

SOCIAL SERVICE – COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROJECT AND TOOL FOR SUPPORTING THE PEASANT FAMILY

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ABSTRACT

The present article aims to analyze in an objective way the Social Service, institution created by the Romanian sociologist Dimitrie Gusti in 1938, from the perspective of the purpose for which it was established, and less from the perspective of the context in which it was born and the political and ideological disputes surrounding it. Also, due to our concerns for the family institution, we intend to identify to what extent Social Service was a rural community development project directed primarily at protecting and supporting peasant family. If the main purpose of the Service was “improving Romanian villages”¹⁷¹, it remains to be analyzed to what extent this action targeted the social unity of the family and what were the concrete directions of intervention for its protection.

Keywords: Social Service, development, peasant family.

DEFINING CONCEPTS

Social Service

Born following the *Law for the establishment of the Social Service* of October 13 1938, *The Social Service* was an autonomous institution founded with the mission “of improving villages and towns”¹⁷² and having the following four stated purposes: training and guiding young graduates from all categories of schools in the work of village reorganization; the creation of the Cultural Houses as execution institutions of the *Service*; organizing and leading the work of knowledge of the villages through monographic research and the organization of schools for the education of villagers and city dwellers¹⁷³.

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¹⁷¹ “ridicarea satelor românești” in Dimitrie Gusti, *Cunoaștere și acțiune în serviciul națiunii* [*Knowledge and action in the service of the nation*], vol. II, București, Ed. Fundației Culturale Regale “Principele Carol”, 1939, p. 253.

¹⁷² “de ridicare a satelor și orașelor”, *Ibidem*.

¹⁷³ “Legea pentru înființarea Serviciului Social” (Anexă) [*Law for the establishment of the Social Service*] (Annex), Dimitrie Gusti, *op. cit.*, pp. 253–261.

Community/rural development

Although the concept appeared in social theory relatively recently, being “in the Romanian context after 1989, a social innovation”¹⁷⁴ we will conceptually integrate the institution of the *Social Service* within the community development processes with the aim, maybe quite bold, to analyze to what extent the theoretical and application framework of the *Social Service* can be cataloged, in terms of topicality, as actions of community/rural development, in today's meaning of the term. We intend, therefore, to observe to what extent the *Social Service* is an original Romanian attempt at a community development project and identify conceptual similarities and differences between past and present, with a focus on family intervention policies. Therefore, for the concept of community development we will operate with the definition given by the sociologist Dumitru Sandu:

“Community development [represents a series] of local intervention practices or models that have or tend to result in the well-being of the community. Community development refers to voluntary changes in, through and for the community”¹⁷⁵.

The peasant family

For the family concept we will operate with the definition given by Xenia Costa-Foru, member of Dimitrie Gusti's monographic teams and responsible for researching the family's social unit. In *The Monographic research of the family. Methodological contribution*, Xenia Costa-Foru considers the family as “the most direct and natural of the imposed human communities”¹⁷⁶, defining it as “an autonomous ensemble of spiritual, economic, legal and political manifestations, cosmically, biologically, psychologically and historically conditioned and integrated into a series of relationships and social processes”¹⁷⁷. Given that our study focuses on the peasant family (during the two World Wars) we must stipulate the general characteristics of this family, which we classify in the typology of the patriarchal family, specific to the Romanian rural space (in the period we are dealing with - the interwar period), having the following general characteristics: patriarchal authority; complete dependence of children on the family community; the work is cumulative, all family members being involved in household activities; closed economy, *autarchic*¹⁷⁸.

¹⁷⁴ “în contextul românesc de după 1989, o inovație socială” in Dumitru Sandu, *Dezvoltarea comunitară și regională [Community and regional development]*, București, 2011, p. 4.

¹⁷⁵ “Dezvoltarea comunitară [reprezintă o serie] de practici sau modele de intervenție locală care au sau tind să aibă ca rezultat mai binele comunității. Dezvoltarea comunitară se referă la schimbări voluntare în, prin și pentru comunitate.”, *Ibidem*.

¹⁷⁶ “cea mai directă și mai firească dintre comunitățile omenești impuse”, in Xenia Costaforu, *Cercetarea monografică a familiei [The Monographic research of the family. Methodological contribution]*, București, Ed. Tritonic, 2004, p. 35.

¹⁷⁷ “un ansamblu autonom de manifestări spirituale, economice, juridice și politice, condiționate cosmic, biologic, psihologic și istoric și integrate unei serii de relații și procese sociale”, *Ibidem*, p. 36.

¹⁷⁸ Ilie Bădescu, Darie Cristea (coord.), *Elemente pentru un dicționar de sociologie rurală [Elements for a dictionary of rural sociology]*, București, Ed. Mica Valahie, pp. 207–208.

THE SOCIAL SERVICE LAW

Previous projects

The 1930s were marked, both nationally and internationally, by social movements oriented towards “improving Romanian villages”. Internally, these concerns were a reaction both to the state of poverty in which the Romanian villages were, but also to the discrepancies that exist in society. This “village-improving movement”, in the sense of getting out “of poverty through modernization”¹⁷⁹ it is not only specific to the interwar period, being known to the public the movement of cultural upliftment of villages started by Spiru Haret, as Minister of Cults and Public Instruction, in the period before the First World War. Spiru Haret’s movement was based on cultural circles, adult schools, village sittings, school gardens, popular banks, cooperative associations, social apostolate¹⁸⁰. Another example of a social movement prior to the Social Service is the one initiated in the 1920s by the Liberal Minister of Education, Constantin Angelescu, whose actions have succeeded, on the basis of volunteering, in starting a wide-ranging social action to build schools in rural areas¹⁸¹.

