

---

# T A N G E N C I E S

HORAȚIU SORIN  
DAN  
MIRCEA TEODOR  
MANIU

## Revisiting Romania's Regional Approach Lessons from the Recent Past

---

*Should Romania draw conclusions from its regional past, as much as it existed, and validate them within the template of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, or instead open a brand new spatial-developmental chapter of its economic history?*

---

### **Horațiu Sorin Dan**

Lecturer at the Faculty of European Studies, Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca.

### **Mircea Teodor Maniu**

Associate professor at the Faculty of European Studies, Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca.

### Introductory Remarks

**T**HE TERRITORIAL development of the geographic areas in Romania, no matter if we are discussing historical provinces, traditionally established counties or, today, purely politically and administratively designed macro-regions (*regiuni, ținuturi, directorate ministeriale, județe*—as they have been featured throughout the country's contemporary history), has been interpreted by most economists—and, even worse, by policy makers—predominantly in a *factorial analysis* key, building primarily on *resource endowment* and to a lesser extent on assets derived from *historical peculiarities* observed in a comparative spatial framework. Some territorial entities obviously benefitted more from their rich natural assets, some from the organizational culture that was objectively brought about by the successive political contexts, others from various junctures, but what an objective observer could notice is the fact that such an analysis has been seldom conducted

along coordinates of economic history that could bring forth argumentative perspectives, difficult or impossible to reveal otherwise.

Though the boundaries between what is called—indeed, in a rather methodologically reductionist manner—*local economy* and *world economy* seem to be clearly drawn from the perspective of *spatial economics*, both the old pattern (Braudelian and Wallersteinian) and the new undisputed globalizing one prove quite the contrary.<sup>1</sup> This is precisely what we would like to undertake in the following pages, namely, to interpret some of the issues correlating the present-day regionalization debate based on economic arguments with historic, geographic, demographic, cultural, social or business environmental features that illustrate the process of economic growth and development in any territorial profile during the last hundred years. Our main target in this endeavor would be to decant what is worth taking into consideration in terms of policies and actions that occurred in time, mainly for the sake of devising *heterodox predictions* for the inevitable deeper regionalization process that will occur sooner or later in Romania.

We strongly believe that during a time when Romania's regional policy has been described in relevant sources, both international and domestic, as a *classical exogenous effect* of "Europeanization,"<sup>2</sup> indicating that successive Romanian governing bodies endorsed after 1989 the blueprint of a *territorial division of NUTS II type*, more or less explicitly designed for the purpose of absorbing EU funds, it is crucial to elaborate on the *endogenous approach*, as much as it existed in recent history and can be branded as regional policy. Otherwise, this perspective on the overall process of regionalization in Romania would stand only under the aegis of the present day EU integrative processes, while the controversial economic legacy of the interwar years and the highly debatable inheritance of the postwar communist egalitarian development, grounded on the dogma of industrialization at all costs, to pick only two relevant examples, would be lost from the main track of the analysis.

No wonder that some economists<sup>3</sup> would depict the contemporary, post-1989 outcome in this area of regionalization and regional policies as strongly artificial and ultimately conceived as nothing more than "another transitional tool," subject to change as soon as the economic geography indeed starts to matter in terms of business life. It is precisely the reduction of the so-called *transaction costs* by a lesser than national territorial approach that we would like to convey through our approach. In this respect, we are focusing on Romania's territories from an entirely domestic historical economic perspective. To what extent such a vision could be interpreted as another view on the much discussed "By Ourselves," or just as another intellectual, liberal *après la lettre* speculation on classical topics, this is an issue to which we would mostly gladly contribute with new arguments.

## Crafting Modern Romania: Territorial and Developmental Logic during the Interwar Years (1919–1939)

**T**HE ARCHETYPE of regionalization in modern Romania could be tracked back as far as 1862.<sup>4</sup> Although the legislation submitted by Barbu Catargiu, president of the joint government of Wallachia and Moldavia, was meant to make administrative operations compatible, decentralize current procedures and also facilitate all types of linkages between the two provinces, a common business environment was without doubt a strong subliminal message of the law. The fact that it suggested a division of the country into 4 regions, each including several of the historical counties (*judete*) but clearly overlapping territories that had shared a common economic life throughout history, qualifies those entities for such a designation. But this law was never operational along these coordinates, and as a consequence little economic impetus can be observed when it comes to industrial or agricultural output, trade, and the general feeling of belonging to the same market, at least in our opinion, till the spatial unification of the national state, following the First World War.

