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THE IMAGINING OF NATIONAL SPACES IN INTERWAR ROMANIA. NATIONALIST REGIONALISM AND ETHNOLOGY

Political and cultural contexts

In pre-war Romania, but especially during the interwar period, there was a large and important reworking and re-legitimation of various scholarly disciplines in a new intellectual context of (neo)romanticism and reactionary modernism; a massive scientific, intellectual and cultural redefinition of different disciplinary canons.

A number of sub-domains were being constantly formed, criticized, expanded and contracted in the quite prolific intellectual atmosphere of the period. One of these sub-domains – sometimes called, in a German manner, anthropogeography or geopolitics, or, under a French influence, human geography – emerged at the intersection of geography, sociology, ethnology, historiography, etc.

Here I will concentrate mainly on the interwar period since I believe that during this period a certain paradigm shift took place, or, in any case, an important mutation in the cultural mechanisms of national identity reproduction. Between the two world wars, the scientific discourses on the topic of the nation-state and national space(s) became more important, providing a complementary, or even, sometimes, alternative, way of spelling the naturalness of the nation in comparison with the historiographic ways.

The 1920's had tremendous territorial and institutional effects for the Kingdom of Romania. Provinces, formerly part of the Hapsburg dualist empire (Transylvania, Banat and Bukovina) or of the Russian empire (Bessarabia) were incorporated at the end of 1918 into Romania. The task of integrating demographically, socially, institutionally, economically and culturally very diverse population was huge. Romania was undergoing

a fundamental change as it was struggling to integrate, in a very short span of time, the newly annexed provinces in the full-fledged mechanism of a nation state. The inner heterogeneity was not only connected to a passage from 8% ethnic minorities to 28% but also to great disparities – in lifestyles, political culture, economic infrastructure etc. – between ethnic Romanians belonging to different regions.

This dramatic change led to the establishment of a new pattern of relations between national-cultural experts, state bureaucrats and political elites. A new generation of intellectuals, bred in the new Romanian academic system, deriving their legitimacy from an expertise in the national culture but also from their mastery in the Western scientific canon, collided with the older, established generation of national-culture experts.

After a short period of expansion of state bureaucracy personnel, due to the enlargement of Romania's territory, when the state institutional framework became unable to integrate the new intelligentsia, the most important conflict became the one opposing this new generation to the new political and state elites. Now that Greater Romania was a political-institutional reality, these elites were less dependent on ideological legitimacy from the growing intelligentsia, and also, less able to absorb the huge mass of educated youngsters produced by the national educational system.[1]

Because of these tensions, working at the level of the organization of the mechanisms of national culture, the pre-WWI unified *national pedagogy* collapsed. There were of course different ideological and political-cultural groups before WWI, sometimes fighting violent wars. Nevertheless, a common pedagogical template provided an unifying language; the people, the nation, were constructed inside a "continuity" and "autochthony", historiographical and ethnological hypothesis. The difference between the people and its "teachers" was never problematised as all the important political-cultural groups were caught in a twin program, enlightening the population and, in the same stroke, fighting for the political unity of all ethnic Romanians. These pre-1918 *'directeurs de conscience'*, which, quite successfully, transposed an individual pedagogy to the collective, national self, were entering, after WWI, a very different, i.e. competitive, arena. The polemics on who was in possession of the right criteria for defining the "real" and "authentic" national-identity or national space were multiplying and turning very harsh.

This was, in brief, the institutional and cultural setting in which, in post-1918 Romania, the (re)invention of national culture was pursued, in a dense network of disputes, alliances, counter-alliances and competitions for national and scientific legitimacy and representativeness. The discourse on national space, on the naturalness of the newly formed state of Great Romania, became soon a strategic point in these competitions.

In what, using James Clifford's words, appears as a network of "traveling cultures", foreign themes, cultural and political concerns were transferred and transformed by Romanian scholars. All the new intellectual experts in national culture were academic travelers deeply enmeshed in the ambiguous dialectic of "roots and routes" (Clifford 1987), brokers of different cultures, even if they were to take, at some point, a more or less nationalistic stance in the field of the politics of culture in interwar Romania.

In mapping external discursive influences I shall try to avoid a simple "borrowing" model – a potentially essentialist one – and, instead, reveal the strategic way in which "marginal" thinkers were using the ideological and scientific discourse of the more or less "canonized" West to solve local problems and appease local concerns. The peculiarity of thinking at the margins is, probably, that it consciously seeks resemblance to the "core", Western theories, that legitimize the central and east-European scholars as scholars, while trying to use the same theories for purposes not necessarily equivalent to the original ones.

The influence of the German diffusionist ethnological school, of cultural morphologists, of the Maussian sociology etc. was mingling with more or less explicit political concerns: the problems of Transylvania, of the lower Danube, of Bessarabia, of the cultural integration of post-1918 Romania, of regionalism and centralism, etc. A new national imaginary was being constantly forged. New mental pictures of a homogenous and unitary Romania were combined with former concerns about the origins of the Romanians, the authenticity of popular culture, the cultural threats posed by modernization, etc. Important scientific texts were being created and re-evaluated in this new context. The emergence of a new image, a new national invention of space is probably the most important product of this interdisciplinary field.

