

Swinging Statistics: Population Research and Political Construction in 20th Century Romania*

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Abstract: The present article proposes an examination of the disciplinary evolution of demographic research in Communist Romania, as a case study of the mutually constitutive, multifaceted relationship between science, politics, ideology and memory. My research tries to compensate for the lack of access to the archives of the central institutions for population research during Communism (the National Institute of Statistics and the National Commission of Demography), by combining published sources (mainly scientific works, but also histories of demography and personal memoirs), with different archival documents, mainly coming from personal funds of two population researchers (Sabin Manuilă and Ştefan Milcu), from the fund of the Central Commission for Planning, of the Chancellery of the Romanian Communist Party and from diplomatic archives.

I pay attention to the side of the story offered by the actors themselves, focusing on the way in which the legacy of interwar demography was assumed and invoked in different post-war accounts regarding the history of demographic discipline in Romania. By doing so, I seek to contribute to writing a history of science as a product of complex entanglements between the different factors that circumscribe the process of knowledge production within a larger social and political context: specific professional interests and institutional settings, subjective interpretations, ideological pressures and attempts of political control.

Keywords: demography, ideology, continuity, vital statistics

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Interwar Legacies & Post-War Realities

Until 1947, the infrastructure for vital statistics (*statistica demografică*) and demographic research was concentrated at the *Institutul Central de Statistică*/ the [Central Institute of Statistics - CIS] (Trebici 1981, 657), the main site of demographic knowledge production since the 1930s, which was run between 1935 and 1947 by its founder, the physician and demographer Sabin Manuilă (1894-1964). The number of researchers employed in the different branches of the CIS in 1947 confirmed the relatively good situation vital statistics enjoyed in comparison to the other branches (Documentar 1947, 4, 11, 14): while financial and industrial statistics had just 134 employees, population statistics had 109 employees (Documentar 1947, 14). Most of the researchers employed at CIS (44 put of 109 researchers) were working in the branch of population statistics (Documentar 1947, 14).

Vital statistics and demographic research enjoyed a preeminent position within the statistical services of Greater Romania (Conferința 1947, 22; Trebici 1981, 655, 657), not only because of the particular circumstances under which the centralized infrastructure of statistics was built in the 1930s, but also because they could offer some answers to the ethnic challenges brought by the political structure configured in the country after 1918 (Solonari 2009, 10-32, 88-90).

The interwar organization of a centralized system of population research and statistics was closely related to the personality of the physician and demographer Sabin Manuilă (1894-1964), the founder and director of the Central Institute of Statistics between 1934 and 1947, who played a capital role in the institutionalization of population research and vital statistics in interwar Romania (Solonari 2009, 75). Manuilă showed remarkable political abilities, absolutely necessary for survival in the shifting political context of the 1940s. A close collaborator of the politician Iuliu Maniu, the head of the National Peasant Party, and the most important councillor on population policies for Ion Antonescu (Achim 2001, 598), he also played an active role in the *coupe d'état* of 23rd of August 1944 that removed Antonescu from power (Betea 201, 51, 58). Manuilă was subsequently appointed as Secretary of State in the first three governments in power after 23rd of August 1944. Thus, he managed to keep his position as head of CIS until June 1947 (Golopenția S. 2009, 12), and to preserve after August 1944 the pivotal position the Central Institute of Statistics came to play in governance after 1940 (Solonari 2009, 80).

The major interest of interwar population research created during the 1930s around the statistical tools and information they provided upon population dynamics in general, and birth-dynamics, infant mortality and population-growth, pointed towards an increased interest in the ethnic structure of the country. This major research interest was expressed with the help of

different statistical tools along the 1930s, starting with the 1930 Census questions that interrogated ethnicity of the respondents (Recensământ 1930) and continuing with the measurement of birth and death rates in accordance with the ethnic origins (MPR 1933). During the 1930s, Manuilă vigorously advocated for a “demographic policy in tune with the interests of the Romanian nation” (Achim 2001, 595), whose main goal was to achieve an increased presence of the ethnic Romanians, through Romanian colonization of towns, population exchange programs with the neighbouring countries and stricter control on migration and immigration (Achim 2001, 595).

During the Antonescu regime, the increased interest for the *Romanianization* of the country was materialized in different population exchange programs, which became the preferred solution for ethnic homogenization after the territorial losses suffered by Romania (Achim 2001, 600).

Between September 1940 and June 1941, several programs of relocation of different minorities from Southern Bukovina and Dobrudja (Germans, Bulgarians and Hungarians), and some repatriations of Romanians took place, actions in which both Manuilă and CIS were involved (Achim 2001, 597-598; Solonari 2009, 95-114). The plans and ideals for the realization of an ethnically homogenous country greatly accelerated after Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina were recovered from the Soviet Union in the summer of 1941 (Achim 2009, 601). In October 1941, Manuilă drew a 10-page memorandum addressed to Marshal Antonescu, in which he exposed his population policy plan, whose main goal was the “ethnic homogenization of the country” (Achim 2001, 601), to be attained through “a total and compulsory exchange of population with the neighbouring countries” (Achim 2001, 601), a complex plan to be implemented in several steps. While Manuilă’s contribution to the genocidal deportations of Jewish and Roma communities from the territories controlled by the Romanian army was not undeniably proved¹, the deportations to Transnistria of “the Jews from Bessarabia and Bukovina and part of the Gypsy population [...] were also part of the policy of ethnic homogenization” (Achim 2001, 608), an ideal that Manuilă was advocating since the 1930s. The preoccupation for the ethnic dimensions and implications of population dynamics represented a major feature of the interwar Romanian population science, as it materialized around the institutional structures created and run by Manuilă. The growth of this major research was favoured by particular disciplinary roots population research had in Romania.

From a disciplinary point of view, interwar demographic research was endowed to **public medicine** and **sociology** (Trebici 1981, 656-661). These disciplinary filiations developed under the institutional and personal networks created around Manuilă and the CIS. Population dynamics, and especially infant mortality, constituted major research interests for the two main schools of public hygiene and eugenics from interwar Romania, one in Bucharest led

by the physician Gheorghe Banu (1889-1957), the other in Cluj, led by the physician Iuliu Moldovan (1882-1966) (Bucur 2002; Trebici 1999, 659-661; Turda 2011; Georgescu 2011). Manuilă was particularly close to his former professor, Iuliu Moldovan, and was very familiar with his research (Trebici 1981, 659; Trebici 1995, 9; Solonari 2009, 88). Apparently, with the help of the impressive bureaucratic organization he had managed to build, Manuilă put in practice many of the ideas he and Moldovan shared (Solonari 2009, 75).

