-28.
[128] Caraioan, "Gusti," 141.

as Pompiliu Caraioan assessed it.[129] The researchers focused on socio-economic processes, using the 'orthodox Gustian system' only as a working tool, thus producing a very dynamic map of a countryside firmly plugged into a network of relations with the urban world. The project proposed further innovations in the method of study, favouring short stays (eight to ten days) in different villages, and successively covering the most representative ones in the county: Rociu, Gliganu, Suseni, Oarja, and Teiu. The reason for this was that the study did not try to cover all aspects and details of rural life, but only the most significant ones in terms of social change. Finally, the choice of location was also representative for this new vision of the countryside on its pathway to modernity. Considered by the researchers the economic 'heart of the country', Dâmbovnic was 'a land of former latifundias', and therefore very different from the villages visited by the first generation of Bucharest sociologists, which were mainly former free villages preserving strong connections to the past and inspiring an image of authenticity.[130] Pop stressed this difference between his older colleagues' search for the authentic traditional Romanian village, and Golopenția's interest in the contemporary village with its constant changes and conflicts.[131]

The introductory study of the region signed by Golopenția and Pop illustrated a new way of seeing the countryside, as was partly explained by the latter in an interview with Rostás:

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[129] Ibid.
[130] Golopenția and Pop, *Dâmbovnicul*, 5.
[131] Rostás, "Mihai Pop," 299.

In Dâmbovnic we went to investigate the 'state of conflict following the idea that after the land reform (…) everyone had got land, but not everyone had kept it, they sold to those who had more resources, thus creating a difference in the village, between the rich peasants, who then became *chiaburi*, the middle peasants, and the agricultural proletariat.[132]

This implied not only paying attention to conflict and class, but also acknowledging the existence of a 'new modern peasant' with economic, social and political potential for the future of the Romanian state.[133] Born into one of the most productive agricultural areas of Southern Romania, the population of this region was neither fully modernised nor economically successful. The area was starting to show signs of overpopulation, the locals were only engaged in cereal-based agriculture, and they lived in poor conditions. Situated at the crossroads of many trade routes, the locals had been strongly influenced by the cities, which they provided not only with products but also with manpower and migrant labour.[134] The lifestyle in the region had therefore been strongly transformed by this rural-urban exchange, which had been to some extent beneficial to both parties. For the villagers, it had provided additional incomes, an interest in education, politics and a new mentality, whereas for the cities, it had meant a constant supply of food and manpower. Yet, the authors appreciated this new peasant type which they called 'Americanised', meaning a 'modern, realist and open man, ready to do any job and predisposed towards all that was new'.[135] Despite its problems, they saw the potential of the region and of its semi-urbanised population, calling for the state's attention to the

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[132] Ibid., 295.
[133] Golopenția and Pop, *Dâmbovnicul*, 17-21.
[134] Ibid., 6.
[135] Ibid., 17.

problems in the area and their resolution. This illustrated a new attitude to change that continued the work in *60 sate*, also strengthening the authors' 'breaker' position.[136] Their study was not only an acknowledgement of change, but also an appeal to nurture and manage this transition that could, according to them, benefit the Romanian state in the future.

The studies of the Dâmbovnic team members reflected this attitude to change with some variations. All authors discussed a type of transformation – cultural, economic, and social – contrasting the old to a new style of life (Reteganul discussed the transition from a pastoral life to an agricultural one, Teodora Niculescu looked at the change of dress according to age and social status) but also engaging with the central theme of social differentiation. The most interesting articles I have chosen to discuss here presented two opposite facets of social transformation – the enrichment and the impoverishment of the rural population in the village of Oarja.[137] The authors, Nicolae Marin-Dunăre and Miron Constantinescu, had different political orientations, the first holding moderate left-wing views, while the other was a declared communist.[138] Their studies therefore presented capitalism and its role in transforming the structure of the rural population, focusing on the new extremes of the social spectrum: the rich (*chiaburi*) and the poor (the landless peasants of the rural proletariat). For Dunăre, the

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[136] Mazlish, *A new science*.

[137] Nicolae Marin-Dunăre, "Procesul de îmbogăţire in satul Oarja," in *Dâmbovnicul : o plasă din sudul judeţului Argeş : câteva rezultate ale unei cercetări monografice întreprinse în 1939* (Bucharest: Institutul de Ştiinţe Sociale al României, 1942), 46-52; Miron Constantinescu, "Procesul de sărăcire in satul Oarja," in *Dâmbovnicul : o plasă din sudul judeţului Argeş : câteva rezultate ale unei cercetări monografice întreprinse în 1939* (Bucharest: Institutul de Ştiinţe Sociale al României, 1942), 56-61.

[138] Rostás, "Nicolae Dunăre," 74-5.

enrichment process in Oarja presupposed eight factors: an inheritance, human capital (not all sons of rich peasants continued the process of enrichment, but many learnt the rules of the game from their parents), cattle trading (most rich peasants used to have many animals that provided capital for them to buy land with), entering agricultural associations, accumulating more land, using *dijma* (tithe) to ensure cheap labour, often engaging in money lending, investing in industry (such as owning a mill), and finally being 'economical' or tight.[139] His study allowed the voices of the *chiaburi* themselves and those of other peasants to maintain primacy, illustrating the categories he had identified with examples from his interviews. His categories showed the complexity of the rural enrichment process, by following the trajectory of capital from the source, to its transfer from one generation to another, from one form of goods to another (animals to land), its multiplication (through association or money-lending), its social effects (exploitation) and cultural needs (a specific spirit). Dunăre's study did not draw any major conclusions beyond identifying the factors that led to the creation of this social group. However, the interest in this social process and the approach taken, which combined structure (economic factors) with agency (a particular moral values and attitude to money) showed the author's understanding of change as a complex phenomenon.

Constantinescu's study of pauperisation provided a different approach to social change. He interpreted this process in terms of the class struggle in the Romanian countryside, which had been caused by the 'penetration of commercial

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[139] Marin-Dunăre, "Procesul de îmbogățire in satul Oarja."

capitalism in the rural world'.[140] The author argued that the vicious circle of land

fragmentation engendering 'hunger, over-work, and under-feeding', which in turn

led to 'primitive production levels', meant that poor peasants had no other

alternative but to starve to death or leave agriculture for another trade. He

produced a social typology of rural pauperisation, which included the following

categories: the urban proletariat, servants, travelling salesmen, travelling craftsmen,

small-scale tradesmen and petty bourgeoisie.[141] His examples showed the way poor

peasants coped with their situation: clinging to the small plot of land they had as

well as working either on the rich peasants' lands or migrating to the city. Within the

village, the poor ended up in a hybrid situation, exploited by the rich and struggling

to keep working their own land, which he interpreted as 'remainders of feudal

relations coexisting with capitalist ones'.[142] Rural proletarisation appeared as a

consequence of this structural change that was gradually eliminating the majority of

the small and even middle peasants.[143] Those choosing to leave for the city were

faced with another set of misfortunes. Ending up in slums, wracked by social

diseases, these peasants changed their way of thinking and their appearance.

However, for Constantinescu this transformation was not only degenerative, since it

brought with it a 'rudimentary positivism, a trust in science, medicine, education

and the will to work the land (in the case that they still had some)'.[144] Despite the

belief this was a systemic problem that led to 'the rise of capitalist exploiters who

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[140] Constantinescu, "Procesul de sărăcire in satul Oarja," 56.
[141] Ibid., 59.
[142] Ibid., 57.
[143] Ibid.
[144] Marin-Dunăre, "Procesul de îmbogățire in satul Oarja," 60.

profit from the badly paid work of the poor, which in turn led to the need of the poor to find another source of income', Constantinescu's article presented social change as a positive *prise de conscience* of the peasantry who became aware of its own exploitation.[145]

The importance of these two articles consists in engaging with social change in terms of processes engendered by and entangled with the movement, accumulation and manipulation of capital, at ground level, at the same time delving into the locals' psychology. The lack of clear conclusions (especially for Dunăre) leaves these complex phenomena unsettled, which contrasts with Constantinescu's more programmatic study. The authors did not seek to isolate the region in time or space, dealing with its different types of mobility (social, economic, geographical, etc). This was also reflected in the description of the peasant types and their relation with the community, the city and the state, which presented then as dynamic socio-economic and political agents rather than victims of structural forces. The study of Dâmbovnic therefore marked a new phase in the BSS, whose future was severed by the start of the war.[146]

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[145] Constantinescu, "Procesul de sărăcire in satul Oarja," 60.

[146] Romania officially entered the Second World War by attacking the Soviet Union on the 21st of June 1941. However, Romania, led by Marshal Antonescu, had already signed an economic agreement with Nazi Germany in December 1940. Hitchins, *Rumania: 1866-1947*, 460-471. Some of the participants followed Golopenția 'beyond the River Bug', where he conducted studies on the local population during the war, with a view to a potential population transfer. See Golopenția, *Românii la Est de Bug*.

Conclusion

The three monographic studies presented in this chapter represented the most advanced phase in the research of the BSS before the outbreak of the Second World War. Stemming from the common roots of monographic methods and theories, they were products of the collaboration between the first and the second generations of sociologists, thus illustrating different visions of social change in the rural world. To sum up the main findings of this chapter, I will compare these works in terms of their approaches to rural space (during fieldwork), the style of their writing, and their resulting conceptions of time in relation to social change.

The projects' underlying relation to the field reveals the different ways the coordinators approached space and time, thus producing distinct visions of the countryside. In Nerej, Stahl chose an in-depth microanalysis, producing a longue-durée image of the village. This constricted spatial axis reflecting the village's and the area's isolation allowed the researchers to expand the temporal axis historically to the point of origin, using the past to give meaning to the present. Stahl's method, tellingly called 'sociological archaeology', approached the field as an archaeological site, each researcher carefully digging out through layers of historic time, treating 'social facts' and processes not for what they were or appeared to be at the time of the research, but as vestiges of a 'fuller, truer past'. This involved interviewing older people rather than the younger generations in an effort to rescue the 'social memory' of the village from total oblivion.[147] The field therefore was a 'place of the

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[147] Golopenția, "Mihai Pop la Dâmbovnic. Lunga vară fierbinte a sociologiei românești," 24-29.

past', where change was perceived as decay (of the natural habitat) and social amnesia (of the locals).

In *60 de sate*, the field was a not an immersion experience but an exercise in producing a synthetic image of the countryside. On the one hand, the data was collected by the activist teams (not by the students who wrote up the monographs) and then passed on to the Central Institute of Statistics for analysis, producing the material for the first two volumes and for Golopenția's article in *Revista de Igienă Socială*. On the other hand, the authors of the summary monographs only went on brief survey trips to the villages they wrote about, mostly rewriting the existing materials produced by the local activist teams. This engendered two types of analysis: a macro and a microanalysis of a field formed of 60 individual villages. The first studies, completely remote form the field, exemplified the lack of any emotional or experiential attachment to place and its inhabitants. The last two volumes nevertheless illustrated the condensed information and experience of the short trips undertaken by the students, often including comparisons of the other locations the same person had visited in recently. Overall, this extended field was formed of synchronic studies that represented two different gazes: a statistical and a sociological one.

Finally, the *Dâmbovnic* study proposed yet another approach to the field, that stood in between the two discussed above. Organised to study a region rather than individual villages, the team led moved from one area to another, staying only a few days in each locality, collecting, comparing, and writing up the data. In this

case, the field was not so much a fixed place of experience (dwelling), but a series of transit zones, marking the origins, waypoints, and destinations of flows and processes (social, economic, cultural, etc). This ambulant research produced a dynamic map of the field that integrated the locals' own mobility into the study. In this sense, the result was a vision of change as integral to the rural world, but overflowing its borders, connecting it to the city and to other areas through a constant two-way flow of people, capital, products and knowledge.

The treatment of the field in these studies went hand in hand with the style of writing adopted by their authors. Alongside several common features, other new ways of writing were employed to describe the countryside. In general, all three combined scientific rigour with literary overtones, and a certain activist engagement. On the one hand, the texts of the Nerej monograph preserved a certain simplicity and distance from the objects of study, with no stylistic ornaments and overt subjectivity. Nevertheless, this formal scientific rigour still conveyed subjective views on the past, present and future of the countryside. Throughout the Nerej monograph, the description was intertwined with melancholic interludes that contrasted the past with the present, such as: 'if in ancient times, nature has offered protection and constituted a benefit, in modern times it has turned into a obstacle'.[148] Overall, Stahl's voice and style dominated the Nerej monograph, although the other members of his team also added their own different nuances and stresses to this extensive study.

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[148] Stahl, *Nerej*, 1:100.

The volumes of *60 de sate* were written in two very different styles – the macro analysis painted a geometrical, pragmatic, and almost soulless picture of the countryside, whereas the microanalysis in the summary monographs verged on a literary and rather personalised style that presented realist, yet assumedly subjective descriptions. The great contrast between the two parts can be explained through the disciplines of their authors, their generations and the relation they had to the field (discussed above). The first approach belonged to statisticians, economists and agronomists, being characteristic of quantitative analysis. The authors discussed the 'efficiency', 'profitability', 'economic success and failure' and 'potential' of the peasant as an anonymous economic agent for the state to manage and control. The second one was the work of the new generation of students (most of them sociology graduates), who adopted a style characteristic of the engaged activist literature encouraged at the time by the numerous publications devoted to the Royal Teams. Adopting a style at the meeting point between travel literature, diary and reportage, these monographs commented on village life in a rich, colourful way that expressed facts, but also emotions, personal opinions, and interpretations. The author's voice was often present in the text, addressing the reader, inviting them to participate in the natural settings and in the locals' lives. In many cases, this showed a high degree of identification with the object of study and a need to speak for them rather than simply about them. This pushed the boundaries of sociological monographs further in stylistic terms, loosening its objective prerequisites.

The stylistic devices used in the Dâmbovnic regional study were again slightly different, combining scientific objectivity with a certain political engagement. Its unfinished quality makes it difficult to know what the study would have looked like if completed, but the overall style adopted in these shorter pieces was that of academic journal articles similar to those published in *Sociologia Românească.* Since the studies did not aim to cover all aspects of rural life like the summary monographs, the authors concentrated on narrating the processes of social life and on analysing their main actors rather than communicating an the experience of place and its inhabitants. In this way, the Dâmbovnic studies turned change into a narrative device affirming their interest in the countryside as a dynamic category.

Altogether, these new approaches altered and redefined the monograph, as a format of sociological research, indicating the two directions Romanian sociology, as represented by the BSS, was moving towards. The first, represented by Stahl, was that of historical sociology, which analysed long-term processes of change and their structural effects on traditional societies. As the study of Nerej showed, this produced a diachronic image of the village in which people's agency was conditioned - enabled or annihilated - by the great invisible structures of historic transformation. His study engaged with the struggle between the peasant, nature, and modernity, showing not only the victory of the latter over both others, but also the dangers this loss of balance could cause. In this sense, in looking for the original 'ancient village community' and lamenting its destruction, he confessed his doubts about the potential success of 'high modernism'. This contrasted with the second

type of sociological discourse put forth by Golopenția, who, despite his strife with Gusti, remained faithful to the 'high modernist' agenda of the 'science of the nation'. His projects were variants of a presentist sociology that preferred to deal with shorter periods of time and emphasised the 'here and now' to the 'there and then' in order to identify future trends and possibilities. Although indebted to Gusti's theoretical framework, this type of research seemed to constantly try to subvert its holism, in search of simpler quantifiable indicators. This was a synchronic vision of social change in the countryside taken not as a unique isolated human settlement, but as an integral socio-economic subunit of the nation-state. Instead of looking for isolation and resistance, Golopenția and his team searched for connectivity and adaptation of the countryside to an inevitable and desirable modernity.

After this discussion of the products of academic research, the last chapter of this thesis will return to activism and explore the materialisation of Gusti's sociological vision in the reconstruction of the 'model village of Dioști' which took place on the brink of the Second World War.

Chapter 5

THE VILLAGE OF THE FUTURE

THE RECONSTRUCTION OF DIOȘTI

1 April 1938, Dioști, Oltenia: A child playing with burning coals accidentally sets fire to a haystack. The fire spreads from one household to another sending the entire village up in flames.

8 April 1938: 'King Carol II, the guardian of the villages, went to ease the sorrow of the peasants in Dioști'.[1] During his visits to Dioști, the monarch announces his decision to rebuild a 'model village' on the burnt-down ruins of the locality.

29 June 1938: 'Professor Gusti to turn the royal thought into reality'.[2] Dimitrie Gusti, the director of the Royal Cultural Foundation and of the Social Service is placed in charge of the reconstruction of Dioști.

Started in 1938 and almost entirely completed during the next two years, the reconstruction of Dioști was stalled by the outbreak of the Second World War and then completely abandoned at the end of it. Today, driving along the elegant boulevard leading to what used to be the *cămin cultural* (village hall), the model village looks old like the old people sitting on the side of the road, bored even of waiting.[3] However, visually, the village is striking with its standardised modernist

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[1] "M.S. Regele Carol, ocrotitorul satelor s-a dus ieri să aline jalea plugarilor din satul Dioști," *Timpul*, April 8, 1938.
[2] "Prof. Dimitrie Gusti împlinește înaltul gând regesc: Construcția satului reprezintă construcția României Noui," *Timpul*, June 29, 1938.
[3] I first visited Dioști in the summer of 2009, when I went as part of my research trip to Romania. I stayed in the house of Gheorghe Gheorghe a former schoolteacher in the village, for two nights.

buildings, their svelte arches and sharp angles counterpoised with wooden carved pillars, and impressive gates with geometrical designs. A vestige of an abandoned rural utopia, Dioști opens a window onto the unfinished high modernist project of rural modernisation proposed by Dimitrie Gusti and realised under the authoritarian regime of King Carol II.