Radical Conservatism: the Synchronism of Romanian Interwar Culture

Before discussing the Romanian case, we have to explain, briefly, the larger European intellectual trend inside which the Romanian one, with all its peculiarities, should be understood. This larger European political and intellectual framework was the *conservative revolution*.

The radical conservative shared many of the *concerns* of more conventional conservatism, such as the need for institutional authority and continuity with the past, but believed that the processes characteristic of modernity had destroyed the valuable legacy of the past for the present, and that, therefore, a restoration of the virtues of the past demanded radical or revolutionary action (Muller 1987: 19). The defense against the cultural and political effects of modernity on the body politic was thought to require however a homeopathic absorption of the organizational and technological hallmarks of modernity.

These kind of intellectual movements that embraced technological and economic modernization, political activism and state power in the name of a particularistic cultural idea were usually turning towards state power in order to reach their goals. These goals consisted mainly in the reassertion of collective particularity against a twofold threat. The internal threat, as posed by the functioning of free markets, parliamentary democracy, internationalist socialism, liberalism etc. The external threat, usually conceived as the influence of powerful – politically, militarily, economically and culturally – foreign states.

The radical conservatism or, in Jeffrey Herf's words, reactionary modernism (Herf 1986) is questioning the idea that modernity comes as a package deal. There is not just one sole brand of modernity but, also, alternate ways of spelling modernity, some of them not very pleasant from a moral point of view, but still modern. Even if the package-theory was, and still is, widely upheld, having important theoretical and pragmatically insights, it has been attacked from different points of view, starting with Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Thomas Mann and the Weimar conservative revolutionaries to Karl Mannheim and the less extreme analysis of Jeffrey Herf, Fritz Stern, Stefan Breuer and others.

Fritz Stern, the analyst of the "politics of cultural despair", for example, considered that "we must accept the fact that this kind of rebellion against modernity lies latent in Western society and that its confused, fantastic program, its irrational and un-political rhetoric, embodies aspirations just

as genuine, though not as generous or tangible, as the aspirations embodied in other or more familiar movements of reform" (Stern 1974: xxii).

Country and Countries. Interwar Nationalist-cultural Regionalisms
Ion Ionică and Nationalist-cultural Regionalism

Regionalist discourse in the Romanian cultural context was often regarded with suspicion. During the interwar period, the imperatives of accomplishing institutional and cultural unity in the united Romania's territories, proceeding from diverse political-cultural areas, made regionalist impulses appear as doubtful and irredentist. Cultural unity was perceived as being the major goal of the state but also of the intellectuals, being supported by a growing centralization of re-unified Romania's territories.

However, interesting views and studies emerged questioning this hurried overlapping between institutional centralism and cultural integration. The most intersesting, from our point of view are those perspectives that came from social and geographical sciences which we might describe as "regionalist", like Ion. I. Ionică's, A. Golopenția's, Ion Conea's, G. Em. Marica's and others. The interwar regionalist-nationalist discourse belonged, we believe, to the set of heterogeneous scientific-disciplinary discourses belonging to an implicitly common project: national space imaging from a scientific point of view.

Ion I. Ionică, a former student of Marcel Mauss, and one of the most important Romanian ethnology oriented sociologists, belonged, together with Ernst Bernea, D. C. Amzăr etc., to a dissident group to the powerful Gustian school; a group reunited by *Rânduiala* [The Order] review. This review, also called *Arhivă de gând și faptă românească* [Archive of Romanian Thought and Deed], included a permanent column: *Țară și țări* [Country and Countries], based on what appears to be a quite well structured regionalist project.

The theoretical elements of cultural and political doctrine included in this project have been frequently used by Ion I. Ionică in his publications.

Countries are, according to the Romanian sociologist, "geographical and ethnical entities, with local conscience, with ancient social and ethnic life, where the work system, the organization of the community, the folkloric patterns etc. took special forms" (Ionică 1935: 129).

According to this Romanian regionalist conception, following a cultural-identity line, "Transylvania" appeared as an exteriorly determined and foreign entity assuming the avatars of the former Hungarian rule and falsely overlapping the structure of Trans-Carpathian "Countries".

This kind of interwar regionalism opened, through this analysis of Transylvania's falsity, what seemed to be a rather perspectivist but also organicist view. Perspective, cultural and broader geopolitical discourses appear as constitutive parts of the region's structure, form and even cultural, economical and political significance. These can develop some of the present territorial "historical energies" and block others, completing a not always innocent reading schedule. Univocity will be regained through the national-organic perspective.

Anton Golopenția's approach to regions was related to an institutional-administrative perspective and to his specific cameralistic version of Geopolitics. Anton Golopenția believes that "we need a more flexible administration not only as far as Banat is concerned, but also for all the other peripheral regions, as well as for the counties located in the middle of the country. We need an administration that will stop ignoring the shortcomings of a single region, because it fears laws and special regimes, or to impose rules dictated by the circumstances of one part of the country or of another. In no way such a differentiated administration, if knowingly applied, could endanger the unity of the country" (Golopenția 2002: 129). Thus perceived, regionalization, even if proceeding through a "regions' differentiated administration", was to become a modality of accelerating Great Romania's cultural-institutional integration.[2]

Nationalist-regionalist Ethnology

Probably the most interesting work that could be integrated into this nationalist-regionalist trend mentioned above belongs to Ion I. Ionică, being an ethnology study.