The physician Petru Râmneanţu (1902-1991), also a Rockefeller fellow with specialization in biostatistics at Johns Hopkins University and one of the closest collaborators of Moldovan, published several researches on the fertility decline in Banat and Transylvania², population dynamics and demographic policies in Romania³. He was deeply concerned with ethnic dynamics and the quantitative and qualitative negative consequences of the ethnic-mixed marriages in Transylvania (Solonari 2009, 69-70). In 1939, CIS published Râmneanţu's *Elemente de biometrie medicală și statistică vitală* (Râmneanţu 1939).

Manuilă also worked closely with Dimitrie Gusti (1880-1955), the sociology professor of Bucharest University and with his research teams (Trebici 1981, 656-659; Trebici 1999, 11-12; Golopenţia S. 2009, 11). They actively cooperated in several important research projects, like the Census of 1930 or the research project *60 de sate românești* (Georgescu and Golopenţia 1938), bringing together research personnel, resources and infrastructure. Many members of the CIS staff were recruited from the sociological research teams at different moments by Manuilă, especially after 1939, and many of them kept their positions until 1947-1950 (Rostás 2000, 81, 87; Golopenţia S. 2009, 10, 11, 170, 172). At CIS, Manuilă's closest collaborators in demographic research and vital statistics were the physician Dumitru C. Georgescu (1904-1974) and the sociologist Anton Golopenţia (1909-1951) (Trebici 1999, 657). Georgescu specialized in demography (Rostás 2000, 115), and worked as secretary of the 1930 Census (Rostás 2000, 141), and he soon became one of the most trusted collaborators of Manuilă at the CIS, ever more committed to demographic research and statistics (Rostás 2000, 250). Together with Manuilă, Georgescu published in 1938 the volume *Populația României* (Manuilă and Georgescu 1937). In addition to several studies of demographic research⁴, Georgescu also acted as the Secretary general of the 1941 census, coordinated by Manuilă at the CIS.

Anton Golopenţia (1909-1951) was a Philosophy graduate from the University of Bucharest (1933) (Trebici 2002, 12), and one of Gusti's brightest students. With a good knowledge of statistics, Golopenţia was hired by Manuilă at CIS in 1940, in the context of the general deterioration of social-sciences research conditions, determined by the outbreak of the 2nd World War (drastic budget cuttings, lay-offs in personnel), and became the head of the Research branch of the CIS (Golopenţia S. 2009, 12, 13).

As head of the research branch of the CIS, Golopenția employed at CIS many of his former students specializing in sociology from University of Bucharest, or researchers from the University of Cluj who took refuge at Bucharest after North-Eastern Transylvania was ceased to Hungary in august 1940 (e.g. Gh. Retegan, Nicolae Betea, Mihai Levente, Constantin Pavel, Roman Moldovan, Mircea Biji, Cornel Mănescu, Anton Rațiu) (Golopenția S. 2009, 11-12). With the significant “infusion” of social scientists brought from different research structures from Romania, mainly members of the Sociological School of Bucharest, CIS turned into a real “institute for social research” (Trebici 1999, 12). Golopenția also contributed to the methodology of the 1941 Population Census (Recensământ 1941), and was involved in the ethnographic research campaign commissioned by the Antonescu government to study the communities of Romanians who were identified in the territories from east of the Southern Bug River, during the Romanian Army’s Eastern military campaign (Trebici 2002, 10, 22, 28; Golopenția 2006; Achim 2001, 604-605).

In the changing political context of 1946-1947, Manuilă was cautious enough to leave Romania. He escaped the country in the fall of 1947, together with his wife, Veturia Manuilă (Oprea 2008), and established in the USA (Trebici 1995, 8). After Manuilă resigned from CIS (June 1947), Anton Golopenția overtook his position, and served as deputy director of the CIS between August 1947 and September 1948 (Golopenția S. 2009, 12, 13). The years 1947-1948 represented a turning point for the statistical research in Romania, marked by the beginning of a structural reorganization of its research agenda and institutional infrastructure (Trebici 1999, 11, 12).

A conference for the *Reorganization of Statistics* was organized in October 1947 and presided by Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, chief of the Economic Council and of the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, and Secretary-General of Romanian Communist Party (Conferința 1947, 14, 15). Representatives of several ministries, of the government and of the CIS took part at the conference (Conferința 1947, 80, 81).

During the conference, the little interest paid by the CIS to economic statistics in general, and to industrial and financial statistics in particular, was underlined (Conferința 1947, 21-23, 41, 48). The need of a new, centralized system of statistics, able to provide the economic data necessary for the central planning of the economy and the socialist reconstruction of the country was underlined throughout the 1947 conference. Gheorghiu-Dej made it clear from the very beginning: “Let us begin with the organization of a statistical system related to the economic process, a system of statistics meant to enlighten the inner-movements of the economic process” (Conferința 1947, 6). In this context, population statistics’ design and scope were redefined to fit the new paradigm. (Conferința 1947, 56-62). The study of “working population”

became the new major interest of population statistics and research, with an increased attention given to work and working force statistics (Conferința 1947, 71), and to research of the “social relations” (Conferința 1947, 61).

The epistemological reorientation of the statistical system was paralleled by important changes in institutional infrastructure and research personnel. In the summer of 1948, the Central Institute of Statistics was put in the subordination of the Central Planning Commission (*Comisiunea de Stat a Planificării*) (Trebici 1999, 12). While vital statistics continued to be collected in a satisfactory manner (Trebici 1999, 13), population statistics became more interested in different social aspects of the working force, preoccupied to obtain data regarding the social composition and living standards of the working force (Referat 1948, 27; Mărginean 2015; Mănescu and Vasilescu 1967).

