

## THE CULTURAL CENTER – A GUSTIAN ANSWER TO THE ISSUES OF TODAY’S ROMANIAN VILLAGE

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### ABSTRACT

*The Romanian village is threatened by challenges similar to those it went through before the imposition of the communist regime. Can the cultural center, the solution conceived by the founder of the Sociological School in Bucharest as a response to the problems of the interwar Romanian village, still respond today? This material offers a possible answer. In the first part, the theoretical thinking on which the cultural centers were built and functioned will be presented. The second part is reserved for the exposition of the economic and demographic problems of today's Romanian village. Then, through an exercise of imagination, it will trace the possible solutions offered by the cultural center in solving them. What can be the contribution to the problem of the deficiency of peasant agriculture, or to the low fertility and emigration of young people from the village?*

**Keywords:** Romanian village, Sociological School of Bucharest, Dimitrie Gusti, village cultural centres, social problems.

### THE GUSTIAN SOCIAL SCIENCE SYSTEM

The University was a constant source of solutions to social problems for Dimitrie Gusti. In his leadership of the Ministry of Public Instruction, Worship and the Arts during the economic crisis (1929–1933), in the establishment of the Village Museum in Bucharest (1936) and in the work of the royal teams to raise villages, the system of social sciences that Dimitrie Gusti discovered was his guide. The village cultural center does not deviate from these rules. Therefore, before defining and characterizing the cultural center, we will set out the theoretical foundation underlying it, *i.e.*, the Gustian system of sciences.

What does the gustian scientific system consist of? The Romanian intellectual integrated sociology into a system of social sciences alongside the science of ethics and politics. At the heart of this system is the concept of the social will. Society is not just an agglomeration of people interacting without joining forces in a common activity. In contrast, for Dimitrie Gusti, society is a chain of groups or social units acting in pursuit of certain ends and using certain means. The driving force of action

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is the social will because it is the social will that motivates the members of society to achieve their goals. By willing together, they act jointly: they found firms, schools, change laws or manage a state's foreign policy:

“The whole conception [of Dimitrie Gusti] is centered on the idea of the will and on the doubted manner of its existence as a phenomenon and as a process, as a ready-made fact and as a power of doing”<sup>252</sup>.

Only together can sociology, ethics and politics study the will as a “ready-made act” and “as the power to do”. Sociology investigates people’s actual shared actions. Ethics examines the ideals that today’s society will act according to in the future, and politics discovers the ways to achieve these ideals. The circuit also works in reverse. The future action taken will be the object of study of sociology, ethics and politics:

“Social life is, in its essence, will, and everyone will generate a tendency, an attitude towards the thing explained, the conclusions of sociology are, in their turn, the object of judgment for a superordinate science of ethical and political valorisation, the former establishing the ends, the latter the means by which social life is modified towards its ideals, is reformed [and vice versa]. Once social reform has been achieved, its outcome becomes once again an object of observation for the particular social sciences, which provide new material for explaining sociology; and its conclusions provide, in turn, ethics with new material for judging”<sup>253</sup>.

Social reality is an object of study in Gustian sociology. How does it differ from other realities? The uniqueness of social reality is provided by the relative independence of the human will from the surrounding world:

“Does social reality differ from the surrounding non-social world? By the relative independence of the human will from the surrounding world, in other words, by its voluntary character”<sup>254</sup>.

Social groups or units compose the social reality which is economically, spiritually, legally and politically manifested and which is cosmically, biologically, psychologically and historically conditioned. In addition, Gustian sociology

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<sup>252</sup> „Întreaga concepție [a lui Dimitrie Gusti] e centrată pe ideea de voință și pe îndoita modalitate de existență a acesteia ca fenomen și ca proces, ca faptă gata făcută și ca putere făptuitoare” Mircea Vulcănescu, *Școala Sociologică de la București [Sociological School of Bucharest]*, Bucharest, Eminescu Publishing House, 1998 [1936], p. 46.

<sup>253</sup> „viața socială este, în esența ei, voință, și orice voință generează o tendință, o atitudine față de lucrul explicat, concluziile sociologiei sunt, la rândul lor, obiect de judecată pentru o știință supraordonată a valorificării etica și politica, prima stabilind scopurile, a doua mijloacele prin care viața socială se modifică în sensul idealurilor ei, se reformează [și invers]. Reforma socială odată realizată, rezultatul ei devine din nou obiect de constatare pentru științele sociale particulare, care oferă un nou material de explicație sociologiei; iar concluziile acesteia oferă, la rândul lor, eticei un nou material de apreciere” in *Ibid.*, p. 48.

