

The Rockefeller Foundation Fellows in Social Sciences: Transnational Networks and Construction of Disciplines— The Example of East Central Europe

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During my research at the Rockefeller Archive Center (RAC), most of my time was devoted to the collective research project, “The Rockefeller Foundation fellows in the Social Sciences (1924-1970): Transnational Networks, Construction of Disciplines and Policy Making in the Age of Globalization,” coordinated by Ludovic Tournès and Michael Werner. This program aims at analyzing the role of the Rockefeller Foundation (RF) in the shaping of the social sciences in the world between the 1920s and 1970s, especially through its fellowship program. It is based on a study of fellows, the goal of which is to reconstruct their careers and trajectories before, during and after their fellowships. The worldwide geographical scope of the project gives the opportunity to go beyond national borders and to draw a global map of the construction and development of transnational networks of social scientists in which the RF played a prominent role. In following the fellows’ careers, we can also study the way the social sciences were used, both at the national and international levels, and as intellectual tools in the elaboration of public policies, especially through the channel of expertise. This project fits into the growing field of transnational history applying its methods to the intellectual and institutional history of fellows, who have been largely neglected by historians of philanthropy, since many earlier studies have focused on grants given to institutions. The goal of this project is the construction of a database of all Rockefeller fellows in the social sciences between 1924 and 1945.

As the first of the team present at the RAC, (out of five historians, mostly French) I began to complete, in alphabetical order, the database of the first two hundred twenty-four Social Sciences fellows.¹ At this time the database was not completely blank. In Paris, by using the *Directory of Fellowship Awards*, our team already had the basic information about the fellows, but the *Directory* is at times incorrect or too vague, and many fellows have been omitted (for the social sciences, only about one hundred out of one thousand are listed in the *Directory*). That is why it was so important to work directly in the archives using the Fellowship cards² and for the most interesting cases, the Fellowship Files.³ Archivist Beth Jaffe Davis was therefore incredibly helpful and efficient.

Creating the database was a slow process, but from my point of view, also an interesting one. Three phenomena were particularly illuminating to me. First, it was possible to analyze the selection process of the grantees. In some cases, it was especially striking to see how the RF's officers and correspondents tried to identify among young scholars the best future social scientist of their country. For example, Octavio Cabello (Chile) was supposed to become the first modern statistician of his country,⁴ Domas Cezevicius "will probably become the leader in Lithuania in studies of the cyclical and structural changes,"⁵ and Violet Conolly (Ireland) was expected to be "the future prominent figure in International Studies."⁶ Secondly, it was interesting to analyze the disciplinary trends in the selection of the fellows. For example, at the eve of World War II, many RF fellows specialized in the field of radio programming or in Latin American Studies. Lastly, the database reveals some illuminating professional itineraries: many fellows worked for instance, after their fellowship as experts in various domains, with many in the League of Nations or in the other post-war international organizations.

After my work on the database, my research at the RAC was devoted to my own project on "The Production, Circulation and Transfer of Knowledge between the United

States and Eastern Europe: Slavic Studies, Social Sciences and the Cold War.” My project is structured along two axes. The first axis consists of an analysis of the political and scientific conditions of the production of American knowledge of Eastern Europe, and vice versa, and on their diplomatic uses during the Cold War. However, it is impossible to limit my scope only to the Cold War, which, in itself, does not explain everything. Therefore, I adopted a broader historical perspective by going back to the 1920s.

The second axis involves an analysis of the circulation and transfer of knowledge between the United States and Eastern Europe. Made possible from the end of the 1950s by the relative opening of the Soviet bloc, these East-West exchanges allow thinking about the Cold War not only in terms of clashes and oppositions, but also in terms of circulation and transfer on both sides of the Iron Curtain. They also offer an illuminating perspective on the phenomena of international mobility, intellectual interaction, and the internationalization of the American social sciences. I studied these phenomena through the analysis of Area Studies, and more precisely through one branch of Area Studies: Slavic Studies or Russian and East European Studies, which included the USSR and Central Europe. Such Slavic studies were indeed the main—but not exclusive—source of knowledge production with regard to Central and Eastern Europe, and became subsequently a central actor in intellectual exchanges with the Soviet bloc.

During my stay at the RAC, I focused on two topics. First, I studied RF activities and their role in shaping the social sciences in Eastern Europe through the creation of transnational networks active during the interwar period and which managed to survive into the Cold War. I therefore studied the fellowship cards⁷ and files of all the East Central European fellows in the social sciences and the project files connected to them. On this last point, I focused mainly on three projects:

- 1) The Statistical Institute of Economic Research established in Sofia (Bulgaria) in 1934 by Oskar Anderson, a former fellow (1933).⁸ This Institute was selected by the RF for two three-year grants: \$15,000 for 1935-1938 and \$24,000 for 1938-1941.
- 2) The Institute of Constitutional and International Law and the School of Diplomacy, established in Lwow (Poland) in 1921 and 1930 by Ludwik Ehrlich.⁹ Between 1932 and 1938, the two institutions received several grants totaling \$26,000.
- 3) The Rumanian Institute of Social Sciences (1921) and the affiliated Center of International Studies (1937) established in Bucharest by the famous Rumanian sociologist Dimitrie Gusti.¹⁰ The Institute was funded by the RF by several grants: \$35,200 between 1931 and 1936 and then \$18,000 between 1938 and 1940.

