

**SOCIAL SCIENCE FACING THE INSTITUTIONS
OF THE STATE OR ABOUT THE UTILITY OF SOCIAL SCIENCE
IN A MODERN SOCIETY**

Riscuri și inegalități sociale în România

by Marian Preda (coordinator)

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As we are accustomed to, the prestigious Polirom publishing house from Iași is offering students, specialists in social sciences but also to the grand public a new, interesting and worthy paper. It appears in the social science and anthropology collection, the Colegium collection and is coordinated by the well-known professor of Social Science at the University of Bucharest, Marian Preda.

The paper *Risks and social inequities in Romania*, which has come out at the end of the year 2009, represents a sociologic analysis of great dimensions, in which an image of the present Romanian society is presented. Being published as a result of a diagnostics made by the Presidential Commission for Social and Demographic Risk Analysis (established on 13th of January 2009), with Marian Preda as its coordinator, the paper does not only bear the collaboration of renowned sociologists from Bucharest, Iași, Cluj and Sibiu, but also of the institutions of the state, meaning the President's Office, under the protection of which the entire scientific intercession took place. We recall as the authors of the seven chapters of the paper: Dumitru Sandu, Traian Rotariu, Marian Preda, Doru Buzducea, Ștefan Cojocaru, Bogdan Voicu, Cosima Rughiniș, Vasile Ghețău, Livia Popescu, Monica Alexandru, Monica Alexandru, Adrian Nicolae Dan, Manuela Sofia Stănculescu, Florin Lazăr, etc. They also took part in the presidential analysis commission. Being experts in different areas of activity, the authors accomplish a perfect, concrete analysis, a multidisciplinary approach of the present Romanian context in full global crisis. The specialists study thoroughly the systems, the politics, the social programs and make up prognosis regarding incomes, migration, unemployment, health, education, social protection, poverty, etc. The value of these resides not only in the actuality of the data collected on the field, but also from a series of methodological explanations, pertinent interpretations advice. For example, chapter I accommodates an explanatory beam with reference to the evaluating ways of poverty. After a presentation of the evolution of the phenomenon done on social categories, backgrounds and regions, the authors make up a series of conclusions and advice to minimize the risks of escalation of poverty.

The „Risks and social inequities in Romania” work, as Marian Preda states in the introduction part, has a compensative character after 20 years of transition, marked by „incoherent, inefficient, reactive politics who offer ad-hoc solutions to specific crises, who have conflicting objectives, are lacking vision, strategic

approach, who are not based on evidence, social markers, who do not turn to monitoring and evaluating the current and past programs” (p.15). A part of the past research had been structured on certain specific segments, separately interpreted and only offering unilateral perspectives, most of the times only conjunctural, in order to pass through critical situations, to win votes, to induce certain points of view or to cover up other irregularities.

The paper is structured on seven chapters and it approaches themes of real interest: inequality and poverty, risks and vulnerabilities on the work market, the Romanian social protection system, social services, social risk groups, demographical processes and, not last, conclusions and recommendations.

The paper reveals in each chapter which are the risks and inequities on different levels of the social life. Rhus, we find out that in Romania, the highest risk population for poverty is formed out of children, old people (alone, pensionaries, agricultors), unemployed and agricultural pensionaries. In the same manner on the work market, the vulnerabilities are focused around the informal sector, the households, the long-term unemployment, but it is also concerns a certain daunting of entering the work market and even the „poverty of the working class”. According to the research presented in the paper, the social protection systems are inequitable and nonperforming. This, at least at the level of the pension system („pensions and health insurance- are about 78% of the total spent in Romania” (p.335)). On what concerns habitation, the higher risk is represented by the gypsies, young people and the once from the countryside. Comparing to the countries from the E.U., Romania distributes very little money to the healthcare system, fact reflected in the quality of the medical act. Although neither does the teaching system have a good financing, the identified risks in this sector are tied up to the acces to learning and participation, quality an equality to chances.

Among the identified social groups as being with a high rate of social exclusion there can also be found: children, handicaped people, gypsies, drug addicts, home battered, prostitute, or who are smuggled and the HIV infected.

