

## THE POLITICS OF MOBILIZING LOCAL RESOURCES FOR GROWTH: 'URBAN AREAS' IN ROMANIA

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**ABSTRACT.** In this paper I argue that sociology was a key discipline in producing relevant knowledge for managing and reimagining the socialist economic development in Romania. It played a central role in placing economic development at the subnational level, since much of the everyday economics unfolded at the level of the regions, which formed around the emerging cities. I analyse the birth of the 'urban area', an academic concept and a policy tool, as it was developed by Miron Constantinescu and his associate Henry H. Stahl. This was the main device that shifted economic growth to the subnational level and allowed the planners to regulate the economy as a set of inter-connected production chains. Sociology was disbanded as an academic discipline in 1948; nonetheless, through the figure of Miron Constantinescu, a key member of the *Political Bureau* between 1945-1957, it remained a central producer of knowledge through complex institutional arrangements, put in place in the 1950s. These institutions employed sociological figures from the inter-war sociological establishment. Their methodological skills and theoretical endeavours were put to work in applied research. I argue that some strategic developmentalist policies in socialist Romania were strongly shaped by the reworking in Marxist terms of certain key ideas of the Gustian school of a 'sociology of the nation'.

**Keywords:** urban zones, socialism, urban policy, developmentalism, the sociology of sociology

### Placing socialist economic growth

One of the major critical analytical lenses thorough which real existing socialism was appraised was that of a modernist-utopian planning system, driven by technical apparatuses necessary for integrating a centrally coordinated economy and society (Bockman, 2011; Ellman, 1973, 2014). Or, as Scott formulated the issue in Foucauldian terms (2007), socialism was another instance of high-modernism that used a rational grid to systematize the chaos of the social,

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and thus became deeply repressive precisely because it took its panoptic web to its last consequence. Nonetheless, as anthropologists have repeatedly shown, socialist investments relied heavily on local knowledge, practices, and skilled brokers that linked the local with the national scale (Cullen, Dunn and Verdery, 2015; Dunn, 2004; Verdery, 1996). Romanian developmentalist economic policies are a case in point for illustrating these observations (Ban, 2014, 2016; Petrovici, 2013). Li's criticism (2005) of Scott's thesis on high-modernism can be easily reworked for the case of the Romanian socialism: the force of the socialist developmental scheme lied in capturing local practices for larger plans, by maintaining a space for negotiation.

Another major critical analytical perspective used in the analysis of socialism emphasises precisely the managerial negotiation with the central state apparatus, creating a vast array of seigniorial-like relations, which resembled in many ways a feudal society (Kornai, 1980; Mihályi, 1992). Socialism was an attempt of a hierarchical political system to catch up with the more advanced economies by recasting a redistributive system in a modern form (Csillag and Szelenyi, 2015; Mihályi, 1992; Szelenyi, 1981). Romania seemed to have been an epitome of these arrangements through the apparent 'sultanist power regime' of Ceaușescu, who tried to instil his kin members in the top positions of the party (Linz and Stepan, 1996) as well as, through the way in which socialism managed to use local energies and amass them together based on personal relationships, through negotiation, for the sake of accumulation at a national scale (Câmpeanu, 2002).

While these major paradigmatic views have their virtues, many of their predicaments derive from the scale of their analytical focus. If the focus of the analysis is on the national level, the emphasis rests on the apparently all-encompassing planning system (Soós, 1985, 1987, 1989). If the focus of the analysis rests on the factory, the empirical endeavour tends to question whether local managerial interests were harmonized and transformed into a coherent whole – which apparently was rarely the case (Bauer, 1978; Kornai, 1980).

I am proposing that the analysis should, instead, be conducted at the subnational level, because much of the everyday economics unfolded at the level of the regions which formed around the emerging cities. The mix of the messy local interests became tied together by connecting through the major cities the industrial and the agricultural chains of productions. In Romania, the urban-rural chains of production became a policy tool in the 1950s and gained momentum once again in 1970s, paradoxically, just after all counties, which were endowed with very unequal resources, were requested to produce an equal amount of the total plan. In fact, finding the scale where to place economic policies was one of the socialist developmental conundrums, and favouring the subnational had its own history.

My contention is that sociology was a key discipline in producing relevant knowledge for managing and reimagining the socialist economic development in Romania. I analyse the birth of the 'urban area', an academic concept and a policy tool, as it was developed by Miron Constantinescu and his associate Henry H. Stahl. This was the main device that tied economic growth to the subnational level and allowed the planners to regulate the economy as a set of interconnected production chains. Sociology was disbanded as an academic discipline in 1948; nonetheless, through the figure of Miron Constantinescu, a key member of the *Political Bureau* between 1945-1957, it remained a central producer of knowledge through complex institutional arrangements, put in place in the 1950s. These institutions employed sociological figures from the inter-war sociological establishment. Their methodological skills and theoretical endeavours were put to work in applied research. I also argue that some strategic developmentalist policies in socialist Romania (Ban, 2014, 2016) were strongly shaped by the reworking in Marxist terms of certain key ideas of the Gustian school of a 'sociology of the nation'.

In the next section I sketch briefly the major conundrums at play in the developmentalist strategy of growth and the major opposing policy visions in the *Political Bureau* of the communist elites. Then, I follow the definition of the concept of 'urban zone' as used by Constantinescu and Stahl in the 1970s. In the fourth section I sketch a history of the same concept as rooted in the emerging sociological and geographical fields at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and its subsequent transformations after the 1950s. In the fifth section I analyse the way this concept was used as a policy tool and redeployed in the 1970s, this time as a critical sociological concept in the face of the new regional disparities produced by the 1970s-economic development. In the sixth part I discuss the importance of the concept of 'urban area' as a policy tool for regulating the subnational and some implications in terms of the way the sociological field restructures around this tool.

### **Developmentalist conundrums**

After World War II, Romania consisted of no less than 78% rural population. Industrialization could only be imagined in relation to the agricultural sector. Two options emerged during this time: land agglomeration for large-scale agricultural production could either precede industrialization, or follow it. The idea of land agglomeration itself was not problematic as there was a consensus within the *Political Bureau* on this. It was more a question of order. The first solution: industrialization, mechanization of agriculture and then collectivization, or the second solution: collectivization, industrialization and then mechanization.

As pointed out by Levy (2001), what seemed to be just a contextual question was in fact a question of economic architecture which had to be addressed not only in Romania, but also in post-revolutionary Russia or elsewhere in Eastern Europe (Davies, 1980, 1989; Davies, Harrison, and Wheatcroft, 1994).

