

ARTICLE

# Academic Mobility and Epistemological Change in State Socialist Romania

## Three Generations of Sociologists, Western Social Science, and Quality of Life Research

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### Abstract

This article explores the connection between academic mobility, epistemological change, and generational belonging in state socialist Romania. Drawing on insights from intellectual history and recent literature on the use of generation as an analytical concept for the study of state socialism, it addresses academic mobility both as a generation-defining experience and a source of epistemological change. On the issue of generations, it reviews the types of academic mobility available and their roles in the careers of social scientists trained before 1945, in the early 1950s, and after the re-institutionalization of sociology in 1966. Across these three generations, this article analyzes how academic mobility was reflected in the knowledge produced on one theme in particular: quality of life. Empirical and theoretical research on quality of life in Romania was carried out under the umbrella of futurology (early 1970s), socialist modes of living/lifestyle studies (late 1970s–early 1980s), and finally demography and migration studies (1980s).

### Keywords

Marxist sociology; academic mobility; quality of life research; Socialist Romania

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In the immediate post-1989 period, the history of Romanian sociology underwent two important reconceptualizations. On the one hand, the interest in interwar sociology dominated the search for a “usable past” for the discipline. The state socialist period was described as one of almost complete rupture, even though starting in the 1960s the cultural politics of partial “re-valorization” of the intellectual heritage previously marginalized as “bourgeois” had made possible discussions about interwar sociology.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, new histories of sociology described scholarship stemming

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<sup>1</sup> While there is a rich literature on interwar sociology and its reception during state socialism (among others, by Zoltán Rostás, Ștefan Bosomitu, and Călin Cotoi), its place in the restructuring of the discipline after 1989 is much less discussed. For an attempt at a long-term social history of Romanian sociology, see Zamfir 2015.

from the state socialist period as heavily limited by ideological constraints and severely lagging behind the development of the discipline in the West (Costea 1998; Larionescu 2007). The lack of access to Western literature, methods, and computational infrastructure in sociology, and consequently, the perceived backwardness of Romanian sociology during and after state socialism are recurring topics in oral history interviews with sociologists trained under state socialism, one of which I discuss in detail in the last section of this paper. These two approaches—the drive to establish a continuity with the severed tradition of interwar sociology and the interpretation of sociology under state socialism as either overly ideologized or backward—have marginalized questions about the production of sociological knowledge locally and the circulation of sociological knowledge transnationally during state socialism. In this context, academic mobility was interpreted in post-socialist public discourse either as a privilege that required political compliance or as proof of scholarly merit beyond necessary ideological compromises.

This paper sets out to explore the connection between academic mobility, epistemological change, and generational belonging in state socialist Romania. It reviews the role of academic mobility broadly defined in the careers of several sociologists and in the elaboration of one research topic in particular. Academic mobility could take the form of participating in international conferences, conducting collaborative research within regional working groups that involved regular meetings over almost a decade, exchange periods spent abroad, and internal mobility—the latter being a form of academic mobility taking place within the local branches of international organizations. Drawing on insights from intellectual history and on recent literature on the use of generation as an analytical concept for the study of state socialism, I approach academic mobility both as a source for epistemological change and as a generation-defining experience.

Based on my intellectual history analysis of social thought and sociological knowledge in state socialist Romania (Hîncu 2019), I identify three approaches to the study of social reality after de-Stalinization: 1) the revisionist Marxism of the second half of the 1950s and early 1960s, stemming from the critical engagement with historical materialism by social scientists trained in the interwar or immediate postwar period, and leading to either so-called “concrete sociological research” or Marxist humanism; 2) what I term the “everyday Marxism-Leninism” and the Marxist sociology of the 1960s–1970s, developed at the research institutes belonging to the Academy of Social and Political Sciences and at the university, respectively, which sought to develop social theory and carried out empirical research on issues laid down in party directives, such as “social homogenization,” urbanization, or the “multilaterally developed socialist society”; and 3) the social engineering of the 1970s–1980s, an eclectic intellectual mix of interwar monographic research, French and American sociology from the 1950s and 1960s, and critical Marxist theory (e.g., Gramsci, the Frankfurt School, Praxis), in which the cohorts of students graduating from sociology under state socialism were trained.