After completing the works for the 1948 Population and the Agriculture Census (Golopenția and Onica 1948), and published the Population Census’ partial results (Golopenția and Georgescu 1948), both Georgescu and Golopenția were sacked from the CIS in the autumn of 1948 (Trebici 1999, 12). Georgescu managed to get a job as health statistician at the Institute of Oncology of the RPR Academy, where he later retired from (Rostás 2000, 250; Ţone 2013). Golopenția worked for a while as external collaborator of the Central Commission for Planification (CCP), receiving different research contracts at the recommendation of his former student, Miron Constantinescu, the chief of the Central Planning Commission and an important member of the Romanian Communist Party (Ornea 2001; Bosomitu 2014).

Between 1948 and 1954, the Central Institute of Statistics in Romania was shaken by a political turmoil. The atmosphere was full of suspicion and mistrust. A report written in the second of half of 1948 by a member of the CIS Party organization was informing about the unsatisfactory political situation of the CIS administration:

The most reactionary circles of the administration (Sabin Manuilă, the former director, closed to the Peasant Party circles, Negru Ion, etc.) have been sacked in the summer of 1947. Between the summer of 1947 and the summer of 1948 we have worked together with other reactionary elements left in the administration: A. Golopenția and Mitu Georgescu.[...] During this year [1948], Golopenția and Georgescu showed that they are not able to draw near the democratic [Communist] regime and hold their reactionary positions (Golopenția S. 2009, 54).

Another report (*Sinteza* 1949), from January 1949, underlined CIS’ involvement in the ethnographic studies commissioned by the Antonescu government in the USSR, as well as the wicked legacy of Manuilă and of his successor Golopenția, at the CIS: “Actually, nothing changed in the institution [after Manuilă’s departure], as he was replaced by his man [Golopenția]”

(*Sinteză* 1949, 2). The situation did not improve, not even after Golopenția was sacked, the report continued, given that

the senior employees escaped the cleansing process of the workforce, on the pretext that the CIS has highly-skilled workers, very difficult to replace. At the same time, the ever growing need of statistical data, requested by the government for the economic reconstruction of the country, became the most important thing [at the CIS], neglecting the recruitment of new, loyal employees. [...] On the contrary, because of the need for a bigger working staff, suspect elements, sacked by other institutions, were hired at the CIS. [...] Thus, the former administration of the CIS, previously hired by Antonescu's government, is still in charge [at the CIS] (*Sinteză* 1949, 3).

The document went on by accusing different employees of the CIS of being either incompetent or not enough dedicated to their work (e.g. Gh. Racoviță, Gh. Mihoc), or loyal to some "reactionary" political organizations (i.e. Gh. Retegan, the chief of the Work and Working force Statistical Service, accused of being loyal to the National Peasant Party), or unfaithful to the RCP (i.e. Mircea Biji) (*Sinteză* 1949).

The situation escalated at the CIS after its employees found themselves caught up in the internal fights of the Romanian Communist Party, in connection with their involvement in the "Pătrășcanu case" (Golopenția S. 2009, 84-89), the last Stalinist frame-up in Eastern Europe (Ilie 2006; Tismăneanu 2008, 62-68).

Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu (1900-1954) was a lawyer and social scientist, member of the Communist underground movement, who rose to political power after the *coupe d'état* of 23rd of August 1944. He played an important role in the *coupe d'état*, and served as Minister of Justice as representative of the RCP between 1944 and 1948. He was arrested in April 1948 for investigations and in June 1948 was accused of betrayal of the working class and allegiance with the bourgeoisie. Pătrășcanu was kept in arrest for six years, interrogated, investigated, trailed and condemned to death for "crimes against peace" and "crimes of high-treason" in April 1954, and was executed in April 1954 (Betea 2011; Tismăneanu 2008, 62-68).

48 persons – family members, friends, acquaintances, collaborators of L. Pătrășcanu were arrested and interrogated as witnesses in Pătrășcanu case (Betea 2011, 224). In the scenario created by Pătrășcanu's investigators three different political groups were connected, in order to substantiate with proofs to point out beyond doubt Pătrășcanu's guilt (Betea 2011, 311-333). Among these groups, the "group from Statistics" played a central position (Betea 2011, 312, 316).

Many of the employees hired at the beginning of the 1940s had leftist sympathies and political options, and some of them already were or soon

became members or supporters of the Communist Party of Romania (CPoR) (Golopenția S. 2009, 12). This is how a Communist underground group formed at CIS between 1941 and 1944, known as “the group of statistics” (Bucur Şchiopu, Anton Raşiu, Nicolae Betea, Belu Zilber, Mihail Levente-future chief of the Central Direction for Statistics, Cornel Mănescu-future Ministry for Foreign Affairs; Mircea Biji) (*Sinteză* 1949, ; Golopenția S. 2009, 12; Betea 2011 175, 310-311). Together with Manuilă and Golopenția, some of the members of the “group from Statistics” (Anton Raşiu, Nicolae Betea, Belu Zilber, Ştefan Popescu) also played an active role in the 23rd of August 1944 events (Betea 2011, 125-126, 132-135).

The CIS employees’ political involvement and allegiances proved very important for their destiny, and also for the epistemological (re)configuration of statistics at the end of the 1940s. The arrests and condemnations made in connection with Manuilă’s escape and the Pătrăşcanu case caused a turmoil in the statisticians’ world. Anton Golopenția was arrested in January 1950 (Golopenția S. 2009, 285-286) and investigated for his presumed involvement in Pătrăşcanu’s tentative of escape, and for his alleged anti-Soviet (he had participated as expert statistician of the Romanian delegation at the Peace Conference in Paris 1946) and anti-Communist attitude (Betea 2013, 312-315). He died in prison during the investigations, because of untreated tuberculosis (September 1951) (Betea 2013, 315).

Other CIS employees were trailed in 1954 together with Pătrăşcanu and condemned to prison (Anton Raşiu was condemned to 6 years of prison, Nicolae Betea and Constantin Pavel were condemned to 10 years of prison), while G. Retegan was cleared of accusations and released in the same year (Betea 2013, 333, 3777-378). Most of the CIS employees arrested in the Pătrăşcanu case survived the prison, the investigation and the trial, and some of them (e.g. Mihai Levente, George Retegan) worked again as researchers after their release from prison, while others (e.g. Anton Raşiu, Constantin Pavel, Nicoale Betea) did not.