These institutions interested me at two levels: First, they revealed the circulation of concepts and methods between the United States and East Central Europe. For example, the last two institutes were praised by RF officers for introducing in their countries “empirical and quantitative methods” and a “realistic and inductive” approach. This is not a surprise, since many specialists of American philanthropy already analyzed this type of research supported by the RF and have shown its participation in the development of a certain type of social science, mainly a technocratic, utilitarian and apolitical one.¹¹ To what extent does this approach explain the possibility of a rebirth of this kind of social science during the Cold War behind the Iron Curtain? Similarly, the concern of Communist regimes to improve the productivity and efficiency of their workers in the years 1970-1980, very likely explains the convergence with U.S. research on human resources and management.¹²

Secondly, I hope that this research on RF interwar projects in East Central Europe will help me to reveal some transnational networks between the two regions which survived to the establishment of Soviet domination and therefore analyze the reactivation of old partnerships. For example, several researchers have already studied the development of sociology behind

the Iron Curtain. They showed for example, how the Polish school of sociology, influential during the interwar period, was liquidated by the USSR, yet revived in the 1960s, thanks to exchanges with Western sociologists, among them many Americans.¹³ It is too soon for me to give any conclusions, but I will try to connect the people of these three institutes with the Eastern European scholars who during the *Détente*, had the opportunity to come to the United States on academic exchange programs.

For instance, the Rumanian anthropologists might be good examples. As noted, Professor Gusti and his staff received active support from the RF during the Thirties. In addition to several grants to the Institute, four members of the staff received fellowships: Xenia Costa-Foru (1932), Anton Golopentia (1933-1934), George Vladesco-Racossa (1936), and Constantin Vulcan (1936). In the 1970s, after decades of repression, Rumanian anthropology reemerged, thanks to the intensification of contacts with Western countries and especially the United States.¹⁴ A growing number of American anthropologists went to Rumania for field research (mostly students of John Cole, professor of anthropology at the University of Massachusetts) with the help of the Bucharest Folklore Institute, which after World War II was the successor of the Gusti Institute.¹⁵

Some other examples might lead to a dead-end. For instance, the RF gave extensive support to the Bulgarian economist and statistician Oskar Anderson (fellowship in 1933). His institute received many grants and four members of his team were awarded fellowships (Anastas Toteff 1935-1937, Slavcho Zagoroff in 1937, Pavel Egoroff in 1937-1939, and Tzonu Tzoncheff in 1938-1939). However, the Communist regime destroyed this economic school, and I believe that in Cold War Bulgaria it will be hard to find some active elements of this research and these programs. These examples show the importance of case studies and the necessity to analyze the transfer of knowledge between East and West through differentiating time periods, countries and disciplines.

My second focus interest was on the RF's encouragement of the development of International Studies and Area Studies in the late 1930s and the 1940s. For this, I worked on various kinds of documents.¹⁶ This research on Area Studies suggested two reflections: First, a reflection on the chronology of the Cold War. In my opinion, inserting the history of the East-West conflict into a larger historical time-frame is necessary. As a global and total confrontation, the Cold War destabilized international hierarchies, altered many local and regional antagonisms, and transformed societies. As a result, it is far too often evoked as the sole explanatory factor for the phenomena and processes that mark the period from the 1950s to the 1980s. This is notably the case of *Area Studies*, which is considered a development typical of Cold War universities. The point is not to deny this obvious relationship, but to stress the importance of the interwar years in the emergence of Area Studies, as they are rooted in American internationalism of the 1920s.

For example, in the late 1940s, philanthropic foundations, the American Council of Learned Societies and the Social Science Research Council, fostered the development of Area Studies for three main reasons. First of all, it was a way to transform the American university through bridging the gap between the social sciences and the humanities, by fighting disciplinary isolation and hyperspecialization, and by “de-provincializing” U.S. universities. Secondly, they wanted to enlarge the mental and intellectual horizon of Americans, to teach them tolerance and cultural relativism. A less ignorant American citizenry meant a less isolationist citizenry.¹⁷ The last goal must be understood in the context of rising tensions with the USSR. For many American scholars and philanthropists, these tensions were the result of ignorance, prejudice and misperceptions, a conflict that a better mutual understanding could overcome (showing, as well, the excellence of the “American Way of Life”). Such an analysis will contribute to the definition of a new periodization of the Cold War by stressing continuities from the 1920s to the 1980s.