The observation that these different styles of sociological reasoning correspond to different generations of social scientists rests on what Anna Artwińska and Agnieszka Mroziak described as a sociological approach to the issue of generation, which aims to “accentuate the alleged shared fate and experiences of certain groups of people, born more or less in the same period of time and bound by ‘common’ life events of ideological or historical nature” (Artwińska and Mroziak 2020: 10). The boundaries between generations were never clear-cut. Cross-generational continuities and contestation happened in a shifting political, institutional, and intellectual landscape, in which social scientists formed and re-formed alliances based on temporary networks of patronage, mentorship, or shared intellectual curiosity. To this, one should add the ways in which the history of social thought under state socialism is remembered in the post-socialist period by social scientists themselves in

memoirs, autobiographies, and oral history interviews. As remarked by James Mark, these sources reveal “the range of acceptable stories available to individuals in the post-socialist period, [...] highlighting the clashes between past experiences and new ideas of what is politically and morally appropriate” (Mark 2010: xxv). Along the lines drawn by Artwińska and Mroziak, this opens up for analysis the constructed nature of generation, intricately tied to the memory politics of the post-socialist period (Artwińska and Mroziak 2020: 11). Importantly, it also raises the question of the extent to which, as an analytical concept and a form of self-identification, intellectual generation is to a large degree gendered male, corresponding to the typical personal and professional paths of male academics under state socialism.

How does academic mobility fit into this account of generations? Social scientists did not just have different formative experiences as communist activists and intellectuals, but also different opportunities for transnational encounters. For the generation of social scientists trained during the interwar period, I show how continued participation in international conferences during the 1960s allowed them to push for the de-Stalinization of Marxist social science at home. For the generation of social scientists trained during the immediate postwar period, who had the opportunity for long-term scholarships abroad in the 1960s and 1970s, I explore how these experiences resulted in epistemological change not through the simple transfer of knowledge or research instruments, but from a position critical of both Western and socialist social science. Finally, for the generation of sociologists trained beginning in the second half of the 1960s, for whom the options for international mobility had by then dwindled, I discuss the importance of international research centers set up in Bucharest for “internal academic mobility”—the experience of being embedded in a different academic culture and benefiting from its resources without leaving Romania. Finally, whereas in this paper I explore how academic mobility was tied to epistemological and generational change, the question remains to what extent in the post-socialist period the common experience of academic mobility served as a basis to restructure the sociological profession that cut across generational divides.

In the following sections, I discuss different types of academic mobility most common for social scientists belonging to the three generations outlined in this introduction. These often depended on the scholars’ institutional affiliations and on informal networks. For example, being a researcher of the Academy made exchanges within the network of social scientists from state socialist countries more likely, while sociologists from the interwar period could facilitate exchanges through their pre-existing scholarly networks. In order to address the issue of epistemological change, I analyze in more detail how academic mobility was reflected in the knowledge produced on one theme in particular: quality of life. Empirical and theoretical research on quality of life in Romania was carried out under the umbrella of futurology (early 1970s), socialist modes of living/lifestyle studies (late 1970s–early 1980s), and finally demography and migration studies (1980s). Other research topics registered generational change and the impact of academic mobility at different rhythms, complicating the usual periodization of knowledge production in state socialist Romania according to the chronology of political change—e.g., Sovietization, thaw, “neo-Stalinism” (Tismăneanu 2003).

## **FIRST GENERATION: FROM HISTORICAL MATERIALISM TO CONCRETE SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH**

The emergence of new ideas and practices of observing, analyzing, and intervening in the social realities of socialist society in Romania was initially made possible by the development of revisionist Marxist and Marxist humanist thought in the early 1960s. As elsewhere in the Eastern bloc (Voise

2012), debates over the relationship between the main disciplines of Marxism-Leninism (historical materialism, scientific socialism, and Marxist sociology) in the early 1960s opened up space for empirical approaches to social reality, or so-called “concrete sociological research.” In the Romanian case, the move was emancipatory not just for the re-emerging discipline of sociology (institutionalized only in the second half of the 1960s), but also for Marxist social thought. This led to the theoretical reworking in the 1970s of the relationship between the individual and society in socialism, and to decentering the collectivist ethos characteristic of Stalinist Marxism-Leninist philosophy in the 1950s.

The main actors in this shift were professors of historical materialism from the main university centers throughout the country. Many of them were of Jewish descent, had experienced discrimination, genocide, and displacement in one of the territories belonging to or annexed by Romania during the Second World War, or had survived the Holocaust following the deportations of the Jewish population from Transylvania by the Horthy administration. Their commitment to the communist cause had been closely bound to anti-fascist activism and postwar reconstruction, including the establishment of the Stalinist canon of Marxist-Leninist social science. Yet by the mid-1950s, initial attempts at de-Stalinization were stifled in Romania in the wake of Khrushchev’s “secret speech” and especially the 1956 Hungarian revolution. Philosophers defended historical materialism against encroachment from scientific socialism (perceived as the most dogmatic, anti-intellectual discipline) in order to secure their fragile institutional arrangements in the unpredictable context of de-Stalinization. The issue of expertise and especially access to non-socialist literature and intellectual networks became a crucial point of contention.