Thus, at the beginning of the 1950s, Romania’s leading researchers and population statisticians, those who had coordinated the last 3 censuses (1930, 1941, 1948) and published the most important researches in the field, were gone: Manuilă had fled the country in 1947, Golopenția died in prison in 1951, while Dumitru C. Georgescu continued to work as health-statistician, and was not longer involved with the centralized system of population statistics. Together with them, other statisticians formed in the 1930s and 1940s left CIS in 1948 (Trebici 1995, 23). Statisticians may have learned from these traumatic experiences how difficult it was to live with the new regime, and how dangerously close scientific research became involved in political games. New times were coming.

At the end of the 1940s, the entire system of scientific knowledge production started to be reorganized upon the Soviet model. As E.A. Rees explained, in Central and Eastern Europe, Sovietization was taking place

at highest intellectual level, being reflected in the commandeering science, through academies and universities, and their effective submission to a Soviet Model, whereby the primacy of Soviet science was celebrated, and direct links were forged with Soviet research institutes and universities[...] And as in the USSR the party occupied a central role in directing science and harnessing it to the socialist project (Rees 2008, 23).

Between 1948 and 1955, Romanian Universities and the Romanian Academy, the most important institutions of scientific knowledge production in Romania, were severely affected by this process, in terms of staff and organizational structure (Someșan 2004, 241-268; Boia 2011, 253-257; Doboș D. 1995; Someșan and Mircea 1998; Someșan 2002; Ionescu-Gură 2005, 455-464; Popescu-Gorgan and Ilie-Voiculescu 1998). The Law of Education from August 1948 (Decret 1948) marked the restructuring of the education system, on the Soviet model (Diac 2004). Social research was almost dismantled, as, in a

gesture of free mimesis caused by a desire to align to the Soviet model, where sociology was considered to be a bourgeois-pseudoscience, Romania ended an important pre-war intellectual tradition. [...] University departments and specialized institutes were dissolved. The periodical publications disappeared as well, as sociology was eliminated among academic disciplines (Bosomitu 2012, 56).

Population statistics made no exception. While the collection of vital statistics continued during the 1950s at the central institution for statistics, renamed in 1952 *Direcția Centrală de Statistică* [Central Direction for Statistics-CDS], (Trebici 1999, 13), the research priorities changed, vital statistics being given less importance. In post-war Eastern Europe, the situation of demography differed from country to country, but generally, demographic research had a difficult time during the first half of the 1950s (Trebici 1996, 150; Klinger 1997, 95-96).

In Romania, the 1950s were marked by a Sovietization of the statistical system (Tulbure 2017, 339) as a new generation of statisticians, most of them trained in USSR at the beginning of the 1950s, stepped in (Trebici 1999, 16-17). A series of translations of Soviet statistical textbooks, together with training stages in USSR, contributed to a quick popularization and assimilation of Soviet statistical methods and principles (Trebici 1957, 12-13).

“Demography” as an analytical science was deemed unnecessary, as it was considered that vital statistics was furnishing enough data to understand the demographic evolution of a planned economy. During the 1950s, the USSR trained statisticians began to teach courses of vital statistics at the Institute for Economics and Planning “V.I. Lenin” (the former Academy of Commerce), whose content was similar to the Soviet textbooks of statistics (Trebici 1999, 17).

The epistemic transformations suffered by population research starting with the 1950s are reflected by the important changes in the analytic tools employed by the different post-war population Censuses. The 1948 Census was the swansong of the interwar demography, in both what research interests and research personnel are concerned (Trebici 1999, 12). In line with the 1930 and 1941 Censuses, the 1948 Census used as main unit of analysis the household (*gospodăria*), as the comparative use of the household size was useful to observe the “biological evolution of a given population” (Golopenția and Georgescu 1948, 17).

Less than a decade later, the 1956 census displayed distinctive features, soon after considered to be “bizarre,” a clear break from the interwar legacy: the use of “family” instead of the “household” as the basic unit of data registration and analysis, as well as new items to investigate the social structure of the country (Trebici 1999, 13). The use of “family” instead of “household” as main unit of data collection, decided upon “Muscovites” statisticians’ express request, made impossible a comparison between the 1956 census results with both the previous and the next ones (Trebici 1999, 13). This was also the first time that the item “religion” did not appear in the census questionnaire, and this situation was maintained within the other censuses to be realized during the Communist period (1966 and 1977) (Trebici 1999, 13). The place of birth of the respondent was not questioned either, an absolute novelty, which later proved detrimental for the investigation of migration (Trebici 1999, 14).

Moreover, the growing interest for the study of the social categories created through the socialist transformation of economy and society was reflected, for example, in the population censuses carried in Communist Romania since the 1950s, which made use of this analytic tool in order to explore some of the social consequences the socialist transformation of the country. The social category, defined as such by the position held in the relations of production (Recensământ 1956a, pp. 5-6), became operational in post-war Romania, turning into a significant element of the grid social reality was created and explored with.

The 1956 Census was the first one to employ the “social category” as a new analytic tool in an effort to understand the social stratification of the country. While the examination of professional situation in the previous censuses (1930, 1941) took into consideration the domain of activity of the respondents, without paying attention to their employment/property status, the

“social group” represented a homogenous category, defined in accordance with the main occupation of the respondent and with his/her employment, also comprising all the persons he/she had in care (Recensământ 1956, V-VI). The 1956 census operated with 11 social groups (workers, clerks, cooperative peasants, cooperative craftsmen, individual peasants, individual craftsmen, tradesmen, self-employed [*liber-profioniști*], etc.) (Recensământ 1956, XII-XIII).

