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CONTEMPORARY EXOGENOUS EFFECTS ON REGIONAL IDENTITY. THE RELATIVE RELEVANCE OF THE ROMANIAN CASE

This paper is focusing on several arguments pleading for the fact that EU regionalism is indeed a major economic, political, administrative, and even social challenge for the years to come and this situation will probably have a specific impact beyond the Union's borders. Today's Romanian regionalization process appears to be predominantly exogenously generated, as a political move towards adopting operational procedures in order to better absorb EU structural funding, while the historical, endogenously cultural shaped patterns, that could better unveil regional competitive advantage, is being more or less left aside. A distortion concerning the identity issue we focus on, may occur easily under such specific circumstances.

Keywords: identity Factors, EU Regional Policy, Regional Governance, Development, Romania.

Мірча Теодор Маніу. Сучасні екзогенні впливи на регіональну ідентичність. Актуальні аспекти в румунському контексті. Ця стаття зосереджена на декількох аргументах стосовно того, що сьогодні регіоналізм ЄС справді є основним економічним, політичним, адміністративним і навіть соціальним викликом, і в майбутньому такий стан речей, ймовірно, матиме певний вплив і поза кордонами ЄС. В Румунії процес регіоналізації в основному сформований екзогенно, як політичний крок у напрямку прийняття оперативних процедур для того, щоб краще влитися у структурні фонди ЄС, тоді як історичні, ендегенно сформовані куль-

турні особливості, які могли б краще виявити регіональну конкурентоспроможність, залишаються поза увагою. Такого роду викривлення питання ідентичності, на якому ми фокусуємо увагу, легко виникають за таких конкретних обставин.

Ключові слова: фактори ідентичності, регіональна політика ЄС, розвиток, Румунія.

Mircea T. Maniu. Contemporary Exogenous Effects on Regional Identity. The Relative Relevance of the Romanian Case. Acest articol se concentrează pe mai multe argumente despre faptul că regionalismul din UE de astăzi, într-adevăr, este o provocare economică, politică, administrativă și chiar socială. În viitor această situație poate să aibă un impact în afara granițelor UE. În România procesul de regionalizare, în principal este format exogen ca un pas politic spre adoptarea unor proceduri operaționale pentru a se integra mai bine în fondurile structurale ale UE, în timp ce caracteristicile istorice, culturale formate endogen, care ar putea identifica mai bine competitivitatea regională, rămân nesoluționate. Astfel de denaturări în ceea ce privește întrebarea identității, asupra căreia ne-am concentrat atenția, apar ușor în astfel de împrejurări.

Cuvinte cheie: factori de identitate, politica regională a UE, management regional, dezvoltare, România.

The peculiar regionalism of Europe. The crucial issue of turning an already established EU institutional

and administrative framework, namely that of regional consistence, towards sub-frames of culture, sociology, religion, anthropology, politics, or last but not least business and economics seems extremely important but meanwhile extremely complicated, for the future shape of an enlarged European community of nations. Paradoxically or not, it is precisely this Europe of nations which brought "European consistence" to the whole world during modern history and ultimately gave birth to the often invoked *Unity in diversity* concept, expressing much beyond its intrinsic value as a logo. (Rougemont, 1965) Many Europeans feel nowadays that a certain *post-national Europe of regions*, both a home and an aggregated market for almost half a billion people, with an obvious tendency to grow and develop on the long run, could better imagine the potential of tomorrow's Europe. In such a place, every region or even local community of certain visibility could find itself in a straightforward competition with every other nearing or even long distance but comparable community, both for the caption of resources and gaining market share. But the main historical difference would be that such a new kind of competition would occur in a completely new environment of co-operation.

