

Interwar Romania:

Historical Analysis and Social Representation

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IN ORDER to lay the groundwork for our research we must answer at least a few questions: 1. Why do we discuss this period? 2. What is interwar Romania? 3. How is it presented by historians and specialized publicists in the history of the period? 4. What do we propose?

1. For the first question, we must consider that after 1990 an impression was created at the level of “public perception”—an impression cultivated with “scientific” care by certain political forces, newspapers, television stations, NGOs, etc.—that a “history thread” is resumed, that we go back to 1948, when the “interwar period” ended, and the main argument was the abdication of the king. Moreover, some politicians from this period are back in the limelight, even the king is trying to return to his homeland, the historical parties are recreated, numerous books regarding the political life between the two world wars, including the legionnaire movement, are republished, etc. Consequently, there is a general relation—based on arguments but completely non-uniform—to the interwar period.

2. The completion of the national and state union in 1918 had multiple consequences from territorial, demographic, social-economic, political, and mentality perspectives¹. The best known consequences are the significant increase of the territory, population and economic potential: the area of the country from 137,000 square kilometers to 295,049 square kilometers; the population, from 7.5 million people to over 18 million people in 1930; the tillable area, from 6.6 million ha to 14.6 million ha; the industrial sector by over 235%; forested land, from 2.5 million ha to 7.3 million ha, etc. However, the discussion about the new reality raises several methodological problems related to the best way to approach this research topic.

The first matter refers to the historical terminology that describes the new geopolitical reality after 1918. Do we choose Greater Romania or United Romania? The term “Greater” has had and still has a predominantly political connotation, reaching meanings close to “expansionism.” In historiography there are similar phrases: “Greater Hungary,” “Greater Serbia,” “Greater Greece,” “Greater Bulgaria,” “Greater Albania,” “Historical Poland” = “Greater Poland,” etc. Consequently, we believe that the term “United Romania” is closer to the historical reality and the meaning of the Great Union. Not accidentally, King Ferdinand was called the “Unifier.”

Another methodological and ethical problem, which some researchers have tried and are trying to emphasize, is that of the “beneficiary.” Did the Old Kingdom obtain what it wanted by the Union?; did it obtain more, or less?; did the united provinces achieve their dream?; which did?; which didn’t?, etc. In fact, the political leaders of Romania and those from the provinces that were reunited with the country did not act based on mercantile political calculations. The ideal of the Great Union had been served by the generations of the 18th and 19th centuries and was epitomized by the sacrifice of hundreds of thousands of Romanians in the First World War. For those detail-oriented, we would like to clarify something. Transylvania, Banat, Maramureș, Bukovina contributed with the richness of the soil, many industrial factories, etc. But the Old Kingdom had oil and also the breadbasket of the Bărăgan. And the structure of exports from interwar Romania—which covered the costs of modernization—was dominated by oil (approximately 40%) and agricultural products (approximately 40%).

Comparing nations, determining the place of a country in European or world “rankings” may seem obsolete, belonging to romantic models. However, we consider that such an approach is useful when it comes to determining, in a clearer and more nuanced manner, the coordinates of Romanian history in the interwar period. Of course there are many difficulties. What factors do we compare? Which countries—the developed ones? The neighbors—do we include them in the “rankings”? How do we determine a balanced vision, without exaggerating either the “performance” or the “limitations,” etc.? Being aware of these risks, we chose the following fields: *territory*; *population*; *economic level*; *political regime*; *international relations*.

Territory

After the Great Union, Romania had an area of 295,049 square kilometers, which represented 2.52% of the area of Europe and was 10th in Europe². Romania was smaller than Germany (470,714 square kilometers), France (550,986 square kilometers), Poland (388,635 square kilometers), but larger than Czechoslovakia (140,499 square kilometers), Hungary (93,061 square kilometers), Bulgaria (103,146 square kilometers), Yugoslavia (249,468 square kilometers) and Greece (130,199 square kilometers)³.

Consequently, United Romania consolidated its position in Southeast Europe and had an area that was significantly larger than that of the other states, as it was surpassed only by Poland and, obviously, the USSR.

Population

Size and density. The Great Union of 1918 caused the population to double: from 7,771,341 people in 1914 to 14,669,841 people in 1919⁴. Thus, it became a medium-sized country, 8th in Europe, by the size of the population⁵.

In 1930, with a population of over 18,000,000 people, Romania was surpassed only by: the USSR (including the Asian territories)—160,000,000 people; Germany—65,092,000 people; France—41,610,000 people; Italy—41,069,000 people; Great Britain—39,952,377 people; Poland—31,685,000 people; Spain—23,563,867 people. It had a larger population than: Hungary—8,688,319 people; Yugoslavia—13,822,505 people; Czechoslovakia—14,735,711 people; Greece—6,398,000 people; Bulgaria—5,776,400 people, etc.⁶.

An important problem was that of the Romanians who remained in other states after the Union: in Russia—249,711; in Yugoslavia—229,398; in Bulgaria—60,080; in Hungary—23,760; in Czechoslovakia—13,711; in Albania—40,000; in Greece—19,703⁷.

Economic Level

The main direction of the modernization process in the interwar period was industrialization. The legislation passed by the liberal governments in 1922-1926 and 1934-1937 favored the consolidation of industry and internal capital. In 1938, industry contributed over 30% to the creation of the national revenue and ensured approximately 80% of the products necessary for internal consumption. Significant progress was made in transportation; Romanian engines were competitive in Europe; likewise, civil aviation could be compared to those of other European countries, with higher economic development.

However, Romania continued to depend on the imports of machine tools, of some technically sophisticated industrial products, etc. Regarding the population that worked in agriculture, it was surpassed only by the USSR and Bulgaria. Also, regarding the productivity in agriculture and the revenues per capita, Romania was low in the European “rankings.”

Political Regime

In the first years after the end of the First World War, Europe was dominated by *democratic regimes*. Only Russia had instituted in 1917 a totalitarian regime and Hungary (1920) a dictatorship.

After two decades, the number of countries with authoritarian (dictatorial) regimes had significantly increased: Albania, Austria, Bulgaria, Estonia, Germany, Greece, Italy, Yugoslavia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Romania, and Spain.

From this perspective, we must underline that Romania was one of the last states in Europe which instituted an authoritarian regime, that of Carol II, in February 1938.

Role in International Relations

It is well-known that after the Paris Peace Conference, European states were divided into two large camps; the first included the states which acted for the application of the treaties, for maintaining the borders and defending peace; the second included the states which wanted the breach and revision of the treaties, retaliation and war. Also, the actions of Romania within the Little Entente, the Balkan Entente, the League of Nations, at international conferences, the firm actions in relation to the threat of war and to treaty breaches, etc. are well-known. In the end, after the collapse of the Versailles System, after the forceful acts of Germany, Soviet Russia, Italy, Hungary and Bulgaria, Romania was one of the victims of the war, as in the summer of 1940 it lost a third of its territory and population. Under the threat of its neighbors, Germany and Italy, United Romania collapsed. The historical evolution after June 1940 must be understood in the context of the world war. It would be completely unjust if Romania were to be judged—as it is in some works—only from the perspective of the Eastern campaign, forgetting the consistent policy of defending peace in the interwar period, and the Western campaign started on 23 August 1944.

3. The perception of the United Romania and its presentation in various works vary greatly. The contributing factors for this are appreciation, the author's background, his/her political views, etc.

Thus, K. Hitchens states: “*In-between the two world wars, Romania represented a striking contrast between a deeply rooted backwardness, on one hand, and the development, though unequal industrialization and urbanization, on the other*”²⁸.

Irina Livezeanu’s conclusion is that “*The Union of 1918 meant the appearance of a deeply divided state and the unexpected effects of centuries of political separation thus creating great difficulties ahead, and the feeling of national identity amidst its population. The fragility and segmentation of this unified state was surprising for Romanian nationalists, who were unprepared during the interwar period for irredentist nationalism to deal with the multinational and divided nature in regions of their country*”²⁹.

Analyzing the “democracy” of the ‘20s—the inverted commas belong to the quoted author—Ștefan Fischer-Galați¹⁰ stated that: “*The option Bucharest faced was either to integrate ‘foreigners’ in the life of the country, and implicitly lose oligarchic political power or to have a fake alliance, of Romanian principle, only with the political leaders of Transylvania. Choosing the second alternative, considered the lesser of two evils, had much deeper and disastrous repercussions*”¹¹.

Florin Constantiniu, in *O istorie sinceră a poporului român* (An honest history of the Romanian people)¹², has a subchapter about the interwar period called the “True face of democracy,” in which we find the following conclusive opinion: “*What must be shown is that, in Central-Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, excluding Czechoslovakia, a country with a genuine democracy, all the other states had semi-dictatorial or authoritarian regimes, which, by comparison, made Romania’s spot appear brighter; after all, as the saying goes, in the land of the blind, the one-eyed is King*”¹³.

Of the political analysts, philosophers, journalists, etc., we would like to mention only two examples: Sorin Alexandrescu’s book¹⁴ whose title speaks for itself and the *Dosarele istoriei* (History files) magazine no. 12/1998. In an article called “A possible explanation for the disaster of Greater Romania. A long tradition of crooked democracy,” I. Cristoiu writes: “*The truth is that the years between the two wars were those of a severe sickness of Romanian politics. The democracy was not genuine. It was a democracy touched by Balkan mentality and infantilism [...]. Romania must end not only this communist mentality but also the Balkan mentality which is typical for the modern history of this country. We can have a genuine democracy; we can enter Europe with our heads held high, not only by removing communism’s negative effects but also by interrupting the long Eastern tradition in internal politics. The Europeanization of our political life is nothing more than the creation of a genuine democracy, not interwar democracy. Because this democracy does not comply with the current European standards*”¹⁵.

