

DYNAMICS OF SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CHANGE

COSMIN SERGIU CREMENE *

ABSTRACT: *As shown by Adrian Neculau the concern for the issue of change is not new. This concern can be traced from the first manifestation of human culture, but it is constant starting with modernity. We know very well that the discourse about change is actually a discourse about movement or lack of movement. In this regard, the ideas of Heraclitus of Ephesus, the follower of absolute movement and change, made a career alongside the ideas of the representatives of the elected school (the case of Zenon of Elea and Parmenide) who considered that any kind of movement or change is only apparent.*

KEY WORDS: *social change; mobility; social marginalization; jobs.*

JEL CLASSIFICATION: *J21, J24, J62, J64.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Studying social change occupies a central place in classical and modern sociology. From the precursors of discipline to contemporary theorists trying to understand how a change occurs in a given society, countless were attempts to solve a problem whose elements seem to be confused with those of history and whose statement appears to be related to most areas of social sciences: economics, ethnology, demography and so on.

We can define social change, starting from Rocher's analysis, as an observable transformation over time, which affects, in a way that cannot be provisional or ephemeral, the structure and functioning of the social organization of a given authority and which changes the entire course of its history.

The 20 years since the Revolution of December 1989 mark a period in the history of Romania which, due to the volume and the transformations that have taken place, will probably be considered a reference stage in terms of the speed and structure of social changes in a country. A country on the road to transition from communism to capitalism.

Beyond the transformations produced after 1989 in economic and political terms, the most profound, dramatic and painful changes, in the sense of the social cost

* *Research Assistant, Ph.D., University of Petroșani, Romania, c.sergiu@yahoo.com*

involved, are those that affect the social structure, living conditions, behavioral and mentalities of the population. Social change refers, in a general sense, to changes in the basic structures of the society (or of a social group) so that a qualitative and / or quantitative transition from one state to another of the social system occurs.

The studies on social change focus on the factors that generate them, on the process of transition from one state to another of the society and on evaluating the differences between the two successive states of a social system, social change itself being a transitory state between the initial stage. and the target stage.

The phenomenon of social change over the last 20 years has been approached from different perspectives, varying according to the emphasis placed on the macro or micro social aspects, on highlighting the modification of the hard structures (social groups, institutions) or soft (value orientations) of the society, on the degree of organization and social differentiation (polarization), by highlighting the modalities of penetration or impact of the western-type structures (mechanisms for advancing the border or establishing "bottomless forms"), by consensus or social conflicts.

2. SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

However, with all the commendable contribution, sometimes exceptionally if we consider the ingenuity of the analyzes, it has not been possible until now to determine a synthetic picture of the main social changes that have occurred in the life of the population of Romania during the last two decades.

Social changes that occurred during this period but cannot be fully highlighted by the usual statistical indicators such as the internal product per capita, the average income, the share of some classes or social categories. Indicators are needed that reflect the phenomena of professional or occupational mobility, marginalization, precariousness of the workplace, weakening of social links, insecurity of inequalities generated by underdevelopment or survival strategies.

At the same time, indicators are needed that reflect the population's attempts to adapt and participate in the development of a market economy in Romania. In general, it is about changing the status quo since 1989 by intensifying the movement in the social space, by increasing social mobility and accelerating the participation in the market economy. In this regard, two types of indicators are used in our analysis model:

- Of professional or occupational mobility and the integration and participation in the market economy;
- Of marginalization and social exclusion;

For our study, which aims to determine the major social changes of the two decades, only the adult population from 1989, respectively those who were at least 18 years old at the beginning of 1990. For the longitudinal analysis there is the advantage in this regard that we can study the same people who provide about two periods of time (similar to a panel research) which facilitates the measurement of social changes produced for 20 years.

At the same time, there is the disadvantage that certain changes in the structure of the same populations over a period of 20 years inherent, regardless of the dynamics of society, due to age. In this sense, the higher share of pensioners nowadays, compared

to the one in 1989, within the same population sample, is explained by biological factors rather than by social nature.

