

Review

**ON THE PROCEEDINGS ENTITLED
«ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF SOCIOLOGY IN SERBIA»
- A Turbulent and Dynamic Period -
Sociological Society of Serbia, Faculty of Law in Belgrade**

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The end of the last year saw the publishing of a three-volume proceedings as a special issue of the Sociological Review journal, containing the papers presented at the "100 Years of Sociology in Serbia" conference held at the Avala Gathering on September 1-2, 2012. *The Sociological Society of Serbia* organized this conference together with the Faculty of Law in Belgrade, and did so with the support of the Ministry of Education and Science, whereas the exhibition and the entire event was supported by the Centre for the Promotion of Science.

The published Proceedings represent a significant contribution to the holistic view of sociology as a scientific discipline in our scientific community, to the understanding of the emergence of sociology, to the *raising of professional self-awareness of sociologists in our country*, and to the attempts to make for the gaps in the area, especially in view of the fact that apart from the monographs by *Milovan Mitrović* and *Marija Bogdanović*, no such analysis has ever existed.

The aim of the scientific conference was to present and analyze the developmental path of sociology in Serbia over a century, i.e. to present the changes and the transformation of sociological topics and ideas in the past century. The attitude of the ruling classes towards sociology, and the attitude of sociology towards the ruling classes, can be characterized as a turbulent and eventful one, as *Slobodan Antonić*, the president of the *Sociological Society of Serbia* put it. The conference, in his words, served to present the results sociology achieved during a century, to discuss important personalities and their achievements, the institutions sociology has developed in and to point to some research problems, with the aim of *presenting sociology as a profession and to try and popularize sociology as a profession*.

However, in *Antonić's* words, sociology *has finally entered a constructive phase over the last couple of years*, it is extremely important that sociologists have started to *think for themselves*. "Critical thought on social issues has a future", *Antonić* said. *Sociology is important for the understanding of reality we live in and can, as such, offer answers to the challenges ahead of us* (Ž. Obradović). Our life is a specific form of getting acquainted with society, i.e. a process of understanding of society, so that it could be said that each of us is a sociologist. Sociology as a science and sociologists say the same things about society as laymen but do so in a different way.

The proceedings represent an informative overview of the development of sociology in Serbia from 1912 to 2012, and as such present a key resource for the research of the history of sociology in Serbia. On the significance of sociology in contemporary society *Antonić* has the following to say: "sociology is an in-depth science analyzing the very structure and foundations of society; however, it also attempts to keep up with the most important trends in its analysis of the most important problems of every society. It sets the diagnosis, as it were, and some sociologists even try to define what a healthy society should be like. In that sense, sociology tackles the pathological phenomena in society and what society, normatively speaking, should look like. Unlike political science or history, for example, it is more closely linked to groups, movements, social structures".

The impetus for the summarizing the development path of sociology and of sociological institutions in our country was provided by the "Sociology" column in the *Chronicle of Matica Srpska (Letopis Matice srpske)* (a journal still published and important today), No 5, 1912, written by *Mirko M. Kostić*¹, who is considered to be our first schooled sociologist and the author of the first modern textbook in sociology. Therefore, the starting year of sociology in Serbia is taken to be 1912.

Having in mind that times have changed and that new knowledge has been acquired, it is necessary to reevaluate the analyses given so far, to pay attention to the social and historical context in which sociologists have worked since the beginning of its development to this day, so as not to be subsumed by national romanticism and ethnocultural nationalism. Sociologists are therefore advised to adhere to cultural relativism, i.e. to abandon their deeply-rooted cultural beliefs and to analyze phenomena according to the standards of another culture.

During the two-day conference, 50 participants have presented 65 papers (available at the website of the *Sociological Society of Serbia*²) dealing with various aspects of sociology – its roots and development, the important people who have contributed to it, its institutional development and its development at universities and schools, and its various disciplines and research problems. All of that was presented in the conference proceedings containing 1250 pages of text.

The participants had prepared papers covering a wide area of topics, including historiographical ones dealing with the history of sociology in Serbia, the sociology in the works of well-known scientists (among them being *Slobodan Jovanović*, *Valtazar Bogišić*, *Jovan Cvijić*, *Sreten Vukosavljević*, *Radomir Lukić*, *Miroslav Pečujlić*, and others). Other topics include introducing sociology into high schools in Serbia, its institutional development at universities, as well as the obstacles and the possible directions of development of sociology in Serbia.

¹ Mirko M. Kostić, "Sociology", *Letopis Matice srpske* No. 5, 1912, p. 105-106.