Internationally, we must briefly mention two representative moments in the field of social services initiatives. We find out about the first from an article published in *Romanian Sociology* by Christina Galitzi in 1939, in which the author states that, for the first time, social service is theorized at the Milford, Pennsylvania Conference of 1923, and later at an international conference in Paris. At this conference, social service is defined as:

“methodical use by the individual, with the support of titrated specialists, of all means of social action (various charitable and social prevention institutions, social laws, recreation centers, cultural centers, etc..), to ensure maximum adaptation to the requirements of its social environment”¹⁸².

A second international landmark on social service pioneering is found in the United States. Following the world economic crisis of 1929–1933, American

¹⁷⁹ “din sărăcie prin modernizare” in Dumitru Sandu, “Ridicarea satului prin el însuși. Ideologii și practici în interbelicul românesc” [*Raising the village by itself. Ideologies and practices in the Romanian interwar period*], în Sanda Golopenția (coord.), *Revista Secolul 21*, 1–6, 2012, *Școala sociologică de la București*, p. 215.

¹⁸⁰ Spiru Haret, *Operele lui Spiru Haret. Oficiale* [*The works of Spiru Haret. Official*], ediție îngrijită și note de Constantin Schifirneț, București, 2009, pp. 196–413 *apud* Dumitru Sandu, *op. cit.*, p. 235.

¹⁸¹ H. H. Stahl, *Pentru sat: Fundația Culturală Regală „Principele Carol”* [*For the village: “Prince Carol” Royal Cultural Foundation*], 1939, p. 60 *apud* Dumitru Sandu, *op. cit.*, p. 235.

¹⁸² “întrebuințarea metodică de către individ, cu sprijinul specialiștilor titrați, a tuturor mijloacelor de acțiune socială (diferite instituții de binefacere și de prevenție socială, legi sociale, centre de recreere, cămine culturale etc.), pentru a-și asigura adaptarea maximă la cerințele mediului său social.” In Christina Galitzi, “Serviciul Social în statul Chile” [*Social Service in Chile*], în *Sociologie Românească* [*Romanian Sociology*], IV, Nr. 1–3, 1939, p. 25.

governments tried to find economic recovery measures, later adopting the economic policy of the New Deal which aimed, among its objectives, to revitalize the American rural environment¹⁸³.

The scientific basis of social service

The law for the establishment of the Social Service was considered by Dimitrie Gusti as the completion of his theoretical, sociological, ethical and political program, because it came after almost two decades in which his system of thinking was theorized and implemented, with notable results in terms of the work of organizing social action in villages. The law has its roots in the “positivist” conception adopted by Dimitrie Gusti since his doctoral studies abroad, a conception especially concerned with *bringing together social theory and action*, “in a common effort towards a fully self-aware human life, and mastering its own destiny”¹⁸⁴.

“This law is of great importance for the social life of Romania, because its purpose is to awaken and organize the country's effort to conquer a new life”¹⁸⁵, claims Dimitrie Gusti.

This voluntarist approach, specific to the era, is explained by the Romanian sociologist as an original contribution to the doctrine of science policy, and not “a vague desire to turn a utopian ideology into reality”¹⁸⁶. We specify this because we consider it necessary to analyze this legislative initiative primarily in its original theoretical framework, in terms of the arguments brought by its initiator, and less in terms of value judgments and labels attributed by commentators or detractors of Dimitrie Gusti's work. Therefore, Dimitrie Gusti assigns to the Social Service the mission of scientific knowledge of the social realities and crises that the Romanian society was facing and the establishment of the best methods of social intervention:

“Should we not take into account the laws of social life in order to subdue them by obeying them? Shouldn't we know to anticipate and supervise?”¹⁸⁷

The Social Service is also based on the social ideal of reality, which, in the author's view, must be in line with the problem of the relationship between individuality and society. Here comes one of the *strong* concepts of Gustian

¹⁸³ Ioana-Cristina Moraru, *Serviciul Social – între intervenție socială, propagandă și aglomerare a dezideratelor* [Social Service – between social intervention, propaganda and the agglomeration of desideratum], în *Sociologie Românească* [Romanian Sociology], volumul XII, Nr. 1–2, 2014, p. 134.

¹⁸⁴ “într-un efort comun spre o viață umană din plin conștientă de sine însăși, și stăpână pe destinul său.” în Dimitrie Gusti, *op. cit.*, p. 223.

¹⁸⁵ “Această lege are o mare importanță pentru viața socială a României, căci scopul ei este de a trezi și de a organiza efortul țării pentru cucerirea unei vieți noi.”, *Ibidem*.

¹⁸⁶ “o dorință vagă de-a transforma o ideologie utopică în realitate.”, *Ibidem*.

¹⁸⁷ “N-ar trebui să ținem seama de legile vieții sociale ca să le dominăm supunându-le? N-ar trebui să știm, ca să prevedem și ca să supraveghem?”, *Ibidem*, p. 224.

sociology, namely *social personality* meant to solve the antinomy between the individual and the society, transforming into a “creative force”.

