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Article

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Amfiteatru Economic Journal

Provided in Cooperation with:

The Bucharest University of Economic Studies

Suggested Citation: Țaicu, Marian (2019) : Romanian statistical thinking in the last century: Restitutions of the past, present additions and perspectives, Amfiteatru Economic Journal, ISSN 2247-9104, The Bucharest University of Economic Studies, Bucharest, Vol. 21, Iss. 51, pp. 489-493, <https://doi.org/10.24818/EA/2019/51/489>

This Version is available at:

<https://hdl.handle.net/10419/283552>

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ROMANIAN STATISTICAL THINKING IN THE LAST CENTURY. RESTITUTIONS OF THE PAST, PRESENT ADDITIONS AND PERSPECTIVES

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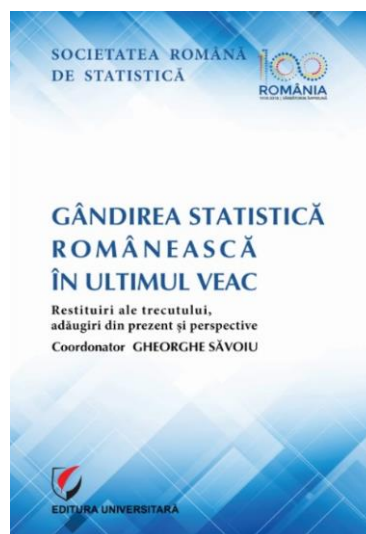
Please cite this article as:

Țaicu M., 2019. Romanian Statistical Thinking in the Last Century. Restitutions of the Past, Present Additions and Perspectives. *Amfiteatru Economic*, 22(51), pp. 489-493.

DOI: 10.24818/EA/2019/51/489

An introspection of the evolution of any type of scientific thought becomes all the deeper as it manages to cover a longer period in time – and we proceed from a known epigram, according to which the more you get into the past, the better you can see farther away... into the future. In fact, the very statistical thinking underlines the need for secular series of data, also known as chronological or historical variables, as being genuinely apt to describe a behavioral profile, whether it is that of an economy as a whole or that of a single entity or distinctive economic subject. With these two introductory remarks, the inherent chain of inquiry, past – present – future, can be invoked in any extended approach, or even an approach having holistic intentions, like that of scientific thinking.

At the end of this centennial year, the University Publishing House in Bucharest published the book **Romanian Statistical Thinking in the last century. Restitutions of the past, present additions and perspectives**, under the aegis of the Romanian Society of Statistics, thanks to through the effort of a team of authors and coordinated by prof. habil. Gheorghe Săvoiu, PhD, known among statisticians as a passionate and relentless researcher in the field of specific thinking of this science and its applications. A brief presentation of this book is possible starting from the initial recognition of concrete manifestations of scientific thinking in general, and of the statistical one in particular, in its multiple forms: institutional, focused on informational support, educational (academic), editorial (journalistic), resulting from inter-, trans-, cross- and multidisciplinary research, guild- or scientific community-centred, etc.



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The **introduction** was authored by the coordinator of the work, Gheorghe Săvoiu, and is suggestively called **From Dimitrie Cantemir to the Great Union of 1918 – a brief retrospective of statistical thinking**. The evocation of Dimitrie Cantemir's personality as early as the introduction emphasizes his role as founder of Romanian statistical thinking. The originality of the introductory approach is conveyed by shifting emphasis from *Descriptio Moldaviae* to *The Divan, or The Quarrel of the Wise Man with the World*, arguably considered as a defining piece of evidence for the manifestation of statistical thinking in the work of Dimitrie Cantemir, and thus further perpetuating the treasure trove of the national culture and science, as Cantemir is a thinker who permanently allows himself to be rediscovered, and has an undeniable pioneering role in the history of Romanian science and research.

Chapter I – Development of the Romanian institutional statistical thinking is written by Ilie Dumitrescu, Gheorghe Săvoiu, Cornel Lazăr and Mirela Lazăr. As it can be inferred from the etymology of the word, *statistics* has implicated the existence of state from the very outset, being linked to its emergence and development, and providing permanent information necessary for the knowledge and management of human territories and communities. In the pages of the chapter, institutional statistical thinking appears as a practical derivation of the state's appearance, being essentially related to its evolution, as evidenced by the information presented at an international level, at a dominant European level, and detailed at the level of Romania. In the absence of state organization, it would have been impossible to shape the theory and statistical practice, as we know, and benefit from them today. In fact, the expression "state statistics" is practically a pleonasm, instead of which institutional or official statistics were obviously more justified to be used at the time, as emphasized in this chapter.

