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THE INFLUENCE OF POPULATION SURVEYS ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL CAPITAL

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Abstract

Population surveys represent an extremely important quantitative method, giving valuable details in regard to the great diversity of characteristics of a state's population at a certain time. Even though it is extremely important and they are mandatory by nature, the population survey that was done this year in Romania was negatively affected by a series of issues, having to do with the low participation rate which had as a result the postponing of the deadline several times. This situation highlighted the negative attitude that usually the citizens have in connection to state authorities. Social capital, which is mostly based on trust, has a huge rule on the success of the survey. If we are talking about a low social capital, this will usually materialise in a lack of participation of the citizens in the process, but when participation increases this leads to the development of social capital. These two aspects, the survey process on one hand, and social capital on the other hand, have an interdependence, being marked by a people's history, civic culture and education.

Key words: *population survey, social capital, civic culture, citizen participation, trust.*

INTRODUCTION

The etymology of the Romanian “recensământ” is rooted in French, being derived from “recensement”, the initial term used was „passer en revue”, which would be literally translated as “review”. (*Bargan, N, p.8*). The survey is one of the most important observation methods which makes possible the creation of statistics in demography. According to the UN (*Commission for Statistics*), the survey represents a “a highly peculiar process that implies collecting, generalising, analysing and publishing, or disseminating through other methods of demographic, economic and social data which are representative at one point for the population

of an entire country, or of a well define region of a country,”According to the Romanian statistician Sabin Manuilă, "population censuses are important, not only to know the demographic and social structure of the moment, but also to see the trend of social evolution and the speed of development of a society". He was also one of the coordinators of the 1930 census conducted in Romania (*Bargan, N, p.9*).

The population census is the largest and most important statistical process of a state which opened at the end of the century. 18th, is organized regularly in almost all countries of the world, including Romania. The methods of carrying out censuses as well as processing data or using their results have an old tradition, but which support a continuous update, keeping pace with the changes of time, currently applying the most advanced technologies aimed at efficiency. Of the process (*Bargan, N, p.5*).

The census represents an extremely important quantitative statistical research, which is carried out at the level of the population that actually lives in the territory of a country at a precise moment. Thus, the Population and Housing Census of Romania refers to that resident population that lives on the territory of the country. As a quantitative method, it provides statistics on a number of aspects such as the demographic and socio-economic structure of the population, housing, living conditions, existing utilities in housing, etc.

Thus, the data obtained are used for the implementation of various public research policies or in the performance of various research statistics. In specialized literature, censuses have been over time procedures for recording the population, characterized primarily by the lack of errors and a very high statistical precision. Modern approaches emphasize population estimation problems, the results being improved by using various techniques and methods of estimating statistical data with other official data sources.

In the last decade, the quality of population censuses in the European Union states was a topic discussed and analyzed at the level of official European statistics (*Chirnuiciuc, C, Vaida-Muntean, G, Vârdol, D, p.66*). The census process helps both at the national level, as I mentioned, in the formulation of various public policies or in research, but on the other hand, it also helps to outline some overviews of the position of a state compared to other states, so it also helps in the formulation of comparative analyses.

1. THEORETICAL NOTIONS REGARDING SOCIAL CAPITAL

Regarding social capital, citing Robert Putnam, social capital represents those characteristics of social life: networks, norms, trust, which allow participants to act more effectively together to achieve common objectives (*Putnam, R, p.121*). Also, social capital represents an argument and a pressure factor for the performance of social and governmental institutions (*Popescu, L, p.141*).

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Both the trust of citizens in each other but also the trust of citizens in institutions, the willingness to live in accordance with the norms of the community you belong to and to sanction those who do not obey the laws of the community, all these elements are essential for the proper functioning of society and, implicitly, of democracy, contributing to the development of social capital (*Preda, D, p.5*). The main components of social capital are institutions, social networks and social values, but also sanctions (the latter represent the processes that ensure compliance with the rules by network members) (*Preda, D, p.5*).

Social capital can also be defined, according to Dietlind Stolle, "a societal good that unites people and allows them to pursue their common goals more effectively". The main components of social capital, on which the attention of numerous authors focuses in different ways, are: institutions - which are based mainly on laws but also on tradition, history, social networks - who knows who, social norms and values - formal rules and informal ones that guide our entire behavior but also the sanctions - which represent those processes that ensure compliance with the rules by the members of a society (*Preda, D, p.8*).