“In summary, our doctrine is based on affirming the need to study social reality with the help of direct research of the sociological monograph, on a fair conception of the human personality and on researching the means of cultural policy, capable of transforming a social unit in a single will to create.”¹⁸⁸

The Social Service, a revolutionary institution?

Those who treat and discuss today on the *Social Service* of Dimitrie Gusti consider this institution, limiting itself to judging in the light of the present or to put labels only on the basis of a single component of this *Service*, namely the obligation of internship for all graduates. In fact, the Social Service Law was composed of four components, of which three had already been put into practice since 1934: the existence and functioning of the Cultural Houses, the existence of the training schools for young people and the leaders of Cultural Houses and the Institute of Social Research of Romania (which practically takes over the attributions of the Romanian Social Institute). The fourth component, mandatory internships for young people, it is true, appears as a novelty. However, we consider it correct to analyze the Law in terms of all its components and not to limit it to one.

Thus, Dimitrie Gusti, in a statement made on October 24, 1938 at Radio said: “Because this (Social Service Law n.a.) was prepared through five years of experimental work”¹⁸⁹, “it has been lived for years and followed with passion in the work accomplished and supervised by the Royal Cultural Foundation “Prince Carol” in so many villages in the country, in over 2000 Cultural Houses, and in carefully designed work programs”¹⁹⁰.

Beyond this aspect, the *Social Service*, as we have already mentioned, appears as a theoretical finality of the Gustian system, a “crowning” of the monographic and cultural experience. Again, we express our reservations about the “revolutionary” nature of the law.

“Only then, when the method of improving the Romanian village proved to be practical and fruitful, both to its discoverers and handlers, through field trials, and to

¹⁸⁸ „În rezumat, doctrina noastră se întemeiază pe afirmarea necesității de a studia realitatea socială cu ajutorul cercetărilor directe ale monografiei sociologice, pe o justă concepție a personalității umane și pe cercetarea mijloacelor de politică culturală, capabile să transforme o unitate socială într-o singură voință de creație.”

Ibidem, p. 229.

¹⁸⁹ “Căci ea [Legea Serviciului Social n.a.] a fost pregătită printr-o muncă de experimentare de cinci ani”, *Ibidem*, p. 241.

¹⁹⁰ “ea este trăită de ani de zile și urmărită cu pasiune în munca împlinită și supravegheată de Fundația Culturală Regală „Principele Carol” în atâtea și atâtea sate din țară, în peste 2000 de Cămine Culturale, și în programele de lucru alcătuite cu grijă.”, *Ibidem*, p. 244.

the authorities and the general public, through facts and exhibitions, did the Law come as a crowning! Law, adding only novelty: the character of generalization, permanent and systematic monitoring of what had so far only fragmentary, regular and short”¹⁹¹.

The need for the *Social Service* as a culmination, as we have already mentioned, of the experiences of the Gusti School, appears, in the conception of its founders, following the 15 years of monographic campaigns that proved “how big is the gap between the real country and the legal country”¹⁹². Therefore, starting from the need for “Scientific Truth”, the law did not aim to invent a new reality, but to finalize the *instrument* that would speed up the process of integral knowledge of the Romanian realities, towards “the reorganization and upliftment of the state and the solid prosperity of its inhabitants”¹⁹³ (of peasant families in particular n.a.).

“The Social Service Law calls under one flag and around a unique program of national solidarity, all public authorities, the intellectual youth in the cities, the manual workers in the villages, all the professionals, all the enlightened citizens of the Country!”¹⁹⁴

ETHICAL SUBSTANTIATION OF SOCIAL SERVICES

As previously mentioned, the *Law for the establishment of the Social Service* must be analyzed and understood, from our point of view, within the Gustian conception of social reality, in which ethics is a constitutive and basic component. Therefore, our goal is to highlight the character of normality, natural, but not through the eyes of modernity, but trying to understand the ethical and scientific bases that formed the basis for the establishment of this *Service*. Our approach is not limited to presenting an institution specific to the interwar period and passing it through the filter of actuality, but we aim to remain within the Gustian system where it was conceived. We are less interested in how natural the *Social Service* appears to us today, but we aim to see why it was natural in the conception of its author. Ethical substantiation is an essential component of Dimitrie Gusti's thinking system. In his conception, knowledge must be based on scientific truth and must propose ideals in relation to the society for which it must work.

¹⁹¹ “Abia atunci, când metoda de ridicare a satului românesc s-a dovedit practică și rodnică, atât descoperitorilor și mănuiitorilor ei, prin probele pe teren, cât și autorităților și marelui public, prin fapte și prin expoziții, a venit și Legea ca o încununare! Legea, adăugând doar ca noutate: caracterul de generalizare, de permanență și de supraveghere sistematică, a ceea ce fusese până acum numai fragmentar, periodic și de scurtă.”, *Ibidem*.

¹⁹² “cât de mare este prăpastia între țara reală și țara legală.”, *Ibidem*.

¹⁹³ “reorganizarea și înălțarea statului și propășirea solidă a locuitorilor lui”, *Ibidem*, p. 250.

¹⁹⁴ “Legea Serviciului Social cheamă sub un singur steag și în jurul unui program unic de solidaritate națională, toate autoritățile publice, pe tineretul intelectual de la orașe, pe muncitorii manuali de la sate, pe toți profesioniștii, pe toți cetățenii luminați ai Țării!”, *Ibidem*.

