

Methodological complementarity of sociology and history in the study of demographic processes

Abstract

Properly and accurately interpreted historical data over time are the recognition of a serious scientific research seeking their sociological explanation and interpretation. The necessity of complementarity of sociology and history in scientific thought is recognized in different time periods based on the scientific trends and tendencies in these two disciplines. The subjects of the sociology and history are mostly identical, but the roads that they use to come to findings are different. Their connection is evident in the unity of different cognitive goals. Historical studies are based on specific and individual and sociological on the identification of the general patterns in historical events. One of the scientific phenomena that can be studied with a considerable degree of disciplinary consent of sociology and history is the problem of demographic shifts, or processes. Consideration of demographic trends of one or a different social period falls within the historical sociology, which is a scientific discipline constituted during the last decades of the twentieth century. The demographic data presented in statistical or empirical materials are historical records, and their explanation is the subject of sociological theory. Demographic phenomena and demographic trends have their historical duration and historical foundation. The sociological studies of demographic trends, and through the history, and in modern time contribute to defining and determining the demographic structure as a substructure of society. For this reason, within the study of demographic trends is necessary the methodological complementarity of the sociology and history as well as to mutually complement each other.

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Introduction

The study and examination of demographic processes and characteristics are a necessity for all plans and development strategies. A special place in the interpretations, comments and explanations have the censuses. Through the statistical processing is not determined only the quantity of biological substances in a society, but also its quality. Various census results are the basis for deeper and more strategic thinking on the development of society and the directions that should be promoted for their (lack of) overcoming. In heterogeneous environments, burdened by a conflict between diversity, population censuses are often politically motivated, since the beginning of the process to the analysis of the results. The consequence of all this is the subsequent manipulation of the census results, including the eventual demographic trends that have almost nothing in common with the political games. There are areas in the South Slavic ambiance that were exposed to handling events for a time, during and after the completion of field statistics of the census process. But the present situation is that, despite the efforts, it is hard enough in most cases to achieve the manipulating counsel through the demographic indicators. And when something like that does not function, the consequences are the new statistical counting and the new costs for citizens, the state and society. For the census or other demographic trends over time to be truly and accurately transferred and interpreted it is required the methodological complementarity of sociology and history, as well as two disciplines that basically very much use the demographic indicators.

1. Towards the historical sociology

The consideration of demographic trends is one of those phenomena that can be studied interdisciplinary, with all the difficulties that arise among scientific disciplines in determining and defining the unique theoretical - conceptual apparatus and the choice of methodological procedures. There is a large degree and the agreement among different disciplines, and especially between sociology and history in the analysis and considerations of demographic shifts and processes. This is an issue of sociological, and historical, and economic, and legal and ethnological, and other disciplines. The analysis of demographic trends of society, especially social mobility and demographic facts as an element of quality of life is a sociological topic. However, if the demographic analysis is performed for a specific period, of a given society, whether it is a traditional or modern, then it falls into the domain of historical sociology as a discipline whose name

is constructed over the last two decades of the twentieth century. Demographic studies are one of those segments of sociological science that shows why sociologists are dealing with history and which allows the completion of the methodological and epistemological dilemmas that arise and which exist in the use of historical material by sociologists. Although a time frame for stronger rooted historical sociology of scientific developments is taken the period of the 70s of the twentieth century, some historians (Radovan Samardžić) point out that the disciplinary determination of historical sociology began between the two wars and that “Dušan J. Popović introduced lectures from historical sociology.”² Historical sociology determines the legality of a society at a given historical period. In this sense, is achieved a significant link between sociology and history, which is reflected in an interdisciplinary approach to the study of certain problems. The interdisciplinarity of the subject of the research of many social sciences is contemporary, modern tendencies of the development of these disciplines and the entire science. Many things are connecting sociology and history as the two complementary disciplines. Sociology in the study of specific topics is using the historical approach, and history in the explanation of certain phenomena is applying the sociological approach.

Common to history and sociology is that their case study is human society. And both sciences are studying the social totality, and all sides of social life. The methods with which they achieve that and research tasks in this goal are different, but they can be complementary as well. Sociology as its own research method in the study of historical events applies the comparative historical method through which it considers the concept and type of historical sources, critical analysis of these sources, interpreting the meaning of sources, internal and external criticism of sources and based on all that it runs the historical synthesis as the final step of the historical study of some social phenomenon. On the other hand, history is used in its research through sociological methods and techniques, and in particular through the sociological results. The study of the historical past and historical events is a prerequisite for the study of development. Sociology is increasingly relying on historical sources and historical results in the construction of its theoretical and empirical attitudes, while history uses concepts, terms and results of the sociological science. Such common topics of study include demographic changes and changes caused by them. In the sphere of historical sociology enters the study of demographic factors, natural growth, social mobility, as well as other demographic indicators.