<sup>254</sup> „Prin ce se deosebește realitatea socială de lumea înconjurătoare nesocială? Prin relativa independență a voinței omenești de lumea înconjurătoare, cu alte cuvinte prin caracterul ei voluntar” in Dimitrie Gusti, *Cunoaștere și acțiune în serviciul națiunii [Knowledge and action in the service of the nation]*, Bucharest, Royal Cultural Foundation “Prince Charles”, 1939, p. 15.

examines the social processes (changes undergone by society in a given period) and the future trends of society:

“In short, our system of sociology states: 1) Society is composed of social units, i.e., groups of people bound together by an active organisation and a spiritual interdependence; 2) The essence of society is the social will; 3) The social will performs an economic and a spiritual activity, regulated by a legal and a political activity. 4) The social will is conditioned in its manifestations cosmically, biologically, psychologically and historically. 5) The changes undergone by society during time through its activities and under the influence of conditioning factors are called social processes; 6) The beginnings of development which we can capture in the present reality and thus predict with some precision are called social trends”<sup>255</sup>.

In the Gustian system of social sciences, the ideal of man and society are intertwined. For the individual, the good is to become a creative personality. It is through the creative activity of personalities that the ethical wish of societies can be fulfilled - to actualise to the maximum the possibilities offered by the frames.

“[To become a] maximum personality, creator of culture is, according to Dimitrie Gusti, the supreme ideal of individuals and of collectivities, to which all their activities must be subordinated”<sup>256</sup>.

“The ideal, consisting of the maximum development of all the possibilities offered by the frameworks of social life, in a living, value-creating, self-conscious unit, sympathetic to others and framed in the material and spiritual universe in which it lives ...”<sup>257</sup>.

What are the means for achieving this ideal? In the Gustian system, the answer is provided by the scientific field of politics. Politics notes that the means are specific to social units and are derived from a sociological study. Social reform (the set of means used to achieve the ideal) in the Gustian conception must be integral, i.e., it must consider all aspects of a problem.

“The law of social parallelism shows that social reality cannot be dissected into separate logs except for scientific analysis. The facts themselves form a whole with

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<sup>255</sup> „Pe scurt, sistemul nostru de sociologie afirmă: 1) Societatea se compune din unități sociale, adică din grupări de oameni legați între ei printr-o organizare activă și o interdependență sufletească; 2) Esența societății este voința socială; 3) Voința socială depune manifestări de viață: o activitate economică și una spirituală, reglementate de o activitate juridică și de o activitate politică. 4) Voința socială este condiționată în manifestările ei cosmic, biologic, psihic și istoric. 5) Schimbările suferite de societate în decursul timpului prin activitățile ei și sub înrăurirea factorilor condiționali, le numim procese sociale; 6) Începuturile de dezvoltare pe care le putem surprinde în realitatea prezentă și deci le putem prevedea cu o oarecare precizie, se numesc tendințe sociale” in *Ibid.*, pp. 18-19.

<sup>256</sup> „[Să devină o] personalitatea maximală, creatoare de cultură este, după Dimitrie Gusti, idealul suprem al indivizilor ca și al colectivităților, căruia trebuie să i se subordoneze toate activitățile acestora” in Mircea Vulcănescu, *op. cit.*, p. 56

<sup>257</sup> „Idealul, constând în dezvoltarea maximă a tuturor posibilităților oferite de cadrele vieții sociale, într-o unitate vie, creatoare de valori, conștientă de sine, simpatizantă cu alții și încadrată în universul material și spiritual în care trăiește ...” *Ibid.*, p. 58.

an autonomous structure and a social will of their own. This allows us to draw the conclusion that social reform will have to wait, or be integral in terms of the whole of the forms of social life and its determining causes, or remain sterile”<sup>258</sup>.

Every social problem has an economic, spiritual, historical, psychological, etc. dimension and cannot be solved without intervention in all of them.

