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ABSTRACT OF THE HABILITATION THESIS

Title *Inegalități de venit între politica socială și vulnerabilitatea în ocupare*
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The habilitation thesis presents the evolution of academic research concerns in socio-economic inequalities and social protection, arguing their relevance in the scientific landscape. The thesis is structured in four parts, reflecting the evolution of the academic and professional career (I), the main directions for the development of the academic career (II), plans for the evolution and development of the scientific career (III), respectively the coordination capacity in the field of research (IV).

The first section provides a professional summary and a statistical synthesis of the research findings. They capitalized on the interdisciplinary skills acquired through undergraduate studies (economics, socio-economic statistics) and doctoral studies (sociology, in the field of social policies) as short-term courses that updated my skills for handling international datasets.

Academic research concerns have targeted the welfare state in the analytical key to income inequalities. On the one hand, we observed inequality as an effect of distributive and redistributive policies that generate the resources necessary for the individual's existence and development, which profiled a mezzo-macro perspective on inequalities. On the other hand, we paid attention to a diverse palette of contexts that deteriorate the quality of labor income and the response of social policies to these situations, profiling a mezzo-micro perspective on income inequalities.

The section on the main directions of the academic career develops these two broad directions in its first two parts. The third part refers to research that remains in the mentioned research fields but is differentiated by the volume and diversity of the statistical information they call upon, while the fourth mentions significant scientific achievements.

Subsumed under the direction of *social policies and income inequality* are two types of analyses. The one that gives the direction profile is monitoring the income inequality level and identifying the constituent sources' contribution to it. Performed for the first time in my doctoral work, I resumed this analysis over time. Less than a decade after the publication of studies signaling the severe increase of inequality in ex-communist countries due to the profound economic and social policy reforms that had started (which did not include Romania), the thesis was novel in the national research. The studies I carried out later consolidated this research results and maintained the particularity of my research; other analyses either do not include Romania, are partial, or follow other dimensions of the disaggregation of total inequality, being, in general, lacking a temporal perspective.

Part of this direction is the analysis of income policies: the evolution of salary and pension rights, characteristics of the salary policy from the perspective of their inequality, and the relationship with the minimum wage. The constant concern in this direction allowed the extension of analyses of this type for the national space until the interwar period. Although the international comparative perspective was present in my research, the retrospective analysis of salaries, pensions, and child allowance, the social protection system, and the inequalities that marked the access to these in the three significant



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periods, distinct in terms of social-economic organization, of the last Romanian century particularize my contribution to the national research. They are the subject of one of my books.

In other studies presented in the thesis, I showed the persistence of the consistently high level of income inequality, as well as the gap compared to most European countries, from the perspective of several indicators (Gini, wage ratios, persistence and depth of poverty, consumption model), as well as the very low efficiency of welfare-type social transfers. In contrast, the efficiency of insurance measures (pensions) is high, above the EU average, but below the level of the former communist East European countries, which define the European maximum in this regard. These come in addition to poverty risk and pre-transfer inequality, the result of primary income, among the European maximums. The diagnosis of income and employment in rural areas has been the subject of separate studies. Among their conclusions is the increase in the gap in poverty risk of the rural areas not bordering large urban areas and the last ones, as well as the modernization trends of the Romanian rural environment, including in agricultural work.

Close to the topic of employment vulnerabilities, the study on the impact of the context of the COVID-19 pandemic on the labor market was built around a context and a policy analysis. They highlighted the unequal impact of the pandemic context on the labor market and professional qualifications, as well as the importance of an active measure addressed to small entrepreneurs for protection in crises. With a history of over a hundred years in some European states but absent in Romania, such a measure supports economic activity simultaneously with the protection of employment, including in the context of technological pressure, which is increasingly felt today.

In the direction of *employment vulnerabilities*, there is research on job insecurity, either by referring to the risk of non-standard employment or as a result of inadequate relationships at work. Among the non-standard forms of employment, self-employment and informal employment, often combined, are specific to Romania. Although we have identified fluctuations in the transitions to and from self-employment about economic dynamics, including the phenomenon known as the refugee effect, echoing the results of other specialized studies, in the research studies, we have argued the predominantly subsistence nature of self-employment in the Romanian space.

Other groups observed were the people with disabilities, the Roma population, young people leaving the child protection system, the risk of over-qualification in young people (a casual approach), and ex-prisoners. For these, similarities and specific problems of the risk of unemployment were identified. The experience thus acquired recommended me for participation in international projects that allowed me to compare the Romanian situation concerning the policy and practices of inclusion of vulnerable groups.

At its development, the study on inappropriate relationships and workplace harassment was a novelty in the Romanian scientific literature. This was one of the research efforts in the realization of which I was involved in all stages, from the design of the research to the publication of the results. The study also pointed to mechanisms generating marginalization and inappropriate workplace behaviors other than those frequently monitored in discrimination studies. Age or material situation was reported more frequently than sexual orientation or even ethnicity as vectors of marginalization. The study's results are also relevant to human resource management.



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The research presented in the section *Indicators and Data Resources in the Social Domain* is a plea for secondary data analysis, in general, for better use of existing statistical resources. I mention here the administrative and institutional data, based on which I have carried out over time, as an author or co-author, a complex diagnosis of the tobacco economy in Romania, an analysis of Romanian sociological journalism, an analysis serving the monitoring of domestic violence, but also of the dynamics of criminality with the socio-economic context.

For *future research*, I envisage the continuation of scientific research on the mentioned dimensions following particularities and sub-fields that are relevant in the current context.

The analysis of income inequalities remains a topic of interest. The successive crises that Romania, like other countries, has gone through with the COVID-19 pandemic are a challenge for income policies and an opportunity for their analysis. The concerns of monitoring the level and sources of inequality and expanding the analysis by dimensions not addressed in my work to date, both as national specifics and in international comparisons, remain of interest. Monitoring the sources of inequality according to dimensions defined geographically by the educational or socio-professional structure can support the evaluation of territorial development policies, labor market support, and, in general, income policies. Particular attention will be paid to the minimum wage policy, given its relevance to the objective of decent work, the fight against poverty, and its relationship with any minimum income benchmark.

From the mezzo-micro perspective, the research on vulnerabilities in employment will continue in the direction of observing occupational transitions, mainly looking at the transition to and from self-employment, as well as the transition from school to work. A new direction of my research will consider the impact of the expansion of information technology in the current labor market on the structure of employment by branches and the labor force. Not the process itself, but the speed at which it is happening lately has a novelty character, which can generate the moral wear of professional qualifications within the same generation.

I also intend to get involved in projects and cooperations that mediate inter-institutional communication to harmonize administrative information of statistical type. In particular, I plan to develop research regarding the seasonality of the phenomenon of domestic violence, a topic practically not addressed in national publications.

Section IV presents arguments that prove the ability to *coordinate and facilitate learning* in scientific research. Previous experiences in designing and coordinating annual and multi-annual research projects based on quantitative and qualitative methodology are presented, as well as experiences in training and managing research teams. It also mentioned the activity of coordinating scientific works and that of the reviewer for publications on quality of life, social policies, and living standards.