The 1920s and '30s were years of accelerated growth but unbalanced development, with a few competitive industries, matching international standards, such as petroleum extraction and processing or aircraft construction, on the one hand, and an extensive and labor intensive agriculture, on the other hand. More precisely, in 1929 agricultural activities and forest exploitation accounted for 72% of the Romanian GDP, while industrial activities accounted for only 18%.<sup>5</sup> From a territorial perspective, for 1930 the data regarding the heavy industry shows severe discrepancies between regions, with Banat and Muntenia on the developed side of the scale (the former accounting for 14.57% of the national heavy industrial production while accommodating just 6.55% of the country's population and the latter accounting for 38.49% of the national industrial production while being home to 29.03% of the country's inhabitants) and Oltenia, Dobrudja and Bukovina on the opposite side, the aggregate production of these three regions, inhabited by 17.58% of the country's population, accounting for a mere 4.34% of the total national heavy industry output.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, we can notice that the inherited structure of the economy was somehow perpetuated throughout the interwar years, with Wallachia's economy (except for the more industrialized area of Bucharest) relying mostly on agriculture and the oil industry (in the Ploiești area), while Transylvania, where during the Modern Era the cultural differences exhibited by the province's inhabitants resulted in a particular social identity<sup>7</sup> that would influence its further development, continued its economic modernization described by Balog<sup>8</sup> that started in the second half of

the 19<sup>th</sup> century and became the small but dynamic cradle of the Romanian industry. Moldavia, however, remained the less developed area in all respects. The unbalanced evolution of economic life was even more acute when it comes to the archetype of modernization, namely, the urban-rural pattern.<sup>9</sup> While elsewhere in Europe the complex process of modernization following this industrialization largely eliminated this historical gap, which could be easily documented as a field of territorial economics, this was definitely not the case in interwar Romania, with all the negative consequences this entailed.

It is not by chance that the 1929 Law for the organization of the local administration<sup>10</sup> was pushed forward by the National Peasant Party (NPP), a champion of the decentralization of public administration, for reasons stretching from the history of the national struggle in Transylvania to the ideological positioning of the NPP. The seven Ministerial Directorates provided for by the law were in fact macro-regions with strong historical roots, but again, they were conceived for mainly administrative purposes and therefore had little or no impact on daily economic life. A brief comment here about the inconsistency (indeed, identified here from a contemporary comparative policy perspective) of the NPP's interwar administrative policy: while the party served better the task of decentralization, as opposed to their main political rival, the National Liberal Party (NLP), when it came to concrete actions, to supporting the local initiatives and competition through small and medium firms as the backbone of any developing economy, the NPP was indeed shortsighted.

Despite this somewhat objective lack of a more consistent territorial approach that would stimulate the competition and trading links between regions, pushing forward output and improving Romania's position at least in a Southeast European framework, the interwar years were definitely years of catching up with the average European economic indicators, as indicated by statistical data or relevant researches and evaluations such as the comprehensive ones conducted by Axenciuc<sup>11</sup> or Postolache.<sup>12</sup> On this background of economic vivacity, and notwithstanding the fact that "almost all the important political parties and the scientific elite used to elaborate projects of administrative unification,"<sup>13</sup> we witness a relative maintenance of the status quo on the issue of regionalization, an equilibrium broken only in the late '30s, under German influence, when between 1938 and 1940 the so-called *ținuturi* (territories) were actually emulating the newly established German territorial units, the Reich's *Gaus*. There is no trace of historic consistency whatsoever in the *ținuturi* (to the extent that even their names were mostly a list of the main rivers of the country), as they were obviously conceived for more or less domestic political considerations consistent with the international juncture that led to World War II<sup>14</sup> and not always taking into consideration regional historical realities, like the case of the Transylvanian areas of Brașov and Sfântu Gheorghe,

which were included, together with Bucharest, Ploiești and other historically Walachian areas, in the newly created Bucegi administrative region.