I. Agrigoroaiei, in a synthesis regarding the modernization of Romania, concluded: “*While some European countries instituted dictatorial, fascist or pro-fascist regimes, which seriously hindered or even eliminated citizens’ rights, we passed a Constitution which prescribed democratic rights, designed to favor the evolution of Romanian society. The comparative analysis of the political regimes in the European countries underlines the conclusion that Romania followed an ascending course after the Great Union of 1918, and democracy—far from perfect—developed, political life became fuller and richer in content [...]. With all its weaknesses and imperfections, the parliamentary democracy regime resisted in Romania until February 1938, when—in a very complex national and international context—an authoritarian monarchy regime was established*”¹⁶.

Regarding the economy, I. Scurtu has a balanced vision¹⁷: “*In the interwar period, the economy of Romania had a solid development, following the application of the ‘by ourselves’ policy, which got support granted by the state through credits, a protectionist customs policy and the launch of commodities from private companies. [...]. Due to the development of the economy, Romania transformed itself, from an agrarian country in the mid-30s, into an agrarian-industrial country.*”

The interpretative direction of modernization, which seems to be preferred in the last years, is that of failure, by the negative interpretation of the economic, social, cultural or psycho-sociological transformations which took place in Romanian society after 1829. Victor Axenciuc, Liviu Antonesei and, especially, Bogdan Murgescu are the most visible spokesmen of this current approach. After comprehensive and consistent studies regarding the economic history of Romania, which showed the dynamism of the changes in the Principalities and later on in the Romanian state and the fast accumulation on all levels, in the treatise *Istoria României* (History of Romania) Victor Axenciuc concluded that “*in its modern period Romania evolved within a complementary growth model with all the industrial countries, the same as all agrarian states, with very weak chances of getting close to their level; it was a method of dependent and peripheral growth, with low possibilities of structural change, even at the scale of a century (...). Consequently, with all the incontestable progress of development and modernization that was made, to make up for an important part of its centuries of backwardness, the Romanian economy, in the interwar period, was in one of the last places on the scale of development of our continent, a position it held at the end of the 19th century, and which it would also have at the end of the 20th century.*”²¹⁸

In another approach, of a more essayistic nature, Liviu Antonesei resumes an older study, discussing Romania’s failed modernization at the beginning of the 19th century until the post-communist period¹⁹.

The most recent paper written in this interpretative manner belongs to Bogdan Murgescu, *România și Europa. Acumularea decalajelor economice (1500-2010)* (Romania and Europe. The increasing economic gap)²⁰. In tens of pages, the author proposes to show the failure of Romanian modernization, emphasizing the idea of economic differences. He concludes that “*both the Old Kingdom and the Romanian territories under Russian or Austrian-Hungarian administration had made some modernizing progress but had not truly become modern societies, had not committed to sustained economic development and had lost ground in relation to the average rate of growth of Europe*”²²¹. And for the interwar period, the title of chapter III.2, “*Greater Romania and its economic failure,*” is suggestive²².

Although we limit ourselves to just a few examples—but we consider a wide “radiography” of historiography—we notice a relatively high degree of convergence between the opinions of the researchers on this period regarding the geopolitical position and the role of Romania in international relations. There are major divergences regarding: the level of economic development and modernization, in general; the quality of the political regime in Romania (the “degree” of democracy).

By transposing the previous conclusions into *patterns*, the formulation of principle could be *convergence and divergence*, hence also giving non-historians an opportunity to research this field. In our opinion, the approach to the interwar period and especially to modernization—in all its aspects—must be made in a balanced manner by using balanced methodologies. In fact, the contexts to which we relate the process of Romanian modernization are greatly important.

Several questions are necessary for this angle of analysis. For example, when we talk about differences, do we make an internal comparison, with the stages of Romanian evolution in the *modernization age*? Do we relate to the states from the same geo-economic space? Do we relate only to states of comparable size? Or do we compare ourselves to the developed states of Western Europe? Do we make a quantitative and/or a qualitative analysis? What modernization do we relate to, ultimately, only an economic one, a bureaucratic one, a political one, etc.? Do we emphasize the accomplishments or just the limitations of this moderniza-

tion? And the questions can continue, based on the attempt to eliminate any ideological “pressure,” inherited or contemporaneous.

As a method and regarding the “degree” of democracy, the quality of the political regime in interwar Romania, comparisons are necessary to all European states, from Western democracies (plus Czechoslovakia) to the states with authoritarian, dictatorial and totalitarian regimes.

It is obvious that interwar Romania exists not only in the minds of those who expressly study it. As an object of social representation, it is the product of a much wider audience. What does it look like? This could be the challenge for the social psychologists specialized in historical representations, a direction which seems to be gaining ground, stemming from the research regarding the memory of the First World War²³.

4. Aim. The empirical goal of our research is to see whether on the plane of social representation of interwar Romania we find the convergence-divergence *pattern* mirrored in the writings of the authors that have explicitly analyzed this period. Our endeavor is gradual. We investigate, in this article, the social representation of the period among qualified participants, specialized either on account of their studies (history, economy) or of their profession (teaching staff, researchers, archivists, museographers and students). The following stage will consider the representation which exists on the level of common sense. *The final goal is to identify, analyze and compare these representations in order to show their valences, convergence points and differences.*

In the terms of the theory of social representations of S. Moscovici²⁴—as a principal theoretical basis—we analyze the social representation of this historical period based on the variable *distance to the object*²⁵. Its operationalization is made based on the specialization criterion, combined with those of age and gender. In this case, age does not operate as a primary variable, but in its correlation with education, given the participants’ different exposure—by the educational and academic background—to the approaches to the period. It is enough to think about the differences between the school textbooks: the interwar ones, the ones between 1948 and 1989, and the post-December 1989 ones. The criterion of gender was employed based on previous research results, which showed that some social objects are “reconstructed” as representations in a significantly different manner by women and men, while the other variables remain constant²⁶. This triple operationalization of the distance to the object has the advantage of covering various aspects of psychological differentiation of our participants: knowledge, attitudes, interests and experiences of the lived historical time.

Proximal theoretical anchoring. Postulated on a conceptual level at the beginning of this new century²⁷, the variable *distance to the object* receives empirical validation through the study regarding the social representation of cannabis, made by Dany and Abric²⁸. The article of the two authors has the merit of a comparative positioning towards the operationalization of the distance to other researchers. Considering what the research had already shown, the *involvement in the representation object* (either as identification, valorization, possibility of action²⁹, attributed sense, collective markers and controlling one’s own actions³⁰), Dany and Abric prove the necessity of two additional aspects: *direct practical experience* and *the estimated knowledge level* of the targeted object. The first is operationalized by relation to the temporal incidence of one’s own experiences towards the object of representation, the second one as self-evaluation of knowledge towards the respective object. Our research mainly uses these two perspectives. This study relates to participants with significantly different life experiences, given

the differences in their ages, of 68 years (minimum 21 years, maximum 89 years), and with various levels of knowledge regarding the social object in question, in keeping with the nature of their specialization. For the approaches to the *distance to the object* made over the last decade, see the synthesis in *Revista de psihologie* (Psychology review), 3/2012³¹.

Participants. We considered in this stage 202 participants (50% men—average age 37 years, 50% women—average age 31 years), with ongoing or completed studies in History (66.8%) and Economy (33.2%). The average age of the entire group of participants was 34 years, with extremes at 21 and 89 years. Besides students (Bachelor's Degree, Master's Degree, Ph.D.), representing 40.6% of the participants, 24.3% were history teachers in the pre-university system from various areas of the country, 22.9% teaching personnel and researchers from Alexandru Ioan Cuza University (Iași) and Babeș-Bolyai (Cluj), and 12.2%, museographers and archivists from Iași.

Method. The questionnaire was developed for data collection, resembled the ones used by Galli and Fasanelli³². It reunited four of the techniques used in social representation research: an association task, six scale questions, a semantic differentiation and a dichotomy Yes/No question with an open justification of the selected option. Let us detail.

The associative technique, designed to investigate the content of social representation from the prototype-category perspective³³, involved the following steps: writing the first 5 words which spontaneously come to mind in relation to the inducing phrase *interwar Romania*; ranking the words by their importance; indicating the valence (+ / - / neutral) of each word; briefly motivating the presence of each word on the list. The advantages of this technique are the access to the participants' spontaneity, unmodified by logic and the constraints of a discourse. It is also important that this technique allows us to update the implicit or latent elements which are usually masked by discourse.

When analyzing the collected associative material, we chose to first identify the *central core*. This represents the most stable structure of the representation, the "core" which synthesizes the most important aspects of the investigated topic in the perception of the targeted participants. For accuracy and completeness, we analyzed the data from a double perspective: frequency + spontaneity (generation order, as a rank), frequency + importance (as a rank). In other words, out of the hundreds of resulted words, we included in the central core not only the most frequent words, but also the *fastest generated* ones (a rank lower than 2.5), on one hand, and on the other hand, the *most important* ones (rank lower than 2.5)³⁴. For the statistical processing of the material we used the Evoc2000 software, which automatically crosses the three aforementioned criteria, two by two, which thus highlights the central core structure³⁵.