This chapter will look at Dioști's transformation into a model village as a concrete project of reshaping social life in the countryside based on Gusti's and his collaborators' sociological theories. Drawing on Scott's theory of high modernist aesthetics in the context of rural development projects, this detailed analysis of the idea and building of the model village refers to all other previous chapters, concentrating on the aesthetic vision produced by the interplay between sociology, the 'soft authoritarian state' and rural planners.[4] As part of his examination of a wide range of nature- or social-engineering schemes, Scott looked at the visual aesthetics born out of and corresponding to the common process of reducing complex knowledge to simple and easily applicable models.[5] Present in architecture, urban and rural planning, and landscaping, the visual representation of these models acted as the proof of the efficiency and rationality of these schemes, often obscuring the 'thin' knowledge behind them. Instead of applying them directly to the construction of the model village, I use Scott's theory as a reference point and as a set of conceptual tools which can bring out the interplay between sociology, architecture and politics, in realising a model of rural development.

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[4] Scott, *Seeing*, 253-261.
[5] Ibid., 4; 224-5.

Read closely, the story of this project reveals the many different sources of inspiration and ideas that fed into its realisation, challenging Scott's picture of the state's sole role in the conception and execution of such schemes. Although it was apparently the product of Carol II's royal 'dream', the idea of the 'model village' had developed from a multidisciplinary interest in rural planning and modernisation, following different pathways in the academic, artistic and political spheres. Dioști shows how these different directions came together and acquired concrete architectural forms, thus revealing the transition from the idea to its material realisation. Moreover, my aim is to engage with the two-sided concept of the 'model' (*of* and *for*) as it was used in transforming the countryside both socially and aesthetically. Dioşti was based on the model of a traditional village both in its architecture and structures for social space, but it was also meant to become a model for other similar projects and be further replicated. Finally, I will consider the fragile resistance of the 'model village' to the challenges of historical time and to everyday human practices by touching on the fate of Dioşti during communism and beyond.

The idea of the 'model village'

As the previous chapters have shown, sociology's road to power and fame was a long and sinuous one. Similarly, many of Gusti's pre-existing ideas had to wait for the right political context to be realised and many of them achieved only fleeting glory. The same can be said of the 'model village', a project born of the close

relationship between Gusti's sociology and the monarchy, but conceived over a long period of interdisciplinary monographic research and influenced by many national and international ideas. This is why the concrete model village of Dioști captured the negotiation between the different trends and ideas of the School, Gusti's agenda and the political context of the time.

In what follows, I will discuss the two distinct pathways that led to the launch and realisation of the Dioști restructuring project. Firstly the academic and political context that influenced the sociologists' later involvement in the improvement of the rural built environment and secondly the School's interest in exhibiting its research in public displays, international exhibitions and finally in a permanent museum of rural life.

Born of a renewed interest in the peasantry as 'the biological reservoir of the nation'[6], the interwar idea of the model village was the symbiosis of conservative and modernising agendas that sought to transform the countryside, whilst preserving its traditional aesthetics, morals, and existing power structures.[7] The new context created by the 1918 unification, the land reform and the new constitution,

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[6] The exact phrase is used by Henri Stahl, in Stahl, *Echipe studențești*, 19-20; Bucur, *Eugenics*, 18-45.

[7] The model village was first mentioned in the 19th century, as part of an effort to improve the living conditions of the peasantry. Yet, this vision for the future of the countryside differed greatly from the post-war one mainly due to the regime of neoserfdom. The idea had first been formulated by the scholar Bogdan Petriceicu Hasdeu in the early 1870s. There are striking similarities between the latter's proposals and Gusti's plans for the model village, although their view of the peasantry were quite dissimilar. For Hasdeu, the model village was a way for the state to educate 'the ignorant people, who like children, start learning by imitating' and, if given 'an original that they are able to reproduce, they immediately go ahead and willingly make their own copy.' Doubting the ability of theoretical education to change lifestyles, he imagined the role of the state as that of a parent willing to make an investment in the education of their children. Despite his overtly superior attitude towards the peasantry, Hasdeu argued the state had a social mission towards its rural population, thus expressing a vision of enlightened paternalism based on trust in reason and the value of education. Nicolae Marin-Dunăre, "Hasdeu și satul model," *Căminul Cultural* V, no. 5 (1939): 409-10; Nicolae Marin-Dunăre, ""Programa" lui Hașdeu," *Căminul Cultural* V, no. 6 (June 1939): 538-40.

called for new political and administrative measures for the modernisation and management of the rural world in its social and physical dimensions. Consequently, the issue of rural development gained prominence in the academic and political spheres becoming the focal point of many emerging disciplines such as sociology, planning and architecture.[8]

As shown in Chapter 4, the Romanian Social Institute and its journal, *Arhiva pentru Știință și Reformă Socială,* were at the forefront of the debates concerning the transformations affecting the urban and rural population, debating and proposing plans for the future of Romanian society. Urban and rural planning and regeneration, housing, health and social care were amongst their major concerns, generating heated intellectual debates over various solutions. The 'model village' was one such project, proposed as a solution for the systematisation of the countryside. In an article entitled 'The Model Village', the engineer Alexandru Nasta wrote:

> Two major events have recently affected the life of our villages: the war and the land reform. The war made our villagers aware of the lifestyles of all Romanians and other nationalities inhabiting our country. New habits, new needs (...) have awakened in their souls new desires, especially one for a better and more plentiful lifestyle. The agrarian reform, securing ownership of a plot of land for almost all villagers has given them the material means necessary to satisfy, at least in part, their new desires. A wave of optimism has been unleashed based on a visible improvement of their material state and has enflamed the soul of our peasantry. One of the symptoms of this state of affairs is the mushrooming of thousands and thousands of new households across the entire country. (...) The village is changing its

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[8] On the relation between these wider historic changes, architecture and urban planning, see Luminița Machedon and Ernie Scoffham, *Romanian modernism : the architecture of Bucharest 1920-1940* (Cambridge, MA; London: MIT Press, 1999); Popescu, "Rurality as a locus"; Joanne Roberts, "The City of Bucharest 1918-1940" (unpublished PhD Thesis, University College London, 2009).

appearance. It starts to despise its old one, which suited it fine and takes on the foreign appearance that does not fit it at all.[9]

Describing the situation before the Great Depression, the author acknowledged the tempestuous transformation affecting the countryside, its life and built environment as a new wave of social optimism stemming from the peasantry's desire to accede to a better, more modern lifestyle. However, together with the Bucharest sociologists, he also lamented the locals' straightforward rejection of the traditional style and its gradual disappearance, which were destroying the overall aspect of the Romanian countryside.[10] The model village Nasta proposed indicated, therefore, the intellectuals' common diagnosis of a double crisis of the countryside: an aesthetic one consisting in the adoption of new hybrid architectural styles that contrasted with and were rapidly replacing vernacular architecture and a subsequent moral one resulting from this transformation of the built environment. 'By transforming his house, the peasant will also be transforming a great part of his way of living, of thinking and of feeling', stated the author.[11] Thus, in his view, the model village was a way to rescue the essence of peasant life and culture while adapting it to the standards of modern living. 'Model villages' were, according to him, the best solution both for the building of new settlements, and for the systematisation or expansion of existing ones. In the author's words, these represented the embodiment of 'our mental image of a village, which although we have never seen, we have encountered somewhere in our dreams (...) a village partly as it is in reality,

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[9] Al. Nasta, "Satul Model (I)," *Arhiva pentru Știință și Reformă Socială* VII, no. 1 (1927): 58-86.

[10] Henri H. Stahl voiced a similar concern in his article Henri H. Stahl, "Prilej de îndoială: spre o țărănie, o mitocănie și un stil național," in *Pentru Sat* (Bucharest: Fundația Culturală Regală "Principele Carol', 1939), 63-9.

[11] Nasta, "Satul Model (I)," 60.

partly improved by our desire: with wide and straight streets, with harmonious, varied houses that are clean, bright, warm, joyful and welcoming.'[12] Therefore, the model village was not only a means to preserve the visual aesthetics of the countryside, but more importantly it was a way to rescue the essence of peasant life and culture while also adapting it to the standards of modern rational living. 'The households will gain in size, the rational arrangement of the buildings, their well-conceived partitioning, their hygiene and aesthetics, but will always remain adapted to the villager's emotions and mindset and to their real needs'. [13]

Far from being simply a proposal, real steps had already been taken towards the realisation of this project. *Casa Centrală a Împroprietăririi* (Central Office for Land Reform), an institution in charge of the enforcement of the land reform and of rural development more generally, had already commissioned a group of architects to undertake research in the countryside, to produce plans for model villages and to design model houses.[14] The results of these studies were published by Florea Stănculescu[15], one of the architects Nasta mentioned in his article, in a book designed to teach the peasant how to build his own house.[16] The author became a prominent figure in the interwar period and was also involved in the initial plans for the building of Dioști. Written in a simple and accessible language, his manual

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[12] Ibid.

[13] Ibid.

[14] This is also mentioned by Carmen Popescu in the context of wider debates about urban social housing and rural development in the interwar years. See Popescu, "Rurality as a locus," 147.

[15] Florea Stănculescu later became 'head of the Architectural Service at the Ministry of Agriculture, close collaborator of Dimitrie Gusti and architect of the Village Museum'. He was, according to Popescu, 'perhaps the most successful in his integration of lessons from folklore in a modernist agenda', producing different variants of the Romanian traditional *cula*, a 'type of fortified residence, developed in south-west Romania especially in the 18th century under a Balkan influence.' Ibid., 154.

[16] Florea Stănculescu, *Case și gospodării la țară* (Cartea Medicală, 1927).

covered all the practical aspects of planning and constructing a house according to designs that were not, as the author argued, only his inventions, but the product of many years of research into the different styles of Romanian vernacular architecture.[17] His manual resonated with Nasta's arguments and was an attempt to protect traditional aesthetics and to preserve its different regional variations, thus setting the tone for the creation of a rural variant of the 'national Romanian style'.[18] This style provided the architectural vocabulary for the concretisation of the idea of the model village, which led to the final product in Dioști. Greatly transformed during the interwar years, the national Romanian style was shaped by two major directions – an avant-garde that rejected much of the 'futile' ornamentation of the earlier nineteenth-century version of the Romanian style and a more conservative wing that rejected the foreign influences of extreme modernism, seeking to reinvent the national style to match a modern lifestyle.[19] Common to both was a belief in progress, an appreciation of simplicity and functionalism and a desire to find new sources of inspiration in the simplicity of vernacular architecture. However, if for the radical modernists the vernacular was only a source of inspiration, those directly involved in building for the peasantry used it as a model both of the past (the resemblance to the authentic vernacular) and for the future (its potential to be

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[17] Ibid., 8.

[18] Stănculescu also discussed the future of rural architecture in the press, drawing attention to the urgency of rural architectural matters. Florea Stănculescu, "Construcțiuni rurale," *Arhitectura* III (1924): 13-4; Florea Stănculescu, "Satele noui formate în legătură cu reforma agrară," *Arhitectura* IV (1925): 28-9.

[19] The two directions are discussed with reference to Horia Creangă and George Cantacuzino, although the most extremist avant-gardist in Romanian architecture was Marcel Iancu. Popescu, "Rurality as a locus," 152-3. The modernist avant-garde, represented by Marcel Iancu and the *Contemporanul* review appeared as rebellious and shocking in the 1920s, but later became 'the yard-stick of the 1930s architecture' especially in Bucharest. Machedon and Scoffham, *Romanian modernism*, 34-50.

further replicated being essential), seeking therefore to transform the countryside whilst keeping its people in their places, as rural dwellers.

It is not difficult to see the great influence these debates had on Gusti's thought and later ambitions. The issues raised by Nasta and illustrated practically by Stănculescu were the same that provided the base for Gusti's monographic and cultural work projects, finding their embodiment in the model village Dioști. This wider context shows a common vision for the future of the countryside shared by a broad range of emerging intellectual professionals (architects, engineers and sociologists), who also wished to place their knowledge and skills in the service of the state in order to take control of the destabilising changes affecting the rural world. Like Gusti, these elites were caught in between modernising agendas and an attachment to tradition. These ideas were reflected in the specific national Romanian style of architecture which came to represent Carol II's regime.[20] Understanding why the process of transferring these ideas into political action took so long will be clarified by looking at the way this new aesthetics became intrinsically linked to the power of an authoritarian political regime. However, before I discuss the context that allowed the realisation of the model village in the late 1930s, I wish to follow the specific route taken by the 'model village' idea in the BSS.

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[20] Carmen Popescu, *Le style national roumain. Construire une nation à travers l'architecture 1881-1945* (Rennes; Bucharest: Presses universitaires de Rennes; Simetria, 2004), 206-8.

Sociologists and the peasant house – dwelling, collecting, exhibiting

Although acquainted with the concept from the early 1920s, Gusti and his
collaborators did not mention the idea of a 'model village' until more than a decade
later. This is understandable since the monographists were not meant to transform
the village, but to understand its social life and structure. Thus, as shown in the
previous chapters, although change was acknowledged, recorded and debated, the
monographic trips did not take any direct action to influence it. This became the
goal of Gusti's new civilising mission launched under the auspices of FCR-PC.[21] Unlike
the researchers' fieldwork which had been an experience of 'travel and dwelling',
contributing to a multi-sensorial vision of rural life and of the rural habitat in
general, the student teams camped in the countryside, where they undertook
cultural work meant to shape the peasant lifestyle and thus integrate them into the
structures of a modern state. This mission could be seen as one of making peasants
into 'model rural citizens'.[22]

    What linked these two different types of sociology and field/work was a
common desire to represent the rural world in the most realistic way possible.
Initially fascinated by its otherness and aware of its impermanence, the first
generation wished to capture an image of the countryside in its past-in-the-present
state. This engendered an interest in collecting and exhibiting rural life that fed into
national and international displays. Later, the activism of the student teams used

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[21] Volkov, "Kul'turnost," 210-211.
[22] Ideas about a model peasant who could best adapt to modernity whilst preserving their authentic culture and
tradition had been put forth by the economist Nicolae Cornțeanu in Stănculescu and Ștefănescu, "Situația
economică prezentă," 207.

exhibitions as a way to show its results and predictions for the future. The idea of the model village was born at the intersection of these two ways of exhibiting of the past, present and future of the countryside. If the first generation created an aestheticised vision of the rural world, the second added a 'logic of improvement' that, in turn, led to the idea of the 'model village'.[23] This section will look at this exhibiting practice in more detail, retracing the birth of the model village from the early displays of peasant life of the monographic trips to the founding of the Village Museum, showing how this local interest was further influenced by the context of international fairs.

Collecting and displaying the village

Armed not only with pen and paper, the sociologists, artists, ethnomusicologists, and other participants in the monographic trips, employed complicated and intimidating machinery to record each aspect of peasant life, in an effort to capture, safeguard and reproduce it for a wider public. Three photographs documenting the 1929 trip to Drăguş, illustrate this hunt for the spirit of the village. The first one centres on a phonograph that splits the image in two: behind it, Constantin Brăiloiu, the ethnomusicologist and a group of colleagues observe an old peasant, who, leaning forward towards it, is singing into the recording device. The second shows an improvised artist's studio, with the painter Margareta Sterian sitting at the easel, executing the portrait of a peasant girl standing at the other end of the room. Finally, the last photograph is an open-air scene of the cinematographic team filming

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[23] Scott, *Seeing*, 224.

'*Buzduganul*', a local harvesting custom. The moving camera, another recording device, stood at the centre of this last image. Focused on the process of artistic or mechanical reproduction, these three images illustrated the monographists' desire to (re)construct the sensorial experience of the field for both aesthetic and scientific purposes. The research trips collected hundreds if not thousands of such pieces of peasant life: sound, still or moving images.

Collecting and exhibiting rural life was part of this desire to capture and represent the field in order to understand and preserve it. These practices added a new dimension to recreating the experience of being there, in which real objects and images replaced the human presence in the countryside. Faced with rich repositories of valuable folk artefacts in danger of being lost or destroyed, the monographists integrated the collection of objects and artefacts into their research practice. The first systematic collection in Fundul Moldovei (1928) led to the School's first mini-exhibition, marking the start of a long series of public displays of rural life.[24] In time, this became the School's way of communicating their findings and of making sociology accessible to wider audiences.

The sociologists regarded collecting as an 'annex of sociological research' and saw material culture as a repository of social meaning, thus creating their own definition of heritage. They were therefore interested in the objects' value as metonyms of social reality both past and present, rather than in their age and

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[24] *Catalogul materialului sociologic privitor la cercetările întreprinse în comuna Fundul Moldovei din Bucovina, în anul 1928, cu referințe la cercetarile anterioare din 1925 (Goicea Mare), 1926 (Rusețu) si 1927 (Nereju), Univ Buc - București (1928)* (Bucharest: Universitatea din București, 1928).

authenticity.[25] Faithful to a scientific and realist agenda, their displays included objects that had only recently entered peasant life, such as new 'ordinary trunks bought in the market, presenting no artistic interest', therefore documenting the transformation of village life through its material culture.[26] However, despite their apparent originality and desire to distance themselves from ethnographic and folkloric styles of display, the sociologists were part of a widespread international exhibiting practice defined by Clifford as a way of 'salvaging order from disorder', which involved taking objects out of their natural habitat and rearranging them to create evolutionary series or synchronous ethnographic presents'.[27] Their modern curating style, drawing on the latest techniques taught at the *Ecole de Louvre*, displayed objects in a 'lived context' by reconstructing entire interiors, indirectly replicating the fieldworkers' experience of dwelling in the countryside. These early exhibitions of the School illustrated a tendency to document and build a heritage of the rural present, in an attempt to make it accessible to different publics. Extracting objects from their everyday context (either taking them out of old trunks where they were forgotten, or suspended from daily use) estranged them, made them precious both for their aesthetic but more for their scientific value, and placed them in a new (constructed and) controlled reality that was implicitly historical. Therefore, these

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[25] This was illustrated in the catalogues of the school's exhibitions organised in the halls of the Bucharest University in 1928 and 1929. *Catalogul materialului (1928)*; *Catalogul materialului sociologic privitor la cercetările întreprinse in 1929, între 15 Iulie și 15 August in comuna Drăguș, jud. Făgăraș, expus în sălile Seminarului* (Bucharest: Universitatea din București, 1929).These displays included not only old but also newer objects deemed to have 'no artistic value' that were presented as the material signs of the ongoing transformation of the rural world. *Catalogul materialului (1928)*, 25.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Clifford, *The predicament*, 228.

displays acted like time machines for the visitors able to experience the countryside not only as a staged reconstruction, but also as a legible order of things.