What we can really extract from this brief and heterodox incursion in the country's spatial economics during the interwar years would be the fact that, although resonant with the political realities of the time and comparable with those in many European countries,<sup>15</sup> the regional approach was targeting more or less the opposite of what we define today as regionalization policy. In fact, the need to harmonize the existing divergent social and cultural realities in various Romanian provinces through administrative reforms came at the implicit cost of sacrificing the economic dimension, if there was such a dimension in the legislator's view at all. If one browses through and interprets the various sources of inspiration, changes and adaptations of the territoriality of Romanian interwar public administration, as Dincă has done,<sup>16</sup> they would probably be tempted to assess the system's leveling message, as opposed to its potential role as developmental enhancer with spatial consistency.

## The Soviet-Inspired Spatial Development (1945–1965)

**T**HE SECOND World War generated economic losses for the Romanian economy estimated to nearly 4 billion USD (at the 1938 exchange rate), while the human loss was exceptionally high for a country of the size of Romania, nearing 1 million people and substantial territorial losses, accounting for more than 100,000 square kilometers and more than 6 million inhabitants. Under these circumstances the first two postwar decades were not much different in Romania than all across the European countries that ended up behind the Iron Curtain, except maybe in what concerns the extraordinarily heavy economic burden to be carried by the country in terms of war reparations towards the Soviet Union. Roughly speaking, during the late '40s and throughout the '50s, the country was more a provider of all sorts of commodities for the war victors in the East than for its own people.<sup>17</sup> So, focusing on our topic, we cannot observe anything but a model of economic life and consequently a territorial distribution of factors that was heavily based on the Soviet model tested in the USSR during the late '20s and '30s. The nationalization of relevant industries and an agriculture based on collective farms, state monopolies in most economic fields and the replacement of the free market with socialist planning, all these were blueprinted during this stage.

It is not a surprise that in such a context, when an estimated 55% of the country's output was one way or another bound for the USSR,<sup>18</sup> the governance of the Romanian territory switched, in terms of the public administration of the

territory, from the interwar counties to a Soviet model of largely depersonalized regions. Apparently, Law 5/1950 on territorial organization showed some economic consistency when reducing the number of territorial administrative units from 58 during the interwar years to 28, and later on to only 16, in 1956. However, as they completely ignored the traditional historical borders between territorial units and subunits and continuously and arbitrarily changed their names, sometime barely remembering the traditions of the place, these regions were in fact substantially artificial and did not generate any sort of stimulus in terms of economic life. On the contrary, the bulk of the planned tasks were territorially distributed to sub-regional units (*raioane*) that were irrationally conceived and multiplied in Soviet style, obviously in order to increase the political control over local communities.

From our territorial developmental perspective, we notice only one positive development of this period, namely, the stimulated industrialization that occurred more or less evenly in all Romanian provinces, priority being given to less developed areas such as Moldavia. It is precisely this branch of the economy that would constitute the buffer for the workforce made redundant by the newly socialized agriculture (the shift to collective farms took place between 1949 and 1962), which represented a significant setback in terms of agricultural output and productivity when compared to the interwar years.<sup>19</sup> Industry, in its territoriality, was beyond doubt the main accomplishment of the so-called Five Year Plans inaugurated in 1951. When, during the early and mid '60s the country was under the pressure of CMEA integration within the international socialist division of labor, epitomized by the so-called Valev Plan, the government of the country reacted vehemently, paving the ground for the further separation from the Soviet path of development. Therefore we can contend that industrialization would be the main asset of spatial development in Romania, while agriculture and infrastructure were definitely its liabilities.