The authors make an original analysis of the different aspects regarding the evolution of official statistics in our country, historically and creatively analyze institutional statistical thinking by presenting them in several distinct stages, namely: (1) the period 1859-1918, from the accomplishment of the Great Union, (2) the period 1919-1947, (3) the period 1948-1989, or the communist period, and (4) the period after 1990 to the present, or the post-December period (Săvoiu et al., 2018, pp. 30-40). In this same chapter, the personalities that marked the beginnings of institutional statistics in Romania, such as Ion Ionescu de la Brad, Dionisie Pop Marțian, Leonida Colescu, Dimitrie Gusti, etc., are briefly presented.

Chapter II – Informatics, the main support of statistical thinking was written by Marius Augustin Pop, Grigorie Grama, Ioan Goreac and Vitty-Cristian Chiran. Ever since their introduction, modern computing has decisively influenced the way data are processed, facilitating the collection, processing, reporting, retrieval and storage of data. Today it would be inconceivable to carry out large-scale statistical activities, or work having regional, national, European or international coverage, without the support of IT. In Romania, the first step towards providing modern calculation equipment was taken with the 1930 census, where two-thirds of the sum allocated for its realization was spent on "machinery and accessories destined for the rapid and accurate processing of the data collected", as the authors pointed out (Săvoiu, et al., 2018, p. 45). After the Second World War, through the endowment with mechanographic equipment – such as the tab devices or the first programmable equipment, the Romanian computer science began properly. Efforts continued in the direction of endowing Romanian statistics with the means of calculation

specific to each stage of evolution of the native IT support. Thus, the computerization process evolved from a possible one into a continuous one, also thanks to the efforts made by statisticians to specialize and improve their qualifications in the IT field.

Chapter III – The Romanian Yearbook, Statistical and Demographic Bulletins, and other specialized statistical publications is the result of an extensive research of Romanian statistical thinking, embodied in archived publications, an investigation made by a team coordinated by Gheorghe Săvoiu, and including Ilie Dumitrescu, Ioan Gâlceavă and Marian Țaicu, and briefly presents the beginnings and destiny of the major publications in the vast field of Romanian demographic, economic, social statistics, etc. This approach was absolutely necessary because the Romanian statistical thinking would not be complete without the journalistic or editorial thinking, which is meant to disseminate information, methods and models specific to statistics. The emergence and development of Romanian journalistic thinking in the field of statistics are related to the institutional and academic area, and have decisively contributed to the formation of a statistical culture of the general public in Romania.

Chapter IV – The discipline of statistics, and statistical education in Romania could only be drafted by university professors of statistics, namely by Alexandru Isaic-Maniu and Claudiu Herțeliu. Actually, a description of statistical thinking in Romania would be impossible without a component targeted at the education and training of statisticians. Thus, the emergence of the Institute of Statistics, Actuarate and Calculus in 1941, as an addition to the University of Bucharest, is considered by the authors as proof of Romanian statistical thinking reaching its maturity. As the authors of this chapter point out, statistical education in its present form is the fruit of the efforts made by several generations: “In a discontinuous manner, over a period of eight decades, and continuously for more than half a century out of the centenary of Romanian statistical thinking, which is described in this book, three generations of mentors enthusiastically and competently prepared disciples of the theoretical and applied scientific statistical thought, in an extensive inter-, trans-, cross-, and multidisciplinary statistical process that has remained fundamental even today” (Săvoiu et al., 2018, p. 85).

Chapter V – The inter-, trans-, cross- and multidisciplinary specificity of statistical research, written by Gheorghe Săvoiu, Simona Bara and Marian Țaicu, contains a conceptual detailed breakdown of inter-, trans-, cross- and multidisciplinary, followed by the approach of future relations of the national statistical institutes with the various stakeholders interested in the results of these researches. In the current context, the one-disciplinary character of classical statistical thinking can no longer provide coherent and forward-looking solutions, but rather succeeds in isolating statistical thinking from the whole of scientific thinking in general, which inevitably leads to the solution of the trans-, inter-, cross- and multidisciplinary.