If all these components exist in a society, are respected and work in support of citizens, then the level of social capital in that society will be high, with individuals actively involved in the problems of the communities, who respect the laws and who show a high degree of trust in the authorities that lead them.

2. THE INFLUENCE OF THE CENSUS PROCESS ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL CAPITAL

These two basic components of the present work, namely the census on the one hand and the social capital on the other, are based on the concept of citizens' trust in the state authorities. When the census process is carried out normally, easily, without difficulties related mainly to the percentage of those who participate, this leads to the development of social capital. It is very important for citizens to participate in the census, because it is a civic duty that we each fulfill for the community in which we live, we all want a better future for ourselves and the generations to come. Completing the review questionnaire is mandatory because obtaining accurate and relevant results is a goal of major importance to each of us or to the communities in which we live, to us as a state. A low percentage of participation, given the fact that it is mandatory, does nothing but emphasize citizens' lack of interest, lack of information, fear or mistrust in state institutions.

Talking recently with several land surveyors from the city of Constanța, I found out that citizens' trust in the state authorities is extremely low, they consider that if they participate in the census they are doing the state a favor and I quote "what the state offers me is worth participating too at this census?". Situations of this kind are not particular or specific to a city or region, but are spread throughout the country, the causes being multiple. Also, political culture has a

major impact on the census process but also on social capital, but in the relationship between the three concepts, an extremely important role is played by education, lack of knowledge regarding personal data, fake news, etc., and all these elements prevent individuals from becoming civically involved because they lack trust in the authorities, their main concerns are others, and many prefer to pay fines rather than participate in the census. This causes the share capital of the company to decrease.

Social capital is created when relationships between people change in a way that facilitates all cooperation and action. In the present case, the action is represented by the census process and when citizens decide to participate in the census and thus be involved from a civic point of view, then social capital develops. In a democratic society gripped by corruption, fear, inflation, poverty or poor education, there will be a lack of trust in state institutions or the desire for civic involvement and this was clearly seen in this year's census process (2022) needing more many extensions of the completion deadline often encountering problems related to citizen indifference or technical problems.

But in this case the citizens are not to blame, but the lack of efficiency of the state institutions, because this distrust of the citizens in the state authorities, has its roots in the disappointment of the people who over the years had expectations, wishes, shortcomings and who waited for decades in line for the state to solve these problems. This did not happen and the citizens repressed all these shortcomings, considering the state an "enemy that does not deserve to be helped (through participation in the census)". When citizens would rather pay fines than participate in the census, it is clear that trust as the basis of social capital is at an extremely low level or absent. This aspect causes the level of social capital at the national level to decrease.

3. THE INFLUENCE OF THE CENSUS PROCESS ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL CAPITAL

As for the population census in Romania, it turned out to be an arduous process, needing several extensions of the completion deadline because those who participated were in an extremely small number initially. From a sociological point of view, the interaction between field reviewers and reviewees has been influenced by a number of factors, including the conflict in Ukraine.

In addition to this aspect, other factors influenced the evolution of the process and the interaction between the reviewer and the reviewed, these being represented by the poor education of the citizens, the lack of civic spirit but also a chronic mistrust of the citizens in the state institutions.

On the other hand, there were also problems regarding the technological means of completing the questionnaires, being another obstacle in bringing the process to a successful end. Based on all these problems, the citizens did not see this census as an obligation or duty of theirs as a citizen but as a favor done to the

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state, choosing not to participate and thus leading to a decrease in the level of social capital.

CONCLUSIONS

As I have explained in this paper, social capital is formed by the totality of a state's institutions, interpersonal relations or social values and norms, all of which are based on citizens' trust in each other on the one hand and in the state authorities on the other.

The census is an extremely important part of a society that cannot be replaced, providing accurate, clear data on what exists in a state at a given time, being binding. When citizens are aware of the importance of this process, are informed, have a civic culture and participate in the census then citizens contribute to the development of social capital through the census process.

But in a society dominated by economic problems, poverty, corruption or poor education, the trust of citizens drops significantly, giving way to suspicions or fears, decreasing participation in the census for various reasons previously exposed in the paper, and thus the social capital suffers.

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