Dealul Mohului. Ceremonia agrară a cununii în Ţara Oltului [Dealul Mohului. The Agrarian Ritual of the *Cununa* in Ţara Oltului], a complex research into the intricacies of a sewing rite from Ţara Oltului and also

the author's Ph.D. thesis – defended in 1940 and published in 1943 – is the best example for the existence of a national based approach of the regional element, both from a spatial-regional perspective, as well as from a temporal-historical one. I will present as follows only the explicit theoretical part of this study which accounts for the existence, we believe, of a version, different from the Gustian one, for the understanding and articulation of national space and national-regional temporalities.

The author's theoretical stance derived from the fact that there were important social facts that, even if functionally integrated into the social life of the village, overflowed its borders entering a regional field of manifestation. This geographical spreading phenomenon is actually a well known one, especially in German but also in French ethnology (Stocking 1987, Mauss 1974) even if it has a marginal place in the 'manifestations and cadres' scheme of classical monographic Romanian Gustian type sociology.

Ion Ionică's explicit theoretical and methodological references are the cartographic or geographic method as it was codified by Friedrich Ratzel in *Anthropo-geographie, II – Die Geographische Verbreitung des Menschen* (1981) but also the linguistic, ethnological and folkloristic atlases like *The French Linguistic Atlas* of Gilliéron and Edmond from 1902, Leo Frobenius' *Atlas Africanus* or *Atlas der Deutschen Volkskunde* edited by Harmjanz and Röhr.[3]

Nevertheless, the Romanian ethnologist's approach was neither a cartographic-positivist one nor subsumable to some kind of cultural morphology. The spatial dimension of the social facts was given, in his view, by their social power (*forța socială*). The extensive reality of social phenomena has an "expressive character", meaning that the spatial extension of a social fact speaks for the existence of a larger social unit, in which it is organically grounded as a dynamic cultural complex (Ionică 1996: 9). The force behind the extensive reality of a social fact becomes a spatial pressure that is a "pressure of the conscience", a "social-subjective reality […] connected to the geographic horizon of the society" (Ionică 1996: 9).

From a methodological point of view, Ion I. Ionică starts with the notion of "extension area", having a neutral, external spatial-territorial meaning without implying the existence of any subjacent social unit and ends with the concept of "type". This "type" is neither a statistical notion, a kind of average of the characteristics of a statistical population, nor a model created by abstracting the common features from a lot of concrete

cases. It seems, at a first glance, quite similar to the Weberian ideal-type (Weber 1968), but it does not share with it the same methodological precautions and radical perspectivism. Ion Ionică's "type" is a "schemata with concrete life power" (Ionică 1996: 7-8), and there is even a process of creation, of birth, linking the type with its manifestations, being more like a *Kulturschicht*:

> "In this double meaning, of exemplary appearance, representative for a series of objects, on one side and fundamental, even originary (*Urgestalt*) form from which all others developed and on which they rest, on the other side, we believe we have the primary meaning of this concept" (Ionică 1996: 10).

That's the main reason why, for Ion Ionică, analyzing isolated series and then assembling them cartographically was insufficient. The analysis had to take as its main objects specific cultural complexes, "bundles of social facts involving simultaneously multiple series of artistic, technical, economic, religious etc. values and constituting, for us, important methodological tools for the sociological analysis of rural life" (Ionică 1996: 10).

These bundles of social facts, organically interconnected can be understood only by situating them in larger social contexts, in units of social life more extensive than the village communities. The exterior and neutral "extension areas" become interiorized by transforming themselves into "unitary regions of social life":

> "From now on we don't have simple extension fields for isolated facts, having an inorganic character, but an organic whole of social life into which the extensive series of facts are integrating themselves" (Ionică 1996: 11).

It is as if Ion Ionica was trying, not on an entirely new path to be sure, to fuse the *Kulturkreise* method of W. Foy, Fritz Graebner and W. Schmidt to the *Morphologie der Kultur* method of L. Frobenius and O. Spengler. But there was an important difference. His aim did not consist in building ethnology as a "*histoire des peoples sans histoire*", as quite poignantly M. Mauss defined the German *Volkskunde* tradition's main goal, but in understanding European cultural regions, as part of modern political societies.

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So, these organic areas were actually the countries (*țări* in Romania, *pays* in the French tradition) differentiated among themselves by objective features, economic, cultural and spiritual functions but, most important, by the existence of a "local conscience".

The unitary life of regions appeared under two different registers:

– First, it was about the "regional collective participation facts", i.e. the pilgrimages to sacred places, the big annual fairs, *nedei* and the life of the most important regional town.