International exhibitions and World Fairs

The School's interest in displaying rural life was in perfect synchronicity with the international exhibiting trends of the time, both through their aesthetics and their ideas. The interwar period was fascinated with temporary displays of contemporary life, from academic to art exhibitions, to the Olympic Games and the World Fairs.[28] Gusti's awareness of and involvement in the wider international arena helped connect the School's research and exhibitions to the agendas of international organisations who were actively supporting research and inter-state cooperation on common issues of social hygiene, housing and nutrition.[29] As seen in the earlier chapters, Gusti had secured funding from the North-American Rockefeller Foundation both for publications and for the doctoral studies of many of his collaborators. Similarly, placing the School's work under the auspices of the League of Nations and their special concern with social hygiene, their displays travelled from the University seminar rooms straight to the Barcelona International Exhibition (1929), the International Hygiene Exhibition in Dresden (1930), and later to the Paris (1937) and New York (1939) World Fairs.[30] As pointed out by Laurenţiu Vlad, the World Fairs and international exhibitions were stages for universal encyclopaedic

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[28] This was also the heyday of the 'period room' and of 'outdoor museums'. See Edward N. Kaufman, "The Architectural Museum from World's fair to Restoration Village," *Assemblage* 9 (June 1989): 20-39; Sten Hertzhog, *Open air museums. The history and future of a visionary idea* (Stockholm: Carlsson, Jatmi forlag, 2007).
[29] Borowy, "International Social Medicine."
[30] Vlad, *Imagini ale identităţii naţionale*.

ambitions and for nationalist discourses, where states presented both their uniqueness and their universality.[31] These two specific features gave further meaning to the sociological displays of Romanian villages. On the one hand, they were entries in an international taxonomy of the global rural world, whereas on the other they formed part of Romania's new national public image, which appeared to combine successfully an authentic patriarchal purity with a modern dynamic spirit.

Cultural work as the logic of improvement

The new project of cultural work launched in 1934 reduced the complexity of sociological research to a set of applicable rules and principles, thus turning the village from a place of experience into a site of intervention. The project also added an interest in the health, hygiene and reform of the countryside to the heart of sociology, shining a new 'medical light' on rural living conditions. For the student teams sent to work in the various villages across the country, the rural built environment and material culture were targets of their 'civilising mission', which sought to shape and improve peasant life by separating the elements that should be kept from those that had to be transformed. The goal was to find a perfect balance between the old and the new, the traditional and the modern by preserving the old order of village life whilst improving its standards and quality. However, the shift from *sociological cogitans* to *sociologia militans,* although without replacing the first with the latter, transformed the scope, variety and depth of the knowledge

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[31] Laurenţiu Vlad, "Propaganda and Reception in the Construction of the Romanian National Identity: a Case Study on the International Exhibitions in Paris, 1867-1937," in *Re-Searching the Nation: the Romanian File. Studies and Selected Bibliography on Romanian Nationalism* (Cluj-Napoca: International Book Access, 2008), 115-123; Vlad, *Imagini ale identităţii naţionale*, 179-225.

produced, limiting the desire to understand the complexity of rural life in order to create a ready-made formula for change. As part of the cultural work project, the idea of the model village was an ideal of rural transformation, achieved through the successful application of a set of principles related to the body, work, mind and soul of the Romanian peasant. This 'logic of improvement', to use Scott's term, was correlated to a specific visual aesthetic which represented the project's principles through recognisable images and formulas. Various types of physical exercise, work routines, cooking recipes, lists of books, hygiene practices, etc, which the specialists demonstrated and the locals had to replicate and eventually adopt, stood in for the goals of cultural work itself. The exhibitions organised by the student teams at the end of each cultural work year illustrated a process of creating model rural citizens though visual representations, which reduced the complexity of rural transformation to propaganda images and statistics quantifying the success of the project.[32]These images included photographs of peasant men doing group exercise, and of peasant women learning to cook or sew.

The visual aspect of the project is key to understanding the similarities between the Dioști reconstruction and what Scott has defined as high modernist projects, which were based on plans in which scientific formulas meant to 'improve the human condition' in rural areas were introduced initially as models for the locals to follow. Projects like the 1960s and 1970s villagisation in Tanzania reduced complex scientific knowledge to a 'visual codification of modern rural production

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[32] Muzeul Satului Românesc, *A III-a Expoziție a Echipelor Regale Studențești. Inaugurată luni 22 martie 1937, in prezența M.S. Regelui Carol II. Catalog* (Bucharest: Fundația Culturală Regală "Principele Carol', n.d.).

and community life'.[33] As Scott argued, since 'it is far easier for would-be reformers to change the formal structure of an institution than to change its practices', these attempts to replace practical knowledge accumulated over long periods of time (*metis*) with scientific formulas corresponding to attractive visual representations failed in their attempts at making locals reproduce the models they were provided with.[34] Moving from cooperation to coercion, the Tanzanian example may arguably bear more resemblance to the collectivization process in post-war Romania than to the small-scale sociological attempt supported by King Carol II. However, the interwar model village partially fitted with Scott's high modernist 'visual aesthetic of miniaturisation', which 'offers a visually complete example of what the future looks like.' Unlike the communist collectivisation and later rural development plans, this was a small-scale attempt to plan and codify social life according to pre-designed scientific formulas and rules, which were visually represented by a specific aesthetics.

The open-air social museum of the village

This new aesthetics of miniaturisation was also at play in the construction of a 'social museum' of the village, meant to represent the past, present and future of the Romanian countryside through an open-air architectural display.[35] The opening of the Bucharest Village Museum in May 1936 was the culmination of the School's long

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[33] Scott, *Seeing*, 253.
[34] Ibid., 255.
[35] Stahl, *Amintiri*, 316-333.

series of temporary displays of rural life.[36] In his speech delivered at its inauguration, Gusti explained that he wished his museum to be different than the existing European open-air museums, such as the Skansen, Bigdon and Lillehammer, which he saw as 'romantic and too ethnographic, concentrating more on the value and the objects as museum pieces, rather than on human beings and their everyday life.'[37] In this way, Gusti was prepared to take a step further than his Scandinavian predecessors by creating not only a display of traditional folk life, but also a vision of rural modernisation. A year later, a *maquette* of the museum was presented at the International Exhibition of Rural Housing organised as part of the 1937 Paris World Fair.[38] This differed from the actual museum in that it represented the intended final version of the museum, in which the existing section, representing the contemporary Romanian village, was accompanied by a second one, consisting of a model village formed of purpose-built and efficiently planned rural housing neatly organised around a new civic centre.[39]

These plans were never completed, leaving the open-air Village Museum to represent a picturesque impression of peasant life in the Romanian countryside as it was and never counterpoising it to the village of the future. Nevertheless, the impulse to collect and exhibit rural objects in a *tableau vivant* style was not only connected to the idea of the model village, but it provided its very raison d'etre. The

[36] Dimitrie Gusti, "Muzeul satelor românești," *Curierul Echipelor Studențești* I, no. 5 (1935): 1; Henri H. Stahl, "Cum se stâng obiectele pentru muzeu," *Curierul Echipelor Studențești* I, no. 5, 1935 (n.d.): 8.

[37] Dimitrie Gusti, "Muzeul Satului Românesc," *Sociologie românească* I, no. 5 (May 1936): 1-7.

[38] "Lucrări referitoare la participarea României la Expoziția Internațională a Casei rurale de la Paris," 1937, FCR-C/1937/18/1-45, Arh. Naț.

[39] *A IIIa Expoziție a Echipelor Regale Studențești. Inaugurată luni 22 martie 1937* (Fundația Culturală Regală "Principele Carol", 1937), 153-159.

building of an open-air museum reconstructing a miniature version of the Romanian

countryside provided the base and the tools for modelling the village of the future.

As Scott and other scholars of museum studies have argued, museums offer an

environment 'where control is maximised but impact of the external world is

minimised (…)' thus allowing 'high modernist aspirations to be more neatly

realised'.[40] What made the Bucharest museum groundbreaking was that it was

meant to be lived in. The thirty-two houses brought from all regions of the country

and organised along several windy roads were to be inhabited by villagers employed

to live in the museum and illustrate rural life for the visitors.[41] The criteria for

selecting the museum dwellers, explained in an internal document, indicated the

points of connection between the model-making ethos of the museum and that of

the future model village. The organisers stated that:

> Following the same principles used in selecting the most characteristic and
> most beautiful houses in each region, we have to choose their inhabitants for
> the Village Museum. We should therefore pick handsome, healthy, articulate
> (*sfatoşi*) people, who are able to talk to the visitors [about the houses and
> their region] (…) Their dress should be authentic and beautiful (…) The
> villagers themselves will be considered museum pieces, and should therefore
> be absolutely authentic.[42]

Despite the clean façade and success of the museum, its revolutionary idea of

exhibiting real peasant life in the Romanian capital soon backfired. The

documentation from behind the scenes of the institution showed the unexpected

consequences of this experiment. A 'strictly confidential letter' from 1937 informed

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[40] Scott, *Seeing*, 257.

[41] Ioan Godea, *Muzeul Satului 1936-2003* (Bucharest: Ed. Coresi, 2004), 23-69.

[42] "Instrucţiuni Domnilor inspectori pentru alegerea şi aducerea în Bucureşti a sătenilor care vor locui în Muzeul Satului Românesc," 1936, FCR-C/1936/07/200, Arh. Naţ.

the museum leadership that 'two ladies from outside the museum are living in the

Şanț house, receiving male guests day and night and having frequent parties.'[43] The

letter continued, explaining that the rightful '*gospodar* (peasant) living in the Şant

house has been missing since the first of June, and that the *gospodină* (peasant

woman) of the same house also took part in these parties alongside the woman

from Drăguş, Ana Sofonea.'[44] The incident pointed to the limits of control in the

museum environment and the risks of including real human beings amongst the

museum exhibits. This made the connection between the museum and the model

village even clearer, emphasising the experimental nature of the sociologists'

enterprise. Trying to establish an institution that was more that a museum, the

sociologist's creation was unsustainable. In this, it was very similar to their later

village, the model village.

Therefore, the model village appeared as the product of scholarly

exhibitionary practices that sought to represent the experience of the field

enhanced by the international aesthetics of the World Fairs and combined with the

ethos of cultural activism. In his comments regarding the projected addition of the

model village to the museum, Mircea Eliade noted that 'the stylistic unity of rural life

abates any fears about the potential dangers of a "model village". Whoever has

looked carefully at the Village Museum will realise that they should not fear

modernisation or hybridisation. Peasant culture is still fertile enough to be able to

assimilate and transform a 'model village' according to the cannons of its [aesthetic]

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[43] "Strict Confidenţial," 1937, FCR-C/1937/04/218-219, Arh. Naţ.
[44] Ibid.

sensibility (…).'[45] Emphasising the organisers' deep knowledge and understanding of rural life and culture, Eliade expressed a widely held belief in the success of the model village as a project to modernise the Romanian countryside. Abandoned as an addition to the Village Museum, the opportunity to transform this exhibition into a real housing project in the village of Dioști in the spring of 1938 marked the complete transfer of Gusti's ideas from the exhibition space to real life.

Politics

Although planned and made public in the School's publications and at the 1937 Paris World Fair, the building of the model village might have not happened without the right political context. The instauration of the royal dictatorship in 1938 allowed the Monarch to embark on his own high modernist vision of the future. Arguing that his 'soft authoritarianism' embraced Gusti's sociological 'logic of improvement' and sought to appropriate the emerging national aesthetics of rural development, I will examine these two aspects of the new regime as they appeared in the rebuilding of the village Dioști as a model village.

As shown in Chapters 4 and 5, the Monarch's primary targets were the peasant population and the youth, whom he saw as crucial to the building of a new modern Romania. The abolition of the multi-party system was therefore followed by an immediate burst of royal generosity towards the countryside meant to strengthen his image as 'King of the Peasantry'. The new constitution of 1939 was presented as the Monarch taking control of politics and restoring order, seeking to

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[45] Mircea Eliade in Godea, *Muzeul Satului 1936-2003*, 74.

re-establish in the eyes of peasants the link between royal power and the divine.[46] In

the months following the regime change, the King visited many villages, met his

peasant subjects and distributed aid to localities affected by natural disasters. The

launch of the Dioşti reconstruction project occurred in this specific context.

Although Dioşti was one of many villages to go up in flames at that time, as

fires affected the countryside almost daily, causing many victims amongst the rural

population, the King's visit to the site of the disaster was publicised as an act of

divine mercy. The idea of the building of a model village in Dioşti came as suddenly

as the fire and the royal visit announced a few days later, as if the King had dreamt it

up over night.[47] The entire project stood under the sign of a new direct alliance

between the King and the peasant, unimpeded by the political bureaucracy of the

earlier 'democratic' regimes. An article in the daily newspaper *Curentul* wrote:

'There were moving scenes: an old man whose house had burnt down fell to his

knees shouting: "Long live our father, his Majesty the King, our saviour!" Deeply

moved, H.M. promised he would turn Dioşti in a model village'[48] Similarly, Gusti was

presented by another newspaper as 'the man who would turn the King's thought

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[46] Redacţia Albina, "Cum trebuie înţeleasă politica," *Albina* 41, no. 2 (January 1938): 1; "Majestatea sa Regele Carol II, Regele tuturor Românilor, cu învoirea întregului popor în trăreşte cu sigiliul noilor Sale puteri noua legiuire a Ţării," *Albina* 41, no. 11 (March 1938): 2-3.

[47] At. Andronescu, "Amănunte asupra incendiului catastrofal de la Dioşti-Romanaţi," *Curentul*, April 6, 1938; Andronic, "Comuna Dioşti din Romanaţi, distrusă de incendiu. -250 de case nimicite- . Sute de familii rămase pe drumuri," *Curentul*, April 4, 1938, sec. Incendii şi furtuni catastrofale în ţară; "Focul de la Dioşti a fost complect stins," *Curentul*, April 7, 1938; "Suveranul a vizitat regiunile bântuite de incendiu. Comuna Dioşti va deveni sat-model," *Curentul*, April 8, 1938; "M.S. Regele face inspecţii inopinate în ţară. În mijlocul sinistraţilor de la DIoşti (...)," *Curentul*, April 9, 1938; "Dioşti, sat model prin dărnicie regală," *Curentul*, April 10, 1938.

[48] "Suveranul a vizitat regiunile bântuite de incendiu. Comuna Dioşti va deveni sat-model."

into reality',[49] thus illustrating what Rostás has called the relation between 'an enlightened monarch and a well-educated mandarin'.[50]

The event that triggered the regeneration of Dioști and its representation in the propaganda press showed the nature of the state power that lay at the foundation of a model village. Presented as a symbolic act of royal mercy and a monument to the royal dictatorship, the model village was part of an aesthetics of power meant to embody Carol II's sustained process of state building and modernisation, which he had started since his return to the throne in 1930. Allegedly delayed because of the constant political fighting caused by the multi-party system, the new regime was thus meant to unleash the King's vision of a modern Romania materialised in a style that had become part of the country's new image as shown by its pavilions at the World Fairs.[51] Designed to 'reflect the country's cultural, economic, political and social rebirth', as Vlad commented[52], the emerging new national Romanian style of the 1930s, also known as the 'Carol II style', translated traditional elements from the Romanian vernacular into a modern language dominated by a lack of decoration and simplified features.[53] The public buildings designed during Carol II's regime in this style were in line with a wider trend dominating European architecture at the time and represented at its best in the Italian fascist and Soviet Stalinist styles.[54] Duiliu Marcu's Romanian Pavilion for

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[49] "Prof. Dimitrie Gusti împlineşte înaltul gând regesc: Construcţia satului reprezintă construcţia României Noui."
[50] Rostás, *O istorie orală*, 79.
[51] Popescu, *Le style national*, 329-345.
[52] Vlad, *Imagini ale identităţii naţionale*, 198.
[53] Popescu, "Rurality as a locus"; Popescu, *Le style national*, 262-264.
[54] See Kenneth Frampton, *Modern Architecture. A Critical History*, 4th ed. (London: Thames & Hudson, 2007).

the 1937 Paris World Fair, for example, 'was modernist to a certain extent, but especially nationalist (…), close in meaning and realisation to the German and Italian pavilions.'[55] Much smaller than Carol's more ambitious plans to restructure the capital's city centre, the model village was an opportunity to realise - in miniature form - the monarch's vision of rural modernisation.

The model village Dioști

The reconstruction of Dioști started in 1938 and involved two main phases: the research and planning of the new section of the village and its actual building comprising a civic centre, a complex of 'model houses', and many other facilities meant to improve the living standards of the entire village. Gheorghe Focșa, a leader of the Royal Teams and monographic researcher was put in charge of the project.