## DEFINITION AND BACKGROUND

The cultural center is part of the framework designed by Dimitrie Gusti to improve the village and is defined as follows:

“... a working unit, made up and run by locals, villagers, intellectuals and sons of the village who had left the village. It is the executive body of the Social Service. The aim of the Cultural Center is to help, strengthen and deepen the action of the Church, the School and the State authorities. It will coordinate and unify all the activities carried out in the village by the State and social bodies through harmonious development”<sup>259</sup>.

The idea of an organization that would unite the forces of the village in a common ideal was born as a result of the Gustian system of sociology, ethics and politics and the efforts of the royal teams in the development of the villages, more precisely so that the three-month effort of these teams would not be in vain. Guided by the Gustian system, they studied the village according to the monographic method in the first month, and in the following two they tried to solve the problems discovered by their studies. The teams were part of the Royal Cultural Foundation “Prince Charles”, whose founder was King Charles II. They were made up of specialists and students. Thanks to their cooperation, the knowledge of the village became integral and the social reform total. Once the campaigns were over, there was a danger that the “new spirit” brought by the teams to the village would be lost. This danger, along with the two reasons mentioned above, formed the basis of the decision to build cultural centres. The foundations of the cultural center were laid during the campaigns. Team members were asked during the campaigns to look for future members and try to familiarise them with the programme. The cultural centers attracted the village elites: teachers, priests and “leading peasants”.

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<sup>258</sup> „Legea paralelismului social ne demonstrează că realitatea socială nu poate fi disecată în trunchiuri separate decât numai pentru analiza științifică. Faptele însăși formează un tot cu o structură autonomă și cu o voință socială proprie. Aceasta ne permite să tragem concluzia că reforma socială va trebui să se aștepte, sau să fie integrală în ceea ce privește ansamblul formelor de viață socială și a cauzelor sale determinante, sau să rămâne sterilă” in Dimitrie Gusti, *op. cit.*, p. 227.

<sup>259</sup> „Căminul Cultural este o unitate de lucru, alcătuită și condusă de localnici, săteni, intelectuali și fii ai satului plecați din sat. El este organul de execuție al Serviciului Social. Scopul Căminului Cultural este de a ajuta, întări și adânci acțiunea Bisericii, a Școalei și a autorităților de Stat. El va coordona și unifica toate activitățile desfășurate în sat de organele de Stat și sociale, prin dezvoltarea armonică.” in *Ibid.*, pp. 255–256.

“... all the leaders of the village who have distinguished themselves by their prowess, regardless of the times and what separates them politically or personally”<sup>260</sup>.

To ensure that no aspect of the village was left behind by social reform, action was taken in four directions simultaneously, in the culture of health, mind, work and soul:

“The branches, in which a cultural center was established, were aimed at the four areas of culture: health, mind, work and soul: The branches, in which a cultural center works, one for the care of health, the second for improving work and economic conditions, the third for the growth of ancestral faith and good manners, and the last, the fourth, for the development of knowledge of all kinds, customs, or the gains of school, are also not merely casual divisions, being able in one place to be embraced only one and disregarded the others, according to power or only according to good will”<sup>261</sup>.

In 1939, there were 2000 cultural centers across Romania. The vast majority were managed by teachers and rural officials, and 400 by peasants. The Royal Teams' work was the biggest effort to modernise the village during the interwar period. By the autumn of 1939, the royal student teams had carried out 220 work campaigns in 150 villages. Among their achievements are: 310.000 medical consultations, 15.000 analyses, 12.000 injections, 70.000 veterinary consultations, the creation of 150 nurseries, 250 agricultural courses, 26.000 cooking and tailoring lessons, 200 building projects (homes, baths, churches), the organisation of 3,000 feasts etc.<sup>262</sup>.

## PROBLEMS OF ROMANIA'S VILLAGES

### 1. The Romanian village: definition and current situation

A village is a reality with many definitions in sociology. One relevant definition of the village was conceived at the end of the 20th century by M. Giacobbi and J. P. Roux (1990):

“... micro-society ... [with] four characteristics: 1) it is a limited, restricted, small, relatively autonomous space in which a constellation of related families, accompanied by school and church, operates in more or less conflictual relationships; 2) a certain economic specificity resulting from the predominance of

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<sup>260</sup> „... toți fruntașii satului care s-au distins prin destoinicia lor, indiferent de ori și ce i-ar despărți politicește sau personal” in *Ibid.*, p. 106.