The six scales that we used, each with 5 options, aimed to position our participants towards some of the characteristics of interwar Romania: *area, population, literacy, economic development, neighbors and political life*. In the case of the first four, the introduction of the comparative size (*In your opinion, in relation to the other European countries,...*) was aimed to bring the European reference framework to the attention of the participants. We took this approach because the variability of its operationalization, among the historians of the period, is one of the causes of the divergent diagnoses on interwar Romania. Our questions were designed to put the participants in similar referencing situations with the specialists of the period, in order to determine if the convergence-divergence pattern is also reflected in

their social representation of the period. And, if it is reflected, does it influence the same coordinates as those presented in the historical analysis of interwar Romania? The question is legitimate insofar as our participants are representative for the targeted audience, professionally connected to the historiography of this period.

When analyzing the data, we considered the frequency of the options for each scale, their distribution (Skewness and Kurtosis indicators)³⁶ and, based on them, the leptokurtic or platikurtic nature of the dispersion for each question. The Kurtosis value indicates if the scores are widely spread or rather grouped around a certain value. A value of the Kurtosis indicator which is lower than 3 indicates that the participants' answers are widely spread, the distribution of the values is rather flat (platykurtic), and that their opinions are rather divergent. On the other hand, a value that is higher than 3 indicates that the participants' answers are grouped around a certain value, the distributions of the values had a pointy shape (leptokurtic), and their opinions are rather convergent. The Skewness indicator offers clues about the asymmetry of the distributions. A value of the indicator higher than 0 means that most values are concentrated on the left side of the mean, which mirrors the participants' tendency to choose preponderantly answers lower than the mean. On the other hand, a value that is higher than 0 indicates that most values are concentrated on the right side of the mean, which indicates the participants' tendency to choose preponderantly answers higher than the mean.

The *semantic differentiator*, based on Osgood's³⁷ stages and technical parameters, involved, in the creation stage, the collection of the primary markers from the 89 participants. They were asked to characterize *interwar Romania* using a maximum of 5 adjectives. The resulting list of 256 adjectives was reduced to the most important 25 adjectives, selected according to the frequency criterion. We gave each adjective an antonym so that each of the 25 pairs resulted in this manner would represent the poles of a seven-interval scale, from -3 to 3+, passing through 0. In this manner, a complex and gradual evaluation register was created, with three fields—*negative* (-3–0), *neutral* (0) and *positive* (0–3+)—for the 25 pairs: 1. *rich-poor*, 2. *totalitarian-democratic*, 3. *unknown-known*, 4. *small-big*, 5. *passive-active*, 6. *rural-urban*, 7. *weak-strong*, 8. *conflictive-pacifist*, 9. *ugly-beautiful*, 10. *nationalism-patriotism*, 11. *sad-happy*, 12. *insignificant-important*, 13. *divided-consensual*, 14. *anachronistic-progressive*, 15. *tense-quiet*, 16. *unfair-fair*, 17. *unpredictable-predictable*, 18. *chaotic-organized*, 19. *backward-civilized*, 20. *dependent-independent*, 21. *traditional-modern*, 22. *uninteresting-interesting*, 23. *Balkan-Western*, 24. *ignorant-cultivated*, 25. *lazy-industrious*. Thus, by formulating the requirement to use the semantic differentiator, each of the 202 participants could express his or her opinion as to various aspects in a comparative manner. The instruction given to the participants was: “For each of the following polar scales, set the place of *interwar Romania in Europe*, as you perceive it and feel it. For each pair of characteristics, choose only one of the 7 values.”

Out of the various possibilities for processing the material obtained in this manner, we chose three series of results: identification of the general profile (based on the average of each scale), building profiles based on gender, and analyzing option dispersion for each scale. This latter aspect was of interest to us in order to see which of the 25 characteristics the participants had convergent/divergent opinions. In other words, when reporting to which pairs of adjectives do the responses of our participants differ the most among each other? 18 of the 25 aspects relate, in the opinion of an expert jury made up of three historians, who independently evaluated the list, to 4 dimensions: *economic* (1, 6, 14, 19, 21), *geopolitical* (4, 12, 17, 20, 23), *international relations* (3, 5, 7, 8), *political* (2, 13, 15, 18).

This helps us compare the position of our participants, representing a qualified audience, towards the *convergence-divergence pattern* of the historiography of the period that we outlined from the Kurtosis and Skewness values, the same statistical techniques that were used in the case of the 6 aforementioned questions.

The final question (Did you like/would you have liked to live in interwar Romania?³⁸), by its answer combination—closed (*Yes / No*) and open (*Why?*)—, shows, on one hand, an explicit attitude position of each subject, and, on the other hand, provides the chance of argumentative discourse material, structured by choice. This can be the subject of a content analysis which, in a future article, can be a complementary mirror of the manner in which our participants build, as a qualified audience, the social representation of *interwar Romania*. Another potential analysis method which is interesting, especially from a psychological point of view, is the correlation one. To what degree do the participants' answers to the associative task and their positioning in the semantic differentiator predict the choice in the last question? Does the appreciation of the period in the first situations favor or not the game of self-projecting their lives in that time?

We would like to emphasize the complementarity of the path we chose, given the techniques comprised in the used instrument. The goal was to collect information related to cognitions (rational and stereotypes), attitudes, values, affective states, expectations, etc. This is precisely what characterizes social representations from the perspective of its structural approach, promoted by the social psychologists from Aix en Provence³⁹.

Results. Discussions. Significances. In this article, for publishing reasons, we will limit ourselves to the analysis of the data resulted from the processing of the global data of all the participants as well as of the differences generated by the gender variable⁴⁰. The structure of this presentation will have four sections, corresponding to the data collection techniques: a) *associative*, b) *scalar*, c) by *semantic differentiator* and d) by *dichotomic interrogation*. Each of these will provide complementary data and significances of the social representation of interwar Romania and, in part, will answer the starting challenge: *can a convergence-divergence pattern be identified, and if so, with what phrases?*

a) *Associative material*. The 202 participants generated an associative material of 1056 words. Out of these, 747 words (70.7%) received a positive response, which is the first index of the positive valence of this representation, and the difference to those marked negatively (271) is significant ($X^2 = 57.68$, $p < 0.001$). The remaining 38 were considered by the participants as neutral. The difference between the attributions of positive connotations by the two gender subgroups was also significant ($X^2 = 12.73$, $p = 0.002$). In the case of women, out of the 491 generated words, 322 (65.7%) were positive, while men considered 425 (75.2%) words as positive, out of the 565 words that were generated. There is also another particularity. Given the equal number of men and women in our group, we noticed the special productivity of the male subgroup, as there were many participants who provided more than five words.

The flexional and semantic reductions led to the identification of 357 sole words: 195 in the case of men and 162 in the case of women, which indicates a difference in variety, also in favor of the male subgroup⁴¹, or, from another perspective, there was more homogeneity in the female subgroup. The term identities between men and women were 68. Although, related to the vocabulary of each group, this semantic interference is relatively limited (34.9% for men and 41.9 % for women), it covers, however, by frequency, 69.6% of the generated asso-

ciative material. Most of these common words have similar frequencies (*monarchy* 44/41, *culture* 24/23, *legionnaires* 14/12, *liberalism* 5/4) or, even identical (*Great Union* 20/20, *prosperity* 4/4, *independence* 2/2, including many of those with a single reference per subgroup—1/1: *Antonescu*, *Germany*, *Queen Mary*, *bohemian*, *diversity*, *political elite*, *peace*, *parliament*, etc.). Common words, with different frequencies, are also interesting: *democracy* 41 M - 21 W, *war* 18 W - 3 M, *Europeanization* 14 M - 7 W, *conflict* 13 W - 4 M, *constitution* 12 W - 4 M, *Băitianu* 11 M - 5 W etc. The reassessment of the vocabulary on the scale of importance generally keeps these configurations, however some words were viewed as being more important than others: *political extremism* 22 M—14 W, *multiparty* 19 M - 17 W, *economic crisis* 11 M—11 W. It is noteworthy that, out of the 95 words that are present only in the list of the men's group, only three words have frequencies higher than 2: *civilized* (4), *education* (3), *industrious* (4) compared to the women's group that has eight words specific to their subgroup: *monetary depreciation* (3), *extreme right* (3), *inflation* (5), *literature* (3), *Nazism* (4), *regency* (5), *theatre* (3), *Trianon* (3). The analysis of the associative material and the representation vocabulary already shows the convergence-divergence pattern, which motivated this research.

The 20 words with frequencies over 10 represent 44.3% of the generated associative material, which is another sign of convergence within the investigated group. As frequency, the following terms are most significant: *monarchy* (85), *democracy* (62), *culture* (47), *Great Union* (40). We would like to mention that in the theory of social representations, this prototype-category perspective uses, combined in pairs, three criteria: *frequency*, *order of occurrence* and *importance*. In our group, the word *monarchy* was the most frequently used one, the most spontaneously evoked were *great* and *democracy*, and the most important phrase was *Great Union*.