The break with the interwar legacy was also accomplished at discursive level, as one of the aims of the new statistics was to “uncover” the class character of the “bourgeois” statistics (Trebici 1999, 13). New research structures for vital and sanitary statistics were established, and new names began to feature. In 1948, a Direction for Sanitary Statistics was established at the Ministry of Health, and later transferred at the Institute of Public Hygiene. The head of the new structure was the physician Petre Mureșanu (1917-2012), a doctor of internal medicine, who later specialized in biostatistics (Ionescu 2012). He published in 1957 a textbook of sanitary statistics, which contained several chapters dealing with vital statistics (Mureșanu 1957). In the introductory section of the book, Mureșanu openly criticized the interwar guard of demographers and biostatisticians, labelling Banu, Moldovan, Râmneanțu and other “members of the Rockefeller school” (a hint to Manuilă, maybe) as “bourgeois statisticians” promoters of “eugenics with ethnicist tones” (Mureșanu 1957, 16-17). The main fault of these “statisticians” was that, by trying to please the ruling elites, they did not address the social roots of the poor sanitary situation of the country, finding instead biological and racial explanations (Mureșanu 1957, 17).

Emil Mesaroș, a statistician trained in the USSR (Trebici 1999, 17), also published in 1957 a textbook of demographic statistics (Mesaroș 1957). Like Mureșanu, he openly criticized the interwar demographers and biostatisticians, naming Petru Rîmneanțu and Gh. Banu as exponents of eugenics and racism (Mesaroș 1957, 13-14). The same criticisms were undertaken by Mesaroș during the class of demographic statistics he was teaching at the Lenin Institute for Economics and Planning at the end of the 1950s (Trebici 1999, 17). Later (1969), Mesaroș also criticized the option of using the household as main unit of data registration and analysis, used for the 1948 census, as not the best solution for the analysis of family size and of its demographic structure (Mesaroș 1972, 2024).

The publication of the (provisional) results of 1956 Census triggered the interest for different aspects of population dynamics, as shown by the increasing number of articles published, mainly in *Revista de Statistică* [Journal of Statistics], the main periodical of the CDS, founded in 1952. The articles published at the end of the 1950s rather insisted on the positive aspects of population dynamics (the significant decrease of mortality rates, accompanied by the increase of life expectancy), brought by the investments made by the

Communist regime in healthcare, housing and education (Mesaroş 1957; Ferenbac, Mada and Lungu 1959; Iscovici 1959; Mada 1960).

However, the lack of involvement of population researchers (statisticians or physicians) in the decision to liberalize access to abortion on demand in 1957 (Trebici 1997) suggests the insignificant position population research had during the 1950s in Romania. The neglect of population researchers' opinions in an important matter, such the interruption of pregnancies, was later criticized by both healthcare professionals (Matioc and Costa 1963, 200-201) and population researchers (Zlătescu 1982, 238).

Back in Business...

Starting with the 1960s, demographic research and statistics experienced a period of growth throughout the region, in the political and ideological context created by destalinization, being prompted by the workforce necessities required by the ambitious plans of development assumed by the Communist regimes (Gregory 1982; Kosinski 1977).

In Romania, the articles of demography published at the beginning of the 1960s indicated concerns regarding population ageing and birth-rates decline, especially in the rural areas. Gh. Retegan (1916-1998), a former member of the Sociological School of Bucharest, and particularly close to Golopenția, arrested in connection with Pătrășcanu case (1950) and released from prison in 1954, showed interest in demographic research during the 1960s (Doboş C. 2020). In the articles dealing with evolution of population dynamics in the main cities of Romania, published at the beginning of the 1960s under the pseudonym G.R. Şerbu (Gheţău 1997, 8), he demonstrated that the increase of urban population was determined, before and after 1948, not by an increase in population growth, but by the massive migration from the countryside (Şerbu 1961a) (Şerbu 1961b) (Retegan 1965). Retegan also was the first to compute and analyse the evolution of female fertility in the post-war years, by using the brute reproduction rate, a synthetic index used by demographers since the interwar to measure the degree of population replacement in a society, and the results of his estimation are still valid today (Gheţău 1997, 4-5). He emphasized the pronounced decrease in birth rates after 1956, determined by the liberalization of abortion on request and by the increased use of contraceptive methods (Şerbu 1961a, 47, 51), underlying the importance of both quantitative and qualitative study of birth-rates evolution (Retegan 1963; Retegan 1964). The anxieties regarding the declining birth-rates grew during the 1960s. In addition to the signals given by statisticians, a series of physicians, specialists in obstetrics or in public medicine, began to express their worries concerning the harmful effects of (repeated) abortions for women's

reproductive capacity and for their offspring, and proposals to limit abortion on demand were formulated by physicians as early as 1962 (Doboş 2017).

In addition to the growing number of studies dealing with demographic issues, coherent demographic research re-emerged at the beginning of the 1960s around the research structures created during the 1950s at the Lenin Institute for Economics and Planning, at the Department of Statistics (later, Cybernetics). Vladimir Trebici, who would become one of the most important demographers of Romania during the 1970s, began to teach vital statistics at Lenin Institute in 1962 (Trebici 2011: 102). Trebici was a law graduate, who had been hired by Golopenția at CIS in the 1940s, and who gradually specialized in statistics (mainly industrial statistics) during the 1950s, working in different institutions of research and planning (Trebici 2011a; Trebici 2011b). In 1962, he undertook the class of demographic statistics at the Faculty of Statistics, and slowly turned the class on “demographic statistics” he inherited from his predecessor, Ioan V. Stoichiță, into a class on “demography” (Trebici 2011b: 103). With the help of Western demography books (especially French) from the library of the CDS, he upgraded the content of the course, which was still structured in a similar manner to the class of demographic statistics of the Soviet demographers A. Boiarski (Trebici 2011b: 103). But he gradually began to use in his class - without naming it, though- Rîmneamțu’s textbook of biostatistics. Rîmneamțu’s name, together with that of Manuilă, could not be openly mentioned yet (Trebici 1999, 18).

Demography’s slow revival took place in the context created by the “declaration of independence” from April 1964 (Trebici 1999, 14, 18), a document dealing with Romania’s economic policy, which marked the beginning of the country’s pronounced autonomy from the USSR’s hegemonic position in the Eastern bloc and had important consequences for the entire field of intellectual production (Verdery 1991: 105-106). With the Soviet influence in social sciences in Romania diminishing systematically, the (limited) re-claim of the interwar heritage and the (limited) (re)connection to the Western sciences became possible in social research. In the mid-1960s, the re-institutionalization of sociology (1965) marked the end of the “age of misery” experienced by social research after 1948 (Bosomitu 2012).