Under the social pressure of the peasants, the first solution pleaded for experimenting with nested market forms: the rural area to become a market for industrial products, and vice-versa, the urban area to become a market for agricultural products, following a relative parity of prices between these areas. Initially the new socialist government tried to increase the productivity of agriculture through a gradual mechanization. Between 1946 and 1951, Ana Pauker, party secretary for agriculture (between 1948 and 1952), was a defender of the nested markets approach and she opposed those economic policies that pleaded for an imbalanced pricing ratio between industrial products and agricultural products (Levy, 2001). Within the *Political Bureau*, Vasile Luca, Minister of Finance, was also a defender of this policy. Until 1951, while in a position of leadership, Ana Pauker opposed collectivization 'in force' and attempted a collectivization focused on the mechanization of agriculture, to motivate peasants to participate voluntarily in the land agglomeration. Vasile Luca successfully pushed for the parity of urban-rural products and for balancing the development of the heavy industry with light industry in order to have consumer goods for peasants (Kligman and Verdery, 2015). The Muscovite councillors opposed these solutions as early as 1947, during the first post-war monetary reforms, supervised by Miron Constantinescu (Bosomitu, 2014b). Stalin had been pushing for collectivization for the entire socialist bloc as early as 1948. Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, the general secretary of the Party, also preferred this first approach until the middle of 1948. After 1949, Dej changed his position and became an exponent of the second solution, alongside other actors within the *Political Bureau*, especially Gheorghe Apostol, Alexandru Moghioroș and Iosif Chișinevschi (Levy, 2001).

The second position involved the collectivization of agriculture and the use of agricultural products to offer cheap consumer goods in the urban areas and raw materials for the industry. As pointed out by Levy (2001), Dej's position changed for reasons related to the socialist state's architecture. It was impossible to control the individualized peasant economy in terms of price formation, which made it impossible to secure a steady income and hence a constant level of investment in industry and key services. Gradually, the *Political Bureau* came to prefer the solution of bureaucratizing the economy, through the formation of domestic industrial markets with factories linked in production chains coordinated by the *Council of Ministers* and the *Planning Council*. Stalin was putting a lot of pressure on the entire bloc for the heavy industry, to the

detriment of the light industry, to ensure, in the context of the Cold War, that the industry across the region could be reconverted into an arms industry in the face of a possible military confrontation (Bosomitu, 2014b; Davies et al., 1994; Levy, 2001).

An unexpected solution came from Miron Constantinescu that succeeded, somehow, to propose an in-between concept that was responding both to Ana Pauker's pressure for prices parity between the urban and the rural manufactured goods and Gheorghe Gh. Dej's pressure for a rural economy in the control of the state so as to maintain a manageable pace of resource extraction necessary for industrialization. The solution was the 'urban area' concept, which emphasized the diversity of local resources for growth and the necessity to interlink them in regional input/output relations between the emerging industries, which was to create urban-rural units in a complex national mosaic of diverse economic ecologies.

Between 1949 and 1955 Miron Constantinescu was the head of the *State Planning Council* and he was the main actor entrusted to design the first four planning cycles (1949, 1950, 1951-1955, 1956-1960). Also, he was trained as a sociologist, highly committed to empirical research, and, therefore, he preferred evidence-based policies. In 1949, he put together a research team to which he entrusted the research needed to devise a comprehensive planning process. The interdisciplinary team, in which Henri H. Stahl was a key player, was mainly formed by fellow researchers working in the 'monographical Bucharest school', headed in the interwar period by the sociologist Dimitrie Gusti. However, the recruitment of members in this new team depended largely on responding to the contending visions on economic development of the *Communist Party* leaders and Miron Constantinescu's contradictory position within the *Political Bureau*. With the help of this research, Miron Constantinescu could position himself in a complex manner in relation to the big issues raised by managing a socialist economy.

However, this solution came under public scrutiny only in the 1970s as a sociological observation, when the first researches on industrialisation were published. In a study on the urbanisation process in the region of Slatina, Miron Constantinescu, together with Henri. H. Stahl (Constantinescu and Stahl, 1970), proposed the 'urban area' concept to capture the exchanges of population and goods between the city of Slatina and the neighbouring localities in the Olt County. This was the first book in a series of three volumes that compared the industrialization and urbanization processes in different stages in the formation of the fix capital and maturity of investments. The teams coordinated by Miron Constantinescu selected three different cases, depending on the industrialization-urbanisation „development stage”: „advanced stage” – the Braşov area (Bogdan,

Cernea, Constantinescu, and Cristea, 1970), „median stage” – the Slatina area (Constantinescu and Stahl, 1970), and the „incipient stage” – the Vaslui area (Brescan and Merfea, 1973). The meaning of the ‘urban areas’ might elude us if we only classify it as the sociological concept of some influential researchers in the 1970s. We are not dealing with a concept that describes the reality it studies. The ‘urban area’ is a normative concept with a history in the interwar period, which was reassumed as a development policy tool in the 1950s. This concept is based on an entire knowledge production infrastructure that precedes the real existing socialism and that, eventually, had important effects on structuring the socialist public policies.

### **The urban area**

As noted above, Miron Constantinescu was not just a sociologist who had an interest in the urban issue in the 1970s. In fact, he was a key actor of the *Romanian Communist Party*: a communist *illegalist* before the Second World War, member of the *Political Bureau* and of the *Central Committee* between 1947 and 1957. He was one of the key actors of the economic stabilisation after the war, between 1947 and 1950, and president of the *State Planning Committee* between 1949 and 1955. Between 1952 and 1956 he was considered a potential successor to and competitor of Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej (Bosomitu, 2014b). After Nikita Khrushchev’s rejection of the personality cult in USSR during his secret speech at the 20<sup>th</sup> CPSU Congress, in February 1956, Constantinescu was propelled by several forces in the party as Dej’s liberal successor (Bosomitu, 2014b). In April 1956, supported by Iosif Chişinevschi, another member of the *Political Bureau*, Constantinescu openly criticized Dej in front of their peers. However, Dej had anticipated this opposition and made the necessary alliances with the other four members of the *Bureau*. Because of this opposition, between 1957 and 1965 Constantinescu was marginalized within the party, holding only academic positions as president of various research institutes. Even if marginalized politically, he became an influential actor in the historiographical field: he specialised on issues concerning the tributary system (Guga, 2015), on the history of Transylvania (Constantinescu and Daicoviciu, 1961; Daicoviciu and Constantinescu, 1965a, 1965b) and on the project of rewriting the history of Romania (Constantinescu, Daicoviciu, and Pascu, 1968). Miron Constantinescu’s rehabilitation was orchestrated by Nicolae Ceauşescu, as a reactivation of the voices critical towards Gheorghiu-Dej. In 1965 Constantinescu was appointed Deputy State Minister in the *Ministry of Education*, and in 1966 he became a university professor of the new Sociology Department at the University of Bucharest. In 1969, Constantinescu became *Minister of Education* and a member

of the *Central Committee*. Between 1965 and his death in 1974, Miron Constantinescu played a central role in reinstating sociology as a discipline in Romania (Bosomitu, 2014b); as a matter of fact during this time there was a boom in the sociological production in Romania and several academic journals were founded (Costea, Larionescu, and Ungureanu, 1983).