When it comes to certain demographics in the historical period should be borne in mind that it is socially and historically very difficult to perform and

² Radovan Samardžić, “The Science in Belgrade“ (1918-1941)“, in: *The History of Belgrade*, Belgrade: Prosveta, 1974. 320 –366.

identify them. This especially applies to the period of acculturation or so called compensation period after some tumultuous historical events, such as, for example, wars and social deconstruction. So, if you are considering a process of demographic developments and movement in the South Slavic society, in the second half of the twentieth century can be seen that it is on the historical side quite hard to do. It is, in particular difficult to achieve it with mobility. Inability of reliable inference about trends and directions of mobility stems from the unclear differentiation of social groups that occur due to:

- a) cultural, economic and historical differences between some of the south Slavic environments;
- b) the interrupted continuity of the social structure of the first Yugoslavia, caused by the war from the year 1941 to 1945;
- c) concept of control - the control system which favored some industries at the expense of others, where the social sectors in favored industries had greater material supplies and met the quality of life at a higher level from social groups in disadvantaged sectors;
- d) non-existence and non-functioning of the markets³

By revealing historical legality of demographic changes in certain historical periods, historical sociology aims to “provide an explanation of events in the past and predicting the future events by detecting social or historical laws”⁴

2. Complementarity of history and sociology

History is much older scientific discipline than sociology. In order for sociology to appear it was necessary to exist the given historical milieu of social affairs institutions and relationships. Thus, it can be said that history is, in a sense, a scientific assumption of the emergence of sociology as a separate science. Sociology was able to constitute its object of study only after the systematization of historical experience and knowledge of various historically known forms of society. In order to constitute a theoretical and empirical apparatus for studying of the state as the organization of power of society, sociology had to record scientific and empirical basis of existence of Sparta and Athens, and Rome, and Egypt, and other ancient countries, that have long been missing from the social and historical stage.

³ Slobodan Vuković, *Mobility and Social structures*, Belgrade: Institute for Criminological and Sociological Research, 1994. pp 32.

⁴ Karl Popper, “Poverty of Historicism,” in *Critique of collectivism*, Editor Vlado Gligorov, Belgrade: Filip Višnjic, 1988. 168.

Complementarity of history and sociology was present in the initial period of the constitution of sociology as a separate scientific discipline. The founders of sociology advocated for complementation of knowledge of society through historical facts. In theoretical thought of Auguste Comte and Karl Marx was emphasized the necessity of a single disciplinary approach for the study of society, so Comte points out that “the sociological method is essentially determined by the historical approach to social phenomena”⁵.

A similar view of the complementarity of social and historical knowledge can be seen with Emil Durkheim. He even used the term “scientific history or sociology.” Durkheim commitment to the uniqueness of historical and sociological approach to the study of society can be seen from his appearances in the French philosophical society in 1908, where he reacted to the exposure of a member of the Company regarding the relationship of sociology and history in scientific research shelf. In the context of that dialogue Durkheim pointed out that “Mr. Senjobe confronts the history and sociology as these are the two disciplines that use different methods.”⁶ In his writings, Durkheim states that there is nothing in his sociological knowledge “that is worthy of that name which would have no historic character ... There are no two methods or two ideas that are contradictory. What is true for the history, it will also be for the sociology.”⁷

On the complementarity of social and historical knowledge insisted and Max Weber, Karl Mannheim and C. Wright Mills. From the 20s to the 60s of the twentieth century, much less in sociology is insisted on historical knowledge to complement sociological interpretation of society. Thus, between the 1925 and the 1960 the word history does not appear even once in the relevant register of “The American Sociological Review”, a well-known journal of the American Sociological Association. That was caused by the trends in sociological science by which sociology has to deal with the present and history with the past. Cases of these two sciences are almost identical, but the roads that lead to findings are different. In the unity of the different cognitive goals reflects and their mutual connection. History studies what is specific and individual, and sociology seeks in historical events to discover what is universal, what is an expression of the general principles.