The generation of social scientists trained during the interwar period could still rely on institutional and personal connections forged before the Second World War. The most notable case was that of Henri H. Stahl, one of the prominent members of the Bucharest School of Sociology formed in the 1920s around the sociologist Dimitrie Gusti. Stahl remained connected to the French sociological and anthropological milieu and could continue his work as well as the intellectual dialogue on issues of rural studies and uneven development throughout the state socialist period (Guga 2015). Younger social scientists, who had been trained in philosophy in the 1950s but became interested in concrete sociological research, could also access these pre-existing networks through the mediation of the sociologists trained in the interwar period. These connections could be made either directly by travelling to France or Germany for short periods of time, or indirectly by going back to the sociological literature published by these sociologists before the Second World War.

For most social scientists of the first generation, however, academic mobility took the form of participation in international conferences and membership (at times leadership) of international associations. Initially prompted by the regime’s interest in representation, as suggested by the case of the National Sociological Committee established in 1959 without any sociologist members, engagement in international forums gradually became less of a pretext to emphasize the differences between bourgeois and socialist science, and more of an opportunity for dialogue (Bosomitu 2017). The paradigmatic case here is that of Miron Constantinescu, a sociologist trained in the late 1930s who had held high ranking positions in the party and as a member of the Central Committee had attempted de-Stalinization following Khrushchev’s secret speech, but was subsequently marginalized and only rehabilitated in the mid-1960s. Constantinescu was the main force behind the re-institutionalization of sociology at the University of Bucharest in 1965. He became the “patron” of the discipline until his death in 1974, initiating large-scale studies of urbanization as well as experimental programs for the scientific management of planning activities locally. As the head of the newly established Academy

of Social and Political Science (1970–72), Constantinescu was the most important Romanian representative in the International Sociological Association, and subsequently was also elected as a member of the organizing committee of the 1974 World Congress (Bosomitu 2014). From this position, he articulated the role of Romanian sociology as a mediator between bourgeois and socialist sociologies.

The field of future studies offers one final example of the role of academic mobility for the first generation of social scientists under state socialism. As head of the Romanian Futurological Committee, chair of the organizing committee for the Third World Future Studies Conference held in Bucharest in 1974, and member of the World Future Studies Federation, the philosopher-turned-Marxist futurologist Pavel Apostol worked towards carving common ground between Marxist and non-Marxist perspectives on the future. In an article translated into Italian, German, and English, Apostol argued that the work of Marx, and in particular his vision of social development, had been simplified by dogmatic Marxism as well as superficial bourgeois criticism to the point of postulating a deterministic, linear view of historical change. In the context of sustained discussions about the Global South in the 1970s, Apostol maintained that a clarification of the Marxist structure of the future was made all the more necessary by the “unstable equilibrium” of what he called “the three great partial systems of our contemporary world”: the capitalist, the socialist, and the developing systems. It was their interdependence that future studies would need to account for moving forward, rather than speaking only to the interest of one’s own system (Apostol 1972: 203). In the second half of the 1970s, Apostol elaborated a comprehensive approach to the future that synthesized the anthropological assumptions of Marxist humanism, a dialectical methodology for the study of the future, and a critical approach to global modeling (Apostol 1977: 319).

Apostol’s experience of “academic mobility” in the field of futurology is also reflected in his approach to the issue of quality of life. In a series of colloquia for social scientists organized by the Sociological Laboratory at the University of Bucharest, he reported on the ongoing discussions about the use of objective and subjective indicators in the operationalization of “quality of life” within the World Futures Federation and by the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (for a history of the social indicators movement starting in the 1960s, see Land and Michalos 2018). The latter’s expert commission, he explained, refused to include subjective indicators because that would have meant accounting for “the element of class judgement.” Meanwhile, the working group on the quality of life which met at the Fourth World Future Studies Conference in Rome had almost unanimously accepted the proposal put forward by Apostol and the physics Nobel Laureate Dennis Gabor to also include subjective quality of life indicators in models of social prognosis (Dezbaterea 1973: 23–24). Apostol argued that while planning for the quality of life should be the main aim of social development, it should not be limited to projecting into the future the existing structure of social indicators; it should ensure the future freedom to choose and prioritize indicators for the people themselves. Echoing his analysis of the Marxist structure of the future, Apostol maintained that the study of quality of life should in fact be a study of the structure that could guarantee such freedom for members of a future society (Apostol 1975: 197–203). Drawing on the work of social scientists from state socialist countries and the Global South who challenged the global developmental models elaborated in the 1970s, and especially *The Limits to Growth* (Botkin, Elmandja, and Malița 1979), he projected the central role of “education for the future” in enabling both individuals and communities “to master the social technology of creating and governing free societies, free people who have the social minimum necessary guaranteed for the non-manipulated satisfaction of their fundamental needs and the free choice of their quality of life” (Apostol 1977: 319).