Our assumption is that the social changes that have occurred in the last two decades in Romania have a double determination. On the one hand, we are witnessing the exit of the population from the incidence of labor force training policies according to the "single plan", of its distribution in the territory, sometimes without taking into account a number of subjective factors (interests, options and aspirations) and objectives (economic and financial conditions of families and local communities).

Therefore, the employed population lost certainties offered by its previous professional status, marked by the paternalism of the state, in which, even if there were still professional changes, they were limited and relatively controlled and, anyway, took place against the backdrop of maintaining the job and a predictable retirement life.

On the other hand, after 1989, the population faces the danger of layoff and with multiple uncertainties arising on the labor market, generating both increased possibilities of professional ascension but also of marginalization or exclusion from the circuit of useful economic and social activities. Therefore, the profound changes that took place in the Romanian society as a result of the establishment of political democracy, the change of forms and property relations, the abolition of centralist and bureaucratic principles of control in the economy, at the same time with the loss of jobs and the affirmation of the competitive spirit on the market have determined direct and indirect effects on human resources in general and the labor force in particular.

The basic idea of the research is that the most significant social changes of the last two decades are related to the labor force or the professional activity of the population. As a result of changes in the professional plan, the social structure thus becomes, from the point of view of social categories, less readable. New professions and fields of activity have emerged, while the weight and importance of those related to the occupational structure and distribution by areas, specific to the economy before 1989, have diminished.

In fact, we could say that although the change of the old structures is generally slow, during the last 20 years the former social structure in which the working class dominated (which together with the peasantry and the intellectuality the known Stalinist triangle) has been replaced by a new stratification, in which the proportion of the population employed in services is increasing.

Unfortunately, these social changes were also associated with some valuable upheavals by which some professions claiming large intellectual investments diminished their share and lost prestige.

3. SOCIO-OCCUPATIONAL MOBILITY

The structure of the population employed by branches of the national economy and according to the employment status is significantly different in 2009 compared to that of 1990-1991. As the official statistical data produced by the NIS show, the share of employees and those employed in agricultural or cooperative societies has significantly decreased and the share of self-employed, unpaid family workers and employers has increased.

At the level of branches of the national economy the share of the employed population in industry and construction has decreased significantly and the share of the population employed in trade, services and even in agriculture has increased (although it is a subsistence and helpful).

From the data of the survey carried out at the level of the adult population of Romania that was in 1989 at least 18 years, it turns out that it had at the level of 1989 an occupational structure in which the proportion of skilled (40%) and unskilled workers (3%), of specialists with occupations dominated intellectuals in the state (12%), workers with studies in services and trade (10%), farmers (9%), students and students (7%), technicians / masters and housewives each 6%.

What is the structure of this population in 2009? About half of them became retirees (52%) and unemployed 4%. The share of skilled workers was reduced to 10% (of which 3% unskilled), of the specialists with higher education to 8% (2% in the private domain), of the farmers to 1% (of course, some of the retired retirees and a supporting agriculture).