It is highly debatable if the model of socialist industrial development of Romania inaugurated in the '50s is in fact an endogenous answer (some would brand it as merely nationalist) to the Valev-inspired approaches devised during the '60s. From the perspective of more than a half century, these plans appear to be an ideological scarecrow of the regime, building on the traditional anti-Soviet attitudes, rather than a rational reaction based on facts.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, although somewhat speculated, but not without grounds and definitely consistent with the idea of growth and development along mainly national parameters, the Romanian national will to industrialize at all costs could be also interpreted as a natural follow-up to the interwar "By Ourselves" set of policies. How much did that serve the country? Obviously, any empirical study of economics would assess that it was a positive approach during the analyzed period. But the contempo-

rary, globalizing perspective can easily change views and demonstrate that the roots of the country's growing economic insulation in the world during the '70s and '80s, culminating with its de facto autarchy of the late '80s are to be found precisely in the wrong policies of the late '50s and early '60s.

## **Romanian National Communism: A New Regional Approach (1966–1989)**

**T**HE POLITICAL split with the USSR that occurred in the mid '60s had dramatic economic consequences for Romania, and some of those consequences are easily identifiable in the area of the spatial evolution of the economy. This is true because Romania started to differentiate among the socialist countries, accelerating along an independent path, especially due to the increased need to provide raw materials and various supplies to its newly born extensive industry and meanwhile invest in more advanced technology in order to turn it intensive in a relatively short time.<sup>21</sup> So the country objectively turned towards the non-socialist world, on two separate tracks: bargaining for investment, in the developed world, and scouting for markets for its industrial output and also raw materials to feed the industry, in the underdeveloped one. This pattern was significantly narrowed in the '80s, when political reasons imposed a de facto Western ban on doing business with the country.

In the first stage of socialist evolution Romania had one of the highest rates of accumulation of capital in the world. While in the early '70s the country would grow by almost 12% per year, this growth decreased to about 3.5% during the late '80s.<sup>22</sup> The excellent pace of progress of the Romanian economy during the opening of this stage is to be attributed to a plethora of factors, both domestic and international. And all happened in a spatial perspective that was inaugurated by the territorial administrative re-organization of 1968, which recovered much of the interwar framework. But even more important would be the fact that the new Law 2/1968 established initially 42 counties and two years later 39 plus the Capital city, entities that were designed after two years of studies based on cultural, geographic, socio-economic, etc. factors, therefore qualifying for the first time during the communist regime for the title of regional dimension as observed elsewhere in the developed world. The most important feature would be the fact that many administrative units would once again match the historic, traditional forms of territoriality.

Within this template, which from an administrative point of view still stands today, the whole territory of the country developed more or less evenly. It was

customary for *macro-regions* (historical provinces) to host huge redundant heavy industries, complex investments built from scratch, with a fuzzy vision of the destination of their output, designed for political rather than economic reasons. It was just as customary to supplement these heavy industries with light industries, in order to absorb the feminine workforce in the area, and this is why during this period Romania became one of the largest manufacturers of textiles in the world. With a weak inter-regional infrastructure, but also with a very restrictive policy of domestic migration, and given the lack of a significant marketable identity (not that it mattered within the closed economy Romania had at that time) and a deficient and politically biased planning, no wonder that competition among territorial units, no matter how large or small, was out of the question at the time. Therefore the very core of any professional regionalization plan was, simply put, compromised, although the formal administrative framework in place was substantially superior to that of the previous stage, especially since the mid '70s.

The territorial approach was significantly enhanced in 1976 when the National Territorial Plan (NTP) was issued, and consequently the 1968 administrative grid became much more consistent from the spatial developmental perspective. The plan imposed a developmental model having as its main target a social one, namely, the reduction of differences in the standard of living between various counties but also between historical provinces (macro-regions). It was meant to significantly improve the linkages between different areas of the country, to regularize the flow of the major rivers, to control the relative chaotic urbanization, etc.—all these in order to facilitate a more rapid pace of economic growth. Though the tasks embedded in the NTP were partially accomplished, we consider that the plan, issued precisely at the beginning of the stage of maximum alienation for the political leadership, was in fact inducing plenty of unwanted consequences (over-industrialization, pollution, defective urbanization and infrastructural projects, cultural biases of various kinds, etc.) that can be seen even today, still jeopardizing the chances of success of the present-day territorial policy.