In the study of social regularities the sociology needs the help of history, just as history has to rely on sociology. Many authors believe that these two sciences should develop a unique approach to society with which they would complement each other. Thus Edward Carr believes that it is possible to “build

⁵ Auguste Comte, *The Course of the Positive Philosophy*, Nikšić: Univerzitetska riječ, 1980. p.30.

⁶ Robert N. Bellah, “Durkheim and History”, *The American sociological Review* VI, No. 4. 1959. p. 21.

⁷ Ibid, p. 24.

a synthetic character of approach to society through a kind of union of the two sciences,” where, as further is stated, “If sociology becomes more history, and the history more sociology, it is all better for the both.”⁸ The idea of the synthetic unity of the sociology and history is also seen with Lucien Goldmann who speaks about the foundation of a new scientific discipline that would be called historical sociology or sociological history.⁹

Sociological texts which for the course of study have the historical themes from the 70s and 80s of the XX century are published in journals and other professional publications in large numbers. At the beginning of the 90s there is a strong rise of historical sociology. Those years were printed out the first guides for modern historical sociology¹⁰, and according to the division of sociological discipline exercised in the prestigious journal “Contemporary Sociology,” published by the American Sociological Association, the historical sociology is classified as a large group (Macrosociology, Social Change, Social Movements, World System, Comparative and Historical Sociology)¹¹.

It is possible to make the typology of the studies that fall within the domain of the historical sociology:¹²

1. the examination of sociological theories in the light of historical facts,
2. the examination of historical phenomena in the light of sociological theory,
3. the examination of some sociological phenomenon by the research of its history,
4. the comparative-historical research of a sociological phenomenon,
5. the studies of global social structures in the time dimension.

The study of demographic trends in different social periods falls within the field of historical sociology, as demographic indicators are historical records, and their explanation is in the framework of sociological theory.

3. The study of demographic trends

Historical phenomena need to be studied, in order on the basis of them to analyze the development. Demographic factors which are manifested in the growth of a population, of a society are very important factor of its historical development, its progress or deterioration. According to the former president of

⁸ Edward Hallett Carr, *What is History?*, London: Macmillan and Co, 1961. p.60.

⁹ Lucien Goldmann, *Humanities and Philosophy*, Belgrade:Kultura, 1981. p.7.

¹⁰ Denis Smith, *The Rise of Historical Sociology*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991.

¹¹ Slobodan Antonić, *The Challenges of Historical Sociology*, Belgrade: Institute for Political Studies, 1995. p. 47-48.

¹² *Ibid*, p. 49-52.

the Sociological Society in Paris, population growth and its density are the main factors in the development of society and social phenomena. He points out that “the rise of members of a society is the primary cause of all evolution. The rise of a unified population leads to an increase of social differentiation, division of labor and social abilities, facilitating the transport of various sectors of society and providing a better and stronger coordination of individual actions, and more precisely and accurately expressing of the unity of the laws of nature.”¹³

The development of the study of demographic trends was conducted by the individual demographic factors evolved in the lap of another sciences, not just demographics. Therefore, in the interpretation of certain demographic moments we need to rely on the explanations of other scientific disciplines, in this case, sociology and history. Demographic trends of population, as well as some demographic factors, have their historical development. The interest of the sociology for the development of the population and demographic factors through the history, and even today is very important, since such studies contribute to determining the demographics as a very important sub-structures of society. That is why the study of demographic trends requires the complementarity or mutually complementing / intersection of the sociology and history.

4. The encounter of the sociology and history in the study of demographic trends

In the last years of the twentieth century, along with the constitution of historical sociology, there was a growing interest in the demographic movements of the majority of scientific disciplines, and thus the sociology and history. There are two main reasons for the increased interest of the sociology and history for the study of demographic trends. The first is that at the end of the twentieth century in many developed countries, and in some areas of the former Yugoslav society, there was a decrease in birth rates and population growth rates due to which with the comparative historical study were studied the values of these parameters in earlier historical periods. Another reason is that factors of demographic trends are affecting the quality of life, and in the stated period occurs and the increased interest in the sociological study of this dimension of social stratify, in contrast to the earlier period when the quality of meeting the basic needs was primarily considered from an economic point of view.

Areas where the sociology and history meet in the study of demographic trends are different.

¹³ Cited by: Pitrim Sorokin, *Sociology, contemporary trends and theory*, Volume 1, Belgrade: Publishing house Gece Kona, 1932. p. 566.