<sup>261</sup> „Ramurile, în care lucrează un Cămin, una pentru îngrijirea sănătății, a doua pentru îmbunătățirea muncii și a stărilor economice, a treia pentru creșterea credinței strămoșești și a bunelor purtări și cea din urmă, a patra, pentru dezvoltarea cunoștințelor de tot felul, datini sau câștiguri ale școlii, nu sunt nici ele numai niște împărțire întâmplătoare, putând fi într-un loc îmbrățișată una singură și nesocotite celelalte, după puteri sau numai după bunul plac” in *Ibid.*, p. 211.

<sup>262</sup> Anton Golopenția, *Opere Complete [Complete Works]*, vol. I, Bucharest, Enciclopedic Publishing House, 2002.

agricultural activities and the coincidence between the peasant household and the economic enterprise; 3) relationships of acquaintance, friendship marked by customs and rituals; 4) the stability of social relations and the perception of a community identity”<sup>263</sup>.

In the case of the Romanian village, the third characteristic is missing. The peasant household is not equal to the capitalist enterprise. The Romanian peasant produces according to need, the enterprise is profit-oriented:

“From a social-economic viewpoint, the peasantry is a social segment characterised by family management of the means of production. The peasantry owns land without being rentiers (although in some cases they may rent their property) and without seeking a profit from their land, *i.e.*, they are not a capitalist social category”<sup>264</sup>.

The productive function is present regardless of its direction (towards needs or profit). Therefore, instead of the third characteristic, we can say that the Romanian peasantry tends towards a fusion between production and consumption, a fusion recorded in another definition of the village:

“In a synthesis, Mucchielli defines the rural space by the low population density ... [and by] the tendency of a fusion of the family group with the production group and the consumption group”<sup>265</sup>.

The exposure of the village to modernity, which began before the Second World War and followed by the establishment of the communist regime, changed the basic village structures. Today, the survival of this social unit is in danger due to poor economic development and lack of infrastructure (sewage, roads, water, gas, etc.). At the other end of the range are villages that have developed financially but have moved away from their own traditions and customs<sup>266</sup>.

The employment structure in the village is no longer homogeneous. In addition to peasants, there are workers with non-local incomes (pensioners, communal workers and commuters)<sup>267</sup>. Despite these, this structure remained

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<sup>263</sup> Michèle Giacobbini and Jean - Pierre Roux, *Initiation à la sociologie. Les grands thèmes, la méthode, les grands sociologues [Introduction to Sociology. The main themes, the method, the great sociologists]*, Paris, Hatier Publishing House, 1990, p. 93.

<sup>264</sup> „Din punct de vedere social-economic, țărănimea este o pătură socială caracterizată prin gestiunea familială a mijloacelor de producție. Țărănimea este *proprietară* fără să fie *rentieră* (deși în anumite situații își poate închiria proprietatea) și fără să urmărească obținerea unui *profit* de pe pământul său, adică nu este o categorie socială capitalistă” in Radu Baltasiu, “Țărănimea” [“Peasantry”], in Ilie Bădescu and Ozana Cucu-Oancea (coord.), *Dicționar de sociologie rurală [Rural sociology dictionary]*, Bucharest, Little Wallachia Publishing House, 2004, p. 612.

<sup>265</sup> „Într-o sinteză, Mucchielli definește spațiul rural prin slaba densitate a populației ... [și prin] *tendința unei fuziuni a grupului familial cu grupul de producție și grupul de consum.*” Roger Mucchielli, *Psycho-sociologie d'une commune rurale*, Paris, Entreprise Modern d'Édition – Libraires Technique, Les Éditions ESF, 1976 apud *Ibid.*, p. 454.

<sup>266</sup> Flavius Mihalache, *Mediul Rural între 1990 și 2020 [The Rural Medium between 1990 and 2020]*, Cluj, Cluj University Press Publishing House, 2020, pp. 66–67.

<sup>267</sup> Maria Mitrică, „Interviu Academicianul Ilie Bădescu: Puterea de dănuire a satelor românești e astăzi afectată de marile presiuni istorice [„Interview Academician Ilie Bădescu: The

predominantly agricultural until 2016. For the first time since 1990, this year, the number of non-agricultural workers in the village exceeded the number of peasants<sup>268</sup>. However, the reality is different in southern and eastern Romania, where agriculture continues to be the main economic activity of the villages<sup>269</sup>.

