

Author: Nicolae PANEA
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Review by: Roxana OSSIAN
Master in Anthropology and Multicultural Studies, Faculty of
European Studies, Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca

There is little known about urban anthropology in Romania. So, writing and publishing a book on this topic means an interesting project, from the very beginning. If we follow the rule which says that people are attracted to new stimulus, we can predict the interest that Nicolae Panea's book ("Asphalt gods") will provoke. Besides the fact that it breaks new ground, it is necessary to underline the strictness of this study: first, the author presents theories and methods that are requested for this subject (Ulf Hannerz is named "parent" of this science); then he passes to a particular level, more precisely the Romanian urban space.

Panea is asking himself what is the object and the story of this science. Answering this question, we find out that the anthropology of urban tries to establish definitions and typologies for the town, starting from a threefold reference: history, geography and sociology.

Its focus is on the usual, normal reality. Talking about the methods - in order to ensure the strictness of the study - the author claims the need for using two approaches at the same time: a descriptive and an interpretative one. In order to build a theoretical framework, he uses the Chicago School researches which inaugurated almost all the domains that are now the topics for studies.

There are two points of view in the Romanian historiography: the first one belongs to the inter-war period and says the cities were placed at the trading crossroads and the second one defends the idea that the town appeared as a result of development of rural centres.

What are we looking for in a city? Being a branch of anthropology, it is primarily interested in relationships between people, connections which form a multitude of networks and they, at their turn, create reticulated fields. If we place this structure in a more general framework, we can see any society as being defined by the interactions of its reticulated fields.

What is the specificity of the Romanian urban communities? This aspect takes into account the fact that the rural models are replicated in the urban space, but they have become *lazman* in style. In this way, living in towns is a series of memories about the present! Besides that, the urban identity is permanently building in this space: women try to become visible using clothes, job, rhetoric, behaviour; the child has to deal with a large variety of specific emotions and he ends living his childhood as a profession. Football is the image of the present society: it is a recreative, productive, administrative, educational network. New stars are born, but they play the same justificative role.

Death and funeral, staircase and gangs are possible topics for future research. The elements of the vast urban life described by Panea give us a general representation of the way in which people organize their life.

Even if his manner of writing rather belongs to ethnology than anthropology we have to recognize the effort he makes in pleading for an urban anthropology in Romania.