Over all of these, a series of demographical processes (like the rate of death, of birth, the aging process, migration, territorial disparities) are emphasizing the imbalances from Romanian society.

From all of these and from the causes which generate social imbalances and inequities, the authors, as respectful specialists, are offering propositions, adapted and adaptable solutions to Romania. The data presented in numerous statistics and interpretations from the paper are a clear evidence that the Romanian territory has a series of specificities on what concerns the causes, social phenomena and their evolution. To those subtle, quantifiable social mechanisms, other mental and cultural conditionings are added. Here are sufficient arguments which sustain a lot of the recommendations and suggestions presented in the paper. They demonstrate that the solutions borrowed from different spaces, other than the Romanian one, are not always the right ones. Besides, there is emphasizing in the

paper at an imperative mode, the fact that certain politics had been adopted without any previous expertise, depending on the context. Thus, the solutions given by the authors are both short-termed and long-termed, for the normalisation of the society.

The multidisciplinary approach makes the problems researched to include interdependencies, aspect which facilitates the lecture of the paper, the essential being easily retainable. The charts, tables, cassettes are all filling out the analysis from the pages of the paper, indicating tendencies, underlining key coordinates in each approached conjuncture: the initial situation, present point and optimal direction, all of these being fundamented on research, expertise, historical determination etc.

The conceptual construction and the used language are flawless. They are remarkable through their accessibility, clarity. The determination of some concepts as formal and informal sector, risk groups, vulnerability, resource, additional allowance, making the market more flexible, minimum and maximum margins, replacement route, community breaking, healthcare system accessibility, continuous education, etc., and their replacement with data, projections and interpretations, demonstrate to anyone that social science is a living science, with concrete application and not just a set of abstract concepts.

The reading of the book, its conceptual construction, offers the reader an anchor in the real Romanian daily life, impeccably done, which comes to eliminate the preconceived opinions, unfounded on solid arguments. Thus, the utility of this book is noted line by line, chapter by chapter, each of us finding points of resonance with the authors. The social science investigation oposes in this way clarity, the checkable, analysis, professionalism, unauthorized comments, fragmentation, subjectivism, deformation and the lack of professionalism. These last ones are more than present risks in the contemporary Romanian society.

The final chapter, „Conclusions and recommendations” offers an algorithm to solving the risks and social inequities in Romania. He is not based on prioritization of solutions, but on taking into account of all the conclusions and recommendations found in the previous chapters. This integrative and not segmentary vision demonstrates that only by giving priority to some problems and delaying or postponing others, can there be anything done to extend the agony of a system in transition and to widen the frustration of the population. This last chapter also induces an individual thinking regarding the place and role occupied by each one in this present context. Things like „Where am I in this hierarchy?” or „What can I personally do to change this situation?” are, in this case, inevitable and that they are deeply inoculated during the lecture and at the end of it.

If only the basic, correct reference to the surrounding reality doesn't let anyone still indifferent, then the purpose of the publishing has been accomplished.

The founding of the „Social Observatory of Romania”, as an institution which will publish an annual “Repport regarding the Social Situation of Romania”, proposed by the Presidential Comission for Social Risk Analysis of Romania, is a

start. We hope that this won't remain under the curse of Adam of an eternal Romanian begging. Moreover, the ambitions of renowned social scientists as Petre Andrei, Dimitrie Gusti, of making out of social science a science of a highly academic suite, respected and useful to any institution of the state, can this way be sustained by the whole community of Romanian social scientists. The „Risks and social inequities in Romania” work, coordinated by Marian Preda, proves the fact that the profession of social scientist is useful, essential to a well functioning of the state and that, finally, we cannot afford to refuse the competence, efficiency and value from any institution.

All of these recommend „Risks and social inequities in Romania” for lecturing and analyzing from both everyone interested by the markers of the current period we are living in, and from specialists in the field and journalists, „omniscient” analysts and, not least, to the public.

Without any doubt, the work represents a serious card for Romanian social science.