

# Arta Musaraj and I, and the Wonderful Idea of the “New Academy” Born in Her Homeland, Albania

In memoriam of Arta Musaraj (August 28, 1974 – May 18, 2025)

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I had the great pleasure and honor of meeting Arta Musaraj fifteen years ago, in 2010, thanks to the fortunate mediation of Professor Maria Immacolata Maciotti, known affectionately as “Minette” in academic circles, my lifelong colleague at the Department of Social Sciences and Economics at Sapienza University of Rome.

Minette used to organize truly unique seminars within the Sapienza Master’s program Immigrants and Refugees, of which she was the director. Arta had been regularly invited to lecture in this program for several years.

When I first met Arta, I was immediately convinced that she was the right person to also hold seminars in the PhD program in Sociology and Applied Social Sciences (SASS), which I coordinated at the time. Her professional competence and personal charisma were truly remarkable, as her impressive and distinguished curriculum clearly demonstrated.

I invited her to join the SASS doctoral program as a seminar lecturer. Not long after, she also became a permanent member of its Scientific Committee, where she remained active and engaged until the very end.

A few years later, I proposed to Minette the idea of establishing an association of university professors and researchers who shared a deep belief in the need for interdisciplinary approaches to teaching and research, along with a strong critical perspective. This, in open contrast to the widespread and often rigid academic practices common in universities then, and sadly, still today.

Minette immediately thought of Arta as the ideal person to be involved, someone capable of offering constructive ideas and valuable insight.

To move things forward quickly and launch the project within a few weeks, I traveled directly to Albania, together with my wife Rita, to meet Arta in person and present the outlines of our initiative.

Although she lived in the south, in Vlora, where she served as Rector of the University of Pavarësia, we arranged to meet in Tirana to make our journey more manageable. Arta was accompanied by her husband, who actively supported all her initiatives and her vision. His presence and clarity helped make our conversation even more effective and fruitful.

We continued our discussion over a meal in a beautiful restaurant on Mount Dajti, accessible by cable car, offering a breathtaking panoramic view of Tirana. After a long and inspiring exchange of ideas, it was Arta who suggested the name “New Academy” for the association, a name that immediately resonated with me.

And so, the “New Academy”, our bold and hopeful endeavor, “took off” from the heights of Mount Dajti and “landed” in Italy, where it was warmly embraced by the other founding members in the weeks that followed.

The elegant and internationally recognized Scientific Journal Academicus, which Arta had founded and led as editor-in-chief, regularly welcomed and published the scholarly contributions emerging from the conferences and seminars organized by the “New Academy”, often in collaboration with Italy’s most prestigious universities.

Thanks to her passion, her great care, and her refined intellectual and editorial touch, we are proud that this wonderful idea, born in Albania and nurtured through the years, has become a lasting scientific reality. Beyond the name and structure of the “New Academy,” Arta’s spirit remains alive among us, always.