In the next stage of the analysis, out of the words with frequencies of at least 10, the ones which were correlated with a high rank of *appearance order* or *importance* paid by participants were qualified to be candidates for the core of the social representation of interwar Romania. This is, as it can be observed, a triple-filtering technique. The most important words were: *Great Union*, *monarchy*, *democracy*, *war*⁴². The following were added, with a triple qualification (frequency, importance, spontaneity): *constitution*, qualified as frequency and importance ranking, *multiparty* and *economic crisis*, qualified by frequency and invoking spontaneity ranking. These 7 terms represent the stable, defining, central core of the social representation of interwar Romania in the vision of our participants. Obviously, this can be compared to what the specialized historians propose.

Of the other candidates in the core⁴³, two words draw attention by their high frequency in the overall group: *culture* (as frequency, present with almost a quarter of the participants) and *political extremism*. However, both miss the placement in the core because of their disadvantageous rankings (higher than 2.5) in the spontaneity/appearance order and importance criteria. In other words, they receive no "support" from either the stereotypical dimension of the representation or from the evaluative, more rational, one.

In the case of the core, a comparison of the male and female subgroups brings interesting additional data on the inverse positioning of the two categories of participants. In the case of women, the importance criterion widens the core; in the case of men, it limits and modifies it. The differences observed when the importance of the criterion is taken into account are more numerous in the case of men (3 aspects) compared to women (1 aspect). The contribution of the two subgroups to the core, of 7 words, is significantly different, as weight and content. For example, only for one term, *democracy*, the positioning is equal (the equivalent

of “2 votes” from each gender group— $2M + 2W$)⁴⁴. The word *war* is advanced only by its high positioning (as frequency, order, importance) in the women’s “list,” and *multiparty* in the men’s list. Mixed contributions also have different formulas: *Great Union* ($2M + 1W$), *monarchy* ($1M + 2W$); the central cores of the two gender subgroups overlap by only 50%. This is not surprising given that out of the 357 sole words, generated in the overall group, only 19% are common to males and females; the subcores are significantly different based on the gender criterion. In the women’s vision, the following elements individualize the core of the social representation of interwar Romania: *democracy*, *monarchy*, *war* (each with “2 votes”) and *Great Union* (“1 vote”). The following elements are essential for men: *Great Union*, *democracy* (“2 votes each”), *modernization*, *monarchy*, *multiparty* (each with “1 vote”).

This is the first conclusion: the core elements of the social representation of interwar Romania differ in proportion of 50% between men and women. This result of our research would be expected if our population had been composed of individuals without any specific knowledge of the field, but given the fact that this is a group of people who are qualified in historical topics it is more difficult to explain it, as one can expect that the specialization will overcome interests and gender sensitivities⁴⁵. A possible explanatory hypothesis could be related to the difference between the ratio of men and women in the two specializations: history and economics. In the male group the ratio is 3.8, and in the female group it is 1.8. Another possibility would be a different subject ratio with the targeted topics, starting from various Bachelor’s Degree, Master’s Degree, Ph.D. degree or, in the case of academic personnel, taught disciplines. The aforementioned differences could overlap on the gender difference.

b) *The 6 scales*. Annex no. 1 synthesizes the results obtained after analyzing the answers to the questions, related to: *area*, *population*, *literacy*, *economic development*, *neighbors and political life*. The histograms represent the overall percentages and the percentages by gender subgroups.

Some comments are necessary: in five out of six questions, the majority answer of the investigated group coincides with the one supported by the specialists and the historiography of the period. This was somewhat predictable, as we dealt with a qualified group, but, despite this fact, the performance of the batch varied. The participants’ responses fall into three categories: the majority answered correctly (e.g. to question about the *population* 77% answered correctly and 67% answered correctly the question about the *area* of the country), approximately half answered correctly (*number of neighbors*—54%, *economic development level*—53%, *literacy* percentage—52%), and the last category, where the answers were relatively equally distributed between the two alternatives. This is the case for the assessment of *political life* in interwar Romania: 45% of the participants considered that it was characterized by *conflicts*, and 43% thought it was defined by *sporadic conflicts*. The overall performance was unexpectedly moderate, given the fact that we had an expert group: for all six questions the percentage of correct answers was 58.2%. A possible explanation could be related to the fact that we asked our participants to compare interwar Romania to the “*other European countries*,” and the participants operationalized this phrase differently. In fact, there were participants who wanted to relativize their option by choosing examples of large and small European countries. Statistically analyzed, the values of the Kurtosis indicators obtained for all six questions indicated platikurtic distributions. Another result that implies the fact that our participants interpreted the phrase “*other countries*” differently is related to the fact that the distribution of the answers varies from an almost normal distribution, slightly flattened (*population*, $K =$

2.4) to a very flat distribution which reflects many dispersed answers (*literacy*, $K = -1.29$). It is interesting that the two exceptions from the rule of the group, only slightly platikurtic distributions—*population* and *area*—are correlated with one of the aspects in which historiography is dominantly convergent: the geopolitical factor. The same overlapping is also seen in the case of divergent elements among the analysts of the period: appreciating the *economic level* and the *quality of political life*. This is already the first element to discuss, in the case of the social representation of interwar Romania and about the existence of the convergence-divergence pattern, with elements consistent with those seen in the historiography of the period.

Based on the gender difference criterion, the answers to these scales show the fact that choosing the right answer is, with one exception (*political life*), more frequent (with differences of 9%-3%) in the case of men⁴⁶. Moreover, for 3 out of the 12 extreme options (2 for each scale), have interesting situations: more women than men are tempted to appreciate, in comparison to European countries, that the area and population of Romania is small and that harmony was a characteristic of interwar political life. This is data that additionally justifies the choice of the gender category as a factor for particularizing this representation.

c) *Semantic differentiator* (annex no. 2)—the results obtained from this task fall within the same lines as the ones previously presented, supporting the aforementioned conclusions. Thus, the positive valence of the representation that was primarily underlined by the associative material is reconfirmed by the participants' answers to the 25 pairs of adjectives. The mean score of almost all pairs of adjectives, with only two exceptions (*rural* $M = -1.28$) and *weak* $M = -0.03$) leans toward the positive pole. They can be divided into three categories: very weakly positive, weakly positive and average positive. In the first category, very weakly positive, we have 6 adjectives: *peaceful* ($M = 0.12$), *honest* ($M = 0.19$), *modern* ($M = 0.26$), *consensual* ($M = 0.32$), *Western* ($M = 0.33$) and *cultivated* ($M = 0.40$). In the second category, weakly positive, there are 8 adjectives: *organized* ($M = 0.51$), *civilized* ($M = 0.62$), *cheerful* ($M = 0.71$), *predictable* ($M = 0.71$), *important* ($M = 0.82$), *rich* ($M = 0.92$), *patriotism* ($M = 0.93$), *well-known* ($M = 0.95$). In the last category, average positive, we have 8 adjectives: *democratic* ($M = 1.02$), *progressive* ($M = 1.02$), *large* ($M = 1.03$), *active* ($M = 1.08$), *industrious* ($M = 1.16$), *interesting* ($M = 1.17$), *independent* ($M = 1.22$), *pacifist* ($M = 1.28$). The adjective that got the highest ranking, by our participants as being the most positive is *beautiful* ($M = 1.66$)⁴⁷.

While the analysis of the participants' average response to the scale allowed us to identify the hierarchy of the attributes and its overall positive valence, the analysis of the evaluation dispersion⁴⁸ helped indicate the convergence-divergence ratio between participants.

The Skewness indicator, calculated for each scale, indicates the fact that the positive average values are the result of an overall asymmetrical dispersion, where the participants used, in a predominant manner, (in 22 of the 25 such situations) the positive half of the scales. There are only three exceptions: *rural-urban*, *dishonest-honest*, *tense-peaceful*. For these three pairs, more participants chose values that were closer to the first term, the negative one, although, on average, in the case of the last two, the overall mean is slightly positive (due to few extreme values at the positive pole).

The overall Kurtosis indicator, for all scales, is lower (0.132), which shows a wide distribution of answers. It seems that the general picture of interwar Romania, as identified by the semantic differentiator, is in general positive but non-homogeneous. In the following section we will detail the distribution categories that are present, in order to explain the previous conclusion. In the overall group, none of the scales have a normal distribution ($K =$

2.4 - 3.4). For the following three pairs of adjectives, the participants' responses were only slightly dispersed (the distribution of the values is platikurtic, with $K = 1.0 - 2.4$): *insignificant-important* (2.314), *uninteresting-interesting* (1.237), *lazy-industrious* (1.232). At the other 22 pairs of adjectives, the participants' responses varied strongly, which implied a very flat and dispersed distribution of values ($K = -2.00 - 1.00$).

The thematic hierarchy of the scales for both aforementioned measurements—average and dispersion—was also of interest⁴⁹. Although not all of them are significant, there are differences. It is interesting that both indicators show the same decreasing order, as the theme hierarchy is: *geopolitical*— $M=0.82$, $K=0.389$, *international relations*— $M=0.81$, $K=0.188$, *political*— $M=0.49$, $K=-0.097$, *economic*— $M=0.35$, $K=-0.419$. The first two domains, *geopolitical* and *international relations*, have values that are almost double the values of the other two remaining domains, and, although we are talking about the same type of platikurtical dispersion, the participants' division is more accentuated for the latter, which have values below zero. Without pushing the interpretation, it was relatively surprising to notice a concordance with the decreasing order of the experts' convergence on the matters of interwar Romania, described by us at the end of the conclusions on the examples of historiography, especially given the participants' poor performance on the 6 questions. We believe that the explanation is related to the nature and qualified status of the group that is unavoidably connected to the historiography of the topic, both by their academic specialization and by their profession. It will be interesting to see whether the results from the unqualified group, which is the subject of a future study, will support our explanatory hypothesis.