In her work on futurology under state socialism, Jenny Andersson argued that futurology “was shaped on a plane between the two poles of tight regime control and dissent.” Whereas in the international networks in which they were embedded the work of socialist futurologists “could be anchored in a long historical humanistic heritage,” Andersson contended, “in their own contexts, socialist future research existed in a space squarely defined by Marxism Leninism and its prescription of the future as a singular and law-driven entity” (Andersson 2018: 126). The case of Pavel Apostol illustrates that this tension was in fact actively negotiated, resulting in the formulation of a Marxist humanist approach to the future that sought to integrate global and local approaches to social development in the 1970s and redefine quality of life as a measure of people’s freedom. His work illustrates the globalization of the field of future studies in the 1970s, “shifting its perspective from a West–East and technology-driven slant towards a global and human-centered one” (Seefried 2017: 40).

## **SECOND GENERATION: “EVERYDAY MARXISM-LENINISM” / MARXIST SOCIOLOGY**

For the second generation of social scientists under state socialism—that is, those who received their degrees, usually in philosophy, in the 1950s and early 1960s—opportunities for academic mobility to the West opened up in the second half of the 1960s. This was the generation most likely to access long-term research fellowships in Western Europe and the United States, through exchange programs for Romanian scholars managed by UNESCO, the Ford Foundation starting in 1962 (Ban 2016: 120), and IREX starting in 1968 (Capodilupo 1984; Faure 2018). The average age of Romanian IREX fellows in the social sciences and humanities at the start of their fellowship was 37. Of the 61 fellowships awarded for SSH disciplines in the 1968–78 period, 12 were in the field of sociology, ethnology, and political science (which in practice were very similar in the Romanian case). Only history and archival science (15) and economics (13) counted more fellows at the time.<sup>2</sup> To illustrate the alternative mobility and career paths of IREX fellowship recipients, and especially how the experience of a longer period of study abroad was integrated into the project of “everyday Marxism-Leninism” or Marxist sociology, in what follows I detail the case of two sociologists from the second generation: Oscar Hoffman and Mihail Cernea.

Oscar Hoffman’s career is exemplary for what I identify as the theoretical engagement with “everyday Marxism-Leninism.” Hoffman studied at the Philosophy Faculty of the University of Bucharest from 1949 to 1953, at the height of the Stalinist period. After several years of teaching at the university, he lost his position when he refused to appear in court at a series of trials organized against students in 1958. In 1968, he became a researcher at the recently established Center for Sociological Research of the Romanian Academy (later the Academy of Social and Political Sciences), a position which he kept through several institutional reorganizations and a revolution, until his retirement in 2007.

In October 1971, Hoffman travelled to the Soviet Union for an exchange in the field of industrial sociology,<sup>3</sup> and from September 1972 until January 1973 he was an IREX fellow in the United States, where he studied social structure research. Hoffman met with sociologists from several universities,

<sup>2</sup> Based on the “International Research and Exchanges Board Records: A Finding Aid to the Collection in the Library of Congress,” Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., 2011, <https://www.loc.gov/rr/mss/finding-aids/IREX.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> Arhivele Naționale ale României, București, Fund Academia de Științe Sociale și Politice, Secția Sociologie [henceforth ANR, ASSP—Sociologie], file 6/1971, “Schimburi de experiență, vizite de informare și documentare științifică” [Exchanges, scientific research and documentation visits], 50.

most notably Columbia, Harvard, Boston, Northern Illinois, University of Chicago, University of Pennsylvania, and University of California, Berkeley. Upon his return, he reported to the Academy that in the field of social structure research, American sociologists were increasingly interested in macro-sociological theoretical analyses of social classes, social mobility, and stratification, instead of just conducting descriptive empirical studies. According to Hoffman, they showed a more critical bent and an interest in Marxist theory than before, but studied Marx mostly through secondary literature and refused to accept the political consequences of the Marxist analysis of class relations.<sup>4</sup> This evaluation of American sociology reflected Hoffman's institutional and intellectual position as a researcher of the Academy. As principal investigator at the Center for Sociological Research, he was heavily embedded in the regional networks of scholarly exchange and collaboration set up among the academies of the Soviet Union and the other state socialist countries. For the rest of the 1970s and into the 1980s, Hoffman was regularly involved in academic exchanges within this network, investing intellectually in the project of a socialist theory of social structure (Hîncu 2018).