– Second, there were "regional facts of repetition", i.e. homogenous series of economic, technological, cultural, religious, ritual facts that reveal the uniformity of the regional life, or patterns of change (Ionică 1996: 12).

These series of facts, more exactly, series of "bundles of facts", have different connections with the region's centre or nucleus. It is not very clear what Ion Ionică understood by this 'nucleus' that is sometimes defined as "the meaning nucleus of regional unity" and other times as "the principle of the unity of regional life" (Ionică 1996: 13). The fuzziness of this concept has to do, I believe, with the dual way of constructing the regional types who are exterior cartographic intersections of series of social facts, on one side, and originary forms of the same intersections on the other side.

The hierarchization of regional social phenomena according to their distance to a certain "nucleus" – a unit of signification but at the same time a unit of social life – engendered a research concerning historical origins. The ongoing continuity of certain aspects of regional life was connected somehow to their centrality that appeared as being not only functionally but also historically construed:

"They all (the social institutions of rural society – our note) live, on one side, in the mainstream of today social life, connected to its main functions, but, on the other side, they still participate, even if behind the level of today's people conscious life, to old unities of meaning. Behind every fragment of actual social life there is an immense stratification, object for a social archeology " (Ionică 1996: 13).

For Ion Ionică it was essential to combine these two aspects, the functionalist one of the present day life and the historical one, in any regional understanding of social life, because "the reality of [...] social

life […] is the result of a historical evolution with a unique unfolding and a certain spatial extension" (Ionică 1996: 14).

The European theoretical position to which Ionică explicitly rallied himself was German cultural diffusionism with its concepts of *Kulturkreis* and *Kulturschicht*. Fr. Gräbner with his *Methode der Ethnologie*, Heidelberg, 1911 and W. Schmidt's theories developed in *Handbuch der Methode der Kulturhistorishen Ethnologie*, Münster, 1937 are quoted. Applying this kind of approach to European rural life can be, notwithstanding all the complications that appear when you study European instead of "exotic" populations, thought Ion I. Ionică, very important. The main problem consisted in the fact that there were a multiplicity of meanings and functional registers of the concept of "people" (*popor*), popular, and of the conceptual connections between popular culture and national culture and identity.

> "We are far nowadays from considering the world of popular cultural values as a homogenous reality, expressing a unique and atemporal origin, so, we consider the artifacts of its culture and his specific forms of life as stemming from well determined historical processes and specific spatial circles – *which does not exclude the problem of the national specificity, but gives it another perspective and another depth.*" (Ionică 1996: 14, emphasis added – C.C.).

The old dichotomy between Folklore and Ethnography, which was dominating the study of "popular life" in Romania, was "unnatural" and "devoid of long term value" for Ion Ionică (Ionică 1996: 16) as it differentiated between a field of the study and collecting of the manifestations of spiritual life – songs, beliefs, customs etc. (folklore) and another similar field for the products of material life – arts, traditional techniques etc. (ethnography). The theoretic poverty of this position cannot be resolved by simply transforming folklore into a province of ethnography – as suggested for example by G. Vâlsan or A. Vuia. The solution, in Ion Ionică's view, consisted in the sociologization of the whole ethnographic approach[4] (Ionică 1996: 19).

Even if this sociologization were to take place, the dualism folklore-ethnography to be surpassed and from folklore as a study of popular antiquities, of venerable traditions and survivals we were to gain a new anthropological and sociological vision of popular reality there still remains a huge ambiguity. The very notion of "popular" remains

indeterminate even in a sociological perspective taking into account the actual, ongoing life of "the people". Ion Ionică was quite aware of these drawbacks and tried to discriminate amongst the meanings of "popular":

„Popular" has, in Ion Ionică's view, at least four different meanings:
– what belongs to the people, to the nation as a social corpus, as a whole
– what belongs to the popular class, to the "small people"
– what became a common good, or a common usage amongst the people, but has its origins elsewhere
– a thing or a deed with its finality in the people, e.g. a work of popular, social assistance (Ionică 1996: 19).

What meant then and how could a "popular reality" be defined? Was in the same way "popular" the village life as the life of poor neighborhoods of large or small towns? How homogenous was the field of phenomena called popular? And, finally, how can the cultural forms and practices of a social category be legitimately extrapolated to the level of the people-nation as a whole?

The answer to all these disturbing questions was to be found, for Ion Ionică, in "the sociological point of view":

"Folklore stopped at a few manifestations from the uncertainly determined field of 'popular' life, which were understood as cultural products of an inferior social stratum, valuable through their ancient character, their traditional character, then their collective or 'popular' traits; ethnography – as it was understood in Romania – oriented itself to the consistent artifacts of rural social life [...] sociology embraces in an organic way all these aspects, reaching deeper to the immensely complex and delicate interior network that sustains the whole superstructure of social manifestations an to the fluid processes of the social life" (Ionică 1996: 20).

This "sociological" answer to ethnographic troubles, even if it sounds convincing at a first glance, is, in itself, more like a verbal than a real solution.