## 2. The current issues of the village

Based on the law of sociological parallelism, the problems of the village occur in each dimension of social reality, made up of frames and manifestations. In the absence of monographic research in Romanian villages, we cannot understand their problems in detail. Therefore, we will focus on the main problems, which are economic and demographic.

Ilie Bădescu, member of the Romanian Academy, drawing on the studies of the interwar economist Virgil Madgearu, identified the following problems of peasant agriculture after 1990:

- “1) The ‘atomisation of property and peasant households’ is the main handicap to the modern organisation of labour and to the increase in purchasing power through the excessive fractioning of property;
- 2) An assemblage of negative connections [derived from the first]: land fragmentation, chaotic land sale or lease prices without organic correlations, out-migration, spread of secondary agricultural occupations, low wages, low farm income rates and misery, declining pasture, grazing and sheep herds, declining cattle herds and declining gross incomes;
- 3) *Biological terror*. Very low income in relation to consumption needs and a low quality of life. The poor distribution of agriculture is reflected in malnutrition of the peasantry, widespread chronic diseases and very high infant mortality ...;
- 4) *Forced self-sufficiency*. The separation of agriculture from the other main economic branch as industry ....;
- 5) *Forced under-use*. Labour organisation and technologies were very much weaker. This problem is reflected in the "incomplete use of peasant labour power" [even agricultural tools, as Radu Baltasiu highlights, cannot be used satisfactorily because of the excessive fragmentation of property]...;
- 6) *Forced demonetisation*. Excessive taxation and the absence of a coherent credit system is another difficult problem facing Romanian agriculture... the farmer has no money because there is no adequate rural credit to make money circuits accessible to him ...;
- 7) *Forced depreciation* of the Romanian agricultural products, and, therefore, of agriculture. Under these conditions, the value of the Romanian agricultural product

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resilience of Romanian villages is today affected by great historical pressures”], June 23, 2019, in *Agerpress*, Available at: [www.agerpres.ro/cultura/2019/07/23/interviu-academicianul-ilie-badescu-puterea-de-dainuire-a-satelor-romanesti-e-astazi-afectata-de-marile-presiuni-istorice--345071](http://www.agerpres.ro/cultura/2019/07/23/interviu-academicianul-ilie-badescu-puterea-de-dainuire-a-satelor-romanesti-e-astazi-afectata-de-marile-presiuni-istorice--345071), Accessed on: August 16, 2021.

<sup>268</sup> Flavius Mihalache, *op. cit.*, p. 158.

<sup>269</sup> *Ibid.*

is very low, in relation to the efforts made by the peasants to produce it and to the value of agricultural production in other countries...;

8) Forced isolation of rural areas and the return of migration as a survival technique... The reaction [to the seventh problem] has been swift: the abandonment of place, a phenomenon attested to by the extremely high rate of rural emigration, the most threatening demographic phenomenon facing Romania at the beginning of this millennium...<sup>270</sup>.

What are the demographic problems of the village? Ageing is not a problem of the village, but of the country. The ageing rate is higher in urban areas than in rural areas<sup>271</sup>. The village faces low fertility rates, *i.e.*, the phenomenon of “childlessness”<sup>272</sup>. Low fertility rates, together with emigration, have also led to the “de-ageing” (absence of young people from the village) of the Romanian village.

<sup>270</sup> „1) «Pulverizarea proprietăților și exploatărilor țărănești», constituie principalul handicap pentru organizarea modernă a muncii și pentru creșterea puterii de cumpărare, prin fărâmițarea excesivă a proprietăților;

2) Un ghem de conexiuni negative [derivate din prima problemă]: «fărâmițarea pământului, prețurile de vânzare sau de arendare a pământului haotice, fără corelații organice, emigrarea, răspândirea ocupațiilor agricole anexe, salarii joase, raporturi de venituri agricole scăzute și mizerie, regresul izlazarilor, pășunilor și ogoarelor, diminuare stocului de vite și micșorarea veniturilor brute» ...;

3) *Teroarea biologică. Venituri foarte reduse în raport cu necesitățile de consum. Calitatea scăzută a vieții.* Nivelul redus al redistribuției agricole se reflectă în subalimentarea țăranimii, răspândirea largă a bolilor cronice și mortalitate infantilă foarte ridicată ...;