Therefore, these regional entities, no matter how we call them in different countries, for the time being in most cases along with the national entities, must learn to adopt, adapt and develop proper governance patterns in this completely new socio-political environment of the XXI-st century. For obvious historic reasons, the case of Europe seems more complicated than elsewhere in this world, the challenge being even greater here if we are dealing with the global process. Following the events of the late 80s of the previous century, but also following the strong impact of the crisis of the first decade of this one, the Western part of the continent is struggling to regain the lost vitality of previous epochs while its Eastern part is struggling to become competitive while retrieving important lost or alienated values during the almost half century of totalitarian regime. Precisely at this time North America is pushing its technological limits of research and work ethics, while East Asia is pushing down the limits of costs and innovative patterns without borders. It is high time that EU comes, politically speaking, with a specific developmental solution. The widely commented and debated *Lisbon Agenda* makes this statement more valid today than anytime. Could this *Europe of regions*, play a comparable role, as the *Europe of nations* did in the past, beyond its political and even geographic borders, for the decades and centuries to come? Important authors, such as Amin (1988) definitely brand the approach as Euro-centric and thus getting an implicit negative sense.

In a world where we find more than 200 independent states and self-governing entities and from a cultural perspective over 6500 spoken languages, introducing the regional dimension at the European scale, could be a major step forward for EU. A step that is nowadays enforced through various administrative

means such as *The European Charter of Local Self-Government*, *The European Outline Convention on Trans-frontier Cooperation*, *The European Urban Charter*, *The European Landscape Convention*, or various regulations supported by the *Committee of the Regions*. Therefore, at first glance and expressing mainly an economist's view, the *Union of regions* appears as a federalist approach, especially conceived for a better specification of the division of powers between central and regional levels designed for the ultimate goal of *reducing the cost of all sorts of transactions*. On the other hand, if one takes into consideration that today's institutional framework of EU rests primarily on national states and the fact that national governments are the EU's channels of communication and they are capital in any enlargement juncture, we must face the reality that national governments control the overall direction and pace of the evolution we discuss. It becomes clear for even lesser documented parts that European federalism is still far away from being effective. Even supranational bodies considered by many as omnipotent, such as the EU Commission, operate mostly as intermediaries of the EU's national governments. Well, true enough, not all of them.

Equally learned opinions as those previously invoked (Minc, 1992) conclude to the overall assessment that we cannot expect a different outcome today since we lack a so called *pan-European cultural identity*. Now, whether agreeing or disagreeing with that, considering it a blessing of history or a curse, a setback or just a rational premise for competitive advantage, we think we can and even must approach the issue of regional development, as ground for a new type of identity, beyond the so long dominant European identity, the national one. The point, in the long run, is to determine how relevant this regional level actually is for the evolution of Europe as a whole, economically, socially, politically, etc. The issue of European identity was under heavy scrutiny at a time when the *Treaty of Maastricht* gave perspective, since back in 1992, to potential *European citizenship*. (Cederman, 2001) Until the late 80s integration within EU structures was naturally conceived mainly in the economic frame, to promote the common market, gradual convergence and not much beyond. Starting with the 90s, social, cultural and political issues became critical, especially after the fall of the *Iron Curtain* and the virtual cultural enlargement to the geographic Centre and Eastern territorial units of the continent with such a different background but sharing to such an extent the common EU values. What was called elsewhere for decades, one must say with notorious envy, the *European life style* and was spotted in areas such as leisure, tourism, media, sports, literature, international education, not to mention cosmopolitan approaches of the day by day life. All these had and still have a peculiar regional flavor and a specific transnational impact, in a world bound for global values and patterns so often grounded on economic efficiency and branding arguments. (Knox et al., 2003)

The fuzzy impact of EU policies. More or less appropriate policies were designed over time in order to accomplish a dual task of the overall process of European integration: one the one hand to *manage more efficiently* the already in place regional policy, conceived as far as 1957, as a tool of financial solidarity among members, let's name it the *regional governance level*. On the other hand to enhance substantially the role of the *regions in conceiving and implementing European common policies*, while *safeguarding identity* and specificity that creates comparative and competitive advantage. It must be said and it was objectively assessed by various bodies that such an EU approach triggered a sort of return to pre-national frames, built through centuries in smaller territories, frames that developed a certain specific solidarity, equaling, if not exceeding in some respects the national bounds. It is within this framework, that competitive advantage, definitely beyond the petty desire to benefit more of the EU funding scheme, became an important feature that allowed the consolidation of the regional identity of the most innovative regions throughout EU. (Herschel and Newman, 2002) Meanwhile it seems more and more obvious that in order to avoid the impact of leveling globalization at this stage of evolution of EU's developmental structures, regionalization should occur as much as possible in a consonant manner with the features of the European diversity as many as they can be observed.