This sociological turn in ethnography is part of a larger and less well articulated project. Ion Ionică is trying to create a hybrid sociology - ethnology that can be, in the same time, national and regional and, in close connection to this objective, to find out a way through which „sound objectives and trends of the folkloric studies are organically integrated in the sociological approach" (Ionică 1996: 21).

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The two main concepts involved in the definition of the semantic field in which this problem can be tackled and eventually solved are, in Ion I. Ionică's view, "unity" and "type".

The concept of unit-unity reveals the "organic consensus", the strong interdependence the elements of social life are woven into. The unity mirrors all the partial elements of society being, at the same time, a *ratio essendi* and a *ratio cognoscendi* for them. Related to this conception, Ion I. Ionică believed that, as a first dimension of his theoretical approach: "the science of the parts is the science of their function in the unit" (Ionică 1996: 21). A kind of not very thoroughly formulated sociological and anthropological functionalism seems to be implied here that can be situated into a larger theoretical tradition, otherwise acknowledged by the Romanian ethnologist.

The study of "little communities" – as it was codified after WWII by Robert Redfield (Redfield 1960) – is quite close to what Ion Ionică seems to be implying here. There is nonetheless an important difference not only in elaboration but also in accent. For Ion I. Ionică, probably because of the previous analysis of the conceptual ambiguity of the "popular" as a legitimate scientific object of a European ethnology, the classical dichotomy *Gemeinschaft/Gesellschaft*, introduced by F. Toennies and further elaborated for anthropological studies by R. Redfield - was less accentuated. There was no form or structure of an abstract and reflexive *Gesellschaft* modernity opposing the "synthetic and vital" (Ionică 1996: 22) unity. Unity was opposed and complemented by the "type". The project in view was not a theory of modernity or modernization but a theory of the harmonic and organic articulation of regions and nation.

By "type", Ion Ionică meant the horizontal dimension of social facts. The elements, the social parts, are extracted from their functional, consensual setting, from their unity, in order to be integrated to another internal logic defining "the fundamental form and the limits imposed to the variations inside which a social fact can exist" (Ionică 1996: 21) becoming so a typological sequence, a "type".

The sequences of facts and phenomena, torn apart from the social unit, in which they are functionally integrated, transform themselves into various typological sequences, connected to various units, "circles" of social life. The correspondence between types and these larger social units is never perfect. Nevertheless, in Ion Ionică's view, connecting typological sequences with various socio/cultural entities remains the

only way we can, meaningfully, go, from small and very concrete social units, like the villages, to larger and more abstract ones, like *țări* or regions.

It seems that we are confronted with a special metaphysics of entitivity (Wolf 2001). The social units, the entities, are broken into typological sequences just in order to be reconstructed, remerged into larger, more abstract and more fuzzy-bordered entities: the unities of regional life. This process of abstractization and progressive indetermination of the borders of social units has an implicit *terminus ad quem*: the nation and its synthetic science. Using the certitude of the national border grounded on national identity but also, implicitly on the state apparatus (Barth 1969, Delanty 2003) the regionalist fuzziness and incertitudes can be tamed from within.

The lack of any conflict or any self-perceived incongruence in Ion I. Ionică's works, or for that matter in all the texts of the interwar nationalist-regionalists,[5] between the national and the regional spaces rests on a subtle dosage of territoriality on two main axes: abstract/concrete and intensive/extensive – the last one entailing the fuzziness of borders between various socio-cultural entities.

The whole background against which the dynamism: small community – region –nation is played, in a kind of nationalized "chain of being" (Lovejoy 1964) connecting long series of social units, consists in the existence of a kind of meta-organism, the nation (*neamul*), this being seen as able to sustain, undamaged, the tension abstract – concrete, to absorb and heal the breaches between tradition and modernity, past and present; to be, on one side, the object of a new synthetic-analytic science and, on the other side, its grounding and its warranty.

"There is […] in this direction, only one large social science, *that of the Nation (neamului),* with its unity of life, ethnically, historically and functionally conditioned. Its parts are constituted on the analytic moments brought by the study of the morphological groups forming the nation. This science can give, relying on data from the present, an abstract image of the total function of social life, of the interconditioning of internal processes etc., but it can also try, relying on data from the past, on the same organic foundation, to reconstruct the historical forms of life of our Nation, that are continuing, on different routes, until the present time, constituting the colorful image of his concrete life." (Ionică 1996: 20).

Ion Conea's regionalism and some monographies

The regionalist perspective, related also to the conception already constructed at the end of the '30s, on historical geography, ethnology, geohistory and geopolitics is clearly expressed by Ion Conea:

> "Man doesn't live suspended in the ether, but connected to a certain piece of land, nourishing its being from traditions and memories. The more alive and rich his conscience is, the more he feels connected to these. And every one of us feels first and more strongly connected to the native horizon of a country – lets call it local…We bear, unknowingly, a treasure of the past, a sacred burden. Our thought and our soul are permanently, however little, bathing in them…the more past glory our local country's earth breathes, the more reasons the geographical and historical framework of the place bears…the more strongly they should be reminded and the more thoroughly studied; the out there man psychology, the present man, couldn't have escaped their influence in some degree and his entire being has to bear the seal of the historical past, just as he bears the one of the geographical framework" (Conea 1984: 91).

