

**IN MEMORIAM TRAIAN ROTARIU,
EMERITUS PROFESSOR OF SOCIOLOGY
AT THE BABEȘ-BOLYAI UNIVERSITY (12.02.1943 – 28.12.2021)**



Photo: Emeritus professor Traian Rotariu. Personal archive.

Traian Rotariu, emeritus professor of Sociology at the Babeș-Bolyai University, passed away on the 28th of December 2021, leaving behind an outstanding oeuvre for the Romanian social sciences and a legacy of institutional building that materialised in the creation of the Sociology Department after the fall of the state-socialist regime and, ten years later, of the Centre for Population Studies at the same university.

His academic career started in 1968, when he joined as a research assistant the Sociology Laboratory within the Babeş-Bolyai University, led by the late professor Ion Aluăş (1927-1994). At the time, he had already earned a BA in Mathematics (1965) and, after working as a high school teacher for a couple of years, he commenced studying for a second BA in Philosophy. Motivated by his increasing interest in social sciences and quantitative methodologies, he successfully competed for a scholarship of the Ministry of Education to pursue doctoral studies at Paris V René Descartes University (Sorbonne), under the supervision of Raymond Boudon, between 1974 and 1977. His PhD thesis, entitled *Education et mobilité sociale* (1977), addressed the problems of social mobility in developed capitalist societies and concentrated on the role of the school system in social reproduction. Its Romanian translation¹ was published in 1980. In 1977 he became research assistant and in 1979 lecturer at the Philosophy Department of the Babeş-Bolyai University. The late 1970s and 1980s meant an intensive period of empirical social research alongside professor Ion Aluăş and fellow young academics, despite the formal restrictions on social sciences imposed by the regime. They analysed the social changes induced by industrialisation and urbanisation, ranging from internal migration to social mobility, demographic changes, family life, and transformations of rural households.

In 1990 he became associate professor and four years later full professor of Sociology at the Babeş-Bolyai University. In these early years of post-socialist transformations he made a substantive contribution to the building of the Sociology Department, together with his lifelong colleague and friend, professor Petru Iluţ. He also acted for six years (2001-2007) as Dean of the newly established Faculty of Sociology and Social Work. Key-courses of the Sociology curriculum such as *The Methodology of Social Research, Social Stratification and Mobility*, and *Demography* were designed and thought by professor Rotariu. Among his numerous PhD students, many pursued successful academic careers at well-known universities and research institutes in Romania.

¹ Rotariu, Traian (1980). *Școala și mobilitatea socială în țările capitaliste dezvoltate [Education and social mobility in developed capitalist countries]*. București: Editura științifică și enciclopedică.



Photo: Ion Aluaș (fourth person from the left, in white suit) and Traian Rotariu (fifth person from the right, with moustache) during field research in the early 1980s. The archives of the Sociology Department.

His books serve as state of the art for demography studies in Romania, but also for quantitative methodologies and social statistics. Most notably: *Demografia României în perioada postbelică (1948-2015)* [*The Demography of Romania in the post-wars period, 1948-2015*], co-authored with Dumănescu, L. and Hărăguș, M., Iași: Polirom, 2017; *Fundamentele metodologice ale științelor sociale* [*The Methodological Fundamentals of Social Sciences*], Iași: Polirom, 2016; *Studii demografice* [*Studies in Demography*], Iași: Polirom, 2010; *Metode statistice aplicate în științele sociale* [*Statistical Methods Applied in Social Sciences*], co-authored with Bădescu, G., Culic, I., Mezei, E., and Mureșan, C., Iași: Polirom, 1999 and 2006; *Ancheta sociologică și sondajul de opinie* [*Sociological surveys and opinion polls*], co-authored with Iluț, P., Iași: Polirom, 1997 and 2006. He edited, together with Petru Iluț, one of the first Sociology handbooks for undergraduate students in Romania (*Sociologia*, Cluj: Mesajrul, 1996) and published a comprehensive handbook of social research methodology (*Metode și tehnici de cercetare sociologică*, university course, several editions: 1986,

1991, 1994). Besides several research articles and book chapters, mostly focused on socio-economic transformations in Romania, inequality, and demographic changes, he edited, together with Mezei Elemér and Maria Semeniuc, a series of archival studies based on the Censuses carried out between 1850 and 1930; these volumes were published between 1997 and 2011 at Presa Universitară Clujeană. He also served as an editor and later as a board member of the present journal, *Studia UBB Sociologia* and of the *Romanian Journal of Population Studies*.

Much of his contribution to the development of social sciences in Romania remains nonetheless anonymously embedded in the institutions he nurtured and in the professional undertakings of his former students. Professor Rotariu created around him a milieu of open-minded, empirically grounded, reflexive, theoretically meaningful, and socially engaged praxis of social research. Although he would be too humble to admit, he was the main architect of building a school of Sociology in Cluj after 1990.

Professor Rotariu will be remembered as a prominent sociologist, generous teacher, and supportive colleague. During the last two years of his life, withdrawn from the academia, he carried with discretion the burden of a devastating disease, helped by his much beloved family, and dedicated medical staff. Our thoughts and condolences are with his wife of 56 years of marriage, Elena, and their children and grandchildren.

His memory and intellectual legacy will continue to inspire future generations of social researchers and to shape the field of sociology in Romania, nourished by his lifelong academic work.