One's experience of academic mobility through IREX also depended on the choice of university, which in the absence of prior contacts was largely a matter of chance. Moreover, upon their return, those who spent time abroad could find themselves treated with caution, suspicion, or even hostility. Such was the case of Mihail Cernea, criticized for applying American sociological theories to Romanian experiences—specifically, the theory of organizations to the analysis of the agricultural cooperative, an approach he developed while on a fellowship at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences, Stanford University, in 1970–71 (Cernea 1974b). Cernea had joined the Philosophy Institute of the Romanian Academy in 1959 and in the early 1960s was one of the first promoters of concrete sociological research, first on the topic of socialist consciousness and then on issues of rural sociology, travelling for a short study trip to Paris through the mediation of Henri H. Stahl.

Cernea's time at Stanford was exceptionally productive, and after returning he published a volume of interviews he conducted with prominent American sociologists (Reuben Hill, Stanton Wheeler, John Kunkel, Alvin Bertrand, Elliot Aronson, and Immanuel Wallerstein), which offered Romanian readers an overview of the cutting-edge American sociology at the time. In the book's final chapter, Cernea described the increasing radicalization of the American sociological field since the end of the 1960s, and argued that the interest in research on social inequality, social indicators, and social problems stemmed from this contestation of the conservatism of academic sociology by radical sociologists. In effect, he was describing a similar situation as Hoffman, yet the implications of his account of radical sociologists in America for the Romanian context are striking:

They analyzed and “unmasked” the conditions in which the American sociologist works for a particular political elite, a power elite; the conditions in which he is subservient to the state hierarchy or academic hierarchy; the conditions in which he is subdued through the system of contracts and through the organization of the process of research, and is not free; the conditions in which sociology cannot fully realize its vocation to pursue the truth. (Cernea 1974a: 227)

While he was abroad for the 8th ISA Congress of Sociology in Toronto in 1974, Cernea was recruited by the World Bank, and he chose not to return to Romania but rather emigrate to the United States. At the World Bank, he mobilized his background in the sociology of socialist development for a career

<sup>4</sup> ANR, ASSP—Sociologie, file 3/1973, “Informare asupra activității de documentare desfășurate în SUA în perioada 28 septembrie 1972–28 ianuarie 1973” [Report on the documentation carried out in the United States, 28 September 1972–28 January 1973], 77.

in the development strategies of the Global South. Cernea's trajectory was almost the opposite to that of Hoffman, for whom the constraints of "everyday Marxism-Leninism" worsened throughout the 1970s, eventually leading to an almost complete abandonment of empirical research in the 1980s. Whereas for Cernea academic mobility also led to professional and social mobility, for Hoffman academic mobility merely put into perspective the unequal distribution of resources and epistemic power across the East–West divide. This only left Hoffman the opportunity to be embedded in the transnational network of Eastern bloc research in the social sciences, originally seen as a possible counter-balance to everyday Marxism-Leninism at home. However, participation in the network and travelling to its meetings came with the obligation to reproduce Romania's semi-independent geopolitical position at the level of knowledge production, against the potentially emancipatory project for a "socialist sociology" promoted by the Soviet Union and, to various degrees, the Eastern bloc countries.

A third example of academic mobility among the second generation of social scientists raises the complex issue of the legacy of academic mobility in the "West" and the "East" during the post-socialist period. One of the main figures in quality of life research in the late 1970s and 1980s was Cătălin Zamfir. He obtained his PhD in Philosophy in the second half of the 1960s and, after a short stint in research, joined the Faculty of Philosophy at the University of Bucharest. Zamfir received a Ford scholarship to specialize in the field of industrial sociology at the Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan, during the 1973–74 academic year. There he became familiar with the latest research in the field of social indicators, especially methodologies developed at the institute for measuring people's satisfaction.