> The Professor called me, among that army of inspectors, all older than me, and said: 'Go to Dioști, stay there two, three days or more, as long as you need, study the possibility of making a model village there and come back with a report.' I went, I stayed there, I met with the local community, I talked to them and got an enthusiastic response, I took some notes, came back, typed a 20 page report and delivered it. The Professor read it, called me and said: "Now go and do it!" There was no way to say no, so I had to accept.[56]

Focșa had worked with the BSS since 1930, when he participated in the Runcu expedition. He had also published a few articles on rural mentalities and spiritual life.[57] From 1934 to 1942, he worked at FCR-PC, as team leader in Moișeni and Cuhea and later as inspector for the same project. His role as coordinator of the reconstruction works at Dioști was, as he admitted, both unexpected and

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[55] Vlad, *Imagini ale identității naționale*, 198.
[56] Focșa and Rostás, "G.Focșa," 43.
[57] Ioan Godea, *Gheorghe Focșa (1903-1995)* (Bucharest: Ed. Museion, 1997), 14.

challenging, showing Gusti's preference for creative multi-skilled people rather than experienced area specialists.[58]

Throughout the reconstruction process, Focşa had to communicate his findings to the team of architects, planners and engineers in Bucharest and supervise the works on the ground.[59] Moreover, he had the difficult tasks of clearing the building site, expropriating all remaining residents, and then reallocating the model houses to their new owners. During this complex process, the representatives of the Foundation were confronted with the locals' scepticism, lack of trust, and straightforward resistance when asked to surrender their land on the promise of getting a new house that was yet to be built.[60]

In an interview with Rostás, Focşa gave a telling example of the locals' unpredictable reactions. During the 1944 bombing of Bucharest, Focşa took his wife and children and left the city for Dioşti, where he was hosted by one of the 'model villagers', a certain Iordan. Coming from a poor background, this man had worked hard and acquired a small plot of land where he had built a house for his family. He was then faced with the official demand of exchanging his possessions for a new model house and, despite some resistance appeared to be working hard on the building of his new home. Yet, five years later, he confessed to Focşa that:

> When he saw that they were going to take his land and his house, and that he had no way out, he plotted with one of his fellows to kill the inspector of the Foundation (...) He confessed of his plan to his wife, who had been to

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[58] The best example is maybe the leading role assigned to the playwright, scenographer and cultural worker Victor Ion Popa in the design and construction of the Village Museum.
[59] Focşa and Rostás, "G.Focşa," 44-48.
[60] Ibid., 49.

upper school for a few years and was thus more educated. She listened to him and then asked: 'Did this man come of his own accord?' He said: 'No, the Foundation sent him, as he had an order from his Majesty.' 'Then I'll tell you what will happen. You will kill this one, you will go to jail and then another one will come and continue building the village.' And this confused, disarmed him and he dropped his plans.[61]

Focșa's story shows the complex tensions between a peasant way of thinking and the state machine, whose mechanism was impossible to grasp and whose intrusion, even in a good cause, was difficult to handle for the rural community. At the same time, it is representative of the complex process of negotiation that the entire project involved. Like most rural development projects or any other situations which require the application of legislation regarding property (either seizure or redistribution of land), the success of the Dioști project depended on the cooperation of the local community. It was far from the planners' and organisers' intentions to exercise force on the village, especially since the project was both inspired by Gusti's principles of local empowerment and was also presented as an act of royal philanthropy. Moreover, as Focșa stated in his book about the model village,

> (…) building for the village but without the [villagers' help], not using its latent energy that it can only develop through action (…) would be a great error. A constructive work programme, executed with difficulties and sacrifices from all participant parties, is better even if it is imperfect and realised with a certain delay (…) This is the way in which great and real efforts have to be made in the villages of Romania, directly in the field. No other method can accelerate the rhythm of the villages for a systematic transformation towards social progress.[62]

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[61] Ibid.

[62] Gherghe Focșa, *Satul Model Dioști* (Bucharest: Fundația Culturală Regală 'Regele Mihai', 1941), 21.

This statement indirectly mentions the difficulties the planners had to face on site, during the project's realisation, at the same time clarifying the conviction that cooperation with the locals was the only way to realise the transformation of rural Romania. However, as Focșa pointed out regarding the local who wished to kill him, the negotiation with the local community was an uneven game of power, which involved planners, local authorities, and villagers belonging to different social strata. If the interests of each party differed, so did their understanding, type of action and power positions. The disparity between the local's limited understanding of the project and even more limited means of defending himself and the planners' or local authorities' sophisticated knowledge and legal power illustrated the failure of each party to comprehend a different way of thinking and of acting. At the same time, this indicates the limitations of the concept of 'legibility' that Scott assigns to all high modernist projects, showing that, as Katherine Verdery has pointed put in the context of the most recent Romanian land reform, in many cases the state's vision is reduced and manipulated by its own agents.[63]

Ruralism – modernising and systematising the countryside

The reconstruction of Dioști followed all the main principles of cultural work launched by Gusti in 1934. Initially placed under the auspices of FCR-PC and undertaken by student volunteers, cultural work in the countryside later became the main aim of the Social Service (between October 1938 and October 1939) and a

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[63] Katherine Verdery, "Seeing Like a Mayor. Or, How Local Officials Obstructed Romanian Land Restitution," *Ethnography* 4, no. 11 (2002): 5-33.

compulsory stage in the academic life and career of all university graduates and civil servants. The project meant re-organising village life around new cultural values, namely those of the body, work, the mind and the soul.[64] Each of the values discussed in Chapter 4 found their materialisation both in the overall new plan of Dioști and in the architectural or technical details of individual buildings.[65] I will therefore examine these, paying particular attention to the ways in which the village reconstruction, the new constructions and space planning expressed Gusti's *sociologia militans* (activist sociology). Moreover, my analysis also seeks to understand how the planners negotiated the relationship between the old and the new, the existing village and its new additions, thus building their vision of social change into this rural project.

The old and the new Dioști

Unlike the model village designed as part of the Village Museum, which was going to be built on a cleared ground in the regulated exhibition space, the reconstruction of Dioști involved the restructuring of an existing locality with a pre-existing structure and specific features. This required a careful negotiation between the old and the new, which involved not only the planners, but also the entire local community. Preserved in Focșa's general report on the situation of the village and his proposal for its reconstruction, this negotiation can clarify the ways in which social change

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[64] *Îndrumător 1936*; *Îndrumător al muncii culturale la sate: 1939* (Bucharest: Fundația Culturală Regală "Principele Carol', 1939).
[65] Without any explicit sources discussing the individual decisions taken for the planning and building of Dioști, I will restrict my analysis to the secondary literature produced about the village reconstruction (press, interviews and monographs), the engineering and architectural plans of the houses kept in the Romanian National Archives and my own visit to the village in the summer of 2009.

was built into this project not only as reform, but also as a means to preserve those traditional elements that were disappearing.

In his report, the author presented two main reasons for the village's transformation into a model village. Firstly, the village presented a relatively high degree of civilisation both in terms of economic progress and in education standards. Enserfed during the reign of Mihai Viteazul (1593–1601), the village had freed itself from serfdom during the seventeenth century, leaving the living 'memory of its boyar origins' amongst the villagers, visible 'in its big urbanised houses, rich dependencies with new agricultural tools and machinery'.[66] Focşa correlated the locals' trust in the value of education with their proud and industrious spirit as well as with moral and physical health, pointing out that Dioşti was healthy ('there are only a few cases of social diseases'), and that the locals entertained good social relations with each other.[67] Secondly, the author argued that, despite its relatively high degree of civilisation, the physical appearance of the village required a structural reorganisation. The old Dioşti used to lie horizontally at a distance from and parallel to the main road mentioned above. It was made up of three main parallel roads with houses on either side, with very few narrow pathways cutting across, useful only for two to three households. These arteries were deemed 'narrow and insufficient' and the 'the houses were placed at irregular distances from the road'. Moreover, Focşa saw the village as slightly disorderly, with houses that,

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[66] Gheorghe Focşa, "Raport general asupra situaţiei actuale a satului Dioşti (judeţul Romanaţi) şi asupra lucrărilor necesare pentru transformarea lui in Sat Model," in *Dioştii. Pagini de istorie VII B*, 1985, 419.
[67] Ibid., 421.

apart from the fifteen *bordeie*[68] that were not suitable for modern living any more,

had almost no authentic Oltenian features in their architecture.[69]

The principles of order and reason enunciated in all four aspects of cultural

work (body, work, mind and soul) were reflected in Focșa's plan for Dioști. In both

its public and private areas, the model village was to benefit from all inventions of

modern science: pavements, running water, sewage and even electricity.[70] Each of

these measures reflected a new care for the life and vital energies of the village and

its locals, as expressed in Focșa's description of the model village:

> In this perfect unit of social life [the model village], all aspects of human existence and all the factors it depends on need to harmonise perfectly to produce and improve life itself, to strengthen its creative powers and ennoble its moral aspirations (…) The model village is a social unit equipped with all the institutions, organisations, edifices and installations (…) which stimulate and deepen the curiosity of the mind, defend and reinforce bodily health, develop physical strength and human vital energy, ease and complement manual labour, multiplying its fruits.[71]

As Bucur has shown in relation to Romanian eugenics, these measures relied on the

common belief that nurturing the vital energies of the peasantry would revitalise the

nation itself, whose strength lay in the untapped raw forces of the rural

population.[72] Focșa illustrated this idea by stating that 'the growth and perfection of

our entire nation depends on the growth and perfection of the humble peasant's

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[68] A *bordei* is a half-dug-out dwelling built of mud and covered with straw that survived on the Romanian territories until the beginning of the twentieth century. For a recent article on this traditional form of architecture, see Ioan Godea, "Bordeiul. O sinteză critică a problematicii legată de un arhaic sistem de locuire"," *Ethnos* 5 (2004): 61-96.

[69] Focșa, "Raport general," 420.

[70] Ibid., 435-7.

[71] Ibid., 429.

[72] Bucur, *Eugenics*, 94-5; 136-9.

life'.[73] Furthermore, in transforming and improving life in rural areas, these modernising measures sought to counter the ongoing migration to the city that often resulted in even worse living conditions (slums, overcrowding, the peasantisation of the city). With hindsight, we can now appreciate how ambitious the Dioşti project was, since the features that remained unfinished at the outbreak of war were only completed during the second and third decades of the communist regime: the water cistern had never functioned and was only reactivated in the 1960s when the power station was also updated.[74] Thus, reordering the rural space according to the standards of health and hygiene of advanced countries (for example electrification was far from being completed in the United States) would make Dioşti a model village not only for Romania, but for other countries, too. [75]

Overall, the map of the village was totally redesigned, starting with its public areas and moving deeper into its intimacy. Two main directions can be identified in this restructuring process: one addressed the community as a body social, building completely new facilities for public life, while the second provided for the private bodies of individuals and their families though new houses and outbuildings. I will discuss each of these separately, highlighting the ways in which these transformations reflected the ideas of the BSS about the past, present and future of the countryside.

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[73] Focşa, "Raport general," 429.

[74] Personal conversation with Gheorghe Gheorghe, a former school teacher from Dioşti.

[75] On rural electrification during the interwar period see Frederick Nebeker, "Electrification in the Interwar Period," in *Dawn of the Electronic Age: Electrical Technologies in the Shaping of the Modern World, 1914 to 1945* (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 83-119; David E. Nye, *Electrifying America : social meanings of a new technology, 1880-1940* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1992), 287-292.
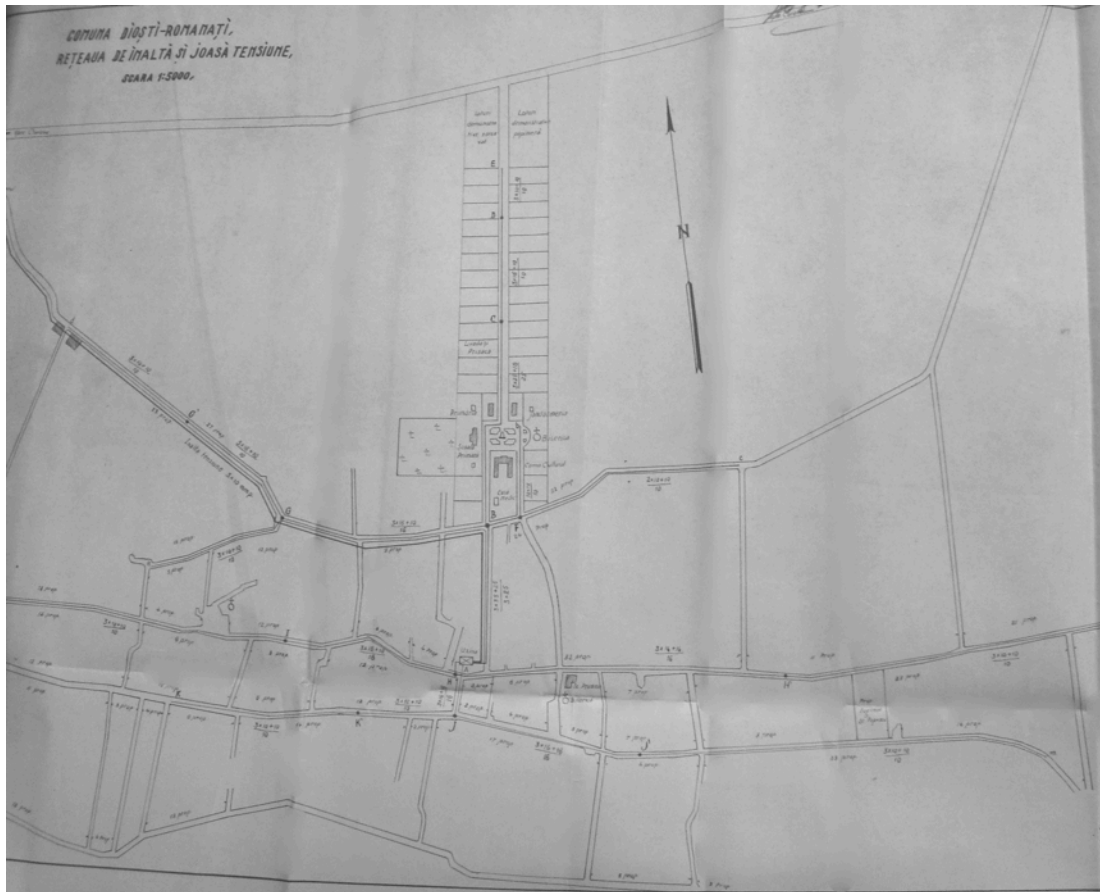
Fig. 3: Plan of Dioști with the 'model section'. Source: FCR-C/1939/21 vol. III/18. Arh. Naț.

The first measures were designed to 'order' and connect the village to the main transport route, the Bucharest, Caracal, Craiova road, resulting in a structural transformation of the village. The planners added a new road to the old village that was not parallel (like the existing ones), but perpendicular to the main road and linked the two sections through a new civic centre. (Fig. 3) This meant re-centering the village around what used to be one of its peripheries and expanding it across the field to meet the main road. This, together with the widening, paving, and straightening of all the roads in the village, served the same principles of circulation

used in the modern planning of European cities.[76] By widening and straightening its roads, the village was allowed 'to breathe' and the bodies of its locals could move freely along and across its territory. Moreover, the transversal new road plugged Dioşti into the main artery of Southern Romania, thus shortening the fifteen kilometres that separated it from the nearest town of Caracal and setting its pace closer to that of modernity.

The next major transformation regarded the restructuring of public space. According to Focşa, catering for the public life of the local community and all its needs was essential. The old village had no real centre or, more accurately, it had no visible one. Unaffected by the fire, the two churches were still standing, but they were placed somewhat laterally even in the old village and would become further peripheral to the redesigned one. Focşa proposed the construction of a new civic centre with public buildings organised according to the villagers' needs, forming four distinct centres: the cultural, the sanitary and physical educational, the administrative, and the economic.[77] Only a few of these buildings were familiar to the local community, most being new additions to rural living seeking to introduce new needs and practices in the countryside. The new edifices included: the *cămin cultural,* a museum, a medical ward, a pharmacy, a stadium, a post office, a fire station, a *gendarmerie*, a bank, cooperative, a mill, various workshops, and a power station.

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[76] See Richard Sennett, *Flesh and stone: the body and the city in western civilization* (London; Bos, Mass: Faber & Faber, 1994).
[77] Focşa, "Raport general," 438.

All these institutions were the physical materialisation of cultural work. So far organised as a temporary activity requiring an influx of students coming into the village, these edifices would fix the practices of cultural work into the very space of the community, redesigning it around the principle of modern civilization and governance. The architectural realisation and landscaping of the public centres placed these ideas in a visual and spatial narrative, legible for both the organisers and the locals. As Focșa stated,

> architecturally, [the buildings] would, on the one hand, have to meet their practical goal in village life in an ideal way and allow the most rational and systematic development of social activities and, on the other hand, give the village a grand and monumental appearance (…) Although in proportion and harmony with the size of the village and the surrounding households, all these public buildings should form an architectural ensemble in a unitary Romanian style, that should arise from and inspire a feeling of their eternal service to the village.[78]

The result was a main civic centre linking the old and the new sections of the village through a public square with a majestic *cămin cultural* in the middle and all other main public buildings mentioned above situated around it. Immediately north of the old village and backing onto it, the square opened onto the new road with its rows of neatly aligned model houses and newly-planted lime trees. The overall design was a miniature version of a modern town centre, in which the architecture articulated a clear message about the relations of power between the citizens and the state or local authorities, at the same time communicating the harmony between them. The new long straight street leading from the main road to the public square created a

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[78] Ibid.

sense of expectation and opened a perspective onto the civic centre, the new

pulsating heart of the village. This gateway also placed the other Dioști behind the

scenes, obscuring its eclectic architecture and irregular streets. In the central square,

the same principles of legibility were at work: at the core of village life and visible

from all angles, stood the *cămin cultural,* an imposing multi-functional building, the

largest of all the public institutions. Facing it, on each side towards the North stood

the matching Village Council and the Gendarmerie, much smaller in size. Flanking

the *cămin,* were the new church to the East and the school to the South. This new

structure of the village centre illustrated the desire to regulate and even replace the

unwritten and apparently disorderly everyday local practices revolving around the

two old churches, the field, etc with a fixed set of flows and permutations turning

around the state and its institutions of power, culture and order.