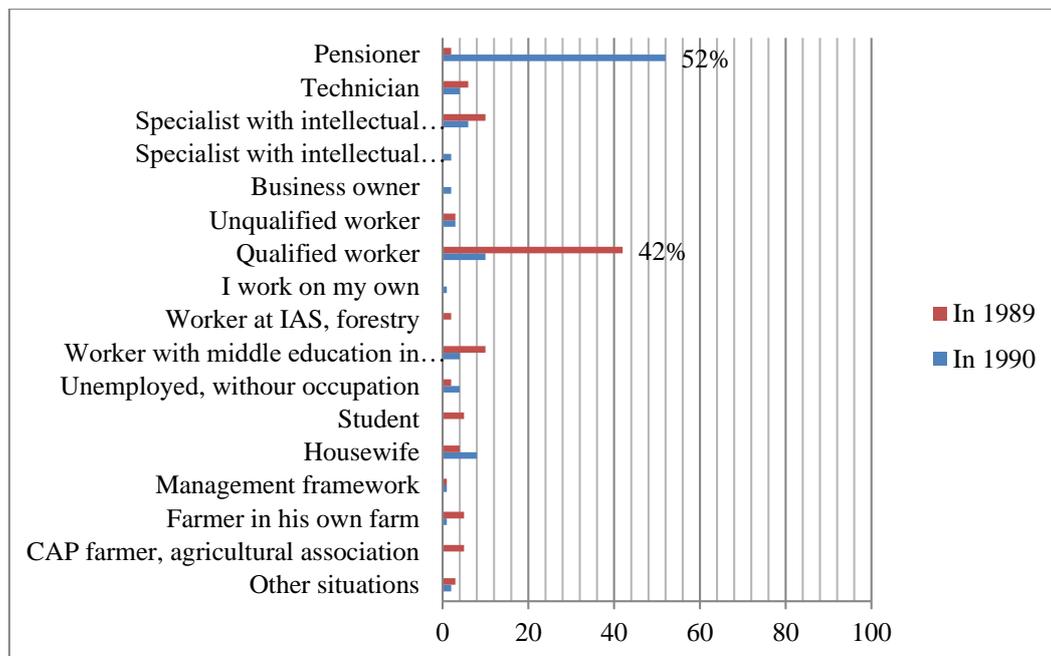


Figure 1. Your occupation in 1989 and 1990

Obviously, there are no longer student-students among those over 38, but they appear or remain in occupations such as employer (2%), management (1%), teacher-technician (4%), housewife 8%. (see Figure 1 Your occupation in 1989 and present)

The level of education has undergone fewer changes, significant being especially the increase of the percentage of graduates of higher education and high school-post-secondary. (see figure 2, "Education level in 1989 and 1990").

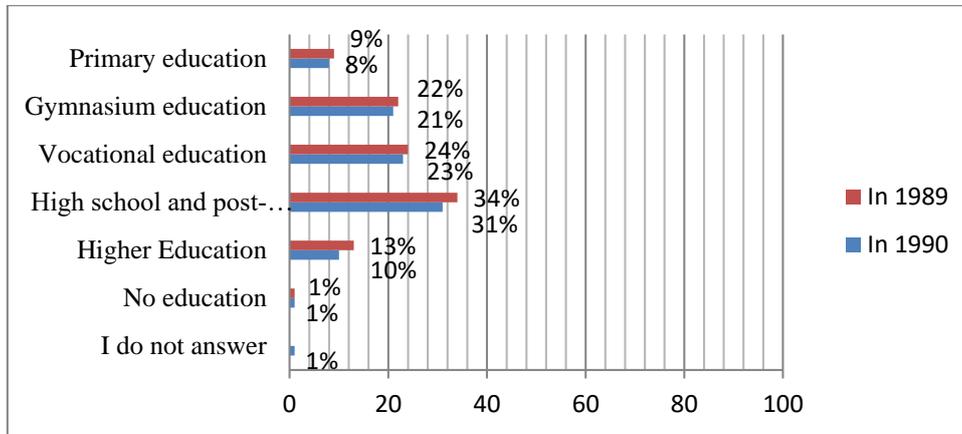


Figure 2. Education level in 1989 and 1990

This is what the socio-occupational structure looks like at the beginning and end of the 20 year period of "transition" (we use the term with quotation marks because we have not defined the terminus of the transition).

But what happened in terms of social change with the adult population of Romania for the whole period 1989 - 2009? Essentially, she endured the wave of changes during this period, whether they had a positive or a negative impact. The result is given by the percentages related to the answers received to the following questions:

After 1989 did you change your occupation?; After 1989 did you change your job? (figure no. 3 and 4). The bottom line is that 1 out of 4 individuals changed their jobs at least once during the 20 years of transition (on average 1.9 times). Basically, a quarter of this population changed its occupation twice during this period.