4) *Autarhia forțată. Ruptura agriculturii de cealaltă principală ramură economică, de industrie ...;*

5) *Subutilizare forțată. Organizarea muncii și tehnologiile sunt foarte precare.* Această problemă se reflectă în «utilizarea incompletă a muncii țărănești» (uneltele agricole însele, subliniază Radu Baltasiu, nu pot fi utilizate în mod satisfăcător datorită fragmentării excesive a proprietății) ...;

6) *Demonetizarea forțată. Fiscalitatea excesivă și absența unui sistem de credit coerent* sunt o altă problemă dificilă cu care se confruntă agricultura românească ... săteanul n-are bani căci nu există un credit rural adecvat, care să-i facă accesibile circuitele monetare ...;

7) *Deprecierea forțată a produsului agricol românesc și deci a agriculturii.* În aceste condiții, valoarea produsului agricol românesc este foarte scăzută, în raport cu eforturile depuse de țărani pentru realizarea acestuia și cu valoarea producțiilor agricole ale altor țări ...;

8) *Izolarea forțată a ruralului și revenirea bejeniei ca tehnică de supraviețuire ...* Reacția [la problema șapte] a fost rapidă: părăsirea locului, fenomen atestat de rata extrem de ridicată a emigrării rurale, cel mai amenințător fenomen demografic dintre cele cu care se confruntă România la acest început de mileniu ...;

9) *Rolul statului. Statul fiscal ...* În locul statului-gospodar atent cu resursele și deci bun manager al proceselor, statul actual este un stat mai degrabă oligarhic, interesat precumpănitor de interesele păturilor superpuse, asupra țării reale aruncând o plasă de fiscalități sufocante, care preschimbă aparatul statului într-o simplă povară” in Ilie Bădescu and Ozana Cucu-Oancea, Gheorghe Șișeștean, *Tratat de sociologie rurală [Treatise on rural sociology]*, Bucharest, Little Wallachia Publishing House, 2009, pp. 12–13.

<sup>271</sup> Maria Mitrică, “Interviu Academicianul Ilie Bădescu: Puterea de dănuirea a satelor românești e astăzi afectată de marile presiuni istorice [“Interview Academician Ilie Bădescu: The resilience of Romanian villages is today affected by great historical pressures”], June 23, 2019, in *Agerpress*, Available at: [www.agerpres.ro/cultura/2019/07/23/interviu-academicianul-ilie-badescu-puterea-de-dainuire-a-satelor-romanesti-e-astazi-afectata-de-marile-presiuni-istorice--345071](http://www.agerpres.ro/cultura/2019/07/23/interviu-academicianul-ilie-badescu-puterea-de-dainuire-a-satelor-romanesti-e-astazi-afectata-de-marile-presiuni-istorice--345071), Accessed on: August 16, 2021 .

<sup>272</sup> *Ibid.*



Ilie Bădescu considers that the latter is a more pressing problem than, because the migration of young people from the countryside brings changes in the movement of the whole family. A young married couple who has emigrated are attracting their parents to their migration destination. For all around, young people orbit around their parents according to the law of genealogical gravity<sup>273</sup>.

Investments in public utility infrastructure (sewage, water, gas, roads) have not been effective, although they existed after 1990. The main rural development programmes implemented (National Programme for Local Development – PNDL and National Rural Development Programme – PNDR) have not brought the expected results<sup>274</sup>.

In summary, the village today faces: depopulation, lack of economic development of agricultural activities, emigration and lack of state interest in its problems.

### **3. The cultural center – a possible solution to solve today's problems of the village**

This study is limited to the analysis of some answers that can be given by the cultural center in the problems faced by the Romanian village. The list of beneficial effects remains open. It could not be otherwise because the cultural center is designed to respond to local problems, of a single village for example, not to more general problems. Each village (being a social unit) has an unknown potential waiting to be used to solve the challenges it faces:

“Scientific, explanatory research implies, as a necessary corollary, appreciative, normative research of reality, confronting the possibilities offered by the frameworks with the actualization achieved through manifestations. The ethical ideal consists of the maximum development of all possibilities, and all research ends with a call to action”<sup>275</sup>.