The new public institutions in Dioști were designed in a variant of the new

Romanian national style, combining traditional elements of vernacular architecture

with the modernist monumentality used in urban public buildings constructed under

Carol II's regime.[79] This responded to Focșa's goal of restoring the traditional

character of the village, by reintroducing regional features in its architecture. Yet, as

in the urban projects of the same era, the architects working on the project dealt

with this requirement differently in the private and public buildings, confining most

modern features to the public sphere.[80] In Dioști, the architects used the vernacular

as the base and structure of their buildings, purging the shapes and forms of all

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[79] Machedon and Scoffham, *Romanian modernism*, 270-280.
[80] Popescu, *Le style national*, 237.

ornament to give them a modern aspect and expanding them to a more imposing scale. All buildings preserved the slanted roof of the traditional rural house and the loggia of the boyar *conac* (manor house) prevalent in earlier versions of the Romanian style, added onto a simple geometrical base, creating an overall interplay between classical monumentality, modernist purism and a strong ethnic character. At the same time, the public buildings were prototypes of different trends in purpose-specific architecture (educational, religious, administration), reflecting the new ideas about the role of these institutions in the country's modernisation and progress.[81] These appeared in the scale and volumes used in the three major constructions - the *cămin cultural*, the school and the church - all combining the same geometrical forms: the arch, the square or rectangle and the column, in a style reminiscent of Duiliu Marcu's Romanian pavilion at the 1937 Paris World Fair.[82] This similarity was not just a coincidence, as the same ideas lay behind Marcu's design. Organised by Gusti, the exhibition presented a modern Romania that was wearing its history and tradition with comfort and elegance. On a smaller scale, the Dioști project was taking the journey in the other direction, bringing this new (image of) Romania back to the countryside for the locals to identify with.

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[81] Machedon and Scoffham, *Romanian modernism*, 237-55; Popescu, *Le style national*, 248-259.

[82] The architect who signed the plans for the school and the Cămin Cultural is Florin Bucă, but it seems that the architect mentioned earlier, Florea Stănculescu, participated in the initial discussions over the redesigning of the village. "Various architectural plans including plans for the model village Dioști," 1936, FCR-C/1936/21/39-49, Arh. Naț.
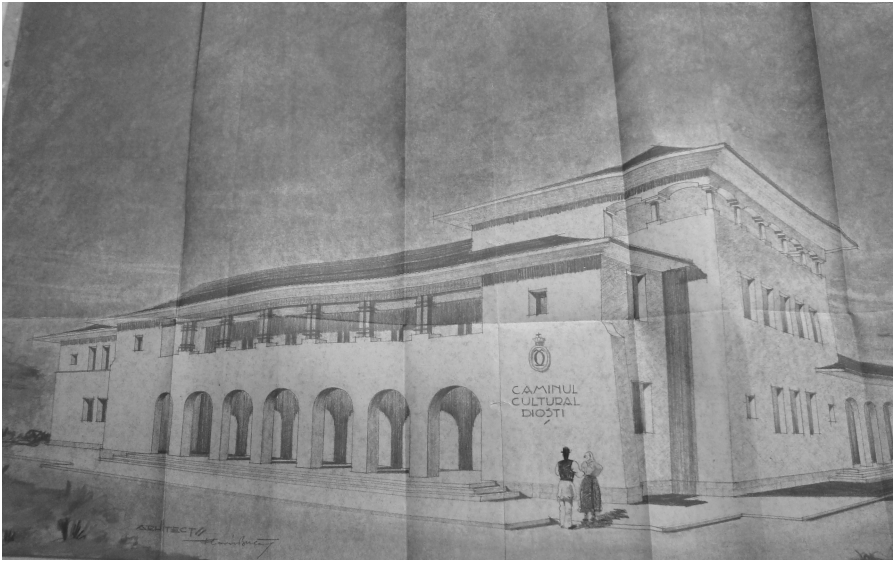
Căminul Cultural

Fig. 4: Sketch of the *cămin cultural* in Dioști. Source: FCR-C/1939/21 vol. III/49, Arh. Naț.

At the heart of the new civic centre, the *cămin cultural* deserves special attention as its central location indicated a desire to give life in a model village a new orientation. Representing the dynamic forces of the community, the *cămin cultural* gained a key role in modernisation of the countryside, as imagined by FCR-PC. (Fig. 4) As the textbook of cultural work announced, 'its goal [was] to unite all the community in order to awaken the village from its current lethargy and to recruit all the villagers as workers towards their own cultural enlightenment'.[83] With the introduction of the Social Service, the project for the *cămine* became even more ambitious, aiming to found one in every Romanian village and town. Furthermore, the *cămin cultural* became the local enforcer of the Social Service Law and the local intellectuals (priests, school teachers and local administrators) were obliged to

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[83] *Îndrumător 1939*, 24.

contribute to its activities.[84] As part of this ambitious plan, the state launched a programme of building new *cămine culturale* across the country, continuing the activity of the student teams on a much larger scale. These new multifunctional buildings were designed to serve the wide range of activities related to cultural work with its four aspects: health, work, mind and soul. Whilst being functional and cost-effective, the architectural style of these new buildings was meant to communicate the importance, progressive spirit and cultural roots of this institution.[85] The plan for the *cămin* in Dioşti provides a perfect example of this wider trend as the standard for all other such institutions across the country.

The *cămin cultural* in Dioşti was a two-storey U-shaped building comprising of four main sections. Occupying the front section of the ground floor was the concert hall (*sala de festivităţi*) where various community and cultural events were organised (concerts, conferences, film showings, etc). The east and west wings were designated respectively for economic and health purposes. The first included two workshops, a kitchen and bakery, a shop and storerooms. The second was comprised of showers with changing rooms, a room for delousing, three doctors' and nurses' consultation rooms and a doctor's office. Finally, the first floor was devoted to the village's museum and library. Fifty metres long on each side, the building had a total area across all floors of about 2000 square metres. The details of this plan shed more light on the ideas behind this new cultural centre of the

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[84] *Căminul cultural. Întocmire și funcționare* (Bucharest: Fundația Culturală Regală "Principele Carol", 1939), 7.

[85] Most of the projects for cămine culturale show a faith in a modern functional style with traditional and classical additions. A counter-example that reinforces this preference was the design of the Cămin Cultral in Drăgănești, Olt, which was rejected because of its overly ornate style. "Various architectural plans including plans for the model village Dioşti.", 38.

Romanian village. This was an embodiment of the School's civilising mission that placed the community and its vital functions (education, economy and health) at the heart of the village itself, all part of a secular system of values meant to represent the nation and the state. As Bucur has pointed out, the *cămin cultural* was not meant to replace religious morality, but rather to subordinate it to the state's high modernist ideology.[86] In the new public square, the new church now occupied a position to one side of the *cămin cultural*, corresponding to that of the school. Displaced from the centre of village life, the church had therefore become secondary to the new centre of the village, which represented the peasant as a rational economic producer, biological asset and cultural essence of the state.

Apart from the public buildings constructed around the main square of the village, the planners reconfigured and organised other new spaces for the use of the entire community. New squares were added in front of the other two existing churches and a stadium was built near the school. Like the public buildings, these designated spaces were meant to help the locals take up and develop new leisure and social practices. In this way, the planners sought to regulate and stabilise these otherwise improvised activities of the community.

Overall, this redesign of rural public life illustrated the high modernist ambitions of the BSS and of the monarch himself. These aesthetic and spatial changes were meant to stimulate the local community in a similar way to contemporary urban regeneration projects. At the same time, the planning of the

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[86] Bucur, *Eugenics*, 74, 210.

public square and its design appeared as a miniature version of the systematisation of the capital governmental quarters, replicating the same visual code that ensured the legibility of space and architecture in the positioning and design of the public institutions and buildings.[87] In this sense, the architects and planners rejected the improvised nature and illegibility governing rural space, imposing a universal aesthetic code.

Model Housing

Providing new model housing for the Dioșteni whose households had been affected by the fire constituted the second major goal of the project. Following Stănculescu's and Nasta's ideas affirmed in the previous decade, the Foundation took a step further, giving advice to the locals on how to build their homes to providing model dwellings for private owners, meant to satisfy the same underlying agenda. Like the public buildings, these also represented an effort to shape the life of the locals by generating new practices and providing higher standards of living. This section will compare the model houses to the pre-existing dwellings in the 'old village' as a way of understanding the planners' underlying vision of social change. If the old village appeared as a transgression from a natural path of rural development, the new housing proposed a neo-traditional style that sought to fix the countryside inside a standardised 'national aesthetics'.

The plans of the Foundation's architects proposed a style of model housing that deliberately contrasted with the local architecture, seeking to counter the

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[87] Roberts, "The City of Bucharest 1918-1940," 119.

direction this was moving towards at the time.[88] Although an article published in

Sociologie Românească in 1938 provided a socio-historical analysis of the local

housing in Dioști just before the fire, Focșa's report on the village reconstruction did

not show any interest in the new trends Dioști had recently adopted in its existing

housing architecture.[89] According to him, the old village had no traditional traits

specific to the region except for the old *bordeie* that he deemed inappropriate for

modern living.[90] He therefore proposed that a traditional Oltenian style be

reintroduced locally though the new buildings constructed by the Foundation. It is

thus important to understand what context the model houses were introduced into

and what relation was created between these two sides of the village. A brief look at

the architecture in old Dioști can clarify the way the ongoing transformation of the

rural built environment was interpreted and what type of change the model housing

proposed.

Pătru's article shed some light on the relationship between housing and the

recent social changes affecting the region, somewhat confirming Focșa's affirmation

about the inauthenticity of the local architecture. From the second half of the

nineteenth century to the fire of 1938, the aspect of the village had been under

continuous transformation. In terms of housing, this change was materialised in a

shift from *bordeie* to brick and wattle-and-daub houses. Initially the most common

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[88] This was still evident in 2009, when I visited the village. My impression of Dioști was that it still looked like two different villages attached to each other. The street with model houses, which welcomes the visitor into the locality contrasts greatly with the buildings people live in on other side of the main square.

[89] Constantin Pătru, "Locuințele din satul de moșneni Dioști-Romanați," *Sociologie românească* III, no. 4 (1938): 214-221. There is no evidence to show that Focșa was aware of this research.

[90] Focșa, "Raport general," 419-420.

form of housing for the Dioșteni, the *bordei* had evolved in time, reaching

impressive sizes and levels of comfort in its twentieth century version. Although not

many, some *bordeie* belonging to better-off villagers had three rooms and a cellar.

Nevertheless, social mobility eventually meant replacing the *bordei* with a new type

of building, the brick house. This style was brought to the village in the mid

nineteenth century by Serbian migrant builders, who constructed the first brick

houses in Dioști. According to one of Pătru's sources, there were only three of them

in 1868, dominating the landscape amongst the mass of humbler *bordeie*.[91]

Preserving a similar interior to that of the *bordei*, these new houses became a

symbol of affluence for the locals who either employed the Serbian builders or

learnt how to make them themselves. Their style borrowed many neo-Classical

features from urban petty-bourgeois architecture, marking a clear break from the

traditional *bordei*. After the Great War, a third type of house appeared in the village,

illustrating a new trend of social mobility. Inspired by the houses in *Câmpia Dunării*

(The Wallachian Plain), the wattle-and-daub house was better and more modern

than the old *bordei* and cheaper to make than the brick house, offering the best

solution for those who wished to improve their living standards but could not build a

brick house. This was probably the type of house the local who planned to kill Focșa

had owned before the fire. This brief overview of the housing in the old Dioști shows

its tight connection with social change manifested as an increase in social mobility

correlated to an opening of the community to external influences. As Focșa pointed

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[91] Pătru, "Locuințele din satul de moșneni Dioști-Romanați," 217.

out, the new houses were 'the faithful replica of urban architecture, with columns, pilasters, friezes, etc'.[92] This was not simply an observation, but an indirect criticism of Dioști's foreseeable evolution.

Focșa and the architects who designed the model housing quarter responded to this existing situation by introducing yet another architectural style in the village. Drawing on traditional Oltenian architecture, mainly that of the mountain part of the region, the model houses alongside the new street leading to the civic centre illustrated the School's agenda for rural reform. Modern in their standardisation and planning of interior and external annexes, the houses were designed in a neo-traditional style, reflecting the intention to re-ruralise the peasantry at the same time offering them the space and facilities of a modern life-style. As mentioned earlier, the houses bore a strong resemblance to the plans proposed by Florea Stănculescu as inspiration for locals wishing to build their own house in the countryside.[93] This showed a transition from a trust in the locals' judgement and willingness to follow specialised advice to the actual realisation of such models with funding from the state.

The new quarter was comprised of two rows of orderly standardised houses with small stylistic variations similar in many ways to the private and social housing projects in other Western European countries and elsewhere.[94] The houses occupied

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[92] Focșa, "Raport general," 420.
[93] Stănculescu, *Case*; Popescu, *Le style national*, 308-11.
[94] See John Burnett, *A Social History of Housing 1815- 1970* (North Pomfret: David and Charles, 1978); Kirsi Saarikangas, *Model Houses for Model Families. Gender, Ideology and Modern Dwelling.The Type-Planned Houses of 1940s Finland* (Suomi Historiallinen Seura: University of Helsinki, 1993); Leen Meganck and Linda Van Santvoort, "'Such a magnificent farmstead in my opinion asks for a muddy pool'. Rural buildings and the search

generous plots that included a front flower garden, a yard for the outbuildings and another garden with a vegetable patch and small orchard at the back of the house. Despite their standardisation, the houses were designed to respect the existing social differences in the locality. Thus, the architects produced three categories of houses, with two, three, and four bedrooms respectively, a kitchen with a pantry and a cellar and distributed them to the locals according to social status (land owned), family size, and value of the damage caused by the fire. This indicated that the planners sought to leave the social order undisturbed, at the same time transforming it according to new criteria. The standardisation of the houses, on the one hand, set certain minimum requirements necessary even for a poor family, and on the other, obscured the visible differences in style between social categories, the only differences being the size of the house and the few distinguishing ornamental features. (Figs.5-7) Therefore, the architects operated a visual simplification of the social categories co-existing in the village, a tendency characteristic of other high modernist rural planning designs.

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for a 'regional' architecture in Belgium," in *Rural and Urban: Architecture between Two Cultures* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), 110-133; Gillian Darley, *Villages of Vision* (London: Architectural Press, 1975).

Fig. 5: Type III house. Source: Gheorghe Focșa, *Satul Model Dioști* (Bucharest: Fundația Cuturală Regală 'Regele Mihai', 1941)
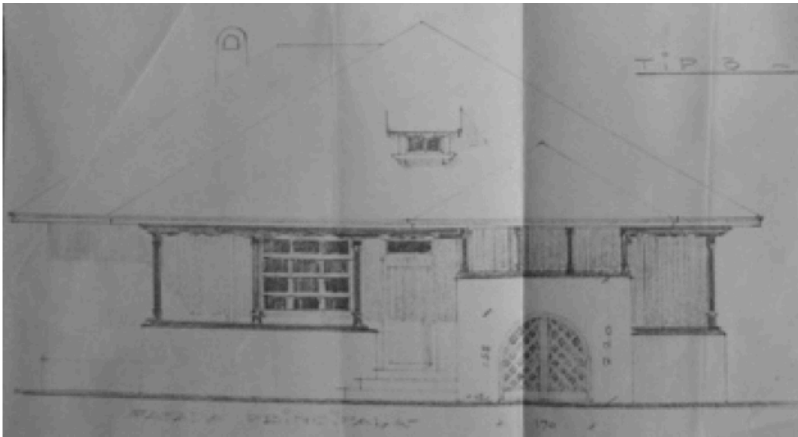

Fig. 6: Exterior plan of a type III house. Source: Arh. Naț. FCR-C/1939/21 vol. II/3
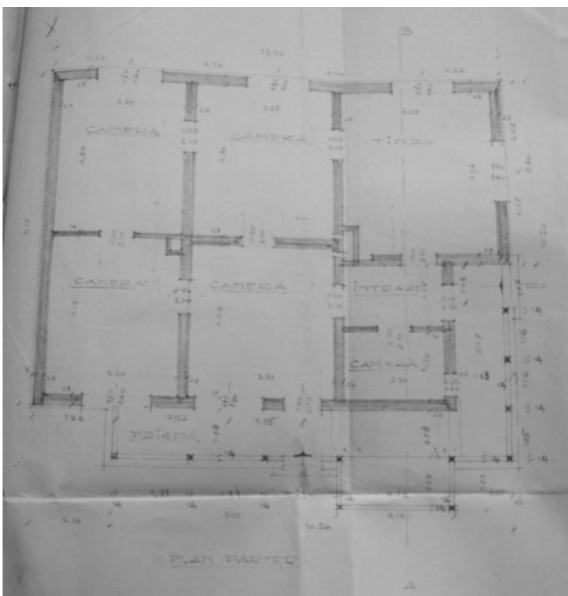

Fig. 7: Plan for the interior of a type III house. Source: Arh. Naț. FCR-C/1939/21 vol III/131

Inspired by the vernacular architecture of the region (but not of the village itself), the architects designed different variants of a square-based house with a slanted tiled roof, a *prispă* (porch) running on one or two sides of the house, and a cellar.[95] The exterior faithfully followed Stănculescu's indications for the building of an Oltenian-style house, restoring certain architectural features that seemed to be disappearing from the new rural dwellings, such as the porch. Here is what the author had to say about this folk architectural element:

> One of the good things in the countryside is the porch, [since] it protects the house and the entrance, and provides a place to clean yourself before going inside (…) The porch plays an important role in the life of the Romanian peasant. This is where the peasant sleeps with his family, this is where the grandmother sits and spins, telling stories to the children gathered round her (…) This is where the child frolics with the dog, and where the baby crawls on all fours chasing a hen.[96]

These comments about the cultural role of the porch reveal a desire of preserving or restoring not only a visual aesthetics, but also the cultural memories and dream world attached to the countryside. Even clearer in the author's contrast between the other good old architectural features and their replacement with new ones copying the urban style, this further clarifies how the model houses in Dioști were meant to reject each new element in the existing styles already present in the village. Unlike the brick houses in old Dioști, with their columns and friezes, the ornamentation of the model houses was reduced to the carved timber columns

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[95] Stănculescu often referred to the square house as the 'matrix house', which is a source of inspiration for other architects of the time (for example Sandu Aldea, Stefan Petrinelli). Popescu, *Le style national*, 308-9.
[96] Stănculescu, *Case*, 68-9.

supporting the porch and the arched doors of the cellar, restoring an overall rustic appearance and indicating a return to natural materials and traditional crafts.[97]

Inside, the model houses proposed a simple and functional distribution of space, different both from the *bordeie* and the brick houses.[98] They had between three and five almost equally-sized main rooms (a kitchen plus the bedrooms), all communicating with each other through doors. The access inside was made through a small hallway that usually stood between the pantry and the kitchen (*tinda*). The latter was the largest room, measuring four by five metres in even the smallest type of house. This spatial arrangement was not only functional, but also reflected the same principles declared by Stănculescu in his textbook, combined with FCR-PC's agenda for social reform.