An interesting fact is that this position appeared in the framework of a monography, oficially elaborated within the paradigm of Gustian sociology: *Clopotiva – un sat din Ţara Haţegului* [Clopotiva – a village from Ţara Haţegului], suggesting, perhaps, that the Gustian monographic sociology's project, apparently unsensitive to the more specific issues of territoriality and regionalism, was able, in a real life institutional and research setting, to sustain different and alternative research projects.

Clopotiva. A Special Sociological Monography

Ironically, for reasons probably related to the artificially and abruptly interupted history of Bucharest sociology school, the 1935 monography of Clopotiva village is one of the only two monographies that have been published.[6] The irony consists in the fact that this monography is atypical, outpassing the boundaries of monographies classical framework which follows the 'patterns and manifestations' diagram, as it has been formulated by Dimitrie Gusti. The distance implicitly taken from Gustian monographic sociology was not polemical and could be ascribed to the fact that this monography was elaborated by a "Royal Research Group" and not by

actual, full-blown Gustian "monographers" research group. However, I believe that there is another cause accounting for the difference between this monography and the ones sketched or partially published by the other, more famous "monographers".

Even starting with the foreword, Ion Conea felt to be his duty to take a stand against the critiques of Gustian research designs. Ion Conea refers to G. Vâlsan's polemical study: *Cercetările sociologice privite din punct de vedere geographic* [Sociological researches considered from a geographical point of view] from 1928. Conea's critique was not actually very convincing. He attempts to formulate the difference between integral monographies, belonging to sociology, and partial, geographical ones, which should comprise a region, rather than a community. The critique was particularly not very persuasive because the monography of Clopotiva, even though formally trying to preserve a part of the classical Gustian standards, was more a kind of "geographical" monography.

Unlike the opinion formulated in Ion Conea's postwar monography - *Vrancea. Geografie istorică, toponimie și terminologie geografică* [Vrancea. Historical geography, toponimy and geographical terminology] - in *Clopotiva* we are dealing with a clear assertion of the existence and the role of the countries (*tari*). Besides the widespread existence of countries within the Great Country (*Țara cea mare*), the word "country" has here a very clear cultural, political and even geopolitical and geohistorical meaning: "There was, Ion Conea believes, a time when the Romanian lived dispersed in some small political organizations, a kind of small popular states, called "countries" by the very Romanians themselves" (Conea 1940: 3). Examples of such countries (Țări) are numerous: Țara Vrancei, Țara Maramureșului, Țara Oașului, Țara Bihariei, Țara Zărandului, Țara Oltului, Țara Bârsei, Țara Loviștei, Țara Hațegului etc. They are, for Ion Conea, "geopolitical seeds" from which, during history, gradually, the great Country was formed (Conea 1940: 3).

The images and the metaphors used by Ion Conea in re-ascribing the articulation of the countries with The Country are quite eloquent, belonging to the same register of organicity in national space formation:

"Similar to the ponds dispelled here and there and which, after torrential rains, grow and swell until they unify one with the other and become a wide water canvas, from the small Romanian countries was born and continuously grew what we now see as today's' Great Romania" (Conea 1940: 4).

The regionalist differentiation and the national integration are dealt with in a register similar to the one we saw above, with Ion Ionică and the cultural regionalist project of *Rânduiala* group. For Ion Conea, living in villages and almost autarchic geographic depressions as in closed "nests", "the parts of the people" started to differentiate by customs, costumes and language until every one of these countries had a special ethnographic and social feature and gained "in body and soul a certain number of own patterns which differentiated it from the population of all the others" (Conea 1940: 4). However, the Romanian geographer and sociologist says, the Romanian soul is "only one and indivisible from border to border" with regional differences as nuances, resembling a unique geometrical figure with several different sides (Conea 1940).

I believe that this way of understanding countries and cultural-historical regions modulates, in an oblique way, the whole sociological-monographic approach. Even though, seemingly, the research proceeds in an objective, summative way, from villages to region, and then to nation, an often un-explained and implicit selection criterion appears, referring to which villages, located in which regions, will be studied.

In Ion Conea's case this criterion becomes explicit. The relation between the studied village and the region was seen as a relation of representativity. The modality of understanding and constructing this relation of representativity is an attempt to connect village, region and local history with national history. Conea stated that in choosing a village we have to be aware of the existence of a certain ethno-history, that is, of the existence of a multi-stratified "spirit of glory", with historical "depth": "…this places' spirit of glory doesn't belong to a single period, but it continuously stratified, in various periods, over the same places" (Conea 1940: 22). Thus, ancientness - more exactly a kind of ancientness with national credentials - is a major criterion of this representativity.

Sociological monography is given a new meaning, under Ion Conea's guidance, a meaning in accordance to his geohistorical and geopolitical writings. In this case, *Clopotiva* must be reminded not as much for the positivist-summative project of thinking the nation, but rather because "there are villages…there are people and places in our country which are able to replace, at least partially, the loss of *Comentariile* on Traian's wars with the Dacians" (Conea 1940: 5).