The population census of March 1966 was considered a departure from the former, Soviet-like, population census and was recognized years later (1999) as a “return to normalcy” (Trebici 1999, 18). The important differences between the 1956 and the 1966 Censuses were explained in epoch by the significant social and economic changes the society went through between the two censuses (Biji 1965, 5, 6), so that the statistics had to keep with the new realities. In fact, many elements of the March 1966 Census, meant to investigate the demographic realities caused by the socialist transformation of economy (mainly of completion of the cooperativization of agriculture, completed

in 1962 (Biji 1965, 5) were designed in accordance with the heritage of the 1930-1948 Censuses. The *household* was used again as the basic unity for data collection and interpretation, while the “place of birth” and “date of residence” were used as well, in order to determine the migration dynamics (Teodorof 1967, 365).

Generally, the 1966 Census was carefully prepared, in keeping up with the international standards and recommendations, and in the same time trying to find a middle ground between the 1930-1948 Censuses and the 1956 Census. Thus, the 1966 census also employed in its collection and presentation of data the social category, even if not identical with those used in the previous census, as it used 7 social categories (workers, intellectuals-clerks, cooperative peasants, independent peasants, craftsmen, etc.) (Recensământ 1966a, table 23, p. 364).

It was also the first time that electric computing machines were used for data aggregation, and this brought significant improvements in data treatment (Trebici 1999, 14). The overall improvements in population data collection, the methodological advancements in data aggregation, the multiplication of the sites of demographic knowledge production, the (re)emergence of the possibility to specialize in demographics, albeit in a limited form and only at post-graduate level, were an expression of the raising interest for population dynamics in the first half of the 1960s.

In the 1966 Census, a special attention was given to the investigation of feminine fertility. New items were introduced, such as an entire chapter dealing with the feminine fertility, motivated by the preoccupation for the evolution of birth-rates expressed in the first half of the 1960s, and the need for reliable data (Biji 1965, 6, 7). The feminine fertility was assessed regionally, on its urban/rural distribution, on age-groups, and in relationship with the education-level of the respondent. The grill of analysis of fertility levels carried on during the 1966 census lacks the correlation between the occupation and the social category of the respondents. This is somehow surprising, especially given the vivid preoccupation manifested by statisticians in Romania since the 1950s to collect information about the social categories created by the socialist transformation of the country. In spite of the fact that the 1966 Census employed in its collection and presentation of data seven social categories (workers, intellectuals-clerks, cooperative peasants, independent peasants, craftsmen, etc.), the fertility dynamics were presented only in relation with the feminine respondents' educational level, and not with other social and economic indices (occupation, revenue, social category) (Recensământ 1966b). Even though this assessment represented a novelty for a Census, and was recognized as such in the epoch (Teodorof 1965, 1365), the assessment of fertility in relationship not with the educational level, but with the ethnic origin of

the respondent, was a frequent measurement used by interwar demographers in the 1930s (MPR 1933, 122-125).

The growing number of studies, proposals and investigations regarding the causes and solutions for birth-rates decline signalled the emergence of a specific professional agenda in population research, gathered around pro-natalist ideas, motivated either by economic rationales regarding the working force age-structure and specialization, or by concerns related to women and children health.

The systematic concerns regarding the declining birth-rates found their expression in several studies elaborated in 1965-1966, under the coordination of the Ministry of Health. These studies examined the evolution and causes of birth-rates decline in post-war Romania, and offered possible solutions to improve the situation (the most important were socio-economic incentives, the limitation of abortion on request, and the promotion of modern contraception and sexual education) (Soare 2010, 115-126; Doboş 2017). They also called for the establishment of a central institution for demographic research to examine and improve population dynamics in Romania. Nevertheless, these studies were badly received by the political decision-makers, who basically did not take into account the proposed measures, believing that the most important cause of the declining births was the liberalization of access to abortion, and that the best measure to curtail them was to ban abortion on request. New measures, revolving around the severe limitation on access on abortion on request, were soon proposed by health officials, accepted by the political leaders, and implemented by the Government (Soare 2010, 127-136; Pălăşan 2009, 154-170). It was the beginning of the pronatalist policy of Ceauşescu's regime, a policy that lasted until December 1989, and which was considered one of the harshest pronatalist programs in the world, characterized by severe restrictions put on abortion on demand, accompanied by different measures of policing women's body, by the lack the modern contraception and sexual education, and by some modest social-economic incentives (Kligman 1998), (Doboş 2010).

Primarily determined, like in other Easter European countries, by the need to examine the size and structure of the working force, the revival of population research in Romania took place on a specific political and ideological background: the ideological relaxation that made possible the re-institutionalization of some of the social sciences rejected during the 1950s (Cotoi 2011, 142), the denunciation of Soviet undisputed hegemony, the political and intellectual rehabilitation of Pătrăşcanu (1968) and of many of those who had been dragged and accused in connection with his "case" (Betea 2009, 405-458), together with the selective recuperation of the interwar cultural and scientific heritage (Verdery 1991, 28, 71, 112, 168.), including the interwar pronatalist agenda (Bucur 2002, 227-228).

Institutionalization of Demographic Research: Back to the (interwar) Roots

Brought into the political arena and transformed into a subject of governmental interest, the pronatalist worries coming from population statisticians and public health researchers paved the way for the (re)institutionalization of demographic research in Romania (Doboş 2017). Expressed since the middle of the 1960s, the need of a central institution to coordinate demographic research in Romania was reasserted after 1966 (Trebici 1968), in the context of the pronatalist program undertaken by the Ceausescu regime. In 1968, the highest political circles decided to organize a research structure (Soare 2011) to study “the social and economic consequences of demographic phenomena” (Directive 1969, 16).

The National Commission of Demography [*Comisia Națională de Demografie* - NCD] was established in 1971, as a central organization to coordinate demographic research and to draw population policy proposals, put under the authority of the State Council (Lege 1971). Many members of the NCD were economists (Decret 1971; Decret 1974), and the main research interest of the NCD was to study the economic consequences of population dynamics, an interest that was shared by other research structures (such as the Academy for Economic Studies, the Academy of Social and Political Sciences, the Institute for World Economics of the Romanian Academy). This led to the expansion of the domain of demo-economics, which further flourished under the new structures for social research created at the beginning of the 1970s at the Academy for Social and Political Sciences (established in February 1970), and the studies of demo-economics constantly grew (Trebici 1971; Halus 1969, 1970, 1974; Bulgaru 1974, 1986; Mesaroş 1976; Băloiu 1975; Grigorescu 1976; Despa 1986).