The results of the semantic differentiator, in turn, show interesting differences by comparing the gender subgroups. Although women and men are not different regarding the representational valence, which is positive for both subgroups, the profile average of the 25 scales is statistically significantly lower in the case of the female subgroup: $M=0.63$, compared to $M=0.72$ —the average of the male subgroup ($t=7.5$, $p=0.019$). Where does the difference come from? Out of the 25 scales, in only two scales men and women have relatively equal averages (*weak*, *Western*), in 19 of the situations women chose lower values—for attributes *interesting*, *democratic* and *cheerful* even significantly lower⁵⁰—and only in four situations—*consensual*, *peaceful*, *modern*, *rural*—men's evaluations have lower values. In the case of the pair *rural-urban*, even if both women and men considered that interwar Romania was a rural country, men's evaluations were significantly lower compared to women's⁵¹.

This difference in positioning determines, in the case of men, the existence of twice as many positive attributes with the average above 1, as compared to women. In decreasing order, they are: *beautiful*, *interesting*, *pacifist*, *independent*, *industrious*, *democratic*, *active*, *large*, *rich*, *well-known*, *progressive*, *patriotism*. The 6 underlined attributes also have average values over 1 in the women's subgroup, but with lower decimal values and in a relatively different order.

Dispersion analysis is also interesting. The conclusion is that the female subgroup is most definitely more non-homogeneous in scalar options, as it is 5.7 times more dispersed in the expressed options compared to the male one⁵². For example, in 21 scales, the values of the Kurtosis index are lower in the female subgroup. Only for four attributes is the dispersion higher in the male subgroup: *beautiful* (-0.270 vs. 0.876), *well-known* (-0.469 vs. -0.212), *Western* (-0.720 vs. 0.268), *cultivated* (-0.027 vs. 1.092). Also, the comparison by dispersion categories illustrates the same trend of accentuated division of women's options. In the male

subgroup, 3 scales have relatively normal distributions, which indicate the homogeneity of the evaluation for attributes: *important* ($K = 2.658$), *interesting* ($K = 2.622$), *industrious* ($K = 2.457$). In the female subgroup, there are no relatively normal distributions as none of the attributes managed to obtain a Kurtosis index closer to three. In the slight dispersion category, in the men's subgroup, 5 attributes qualify—*democratic* (2.228), *active* (1.943), *large* (1.513), *organized* (1.421), *rural* (1.219)—and in the women's subgroup, only two—*important* (2.218) and *cultivated* (1.092). The other scales—17 for men and 23 for women—have higher non-homogeneity, and are more platikurtic. It is interesting that the difference between the two gender subgroups is not only quantitative but also qualitative. For example, in the “peak,” only the attribute *important* would receive a relatively homogeneous evaluation from a significant number of men and women. In the lower ranks of homogeneity, men and women could agree with the same difficulty. These are the attributes which received the most non-homogeneous evaluations for the two subgroups: women—*pacifist* ($K = -1.166$), *independent* ($K = -1.063$), *peaceful* ($K = -0.975$); men—*Western* ($K = -0.720$), *consensual* ($K = -0.581$), *independent* ($K = -0.471$). In relation to the gender comparison, we would like to emphasize the participants' overall agreement related to the positive valence of the representation but also the very high divergence regarding their actual choices. Neither the specialists of the period nor the qualified audience agree.

There are attributes where the non-homogeneity difference between men's and women's appreciation is striking. More than 14 times, in case of the attribute *active*, more than 5 times in case of the attribute *industrious* and more than 4 times for *interesting*.

d) In the case of the last requirement for our instrument, which involved the participants' *temporal projection* (*Did you like/Would you have liked living in interwar Romania?*) the frequency of the answers proved to be an additional clarification. Significantly more participants ($X^2 = 106.29$, $p < 0.01$) answered YES (58.9%), compared to those who answered NO (41.09%). This is a new confirmation of the interest of our group towards the object of this representation and, implicitly, of their positive attitude towards the period. Also in the last challenge of the questionnaire, there are gender differences, even if they are not significant. 64 men and 55 women chose YES, and 37 men and 46 women chose NO. Again, the positive valence of the social representation of *interwar Romania* seems to be preferred by the male subgroup.

Moreover, the justifications provided by the participants are very valuable. The examples below facilitate our access to some prototype answers. The material will be, in the future, subject to independent processing by the content analysis technique. A thematic difference could explain the differences that were identified and discussed until now.

Yes, because:

- “Simple. Because then Romania looked like a Western country and had a positive image in Europe”(s. 2);
- “First of all the existence of the king, of the monarchy as a form of government, then the existence of cultivated politicians, the atmosphere in the large cities”(s. 42);
- “Little Paris,” the liberals governed, the foreigners worked for us, and not the other way around, Romania was relatively important politically speaking, Budapest had been ours for a year, high-quality political elite, Ferdinand” (s. 52);
- “I believe this was truly a glorious period for the Romanian state. An economic, cultural, even political peak” (s. 61);
- “Because I could have attended N. Iorga's lectures” (s. 62);
- “As I come from Bukovina, I would have wanted to live in a whole Bukovina, to study at the University of Cernăuți” (s. 65);
-

“There was the possibility of a career unconditioned by relations, political interests, kinship, etc. People had a different education and appreciated the intellectual model. Today, with very rare exceptions, there are no intellectuals who can be compared to those from interwar Romania” (s. 72); • “For the life of a bohemian, without the stress of modern life” (s. 99); • “Due to the monarchy” (s. 110)” • “This was a beautiful period in the history of Romania, with many cultural and economic accomplishments, with many politicians who asserted themselves as great Romanians. Plus the architecture of the cities, with their specific charm, atmosphere, great apparel and manners, which today are almost extinct” (s. 125); • “The air was definitely cleaner, the people were more relaxed, more cheerful, there was higher respect for values” (s. 126); • “To live in the Great Kingdom would have been far better than in the present, judging by the first four values: Greater Romania, economic development, world-class culture, a multiparty system” (s. 127). • “I would have liked to live then because the people were different; they had purer souls, were more honest, more cheerful, they sincerely loved their country and felt a deeper connection to it. The respect for teachers/professors was definitely higher. The rulers of Romania, for the most part, knew what had to be done and did it, many times in the interest of Romania. The women were more elegant, more distinguished, the entertainment was more varied and politeness was second nature for many of them. The cities, even the small ones, had a charm of their own, the air was cleaner, people were more respectful towards one another. Life was definitely more peaceful and more pleasant” (s. 134); • “I would have liked to live in interwar Romania as I would have felt the significant moment of the union of Greater Romania, by truly living the meaning of the word ‘patriotism.’ I would have liked to have feelings of admiration and gratitude for the king of my country, to take moral values and to learn from the Brătianu family, to read the literature of the great authors of the period, and at the same time to observe their conduct and political activities. Life in interwar Romania was based on traditional moral values, simplicity, profound feelings, charm, candor, decency, authentic values” (s. 139); • “For the spirit of freedom, the Western atmosphere of the large cities, the patriarchal atmosphere of the villages and the high level of culture and science” (s. 140); • “Because morality and common sense ruled, and I like to believe that people’s rights and freedoms were respected, people were less devious, had moral principles, were honest, respected and respectful. There was a certain stability and respect for the rulers of the country” (s. 141); • “Absolutely, yes! Apart from the political ‘backstage’ of the period (which was cleaner than today anyway), relating only to Jean Moscopol and his *Do you want to meet tonight?*, yes, I would have liked to live in that period. After years of destruction, death and suffering, people discovered a different philosophy of life, learnt to live and manifested this desire to live life to the fullest through dance, literature and art. I would have liked that period for its perfume, for the sound background, for the excellent poems and theatrical performances, for courage, ease, honor, respect and education! High-quality education! Also manifested in less cultivated or uncultivated circles of society. I would have liked that period because it was a different world. With more soul! Even if the national landscape copied the European or American models (but adapted them to our own reality), it was a stylish imitation. This meant that Romania, also from this point of view, was not only politically connected to European life” (s. 145); • “I would have liked to live in interwar Romania because overall this was considered as a referential period for many fields of activity: democratic life, cultural effervescence, respect for etiquette in society, neo-Romanian architectural style, urban development, the improvement of household comfort, caring for apparel

in general. The people from the rural environment were starting to buy clothes from the cities and let go of traditional clothing, women were emancipated, they had access to liberal professions such as medicine, law, etc., they dressed more freely, more European (trousers, short hair, practiced sports, outdoor parties, etc.)” (s. 150); • “Yes, because that was the period when in cities there was interest for knowledge, people wanted to have fun, they moved to the cities in order to get jobs in factories, and the aristocrats’ houses from the cities were charming” (s. 155); • “In order to be able to fight against the Soviet Union, which I consider the source of all evil between the World Wars and afterwards” (s. 174); • “Things happened in a very intense rhythm. There were moments when a country was being born” (s. 177); • “Prosperity and development. Less political instability. Women were being offered chances and had access to various sectors, even reluctantly, but there were chances” (s. 179); • “1. I am fascinated by extremisms. I would have liked to live then, to observe the political situation, to understand the mechanisms which caused people to act the way they did. TO BE AN EYE WITNESS. 2. Because Romania was Greater Romania—Royal Romania; even now this is my political ideal: monarchy and union with Bessarabia. Only the king can unite it given the current political crisis (the current political class is as corrupt as between the World Wars. There is no charismatic leader). 3. For literary salons and Bucharest cafés. 4. In order to feel like the authentic Romanian peasant, who was not yet crushed by the Communists and the Soviet tanks, and who still had traditional values: family, Church, etc.” (s. 181); • “The society was well-organized, values were respected, there was honesty, the politicians had a public conscience” (s. 187); • “For women’s elegance” (s. 192).