The "Ecological" Country and the "Political" Country.
A geographical monography of Vrancea

In the very interesting debates on regions and "countries", we are able to identify a sensitive point concerning the meaning of the term "country", discriminating a popular-ecological perspective on the one hand and a political-administrative one, on the other. Ion Conea is the one who illustrates best this point as, after WWII, he changed radically his position from an acceptance of the total overlapping of the two meanings, mediated by the regional culture and ethno-history, to a total divorce.

The latter position of the Romanian geographer is expressed in his postwar monumental monography on a Romanian region: *Vrancea. Geografie istorică, toponimie și terminologie geografică*. Significantly, the author abandons the word "country" which was profusely used in his first regional monography – also his Ph.D. thesis – : *Țara Loviștei. Geografie istorică* [Tara Lovistei. Historical Geography].

The monography begins with the study of popular geographical terminology by using the 1920 recordings made by Romulus Vuia in Hațeg Country regarding the meaning of the popular term "country" in the local speech of the region and, according to Ion Conea, "of the Romanian people living in the mountains in general" (Conea 1993: 43). The difference which appears from Romulus Vuia's fieldwork recordings is one between *țăreni* and *mărgineni*: "we are *țăreni* because we have fields for food, we make wheat and we live in villages", and "*mărgineni* are those having their houses uphill, don't have fields for food, just hay fields...*țărenii* reap, *mărginenii* mow" (Romulus Vuia 1926 apud Conea 1993: 43).

Ovid Densușeanu records the meaning of the term "country" on Jiu river superior valley:

"Here, in the land of Petrila, where we take our sheep, poienari (shepherds from Poiana Sibiului – Ion Conea's comment) and lumânărari (peasants from Loman village near Sebeş – Ion Conea's comment) come and stay for the summer with their sheep; take the mountains from gentlemen, counts, and pay taxes. They come with many sheep, thousands...they come in the spring, four weeks before Saint Peter and stay all summer long. From here they go to the countries, some come back to Poiana, to Lumâna (Loman – Ion Conea's comment), others go towards Hațeg, crossing Banat, crossing Romania. They have no hay, just grass and that's why they go to the

countries during winter; there they find grass" (Densuşianu 1915, p 209, apud Conea 1993: 43).

D. Puşchilă, a Romanian geographer and linguist, deceased during the First World War, is mentioned for his "academic" definition of the country:

"Nowadays, D. Puşchilă says, we are accustomed to using this word (country) as opposed to town and with the meaning of village or – in the sense of collectivity – the territory which includes several villages. But in the past…the word country had another linguistic antonym: mountain. The country was the fields, as opposed to mountainous areas, and tăran, inhabitant of the field, as opposed to the inhabitant of the mountains. There are some traces left from this older meaning of the word. We know that Transylvanians simply call Romania and especially Muntenia, Country. This name dates from very old time. The field of Ţara Românească has long been searched by Transylvanian shepherds for the hibernation of the flocks and, for them, "passing into the country" means to descend onto the fields' area, on the other side of the Carpathians" (D. Puşchilă 1911, p.164 apud Conea 1993: 43-44).

According on these information and interpretation, Ion Conea concluded that this ecologic-economic meaning of the word "country" – as plain, where people 'live in villages and make food" – belongs to all the Romanians from the Carpathian mountains. (Conea 1933: 43).

The Romanian geographer, using here a popular definition of the word "country", a definition that is supposed to have an objective, ecologic and economic meaning, tried to see in what degree is Vrancea a country, or "if, above all, its inhabitants consider it to be a country and, consequently, if we have the right to consider it as such" (Conea 1993: 44).

According to Ion Conea, as far as the occupational structure and the position of Vrancea territory is concerned, it is not a "country", but a "border" with a population that is made up neither of peasants, nor mountaineers, but of "*mărgineni*", meaning the population located in an ecological space between plain and mountain and having all the characteristic of such a intermediary position. Ion Conea's rather abrupt conclusion is that…"Vrancea has never been regarded in the past (and of course, is not regarded today either) as a *country* – and, consequently, his inhabitants haven't been seen as peasants. Vrâncenii know this well,

but the scientists don't, they who should have been the first to know it: geographers, ethnographers, folklorists etc." This conclusion is a rather abrupt one because although *Vrâncenii* could never accept being called peasants, they don't see themselves as being *Mărgineni* either" (Conea 1993: 44), which might mean that there is not always a sufficient overlapping between popular geography's terminology, as used by the studied populations – the emic perspective – and the ecologic and occupational structure, distinguished by the scientists – the ethical perspective.

Vrânceni's self-identification is a composed one: "anyone who lives between Vidra and here and his kind is here, that is, he has the mountain right and doesn't get salt from Valea Sării salt mine, is called Vrâncean" (answers recorded by Ion Conea, Conea 1993: 45). The identification is territorial, juridical, of kinship and, least but not last, related to the access to resources.

The thorough and comprehensive analysis made by Ion Conea regarding *Vrânceni*'s modalities of self-defining, how they called their neighbours and how *Vrâncenii* are called by them, toponimy issues etc.; is strangely suffused by a methodological purism which makes him radically reject the word "country" for these regional individualities, keeping it only for an ecological understanding of the territory.