The participation to the transnational debates on population also contributed to the diversification of Romanian demography research interests, connecting them to the contemporary debates over population, resources and development (Doboş 2018a). Starting with the 1960s, but especially during the 1970s, Romanian population researchers increasingly participated to the international debates which questioned the influence population dynamics on the economic and social advancements of the underdeveloped or developing nations.

The international debate on population and development reached a peak at the World Population Conference in Bucharest (1974), where the Romanian delegation – as representative of the host country – had an important voice and exerted a great deal of influence upon the documents adopted at the Bucharest conference. The Romanian delegation, where different members of the NCD played a preeminent role, expressed a pro-populationist position, supporting the idea that a growing population could represent a valuable

resource to contribute to economic development of a country, and illustrated this perspective with examples taken from the post-war evolution of Romania's population dynamics and macroeconomic achievements. Thus, during the 1970s, the pro-populationist perspective supported for different reasons by Romanian demographers before and after World War II, was re-casted during the 1970s in the developmentalist terms of this international debate (Doboş 2018b).

The resurgence of the pro-natalist ideas during the 1960s and the 1970s was paralleled by the recuperation of some of the interwar population researchers, who were openly sacked or criticized in the second half of the 1950 (Bucur 2002, 226-227). In fact, during the 1960s and 1970s many of the professionals and other members of the intelligentsia who survived the marginalization and the successive waves of repression of the late 1940s and 1950s "filtered back into bureaucratic and professional professions, and by the late 1960s, they formed a distinct strata of aging, well-educated, bitter civil servants and teachers" (Chirot 1978: 462).

Petre Râmneanţu, for example, who was exposed during the 1950s for his fascist ideas, began to be very active during the second half of the 1960s, when he warned the political officials about the perils of depopulation, asking for immediate intervention (Bucur 2002, 227-228). His efforts did not go unnoticed, and his studies began to be published again during the 1970s (Râmneanţu 1974).

Following the general revalorization of the cultural interwar heritage, the re-institutionalization of sociology and the (partial) recovery of interwar sociology and sociologists after 1965 (Cotoi 2011, 142), the reception of interwar demography (and demographers) also began to change. Generally, the interest for interwar public medicine grew during the 1970s (Bucur 2002, 229-230). In several articles dedicated to the history of demography in Romania, the interwar disciplinary filiations (public medicine, sociology) started to be presented as a valuable legacy of socialist demography (Trebici 1981, 656-661), while different interwar population researchers (Banu, Râmneanţu, Moldovan, Manuilă), considered to have been ill-judged as racists and reactionaries during the "dogmatic era" of the 1950s (Trebici 1981, 660; Trebici 1988), were presented as founders of modern demographic research in Romania (Trebici 1981, 654-661).

Râmneanţu's *Elemente de biometrie medicală* [Elements of Medical Biometric], published in 1939 with a foreword by Moldovan, was recognized as "the first textbook of population statistics and demography" issued in Romania (Trebici 1981, 660-661). The contribution brought by other interwar demographers cast away at the end of the 1940s, like Golopenţia or Georgescu, started also to be acknowledged (Trebici 1981, 657-658). In the same vein, the Sovietization of statistics, and the marginalization of sociology and

demography marked a “dogmatic era” in social research, which lasted until mid-1960s (Trebici 1981, 661). The use of the term “dogmatism” to refer to the period of strong Soviet influence is symptomatic for the national turn that started after the 1964 “declaration of independence” (Verdery 1991, 111-112). In this context, “dogmatism” was used to qualify “the imposition of alien interpretations and values upon the national heritage, motivated by a dogmatic Stalinist view of what social transformation required” (Verdery 1991, 112).

After 1990, the legacy of the interwar demography and of the “hygienists-physicians” (Iuliu Moldovan, Sabin Manuilă, Petre Râmneanţu or Gh. Banu) became ever more important (Trebici 1996, 149). The history of demography in Romania continued to be written as a linear story that began in the 1930s and continued until the present, disturbed only by political interference that produced unwanted episodes- such as the Sovietization of statistics during the 1950s when demography, along with sociology, were rejected on ideological grounds as a “bourgeois science,” or the foolish episodes of the harsh pronatalist policy of Ceauşescu regime (Trebici 1996; Trebici 1999; Trebici 1995). In this linear narrative, the 1948 Census was presented as a “model of analysis,” gathering an “impressive documentation” (Trebici 1999, 12), in antithesis with the 1956 census, considered to be just an expression of Soviet statistics put in practice by USSR trained statisticians, was presented as a “weirdness” that broke up with Romanian traditions (Trebici 1999, 13-14), which was fortunately followed by the 1966 census - a return to “normality,” that is to the interwar legacy (Trebici 1999, p.12).

Conclusion

Openly contested in the 1950s, interwar demography and demographers were rediscovered in the 1960s and gradually rehabilitated starting with the 1970s. The interwar legacy proved enduring despite the disciplinary and epistemic transitions that structured the (re)institutionalization of demographic research starting with the 1960s.

The important infrastructure of demographic research and vital statistics built during the interwar period contributed to the survival of this legacy, despite the post-war political and ideological changes. The endurance of this legacy can be also explained in the general context of the nationalist revival that started after 1964 and grew during the 1970s, structuring the entire field of cultural production, but also by the resilience of some of the population researchers active before 1945, who were marginalized during the 1950s, but some of them were recuperated in the 1960s and 1970s.

During Ceaușescu's pronatalist regime, the resurgence of population research was favoured by the successful translation of the pro-natalist ideas that haunted the interwar imaginary in ideologically acceptable terms that fitted the plans of rapid economic growth put forward by the Communist regime (Montias 1967; Jowitt 1971; Murgescu 2010; Ban 2014). However, the adjustment of demography's methodological tools to the ideological demands of the day is suggestive for the way in which social sciences are indebted to the socio-political realities they are called to investigate.