Chapter VI – The Romanian Society of Statistics, written by Gheorghe Săvoiu, Ioan Gâlceavă, Marin Stănică, Ilie Dumitrescu and Grigorie Grama, describes the component dedicated to the profession, or the guild component of statistical thinking, the formation of the first community of statisticians in this country, and the impact of this phenomenon, which was remarkable through its results, from its very inception. In 1937, the Romanian Society of Statistics (SRS) was established in Bucharest by as many as 62 members, including many of the outstanding personalities of national culture, such as Dimitrie Gusti, as president of the society, Leonida Colescu, vice president, Secretary General Sabin

Manuilă, Octav Onicescu, Gheorghe Mihoc, Anton Golopenția, Mircea Vulcănescu, etc. Although some of the SRS's activities were continued in more discrete forms, post-war political developments influenced the destiny of the SRS, which was virtually abolished after 1948, being re-established as late as 1997.

Chapter VII – The statisticians of the centenary, by its authors, Marin Stănică, Simona Bara, Gheorghe Săvoiu, Ilie Dumitrescu, Ioan Gâlceavă and Marian Țaicu, commemorates the coryphaei or the great personalities, as well as the passionate votaries of the Romanian statistical thinking of the last century, succinctly presenting some of those who were trained in statistics, cybernetics, mathematics, or computer science, and lived and died in the last hundred years, highlighting some of their significant contributions. Obviously, such an approach could not possibly be exhaustive, but the authors have endeavoured to include as many personalities as possible in this chapter, emphasizing the diversity of their training, qualifications and concerns.

The **conclusions** of this book, which was published with the significant subtitle **Future of Romanian Statistical Thought and Education**, are written by the coordinator of the book, Gheorghe Săvoiu. Many of the final remarks show a number of considerations regarding the expected developments in the field of statistics, taking into account the trans-, inter-, cross- and multidisciplinary investigative approaches, information technology innovations, and the need to build teams suited for statistical creativity from the standpoint of the diversity of professional training.

Two major aspects dominate the retrospective of Romanian statistical thinking in the last century, according to the opinions presented in the pages of the book. The first one reveals a true triumph of professional continuity, in difficult contexts of perpetual change, and the second one anticipates the increasingly obvious inter-, trans-, cross-, and multidisciplinary specificity of statistical research. Along with the originality of the chapters, the restitution of texts, data and personalities in the field of official, academic, journalistic and professional or guild-like statistics, as well as the identification of short- and medium-term development perspectives, extend the opening to the prospective readers of this book to a broad audience of students or PhD students, practitioners and statisticians, or users of data and metadata generated by this specific type of scientific thinking.

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SĂVOIU GHEORGHE (coordinator)

Gheorghe Săvoiu, PhD, is vice-president of the Romanian Statistical Society, Bucharest, and member of the Scientific Committee of the Romanian Statistical Review, where he published over 60 articles in the last two decades, resulting from 12 years of practical statistical activity and over 25 years of training and education of the young generation's statistical thinking. He is a university professor, Dr. Habil., at the Faculty of Economics and Law of the University of Pitești and a PhD coordinator in the field of economic statistics and cybernetics at the Doctoral School of the University of

Craiova. He makes creative use of statistical thinking as an associate researcher at the National Institute of Economic Research (INCE) “Costin C. Kirişescu” of the Romanian Academy, at the Center for Mountain Economics (CE-MONT), and in the Romanian Committee of History and Philosophy of Science and Technology (CRIFST), also part of the Romanian Academy.

Gheorghe Săvoiu has written more than 35 books and courses, as well as over 300 articles dedicated to statistical, theoretical, applicative, modelling, inter-, trans-, cross- and multidisciplinary thinking.

At the end of 2018, according to Clarivate Analytics Web of Science, Professor Săvoiu had a Hirsch index score of 5, in Scopus = 6, in Research Gate = 8, and in Google Scholar = 14.

In 2012, as editor and co-author, Gheorghe Săvoiu published *Econophysics: Background and Applications in Economics, Finance, and Sociophysics*, London: Elsevier Academic Press, which got an award from the Association of Romanian Economics Faculties (AFER) in 2013, and in 2016, together with Vasile Dinu and Dan-Cristian Dabija, he authored *Conceiving, editing and publishing a scientific article*, which in 2018 obtained, from the same AFER, the distinction “The best book in the economic field”.

In the last 12 years he received the diploma of excellence for the statistical activity at the *Octav Onicescu* Scientific Seminar of the Romanian Society of Statistics in Bucharest.