Secondly, I hope to offer an analysis of American philanthropy in Eastern Europe in a comparative perspective. In 2011, I completed comprehensive research in the archives of the Carnegie Corporation of NY (at Columbia University) and of the Ford Foundation (then located at the FF's Manhattan building). Along with the RF, these three organizations were very active in the promotion of Slavic Studies at the beginning of the Cold War. The Russian Institute of the Columbia University offers in this perspective an illuminating showcase. The creation of the Institute was made possible by a grant of \$250,000 from the RF in 1945, \$75,000 in 1947, and then \$420,000 in 1950, and another of \$250,000 from the Carnegie Corporation in 1952. Also, during the first years of the Soviet Thaw, the Ford Foundation and the RF launched two exchange programs with Poland, in the social sciences for the first organization and in the sciences for the second. Another example of the interactions between philanthropic foundations in the field of Slavic Studies is Philip E. Mosely (1905-1972), director of the Russian Institute of Columbia University (1951-1955) and consultant at the Ford and the Rockefeller Foundations for questions relating to the Soviet Bloc.

I am very grateful to the RAC for giving me the opportunity, thanks to its grant-in-aid program, to conduct my research in the Rockefeller Foundation's archives.

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The ideas and opinions expressed in this report are those of the author and are not intended to represent the Rockefeller Archive Center.

ENDNOTES:

¹ From Elsa Abramson to Ludwik Dworzark.

² Rockefeller Foundation Archives (RF), RG 10.2.

³ RF, RG 10.1.

⁴ RF, RG 10.2.

⁵ RF, RG 10.2.

⁶ RF, RG 10.2.

⁷ Fellows in the following countries: Bulgaria—fifteen; Czechoslovakia—thirty-four; Hungary—twenty-six; Poland—thirty-five; and Rumania—seventeen; Totaling—one hundred twenty-seven fellows.

⁸ RF, RG 1.1, Series 711, Box 3, Folders 24-26.

⁹ RF, RG 1.1, Series 789, Box 5, Folders 67-69.

¹⁰ RF, RG 1.1, Series 783, Box 4, Folders 32-36.

¹¹ Brigitte Mazon, “La Fondation Rockefeller et les sciences sociales en France, 1925-1940.” *Revue française de sociologie* 2 (1985), pp. 311-342; Ludovic Tournès, “La fondation Rockefeller et la construction d’une politique des sciences sociales en France (1918 - 1940).” *Annales. Histoire, Sciences sociales*. 6 (2008), pp. 1371-1402.

¹² Giuliana Gemelli, editor, *The Ford Foundation and Europe (1950’s-1970’s): Cross-Fertilization of Learning in Social Science and Management*. (Volume 5) Bruxelles, Belgium: European Interuniversity Press, 1998, Chapter titled: “From Imitation to Competitive-Cooperation: The Ford Foundation and the Management Education in Western and Eastern Europe (1950’s-1970’s).” pp. 167-306.

¹³ Bogdan Denitch, “Sociology in Eastern Europe: Trends and Prospects.” *Slavic Review* 2 (1971), pp. 317-339; Margorzata Mazurek, “Between Sociology and Ideology: Perception of Work and Sociologists Advisors in Communist Poland, 1956-1970.” *Revue d’histoire des sciences humaines* 16 (2007), pp. 11-31; Martine Mespoulet, “Quelle sociologie derrière le ‘rideau de fer?’” *Revue d’histoire des sciences humaines* 16 (2007), pp. 3-10.

¹⁴ Ioana Cirtoc, “Splendeurs et misères d’un projet intellectuel: l’école monographique de Bucarest.” *Revue d’histoire des sciences humaines* 16 (2007), pp. 33-56.

¹⁵ In 2010 I had the opportunity to discuss with American anthropologist Katherine Verdery, the relationship between Rumanian and American anthropology. Although acknowledging the fact that circulation of information between the two countries was a reality, she also insisted that there are difficulties in this process, not only because of the constraints of the Cold War, but mostly because of the differences between two original intellectual traditions. “Les échanges universitaires Est-Ouest, la logique de bloc et l’esprit de guerre froide. Entretien avec Katherine Verdery.” *East-West Scholar Exchanges, Bloc Confrontation and the Spirit of the Cold War: Interview of Katherine Verdery, Vingtième Siècle. Revue d’histoire* 109 (janvier-mars 2011), pp. 201-212.

¹⁶ In 2010, as a Fulbright fellow, I spent two weeks at the Rockefeller Archive Center (RAC). Most of my time was devoted to the question of Area Studies. Mainly, I work in the Social Science Research Council and the Rockefeller Foundation archives. For the latter, I explored the following records: RG 1.1, Series 200S and 200R, and RG 1.2, Series 200S and 200R (Boxes and Folders related to Area Studies in general and Slavic Studies in particular). In 2012, thanks to the RAC Grant-in-Aid, I consulted the Fellowship Cards and Files: RF Archives, RG 10.2 and 10.1, of Fellows in the field of Slavic Studies (these fellows, from Austria, Canada, Denmark, Japan, Holland, and the United States, were selected mostly during the first years of Cold War). I also worked on Area Studies during the World War II era in the files of the Ethnogeographic Board, which was funded by the RF and the Carnegie Corporation: RF, RG 1.1, Series 200S, Box 331, Folders 3936-3939 and 3944.

¹⁷ In 1949, William Carr emphasized that numerous studies demonstrate the correlation between internationalism and the quantity of information about the world. “Education and International Order.” *Review of Educational Research* 1 (1949), p. 60.