² www.ssd.org.rs

Sociology as a science appeared in Serbia with the beginning of the civil society and within its cultural institutions, among which the university was the most important one. The first institutional background for the development of sociology was the Faculty of Law in Belgrade, at which the Department of Sociology was established in 1935. It was much later that similar departments were established at the Faculties of Philosophy in Belgrade, Novi Sad and Niš.

The selected papers represent an excellent review of the development of sociology, explore the conference topics well and also analyze the historical sequence of those topics, which has much contributed to the variety of the topics covered in the proceedings. The topics submitted were chosen autonomously, so that, as it often happens in such situations, some issues and some people were covered in greater detail than others despite the effort that organizers had made to cover as many important sociologists and institutions as possible. As the editor of the proceedings pointed out – the given proceedings are not meant to present a complete history of sociology in Serbia but only represent a mosaic of scientific insight into some of the issues of the history of our sociology and a resource for its future analysis.

The entire Volume 1 and the beginning of Volume 2 are dedicated to important thinkers between the two world wars and to those working after the Second World War.

The most prominent among them is *Slobodan Jovanović* (1869-1958), in connection with whom the participants attempted to carefully analyze all his work so as to completely understand the ideas and explain the essence of his theoretical sociological thought, to point to the importance of the sociological aspect of his work, to present a brief overview of his attitudes on the social position and political role of Serbian peasants and his criticism of semi-intellectuals, which he did in precise thoughts, strong arguments and beauty of his style (as exemplified by the papers of *Lj. Milosavljević*, *I. Jovanović*, *S. Šljukić*, *B. Kragović* and *S. Mišića*).

As many as three papers were dedicated to the pioneering effort of *Valtazar Bogišić* (1834-1908), one of the greatest Serbian thinkers in the field of social sciences of the 19th century, who worked as an internationally recognized jurist and sociologist and who was the president of the *International Sociological Institute* in Geneva and later in Paris. Researchers have especially pointed to his contribution to the establishment of the sociology of law, which can be considered not only as a contribution to sociology and the sociology of law but also to the field of law and legal history (cf. the papers by *L. Brenešević*, *M. Marjanović* and *N. Kršljanin*). The Proceedings also deal with the problems tackled by *Cvijić* (*Jovan Cvijić* – 1865-1927): the methodological contribution, the contribution in the research of sociological and politicological relevance of the anthropography of the Balkans, migrations, settlements, family cooperatives, psychological types of personality, as well as the modern problems of the position of women and social capital (cf. the paper co-authored by *Lj. Rajković* and the paper by *B. Stevanović*).

A prominent place in the Proceedings was also given to *Radomir Lukić* (1914-1999), one of our most influential sociologists and legal thinkers, and to the connectedness of sociology and law, which is a defining trait of *Lukić's* professional and creative identity (cf. the paper by *Z. Gudović* and *R. Vasić*); to *Miroslav Pečujlić* (1929-2006), one of the doyens of sociology in Yugoslavia and Serbia, who has significantly contributed to general sociology and social theory, the exploration of social structure and dynamics, to political sociology and the methodology of social sciences and of global social processes (cf. the papers by *Lj. Mitrović* and *J. Trkulja*); to *Sreten Vukosavljević* (1881-1960) and his

impact on and importance for the establishment of rural sociology in our country and his contribution to the understanding of the specificities of 'rural society', which can serve as a good basis for the comparison of the previous state of affairs in the area and the current one (cf. the papers by *B. Milošević and A. Gordić*).

Naturally, a prominent place was also given to *Svetozar Marković, Mihailo Avramović, Živan Spasojević, Mirko Kosić, Mihailo Đurić, Miroslav Živković, Petar Opalić, Ruža Petrović and Archibald Reiss*.

Within its institutional framework, academic community creates professional and moral standards, develops the feeling of belonging and preserves its autonomy. The second part of Volume 2 primarily deals with the institutional development of sociology in various centers. One of the most important indicators of professionalization and development of a profession is the degree of its institutional and academic presence. Here we will present only some of the issues relevant in the area. In his paper entitled "The Appearance and Development of Sociology at the Faculty of Philosophy in Novi Sad" *G. Vuksanović* presents the period from the establishment of the Department of Marxism to the latest reform of the curriculum at the Department of Sociology. The issues also dealt with are the development of sociology at the Faculty of Economics at the University of Belgrade, as one of the oldest faculties in Serbia in the field, the institutional development of the Department of Sociology of the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Priština, with a temporary seat in Kosovska Mitrovica (cf. the paper by *Jasmina Petrović*, dedicated to the institutionalization and professionalization of sociology through the analysis of available data on one of the most recently established departments of sociology in the country, including the specific favorable and unfavorable aspects of the social background it emerged in). Attention was also paid to the institutional development of sociology at the University of East Sarajevo (cf. the paper by *B. Kosarac and B. Milošević*), whereby it was pointed out that the development of sociology there has come later than in the other parts of Serbian society because of the formal and informal limitations in the society of the Republic of Srpska.