The fragmented recovery of the interwar cultural legacy became possible in the national(ist) atmosphere promoted by the Communist regime in Romania since the mid-1960s, that structured the entire field of intellectual production. Thus, the resurgence of population research was followed by the discursive valorisation of the interwar demography and demographers, especially of the scientific character of their research - as opposed to the rather dubious character of the Soviet inspired statistics from the "dogmatic era."

An important piece in the strategy of legitimization used by the emerging field of population research, the rejection of the Soviet influence and the recovery of the interwar heritage, led to the uncritical reception of the political facets and scientific value of this legacy, a trend which accentuated during the 1990s (Bucur 2002, 229-231).

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Endnotes

- 1 While Viorel Achim expressed his doubts about a clear-cut connection between the population exchange program drawn by Manuilă in October 1941 and the Romanian Holocaust, Vladimir Solonari is certain that this program was the overture for the destruction of (Bessarabian) Jews and large parts of the Roma people from Romania. See Achim 2001, 605, 607; Solonari 2009, 1-3.

- 2 Petre Râmneanțu, Dr. Oprea, “Mișcarea natalității în Banat” [Natality Movement in Banat], *Buletin Eugenic și Biopolitic* [Eugenic and Biopolitical Bulletin] (BEP), 1928, vol. 2; Petre Râmneanțu, “Calcularea populației viitoare din Banat, Crișana, Maramureș, Bucovina, Basarabia, Vechiul Regat și România” [Computing the Future Population in Banat, Crișana, Maramureș, Bucovina, Bessarabia, Old Kingdom, and Romania], “Studiu asupra depopulării Banatului. Cauzele depopulării. Rezultatele anchetei demografice din comuna Vărădia, jud. Caraș” [Study on Depopulation in Banat. Causes of Depopulation. Results of Demographic Inquiry in Vărădia, County of Caraș], “Studiu asupra depopulării Banatului. Rezultatele anchetei demografice din comuna Banloc jud. Timiș-Torontal” [Study on Depopulation in Banat. Results of Demographic Inquiry in Banloc, Timiș-Torontal County], *BEP*, 1935, vol. 6; Petre Râmneanțu, Dr. Perhăiță, dr. L. Modran, “Mișcarea populației în Ardeal de la 1901-1910” [Population Movement in Ardeal during 1901-1910], *BEP*, 1935, vol. 6; Petre Râmneanțu, “Studiu asupra depopulării Banatului. Cauzele depopulării. Partea III. Rezultatele anchetei demografice din comuna Jablanița, jud. Severin.” [Study on Depopulation in Banat. Causes of Depopulation. Part III. Results of Demographic Inquiry in Jablanița, Severin County], “Studiu asupra depopulării Banatului. Cauzele depopulării. Partea IV. Propuneri, în legătură cu organizarea acțiunii contra depopulării” [Study on Depopulation in Banat. Causes of Depopulation. Part IV. Suggestions for Actions against Depopulation], “Corelația dintre nupțialitate și natalitate, bazată pe proporțiile acestor fenomene demografice din comunele rurale din Banat” [Correlation between Nuptiality and Natality based on the Proportions of these Demographic Phenomena in Rural Settlements in Banat], *BEP*, 1936, vol. 7; Petre Râmneanțu, “Soluțiuni în legătură cu problema declinului etnic al populației românești din Banat” [Solutions for Ethnic Decline in Romanian Populations in Banat], *Revista Institutului Social Banat-Crișana* [Journal of the Social Institute Banat-Crișana], 1936, no. 4; “Biotype and Fertility of Women from the Province of Banat (Rumania),” *Congrès International de la Population*, vol. 8, *Problèmes Qualitatifs de la Population*, Paris, Ed. Hermann, 1938, pp. 14-20.
- 3 Petre Râmneanțu, “The Growth of the Population in Romania,” *Population: Journal of the International Union for the Scientific Study of Population Problems*, 1935, vol. 6; Petre Râmneanțu, “Evoluția structurii pe vârstă a populației din România” [Evolution of Age Based Structure of Population in Romania], *BEP*, 1937, vol. 8; Petre Râmneanțu, “Studiul natalității și efectul reproducerii diferențiate a populației asupra calităților ei viitoare” [Study of Natality and the Effect of Differentiated Reproduction on Its Future Qualities], *BEP*, 1942, vol. 13, “Măsuri de politică demografică și politica demografică totalitară” [Measures of Demographic Politics and Totalitarian Political Demography], *BEP*, 1940, vol. 11; “Tendențe în vitalitatea neamurilor din Transilvania” [Tendencies in the Vitality of Peoples in Transylvania], *BEP*, 1944, vol. 15; “Statistică vitală” [Vital Statistics], in Iuliu Moldovan, Petre Râmneanțu and I. Stoichiță *Tratat de sănătate publică* [Treaty of Public Health], Cluj, 1946; Petre Râmneanțu, Oprea, G., *Mișcarea natalității în Banat prin avorturi criminale* [Natality Movement in Banat through Criminal

Abortions], Cluj, Tipografia Ardealul, 1928 - bibliography partially selected from the sources presented in Marius Turda, ed. 2015. *The History of East-Central European Eugenics, 1900-1945*, London, Bloomsbury Academic.

- 4 Among Georgescu's most important demographic studies: D.C. Georgescu, "Evoluția demografică a satului Cornova 1817-1930" [Demographic Evolution of the Cornova Village], *Arhiva pentru știință și reformă socială* [Archive for Science and Social Reform], 1932, vol. 10, X, no. 1-4; "Planul general pentru cercetarea cadrului biologic" [General Framework for Research of the Biologic Plan], în *Îndrumări pentru monografiile sociologice redactate sub direcția științifică a d-lui Prof. D. Gusti* [Guide for Sociological Research Edited under the Scientific Guidance of Prof. D. Gusti], ICS Publishing House, Bucharest, 1940; *Demografia și igiena populației* [Demography and Population Hygiene]. Fragment from *Drăguș, un sat din Țara Oltului (Făgăraș)* [Drăguș, a Village from Oltului County (Făgăraș)], Bucharest, Publishing House of the Romanian Social Institute, 1945.