Henri H. Stahl was Miron Constantinescu's partner in many of his political enterprises, as an expert and researcher. Henri H. Stahl was one of the most influential sociologist in the 20<sup>th</sup> century Romania, a prolific researcher and a remarkable thinker (Guga, 2015). In 1949 Constantinescu invited Henri H. Stahl to become a member in an interdisciplinary research team working in the *State Planning Council* (Stahl and Matei, 1966) and to coordinate the scientific side of the research needed for planning (Stahl, 1975). Under the supervision of the *Ministry of Construction* and the *State Planning Council* he was employed at the *Superior Institute of Social Work* (Institutul Superior de Prevederi Sociale) during 1948 and 1952, and then at the *Institute for city planning and regional development* (Institutul de proiectări a oraşelor şi a sistematizării regionale) between 1952 and 1961<sup>2</sup>. He received a writing leave for two years<sup>3</sup>, joined the Romanian Academy for this period and then joined Constantinescu's efforts in 1965 to build from scratch a new sociological faculty at Bucharest University (see Bosomitu, this issue). He retired in 1971, publishing intensely until his death in 1991 and supervising PhD students.

Miron Constantinescu's effort to define the 'urban areas' spans across the three above-mentioned empirical books on industrialization in Romania in the form of short vignettes. Therefore, the coherence of the concept becomes apparent only when put in a single chapter on the urbanisation processes, chapter that is part of a book that collects all the essays Constantinescu wrote between 1938 and 1971 (Constantinescu, 1971). I quote him extensively from this source:

Generally, an *area* confines the territorial realities and the units which have some specific physical, economic, and social characteristics. These socio-economic and geographical units have certain common characteristics, and what is essential is the *inter-conditioning* of all these traits and elements within an area, their *inter-dependence* and *interaction*. [...] *The notion of an 'area' has also been extended [from a geographical and bioclimatic area] to the order of the social phenomena when they are analysed as a territorial reality, as form of the relation between humans and nature, mediated by productive forces. An area comprises a complex of specific economic and social relations harmonized on certain coordinates. [...] The*

<sup>2</sup> Bucharest University Archive, Human Resource Direction, employee dossier S2/135, available to me courtesy of Ştefan Bosomitu.

<sup>3</sup> The leave was received with Miron Constantinescu's mediation to write a book on the issue of the transition in Romania (Stahl, 1965).

*urban areas* are formed by combining production and residential spaces, the definition and space delimitation of which differs. Generally, the urban area comprises: [a] the city itself, the agglomeration of population, housing, and economic activities, concentrated in very limited spaces [...] and [b] a convergence area or an area of mutual relations between the city itself and that area called hinterland, with which the city has close and intimate mutual economic relations and on which the city partly grows. The following areas have also been delimited in connection with the city, on the basis of the frequency of participation in the supply of the urban population and industry: immediate (peri-urban, pre-city), adjacent and distant. The mutual economic connections between the two constituent parts – the territorial and functional association between the city and the convergence area (to attract labour force, agri-food products and raw materials) – define the urban integration territorial area or the urban area. The expressions ‘city-region’, ‘urban complex’ or ‘urban region’ were also proposed. In the published literature ‘area’ has a wide variety of definitions, but we consider they are insufficient. These definitions are deficient because of the static manner in which the area is defined. In our opinion, the area in the sociological sense must be defined as a dynamic *unity* in relation to the processes that occur within in. (Constantinescu, 1971:145-146, emphasis in original).

Miron Constantinescu proposes a very precise definition that systematizes his empirical material. He starts from the *geographic and bioclimatic zoning* concept to capture the distinctiveness of local natural resources and he re-labels the natural in relation with the capacities to produce and transform nature into resources using the existing means of production. He then notes that *the urban areas* were created through socialist industrialization, and they are formed by the ‘actual cities’ and ‘a hinterland area’. The hinterland area is a collector from which the labour force is recruited and that provides the supply of agri-food and raw materials. The terminological proposal attempts to capture the dynamic spatial relations between, on the one hand, the labour force and the raw material suppliers, and the urban industry on the other hand. However, through this approach he assumes a very large spatial coherence and integration. In fact, the only time when he raises the issue of the geographical contiguity is in relation with the distance and the frequency of supply, thus producing three types of hinterland: immediate, adjacent, and distant.

As soon as he begins to make a synthesis of the research results on the Slatina urban area, the analysis refers to the supply chains of labour force, produced by the implantation of new factories in Slatina and the secondary ‘constellations of urban localities’, which gradually concentrate the urban labour force from the nearby rural area. In turn, these urban localities are transformed by increasing the productivity through reorganization and investments in cooperatives. ‘At the moment, with regards to construction sites, labour recruiters



are currently discussing with presidents of production agricultural cooperatives and during winter they make contracts to hire people from households in the constructions sites that will open in spring' (Constantinescu, 1971:151). Constantinescu is concerned with (a) labour force supply (b) the industry of *consumer goods* and primary agricultural products for labour force consumption, (c) the industrialized production of agricultural products in remote areas and (d) the extraction of *raw materials* necessary for the industry of intermediate goods centred in the space of the central city or its industrial satellites.

The approach may seem strange if we consider the fact that he studied the products of the *Aluminium Factory* in Slatina of the *Machine tools factories* in Braşov, which were distributed across the country. These factories' products were *capital goods*, necessary as means of production in the Romanian agricultural and industrial sector, or for export in the *COMECON* area. As soon as we begin to consider these aspects as well, we can no longer talk only about an urban area and its hinterlands. That is, we have two different agricultural-industrial inter-sectorial circuits: on the one hand, a circuit consisting of a local industrial supply chain of raw materials and a labour force nurtured with perishable agricultural goods and, on the other hand, a national circuit of production goods. Each urban area specializes in industrial production according to the local resources and trades with the other urban areas. These stakes become much clearer in the proposal section in the volume dedicated to Slatina. An area can develop harmoniously in relation to its hinterland when it is also capable to integrate human and material resources:

Following a reorganization of the communes, according to the administrative territorial law of 1967, equipping the villages with the necessary technical and cultural equipment, supporting the industrialization tendencies of villages, developing the construction of new industrial units through inter-cooperative association, the communes surrounding Slatina could become real *residential districts* of factory workers. Hereby, the industrial and agricultural activity would intertwine, and the communes' population would participate in the development of both industrial and socialist agriculture. The entire area comprising Slatina and its hinterland would develop harmoniously. In addition, this would cheapen Slatina's endeavour to build new block of flats, it would allow a more rational use of the funds coming from factories and the *Popular Council* to build new city districts. (Constantinescu and Stahl, 1970:368)

Henri H. Stahl, the second editor of the study on Slatina, emphasized even more the role of the hinterland. Two years before the publication of the study coordinated with Miron Constantinescu, while Constantinescu was preparing the studies on Vaslui, Slatina and Braşov, Stahl was invited by Miron Constantinescu

to hold a series of lectures at the *People's University* in Bucharest on the 1968 Law on the territorial-administrative reorganisation. The lectures were published in 1969 in a short book entitled *The Administrative-territorial organization*. Even if the conceptual stake is very important, Stahl insisted that 'we can no longer distinguish, as we used to, between a rural and an urban area' (1969:60). There is a very important continuity between the two, in a double sense: empirically, the continuity is an observable process, and from a normative stand it is desirable to ensure a complex exchange between agricultural and industrial products through a consistent investment policy.