The principles underlying Gusti's ethics, which we aim to briefly analyze, give us a clearer understanding of Professor Gusti's thinking and can help us to more naturally integrate the institution of *Social Service* into the Gustian system. The concepts of *dignity, responsibility, freedom, solidarity, sacrifice, charity, social personality* are absolutely necessary to clarify the emergence of the *Law for the establishment of Social Service*, because these concepts are closely related to what Gustian ethics aims: *the formation of the young generation*, which:

“must be the expression of collective-organic ideals, which give the measure of a characteristic attitude towards the problems of life and create, within a national community or even within the universal community, a viable type of culture”¹⁹⁵.

The formation of social personalities and elites, both of which lead to the realization of the ethical ideal. This ideal, in the vision of Professor Gusti, is:

“a harmonious unification between the two series of motives that condition human action: emotional and intellectual motives. When this unification is maximum, that is, it is achieved in all its power, it becomes a true ethical ideal”¹⁹⁶.

In this way, we will understand why for Dimitrie Gusti volunteering and obligation are not absolutely antagonistic concepts, but complementary. Volunteering, paradoxically for those of today, appears in Gustian ethics between duty and obligation. We will explain on the way this issue.

Dignity

The first condition of personality, says Dimitrie Gusti, is dignity¹⁹⁷. Defined as a feeling or a certain consciousness of the individual to recognize his own value, dignity appears to us in Gusti's conception as a means of imposing our personality and as an ethical condition “to defend our own beliefs”¹⁹⁸. Dignity acquires a central place in terms of social values, attributing to it the character of social pedagogue, in the sense that it aims to contribute to the respect of personalities, becoming “a means of organizing and defending them”¹⁹⁹. The author states:

¹⁹⁵ “trebuie să fie expresia unor idealuri colectiv-organice, care să dea măsura unei atitudini caracteristice față de problemele vieții și să creeze, în cadrul unei colectivități naționale sau chiar în cadrul colectivității universale, un tip viabil de cultură.” în Dimitrie Gusti, *Opere [Operas]*, vol. II, edited by Ovidiu Bădina și Octavian Neamțu, București, Ed. Academiei Republicii Socialiste România, 1969, p. 320.

¹⁹⁶ “constituie o unificare armonică între cele două serii de motive care condiționează acțiunea omenească: motivele emoționale și motivele intelectuale. Când această unificare este maximală, adică se realizează în toată puterea ei, ea devine un adevărat ideal etic.”, *Ibidem*, p. 327.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 295.

¹⁹⁸ “pentru a ne apăra convingerile proprii.”, *Ibidem*, p. 296.

¹⁹⁹ “un mijloc de organizare și apărare a acestora.”, *Ibidem*, p. 297.

“From the idea of dignity follows a great ethical requirement: that no personality be used, in social and cultural life, for purposes that are foreign to him, for which he has not prepared or for which he lacks possibilities of definite and real understanding”²⁰⁰.

We can understand that the principle of dignity in Dimitrie Gusti is the condition for assuming actions within society, thus reaching another key concept, that of (social) responsibility.

Responsibility

The term presupposes in Gustian conception:

“soul and moral attitude by which, being aware of our every attitude and action, we understand to justify with dignity the reasons that determined us in their production and to take upon ourselves all their consequences”²⁰¹.

Responsibility is also the guarantee of the morality of the action of individuals in society, which is the main beneficiary of the quality of work of people with *social responsibility*. Responsibility is understood as an elementary condition of soul and moral integrity.

Liberty

In the Gustian sense, freedom, the result of a process of “struggle, work, strain, waiting, tempering instincts and maximum assertion of the spiritual powers we have”²⁰² it is closely related to the previous concept of responsibility. Through *social responsibility*, man reaches the state of (spiritual) freedom by acquiring the ability to create, creation being, according to Dimitrie Gusti, “a direct, strong expression of the state of inner freedom”²⁰³.

Solidarity

The concept of *solidarity* is also closely related to those set out above and appears as a result of the expression resulting from the assertion of the *individual with social responsibility, dignified and free in his manifestations*. Solidarity appears as a framework for organizing the energies of individuals and as a social balance:

²⁰⁰ “Din ideea demnității se desprinde o mare cerință etică: aceea ca nici o personalitate să nu fie întrebuințată, în cadrul vieții sociale și culturale, pentru scopuri care i-ar fi străine, pentru care nu s-a pregătit sau pentru care îi lipsesc posibilități de înțelegere certă și reală.”, *Ibidem*.

²⁰¹ “atitudine sufletească și morală prin care, fiind conștienți de fiecare atitudine și acțiune a noastră, înțelegem să justificăm în mod demn motivele care ne-au determinat în producerea acestora și să ne luăm asupra noastră toate consecințele lor.”, *Ibidem*, p. 298.

²⁰² “luptă, muncă, încordări, așteptare, temperare a instinctelor și afirmare maximă a puterilor spirituale de care dispunem.”, *Ibidem*, p. 305.

²⁰³ “o expresie directă, puternică a stării de libertate interioară.”, *Ibidem*, p. 307.

“Freedom, indeed, is a force that creates moral values, but not individually, but only in an organized framework, in which all important social realities are taken into account. To be strong and real, freedom must have moral limits. These limits are those imposed by the fact and necessity of human solidarity”²⁰⁴.

As such, *solidarity* appears to us as a condition of human freedom itself, and the spirit of association promoted by the *Social Service* was intended to contribute to the formation of a sense of social solidarity among young people and among society.