Therefore, potentially, the village owns the solutions to its problems. The aim of the centre is to discover and implement them in an organised way. Below, we investigate the focus’s response to the village's problems outlined in the previous chapter.

The cultural center has failed to attract the attention of Romania’s political elites to solve the problems of the village. Instead, the cultural home would counterbalance the lack of interest of the elites “above” by increasing the interest of the elites “below”, *i.e.*, those in the village. By involving them, the cultural center would become an environment in which they could make the most of their initiatives,

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<sup>273</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>274</sup> Flavius Mihalache, *op. cit.*, p. 159.

<sup>275</sup> „Orice cercetare științifică, explicativă, presupune, ca un corolar necesar, o cercetare apreciativă, normativă, a realității, confruntare a posibilităților oferite de cadre cu actualizarea înfăptuită prin manifestări. Idealul etic constând în dezvoltarea maximă a tuturor posibilităților, fiecare cercetare se încheie cu o chemare la acțiuni” in Mircea Vulcănescu, *op. cit.* p. 101.

which, although well-intentioned, are usually unsupported. In this way, the opportunity cost of rural development programmes implemented by the Romanian state after 1990 would decrease. A short definition of the opportunity cost is:

“... the potential benefits an individual, investor, or business misses out on when choosing one alternative over another”<sup>276</sup>.

Without organised local initiative, the village will not find development solutions, and without development solutions inspired by local reality, it is condemned to pay the opportunity costs (lack of utilities – sewerage, gas, roads, etc.) of inefficient development programmes.

It is hard to believe that young people will not leave the villages if cultural centers are set up. To a small extent, the cultural center can change the attitude that drives people to leave the villages. The mindset of “no future in the countryside” can be countered by setting up agricultural cooperatives. Inherited land is transformed by the agricultural cooperative from a resource of little economic value into a source of livelihood. For young people who are not interested in farming, the cultural center can be a “vocational school” or a place where students can put into practice the knowledge they have acquired at university. In the case of students, involvement in solving community problems will produce solidarity with the village. Solidarity will not prevent them from leaving their home environment, but it will become an argument for their choice to return.

The low fertility of the villagers can be addressed by the cultural center through parental education. Parenting education is part of the activities related to the culture of mind and health. The courses can take the form of mothers with three or four children sharing their experiences with young mothers, for example. In this way, the courses would be all the more strongly appropriated by young people.

What is the cultural center’s response to the villages most pressing economic problems related to agriculture? The answer is not new. Given that peasant agriculture returned to its old problems after the communist fracture, the solution promoted by the cultural centers of the inter-war period – the economic cooperative – is still valid today. What is the contribution of the agricultural cooperatives to the problems of peasant agriculture listed in the previous chapter?

- a) In the problem of small-scale farming, cooperatives can unify them to produce on a large scale.
- b) The separation of agriculture from the other main economic branch, industry. United in cooperatives, peasants may be able to meet the demand for raw materials that industry from Romania has.
- c) Excessive taxation and lack of a rural functioning credit system – A cooperative is more likely than an individual enterprise to get loans for farming. Credit is then converted into improved operating technologies.

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<sup>276</sup> Jason Fernando, “Opportunity Cost Formula, Calculation, and What It Can Tell You”, August 29, 2021, in *Investopedia*, Available at: <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/o/opportunitycost.asp>, Accessed on: August 16, 2021.

- d) Forced depreciation of the Romanian agricultural product – Cooperatives increase the value of agricultural products by investing in farming technologies and by building new processing capacities.
- e) The village economy is not integrated into the urban economy, migration has become a survival technique – Integrating the village into the urban economy would be possible through cooperatives as they could support the demand of the cities.

### IN THE END

This study illustrates that the Bucharest School of Sociology is a model for sociologists in Romania who believe that the science to which it is dedicated can solve a country's problems. Dimitrie Gusti teaches us that the sociologist succeeds in being useful to the society he studies only if he enters the field of ethics and politics. The approach to ethics and politics can only be made starting from sociology because sustainable solutions, such as the Village Cultural Center, can only be found through a deep understanding of social reality. Thus, the Cultural Center was not an utopia, imposed by the state through the Social Service Law of 1938, but a requirement of the needs of the most widespread Romanian reality of the interwar period – the peasant civilization.

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