Around the central core, which is a mother-city, there is a fairly wide 'pre-city' territory, characterized by the existence of 'dormitory localities' to which I also add 'satellite localities', with a semi-industrial character. Beyond this area, there is another one called the 'peri-urban' area, characterized by its specialization in the production of perishable, consumable goods necessary for the city, and only then comes the proper 'agricultural' area. However, as agriculture is industrialized, this area also ceases to be rural, as the villages also witness a process that can be called 'urbanization', in the sense of raising the standards of living and the lifestyle from an archaic, rural one to a modern, urban one. (Stahl, 1969:60)

The urban-rural complex suggested by Stahl includes a network of localities with different functions and that implies complex exchanges advantageous to everyone. On the one hand, the archaic character of the rural areas is overcome through systematic investments in agriculture, while the peasant population is employed either in mechanized agriculture or in urban factories. Therefore, the rural areas become dormitories for a type of work that is unfolding in urban spaces or is servicing the urban space. On the other hand, rural communities become satellite localities where certain industries locate to transform the primary resources into raw materials used by the mother cities; or they can concentrate industries to further process the industrial products assembled in the mother city. Therefore, the whole lifestyle of the region changes as an effect of the material processes that derives from the economic exchanges which integrate the 'urban-rural' complex. As mentioned before, the concept of 'urban area' was not a new concept, but one that has a history in the interwar sociology.

### **A short history of some of the post-Gusti dilemmas**

Miron Constantinescu had been a member of the Gustian School and he became a sociologist in the second half of the 1930s. In 1938-1939 he participated in the monographic researches conducted by Anton Golopenția,

Henri Stahl, and Octavian Neamțu, as part of a process to extend Dimitrie Gusti's methodological and theoretical horizon. Gusti's students had sought to correct Gusti's lack of formulating more sophisticated methods to categorize the villages and their connections with the areas they belonged to (Sandu, 2012). Following the 1938-39 research, Anton Golopenția managed to publish five volumes during the war, to sum up his research entitled *60 Romanian villages* (Golopenția and Georgescu, 1941). Miron Constantinescu was one of the authors that contributed with some monographs to this volume, from an open Marxist position (Poenaru, 2015). Dimitrie Gusti wrote the introductory study of the first volume. He absorbed his students' critics and stressed the need to build a complex typology of the villages, to build a theoretical synthesis whose ultimate goal was to demarcate Romania's 'Social regions'. During the war, Dimitrie Gusti was elected president of the Romanian Academy in 1944, and from this position he begun to resume the theme of the monographic unit of analyses and drafted a research project to categorize the villages in a certain region and make inter-regional comparisons. As President of the Academy, in the position of president of the *National Research Council*, he proposed the following:

[...] to develop a systematic research plan of the entire country, in such a way that within a minimum interval we can reach the fullest knowledge of all the country's issues. The main basis of this research must remain the research of *social units*, i.e. *villages, cities, regions around the country* with their rich content full of continuing dynamism. [...] The end product of this enterprise would be to determine on the country's map which regions do not overlap with the country's administrative or geographical divisions (Gusti, 1946; quoted in Stahl, 1975:44-45).

Between 1945-1946 Gusti travelled firstly to the USSR, then to Palestine, Lebanon, France, and the United States. The purpose of the trip was to create through the *UN* an organization called *The Social Institute of Nations* to globalize his monographical approach and to secure steady resources for his endeavour in Romania. His attempt was unsuccessful. After 1947 he tried again to found *The Social Romanian Institute* – the key institutional instrument through which he financed the monographic enterprises before the war – in order to create a map of the Romanian regions, included in a *Social atlas of Romania* (Sandu, 2012). Dimitrie Gusti handed the proposal to re-establish the *Romanian Social Institute* to his former student Miron Constantinescu, with the suggestion of a possible partnership with the *Central Institute of Statistics*, whose president was still Anton Golopenția and with the *Superior Economic Council* where Octavian Neamțu was already working. Miron Constantinescu, secretary of the *Ministerial Commission for Stabilization and Economic Recovery*, replied that although his enterprise was 'just and positive', it was

built on an idealist base. As such, he invited his former professor to use the Marxist-Leninist theory and suggested he started the research in a few areas, which he designated in an official letter, requesting a reorientation towards the urban: 'Romanian sociology, a former unilateral rural sociology, must firstly become an urban sociology of the industrial centres and the working population' (Gusti, 1971: 418-419)<sup>4</sup>.

While Gusti refused Miron Constantinescu's offer, Henri H. Stahl accepted it. As president of *The State Planning Committee*, Miron Constantinescu began his mandate with a series of planning experiments. The first of these experiments was located in the County of Hunedoara, as part of the process of building an industrial complex where raw materials from the mines in the area were processed by a dedicated industry (Mărginean, 2015). Henri H. Stahl was one of the methodological architects of the research, as he noted later:

This field research technique, as elaborated before the war, was used and amplified within the territorial systematization actions, which begun in 1949 under the leadership of architect Ștefan Popovici, and were organized under the following formula: brief monographs developed on extremely simple forms, specifically designed to give way to mappings and the application of the so called Geddes (1915) type of 'simultaneous thinking', carried out by interdisciplinary teams comprising of an architect, a geographer and a sociologist, managed by an interdisciplinary central council.

This was the work method in the entire Hunedoara county, and until 1949 researches were conducted in the whole County of Constanța, Tulcea (the last one only through a screening made by the *Central Council*), the basins of Bistrița, Argeș, Brașov area etc., as well a long series of documentations on over 40 cities and their areas, which raised an even more precise problem regarding the theoretical relevance of the areas research, reinforcing the idea that interdisciplinary research needs a central methodological decision forum to conduct the field work and to put together a final synthesis, all of which we consider to have been proven extremely effective, thus deserving to be noted as a substantial contribution to solving the organizational problem of this type of research. (Stahl, 1975:44)

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<sup>4</sup> Miron Constantinescu's letter to his professor, in Dimitrie Gusti, *Opere*, vol. V, Academia Publishing House, Bucharest, 1971, pp. 418-419. Constantinescu's comment is slightly mischievous, because precisely under the pressure of selecting the unit of analysis and the issue of finding the theoretical relevance of the empirical results, the Gustians begun in 1946 the first discussions on urban planning and they conducted the first practical experiments in Hunedoara (Mărginean, 2015:81). Here, *The Romanian Association for Tightening the Ties with the Soviet Union* (ALRUS), where Gusti was one of the 1946 founders, became such a discussion forum on regional research and the analysis of similar Soviet attempts.

