

Guido Martinotti (1938–2012): One of Italy’s Foremost Sociologists and Public Intellectuals

Giampaolo Nuvolati

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In the early morning hours of November 5th, 2012, Guido Martinotti, the world-renown sociologist who is also one of the greatest sociologists in the history of Italy, died suddenly in Paris (He is survived by his wife, Eva Cantarella). In Italy, Guido Martinotti was a pioneer in the field of urban studies. His seminal work dealt with the urbanization process, the quality of life in cities, and the definition of metropolitan populations. For several generations of urban sociologists, Martinotti was one of the last to be called “maestro”, as he had opened up new theoretical and methodological approaches to the study of cities. He clearly had a “sociological imagination” which was characterized by a specific “sociological sensitivity”, allowing him to discover and to study sociological phenomena early on, when such studies were in their infancy. He was perspicacious enough to accurately forecast findings and to predict the evolution of the field. Martinotti taught in universities in France, Italy (Naples, Turin, Pavia, Milan, Florence), and the United States (for example, the University of Michigan, New York University, and the University of California at Santa Barbara).

G. Nuvolati (✉)
Università degli studi di Milano Bicocca, Milan, Italy
e-mail: giampaolo.nuvolati@unimib.it

Active in public life, Martinotti was also an institutional builder. For example, he was a leading force in the establishment of a new university, the University of Milano-Bicocca, where he served as pro-rector from 1999 to 2005 and where he taught until his retirement. He was also very committed to the promotion of progressive policies and reforms in Italy; he was an important intellectual figure in debates over urban issues with a deep influence at the local, regional and national levels. In particular, as member of the working group headed by the Minister of Education, Antonio Ruberti, Martinotti played a leading role in the reform of the entire Italian university system.

Internationally, Martinotti spent his energy and enthusiasm in the promotion of the social sciences. For example, he was a founding member and vice-president (from 1991 to 1994) of the European Consortium for Sociological Research. From 1992 to 2012 he was Chairman of the Standing Committee for the Social Sciences of the European Sciences Foundation. From 1994 to 2013, he served as a member of the Bureau of the European Science and Technology Assembly.

Last but not least, Martinotti was more than a great researcher and advocate. He was a great and wonderful human being. He was always generous with younger colleagues and open to their new ideas. He was very supportive, respectful, and fair in dealing with younger collaborators, who will deeply miss him. Finally, he treated younger collaborators as equals, something which moved and inspired them deeply.

Selected Publications

- Martinotti, G. (1997). *Perceiving, Conceiving, Achieving the Sustainable City. A Synthesis Report, European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions*. Dublin: Loughlingstown, Co.
- Martinotti, G. (Ed.). (1998). *L'inafferrabile élite*, Quaderni della Fondazione Courmayeur, 5, Quart (AO), 1998
- Martinotti, G. (1999). *La dimensione metropolitana. Sviluppo e governo della nuova città*, (a cura di), Il Mulino Bologna.