Instead of Conclusions

Ion Conea's position drew heavily on a particular reading of the old and fateful disciplinary French connection, still alive and influential in the interwar period, of history and geography, where geography was an instrument for history. The Romanian disciplinary setting is placed into a narrative of backwardness and lacking of scientific but also national responsibility towards the history and destiny of the nation.

The political geography stand is downplayed in the advantage of history. Geography is not able to assume a hegemonic position in the disciplinary field, not being able to form a self sustaining discourse about the nation. The comparison with sociology is again illuminating as sociology is, in the interwar period, in the position of articulating all-encompassing scientific-national discourse. A. Golopentia was formulating these hegemonic pretensions in a geopolitical language understressing the technical, stately and administrative facets of Gusti's larger

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nation-building project and taking them to be the true synthetic and the possible rallying point of the science of the nation. His position is quite different from Conea's even if they will fully recognize each other as geopoliticians.

What united, we believe, these 'geopolitical' men and nationalist-regionalists like Ion Ionică was a common diffuse ideology of organicity and continuity coupled with the attempt to construct a unified science of nation centered on the problematic of national space. This science, be it à la Freyer, à la Vidal de la Blache, à la Fritz Graebner etc. was build around a *mélange* of monographical–sociological or monographical-geographical positivism and national history neo-romantism.

In interwar Romania, in the context of a heightened competition amongst scientific discourses trying to capture the cultural and national 'essence', specificity, of the newly formed Greater Romania, sociology (in its monographical guise embraced by Dimitrie Gusti) was able to form a self sustaining discourse about the nation. I believe that the importance of sociology in the interwar period is due, at least partially, to the way it addressed the problematic of the national space and the new borders (internal and external). The geopoliticization of sociology was explicitly endorsed by Anton Golopenția – a student of both Dimitrie Gusti and Hans Freyer – by understressing the technical, stately and administrative facets of Gusti's larger nation-building project and taking them to be the true synthetic part and the possible rallying point of the science of the nation which, in a Freyerian manner, was to be also a science of the state and for the state. His position developed in parallel to a geopoliticization of anthropogeography and tried, in the end, to create a hegemonic, all-encompassing geopolitics of the nation-state.

In the background of this impressive scholarly attempt, there was a blind spot, a certain blurring of the historicity of the nation in connection with the historicity of the scientific discourse analyzing and serving the nation in the same time. When at least one of the roots of the nation can be traced, in what Anton Golopenția, following Hans Freyer, defined as the *ottocento Geist*, its disappearance in a post liberal world which became geopolitical – in the peculiar sense of this term attributed by the Romanian sociologist – should lead to a change in the intimate structure of the nation itself.

If the nation is seemingly absorbed by the national state, "the radical imaginary" of the nation and nationalism disappears completely in front

of its "institutional imaginary" (Castoriadis 1987). However, A. Golopenția's position, in accord with Ion Ionică and Ion Conea, was ignoring the changes that the emergence of a geopolitical world would imply in the very constitution and reproduction mechanisms of the nation. In their discourses the nation appeared as having a strong natural-organic setting and as existing behind scientific discourses.

Thus, the primordial national community was implicitly constructed as a substrate that sustains and nurtures the scientific discourses; in this process these discourses become tainted with meanings different from the explicit arguments. This un- or under-formulated stances can be seen and deciphered either in the context of polemics, or, even better, in the context of unexpected agreements between different scientific positions, behind which one may guess this diffuse, common ideology, of the organic, primordial character of the nation.

NOTES

1.   Cf. Irina Livezanu (1995).
2. This way of conceiving regionalism was more largely sustained but was never developed as thoroughly by other thinkers. For example, Simion Mehedinți – anthropogeographer, ethnologist, pedagogue – belonging to a generation older than the one of the above mentioned, but one of the most influent thinkers of the time, believed that:

   "This is the most appropriate form of regionalism: everyone to bring something of their own region in order to enrich the whole, and not to break the unity because this would mean the weakening of all its parts" (from a conference held in the Bucharest Student Campus in December 17th 1921, in *Poporul* [The People]).
3. It is quite strange that Marcel Mauss's ample critical studies connected to these works (Mauss 1974) are not used or even mentioned. The answer may be found in the French school staunch anti-regionalist (anti-Vidalian for that matter) position (Mucchielli 1996) and also in the fact that the critical theses M. Mauss launches are connected to the differences between society (political society) and civilization - seen as a family of societies or as a moral milieu into which the political societies are immersed - and not the regional divisions of societies which are considered under the rubric of the social division of labor and the dichotomy of mechanic solidarity towards organic solidarity (mediated by the polisegmented type).
4. A quite durkheimian-maussian solution
5. Which are also the main proponents of a geopolitical discourse, like A. Golopentia and Ion Conea were proposing in the same period
6. The second one is the monography of the village of Nerej, coordinated by H. H. Stahl and published in French. A Romanian translation doesn't exist even today.

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