No, because:

• “I would not have liked to live in interwar Romania, because there was great hunger and poverty, and shortly afterwards there was the Second World War” (s. 8); • “I believe that this period was a highly conflictive and tense period, and Romania did not have a lot to offer then” (s. 12). • “Because we did not have access to technology like today” (s. 56); • “The escalation of extremism in the ‘30s and the misery caused by the totalitarian regimes, the authoritarianism of the rulers” (s. 70); • “Because of political radicalism and the threats looming over the security of Romania” (s. 72); • “Because of the difficult access to high-quality education” (s. 75); • “Corruption in the administration, abuse in the police, political extremism” (s. 85); • “A period full of insecurity, between two major conflicts” (s. 86); • “Most of the interwar Romanian society was poor and uncultivated” (s. 100); • “A period characterized by social inequality” (s. 118); • “Because of the increase in the number of sympathizers of totalitarian movements: communism, Nazism. I am frightened by the thought of living among legionnaires” (s. 120); • “Illiteracy was through the roof, daily discomfort and a lack of public utilities” (s. 130); • “I would not have liked to live then because over a 20 year period the world went through two wars and life was hard during those catastrophes. Only a few Romanian families did not suffer in the two World Wars” (s. 133); • “I would not have liked to live at the border of Europe. That was a predominantly rural society (80%). History proves that a society which does not become urban, which does not vigorously choose industrialization, which is not aligned to the introduction of economic progress, is doomed to stay behind. Certain descriptions in interwar Romania mention horrid roads, isolated communities, schools made of daub, which are also present in current Romania. We brag about books written by Rebreanu or Mircea Eliade, but fundamental books remained unwritten. We did not have and do not have books that ensure the universality of a

culture, such as Homer's *Odyssey*, Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, Goethe's *Faust* or Tolstoy's *War and Peace*" (s. 138); • "Who would have liked to live at the periphery of the civilized world, where theft and lies go before honesty and honor, in a world of absolute relativism and subjectivism, where for most people, democracy is equal to anarchy, and public law always loses to private interest, especially if backed by political power or the power of money. A country where any law, document or contract is interpreted, where political interests rule over economic ones and justice. People had a special charm, but not when they counted their money! Nice scenery, folk costumes, archaic traditions, wild nature, good to visit for a month or two... three months at most! And we are talking about a society and a country which was far more European, more predictable and honest than the one of 2014" (s. 143); • "I would not have wanted to live in that period because I do not think that I could have adapted to the living conditions, given the great discrepancies between the social classes" (s. 167); • "It was not progressive enough, from my point of view" (s. 170); • "I am not interested in that period in general" (s. 182); • "Because I was born in a family of peasants and I could not have surpassed my social condition through education" (s. 185); • "It cannot be fun to live in a country which is 80% rural, 50% illiterate, in conflict with neighbors and with heavy political scheming" (s. 195).

Conclusions

The world and Romania between the two World Wars are topics of research and interest not only for historians. Economists, sociologists, politics experts, men of letters, military theoreticians, philosophers, etc. are active presences. Moreover, the period was and is used as a reference point by politicians, journalists, diplomats, writers, moviemakers, musicians, fashion creators, etc. It is here, preserved in the mind of the general public, not just of the people who lived then. Cross-generation transmission also plays a role, as it is the childhood of the great grandparents, grandparents or parents of some of the people from our generation. Therefore, it is a subject of oral history. All of these make interwar Romania a perfect social object, to be researched by psychologists and in keeping with Serge Moscovici's social representation theory.

In this stage of our research, we were interested in identifying the coordinates of the age in the perception of the specialists of the period and also its representation among a qualified public (historians and economists). We were interested in the degree to which the convergence-divergence pattern—present among those who studied it—also appears in the representation. Additionally, we wanted to ascertain whether the gender variable introduces significant differences, which was less likely among a qualified audience. However, the precedent encountered in the social representation of power (see note 27) primarily supported this attempt.

The analysis of the historiography of the period has allowed for the identification of the concrete expression of the convergence-divergence binomial. There was a relatively high degree of closeness between the opinions of the researchers of the period regarding the geopolitical position and the role of Romania in international relations. Predominantly appreciative. There are major differences regarding the level of economic development and modernization in general as well as regarding the quality of the political regime in Romania. The cause of divergences is primarily a different reference framework used by experts.

The identification and analysis of the social representation of interwar Romania leads to some certainties:

– *This is a definitely positive "construct," an aspect which was repeatedly confirmed by measured data:* by the valence of most words associated to the inducing phrase (70.7% - plus),

by the average value of semantic differentiator scales—somewhat low but, nonetheless positive (0.67 out of maximum 3), by a significant preference (58.9%) to have lived then and by the plastic and complex arguments of that option. The dominant attitude of our group towards interwar Romania is definitely favorable. This fact is an element of convergence, a *content* convergence on the representation valence. The divergence, revealed just as categorically, by the analysis of dispersions in the scale answers of the semantic differentiator, refers to the appreciation of the *level* of this positive valence. Here the participants' opinions are significantly different, and are highly heterogeneous. *Definitely, our group has a positive representation, but its level is very differently estimated!*

– Conceptually, this is a relatively “composite” representation, with a high presence in the group of historians and economists. Thus, the processing of the associative material showed the fact that the vocabulary of this construct (sole words) represents only 1/3 of the theoretical maximum value of possible diversity. Moreover, the 68 words, which are common for the gender subgroups, cover, as frequency, approximately 70% of the generated associated material.

– The following elements emerged as elements of the core, the essence, in fact, of a representation: *Great Union, monarchy, democracy, war, constitution, multiparty* and *economic crisis*. The first three with very high frequencies, and *Great Union* with a very high degree of importance. All these represent additional evidence of sharing and, at the same time, of the solidarity of this representation, which benefits from such a strong triple-filtered core: as frequency, importance and spontaneity.

– There are, in the social representation of interwar Romania, *elements of the convergence-divergence pattern from the historiography of the period*: appreciations and higher convergence between the participants for the geopolitical elements and the role of Romania in international relations as well as lower values and higher dispersions in the evaluation of economic development and the quality of the political regime of the time. As this is a qualified group, out of which 2/3 have a degree in history, half of them with didactic attributions, the conclusion is not surprising⁵³. However, the same qualified group has an average of correct answers regarding the characteristics of interwar Romania (6 questions) relatively below their potential. This is probably the effect of the referential framework left at the participants' discretion, as operationalization, which accentuated the heterogeneity. It is indirect evidence of its importance in contributing to heterogeneity. The subsequent analysis of the data collected from the participants who represented common sense will allow us to validate this explanation or not.

– The results of the semantic differentiator show the *profile of interwar Romania*: Here it is, in decreasing hierarchy from the 25 attributes: it was definitely *beautiful!* Satisfyingly *pacifist, independent, interesting, industrious, active, large, progressive* and *democratic*. Only relatively *well-known, characterized by patriotism, rich, important, predictable, cheerful, civilized* and *organized. A little cultivated, Western, consensual, modern, honest and peaceful*. Not *powerful* and highly *rural*.

We would especially like to emphasize the results related to the gender variable. This was introduced in the research design due to the curiosity triggered by the data from previous research, although our expectations were modest, given the characteristics of the targeted group: qualified participants, for which their specialization obviously overshadowed the demographical variables, such as age, gender, residential environment, etc. However, it proved useful by its variety and the number of differences in the representation of interwar Romania between the female and the male subgroups. Although similar overall, they displayed sufficient particularities. Under the reserve of future processing, in which we will maintain

constant the other variables which may interact with gender—specialization, age⁵⁴—the most important findings are:

- A positive valence of the representation is significantly more significant in the male subgroup, both for the associative technique and for the semantic differentiator profile. Moreover, the higher percentage of correct answers to the 6 questions and the homogeneity of the options in the differentiator are characteristics of this subgroup.

- In generating words associated to the stimulus phrase—*interwar Romania*—the male subgroup was more productive (more words) and more varied in sole words, and the female group was more homogeneous.

- The vocabulary of the two subgroups is predominantly different regarding the specific sole words. Only 68 words are common out of 357, but these represent approximately 70% of the entire generated associative material. Therefore, there is a relative difference of spontaneous expression, and an essentialization resemblance. A future additional analysis of the non-shared vocabulary, specific to the gender subgroups, could indicate whether this also implies thematic differences.

- On the level of the subcores, a re-judging based on the criterion of the verbal material, spontaneously generated, has a different effect. The female subgroup also has an element—*Great Union*, the male subgroup eliminates two elements—*monarchy*, *multiparty*—and promotes another one—*modernization*. It is as though the women's first thought is only completed, and in the men's case, it is significantly restructured.

