**Review of the Volume
“Medierea și
Probațiunea. Practici
Sociale Restaurative”
[Mediation and
Probation.
Restorative Social
Practices], Authors:
Antonio Sandu & Elena
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Abstract: Being a psychologist by profession, passionate about the field of law in general, and in particular about the criminal phenomenon, whether it involves deprivation of liberty or not, I found this book a source of knowledge, of broadening perspectives. Although law can be considered an arid field, sometimes difficult to assimilate, especially by those who haven't got specialized training in the field, the book “Mediation and probation. Restorative social practices”, authored by Antonio Sandu and Elena Unguru, published by Lumen Publishing House from Iași in 2016, brings along a historical, philosophical, psychological and sociological approach, offering the chance for a novice to enter an “alternative story” of issues pertaining to justice.

Keywords: *Mediation, probation, restorative justice, Antonio Sandu, Elena Unguru.*

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The book is structured in two parts, which, although written by two different authors, blend harmoniously, complementing each other in terms of style and information. The first part of the volume, "Conflict, communicative action and deliberative justice", written by Professor PhD Antonio Sandu, focuses on understanding the act of mediation as an alternative to punitive justice, as a result of which someone will have to lose in one form or another. With a PhD degree of Philosophy, graduate university degree in Law, Philosophy and Social Work, with a master's degree in Probation and Social Work, the author of the first chapter manages, in an expressive way, to combine philosophical, religious elements with the slightly arid ones from the field of legal sciences.

The first chapter has a smooth sequence, beginning with a few elements of a religious-Christian nature presented in the context of the theme "conflict, communication and justice", thus anchoring the reader in a state of calm and inner peace, thus making them curious to discover more. In order to truly understand the practice of mediation, as well as its advantages as an out-of-court method, the author presents the element that draws people to such a procedure: the conflict. Using a series of theories and explanatory models, the conflict is presented in the most complex situations and placed in various categories. Understanding conflict, its dynamics, its constituent elements is an essential prerequisite for penetrating and assimilating the act of mediation.

Placing now in the mind of the reader a clearer picture of what the state of conflict is, the author invites us to "resolve" this conflict, entering the realm of mediation. The positive and optimistic tone in which mediation is presented offers the reader additional knowledge, but also a perspective of focusing on solutions, on aspects that can be improved both in the relationship with others and with oneself. Mediation means, among other things, a focus on the needs of the other, the formation of an "alliance" with the one next to us, in order for all to obtain the optimal solution for the conflict. Understanding mediation as a development process through which an agreement is reached, we can successfully apply it in conflicts with ourselves, when we will be both mediators and parties to the conflict.

Returning, however, to the legal field, the author presents the legal elements that were the basis for the development of mediation, as well as the origin of this practice, which the author places in the period of Greek-Roman Antiquity. The recommendations of the European Union regarding the practice of mediation are presented, as well as the way in which they were integrated in the Romanian legislation. For a full understanding of the legislative aspects presented by the author, the reader should check during

reading the book and the legislation in force, in order to identify the novelties in the field, thus managing to notice the progress made in implementing the suggestions provided by the author.

Referring to mediation styles, in order to provide the chance to understand how this process is actually carried out, the author analytically and objectively presents several styles of mediation. I was pleasantly surprised by the comparison made between "facilitative mediation" and the model of person-centered psychotherapy developed by Carl Rogers (2003). Elements such as active listening, reflection of feelings or non-directivity can be used successfully by the mediator in his practice, and the result will be to facilitate the change of perspective of those involved, springing from itself, unaltered by the mediator's intervention through their own suggestions or solutions.

The way in which the author manages, in an assertive way, to present both the strengths of the legislator or of other authors who approached this subject (Danileț, 2012; Durnescu, 2011), as well as the points with which he does not totally agree, is to be appreciated, giving the volume an extra originality through the suggestions that he issues.

At the end of the first chapter, the author presents a series of communication strategies designed to facilitate the mediation process. The importance of the personal traits of those involved is underlined, the author concluding with a slight note of resignation: "Mediation will aim at obtaining the agreement of the parties on the situation in dispute, but behind it often lies the need to change attitudes and behavior, which often leads to reject mediation as a tool for conflict resolution" (Sandu & Unguru, 2016).

The second part of the book is complementary to the first chapter, the information presented above serving as a basis for understanding the role of probation in the rehabilitation of adults and juveniles who have committed crimes. Elena Unguru, who has a PhD degree in Sociology, has graduated from Social Work and Law, and with a master's degree in Supervision and Social Planning, harmoniously combines the elements of humanities with those in the field of legal sciences. The author's approach retains an encouraging note, with an emphasis on finding an optimal solution optimal in solving the criminal phenomenon, as approached in the first chapter. In order to be accessible to any type of reader, the history of probation from its inception to the present is presented, being pointed out, in a structured way, the essential aspects of European legislation, as well as its integration into the Romanian legislative space.

The distinction made between crimes and sanctions applied to minors versus those applied to adults is noteworthy. The central element of

this chapter is the presentation of the restorative paradigm, which emphasizes the repositioning of the offender in the state of social balance prior to the crime, the assumption of responsibility for the act and the perpetrator's understanding of the damage caused to the victim. The role of the punishment, in terms of the restorative theory, is therefore to support the cognitive restructuring of the defendant, with educational and therapeutic purposes.

The final part of the book presents elements of social work integrated into probation services. The presentation of the main techniques and methods of social work, as well as how to implement them, makes the transition from a descriptive approach to a practical one, useful for those working in this field. I believe that for a more complex approach, a broader understanding of the reader and an applicability in as many areas as possible, it was useful to present these elements, also taking into consideration the professionals working in the prison environment. Both prison police officers and social reintegration staff can benefit from and use the knowledge gained from understanding restorative justice in their practice.

Finally, I would like to point out the usefulness of this book for a variety of specialists, from those working in the field of justice to those working in the field of social and humanistic sciences. But the way the book is written makes it also approachable for the interests of students or people who just want to improve their general knowledge, as it can be a starting point for acquiring new knowledge. The book makes you want to know more, to discover the current state of the new paradigms and approaches. This volume has a logical and complex sequencing, starting from the placement in the historical context of both the practice of mediation and probation, continuing with the integration of concepts in present realities and culminating with practical and applicable aspects in concrete situations.

Reading this book can be a challenge for those who have studies in fields other than law, but the approach of the two authors offers the chance for an experience of broadening knowledge, along with the desire to engage in an individual process of acquiring new information.

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