As on the outside, the interior was meant to preserve the design and features that best represented a traditional peasant lifestyle and culture. In keeping with the communal use of the peasant living space, which was not separated into different spheres of life, the same room being used for multiple activities (cooking, sleeping, working), the planners did not allocate specific functions to any other rooms apart from the kitchen.[99] Unlike urban dwellings, the model house had no designated living or dining room. Nevertheless, since the houses proposed a more modern style of rural living, the planners sought to tackle the problem of rural overcrowding by providing a generous number and size of rooms that allowed more

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[97] Ibid., 69.
[98] The larger hovels had cross-shaped interiors with a central kitchen/hearth and an everyday room on one side and a guest room on the other, whereas the brick houses adopted wagon-like spatial distribution of rooms of different shapes and sizes. Pătru, "Locuințele din satul de moșneni Dioști-Romanați," 217-8.
[99] Saarikangas, *Model Houses*, 157-8.

privacy and space for each family member. However, since the doors bound all the rooms together, the level of privacy was less than that of an urban dwelling, the walls functioning more like screens in a Japanese style house or like curtains in a communal shower in Soviet Russia.[100] In this way, the design tried to counter the bad habit of the entire peasant family sleeping together in only one room, even when there was enough space in the house. At the same time, there was no provision for a 'clean room' (*camera de curat*), indicating an attempt to move away from an old-fashioned symbolic use of space to a more practical and rational one.[101] Also in line with the health and hygiene agenda of the Foundation, the houses had numerous windows, one or two stoves catering for all the rooms, terracotta and wooden floors in the kitchen and bedrooms respectively. Nevertheless, although each house had its own outdoor hygienic toilet, the plans did not feature indoor bathrooms or WCs, showing the different standards applied to the rural population.

To sum up, the model housing of Dioști reflected the high modernist aspirations of activist sociology, seeking both to transform the countryside into a modern, comfortable and stable living space for the locals and to order, simplify and make it legible for the state to rule. The end result was an aesthetic and healthy living environment, which countered the hybrid architectural styles caused by the unruly influences of modernity with a standardised 'national style' based on traditional sources of inspiration.[102]

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[100] Volkov, "Kul'turnost," 212.

[101] In a widespread rural custom, one of the house's rooms was designated as the 'clean room' its use restricted to guests and special social occasions such as funerals.

[102] Gheorghe Focșa, "Dioștii Sat Model II," *Căminul Cultural* VI, no. 9 (November 1940): 120.

The land question in Dioști

Apart from the cosmetic changes proposed and accomplished by the planners, the Dioști modernising project required a preliminary reorganisation of land and envisaged an even more complex one for the improvement of the village's economy. For both the locals and the planners, land was the defining feature of the peasant economy and the most sensitive one as well. Yet, since the model village proposed a restructuring of rural space, land was key to the realisation of the project and its goals. Firstly, an initial small-scale reallocation of land was needed for the building of the model village and the civic centre. This required the expropriation of some plots with a generous compensation and the re-housing of some locals from *bordeie* to new model houses. The locals, suspicious of state officials, met this plan with scepticism, lack of trust, and straightforward resistance when asked to surrender their land on the promise of getting a new house that was yet to be built.[103] One of the ways the planners convinced them and got their cooperation was by involving them in the building of the model houses.[104] As seen in Focșa's example above, the peasant who had conspired against him worked hard on building his new house and finally realised that the entire project was not a sham.

The second and more daring change to the distribution and use of land, which the planners had envisioned but did not finalise, was the amalgamation of peasant holdings. In the past, Dioști had had a system of land tenure typical for most agricultural free-peasants villages organised in parallel strips of land each

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[103] Focșa and Rostás, "G.Focșa," 49.
[104] Focșa, *Satul Model Dioști*, 19-26.

descending from a common ancestor (*moș*).[105] This had determined the organisation

of the rural housing, with roads cutting across these parallel strips, allowing each

landowner to place his house on his strip. In the interwar period, the village had

been greatly affected by the process of land fragmentation, and the strips were

further subdivided, creating a criss-cross of small plots owned by different locals.

Since the traditional rationale behind the distribution of land was lost, the result was

what the planners defined as an irrational and inefficient organisation of plots. The

plan for the model village was to amalgamate all individual plots and set up a

cooperative to undertake all agricultural labour. In one of his articles on the model

village, Focșa wrote that one of the two projects:

> for the systematisation and the scientific guidance of agricultural work [was]
> done with the help of a team of agronomists and employees of the *Direcția*
> *Generala a Cadastrului* [Land Registry], who identified the properties,
> measured, mapped and marked the entire tillable farmland owned by the
> village measuring a total of 8,000 *pogoane* [equivalent to about 4000
> hectares], on which individual plots are broken into a few thousand small
> strips of about four metres wide and four to eight metres long. [106]

The planners envisaged Dioști as the most advanced agricultural centre in the

region, equipped with all the machinery, tools and raw products necessary for the

modernisation and rationalisation of agriculture. This illustrated a vision for the

future of Romanian peasant economy in which cooperation appeared as the only

way to revive agriculture by consolidating land and introducing new progressive

methods of production. Although a compromise, this solution marked a clear break

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[105] Veselina Urucu, *Dioști un sat din Câmpia Romanaților* (Craiova: Ed. Arves, 2008), ?
[106] Focșa, "Dioștii Sat Model II," 120.

with traditional forms of land tenure, seeking to preserve ownership rights but to reorder the geography of the environment according to the demands of capital and progress.

As various eyewitness accounts show, the locals received the initiatives of economic change with suspicion and resentment for various reasons. Firstly, it must be noted that Dioşti was not a poor village and that the locals who owned more than twenty hectares of land did not see the benefits of cooperation and amalgamation. Secondly, those who had not been affected by the fire remained indifferent to the rebuilding of the village and proved unwilling to change the way they worked their own land. Finally, not even those directly affected cooperated with the local authorities. As a commentator lamented,

> It is sad that those whose houses have burnt down are not helping out with the building of their own houses. Apart from four people everybody else refuses to help out. It is a strange situation. After having been given a house and outbuildings with all the necessary comforts, the peasant cannot be bothered to join in with digging the foundations or to place a brick in the wall of the house he has chosen for himself! [107]

Finally, all the locals manifested what the commentators defined as 'peasant conservatism' – resistance to most incentives for innovation and modernisation and a desire to preserve the existing state of affairs.[108] These reasons made the planners delay the amalgamation plans and therefore also put the structural changes of the village economy temporarily on hold. Due to the outbreak of the war, these were

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[107] A. Bărcănescu, "La Dioşti," in *Sate și echipe* (Bucharest: Fundația Culturală Regală "Principele Carol", 1939), 20.
[108] Lorin Popescu, "Pe șantierele satului model Dioşti," in *Sate și echipe* (Bucharest: Fundația Culturală Regală "Principele Carol", 1939), 18-9.

completely abandoned and after 1945, the model village Dioști was forgotten by the state until the communist land reform and collectivisation process.[109]

During the communist regime, the village was further reorganised according to a new vision of modernity. A different type of land amalgamation was imposed through the '*întovărășiri agricole*' (agricultural associations) and later through the *Cooperativa Agricolă de Producție* (collective farm)*.* Unlike Gusti's plans, which sought to empower the landowners by making the cooperative a profitable agricultural enterprise, the communist regime requisitioned the land from rich peasants, persecuting and vilifying them as agents of capitalism. Thus, the collectivisation process produced a much deeper reordering of Dioști, shaking its economic and social hierarchies and imposing a more rigid version of high modernism than that of the interwar project. This indicated the different pace and nature of power at work in this earlier reform programme, which introduced change by starting from the surface and seeking to go deeper slowly, by preserving the existing structures and convincing people to adhere to the rational principle of modern agriculture. Instead of destroying the capitalist mode of production like the post-war regime did, the interwar reformers wished to use, shape and manage it in the interest of the state and for the welfare of the peasant population.

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[109] Bărcănescu, "La Dioști," 53-4.

Conclusion: high modernist aesthetics and cultural change

In Focșa's book, *Satul model,* he warns the reader that the model village was 'neither a utopian idea, nor a form of visionarism, nor a revolutionary desire, but another form of concrete reality, more perfect, which has been growing gradually in rural reality under the dynamic influence of a projected ideal'.[110] Yet, despite this, it is difficult not to think of this project as a miniature version of the School's and especially of Gusti's high modernist ambitions for the future of the entire countryside. Rejecting these three terms – utopia, visionarism and revolution – Focșa indicated the unique place the School wished to occupy in a history of previous planning projects. One of Gusti's articles from the early 1920s, entitled '*Comunism, socialism, anarhism, sindicalism și bolșevism. O clasificare a sistemelor privitoare la societatea viitoare*' (Communism, socialism, anarchism, syndicalism, and bolshevism: A classification of the systems regarding a future society) shows that his entire system of thought was tightly connected to a long line of political projects of creating a future society.[111] In his view, each of these schools of political thought had attempted to realise their own variant of 'social ideal'. Embracing this common goal, he stated in a metaphysical tone, that the time of a 'third empire', in which 'the triumph of the Light and of a Synthesis of all its forms' was on its way and that 'we should prepare to become its citizens'.[112] For years to come, Gusti sought to build this new world order following his own social ideal, based as he argued, on a

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[110] Focșa, *Satul Model Dioști*, 8.

[111] Gusti, "Comunism, socialism, anarhism, sindicalism și bolșevism. O clasificare a sistemelor privitoare la societatea viitoare."

[112] Ibid., 352.

systematic scientific understanding of Romanian society. First experimented with in the cultural work of the Royal Student Teams, the blueprints for this social reform had ripened in the late 1930s, allowing Gusti to launch the Social Service and to commission the building of the model village Dioşti. This evolution did, indeed, result in a new form of social idealism that, as I have argued, constituted a version of high modernism. This was different from the previous visions of a future society since it combined all three features Focşa refuted in the model village (utopia, visionarism or revolutionary spirit) into the idea that reality itself was perfectable.

The model village Dioşti examined in this chapter offered the opportunity to consider how the School's vision of social change was materialised in a rural planning and housing project. By looking at the way the idea of the model village developed in the academic and political context of the time, and within the fieldwork practices of the School, I have argued that the 'model village' was not only a miniature of the School's vision of Romania's countryside of the future, but also one of the School's own evolution from research to action.

The chapter has followed the two main roots of the Dioşti project: firstly the academic and political debates around the improvement of the rural built environment in the new social context of greater Romania and secondly the School's exhibitionary practices and participation in the international exhibitions of the time. The first explained many of the specific decisions taken by the planners in the actual reconstruction of the village, as well as the place of this project in the wider context of the relationship between architecture, sociology, power and politics. In this sense,

the model village was a response to the ongoing transformations occurring in the Romanian countryside and an attempt to restore the traditional character of rural architectural by providing stylistic models for the locals to reproduce. At the same time, the model village was also a miniature version of Carol II's ambitions to redesign Romanian society according to a high modernist logic of improvement and aesthetic principles. The second root traced the model village to the monographists' desire to represent their own experience of the field in sociological displays and, at the same time, reconstruct the village in the safe and controlled environment of the exhibition space. Transplanted from the exhibition hall into the real world, the model village was realised through a series of unexpected turns of events. The result was, despite Focșa's affirmation above, a miniature social engineering project that remaining closely attached to the conditions and aesthetics of the museum space. Similar to the Village Museum in Bucharest, which created 'a small, self-contained utopian space' where peasants were hired to perform their own lives for visitors, Dioști was meant to inspire the locals to transform themselves into model rural citizens.[113] The unfinished nature and the unexpected consequences of these experiments indicated the limits of sociology's ability to manage and order human life. Moreover, both projects help reconsider the idea of negotiation between planners and locals. If for the former, negotiation only meant setting the rules and getting the locals to agree to them, the latter negotiated through instrumental performative action, which involved non-cooperating or transgressing norms.

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[113] Scott, *Seeing*, 257.

In analysing the village reconstruction, I have considered the two main characteristics of high modernist projects: their underlying logic of improvement and the visual code used by the planners. Drawing on Scott's theory, I have concluded that, like the principles of cultural work designed to transform the rural world through the action of student volunteers, the planning of Dioști required a simplification of the complex issues discussed by the Bucharest sociologists in their academic writings. Although apparently possible, these models of social planning and reform had multiple limitations. 'Thinning', to use Scott's term, the language of sociology to a few visible principles of change, eliminated the complexity and grey ground of the real world. Thus, the Dioști village was reconstructed in conformity with a visual aesthetics of power which required it to be re-oriented towards new social values and which proposed a new national style combining modernism with a return to tradition. In creating a new simplified and legible structure of the village, the planners redesigned the pre-existing social and cultural divisions, creating new contrasts between what was already there and their interventions.

Although it is impossible to assess the outcome of the project because of the abrupt turn of historical events that brought it to a halt, I have indicated one of its major shortcomings. The delay and potential failure to address the village's real economic needs by transforming its land distribution and agricultural practices showed the superficial nature of the project. If architectural design was fairly easy to transform, stimulating real structural change was much more difficult. This further emphasises the aesthetic character of the Dioști reconstruction in which the term

'optics of power' should be employed with the stress falling on the first word, as the power of the state and its role in the transformation of the village were only illusory.

Epilogue

Today, the model village Dioşti is still caught in between the modern and the rural worlds, haunted both by the ghosts of the past and the uncertainties of the future.[114] The recent commemoration of the interwar local achievements has created controversy among the village intellectuals and local authorities, both interested in reviving the spirit and institutions of the past. Yet, these discussions have regarded more the names of streets and buildings rather than their function and use. In this way, the project of a model village seems to have a tragic-comic epilogue that illustrates the different fate of the two levels on which the transformation of Dioşti was projected – private and public. The houses, inherited by the sons and daughters of the first owners or sold to new ones, have survived in good condition, preserving their elegant modernist simplicity combined with traditional crafts. However, the public buildings have had a very different destiny. The only institutions that kept their original function were the school and the local council, the latter of which was being repaired in the summer of 2009. The other additions to village life (the stadium, the veterinary clinic, the new church, and the *cămin cultural*) all have either lost or changed their intended function. The *cămin*

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[114] My remarks are based on the interviews I conducted in Dioşti in the summer of 2009 with villagers Gheorghe Gheorghe, Veselina Urucu, Bălaşa Florea, and Elena Datcu.

cultural is now a home for disabled children from the entire region. Recently repainted bright yellow, it is still at the core of the village, connecting the two sides – the old and the new Dioști. Yet, its new function has turned it into a semi-carceral space, fenced off and impenetrable to the local community. Despite the building's panopticon quality, the locals ignore the children in care, who occupy the central square, thus rendering the building itself invisible. The strange fate of the *cămin cultural* speaks of the shallowness of the optics of power and of its perverse or comic effects.

HISTORY THROUGH SOCIOLOGY

> There are two registers, two levels of [the] change [of the Romanian peasant]. The first level represents the changes in his social life. The Romanian peasant is undergoing great transformations, much greater than those of other social categories, as we still are the country with the largest rural and agrarian population in Europe. The accession into the European Union presupposes dramatic changes inside this population, which is totally ex-centric (out of place) and anachronistic relative to the norms and functioning of European Union institutions. (…) On the other hand, what changes is the discourse about the peasant, just in a more difficult and contradictory manner. Why? Because this discourse is linked to something else, to national identity, to the value we have got used to attaching to the traditional peasant, as a symbol of the country, of its culture, and, in the last instance, of our identity. He, the peasant, is changing, as this is how life is, not waiting for our discourse [to catch up]. The changes in the discourse, in the representations are more difficult, as we do not know what to put in the [empty] place, we don't know how to relate to these 'objective' changes.[1]
>
> Vintilă Mihăilescu, 2006

In an interview published in 2006, Vintilă Mihăilescu, the then director of *Muzeul Țăranului Român* (Romanian Peasant Museum), commented on several aspects of rural transformation in contemporary Romania and on the new challenges this posed for Romanian intellectuals and academics. Mihăilescu's understanding of transformation resonates with several themes in this thesis. His separation between 'objective' social changes and their correspondents in the sphere of intellectual discourse reveals not only the recurrent theme of change in the countryside, but also the same relationship between scholars and the peasantry more than eighty years after Gusti's first expedition to Goicea Mare. If the Romanian peasantry,

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[1] Vintilă Mihăilescu and Razvan Brăileanu, "Țăranul român a plecat în UE," *Revista 22* XV, no. 867 (2006), http://www.revista22.ro/taranul-roman-a-plecat-in-ue-3165.html. [Accessed 2 December 2010]

although marked greatly by the Communist regime, has persisted as an 'anachronism' in contemporary Europe, Romanian intellectuals have also kept their positions as translators of the rural world not only on the national stage, but also on a wider and more connected international one. Referring to the expansion of the European Union as a new international context for understanding the peasant world, Mihăilescu's words sound strangely familiar. As director of the Sociology Department at *Şcoala Naţională de Studii Politice şi Administrative* (National School for Political and Administrative Studies), founder of the Cultural Anthropology programme at the same institution, and director of the aforementioned museum, he is one of the most prominent academics involved in the recovery and reinvention of the Romanian peasant.[2] These continuities show the relevance of this study beyond the limits of interwar history, not only as a reassessment of the period, but also as a contribution to understanding the persistent and tenuous relationship between social sciences, rurality and modernity. Before recapitulating the main conclusions of this thesis, this final chapter offers a sweeping view of the various closing scenes in the story of the BSS and its members.