Various sources suggest that due to the long-term implications of this phenomenon, the politically driven *process of regionalization* could be more important than today's punctual outcome, as depicted by the newly born *institutions of the Euro-regions*. After all, medieval and pre-industrial Europe existed more or less in a regional shape. But present day regionalism appears, for obviously objective reasons, to be generated firsthand exogenously, while the historical pattern of territorial consistence is clearly mainly endogenous. Leaving aside the endogenous/exogenous debate from a historical perspective but introducing into the equation the so called commonality named *regional public goods* (Daniel et al., 2002), we end up with the necessary input for explaining the economic component able to generate spillover effects towards the new spatial dimensions of development that are characteristic for the present day Europe. (Pugalis and Bentley, 2015) This leads to the conclusion that a new type of scaling appears to be necessary, at least strategically speaking: *supra-local* but obviously *below the present day national level*. (Dăianu, 2000) Only this kind of standardized territorial units inducing compatibility of policies of allocating resources, not necessarily the EU's NUTS framework, though this was the purpose of its design, can also induce compatibility into comparing various kinds of feed-backs in order to elaborate proper corrective measures on the path of sustainable growth and development.

EU's Lisbon Strategy was heavily under scrutiny and consequently revised in 2005, precisely aiming to improve the competitive position of EU regions in the

world economy by fostering growth, employment and overall competitiveness. The *European Cohesion Policy* (ECP) became increasingly important for delivering the so-called *Lisbon Objectives*, epitomized by rather comprehensive concepts such as sustainability, innovation and knowledge society. But while more than four fifths of the total funding would go towards the so called *Convergence Regions*, namely those under 75% of EU's average income (obviously the case of present day Romania), the rest will finance European competitiveness in those countries that provide relevant cases of regional good practices and seem innovative enough in order to demonstrate their ability not to waste the allocated money. Since Romania emerged from crisis in 2012, it is nothing but common sense to investigate and evaluate the main assets and liabilities of economic growth and development since EU accession in 2007, and re-track the best options available in order to fulfill the nominal and real convergence objectives in the shortest time possible. It is within this juncture that we strongly believe, and accordingly state, the fact that *smart innovative regional development* is an adequate answer and this topic should gain now momentum, at least in terms of coherent policy design and governance, in Romania. Just as the administrative reform initiated in Poland in 1999 (Petraș, Maier and Gorzelak, 2001) was proven successful and fruitful only a decade later, a politically induced "push" of the regional developmental path appears to be an adequate tool for our country today.

Re-interpreting the whole Romanian regional approach, patterned all along the 1990s in order to comply both with EU's generic regional demands and to provide an adequate vehicle for absorbing EU funds, seems being a long time postponed target, even now in 2015. Actually this updating task of the regionalization process as a whole was embedded in the *Romania's Accession Treaty* and should have had occurred anyway at a certain point. In a Union of 28 Member States, forming a market of almost half a billion people, the almost 300 regions are struggling today for a more competitive position within the Union and increasingly as quasi-independent players of the world economy. EU's regional approach is motivated today by various and increased challenges: first and foremost the logic of *EU funds absorption*, both structural and specifically designated. Then, secondly by the need to coordinate to a lesser than country wide dimension *the infrastructural framework* that were implied by the new ICT revolution, not to mention the need to build/rebuild the transportation infrastructure in accordance with the new traffic values of today. Thirdly and more comprehensively, *to diminish the overall costs of transactions*, generated not only by transportation but also ecological, cultural, managerial, communicational, etc. Supplementary, various exogenous inputs tend to re-shape even less opened economies, as the globalization process, the raw materials and energy crisis, the climate changes, not to mention irrelevant and even defective sets of national

or international policies, therefore the governance of the regions should be today more and more flexible and adaptable to non-governmental layers of decision. (Peterson and Shackleton, 2002)

