

Habilitation thesis

Power, Memory, and Identity: The Politics of the Past in Postsocialist Romania

Abstract

Candidate: Mihai Stelian Rusu

The habilitation thesis takes stock of my contributions to various strands of scholarship in sociology and cognate fields of knowledge within the social sciences and projects the main directions on which I intend to develop my university career in terms of research and teaching. After I have successfully defended my Ph.D. thesis in Sociology with a research on the discursive construction of the Romanian national memory in 2013 (validated by the minister's order in 2014), my research activities were spread in five specific, but interrelated, lines of inquiry, each of which belongs to a particular thematic domain within the social sciences.

First, rooted in my Ph.D. experience, I have continued to extend and develop my academic interest for understanding (1) *the politics of memory and national celebration*. Within this field of study, I have contributed with academic papers in four directions: (1.1) *the politics of Romania's national memory*, (1.2) *the transitional politics of communist memory*, (1.3) *the sociology of celebration*, and (1.4) *conceptualization of collective memory*.

A second line of inquiry combines the sociology of memory with social and cultural geography. The resulting interdisciplinary field of study consists in (2) *the political geography of memory practices*. In the articles I have managed to publish in this domain I engage with the politics of postsocialist toponymic transformation as I am interested in unravelling the patterns of street and school name changes in the Romanian context.

Thirdly, I have contributed to articulating (3) a *political sociology of the extreme right in interwar Romania* by examining (3.1) *the sacralization of politics* within the ideology of "ultra-thanatic nationalism" peculiar to the Legionary Movement (also known as the Iron Guard). A second direction in this regard consisted in exploring (3.2) *the politics of womanhood and fascist femininities* developed within the Romanian interwar Legionary Movement.

My academic interests for political power, death, and memory come together in a fourth research direction consisting in (4) *the sociology of death*. In this regard, I have published several papers in peer-reviewed academic journals on the *thanato-politics of national mourning*, in which I have analyzed the patterns of declaring national days of mourning across the European countries.

A fifth line of inquiry was oriented towards articulating a (5) *sociology of everyday life*. This was done through elaborating (5.1) a *sociological approach of gossip* as an everyday social practice and through (5.2) *theorizing love* from a sociological perspective as a powerful emotion that shapes interpersonal relations and has crucial consequences for the social structure.

A sixth category consists in various studies and articles that do not fit in either one of these thematic sections described above (6. *Miscellanea*). An overview of the studies I published after obtaining the Ph.D. title in Sociology is presented in table 1 below.

Table 1. Overview on my post-doctoral publication record structured in terms of field of study

#	Field of study / line of inquiry	No. of publications	Single authored	WoS
1	Politics of memory and national celebration	12	10	1
1.1	Politics of national memory in Romania	2	2	0
1.2	Transitional politics of communist memory	5	4	1
1.3	Sociology of celebration	2	1	0
1.4	Theorizing collective memory	3	3	0
2	Political geography of memory practices	4	4	3
3	Political sociology of the far-right in interwar Romania	8	8	2
3.1	Sacralization of politics within the Legionary Movement	6	6	2
3.2	Politics of womanhood and fascist femininities	2	2	0
4	Sociology of death and the thanato-politics of national mourning	3	3	2
5	Sociology of everyday life	6	6	1
5.1	Sociology of gossip	4	4	1
5.2	Sociology of love	2	2	0
6	Miscellanea	5	4	1
Total		38	34	10

Besides detailing the contributions I have made to the scholarly literature consisting in single-authored books, book chapters, book reviews, and academic articles published in peer-reviewed journals, the habilitation thesis presents my involvement in research projects (either as director or as team member) as well as my teaching experience gained as a lecturer at the Department of Sociology from the Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu.

The second part of the habilitation thesis indicates the main lines of career development in terms of both research and teaching. In this regard, I will continue to publish valuable academic work along the five thematic domains and lines of inquiry presented earlier. Regarding teaching, I will aim to develop courses for undergraduate studying Sociology where I could best connect the concepts, theories, and methods I have perfected in my research activities with didactic activities (such as, for instance, a course entitled “The Politics of Memory in Central and Eastern Post-socialist Europe”).