Following the adoption of a "Program for the increase in living standards and the quality of life" for the 1981–1985 five-year plan at the 12th Party Congress in 1979, sociological work on quality of life in Romania followed a thin line between legitimization and subversion of the development strategy set out by the party. Zamfir first co-edited a volume of translations from state socialist, South American, and contemporary American sociology on the topic of quality of life, published for a closed circuit of experts at the "Ștefan Gheorghiu" Academy (informally known as the "Party Academy"). This defined quality of life as "the value of one's life for oneself," thus placing the issue of human subjectivity at its core and echoing the Marxist humanism of the 1970s (Zamfir and Lotreanu 1980: v–viii). Around the same time, Zamfir was coopted by a researcher at the Institute of Philosophy of the Academy for Social and Political Sciences to participate in the meetings in Prague, Warsaw, and East Berlin of a working group on the "socialist way of life" within the same network of state socialist academies of sciences in which Oscar Hoffman was involved. The result was an edited volume on the theory of a socialist way of life that attempted to reinterpret the concept in a logic similar to that of sociological research on "everyday Marxism-Leninism" (Rebedeu and Zamfir 1982, 1989). Despite the intellectual inspiration from scholars such as the Pole Andrzej Siciński and his qualitative sociology of lifestyles and way of life (Sicinski 1980), Zamfir maintained that academic mobility within the state socialist network had been largely inconsequential, both in his autobiography and in an oral history interview that I conducted in May 2016 (Zamfir 2009: 125–126). His evaluation is in line with the almost complete de-legitimization of Marxism-Leninism and Marxist sociology in the postsocialist period in Romania. The legacy of sociological knowledge produced during state socialism that was drawing on Western sources was quite different.

In 1980, Zamfir coordinated a small group of researchers from the Institute of Philosophy and the Center for Sociological Research who elaborated a comprehensive set of indicators for measuring the subjective quality of life, adapting the methodology developed at the Institute of Social Research at



the University of Michigan. Unlike the research on the socialist way of life pursued at the time in state socialist countries, this model did not focus on social processes (how people organized their lives within the structural determinants of their society, class, or social group), but rather on people's subjective perception of quality of life and status inequality. Knowledge of the latter also informed governance (Popescu et al. 1984: 54), in so far as the goal of the socialist state at the particular stage of development could not yet be equality but, according to the authors, "moderate inequality regarding the relative quality of life" (Popescu et al. 1984: 57). By defining quality of life both in terms of objective conditions and "subjective perception," the model had a subversive potential, later developed in theoretical work on lifestyles as alternatives to mainstream socialist society (Zamfir 1989). At the same time, the model made subjectivity and individual behavior the target of social engineering.

Reflecting on his career as a sociologist under state socialism, Zamfir argued in his autobiography that quality of life, way of life, and lifestyle research in the 1980s "offered the possibility to exercise political and social pressure to give more attention to people and their needs" (Zamfir 2009: 122). He maintained that social reform topics integrated by the regime from "the West" temporarily offered opportunities for "technocratic," modernizing initiatives, yet were inevitably hollowed out of their original intentions. Nevertheless, they produced a "perverse effect" for the system, in that they "gave substance to the crystallization of an alternative culture to Ceaușescu's ideology," and also allowed sociologists to develop skills that they would be able to apply after the regime change (Zamfir 2009: 126). In perhaps the most successful example of such repurposing of Western sociological expertise in the post-socialist period, Zamfir established an Institute for Quality of Life Research in 1990. The system of indicators that his team developed became a "scientific instrument" of transition, despite calls from Zamfir and others that quality of life should be a pursued political goal rather than just measured as a supposedly spontaneous result of socio-political development (Zamfir 1990).

### **THIRD GENERATION: SOCIAL ENGINEERING**

The opportunities for academic mobility significantly dwindled for the generation of sociologists trained under state socialism. Many of the professors teaching at the University of Bucharest beginning in 1966, when a separate sociology department was first established, belonged to the second generation of social scientists and had the chance to study abroad for short periods of time so as to specialize in various branches of sociology for which no local expertise existed. Sociology graduates from the early 1970s consider Henri H. Stahl, who taught several years at the university before retirement, as the main proponent of sociology as a science of "social engineering." This has come to stand, in memoirs and oral history accounts from the post-socialist period, as the opposite of ideology (that is, Marxism-Leninism), a scientific approach to the management of society with intellectual roots in the interwar period.

Yet whereas this perspective fits well the experience of the first two cohorts of graduates in sociology, who could be integrated into teaching and research positions, it does not fully represent the experience of those who started university in the late 1960s, driven by political engagement and an explicit interest in critical Marxism in the wake of the 1968 wave of student protests. Their aspirations were stifled not just by the state policies that barred graduates from teaching and research jobs immediately after graduation for several years of mandatory "work in production," but also by the eclectic mix of Marxist sociology, structural functionalism, and interwar empirical research that the department offered. Finally, students who started their studies during the second half of the 1970s experi-

enced the disbandment of the sociology department in 1977 and were consequently employed as history or philosophy teachers in high schools in the provinces (the large cities had been closed to new inhabitants). They remember this as a missed opportunity for the proper implementation of social engineering, and as a failure of the technocratic ethos of the 1970s.