Present day sustainable development throughout the world implies a complete review of the classical *growth stages* theory, or the so called *Rostow-Kuznets* model pointing to growth in cycles that could be scrutinized due to the contemporary econometric instruments that are available to legislators. Plenty of theories, with both mainly endogenous and mainly exogenous consistence could be tracked. (Barna, 2008) The *capacity to innovate* in this respect, both in terms of new technologies that would identify as superior a certain region and the institutional forms of organizing the business matter. Clusters and clustering regional scale would support, bluntly speaking a sort of clearing out the rather *fuzzy economic landscape* and *politically biased administrative pattern* and would create realistic premises for a better quality of life in the region, thus enhancing the attractiveness of the area and generating a virtuous circle of development. Is such a professional discourse valid for the present day EU? If we briefly consider the recent media interpretations of the regional approach heavily reflecting ethnically biased standpoints, generated by migration but not only, and consequently generating critical mass for rejection, the answer would be more probably no. If we add to the equation the tensor relations between EU and its Western allies and the Russian Federation, following the events of 2014, we find plenty of arguments of geopolitical consistence in this respect. But we should also take into consideration that through appropriate education and relevant public presentation of comparative *success stories* throughout EU, and definitely beyond, significant and consistent steps could be undertaken.

Consensual political decisions within EU in the predictable future, could make tremendous difference in the area of regionalization. A strong argument that favors the idea that EU should conduct a comprehensive and harmonic regional policy within its territory and beyond its present day borders could be found in the relatively recent in terms of history timing experience of *transition* towards free and competitive markets of the new democracies of *Central and Eastern Europe*. (Seidelmann, 2001) While the process of transition occurred more or less spontaneous and could be branded as basically endogenous, with peculiarities that generated specific patterns, a parallel evidently exogenous process took place: *accession to EU*. A very documented source covering the issue of *transition distortions* (Mattli and Pluemper, 2004) considers that these processes are actually significantly overlapping, the authors' point being that transition was heavily perverted by the exogenous process of acceding to EU structures, inevitably changing the so called *aggregated identity* of several countries, sometime ignoring lessons derived from centuries of evolution. There are strong arguments in favor of the thesis that EU enlargement and consequent deepening is still

an important anchor for the future of Europe as a whole and its near vicinity. The implications of switching from national frameworks to regional ones could be compared with the recent waves of enlargement and the outcome can be branded as positive only if a relevant exogenous factor would trigger such a process on new coordinates.

Last but not least, it is a fact that regional development occurs today roughly all across EU in a dual manner. Sometimes it happens consonant and sometimes evidently in spite of the typical historical European social and cultural diversity. Due to the long-term implications and negative consequences of these phenomena, the political consistency of the process that gives birth to the new forms of European governance could easily overshadow the real outcome of the process, namely the new territorial institutional frameworks, the *Euro-regions*. We cannot deny that pre-industrial Europe existed more or less in a regional shape and in many parts, including South-Eastern Europe, even in sub-regional forms (Calleya, 2000) and this situation was encapsulated in the national patterns that were put in place during the industrial age. But present day regionalization generated firsthand exogenously as we already suggested, contradicts the historical pattern to the benefit of none. There are obvious new spatial dimensions of development in present day EU, especially when we tackle the issue from the perspective of sustainable development. This leads to the preliminary conclusion that a new type of territorial scaling appears to be necessary for further effective results of the overall process of European regionalization.