Sacrifice and charity

Moral attitude, *sacrifice* is a constitutive element of Gustian ethics, obviously specific to the voluntarist current of the times, but which acquires meaning only in close connection with the concept of *solidarity*.

“Sacrifice for others, says Dimitrie Gusti, results from a good and assumed understanding of human solidarity”²⁰⁵.

Along with *sacrifice*, the idea of *charity* appears as a principle and condition of *social justice*. But charity, in addition to the sense of helping those in need, also acquires the sense of prevention:

“Charity must not only consider the healing or temporary removal of evil, but also its prevention, love of fellow human beings, which is a condition of moral life; it cannot consist only in relieving them of some suffering, but also in respecting their full dignity”²⁰⁶.

Social/cultural personality

The Gustian definition of the *ideal* concept is:

“a harmonious unification between the two sets of motives that condition human action: emotional motives and intellectual motives”²⁰⁷.

The notion of *social personality* represents the articulated result of this unification. Personality appears as the finality of ethics and is therefore placed at

²⁰⁴ “Libertatea, într-adevăr, este o forță creatoare de valori morale, dar nu fiecum, ci numai într-un cadru organizat, în care se ține seamă de toate realitățile sociale de seamă. Pentru a fi puternică și reală, libertatea trebuie să aibă limite morale. Aceste limite sunt acelea pe care i le impune faptul și necesitatea solidarității omenești.”, *Ibidem*, p. 309.

²⁰⁵ “Sacrificiul pentru alții, spune Dimitrie Gusti, rezultă dintr-o bună și înțeleasă înțelegere a solidarității omenești.”, *Ibidem*, p. 313.

²⁰⁶ “Caritatea nu trebuie să aibă în vedere numai vindecarea sau îndepărtarea pentru moment a răului, ci și prevenirea lui, iubirea față de semenii, care este o condiție a vieții morale; nu poate să constea numai în a le ameliora acestora unele suferințe, ci și în a le respecta întreaga lor demnitate.”, *Ibidem*, p. 318.

²⁰⁷ “constituie o unificare armonioasă între cele două serii de motive care condiționează acțiunea omenească: motivele emoționale și motivele intelectuale.”, *Ibidem*, p. 327.

the center of this system, because the man who has become *a social personality* is capable of creation in humanity, for the fact that he understood to rise to a high level of generality, acting for the interest of his neighbor, not being encompassed by the detaching egoism:

“Personality implies imperatives that cannot be overcome: the fulfillment of our human duties, the unconditional observance of values, the belief in a superior order of things; all these are formalistic realities. Also, the personality implies a continuous action, within the society, of the realities, of its historical and cultural interests; this is the realistic basis of personality.”²⁰⁸.

As a synthesis of what has been said, we can say that the man who became *a social personality*, with moral abilities, having *dignity* understood through *social responsibility* and exercised through *sacrifice* and *charity*, manifests himself *freely* contributing to increasing the degree of *social solidarity*. Making this modest description and analysis, we hope that we have more clearly stated the ethical framework that was the basis of the Gustian system that was completed by the project to establish *the Social Service*. We can only see what this service consisted of and to what extent ethical principles substantiated and were found in its actions in its short period of existence.

SOCIAL SERVICE COMPONENTS

If most researchers limit themselves to analyzing a single component of *the Social Service*, our scientific approach aims to analyze the entire theoretical and functional system. The four components are: Institute of Social Research of Romania, extension of Cultural Houses, extension of Peasant Schools and Compulsory Social Service for Youth. We will discuss these in the following lines.

Institute of Social Research of Romania

Given that *the Law on Social Service* was provided as a legal basis for the efforts of the Gustian School, this service would be supported in terms of general scientific research by this Institute based in Bucharest and having seven branches in various university centers of Romania. The institute was to consist of 15 sections, these being: Social geography and natural wealth of the country; Social biology and public health; Social history; Culture; Religious issues; Linguistics and folklore; Social economy (agriculture and cooperation; trade, industry and finance; labor); Legal Sciences; Political and administrative sciences; Foreign policy

²⁰⁸ “Personalitatea implică imperative peste care nu se poate trece: îndeplinirea datoriilor noastre de oameni, respectarea necondiționată a valorilor, credința într-o ordine superioară a lucrurilor; toate acestea sunt realități cu caracter formalist. De asemenea, personalitatea implică o acțiune continuă, în cadrul societății, a realităților, a intereselor ei istorice și culturale; iată în ce constă baza realistă a personalității.”, *Ibidem*, p. 333.

(including the Center for Advanced International Studies); Urbanism and ruralism; The issue of minorities and Romanians abroad; National defense; Statistics and Sociology²⁰⁹.

The institute should have contributed, in Gusti's view, to "a new conception of civilization"²¹⁰, a synthesis of all aspects of a community, leading to a new political ideal, that of integral cultural reform, to *the cultural state* based on the priority of *the social personality*.

Extension of Cultural Homes

Although the Cultural Houses functioned de facto since 1934, *The Law for the establishment of the Social Service* stipulates their official character and the obligation to establish these institutions. We will not insist in this material on the institution of the Cultural Houses, which we will discuss it in detail in a paper that will describe in detail how it works, with emphasis on the intervention within the social unit of the rural family.

Expansion of peasant schools

In order to pursue the "ethical ideal of personality"²¹¹, *The law for the establishment of the Social Service* proposed the establishment of new social schools, on the model of the peasant schools that already functioned:

"in order to facilitate the formation of peasant personalities, as well as schools for the training of Cultural Houses leaders"²¹².