The problems of medical sociology, medical ethics and bioethics at the Faculty of Medicine, University of Belgrade, from the 1950s, when sociology-related issues started to be explored there, its challenges and perspectives, were dealt with by *Sandra Radenović*. The Proceedings also contains papers dealing with the contribution of the *Institute for Social Politics* to the development of sociological thought and practice in Serbia, and with the emergence of political sociology as an academic discipline at the Faculty of Political Sciences in Belgrade (cf. the paper by *D. Dinić and R. Smiljković*, whose activities have contributed to the design of sociological thought in Serbia during the last three decades of the 20th century).

The final part of the given volume points to the contribution of the *Teme* journal to the development of Serbian sociology especially in the period between 2001 and 2011. In that sense, *D. Đorđević* explores the presence of sociology in the given journal by using qualitative and quantitative indicators, and in his paper with *D. Todorović* he explores the contribution of the scientific association named "Junior" to the development of the Serbian sociology of religion, as one of the most active units within Serbian Sociological Society, in the period between 1993 and 2012. *S. Antonić* presents very interesting data from the history of *Serbian Sociological Society*, giving thereby an overview of the activities of this national association of sociologists in Serbia (founded in 1954), and doing so by considering two periods – from 1961 to 1974 and from 1975 to 1992. The first period is

characterized by routine activities, as well as by the crisis in professional and social actions, caused, among other things, by political reasons. The second period (when the given organization was known as the Sociological Society of Serbia), is characterized by a rise of activities both at the professional level (establishing units / departments within it, organizing conferences and round tables, publishing books and journals), and at the social level (publishing public announcements, drafting letters of protests to the authorities, organizing public discussions on the issues related to political and social reforms, etc.).

The entire third volume is dedicated to various topics: sociological research of the family and the foundation of the question of gender in sociology (the feminist perspective in sociology in Serbia); various populational perspectives and challenges that contemporary Serbia faces and whose consequences are far-reaching so that they are bound to affect future generations, the social system and its structure, economics, politics and culture; the research of the development of the sociology of work and the establishing of the profession of sociology of work; analyzing basic obstacles and potential directions of the development of sociology in Serbia. In the words of *Sreten Vujović*, a professor at the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade, one of the shortcomings of the "100 Years of Sociology in Serbia" conference is the separation of Serbian sociology from the Yugoslav context. Yugoslav sociologists cooperated from 1959 till the break-up of the country. There also existed Yugoslav Sociological Association. There not only existed intensive cooperation within various macropjects but also excellent professional gatherings of sociologists were held. As the given author pointed out, sociology needs a critical mass to develop and such a mass existed in former Yugoslavia, and it can be formed again if sociologists in the region cooperated more than they currently do. Prof. *Vujović* says that sociology should be imposed as an autonomous scientific discipline, whereby that autonomy would be considered as its first and most important trait. Sociology as an applied discipline would then be pushed to the background. *Working in the field of science does not exclude social intervention, but only under the condition that sociologists separate their role as scientists from their roles as advisors, animators, intellectuals, fighters. Sociologists can fulfil their duties only on condition that they first assert their primarily scientific character.*

The given Proceedings can serve the entire scientific and professional community interested in thorough investigation of sociology; it is especially useful to students of sociology but is also to be recommended to the students of other departments / faculties in our country at all levels of study, which represents a sufficient reason for the scientific and professional community to explore its contents in greater detail. The given book was written in professional and understandable language, it is well systematized, has a clear and recognizable style, and can be easily understood. What contributes to the value of this major and complex study are well-chosen photographs exemplifying different issues. In many aspects, this impressive book, that has a complex and logical structure and that offers a variety of theoretical views, can, with all its strengths and weaknesses, *be considered and adequate mirror of contemporary Serbian sociology.*

Because of everything stated, these proceedings represent a major contribution to the domestic literature on the topic and will definitely be well received in the academic and professional community, as well as in the more general reading public.