Epilogue

The breaking off point for my research is Romania's entry into the Second World War, preceded by the territorial losses to the Soviet Union, and to Germany's allies,

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[2] Other Romanian intellectuals involved in this process were Paul Stahl, Henri H. Stahl's son, who returned from France and became the director of *Institutul de Studii Sud-Est Europene* (Institute for South East European Studies), the artist Horia Bernea, Ernest Bernea's son, who also returned from France to set up *Muzeul Ţăranului Român* (Romanian Peasant Museum) in Bucharest.

Hungary and Bulgaria in the summer of 1940.[3] Between the late June ultimatums through which the Soviet Union demanded the return of Bessarabia and the 'transfer' of Northern Bukovina at the end of (26-28 June 1940), the Second Vienna Award (30 August 1940) through which the Axis Powers compelled the Romanian government to cede Northern Transylvania to Hungary and Southern Dobrudja to Bulgaria (agreed on 7 September 1940), *România Mare* (Greater Romania) was reduced to seventy percent of its former territory and population.[4]

To accommodate part of the great influx of refugees coming from the occupied territories, the Village Museum had to be transformed into a provisional refugee camp.[5] In the autumn of the same year, King Carol II abdicated, thus ending his royal dictatorship. This was followed by the authoritarian regime of General Ion Antonescu, who initially governed with the support of the Legion (September 1940 to January 1941), but later as his personal military dictatorship.[6] This new context totally transformed the premises and purpose of the type of sociological research conducted by the Bucharest School of Sociology. As the entire world descended into war, the future of the country and of its rural population had also become uncertain, priorities changed and the focus of sociology was redirected towards other issues. The senior members of the School took different pathways, most of which entered or crossed the war zone. A brief account of its leaders' wartime activities will cast

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[3] Heinen, *Legiunea 'Arhanghelul Mihai'*, 398-400.
[4] Hitchins, *Rumania: 1866-1947*, 445-450.
[5] The museum functioned in this guise until the end of the war. Godea, *Muzeul Satului 1936-2003*, 83-96.
[6] Hitchins, *Rumania: 1866-1947*, 451-487.

more light on the way sociology was transformed by the political context of the wartime and post-war periods.

After taking power, the Legion proceeded to purge pro-Carol politicians and intellectuals.[7] In danger of being the target of an attack, Dimitrie Gusti, whose wife was not only Jewish but also the cousin of the King's mistress, Elena Lupescu, was warned by Traian Herseni to avoid the fascists' anger and leave Bucharest.[8] His former student, who was a member of the Legion, was appointed General Secretary for Education during the short-lived Legionary government.[9] Despite his narrow escape, Gusti never returned to his highly esteemed position in the political sphere. In 1941, he was offered a two-year appointment at the New School for Social Research in New York, which he accepted, but was unable to honour because General Antonescu denied him an exit visa.[10] For Gusti, this was the first missed opportunity to escape a miserable fate. Between the end of the war and the Communist take-over, he was further and further removed from the centre of the political arena. He remained president of the Romanian Academy and went on

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[7] Heinen, *Legiunea 'Arhanghelul Mihai'*, 410-11.

[8] "Letter of complaint from Dimitrie Gusti to the President of the Cabinet," June 17, 1948, I/234978/47-50, CNSAS. In this letter, Gusti mentioned the fact that he had to escape a potential Legionary assault in 1941. This can be corroborated with the censored article from the Legionary paper 'Porunca Vremii', which stated: 'Mr. Gusti cannot be a taboo anymore. At least not as long as he continues his affair with a Jew (*jidancă*)'. "Copy of a censored article from 'Porunca Vremii' entitled 'D-l Profesor Dimitrie Gusti'," September 18, 1940, I/234978/67, C.N.S.A.S.

[9] Diaconu, "Herseni," 11-12. For the details held by the Romanian Secret Services on Herseni's collaboration on the Legionary government and organisation see Ministerul Afacerilor Interne, "Hotărâre de deschidere a dosarului de acțiune informativă individuală," November 15, 1957, I/163318/3/1-2, CNSAS; Pașcan, "Notă informativă privind pe Traian Herseni." Also, there are various publications confirming Herseni's allegiance to the fascist ideals. Traian Herseni, *Mișcarea legionară și muncitorimea* (Bucharest: Tipografia Isvor, 1937); Traian Herseni, *Mișcarea legionară și țărănimea* (Bucharest, 1937).

[10] Bădina and Neamțu, *Dimitrie Gusti. Viață și personalitate*, 231. The appointment was recorded by the Secret Services at the time. See "Cable to the American Consulate Bucharest informing Dimitrie Gusti (Demetrius Gusti) of his appointment as Associate Professor of Sociology (at the New School for Social research, New York)," I/234978/30, CNSAS; "Corpul Detectivilor grupa I-a. Note on the appointment of Dimitrie Gusti at Institutul Social din New York (The Social Institute in New York)," March 3, 1941, I/234978/35, CNSAS.

various international visits to the USSR, France and the US. It was during his stay in the US that he refused his second opportunity to emigrate.[11] This time, he turned down a position at the *Ecole Libre des Hautes Etudes de New York*. 'This gesture showed', he later explained in a letter to *Președintele Consiliului de Miniștri* (equivalent of the Prime Minister in the Communist government), 'I think, my sincere trust and appreciation of the new Romanian regime and of the new government you preside over'.[12] Shortly afterwards, Gusti was dismissed from his position as president of the Academy, his house and possessions were seized and he ended up sharing a room together with his wife as one of his former students' lodgers.[13] That is where he died on 30 October 1955, aged 75.

Gusti's students from the first generation of monographic research shared equally sad fates. Following similar pathways during the war, they all struggled to survive the Communist regime, some more successfully than others. During the Antonescu regime, the Bucharest sociologists remained at the core of political life, working in academia, in governmental positions and in other institutions as researchers and statisticians. The wartime regime called upon sociology for several extensive population exchange projects in Transnistria and beyond the River Bug.[14] Working again for the state, although this time not for social reform, Stahl[15],

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[11] "Letter from Dimitrie Gusti to the Președintele Consiliului de Miniștri," September 15, 1961, 47, CNSAS.

[12] Ministerul Afacerilor Interne, "Gusti - Dosar I 234978 (53227)," September 15, 1961, 50.

[13] Rostás, "Marcela Focșa," 165-8; Constantin Marinescu, *Dimitrie Gusti și școala sa* (Bucharest: Editura "Felix-Film', 1995), 25.

[14] Golopenția, *Românii la Est de Bug*; Solonari, *Purifying*, 312-319.

[15] Stahl organised the census in Transnistria in 1942. "Activitatea științifică a prof. Henri H. Stahl. Repere documentare," *Sociologie românească*.

Vulcănescu[16], Golopenția and Herseni[17] completed different tasks and research projects on this controversial wartime governmental initiative meant to identify the ethnic Romanians living on Soviet territory. The final goal of the research was a 'colossal population exchange involving five million people who were to be uprooted and resettled or dumped across the borders'.[18] Whilst Stahl was only involved in a census-taking project in Transnistria in 1941, Golopenția spent more time on the ground, undertaking field research in both territories under German occupation during 1942-3.[19] The methodology and composition of the teams for this project resembled that of Golopenția's previous monographic expeditions for *60 de sate* and *Dâmbovnic*. However, the narrower purpose of this wartime project – one of identifying and counting people – meant that its more subtle findings had to be left out or dismissed by the author himself. As Vladimir Solonari has pointed out, the authors found that there were fewer ethnic Romanians than expected and their national consciousness was very weak. Golopenția's implication in the project and his conclusions indicate the same mixed agendas that supported sociological research during the interwar years, combining the state's desire to 'see its existing and future population'[20], its power to commission scientists for this purpose, and

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[16] Vulcănescu was *subsecretar de stat la Ministerul de Finanțe* from January 1941 to 23 August 1944. Diaconu, "Cronologie," CIV.

[17] During the Antonescu regime, Herseni was appointed Governmental Commissioner in Transnistria and charged with setting up the University of Odessa. Diaconu, "Herseni," 12.

[18] Solonari, *Purifying*, 31.

[19] The surviving research findings and documents of these expeditions have been collected and published in Golopenția, *Românii la Est de Bug*.

[20] Scott, *Seeing*.

the researchers' own interest in pursuing their careers even in the exceptional wartime conditions.[21]

In the period between 1944 and 1948, as new alliances were being formed, the members of the BSS struggled to find their place in the changing Romanian political arena. Until the Iron Curtain descended, they continued working within their discipline, as their knowledge was still deemed necessary during the post-war transition. Golopenția was approached first to join the Communist Party, which he did not accept. He also refused to collaborate with Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu and Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej and also turned down an offer to emigrate to the United States at the same time as Sabin Manuilă, his colleague and superior at the Central Institute of Statistics.[22] He remained active as a researcher in Bucharest, organising a field research project in the ethnically mixed village of Hodac-Mureș. 'The theme of this project – ethnical minorities – was associated with the Paris Peace Conference that Golopenția was involved in through the Central Institute of Statistics', as Sanda Golopenția noted.[23] Yet again, the adaptation of sociological research to new political requirements meant that the same scholars working on plans for a population transfer shifted to research on minority rights and peaceful ethnic cohabitation. Golopenția participated in the Peace Conference, where he presented

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[21] In a declaration during his interrogatory on the mission, Golopenția stated that he had accepted to join this position as a way to avoid being co-opted by the Ministry of Propaganda, since he was a German speaker and had completed his studies in Germany'. Golopenția, *Ultima carte*, 4-10.

[22] Golopenția, "Cronologie," CVI-CVII; Anton Golopenția, *Ultima Carte. Text integral al declarațiilor în anchetă ale lui Anton Golopenția aflate în Arhivele S.R.I.* (Bucharest: Ed. Enciclopedică, 2001), 67-74; 83.

[23] Golopenția, "Cronologie," CX.

a paper on the development and political role of sociology in Romania.[24] Although aware of the purges the new Communist regime had started amongst the old intellectual guard (Herseni was imprisoned in 1945 then released, Vulcănescu was imprisoned in 1946, released and then imprisoned again, Manuilă and others were preparing to flee the country, etc), Golopenția remained untouched working at the reformed Central Institute of Statistics until September 1948.

1948 was the year that marked the disappearance of sociology from the academic curriculum and the elimination of sociologists from their academic and public positions. Deemed to be a 'bourgeois discipline', sociology was replaced by historical materialism, the ISR was closed, the publications stopped and all the resources of the seminar and institute were either destroyed or cleared away to various basements and depots.[25] The sociologists were also made to disappear, some permanently and others only temporarily. As Stahl put it, 'the Romanian School of Sociology, or the School of Romanian Sociology (*Școala de Sociologie Românească*) as I call it, was murdered. It did not die a natural death. Our careers were severed.'[26] The worst fate awaited those who had been politically involved with the previous regime and had held positions in government. Golopenția and Vulcănescu both lost their lives in the regime change, falling ill and dying in prison. The former was imprisoned in 1950 and died of tuberculosis after eighteen months

[24] Anton Golopenția and I. Manoil, "Sociologia românească," in *Anton Golopenția. Opere complete* (Bucharest: Ed. Enciclopedică, 1948), 250-263.
[25] Rostás, *Parcurs întrerupt*.
[26] Rostás, *Monografia ca utopie*, 185.

of confinement without a trial.[27] Vulcănescu also fell ill and died in 1952, after six years in prison. The rest of the School's former members survived the transition despite their various political affiliations. Herseni, although imprisoned repeatedly, returned to 'normal life' in 1955, after four years of confinement. Miron Constantinescu, one of Golopenția's students and a member of the second generation of the School, whose pre-WWII Communist affiliations had allowed him to gain a prime role in the new regime, helped him find work within the Institute for Planning.[28] Similarly, Ernest Bernea, also accused of being a fascist, survived his sentence and returned to scholarly activity in 1962 after over twelve years in prison.[29] Other members or associates of the school were also sentenced and imprisoned for various political crimes (e.g. Neamțu, Harry Brauner, Lena Constante).[30]

The other sociologists and students of sociology were simply brushed aside for almost twenty years. The interviews Rostás conducted with Stahl, with the first and second generation of monographists, and with the former student volunteers have shown that all of them did what most Romanian intellectuals had to do after the advent of communism, adapt in order to survive.[31] Some reinvented themselves, thinking sociologically in different disciplines such as ethnography, museum studies,

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[27] Golopenția, "Cronologie," CXVIII-CXX.
[28] Rostás, *Monografia ca utopie*, 167-8.
[29] "Dosar Ernest Bernea," I/157073/1/39-94, CNSAS; Ministerul Afacerilor Interne, "Dosar Bernea "academicianul"," I/157072/1/1-25, CNSAS.
[30] Octavian Neamțu was imprisoned for 'conspiracy against public order'."Fișa Personală Octavian Neamțu," April 23, 1957, I/235895/1/3, CNSAS. Lena Constante and her partner Harry Brauner were imprisoned for espionage. Ministerul Afacerilor Interne, "Fișa Personală Harry Brauner," January 25, 1962, Dos.I 235896/30, CNSAS; Lena Constante, *The silent escape: three thousand days in Romanian prisons* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).
[31] Rostás, *Monografia ca utopie*; Rostás, *Atelierul gustian*; Rostás, *Sala luminoasă*; Rostás, *Strada Latină*.

art history, statistics, etc.[32] Stahl lost his job at the University of Bucharest in 1948 and shifted towards social work for a while. His son, who had also studied sociology, moved to do ethnography.[33] Gheorghe Focşa, the leader of the Dioşti reconstruction project, was designated the director of the Village Museum in 1948. Marcela Focşa, part of the first generation of monographists, went to work for the Folk Art Museum in 1951 and remained in this field until she retired.[34] Many others followed similar divergent pathways, keeping, when possible, a sociological approach in their work. Mihai Pop, for example, preserved part of the ethos and methodology of the BSS in his work at the Institute of Ethnography in Bucharest.[35] This helped keep the discipline alive and allowed the 'sociological imagination' to penetrate and shape other academic fields.

In 1965, the former sociologist and voluntary worker, Constantinescu, resurrected sociology as a socialist discipline meant to 'contribute to the establishment of Communist society'.[36] He also helped rehabilitate Stahl, Herseni and Neamţu as sociologists, reintroducing them into the academic world. In the mid-1960s it also became acceptable to discuss Gusti, the BSS and its activities, and the ways in which their work could become valuable for socialist Romania.[37] However, sociology did not survive long as an academic specialisation, being taken off the

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[32] Paul Stahl, "Şcoala sociologică de la Bucureşti," *Revista Română de Sociologie. Serie nouă* XII, no. 3-4 (2001): 249-50; Rostás, *Monografia ca utopie*, 180-8.

[33] Rostás, *Monografia ca utopie*, 182.

[34] Rostás, "Marcela Focşa," 154-5.

[35] Constantinescu, "Născuţi în '07: generaţie şi destin."

[36] Miron Constantinescu, *Cercetări sociologice 1938-1971* (Bucharest: Ed. Academiei Republicii Socialiste România, 1971), VIII.

[37] The main works devoted to the BSS and to Gusti written after 1965 are Caraioan, "Gusti"; Bădina and Neamţu, *Dimitrie Gusti. Viaţă şi personalitate*; Gusti, *Opere*; Stahl, *Dimitrie Gusti*.

University of Bucharest curriculum in 1977. Its study was restricted to students of the political apparatus special institution, the Academy 'Ștefan Gheorghiu'.[38] This reinforces the system's belief in the subversive nature of the discipline. At the same time, the relaxation of the censorship on the old sociological guard also marked the victory of the Communist regime over it.

Rarely discussed, this apparent resurrection of the discipline deserves more scholarly attention since it reveals different aspects of the relationship between intellectuals, the state and the discipline itself. On the one hand, the persistence rather than resistance and compromise of sociologists partly reaffirm Verdery's conclusions about intellectuals and their relation to the Communist regime in Romania.[39] Using their disciplines as tools and shields, the old sociological guard strove to continue working in their domain although the social reality they were dealing with had changed completely. In this way, their compromise was their coping strategy in dealing with their lost identities. On the other hand, sociological knowledge was useful to the regime in various ways and it was only a matter of time until the state decided to recover these specialists and rehabilitate them whilst keeping them in marginal positions. However, neither the disguise of sociology in the dress of different disciplines nor its temporary reinvention as a 'socialist'

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[38] "Istoricul secției de sociologie," *Facultatea de Sociologie și Asistență Socială. Universitatea din București*, 2010, http://sas.unibuc.ro/index.pl/istoric_sociologie_ro.[Accessed 2 December 2010]
[39] Verdery, *National Identity*, 309-318.

discipline during the Communist regime managed to resurrect it to its former glory.[40]

The history of sociology through the Bucharest School of Sociology

By looking at the ways in which the Bucharest sociologists interpreted the transformation of the rural world and sought to shape it, this thesis takes a new approach to the history of sociology in relation to the specific context of a modernising agrarian state. Romanian sociology as developed by Gusti and the BSS integrated a wider interest in the rural world into the sphere of the social, which presupposed the creation of new concerns, roles, and institutions specifically designed to study it and aid its transformation. In this sense, the discipline acted both as a catalyst and an umbrella for the different initiatives described above that had multiple effects on individuals, on the countryside, on the academic and political sphere, and on the state itself.