In terms of academic mobility, what stands out in the case of the generation trained under state socialism is the internal mobility facilitated by short research trips occasioned by foreign visiting professors and especially by international training centers who employed foreign specialists. Such were the UN-funded Center for the Training of Enterprise Cadres (CEPECA) and the Centre démographique ONU-Roumanie (CEDOR). To illustrate the epistemological impact of internal academic mobility as well as the complex generational dynamic of the late 1970s and 1980s, I will reconstruct in more detail the case of sociologist Dumitru Sandu, whom I interviewed in Bucharest in June 2018.

Sandu joined the sociology department at the University of Bucharest in 1967. During his studies he participated in the summer fieldwork teams coordinated by Henri H. Stahl, whom he considered his mentor. Stahl was his PhD supervisor between 1972 and 1979, when Sandu wrote a dissertation on “The analysis of social differentiation in rural communities.” Like all graduates, Sandu’s job placement was decided through the centrally planned system of job allocation. In 1971, he started at the Center for Sociological Research of the Academy of Social and Political Sciences, and published on the role of the sociologist in studying, guiding, and mobilizing local participation, understood as an activity of “social engineering” or “community work” (Sandu 1977).

Fired from the Center for Sociological Research in 1975, Sandu worked as a researcher at the Institute of Agricultural Economics until 1977, when he transferred to the Laboratory of Urban Sociology (later the Sociology Laboratory of the Design Institute for Typified Buildings). He was employed there as a researcher until 1992, when he became professor of sociology at the University of Bucharest. Sandu described the laboratory as “an oasis of professionalism,” where he had the opportunity to learn statistical techniques and even developed the first computer program for statistical analysis. Overall, Sandu thematized his career, in spite of all the professional discontinuities, in terms of “luck under adverse condition,” setting the tone for an account of the ways in which the epistemic and institutional limitations of sociological research under state socialism could be creatively mitigated.

Over the course of the interview, Sandu systematically mapped the intellectual sources available to the generation of sociologists trained under state socialism, from professors (in his case, Stahl) to contacts with “foreign” literature (both Western literature and literature from the interwar period, but also contacts with visiting sociologists, especially from France) to one’s personal frustration with the possibilities of sociology in Romania at the time. “Communism was a superb school for creativity under conditions of poverty,” he argued tongue in cheek. Having made the point that sociologists trained in the 1970s had not been formed “by communism alone,” he nevertheless explained his own trajectory and that of sociology more generally as “a fight for intellectual survival” against party ideology and the ways it was imposed on sociologists, be it through censorship, the planning of scientific research, or institutional practices.

Sandu discussed at length two types of “strategies of survival.” At the level of methodology, he argued that the use of statistical methods and technical language was an efficient way to avoid censorship: “Censorship was everywhere, but it didn’t know about regression,” he commented, later adding that “if you didn’t know well a standardized method, you were much easier prey to any kind of ideological approach.” Sandu was finally able to travel to the United States in 1986 on an IREX scholarship,

shortly after he had joined the Communist Party (he came to understand party membership as a precondition for travelling abroad). During this visit he chose to specialize in statistical methods at UCLA and George Washington University.

At the level of theory, he was inspired by Stahl, on the one hand by choosing thematic areas that were farther apart from ideological control and on the other hand by focusing on operationalization. “We were formed with the idea that concepts need to be operationalized because otherwise you do ideology,” Sandu explained in reply to my question regarding the idiosyncratic conceptual choices—group structure instead of social structure, differentiation rather than homogenization—in his PhD dissertation. By ideology he identified the mainstream literature on social structure and social homogenization, themes which he perceived as stemming directly from party documents.

Sandu’s dissertation was, inevitably, formulated with reference to the analytical framework of “social homogenization,” one of the main catchwords of “everyday Marxism-Leninism” in the Romanian version. In the interview, he described his dissertation as an attempt “to get as close as possible to the differentiation I was interested in—I didn’t say inequality because it would have been too much.” He bypassed the issue of social structure by focusing on “group structures” (inspired by Pitirim Sorokin, whose work he had read in English and French) and their modernization at the level of rural communities. He defined this process as the combined result of homogenization in terms of vertical social hierarchies and horizontal differentiation as a consequence of the rationalization of social activities. This was, in effect, a study of social engineering drawing upon the research on systematization conducted at the Center for Sociological Research, which operated the conceptual shift (what Sandu called “conversion”) from homogenization to differentiation within the theoretical framework of social structure research.