- The sub-cores resulted from the participants' gender dichotomy interfere only for 50%. In the female subgroup, the triple-qualified elements (frequency + spontaneity + importance) are *democracy*, *monarchy*, *war* and subsequently, *Great Union* is double qualified (frequency + importance). For men, the following elements are essential: *Great Union*, *democracy* (triple qualification) and with double qualification, *modernization* (frequency + importance), *monarchy*, *multiparty* (frequency + spontaneity). Moreover, each gender sub-core feeds the general core with a specific element: *war*—female subgroup, *multiparty*—male subgroup. In this aspect of the representation, the difference is significant. In the theory of social representations, a difference of one term in the core is considered important.

- Regarding the profile of interwar Romania, identified by the semantic differentiator, it is certain that, for the male subgroup, it appears as significantly more *interesting*, *democratic*, *cheerful* and also more *rural*. For the female subgroup, it is more *consensual*, *modern and peaceful* but not statistically significant.

It is obvious that the aforementioned examples represent a challenge for the subsequent analyses of this social representation. Why is the male subgroup more precisely nuanced, “generous” and homogenous in relation to the image of interwar Romania? Is the gender variable the single cause, or is it accompanied by the age differences in our group, as well as the relation between the two specializations? And, if that is the case, than what is the weight for each variable? A possible answer could be the content analysis of the open answers. This includes the subject's justification for each word associated to interwar Romania and the option for living in that period. This is how a topic of contemporary history becomes a challenge for social psychologists.

The main limit from this research stage is the absence of control when it comes to influencing the gender variable between the two operationalizations of the distance towards the object: the participants' specialization and age. This aspect will be compensated by future studies, which will maintain the history specialization as constant and will supplement and

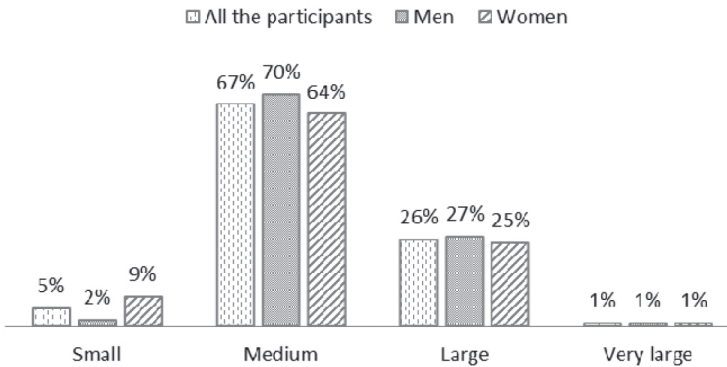
refine, including on the explanatory level, these first conclusions. Despite this aspect, our approach has some advantages: the bidisciplinary combination (contemporary history, social psychology); using, within this social representation research, a qualified audience, which is in general quite original in Romania, but there are international precedents⁵⁵; the alignment to an emerging topic, historical representations⁵⁶.

Annexes

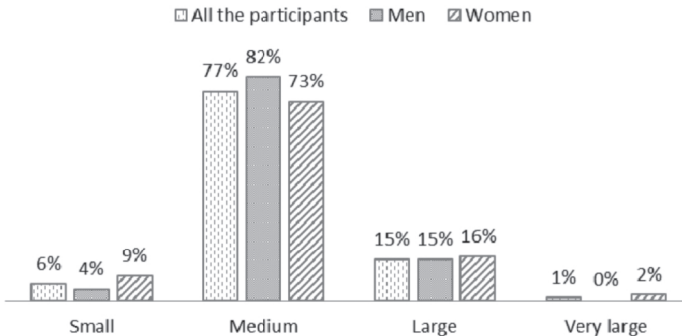
Annex 1

The results of the six scales regarding area, population, literacy, economic development, neighbors and political life of interwar Romania*

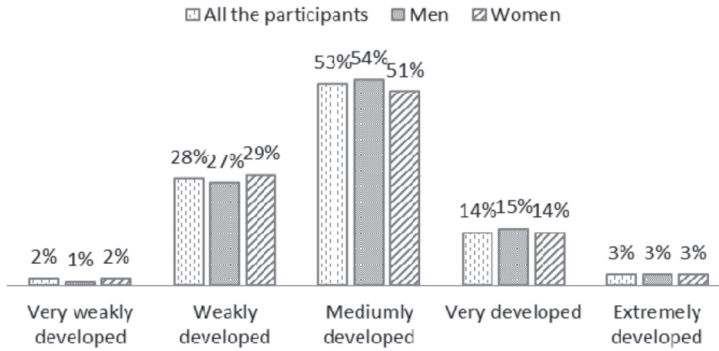
Area of Romania



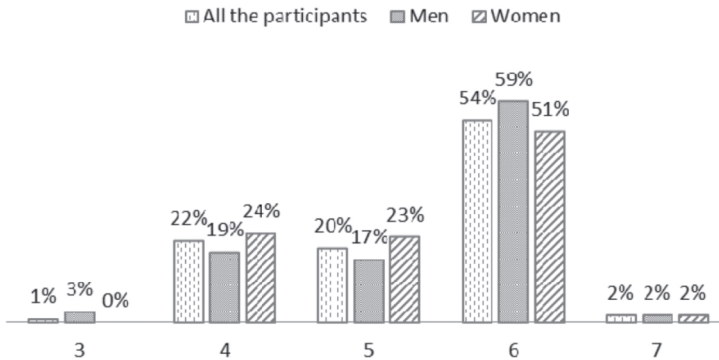
Population of Romania



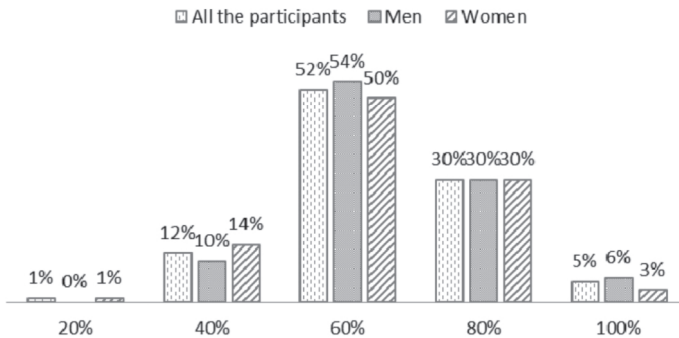
Economic development of Romania



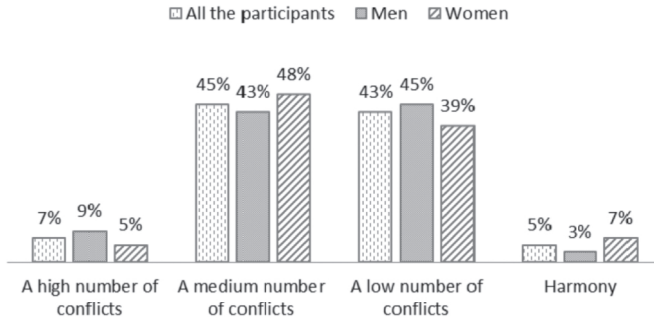
Number of neighbours



Literacy percentage



The political life was defined by

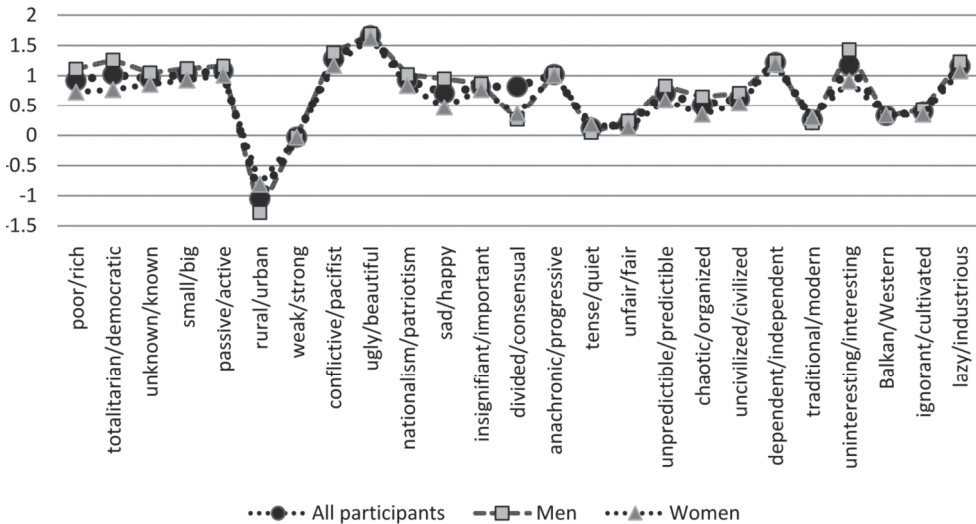


Although all the scales offered five alternatives from which participants could choose their answer, in some of the graphs only four appear because the options with 0 frequency do not appear in the graph.

Annex 2

The mean results of the participants' choices at the semantic differentiator

Semantic differentiator



Notes

1. See Gh. Iacob, *România în epoca modernizării (1859-1939). Towards a modern Romania*, Publishing House of Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iași, 2013; Idem, *Modernizarea României (1859-1939). Legislație și strategie economică*, Publishing House of Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iași, 2012.