Regional policy in Romania. Constructing or deconstructing identity? Institutional integration within EU various structures had to be supported beyond the already classic EU policy frame, must be conducted in such a way in a way that could deconstruct the national historical pattern, only nationally. (Dukes, 1996) That having been said and browsing in a comparative manner the national throughout EU outlook concerning regionalization, approach that we take only to benchmark methodologically the approach toward regionalization in Romania, we can note the following situations as indicative for the situation today. Though only Italy has firm constitutional provisions concerning the legal interpretation of regions, all EU old members developed during starting the 1970 legal sub-frames in order to endorse other than the politically centralized procedures to assess the development of their historic regions. France and United Kingdom fall in this situation while Belgium, Spain or Portugal completed partially this task. But it was only during the mid 1980s at a time when EU policies consistently targeted the correction of severe imbalances when national governments gave indeed consistency to the regional bodies designed in specific countries to take over this issue. (Karagiannis, 2002) Obviously the main target was to *allow regions to manage locally over funds from EU sources*, and this was objectively better accomplished

in those countries which were major recipients of cohesion funds, and according to this consistent measures had to be put in place, countries such as Ireland, Portugal and Greece and witnessed less accomplishments in regions of UK such as Scotland and Wales.

More than a decade later, when the countries of CEE joined and attempted to follow the same steps concerning regionalization, the outlook of EU was sensibly different, just as the mood for redistributing centralized funds, not to mention the chilling of the Euro-enthusiasm after the first wave of enlargement in 2004. However, countries such as Bulgaria, Estonia, Lithuania, Slovakia and Slovenia generated administrative frames, entirely subordinated to their central governments, but territorially acting on regional basis, with bodies fully empowered with control over almost of the regional matters. Other CEE countries, notably Hungary and Romania, implemented regional policy mainly through existing local authorities, obviously initially conceived for other ends, but mandated specifically for this purpose. It is only countries like Poland and Czech Republic that fully adopted in a non restrictive manner regional de-centralization, the approach consisting mainly in the creation of specifically designed structures, new categories of territorial authorities, larger constituencies of NUTS II type, more consistently targeted towards *endogenous local growth and development* than the overall control of exogenous, EU driven process. The Polish model of 16 regions, emerging in 1999, actually represented for some countries, Romania first of all due to demographic similarities, the case of good practices in this respect, though and unfortunately I would say, mainly from a theoretical perspective.

This being the present day of the regionalization outlook, we must interpret the Romanian case starting with its first liability deriving from this "birth sin" namely the lack of decision power on behalf of the bodies in charge with regionalization, legally defined as public interest NGOs. Analyzing the real managerial power of governance of the regions in the country we easily can conclude that it still belongs to the government or its local administrative tiers, technically much less aware of EU's procedures and techniques. The degree of EU funds penetrating in Romania during the previous budgetary session and the beginning the present one are illustrative. Therefore an evident lack of professionalism in tackling with the issue of project management, especially when it comes to those strategic approaches meant to enhance the identity of a region for the purpose of valorizing its competitive potential in a battle where local branding matter more and more. While Romanian regions persist in their role to perform essentially as *vehicles for the redistribution of wealth* in order to converge towards a more or less homogenous country comparable with the rest of EU, they practically ignore the main *engine of endogenous growth consistence*, namely their identity as branding tool for growth. This kind of policy might be considered as acceptable within specific lines for short and medium periods, but would be definitely

negative on the long run due on the one hand to the fact that it would inevitably replicate communist era policies, on the other hand to the fact that creates economic dependency through artificial shielding of various kinds. (Trăistaru and Păuna, 2003) We can witness nowadays that most of the less developed historical provinces of Romania, are actually persisting in the pattern, though the system would be so far from the one in place half a century ago.