Constantinescu put together an interdisciplinary team coordinated by architects who were trained in Gusti's disciplinary teams; Henri H. Stahl was given a key position to set the team's methodological lines<sup>5</sup>. Stahl recruited geographers Vintilă M. Mihăilescu, Victor Tufescu, and Ion Conea (Rostás, 2000), and through the party, Miron Constantinescu assigned a young sociologist, Ioan I. Matei<sup>6</sup>, to work with Stahl. The latter became Stahl's apprentice in terms of territorial and regional planning (Rostás, 2000); he also had a subsequent independent career in the methodology and theory of territorial systematization (Mioara and Matei, 1977). This was an inaugural moment in which Stahl, together with the other collaborators trained in the Gustian method, innovated by creating simplified data collection tools on a wider area, starting with a pilot village, and then, by using visual synthesizing methods (maps) and reporting, they were able to trace the relations of exchange of goods, labour force and the region's integration in the broader economic exchanges (Stahl and Matei, 1966). Moreover, Stahl proposed a series of tools to integrate an area in a historic series of economic exchanges, suggesting possible investment opportunities based on historical trends. The systematization studies on the County of Hunedoara became the main instruments for the urbanization, industrialization and collectivization processes in the area (Mărginean, 2015)<sup>7</sup>. In addition, these research tools became key instruments for the studies to follow up until 1955, while Miron Constantinescu was president of the *State Planning Committee*. The most notable studies done in a similar key at regional level were: Dobrogea (1950), Valea Bistriței (1951), Argeș hydrographic basin (1952), Ialomița-Buzău hydrographic basin (1953), Reșița hydrographic basin (1954), Brașov area (1954), Bucharest's peri-urban area (1956), Ploiești area, Târgoviște areas. In addition to these studies, Stahl also coordinated studies for guiding investments in urban development: Anina, Arad, Baia Mare, Blaj, Brașov, Brăila, Chișcani, Copșa Mică, Cugir, Caransebeș, Turda, Vaslui (Costea, 2001).

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<sup>5</sup> It was not Henri Stahl's first investigation of the Hunedoara County, he also conducted researches in 1946 (Rostás, 2000). Moreover, he had already collaborated with architects Ștefan Popovici and Adrian Gheorghiu at the *Social Romanian Institute* before the war as part of the monograph surveys (Rostás, 2000).

<sup>6</sup> Provoked by Zoltan Rostás's comment, Henri H. Stahl remembers that Ioan I. Matei was the prison warden where Miron Constantinescu and Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej were imprisoned as *illegalists* during the war. However, 'at the right time there was an arrangement with the communists' (Rostás, 2000:183). While throughout the interview, his references are appreciative: 'Matei was second in command, Matei was a debutant. He did not even study with us. He joined us more on a political line. He had not conducted sociology with either Gusti or myself. [...] I do not know how he did it. But I had no idea he even existed. A good kid otherwise. Nothing to say there.' (Rostás, 2000:183)

<sup>7</sup> These innovations are discussed by the Gustians in a series of seminars in 1949 within the Romanian Association of Friends of the Soviet Union (Mărginean, 2015).

Immediately after the war, Miron Constantinescu was simultaneously a close collaborator of Ana Pauker and Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej. After 1947 *The Political Bureau* was a confrontation place between the two radically different visions of economic architecture mentioned above (Bosomitu, 2014b). During the meetings of the *Political Bureau*, Miron Constantinescu, as head of the *Committee for Monetary Reform* since 1947, opposed the urban-rural price parity; however, Ana Pauker and Vasile Luca managed to win that fight. As such, the reform that Constantinescu was meant to put into place followed the principle of the parity of the urban and rural markets. However, with Stalin's help, Dej managed to change the power relations and gradually imposed the solution of the state control agricultural production for the benefit of industrial development. Starting with 1949, Constantinescu, as chairman of the *State Planning Committee*, set up an industrial-oriented annual plan, and for the first five-year period 1951-1955 he built investment plans oriented towards the heavy industry development. Ana Pauker and Vasile Luca had a prompt and critical reaction. However, Ana Pauker was diagnosed with breast cancer in 1951, and she withdrew to Moscow for several medical interventions. Dej took advantage of this period to begin a violent and forced collectivization process (Kligman and Verdery, 2015), and then in 1952, with Miron Constantinescu's support, he framed Vasile Luca's fall during the second monetary reform (Bosomitu, 2014b). At a first investigation level, it would seem that Miron Constantinescu was a champion of the reforms regarding the agricultural expropriation of peasants and the heavy industry.

However, his work with Henri H. Stahl throughout his presidency at the *State Planning Committee* until 1955 indicates, in fact, a much more ambiguous position. It indicates that he managed to make a synthesis between the two types of policies, and this synthesis was the *urban area*. On the one hand, the city was seen as a convergence area for a short circuit of rural fresh agricultural products, with prices that were allowed to operate freely on the local agri-food markets. On the other hand, cereal production entered a long national circuit, with prices controlled by the state. The industrial sector had to operate in the same vein, on two levels: the level of the local raw materials supply chains and a national level of the capital and intermediate goods market. After Vasile Luca disappeared from the head of the *Ministry of Finance* in 1952, Miron Constantinescu became one of the most influential economic actors in Romania until 1957. His vision of the socialist state as a multi-scalar economy with different logics of prices formation weighed a lot. Even if he was arguably one of the most influential economic policy makers, he was just one of the actors who tried to mould the socialist economy. The first three rounds of national plans were done with the attentive supervision of the Soviets. In addition, the economy as a multiplayer activity had its own logic of functioning. Therefore it was an open question whether Constantinescu's vision became inscribed in the socialist economy and to what degree.

### The urban areas research

Between 1957-1965, Miron Constantinescu lost his position at the top of the political pyramid. Even though he no longer held positions such as member of the *Political Bureau*, after his 1965 rehabilitation he continued to have a great influence on the socialist economy. Between 1967-1972, together with his colleagues at the University of Bucharest, he began to study the urban areas in order to verify through empirical research the extent to which his 1950s project had worked. This project brought to life the already mentioned volumes on urban analysis (Bogdan et al., 1970; Brescan and Merfea, 1973; Constantinescu and Stahl, 1970) and a volume on a rural hinterland (Bădina et al., 1970). The research logic in these volumes followed closely the style of public policy reports. As I already pointed out in the previous section, the inaugural volume discussed the urban area concept, and then assessed the extent to which the researched cities are actually working as urban areas. Any deviation from the model was carefully noted, and Constantinescu took time to make precise recommendations in specific chapters. In his manual on the urban areas studies, Stahl (1975) later explained that this type of analysis had two stages: the research conducted before the actual intervention and then the research to track the effects of the intervention.

We can say that there is no social sphere in which the state actions cannot interfere (political, economic, cultural, sanitary, organizational and social-educational, etc.) They all raise the same question for the sociologist, namely to consider them as the two faces of a coin, as two sides of the same reality: on the one hand the *actions* undertaken (planned and accomplished) and on the other hand their *effects* on social life. In our society this issue is the basis of any practical sociological research; which justifies our claim that the sociology of a socialist state must be primarily a 'sociology of the state plan'. (Stahl, 1975:67, emphasis in original).