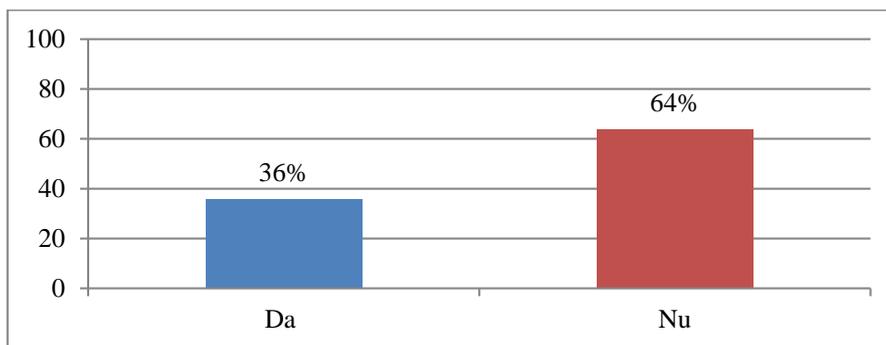


Figure 3. After 1989 did you change your job?

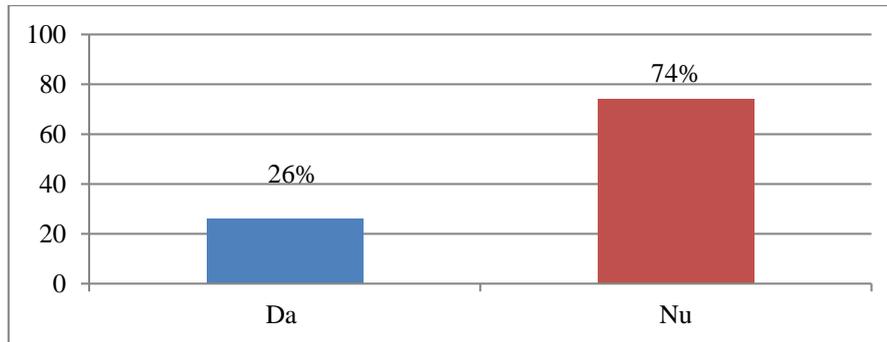


Figure 4. After 1989, did you change your occupation?

Changing the workplace affected over one third of this population (36%), the average of the change of the job being 3.8 times, that is a very high mobility for a period of 20 years, especially if we consider that it is about an ordinary population with job stability. A good part (23%) of those who changed their jobs changed their jobs. The percentages of the two categories do not overlap so that the share of those involved in this process of socio-professional mobility, given by the change of occupation and / or the job, rises to approx. 33%.

Thus, 1 out of 3 people, at least 18 years old in 1989, was affected during this period of change of occupation and / or place of work .

Essentially, the change of occupation involved, in 49% of cases, maintaining the same level of training. For 28% of those affected by the occupational change this meant "a transition from a lower level of professional training to a higher one". However, for 13% of them, this occupational change involved a shift to an activity that required less professional training.

Therefore, in general, about 40% of the adult population involved in social and occupational mobility does not refer to a homogeneous social category and cannot be characterized as positive or negative. Part of this population was involved in downward mobility leading to an increase in those employed in agriculture, in the underground economy, etc., with a lower social status. Obviously, the ascending-descending, positive-negative dichotomy should not be absolute, some changes having an ambivalent character.

A large part of the population that changed their occupation and / or job was also involved in qualification and retraining courses. The share of those who have taken qualification courses amounts to one fifth of the interviewed population. Few of them (10%) were not affected by the change of occupation. They gather for the 33% affected by the change of occupation and / or job, raising the percentage to over 40%. Thus, four out of ten people aged at least 18 in 1989 were trained in the wave of socio-occupational changes (change of employment and / or job and / or qualification courses).

