

Lazăr Vlăsceanu (Ed.) *Sociology*, Polirom, Iași, 2011, 936 p.

Book review

The volume *Sociology*, published in 2011 in Iași, Polirom Publishing House, under the guidance of Professor Lazăr Vlăsceanu, is designed as a treaty of sociology, including the fundamental themes found in works of theoretical and applied sociology. The reading of the volume clearly induces that his project is initiated and built largely by its coordinator, who selected the topics and authors (17 young professionals, performing in sociological research, addressing as many issues to which four more chapters are added, representing almost a quarter of the pages, belonging to the coordinator).

The volume aims to address the community of sociologists from academic and vocational programs to students of bachelor, master and PhD levels in Sociology and other social sciences and, equally, those working in public and private enterprises engaged in social research or analysis and implementation of social programs. The content of the volume refers to social structures: society and change, communities, organizations; to some crystallizations: gender and society, sociology of values and values, social structure and social mobility, normal, social conformity and deviance, the body and social landscape; to configurations, such as: media, public and society, cities, migration, through modernization to modernity, demographic analysis: life expectancy of retired persons and institutions: the economy and society, politics, religion, education, knowledge and scientific knowledge, family and kinship, all with references to contemporary society in general and the Romanian society in particular.

The book is an important source both for those interested in sociological theory and for those concerned with the empirical results of the discipline. The volume presents the most influential classical and contemporary theories in their evolution, closely related to the evolution of society as a whole and some areas of the social world. On the other hand, the chapters of the volume provide researchers with tools to identify and analyze the mechanisms involved in the construction of a reflexive sociological knowledge and in a changing social world.

In essence, throughout its content, Lazăr Vlăsceanu designs sociology as a global science of society, established along with modernity, meeting the need of explanation and interpretation of the profound changes brought by the transition from traditional, patriarchal societies, where life was structured by the institutions of family, kinship, neighborhood, community and village to modern society. In the last 150 years, these structures are replaced by a “constructed social organization” based on “goal-oriented corporate actors”: families are being replaced by institutions of welfare and childcare; groups of friends or interests are no longer limited by geographic area; the emergence of electronic communication brings together people from the most various social and cultural contexts, facilitating even the emergence of new rules in choosing friends, partners, or employment. If classical sociology had focused on the analysis of modern, industrial society, at the end of the twentieth century, the idea of evolution and progress within the frame of modernity would have been increasingly questioned (finds Lazăr Vlăsceanu), launching the idea of configuring a new sort of social organization called “postmodern (“Toynbee),” mass-society “(D. Reisman),” „mass-society” (D. Reisman), „post-industrial” (D. Bell). Modernity, appreciated as unique, is substituted at this stage by multiple modernities: magic, faith and science, rationality and irrationality, linear, non-linear or circular nature and industry are all not incompatible, all options can coexist depending on individual or group options, in a world of affirmed and sustained

equivalences and un-ranking, contradicting the classical modernity in which, as A. Comte had maintained, industry will replace agriculture and science will take the place of religion. Under these conditions the new age requires a new type of sociology, freed by the classical concepts of the first modernity, a reflexive sociology, one that will contain critical analysis not only on its own object of investigation but also on how the knowledge it produces contributes to the construction of the object of sociological investigation. If classical sociology is merely explanatory, the postmodern must be reflexive (produces knowledge about society while considering itself in the production and application of this knowledge).

On the other hand, the multi-paradigmatic character of sociology stands out when one tests the current understanding of sociology and the current state of today's society. For example, Giddens and Beck found that today we are in full modernity. It is the phase in which all the major options of modernity have been fulfilled and we are in a position to manage their consequences and risks arising from the assertion of progress, from the explosion of individualism that has become a fundamental value in place of community and collectivism and globalism, opposite to localism.

Based on the sociological distinction between instrumental knowledge and axiological knowledge, on the one hand, and that between the reception of knowledge by the academic and non-academic audience, on the other, the literature identifies four "types of sociologies, within the division of sociological labor": professional sociology, critical sociology, public-oriented sociology and applied sociology. It is estimated that sociology's destiny is currently that of opening in dialogue with the most diverse audiences, from consumers of media programs to the consumers from the general market and the organizing structures of the economic, social and political world, including opening toward itself, by developing professional sociology.

The four chapters completed by the editor provide a great overview of the most significant sociological paradigms, in relation to social frames and social change. They contain an introduction to the fundamental methodological choices of sociology and a synthesis of the sociological perspective on family and knowledge.

As noted in the foreword, the project is not completed, the plan being to return periodically to capture the further transformation of contemporary societies and social sciences. The reader is invited to become the "author" of a sociology, a prerequisite for this science to become truly "reflexive". Together with his previous volume, *Sociology and Modernity. Transitions to Reflective Modernity*, published by the editor in 2007¹, the current volume offers a new perspective in Romanian sociology, directing it towards the understanding of globalism, the reception of any changes and innovations, reported permanently, however, to local configurations.

Floare Chișea

¹ Lazăr Vlăsceanu, 2007, *Sociologie și modernitate. Tranziții spre modernitatea reflexivă*, Polirom, Iași.