The first area concerns the data source for demographic trends. The sources of information on the movement of population are censuses. Censuses in Bosnia and Herzegovina during the administration of Austro - Hungarian monarchy were conducted in: 1879, 1885, 1895 and 1910. Censuses in Yugoslavia (first and second) were conducted in: 1921, 1931, 1948, 1953, 1961, 1971, 1981, and in 1991 year. The first census after deconstructive events in Bosnia and Herzegovina was conducted from the 1st to 15th October in 2013. All these censuses are the historical sources for the study of demographic trends. Based on actual historical indicators sociology will determine the overall regularity of movement of population development and explain the sociological dimensions of demographic factors in the structure of society.

The second area was represented by an important and specific historical events that have influenced the demographic changes. When it comes to Bosnian society we can distinguish five major historical periods that have influenced the demographic trends: the first from the 1878 to the 1921, the second from the 1922 to the 1948, the third from the 1949 to the 1991, the fourth from the 1992 to the 1995 and the fifth from the 1996 to the 2013. The events that have met the specified periods determined the fate of the Bosnian society, and they therefore had to reflect on the demographic changes. Periods have their own characteristics. Each of them comprises of the three elements of the same type:

- 4.1. A time of peace in which at any time have not been established the social balance to match the ruling powers, but in that period were tumultuous socio-political and economic events
- 4.2. During the war, the devastation of war and the destruction of war.
- 4.3. An equal number of post-war years.

The most important historical events that have influenced the demographic changes in Bosnian society over the last 126 years are:

- a1) The First Period, 1878-1921
 - By the decision of the Berlin Congress, Bosnia and Herzegovina is given to the Austro-Hungarian monarchy “in order to arrange the unsettled state in it”
 - Balkan Wars
 - World War I
 - The creation of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes as the first country of the South Slavs
- b1) The Second Period, 1922-1948.
 - Political and social events in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, and then in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia
 - The economic growth to the year 1929
 - The economic crisis from the year 1929

- Division, the dissolution of the Bosnian society between four banovinas (Drina, Vrbas, Zeta and Coastal)
- World War II and the establishment of the Federal People's, and then the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia
- c1) The Third Period, 1949-1991
 - Political and social changes in socialist Yugoslavia
 - Intensification of the economic and technological modernization of the country
 - Accelerating the demographic transition when it comes to the prominent declining of the fertility
- D1) The Fourth Period, 1992-1995.
 - The war in Bosnia and Herzegovina with devastating consequences for the population.
 - The Dayton Accords and the establishment of the new system of BiH
- E 1) The Fifth Period, 1996 – 2013.
 - Functioning of the state through the two entities and the district.
 - The first census in the new BiH.

Complementarity of sociology and history in the study of demographic changes is imposed as a necessity, because the explanation of the demographic transition as a consequence of the (non) transformation of Bosnian society can not be complete if there are not analyzed the demographic trends from the earlier historical period. Specifics of the historical events through five periods affected the expression and constitution of the demographic structure as the substructure of the social structure in the recent period.

Conclusion

Sociology can explain certain demographic phenomena only if analyzes and interprets certain historical events and movements. Knowledge of a variety of different situations “that only history can offer” is not only a requirement of the explanations of demographic trends, “but the requirement to adequately clarify it sociologically”¹⁴. Current status of the demographic shift is the result of certain past events and historical changes, so it can be accepted the Mill's conclusion at which any sociology that is worthy of its name is the historical sociology.¹⁵

Sociology examines and explains the contemporary demographic trends, referring to the events of the distant and recent historical past using the comparative historical methods. However, the history is increasingly using the sociological

¹⁴ Marija Bogdanović, *Methodological Studies*, Belgrade: Institute for Political Studies, 1993. 9.

¹⁵ Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination*, Belgrade: Modern School, 1964. p. 164.

methods to determine demographic changes, and especially for the examination of social mobility as one of the segments that indicates the openness or closure of the company. The historical studies of demographic shifts are not based on the accumulation of the empirical and statistical parameters on the movement of the population, but on the generalizing the views on certain demographic phenomenon. Data on demographics, which were obtained by the sociological methods help historians and history in explaining the historical events.

Complementarity of sociology and history in the study of demographic changes and the processes is necessary, and because these changes are the result of the processes that are long-term. If demographic trends are the result of the short-term processes, then they are a result of the devastating historical events. Socio-historical complementarity in demographical sense is desirable and important because it can make comparisons between old and new society, old and new changes with which are ascertained and recorded the changes in the social structure.

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