To arrive at differentiation, Sandu focused on the issue of regional migration. Statistical data on migration had been made available for the first time in 1974, in the second (and last) Demographic Yearbook published by the Central Statistical Office under state socialism, which had most probably been occasioned by the World Population Conference, held in Bucharest the same year. It was also in the wake of the conference that the Centre démographique ONU-Roumanie (CEDOR) was established, which would become a hub for specialization in the field of demography with access to foreign literature and professors invited from abroad.

If research was the result of a dialogue between theory, data, methods, and intuition, as Sandu formulated it in the oral history interview, then it was at CEDOR, where he completed a specialization course in 1981, that he reworked his dissertation into a theoretical and methodological study of migration:

And then I shifted from the idea of differentiation to the idea of migration. And I said: If the person leaves, that means he is dissatisfied, etc. etc., I had the theory. Simply I converted the idea of social differentiation into the idea of consequences of social differentiation and inequality. And that’s how I arrived at migration, and a good part of my PhD dissertation became the first draft of my analysis about migration.

In the final research report he submitted to CEDOR, Sandu drew in particular on neoclassical theories of migration, which explained the change of residence through economic advantages and the rationality of the migrant. He identified two variables in particular that explained migration: the quality of life and communication between people from different communities (Sandu 1981). Reflecting on the book that resulted from this research (Sandu 1984), Sandu conceded that there was “very little agency” in it, which he explained as a consequence of the theoretical framework of neoclassical

studies on migration, which privileged economic rationality. He saw the book's main achievements at the level of conceptual innovation, especially the very use of the term "migration." "There were topics which were clearly—to put it academically—dissonant with the official ideology," he explained. "Inequalities, disparities, migration. People never left from one place to another because they were satisfied."

Sandu defined quality of life as "the degree to which the values (embodied in goods, services, or social relations) available to the members of a social group adequately satisfy their needs" (Sandu 1984: 32). In his analysis, he focused on the "objective components" of quality of life, understood nevertheless as theoretically constructed and empirically measurable. He thus distinguished himself from the strand of research pursued in Marxist sociology that I discussed in the previous section (and the interest in subjective perception in particular), as well as from the Marxist humanism of the first generation of sociologists (and more broadly, from what he called "ideology"). Sandu's case illustrates how epistemological change was occasioned by the confluence of meaningful mentorship by a sociologist from the first generation of social scientists under state socialism, intellectual confrontation with the perceived limitations of the theoretical and methodological approaches of the second generation, and finally internal academic mobility via an international research institution set up in Romania.

## CONCLUSION

This paper approached academic mobility as an entry point into the complexities of epistemological change across generations, illustrating the interplay between structural constraints to knowledge production, the dynamic of intellectual continuities and confrontation, and the engagement with and perception of Western literature. For the first generation of social scientists under state socialism, academic mobility was based on existing or newly established intellectual networks, and required an explicit positioning on the issue of socialist and non-socialist approaches to the study of social realities. This determined both the institutional and intellectual framework for the second generation of sociologists under state socialism, who was the most likely to have access to long-term research scholarships abroad. This experience could be integrated into theoretical and empirical research as well as individual career paths in radically different ways, leading to the repurposing of the emancipatory, critical Marxism of the previous generation or to its reification as "everyday Marxism-Leninism" in the context of transnational collaboration. For the third generation of sociologists trained under state socialism, opportunities for academic mobility had significantly narrowed, yet as oral history accounts testify, epistemological change was nevertheless catalyzed by a variety of sources: from close ties to the first generation of sociologists (through formal or informal mentoring), to confronting the status quo of the second generation of sociologists, to drawing on theoretical and methodological insights obtained through "internal mobility" or the rare occasions to study for longer periods of time abroad.

As shown in the case of quality of life, a research topic which I followed across the three different generations, input from the international networks in which the social scientists were embedded, the way they understood their epistemic position within these networks, and how they related to the work of previous generations resulted in different conceptual, methodological, and political approaches. Pavel Apostol's Marxist humanist take on quality of life was articulated within the increasingly globalized field of futurology. Cătălin Zamfir drew both on research conducted within the net-

work of state socialist academies of sciences and on his academic exchange in the US, but these experiences had very different legacies in the post-socialist period. Dumitru Sandu's work was articulated differently from both the Marxist humanism of the first generation and as the "Marxist-Leninist sociology" of the second, drawing on sources of "internal mobility" and emulating the ethos of an "objective" science of social engineering espoused by an older generation of sociologists formed in the interwar period. The sheer variety of academic mobility under state socialism complicates existing accounts of unidirectional transfers and opens the discussion of epistemological change to multi-causal explanations, in which the role of Western literature and foreign exchanges is intertwined with complex generational and genealogical dynamics.

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