Compulsory Social Service for youth

The most commented and controversial point of the *Social Service* is undoubtedly that of the obligation to satisfy an internship for social practice for all young graduates. There are two main arguments in favor of this provision. The first is represented by the difficult situation in which the inhabitants of the Romanian villages were at that moment, representing over 80% of the Romanian population²¹³, among them being the majority of the students who, once they arrived in the big university centers, abandoned, according to Gusti, the problems of their native village, acquiring "the exclusive taste for urban and bureaucratic life"²¹⁴. That's why, Gusti declared:

²⁰⁹ Dimitrie Gusti, [*Knowledge and action in the service of the nation*], vol. II, București, Editura Fundației Culturale Regale „Principele Carol”, 1939, p. 234.

²¹⁰ "o nouă concepție de civilizație.", *Ibidem*, p. 235.

²¹¹ "dealul etic al personalității.", *Ibidem*, p. 238.

²¹² "cu scopul de-a înlesni formarea personalităților țărănești, precum și școli pentru pregătirea conducătorilor de Cămine Culturale.", *Ibidem*.

²¹³ *Ibidem*.

²¹⁴ "gustul exclusiv pentru viața citadină și birocratică.", *Ibidem*.

“for those who are destined to be part of the ruling class of a country, it is extremely useful to go through a period of direct work, inquiry and social action, in the middle of the peasant class, whose misery and greatness they will not be able to know otherwise”²¹⁵.

The second argument is given by the fact that the Military Law of that period discriminated to a certain extent the young people who failed to graduate from college, they were to do military service for 2 years, while the graduates did a short internship of one year. That's why, said Dimitrie Gusti:

“It is not at all unfair to ask intellectuals for three months of Social Service during which they will work for the good of their country”²¹⁶.

The 3 months of compulsory practice at the end of the years of study for young graduates appears today to contemporaries as a measure of totalitarian type, a measure of coercion of individual freedom. We do not intend to contradict or strengthen this assessment, which is often “touched” by labels of an ideological nature, but we propose a modest parallel with the current situation of internships. In most faculties in the country, the semester internship is a mandatory condition for completing the semester courses, consisting on average of two weeks of practical activity. We do not discuss the quality of these internships, the more or less responsible way in which they are completed, we only find that in three years of university studies, a student completes an average of three months of internship. Three months of practice as mandatory as the one provided in *The Law for the establishment of the Social Service*.

Social Service as a model of community development

Community development, such a popular concept today, is a series of practices or models of social intervention that have or aim to result in the “best of the community”²¹⁷. The specificity of these social action measures is the voluntary nature towards which they tend to serve the community, and as mandatory criteria of a community development project we state: *motivation, space, how to achieve and finality*²¹⁸. In this way, community development involves working within a social group (family, village, city), for the benefit of its members (“for the community”) and with their help (“through the community”)²¹⁹. Essential in this approach is the interest of the community, the participatory dimension following

²¹⁵ “pentru acei care sunt destinați să facă parte din clasa conducătoare a unei țări, este extrem de util trecerea printr-o perioadă de muncă directă, de anchetă și de acțiune socială, în mijlocul clasei țărănești, ale cărei mizerii și măreții nu le vor putea cunoaște altfel.” *Ibidem*, p. 239.

²¹⁶ “nu e deloc nedrept să se ceară intelectualilor trei luni de Serviciu Social în cursul cărora ei vor lucra pentru binele țării lor.”, *Ibidem*.

²¹⁷ “mai binele comunității”, Dumitru Sandu, *Dezvoltarea comunitară și regională [Community and regional development]*, București, 2011, p. 4.

²¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 9.

²¹⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 10.

the mobilization of community members. From this point of view we understand the clarity and logic of the Gustian system of social action finalized through the *Social Service*, which at the time represented a pioneering project in terms of community development projects. If we think about the fact that only in 1923, in Paris, there was talk of:

“The methodical use by the individual, with the support of qualified specialists, of all means of social action (various institutions of welfare and social prevention, social laws, recreation centers, cultural centers, etc.), in order to – ensure maximum adaptation to the requirements its social environment”²²⁰.

Dimitrie Gusti formulated the principles of his project of “improving villages” in 1918: the effective participation of every citizen in public life is an essential condition for the consolidation and progress of a democratic state. We understand why the Gustian system and the Social Service still deserve a much deeper and more sincere approach.

Within the Social Service, the working method was based, in Gusti's conception, as well as that of H.H. Stahl, on dialogue “As a means of learning and gaining the trust of the community”²²¹, and the work of the monographic teams falls into the category of popular education actions promoted by any community development program. As such, the central points of the community development model proposed by *The Social Service* would be the following: *the use of dialogue* as a way to mobilize locals; *the scientific substantiation* of all community actions by establishing the Institute for Social Research of Romania; *adoption of the Cultural Houses* as the central institution for voluntary action; the preponderance of care over the *training and professionalization of community members* through the establishment of schools, through the distribution of textbooks and guides. As the sociologist Dumitru Sandu also states:

“The model of community development promoted by the movement of cultural centers through student teams has not only pioneering value in the Romanian context, but also elements of current validity for good practices in community development”²²².