However, the research results were not quite satisfactory, or as hoped. In the first issue of the *Social Future*, Miron Constantinescu's new magazine that started to be published in 1972, Alexandru Bărbat, from the Iași University, published a caustic article on urban areas. In this paper Bărbat made the distinction between *functional urban areas* and *specific urban areas*. On the one hand, the functional urban areas were those areas dominated by an urban space, where the relations between agricultural and industrial products were severely uneven, in favour of the industrial ones. The functional urban areas were themselves hierarchized according to their capacity to 'converge resources', subordinating other regions, in a regional or even a national

system, by distorting the exchange through asymmetrical transactions. On the other hand, the specific urban area were areas 'determined by the geographic, the economic, the demographic and the spiritual specificities and potentialities of a given territorial complex' (Bărbat, 1972:49). The specific area had 'new urbanized rural areas', which should no longer be subordinated to the urban, requiring, therefore, a more equal exchange between industrial and agricultural products. The 1970s' cities, Bărbat mentions, disproportionately concentrate tertiary functions. Nonetheless, many administrative functions were installed firmly in 'the new urbanized rural areas'. Therefore, one could not speak of hierarchies between 'specific areas' or within a 'specific area'. If specializations may have occurred in a 'specific area', that prompted only a comparative advantage which may have ensured a balanced development at national level. Every area had its own place among the nationally distributed economic activities, capitalizing on its specific local resources.

The planned economy, specific to the socialist economy, has a clear position with regard to the area research issue. The territorial planning, aiming at the optimal development and use of each part of the country's territory, is a logical necessity in socialism. Building a multilaterally developed socialist society implies, along with the multilateral development of the productive forces (key factor in every society's progress), 'the right distribution of the productive forces on the territory, to create working conditions for working people across the country' (Ceaușescu, 1971:35). Comrade Nicolae Ceaușescu draws our attention especially on the practical, but also on the theoretical significance of this problem. Personally, I see the practical solution to this territorial issue as a poly-functional landscape, with specific development of each area-complex, a balanced landscape with a balanced development between the economic compartments and with a relatively similar dynamism among these compartments. (Bărbat, 1972: 51)

The subtext of this intervention is clear: the previous policies had stimulated an opposition between rural agricultural populations and urban populations and also an extraction process in favour of the industrial production. At any moment, while reading this text there is a sensation that what's needed is to name this tension: the class struggle between farmers and workers as a form of social embodiment of the socialist accumulation tensions. Some of the terms used seem to reference quite directly Nikolai Bukharin's thesis on the need for 'balance between the elements of the socialist society' and the struggles between the rural and urban classes in socialism to avoid an extractive planning (Bukharin, 2006).

As noted by Alexandru Bărbat, the urban area concept changed substantially after 1970. If Constantinescu's hope in the 1950s was to mobilize



local resources and create a mosaic of areas with specializations that would bring comparative advantages in a national space of collaboration, after 1970 it became increasingly clear that there was a growing hierarchy between urban areas. What was supposed to be possibly just some uneven intra-areas relations, was increasingly becoming an uneven inter-areas relations. These unequal relations were due to changes that took place in Romania's economic architecture.

Even though this diagnosis was rather implicit, the proposal became, once again, more than merely a sociological observation. In 1973 Miron Constantinescu used his double position in the academic system (in the *Bucharest University* and the *Social Sciences and Political Academy*) and also his political position (as member of the *Secretariat* of the *Central Committee*, vice-president of *State Council*, and president of *Central Council of the Workers Control of the Economic and Social Activity*) to initiate a 'sociological and political experiment in the leadership science' in the county of Dolj, with the help of the *County Party Committee*. The goal was to build a set of methods for collecting economic data on the production of each economic unit in the county to observe the extent to which economic chains were produced at county level. Together with mathematicians at the *Central institute for Management and Computer Science in Bucharest* Constantinescu supervised the building of a set of algorithms, based on linear and recursive programming, to allow the material resources and labour force to be treated as a set of matrices between units and economic sectors, and then to model the exchange processes at county production chains levels. The whole theme was formulated under the heading of rationalization and plan breakdown. These algorithms were built in conversation with the new input/output models of the neoclassical economists Wassily Leontief, a Russian émigré and Harvard professor who presented his mathematical research at the *Romanian Academy of Economic Sciences* in June 1968. Those who benefited most from this academic synchronization with neoclassical theories were the groups of programmers that had had access to the *State Planning Committee* data (Ban, 2016). Miron Constantinescu recruited these economists-technicians in his project. In a series of meetings in Bucharest throughout 1971 and 1972, he supervised some analyses of the major issues implied by the uniform territorial development policies, which Ceaușescu had advocated since 1968. Throughout 1972, with the help of the *Dolj County Council*, he experimented with this model and improved it in terms of a system of relevant parameters in the territory. In 1974 the algorithm was taken over by the *Central Planning Committee* and used at national level. The whole logic behind this generalization was very well captured by Constantinescu in a chapter that appeared posthumously in 1974, in a book called *Introduction to the science of the socialist society leadership*, where this process was detailed:

I remember that during a previous meeting somebody asked us why we deal with the problem of modelling the vegetables and fruits supply. This was prompted by the fact that the comrades from the *Central Institute* had made an actual proposal of modelling the production and consumption of vegetables in a certain county. Of course, the significance of a phenomenon sometimes exceeds its immediate context; in this case, what's important is the modelling of this process, the mathematical attempt to understand this issue. Today, we have the tools for an overall view on the decision theory in an essential field of economic and social development of a county of nearly one million inhabitants. In fact, if not for the preliminary attempts on primary elements, this stage could not have been reached today. [...] A source of inspiration comes from the field of sociology and political science, where I started by *affirming the importance of the area concept*. It is known that I have always supported the need to surpass the small size researches, as designed by Dimitrie Gusti: the monograph of a village, taken out of context, of the city, of the social relations it establishes, as a whole. This mentality is long obsolete. I am not referring to the philosophical or its theoretical part; I mean the methodology is obsolete. We have started [...] from an overall conception, namely an area concept that considers cities and villages as an indissoluble connection, and a dynamic approach to the development of these large social complexes in their entirety. (Constantinescu, 1974:231)

Like in the case of other proposals made by Miron Constantinescu, what appeared to be a simple technical issue obscured in fact complex political negotiations implied in the design of this particular type of economic development (see also Poenaru, 2015). Constantinescu's 1970s correction of the urban area as a developmental concept, which in fact mobilized a lot of work in terms of political negotiation and capturing the local and party interests, came to be played in its final form through a set of seemingly technical concepts and procedures. Constantinescu's political purpose seems to have been that of winning over the other political partners from the *Central Committee* by presenting his mathematical models as a more efficient territorial systematization routine and as a planning instrument. Moreover, the new techniques disguised the sociological research instruments used here as a series of harmless operations, a recipe that the state apparatus could use to collect and summarize data by minimally qualified state employees.