2. Ph.D. S. Manuilă, D.C. Georgescu, *Populația României*, Bucharest, 1937, p. 9.
3. *Bréviaire Statistique*, Central Statistics Institute, Bucharest, 1940, p. 10.
4. *Ibidem*, p. 9.
5. Ph.D. S. Manuilă, D.C. Georgescu, *op.cit.*, p. 9.
6. *Bréviaire Statistique*, p. 8.
7. D. Șandru, *Populația rurală a României între cele două războaie mondiale*, Iași, 1980, p. 49.
8. K. Hitchins, *România. 1866-1947*, Bucharest, 1996, p. 359.
9. I. Livezeanu, *Cultură și naționalism în România Mare. 1918-1930*, Bucharest, 1998, p. 347.
10. S. Fischer-Galați, *România în secolul al XX-lea*, Iași, 1998.
11. *Ibidem*, p. 46.
12. F. Constantiniu, *O istorie sinceră a poporului român*, Bucharest, 1997.
13. *Ibidem*, p. 334.
14. S. Alexandrescu, *Paradoxul român*, Bucharest, 1998.
15. *Dosarele Istoriei*, 12, 1998, p. 1, 5.
16. Gh. Platon, V. Russu, Gh. Iacob, V. Cristian, I. Agrigoroaiei, *Cum s-a înfăptuit România modernă*, Iași, 1993, p. 319.
17. I. Scurtu, *România în Europa secolului XX*, in *Dosarele Istoriei*, V, 2000, 12, p. 24.
18. *Istoria Românilor*, VIII, *România Întregită (1918-1940)*, coord. I. Scurtu, Bucharest, 2003, p. 124.
19. L. Antonesei, *Modernizările românești, populismul și demagogia*, in S. Antohi (coord.), *Modernism și antimodernism. Noi perspective interdisciplinare*, Bucharest, 2008.
20. B. Murgescu, *România și Europa. Acumularea decalajelor economice (1500-2010)*, Iași, 2010.
21. *Ibidem*, p. 150-151.
22. *Ibidem*, p. 212.
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24. S. Moscovici, *La psychanalyse, son image et son publique*. Paris, P.U.F., 1961.
25. J.C. Abric, *L'approche structurale des représentations sociales: développements récents*, *Psychologie et Société*, 4/2001, 81-103.
26. L. Iacob, L.R. Gherasim, M. Huceanu, *Genul sau genurile reprezentării sociale a puterii?*, *Social psychology*, 14/2005, 49-69; L. Iacob, A. Neculau, *Fețele lui Iamou în reprezentarea socială a puterii*, *Psychology magazine*, 55, 1-2/2009, 5 -33.
27. J.C. Abric, *op. cit.*
28. L. Dany, J.C. Abric, *Distance à l'objet et représentations du cannabis*, *Revue internationale de psychologie sociale*, 20, 3/2007, 77-104.
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32. I. Galli, R. Fasanelli, *Réconversion industrielle et représentations sociales: le cas de l'aire occidentale de Naples*, *Psychologie et Société* 3/2001, 93-118; I. Galli, I. Markova, B. Bouriche, R. Fasanelli, M. Geka, L. Iacob, Gh. Iacob, *La représentation sociale de la crise économique dans quatre pays européens*, *Cahiers Internationaux de Psychologie Sociale*, 87, 3/2010. DOI: 10.3917/cips.087.0585; I. Galli, A. Neculau, R. Fasanelli, L.M. Iacob, M.A. Ianoș, *La représentation sociale du pouvoir dans la balance des dimensions identitaires genre et nationalité*, *Psychology magazine*, 57, 2/2011, 146-161.
33. P. Vergès, *L'évocation de l'argent: une méthode pour la définition du noyau central d'une représentation*, *Bulletin de psychologie*, 45/1992, 203-209.
34. The research that aims to identify the core showed that the importance paid to a word is not necessarily correlated to its mnemonic accessibility, shown by the spontaneity of its pres-

- ence on the list. It is not mandatory to have an overlay between the first words that come to mind to a given stimulus and their subsequent evaluation based on the criterion of importance. The generation speed relates more to the stereotypical dimension of the representation, and importance, to its reflective dimension. The use of both aspects, combined with frequency (shows the sharing within a population), ensures a more complex identification of the core.
35. In fact, the respective software sorts the entire vocabulary obtained from the participants into four categories: 1. high frequency – high rank (of importance / order), 2. high frequency – low rank, 3. low frequency – high rank, 4. low frequency – low rank. The first category represents the core, the one primarily used in this research. The last comprises peripheral elements, the most fluctuating and non-representative for the investigated social object. Categories 2 and 3 potentially feed the core, either on the line of sharing, or on the line of the stereotypes (if there is a high rank of the spontaneity / order). These are words which, systematically, come to mind first in most participants.
 36. Skewness shows the left/right of the distribution, Kurtosis, its nature: plane ($K < 3$, relatively dispersed distribution of the option choices, therefore a low convergence between participants) or sharp ($K > 3$, the ascending nature an option, aggregated distribution, high response homogeneity).
 37. C.E. Osgood, *Semantic differential technique in the comparative study of culture*, American Anthropologist, 66/1964, 171-201.
 38. The verbal versions from the question considered the two categories of participants: the ones born in interwar Romania and those born after the Second World War.
 39. J.C. Abric, *op.cit.*; C. Flament, *Structure, dynamique et transformation des représentations sociales*, PUF, Paris, 1994..
 40. The impact of variables age and specialization will be the subject of future research.
 41. The conclusion remains valid for the evaluation of the words by the importance paid to them by the participants, by the spontaneous moment for the generation of the 5 words. The ascending nature of the male group (163 words being considered, compared to 137, for the female group) is maintained approximately with the same difference as for the generation order: 26 vs. 33. In the overall group, reasoning in terms of importance brings the participants even closer (the list of sole words is reduced to 290).
 42. It is surprising, at first glance, that the frequency of the word is explained by the participants either by the restitution of the country, damaged by the First World War, or by the fact that the evaluated historical period was placed between the two world wars, and some of the people who lived then lived through both.
 43. Alphabetically listed, they are: *rich, the Britianus, Carol II, conflict, development, Europeanization, Ferdinand I, legionnaires, Little Paris*.
 44. We chose this symbolic expression in order to identify the fact that, at all times, including in case of gender subgroups, we considered the results of the two processing operations as combined: frequency + order and frequency + importance. Thus, theoretically, the qualification at the top of each of the two crossed hierarchies actually meant the chance to get 'two votes.' This allowed us to see the contribution of each gender category to the general core.
 45. In future studies, it will be a challenge to find out whether the other two operationalizations of the distance to the object—specialization and age—are as differentiating.
 46. The average values of the correct answers are: 60.33 %—male subgroup, 56.16%—female subgroup.
 47. Only as an estimate, given the variety of the evaluated aspects, we calculated the general average value of this profile: 0.67.
 48. We calculated for each scale the value of the Skewness and Kurtosis indicators. For the latter, also as an estimate, as the practice is not regular, we determined its average value for the entire semantic differentiator and by scale theme groups.

49. Technically, we are talking about the average values of average values or of Kurtosis indicators. The reservation expressed in notes 47 and 48 remains valid.
50. *Democratic*: $mF = 0.77$ vs. $mB = 1.26$ ($t(197) = 2.54$, $p = 0.010$); *cheerful*: $mF = 0.47$ vs. $mB = 0.95$ ($t(197) = 2.39$, $p = 0.017$); *interesting*: $mF = 0.91$ vs. $mB = 1.43$ ($t(197) = 2.78$, $p = 0.017$).
51. *Rural* $mF = -0,81$ vs. $mB = -1,28$ ($t(197) = 2.22$, $p = 0.027$).
52. The respective proportion is the ratio of the average Kurtosis average values of the two subgroups.
53. While the reflection of historiography is not surprising, it was interesting to find the same configuration of convergent and divergent elements in a group made up not only of persons specialized in history. Especially since it was repeated in the results of the six questions and in the semantic differentiator.
54. In this case, age itself did not matter as much as the associated life experience. The male subgroup included persons, albeit very few, born in interwar Romania. The female group didn't. This imperfect correspondence between the participants of the two gender subgroups is one of the limitations of the research.
55. J.P. Curtial, *Analyse dynamique des représentations sociales des chercheurs: le cas de l'autisme*, Papers on Social Representations, 8/1999, 1- 32.
56. B. Rimé et al, *op.cit.*

Abstract

Interwar Romania: Historical Analysis and Social Representation

Historical research includes themes and topics that are exclusively reserved to experts in the field and themes of general interest that are open to all interested parties. The latter ones are included in what the *social representation theory* (Moscovici, 1961) calls “social objects.” The interwar period has this status, including interwar Romania. In a bidisciplinary approach—contemporary history and social psychology (TRS)—we were interested in three aspects: 1. to indicate the structure of the *convergence-divergence pattern* in the approaches used by the specialists on this topic; 2. to identify the *configuration of the social representation of interwar Romania*—in the case of an audience qualified in this topic by their academic specialization (history and economic sciences) and profession; and 3. to measure its variability, determined by the *distance to the object*—in its various operationalizations (this article, the first in a series, stops at gender differences). The opinions of 11 specialists and the answers of 202 subjects (50% F, 50% M) were analyzed. The first conclusions refer to finding the structure of the convergence-divergence pattern in the specialists’ works as well as in the case of the social representation of interwar Romania and in the existence of significant differences introduced by the gender variable. Both findings are premises in subsequent stages: the investigation of the variability of this representation depending on specialization, the age categories of the subjects of this type of audience, and also at the common sense level.

Keywords

interwar Romania, history, social psychology, social representations, bidisciplinary