So it seems we have reasonable grounds to assess that changing the approach, having in mind the development process in a more and more innovative way that the purely administrative one, must occur today. As Hilpert (2003) points, diversity and initial disparity are prerequisites for a successful regional track, but in the present day EU integrative juncture the initial conditions could not matter less, if a *smart regional policy framework* is put in place. Meanwhile the objectively exogenous factors of mainly global consistency are inevitably playing a larger role than domestic, governmental policies of the kind. But in the case of the Romanian outlook, that would lead to the necessity of a complete re-interpretation and reshaping of the administrative decision taking levels. Just as our economy is for time being peripheral within the macroeconomic frame of the EU, though being the fifth country in terms of natural endowment and the seventh in terms of population and therefore manpower, full integration cannot but underline a process of either becoming more peripheral, or quite the contrary, of getting beyond this situation. It is hard to assess at this stage if *de-periphery-zation* could be accomplished at regional level without losing identity, which would be an unwanted consequence, or on the contrary it would give momentum to the process. Adopting a radical comprehensive de-centralization of the decision through the creation of regional fully empowered decision bodies might be the answer, just as in a rather comparable situation, more than a decade ago Poland went full speed ahead on this path.

It is only this kind of reasoning that allows us to point the fact that beyond being in some respects a *return to archetypal patterns* the regionalization process that occurs nowadays, basically throughout Europe, is a mean of *creating a more autonomous developmental potential*, through competitive advantage and, just our point: regional identity. While several authors underline the fact that the term regionalism concentrates on the emergence of overtly political regional pressures of all consistencies, nationalism included, all across Europe, others consider that economic competitiveness would be the major driving force behind regionalism in the XXI-st century. (Herschel and Newman, 2002) The target is evidently much more complex, identity being a buildup of mainly cultural consistency and could be validated only on the long run and we must face it: a true European identity, out of consistent fragmentation that was always considered a European liability could be seen as a paradox. The current Romanian approach represents a stage that is still a far cry from the European Union

spirit, according to which the regionalization process has become an effective and constructive component for the dynamics of economic and social mechanisms in nowadays Europe. As Bukovsky et al. (2003) pointed: globalization and Europeanization are constraints that could be branded as from above while political culture creating identity would be from below.

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MULTICULTURALISM LA MAREA NEAGRĂ

Dobrogea a reprezentat poarta de acces pe axa euro-asiatică, cu rol major în dezvoltarea dialogului cultural. Localizată în bazinul Mării Negre, populația Dobrogei a venit în contact cu popoarele dispuse în acest areal. Mixul de etnii, culturi, tradiții și religii - sedimentat în milenii, a generat un model unic de conviețuire și comunicare în spațiul euro-asiatic. În același timp, comunitățile turcă și tătară au dezvoltat relații importante pe axa ponto-caspică, strategii care aduc un plus de stabilitate și securitate în zona lărgită a Mării Negre. Modelul dobrogean ar putea să fie dezvoltat ca strategie pentru rezolvarea conflictelor înghețate și închiderea unor conflicte din zonele fierbinți ale planetei.

Cuvinte cheie: Dobrogea, Turcia, tătari, geopolitică, Marea Neagră, multiculturalism

Vasile Simileanu. Мультикультуралізм в Чорноморському регіоні. Добруджа була воротами в Євразійській осі, з головною роллю в розвитку культурного діалогу. Розташоване в регіоні Чорного моря населення Добруджа увійшло в контакт з мешканцями даного регіону. Поєднання та

змішання етносів, культур, традицій і релігій - що відбувалося протягом тисячоліть, створило унікальну модель співіснування і спілкування в євразійському просторі. Водночас, турецькі та татарські громади розвивали важливі відносини Понто-Каспійської осі. Це стратегії, які приносять більшу стабільність і безпеку у розширеному Чорноморському регіоні. Добруджанська модель може бути розвинена як стратегія для вирішення конфліктів і закриття заморожених конфліктів у гарячих точках планети.

Ключові слова: Добруджа, Туреччина, татари, геополітика, Чорне море, мультикультуралізм.

Vasile Simileanu. Multiculturalism in the Black Sea region. Dobruja was the gateway on the Eurasian axis, with a major role in the development of the cultural dialogue. Located in the Black Sea basin, the Dobrogea's population has come into contact with the people in this area. The mix of ethnicities, cultures, traditions and religions of grayish in millennia, has generated a unique model of coexistence and communication in the Euro-Asian areas. At the same time,