This research proposed a new way of looking at the development of sociology which, by drawing a parallel with the history of social and cultural anthropology, paid close attention to the formal and informal practices of fieldwork and writing as they evolved in the discipline. The BSS offered two generations of students and scholars the opportunity to 'go to the people' and experience the countryside in a new way, which contributed to their later professional

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[40] After 1989, sociology reappeared on the academic curriculum of Romanian universities. Since then, the discipline has been negotiating its place in the new academic, social and political contexts.

development. These people played the crucial role of taking the discipline out to sea, facing it to the challenges of social reality. Similar to the group expeditions that built the discipline of social and cultural anthropology, the fieldwork experience was not only a way of collecting materials, but also one of experimenting and testing theories and methods, of solidifying the internal tools and the structures of the discipline in order to adapt it to the specificities of its object of study. This shows the many stages through which the discipline had to go through and the many hands, eyes, ears and bodies involved in fashioning it. Moreover, since Romanian sociology, like social and cultural anthropology and also like some other trends within sociology, required researchers to leave their usual habitat to meet and live amongst their objects of study, the making of the discipline was, as I have shown, also made up by a series of social interactions and relations that created a network of routes which designated its field both in academic and in geographical terms.

If fieldwork allowed the discipline to grow and gain an initial shape, the process of writing up and the publication of research presented it as a form of intellectual 'authority', a way of voicing political positions and of gaining distinction in the sphere of public discourse. My approach to sociological writing challenges approaches which treat sociological texts as self-contained and definitive, instead pointing out the unfinished nature and constant negotiation of meaning occurring at the heart of academic disciplines. Moreover, although sociologists, both famous and less known, have used a variety of writing styles and repertoires, this has passed almost unnoticed in the history of the discipline. Examining the different styles of

writing employed by those who called themselves sociologists or claimed 'the sociological authority' offers an indication of the way different literary devices are used in academic texts as opposed to non-academic texts in order to convey different messages about the authors and the objects of sociological writing. Reading sociological writings alongside other more polemical journalistic texts also reveals the inherently political nature of sociology itself.[41]

Another facet of sociology I presented in this thesis consists of individuals and their professional interests. Underneath the smooth aspect of the discipline, the sociologists were those who made and were made by the discipline, who built relationships and constructed different versions of their objects of study and who used their roles to compete in the politicised worlds of work and of ideas. In defining who the sociologists were, this thesis tested different theories by looking at the social background, motivations and background of both researchers and of student volunteers. Whilst this proved useful in explaining certain details about their scholarly interests and academic or political positions, it did not result in a standard profile of what defined a sociologist. The public and private lives of the Bucharest sociologists and the less well known lives of the student volunteers integrate sociology in the rhythm of life in interwar Romania, showing the very different ways it was interpreted, used and adopted by several generations of students who made up part of the youth of the 1920s and 1930s.

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[41] Zygmund Bauman, "Intellectuals in East-Central Europe: continuity and change," *East-European Politics and Societies* I, no. 2 (1987): 168.

This opens the way towards a discussion about the highly politicised role of the discipline, which became the basis for a civilising process of the peasantry. In its militant guise, sociology was drawn into a three-way relationship between the state, the students and the countryside, which made the latter into the object of social reform. This underpinned both directions that Romanian sociology followed in the mid to late 1930s, *cogitans* and *militans*. Entangled with the soft authoritarianism of King Carol II, sociology was transformed by a high modernist ethos of shaping reality according to simplified and directly applicable scientific principles. Cultural work sought to spread a sociological way of seeing to students of different disciplines, creating a common vision of social reform that would bring together all professions engaged in transforming the rural world. Gusti's Social Service Law, which proposed making cultural work a compulsory stage of higher education and of civil service positions, indicated the central role sociology was meant to play in a future that never happened.

The thinning down of sociological knowledge into normative measures presented in the analysis of cultural work revealed the many similarities between this civilising project and others occurring in Europe at the time, as well as the differences between them. More importantly, it placed the activities of the Legionary Movement in a new context, showing a version of rural reformism born at the centre of the political arena from a wide-spread trust in the power of science to transform and improve the human condition. At the same time, reading the project from the ground level perspective offered by the students' points of view provided

an insight into how this was used as a means for individuals to make sense of the rural world and of the role their professions could play in its modernisation. Read against Gusti's idea of sociology as a meta-discipline able to bring together the individual perspectives of other social sciences and related professions, my analysis has instead shown the tensions and negotiations between disciplinary perspectives amongst which the medical gaze often took precedence. In this way, the 'logic of improvement' as defined by Scott operated not only as a theory, but was adopted by the students in their direct interaction with the peasantry. However, the criticisms and doubts voiced by the activists regarding the power of the state to back-up this project at an institutional level also pointed to the fact that knowledge often did not mean power but the awareness of one's lack of power.

The developments in cognitive sociology, which benefitted from the funding and manpower of the activist project, marked the emergence of new directions in the study of the rural world and a repositioning of the peasantry in both social and physical space. Stahl's and Golopenția's research projects are still relevant today as studies which situated the transformation of the peasantry in the context of an expanding capitalist system. Their diachronic and synchronic views respectively indicated the effects of the penetration of capitalism into isolated communities, the (in)ability of communities and individuals to adapt to new market conditions, and the necessity to redefine who the peasant was in relation to both the countryside and the city. This meant integrating the urban peasant into the field of sociology and thus moving away from a spatial definition of the rural to one centred on a dynamic

of social actors in transit between the country and the city. These developments placed Romanian sociology at the cutting edge of contemporary research on the rural world, marking directions that were echoed in the research of post-war Western European scholars.[42]

Finally, in contrast with the academic legacy of cognitive sociology, my analysis of the reconstruction of Dioști as a model village reached less promising conclusions about the possibility of science to transform the rural world. This example of applying sociological principles to the physical transformation of the built environment in an effort to shape rural life indicated both the contradictory relationship of the discipline to the idea of change and the limitations of specialised knowledge in coping with the complexity of real life. On the one hand, the visual aesthetics and logic of improvement applied in Dioști reflected the desire to reach a compromise between the old and the new by inventing a sense of tradition that reflected and integrated the national dimension at the local level and by seeking to create new everyday practices through the modification of living space. In a similar way to regeneration projects today, the decisions about Dioști were taken by specialists based on a rational understanding of rural life, not on what Scott has called *metis*, a type of practical knowledge acquired over time though direct

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[42] Stahl recounted the episode when he was pointed out as one of the oldest rural sociologists in the world during Henri Mendras's doctoral viva. Stahl's work, which bears many resemblances with the theories and methods of the French Annales School, has been translated both into French and into English. The English translation was produced by one of Stahl's students, the American social historian Daniel Chirot, who acknowledged the influences of his professor on his own work. Henri H. Stahl, *Les anciennes communautés villageoises roumaines: asservissement et pénétration capitaliste* (Bucarest: Éditions de l'académie de la République Socialiste de Roumanie, 1969); Henri H. Stahl, *Traditional Romanian Village Communities : the Transition from the Communal to the Capitalist Mode of Production in the Danube Region* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980).

interaction between learners and teachers. This offered a counterpoint between the type of sociological knowledge proposed by Gusti in his initial monographic expeditions and one of its spin-offs, which showed the lack of attention to detail in intervening in the rural world.

My conclusions show that the development of sociology in interwar Romania was neither simply the product of ideas, nor of people, nor of the state. Instead, it was the outcome of a constant interplay between ideas, interests, actors and contexts, involved in different aspects of negotiating the fragile relationship between rurality and modernity. This study therefore expands both the current geographical and conceptual boundaries of its history. Firstly this study of Eastern European sociology disrupts the existing ideas of centre and periphery inscribed in the current maps of the discipline. Secondly, it goes against traditional approaches to the study of the discipline that most often result in fixed canons, biographies and mausoleums that isolate sociology from its historical context. Focusing on the theme of transformation, understood both as a process of interpreting social change in the rural world and as a desire to take control of it and manage it, this thesis explores the protean nature of the discipline in its journey through history.

The Bucharest School of Sociology in the history of interwar Romania

This study also provides a reassessment of Romanian interwar history by using the development of sociology as a vehicle which cuts across and connects existing major

themes. Whilst my conclusions do not deny the importance of themes like nationalism or fascism, they provide new contexts and new perspectives on them and on the period as a whole.

The focus on the BSS addresses a central issue of Romanian interwar political and academic debates, the agrarian question. Although tightly bound with the theme of nationalism, the transformation of the peasantry was not simply a matter of ideology or discourse, but one that regarded all domains of public life, from economy to administration, to education and culture. Endowed with new political rights and land, the peasantry occupied a new awkward position in Romanian society at the beginning of the interwar era, a fact that Gusti and his collaborators engaged with and sought to understand. Despite agreement over the role of the peasantry as a 'common denominator' in politics, academia, and art, the transformation of the peasantry in the interwar period has received uneven attention from historians of Romania, who have focused either solely on social, economic or political history or on the history of ideas and of intellectual groups. In this sense, transformation has mainly been viewed either as failed social change, as indicated by Verdery's conclusion that, at the end of the period 'peasants remained peasants', or as economic change, also seen as a failure to modernise and improve Romanian agriculture.[43] In the history of ideas, the peasantry has generally been viewed in a static and passive guise, constantly used as a discursive substitute in debates, mainly about the nation. The direct contact with the countryside, the rise

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[43] Katherine Verdery, *Transylvanian Villagers. Three Centuries of Political, Economic and Ethnic Change* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 330-331.

of a sociological way of seeing the rural world and its issues, the competition that the Royal Student Teams represented for the Legion, and the interplay between sociology, aesthetics and the authoritarianism of King Carol II in the building of Dioşti, all offer new perspectives on the interwar period as a period in which the countryside was at the same time a field of study, of interaction and of intervention. Although inside these fields, the peasantry was often distanced, spoken for and attempted to be civilised, the sociological projects also engaged in various dialogues with the locals, they allowed the voices of peasants to be heard in their publications and provided an overall visibility of the social problems affecting the rural world. This contradicts the view that the peasantry was 'colonised' by the intellectuals on behalf of the state, revealing instead the many ambiguities defining this triangular relationship.

This study also reassesses the view of the peasantry as a uniform block, showing instead the great variety within this social group as well as the many different ways of conceptualising it which sociology brought out and engaged with. The gradual process of discovering the countryside initiated by the BSS and expanded by Gusti's cultural work project produced different grids and conceptual categories for examining the rural world, which were born from the negotiation between theory and practice. Throughout the period, Stahl's historical categories based on landownership played a crucial role in the School's vision of the peasantry, equally influencing those who agreed with his ideas and those who developed their own research direction. By the end of the 1930s, other categories took precedence,

showing the evolution of the rural social structure and the process of differentiation, which had occurred throughout the period. Golopenția and his students stressed the new divisions between rich and poor peasants concentrating on the social mobility of these groups. Other divisions based on trade, region, and geographical area also contributed to creating a detailed image of a constantly transforming rural Romania. This raises important questions about which peasantry Romanian intellectuals referred to in their debates about the nation or about modernisation and which types of peasants were targeted by the Legion and which gained their support.

Although this thesis engaged with the theme of gender at various points, this remains an important area that requires further attention. In the works of the BSS, the peasant woman was often mentioned, although she did not gain prominence except in several articles dealing with magic and witchcraft.[44] However, the cultural work project and the monographs published just before the war provided interesting materials for a gender analysis of rural transformation in both understandings of the word. So far, my thesis has only scratched the surface of this topic, pointing to the important role women were assigned both in the preservation of tradition and as agents of positive change. More work is required into the actual transformation of peasant women in this period and into the interactions between urban and rural women both in the context of research and in that of cultural work.

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[44] Cristescu's articles on magic in the rural world allowed some insights into the place Romanian peasant woman occupied on the School's agenda. However, some of her manuscripts showed her developing interest in the urban peasant woman as a representative of the wider phenomenon of rural-urban migration. Cristescu, *Sporul vieții. Jurnal, studii și corespondeță*. Social work was another important area in which women gained academic prominence. The Romanian School for Social Work was set up in Bucharest in 1929 by Veturia Manuilă and Xenia Costa-Foru, who had both studied at North American universities. The School, also presided over by Gusti, attracted many young women interested in pursuing a career. Joseph S. Roucek, "Sociology in Roumania," 61. For a brief analysis of the gender agenda this type of work proposed, see Bucur, "Mișcarea eugenistă," 129-131.

A second major theme this thesis intersects with is that of fascism and of (cultural) politics in the countryside more generally. The story of the BSS and of FCR-PC under Gusti's leadership unfolded in relation to and in competition with several other initiatives to engage with or transform the peasantry. If Gusti reached and agreement and set up a collaboration with the more established ASTRA organisation, his cultural work project entered in direct competition with the Legion. The Royal Student Teams and their cultural activism provide a context and a new angle on the better-known activities of the fascist Legionary Movement by showing how an alternative solution launched from the centre of the political spectrum used similar methods to gain the support of both the youth and the peasantry.

The politics inside the BSS itself also shines new light on the intellectual and political arenas of the time. Firstly, it goes against the general view that the entire young generation underwent a process of 'rhinocerisation' by shifting to the right in the 1930s.[45] Instead, the BSS provided an umbrella not only for different disciplines, but also for different political positions, which, as I have shown, were often more ambiguous than has been claimed. Therefore, although some members of the School supported the Legion, many others actively distanced themselves from this organisation. Secondly, this political pluralism inside the School highlights the many centrist and leftist positions, which have been often ignored by historians of the period. Thirdly, this thesis also deals with two political orientations which both sought to negotiate the relationship between rurality and modernity: the 'green

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[45] The term refers to Eugen Ionescu's play *Les Rhinocéros* (1959).

rising' and the semi-authoritarianism of King Carol II. Reassessing Mitrany's works on rural politics in Eastern Europe, I argue that Gusti's ideas and most of his collaborators' resonated with the wider Eastern European 'green rising' in their desire to find an alternative route to modernity between the political right and left (communism and capitalism). This quest for a third way took them beyond the two economic systems, into the sphere of authoritarianism and 'high modernism'.

Although my account remains within the limits of the period between the two wars, in this way respecting the break with the Communist period, it also indicates several ways in which the boundary between these periods could be challenged. There is great scope for further research on several continuities between the interwar and post-war periods. The Communist regime pursued the civilising mission started by Gusti's cultural work project, promoting education, rural electrification, sponsoring the *cămine culturale* and their artistic activities. As the example of Dioşti shows, the new Communist leadership completed some of the projects of the interwar era and used the existing structures in similar ways. Many of Gusti's cultural work principles were also resurrected by the new regime, which was able to impose them in a more forceful manner. The Communist new peasant was in many ways not very different from the interwar version. A similar agenda was developed containing the cult for the healthy and strong body, for hygiene, education, work (not cooperatives but collective farms), and even a similar idea of a modern spirituality (not as religion but as a effort to eradicate superstition through the more modern belief in the absence of God and the truth of reason). This

apparent contradiction between the ban of sociology and the continuation of cultural work in the countryside can be explained with reference to the concept of high modernism. If we accept that the two regimes (Carol's soft authoritarianism and the Communist totalitarian state) shared the same high modernist ethos of improving the condition of the rural dweller according to the principles of science and reason, then these continuities become apparent and justifiable. At the same time, this also shows the real points of divergence between the two regimes. In a pluralist regime, even a limited one, sociology had a dual function – it worked both for the state producing plans for reform and also criticised it by constantly assessing the state of the nation. The second function could not be completed if the data was censored (as it was in a totalitarian regime). This shows why sociology could not survive under communism and had to be replaced by other disciplines committed to provide the data and plans the system wished to see and impose on the population.

Many themes in this thesis indicate several common points and continuities between the interwar period and post-communist Romania. Some of the continuities are: the persistence of a peasant culture and the relevance of the theme of transformation in the rural world as an object of state and scholarly interest, the challenges posed by international economic and political changes for rural modernisation, the role of intellectuals in debating and providing answers and solutions to questions about this process. Possibly, the most important commonality between the two eras is the pressure of capitalism on the rural world, whose

consequences had to be dealt with by an intellectual elite and a state apparatus themselves in transition.

Returning to Mihăilescu, I end this study with his interpretation, shared by many, of the most visible and debated transformation faced by the Romanian peasantry today:

> I have recently finished editing an issue on migration (…) On the cover there is a photo [representing] the garden gate of an extremely typical peasant household, which was locked with chains and had a big cardboard sign on it saying: 'Left for the EU' (…) You ask what spiritual transformations the Romanian peasant is undergoing. It starts with this demographic transformation: physically, these people are no longer part of a space, 'the country', but somewhere else, in another country.[46]

This temporary disappearance of the Romanian peasant captured in the image of the peasant gone to work in the European Union, like the photograph of the *vornicei* leading the wedding procession on their bicycles, shows not a static and timeless countryside, but one of constant change, flux, and mobility. At the same time, these images are the material proof of the constant effort of sociologists to understand and shape these processes.

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[46] Mihăilescu and Brăileanu, "Țăranul român a plecat în UE."

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