In this context Stahl published in 1975 a volume dedicated to the methodology of 'urban areas' studies, the second volume of his methodological manual called *The theory and practice of Social Investigations*. This second volume had the subtitle *Interdisciplinary Area Research* and had the same purpose, which was to present how to make an area research during a territorial planning of a region. Just a year later, Ion I. Matei, Stahl's

apprentice, published as co-author his manual on territorial systematization that completed the 'de-sociologization' of the process and put forward specific technical concepts, casting a shadow on the whole class tensions and political struggles history embedded in them.

In a post-socialist history of sociology in Romania, Ștefan Costea and his colleagues (Costea, Cristea, and Dumitrescu, 1998), noted in passing that sociology as a discipline fell into disgrace after 1977 following Elena Ceaușescu's observation that 'sociologists are more interested in power than in science'. Elena Ceaușescu's alleged observation does not seem imprecise. Both Stahl and Constantinescu were acutely aware that any attempt to build a 'science of the nation' on sociological bases implied research tools necessary for evidence based policies and this required new state bodies capable of gathering and ordering such complex data. As Poenaru (2015) notes in a re-evaluation of Miron Constantinescu's contribution, his project to institutionalize sociology was, in fact, a project meant to include in the central planning apparatuses mechanisms for creating cadres with sociological knowledge.

### **Sociological knowledge and State science**

With these two voices, Miron Constantinescu and Henri H. Stahl, and their allies, the old dream of the monographic school did not die; on the contrary, it entered into a symbiosis with the socialist state, co-evolving conceptually and methodologically. Moreover, it was transformed into a policy tool. I believe Stahl captures very well this institutional project in the text in which he himself defines the urban area:

However difficult it would be to harmonize these two actions [the industrialization process and the mechanization of agriculture], the solution is possible if we consider it from a demographic point of view, organizing the so called 'social dispatcher', i.e. a guidance forum of the urban-rural demography, on the basis of a detailed knowledge, obtained through demographic statistics surveys across the country, doubled by sociological research, analyzing in detail all the villages in a county (1969:85) [...] Unfortunately, we do not have yet the army of specialists we need, prepared for such operative scientific works, specialists which we have to form, using all the existing skills we have today and allowing them 'lapping' time to be fully aware of the new problems facing them. (1969:93-94)

Stahl was unequivocal; the state was the only body capable to mobilize resources to produce complex, territorial knowledge, achieved by a team ready to face such an enterprise, which would later allow the appropriate

mobilization of investments for a balanced urban-rural development. Despite these efforts to engrave sociology in the materiality of the socialist state, it seems that it had its own dynamic to obtain investments.

To properly understand the importance of the concept of 'urban area' and the policies that it implied, one must take seriously the economic policies of the socialist state and the fact that these policies had a history linked both with the professional fields and a major social tension. However, this presupposition is often bypassed, especially in the historiographical research. Nevertheless, the reconstruction of the strategic context of these types of planning concepts, as 'urban areas', is a challenge in itself. Poenaru (2015) claims that Miron Constantinescu's project turned his work almost invisible and very hard to recover – especially in the context of the hegemony of the anti-communist discourse on the devaluation of the entire institutional scaffold of the real existing socialism. Guga (2015) argues that Henri H. Stahl's contemporary use also becomes partial, precisely because of the impossibility to insulate his Marxism and the fact that his intellectual project was acutely aware of his relation with the socialist state, the modernization process of the actual existing socialism and the massive social transformations he observed and approved. The history of the 'urban area' concept and the long lasting collaboration between Miron Constantinescu and Henri H. Stahl, suggest sociology was imagined as part of the socialist state project. The production of sociological knowledge or a type of similar knowledge was central to the power exercise of the state and profoundly linked with the developmentalist project of economic growth that would encompass all social strata and regions across the state space.

Such a reading puts in doubt the current understandings. Several analyses follow the process of the dissolution of the formal academic sociological training and research in 1948 and the subsequent academic re-institutionalization of sociology after 1965 (Bosomitu, 2011, 2014a, 2017; Zamfir, 2009; Zamfir and Filipescu, 2015; Rostás, 2012). These authors differ slightly in terms of naming the different groups of actors influential in setting up new schools and the organizational homes for social research starting with 1965. However, all of them share the same concern for the autonomy of the social research in a system that was trying to subordinate sociological knowledge production to the political agenda. In these accounts it seems that those actors more versatile in speculating the power plays inside the party, by making credible claims for controlling the sociological field, are the actors who could secure a career in social research. To put it in the terms proposed by Bourdieu (1995), apparently the major tension was between the autonomy of the sociological field from the political and its heteronomy. These accounts are

placing the production of the sociological knowledge in a field, with contending voices in tension over the legitimate definition of sociology as science and its relation to the political field. Purportedly, the various institutionalization proposals after 1965 differ in terms of their capability to sustain a long-term autonomy by securing qualified research personnel and a certain continuity with the interwar sociological tradition.

While this line of thought has its virtues, a different interpretation may arrange the empirical facts in a more serendipitous manner. The developmentalist project of the socialist state as a modernist take on society (Ban, 2014, 2016) was in dire need of knowledge about society. Modern states acquired this type of knowledge in diverse ways, both with the help of repressive apparatuses (see Poenaru, this issue), or productive institutions (Cucu, 2014; Pop, 2015). In Romania, one of the key political figures entrusted with economic reform, Miron Constantinescu, was a sociologist by training. In addition, many important technicians employed in the productive state apparatuses entrusted to manage the population were sociologists trained in the monographical tradition. These various actors tried to embed the production of sociological knowledge in the everyday functioning of the state, as part of the details of the economic planning, industrialization and urbanization.

Cucu (2014) shows forcefully that, from the first economic plans between 1949 and 1955, the industrial management was predicated on forms of knowledge that were ethnographic in nature. Mărginean (2015) documents through archival data that the first the urbanization process between 1949 and 1955 made use of extensive professional knowledge of the area intervened upon, and the sociological data were an important ingredient. Aware of the limitation of statistics and standardized information the local and national party officials counteracted by making in depth research about production, economic units, and employees. The way this type of knowledge worked was through dividing its manufacturing in a series of technicalities that could be entrusted to field operators and then aggregated through visualization and summation methods by planners.

Economic development was in dire need of quality data and a routine of their interpretation. And sociology was the disciplinary milieu for producing these data and theories for the modernization of the economy and state. Miron Constantinescu (1966a) after his rehabilitation in 1965 and his appointment as a Minister of Education published a volume where he collected various sociological papers under the heading of *Contemporary Sociological Research*. There he summarised in the editorial note all the sociological research that he commissioned or supervised from his diverse power positions. The list is quite impressive. The table below summarizes it.