²²⁰ “întrebuințarea metodică de către individ, cu sprijinul specialiștilor titrați, a tuturor mijloacelor de acțiune socială (diferite instituții de binefacere și de prevenție socială, legi sociale, centre de recreere, cămine culturale etc.), pentru a-și asigura adaptarea maximă la cerințele mediului său social.” in Christina Galitz, „Serviciul Social în statul Chile”, în *Sociologie Românească*, IV, Nr. 1–3, 1939, p. 25.

²²¹ “ca mijloc de învățare și de câștigare a încrederii comunității.”, Dumitru Sandu, „Ridicarea satului prin el însuși. Ideologii și practici în interbelicul românesc” [*Raising the village by itself. Ideologies and practices in the Romanian interwar period*], in Sanda Golopenția (coord.), *Revista Secolul 21*, 1–6, 2012, Școala sociologică de la București, p. 224.

²²² “modelul de dezvoltare comunitară promovat de mișcarea căminelor culturale prin echipele studențești are nu numai valoare de pionierat în context românesc, dar și elemente de validitate actuală pentru bunele practici în dezvoltarea comunitară.”, *Ibidem*, p. 235.

THE FAMILY – A CENTRAL ELEMENT OF GUSTIAN SOCIOLOGY

In order to deepen the connection between *The Social Service* and the social unit of the family, we will move on to the description and analysis of the family from the perspective of its roles in society, especially in peasant society at the beginning of the twentieth century.

The preoccupation for the critical study on the family unity appears in the interwar period as a relatively recent one, considering its natural character, and considering that until the appearance of modernity and the influence of the capitalist system in the Romanian space, the family remains a “frozen” social unity, where transformations take place very hard, where it retains its natural character and its shape almost unchanged for a long time. With the industrialization and the “attraction” that the city exerts on the village, the first changes of substance appear within the family. These changes will lead to the first “crises” in the family, reaching the need to theorize and analyze critically to understand them. For this reason, within the Bucharest School of Sociology, *the social unit of the family becomes a central element of Gustian sociology*, appearing the preoccupation for the monographic study of the family.

Romanian sociologist Traian Brăileanu, like Dimitrie Gusti, presents the unity of the family as “the starting point, logical and historical, of human society”, within the national state which he defines as:

“a human community that represents a unity both biological and moral, and religious, and aesthetic, and political, and economic, unity which manifests itself, that is, can be ascertained, by the unitary type of race, by the unity of speeches, morals, beliefs, solidarity serving the defense of territory, homeland, against neighbors, and through economic autarchy”²²³.

The most complex preoccupation within the Gusti School in the field of family sociology belongs to Xenia Costa-Foru, who would be the leader of the team responsible for the monographic research of the family and who will theorize her system in a profile paper, entitled *Monographic research of the family*. From this theoretical system, we extract the several components with a functional role of the family.

The biological component

A first defining characteristic of the family appears to us as *the inbreeding of the family*, which “unites all its members and gives the family a natural stability”²²⁴.

²²³ “o comunitate umană care reprezintă o unitate și biologică, și morală, și religioasă, și estetică, și politică, și economică, unitate care se manifestă, adică poate fi constatată, prin tipul unitar de rasă, prin unitatea graiurilor, a moravurilor, credințelor, a solidarității servind apărarea teritoriului, a patriei, împotriva vecinilor, și prin autarhie economică.”, *Ibidem*.

²²⁴ “unește pe toți membrii ei și care dă familiei o statornicie naturală.”

“Without his will, says Costaforu, man is biologically inserted in a nation whose existence began long before him and which will last, in its many branches, even after the disappearance of the individuals who represent him at some point”²²⁵.

Vector of the common consciousness

In addition to the birth of man in the family, it also achieves his growth, thus consolidating the mental life of the individual, usually outside his will. Within the family, the individual is “imprinted” with a psychological heritage, and for this reason the family, as such, builds a *common consciousness*, which:

“although formed by the adherence of all the socialized individual consciences of its members, will be different from the personal one of each one”²²⁶.

Within this psychological life of the family are found the problems of living together in the same social forms, the family being, from a sociological point of view, the first “pattern” of the society in which the individual enters and, usually, the one who decisively imprints his path.

Factor of social organization

Beyond the biological and psychological basis of the family, it also involves an organization in social forms, specific to the life of a group of relatives. For this reason, the family is an institution of transition, of mediation between the individual and society:

“First by raising him as a future member of society, that is, by socializing him pedagogically, and secondly, by offering him throughout his life a support and a place of refuge (sometimes an embarrassment) in the struggle he it leads to social life”²²⁷.

Work organization framework

Due to the fact that the family has been over time “the most direct and natural of the imposed human communities”²²⁸, within it were developed the first economic activities: workshops, economic units, which were later created stable legal forms, so the social unity of the family becoming a small reproduction of society, “but with a much sharper body spirit and common conscience”²²⁹.

Xenia Costaforu, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

²²⁵ “Fără de voia lui, spune Costaforu, omul se află inseriat biologic într-un neam a cărui ființare a început cu mult înainte lui și care va dăinui, în ramurile sale multiple, chiar după dispariția indivizilor care-l reprezintă la un moment dat.”, *Ibidem*, p. 34.

²²⁶ “deși formată prin aderarea tuturor conștiințelor individuale socializate ale membrilor ei, va fi diferită de cea personală a fiecăruia în parte.”, *Ibidem*.