4. SOCIAL MARGINALIZATION

One category of changes was supported by the population affected by unemployment and / or the unemployed and / or the one who retired earlier than the normal retirement age. The marginalized or socially excluded categories are the result of both the professional breakdown and the disintegration and socialization through which a part of Romania's population passes during the transition period. Basically, the social categories affected by the aforementioned changes are pushed to the periphery of society and to isolation, diminishing the possibilities of playing an important social role.

In the absence of an internal organization and a sense of belonging to a social group, marginalized not a collective force, much less a group or social class, even though sometimes resort to some form of protest, as happened to some of the miners laid off from the Jiu Valley. Overall, these categories are included poverty, the feeling futility and despair. Redundancy and social marginalization or exclusion are more than just a form of downward mobility. Under the pressure of the Economic Reform process initiated after 1989, a large part of the working population has borne, in one way or another, the social costs of this type of transition.

Thus, 22% of the total employed population of Romania was affected by unemployment. That is, 1 out of 5 people has suffered, during the period 1990 - 2009, the vicissitudes of unemployment. Another category of about 12% of the analyzed population fell into the category of those who were laid off or dismissed for different reasons, the main being the restriction of activity (following restructuring, privatization, etc.).

The same economic pressures related to the restructuring of the economy, to which, in addition, a number of individual factors were added, linked in particular to the desire to change the residence from the city to the village, caused the early retirement of about 19% of the population. to which we refer. Many of those laid off were affected by unemployment or early retirement and vice versa. At least one of the three negative changes was affected by 25% of the studied population. It should be noted, however, that the mentioned percentages must be analyzed in context.

The groups or categories of population mentioned are partially distinct, that percentages are not cumulative. 3% of the cases represent the share of those who have gone through all three forms of social marginalization or exclusion (unemployment, redundancy, early retirement). In total, those who have been affected by at least one such social change with positive and / or negative impact amount to approx. 65%. Only 1% of them were involved in all the mentioned changes.

5. CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, the picture of changing the social structure of this population in 20 years looks like this:

- 65% supported at least one socio-professional change, either by socio-professional mobility or by marginalization, positive or negative;
- 25% have retired at term, that is, they have undergone a natural change, which is neither related to socio-professional mobility nor social exclusion;
- 10% have not undergone any change in these 20 years, continuing to practice the same occupation at the same job.

So, to put it simply, about two thirds, that 2 out of 3 adults, have been engaged in the wave of socio-occupational changes over the last 20 years. They are included in this social category, approx. 40% involved in socio-occupational mobility and the other 25% affected in the process of marginalization or social exclusion. On the other hand, over one third of the population aged over 18 in 1989 was not affected by the wave of social changes mentioned.

About 25%, that's 1 of 4, have retired at normal (legal) age in the last 20 years, without undergoing any of the mentioned changes. Another 10% are currently continues to practice the same profession at the same job (even under relatively modernized conditions). This last category of population, active today, but which after 20 years of capitalism is not affected by the wave of social changes, shows, rather than a "resistance" to change, an adaptable professional training (education, profession and skills), corresponding to both the planned economy and the market economy. In conclusion, only 1 of 10 Romanians aged at least 18 in 1989, is active from an occupational point of view and in 2009, without being affected by the wave of social changes caused by the transition.

REFERENCES:

- [1]. **Chelcea, S.**, (2001) *Methodology of sociological research. Quantitative and qualitative methods*, Publishing house Economic, Bucharest
- [2]. **Neculau, A.** (coord.) (1996) *Psihologie socială*, Editura Polirom, Iași
- [3]. **Neculau, A.; Ferreol, G.** (coord.) (1998) *Psihosociologia schimbării*, Editura Polirom, Iași
- [4]. **Rocher, G.** (1970) *Introduction à la sociologie générale, t.3: Le changement social*, Paris, Ed. HMH; Le Seuil