**Table 1.** Governmental lead investigations with sociologists in the research team, by topic and commissioning institution, between 1947 and 1964

Type of investigation	Host Institution	Number of projects
Regional planning	Ministry of Construction	14 micro-regions 5 raions <sup>8</sup> 10 areas
Industrial location	Ministry of Construction	12 areas
Household budgets	Central Statistical Department	1 sample (5000 households)
Urban monographies	Ministry of Construction	15 towns and cities
	Institute for economic research, Romanian Academy	4 towns
Rural monographies	Central Statistical Department	20 villages 3 years panel
	Institute for economic research, Romanian Academy	105 villages
Factory monographies	Institute for economic research, Romanian Academy	3 factories
	Institute of philosophy, Romanian Academy	5 factories
Social services assessment	Ministry of Work	7 villages 4 researches in Bucharest
Educational program assessment	Ministry of Education	Unspecified
Resource-based assessments for industrial location	Institute for geological research, Romanian Academy	Unspecified
Epidemiological studies	Ministry of Health	Unspecified
Hygienic practices assessment	Ministry of Work	3 villages 1 area Bucharest Several unnamed
Labor protection	Ministry of Work	Unspecified
Popular cultural production	Ethnographic and folklore Institute, Romanian Academy	Unspecified
	Village Museum and Brukenthal Museum	Unspecified

*Source:* self-reported data in Constantinescu (1966b). The report specifies all the specific cases.

An important note is to be made here, about the alliance between Miron Constantinescu and Henri H Stahl. The term alliance does not imply any

<sup>8</sup> The 'raions' were administrative subnational territorial units up until 1968 when the system of 'counties' was introduced.

bond of friendship between the two sociologists, or does not imply any seemingly personal tie between Constantinescu and other members of the interwar Bucharest sociological school. As painfully as the case of the incarceration and finally the death of the sociologist Anton Golopenția shows (Bosomitu, 2014b), Miron Constantinescu was not after consolidating friendships among or with sociologists. Nonetheless, Miron Constantinescu (1971) constantly cited Anton Golopenția's work and engaged intimately the work of Henri H. Stahl. But more importantly, he was active in soliciting data and theories for his policies that had an important sociological component<sup>9</sup>, transforming the dream of a science of a nation in a state building project. It was an institutional and epistemic alliance.

Therefore, I suggest, it is inaccurate to make a distinction to search for the autonomous and heteronomous parts of the sociological field, because the very point is that the sociological knowledge was called to be one of the backbones of the state. This process was not complete or smooth. A major new project of integrating this knowledge in the state apparatus came with the project to transform it in a mathematical issue in the late 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s, as a complete routinization of the social research. By the late 1970s the dominant research themes, by far, were industrialization, urbanization, and community studies (Costea et al., 1983). Sociology had this double role, on the one hand of an invisible state science incorporated in various degrees, facing the contradictory pressures of the socialist developmentalist and, on the other hand, of an academic enterprise that is researching the transformation of the society. This last role had its own contradictions since this research was ambiguously trying to grasp the changing realities and, in the same time, was trying to evaluate the success of the various policies in an authoritarian state. Criticism was confined to pointing how to redesign more successful policies.

## Conclusions

Both Henri H. Stahl and Miron Constantinescu argued that the most advanced form of the monographic enterprise was precisely the study of the urban-rural complexes, and this redefinition of the monographic research unit called for a series of important methodological innovations. Stahl (1975) was the one to carefully enounce them. Moreover, Stahl integrated the urban area concept into a theoretical Marxist scheme, showing that the methodological problem of Gusti's empirical synthesis of the multitude of total village

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<sup>9</sup> Between Constantinescu and Stahl there was a routine exchange of information based on the bureaucratic subordination starting from the 1948 when Henri H. Stahl was appointed to *The Superior Institute of Social Work* (Bosomitu, 2014b).

monographs was due to his theoretical paradigm. His proposal paid theoretical attention to the nature of the material-economic relations surrounding the spatial exchanges that were emerging in socialist Romania. Guga (2015) asserted that this was not just a simple ideological concession made to the real existing socialism, in an opportunistic manner. We were facing a sophisticated and consistent Marxist proposal for analyzing the urban, in many ways parallel to the 1970s Marxist disciplinary transformations in global urban sociology. But also, this was a proposal that shaped the very system that it was supposed to analyse.

These observations opened a new avenue of inquiry in terms of the scale of analysis. The 'urban area' was a subnational unit of analysis that illuminated the workings of the socialist economy as an attempt to create a highly interlinked economy based on the available resources, an economy that was favourable to both the rural and the urban populations. However, as the research of Constantinescu and Stahl pointed out, it also showed how these attempts failed to do that. The Romanian socialist accumulation process created a hierarchical space both within and between the 'urban areas', especially after the new investment boom in the 1970s. In many Central and Eastern Europe countries, because of the urban dominance of the capital cities, precisely this subnational level was less visible, therefore orienting the research on the economy either to the national level or at the factory level.

It could be argued that in Romania the various areas specialization took place because the central plan coordinated by technicians produced a complex economic ecology that allowed the capitalization of the local contexts. However, the concept of 'urban areas' advocated a different interpretation: the locally available raw materials became the resources used to negotiate the investment plan with the national authorities and the tools to form intermediate goods supply chains. After 1949 the 'urban area' was re-assembled as a fresh socialist developmental policy concept. Apparently, what seemed to be a concept aiming to coordinate a spatial equalization and homogenization was in fact transformed into a developmental concept used for the complex mobilization of local resources for creating regional value chains. The local raw materials were selected and later became resources for locally integrated industrial chains, with one or two main final consumers. However, it would be an epistemic fallacy to infer post-factum that some areas were better off because they had more resources or some more valuable resources. As pointed out by Miron Constantinescu's definition of an 'urban area', the fact that some particular raw material became a local economic resource is an *a posteriori* artefact; however, the selection of what was a resource was operated by the different actors which were part of the power configuration that produced the local chains of production.



Sociology as a discipline played an important role in organizing the knowledge production necessary for mainstreaming the issue of the value chains and in organizing investments to create these chains as 'urban areas'. The production of the sociological knowledge was taken away from the previous interwar network of academic institutions and between 1948 and 1965, and it was placed in a complex set of economic and planning institutions. The array of commissioned sociological projects during this period is quite significant. Yet, the very type of institutional embeddedness had an important role in transforming the way sociology worked in Romania as an applied discipline, highly technical driven by state growth research questions. After the re-emergence of the academic network in 1965 the vast majority of the papers and books were on three topics: industrialization, urbanization, and community studies (Costea et al., 1983), all following the major transformations of the Romanian society after the war. Sociology became a key discipline in terms of studding the logic of development of the socialist society and economy. However, that does not mean that sociologists as such yielded power. Except for Miron Constantinescu, most of the sociologists were in a subordinated position. Nonetheless, sociological data acquisition and interpretation permeated the state apparatuses as a technique to organize knowledge production about society.

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