²²⁷ “întâi crescându-l ca pe un viitor membru al societății, adică socializându-l pedagogic, și în al doilea rând, oferindu-i în tot decursul vieții lui un sprijin și un loc de refugiu (uneori o stânjenire) în lupta pe care el o duce pentru viața socială.”, *Ibidem*, p. 35.

²²⁸ “cea mai directă și mai firească dintre comunitățile omenești impuse”, *Ibidem*.

²²⁹ “dar având un spirit de corp și o conștiință comună mult mai acută”, *Ibidem*.

The need for monographic research of the family and the need for intervention

At the interference between the autarchic, traditionalist spirit and the new “spirit” of modernity that appeared from the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, arises this need, primarily theoretical, to understand and critically analyze the family unit from the perspective of capacity. Its adaptation to new social conditions.

“The crisis that arises from the mismatch between the cohesive social form and the new background of social life, a crisis that, with special aspects, is also found in the city and which is a crisis of family adaptation, related to the growth of modern society”²³⁰.

For this reason, Dimitrie Gusti's School of Sociology puts the social unity of the family at the center of theoretical and practical concerns, having as main tasks the analysis of the degree of dissolution of the old family forms and the degree of penetration of new social trends and; creating a theoretical system based on a correct understanding of the relationship between the “pressure” of society and the adaptation of the family to it.

In order to understand the consistent efforts for the theorizing of an intervention framework within the family, we will briefly expose the state of the Romanian village at the level of the 1938 that Dimitrie Gusti makes in the preface of *60 Romanian villages. Vol I Population*. He identifies at the level of the Romanian village in general five major problems: property deprivation, high child mortality, demographic decline, poor health and illiteracy.

In the preface of the mentioned paper, coordinated by Anton Golopenția and D.C. Georgescu, Professor Gusti summarizes the results of monographic research conducted according to the method of summary monograph. *The economic situation* of the researched villages is worrying: over 40% of the studied households are poor with less than 2 ha of land; In 30 lowland and hill villages, living off agriculture, only 50% of households have agricultural inventory and only 20% of farmers have a pair of working cattle²³¹. Culturally: in the period 1920–1938, only 78% of children able to attend school were enrolled, and of these only 60% promoted²³², the problem of illiteracy remains another challenge – out of the 35,000 young people aged 7–25 in the villages surveyed, 3,300 were not enrolled in school, and 1100 of them had only attended first grade²³³. *The health* of the population was also worrying: very

²³⁰ “Criza care se naște astfel din nepotrivirea dintre forma socială încheată și fondul cel nou al vieții sociale, criză care, cu aspecte deosebite, se regăsește și la oraș și care este o criză de adaptare a familiei, legată de însăși creșterea societății moderne.”, *Ibidem*, p. 42.

²³¹ Anton Golopenția, D.C. Georgescu, *60 de sate românești. Vol. I Populația [60 Romanian villages. Vol. I Population]*, Editura Institutului de Științe Sociale ale României, București, 1941, pp. VI–VII.

²³² *Ibidem*, p. VII.

²³³ *Ibidem*, p. VIII.

high infant mortality – one in five children died before the age of 1 year²³⁴, lack of medical services in the village, inadequate nutrition.

All this justified the emphasis on family interest, given that she will occupy, starting with Xenia Costa-Foru and H.H. Stahl – who will have the first attempts to theorize family sociology, a central role in the Gustian system. The family will be seen as a social unit as *the basis of society, the central pillar*, and the village – a network of families, on which *The Social Service* would turn its attention and going on improving villages, improvement that would initially go through the village core – *the family*.

SOCIAL SERVICE – A TOOL TO SUPPORT THE PEASANT FAMILY

We recall the purpose for which *The Social Service* was created, namely that of “raising” the Romanian villages, *creating social personalities* and *substantiating the national culture*, and this broad action, although not explicitly stated, “passed” naturally through the family institution, which became the direct and direct beneficiary of all the actions of *The Social Service*. “Raising the village” implicitly meant “raising the family” and “raising the nation” automatically meant “raising the villages”. On these three coordinates *family, village, nation*, *The Social Service* based and applied its system: the Social Research Institute was to contribute to the continuation of the monograph of Romanian villages, which meant an increasingly in-depth knowledge of the needs of families to propose measures on concrete realities; The Cultural Houses, as we will detail in a later material, were to represent the “armed arm” of social action, which intervened directly in the life of the social unit of the family, improving it as we will see; Peasant schools represented the pedagogical framework in which family members entered a process of formation of their personalities. The compulsory Social Service for the youth provided the labor force necessary for the work of knowing the villages, implicitly of the life and problems of the families they composed.

CONCLUSIONS

The Social Service, in its short existence, despite the controversies and divided opinions, contributed to the creation of a Romanian *model of community development*, even having notes of pioneering and modernity. The need to understand and analyze this institution within the theoretical framework in which it was conceived remains important, obviously taking into account the social context in which it was born. The understanding of *The Social Service* must be based on knowledge and assimilation of the principles of Gustian ethics and awareness of

²³⁴ *Ibidem*.

the importance of the concept of *social personality* in the Gustian system, with moral capacities, having *dignity* understood through *social responsibility* and exercised through *sacrifice* and *charity*, freely contributing to increasing the degree of *social solidarity*.

Through its components, *The Social Research Institute*, *The Cultural Houses*, *The Peasant Schools* and *the compulsory internship for graduates*, *The Social Service* represented, within a broad community development program, an effective intervention tool for families in order to protect and support them. The concrete methods of intervention will be described in detail another future article.

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