The most dramatic territorial discourse of the communist regime occurred in the late '80s and was by far also the most controversial. The new Law of territorial administration that was issued in April 1989 would endorse the so-called policy of “rural systematization,” meant to re-organize the country from the urban-rural perspective in order to increase the efficiency of land use. Apparently there were good reasons for this approach: even if it was one of the naturally richest countries in Europe, Romania was lagging behind in terms of agricultural productivity. More precisely, in 1985 Romania's per capita productivity for those working in agriculture stood at 74,652 lei,<sup>23</sup> the equivalent of 4,355 USD (using the 1985 average exchange rate provided by the Romanian National Bank), well behind the 1982 performance of other European countries



such as France (6,359 USD), Denmark (6,839 USD), the United Kingdom (8,359 USD) or Germany (8,963 USD).<sup>24</sup> Moreover, this was observed precisely when the country was heavily relying on agricultural exports to repay its foreign debt. Though implemented, the new law was never in fact operational, due to various factors such as international lobbying but also public disobedience combined with the lack of means to complete such a project, which entailed the elimination of about 400 villages following the model used in larger urban settlements. Again, controversial as it was, the planned reform was one of the few that focused indirectly on enhancing the territorial base of the economy.

## Is There a Lesson in Regionalism to be Learned from Romania's Recent Past?

**A** PRELIMINARY ARGUMENT should be taken into consideration in this regard. While we believe that most historians favored a predominantly endogenous perspective when comprehensively analyzing the historical peculiarities of the Romanian provinces, economists, while invoking the distorting role of the over-centralized policies that were carried out both throughout the interwar decades and during the postwar ones, would endorse predominantly exogenous points of view, drawing on spill-over effects, natural convergence and long run equilibrium. Far from us the idea of juxtaposing standpoints that seem often contradictory by default, but we believe they must be placed in a functional scheme, methodologically heterodox, a scheme that should be relevant for the design of the present-day regional administrative policy. The complex transition process of the '90s, generating a swift move from an (over)centralized economy to free competition and internationally acknowledged procedures of operating businesses, brought to the fore the dilemma of how different Romania actually is when compared to countries falling in the same socio-economic category.<sup>25</sup>

The reason for investigating and eventually solving the dilemma would lie in the reality that, throughout history, the evident peculiarities of the country (insulated Latin civilization, positioned at a geopolitical crossroads, cultural unity despite the political separation of provinces, a balancing act between superpowers) were interpreted mostly as assets, while today the constraints originating from the outside (EU procedures, globalization, sustainability of the economy) could easily be interpreted, in a world where clear boundaries are not supposed to be breached, as mainly liabilities. Therefore the need for proper scientific questioning: should Romania draw conclusions from its regional past, as much as it existed, and validate them within the template of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, or instead open a brand new spatial-developmental chapter of its economic history?

In order not to allow this question to remain rhetorical, we should look back in time and start by invoking some opinions<sup>26</sup> concerning regional competitiveness, as interpreted in purely Romanian parameters. This focuses on the idea that it is false to assume that economic activity is able to spread evenly across the territory, and therefore we cannot define developmental optimality relying entirely on pure territorial econometrics. It is basically self-adaptive policies that maximize the regional competitive advantage effect and this view leads by default towards the analysis of best and worst case scenarios observed in historical perspective. And, illustrating this, we will provide a very simple example concerning the options to solve this dilemma. At a time of radical left-right social and economic positioning in the country during the early '90s, the idea of implementing throughout Romania the most modern (EU) and evidently more Western-compatible administrative and territorial developmental procedures, namely, the Euro regionalization policy, seemed a natural choice.

But this would have been entirely against the historical precedent and the tightly controlled centralization that “came from Bucharest,” no matter if we consider the interwar “capitalist” years<sup>27</sup> or the postwar “socialist” ones. Continuously benchmarking the evolution of the country to that of comparable ones in Central and Eastern Europe during the '90s and then referring to the EU as developmental beacon, we can observe a gradual but inexorable distancing of the dedicated research and of the political discourse from the domestic, historically governed and mainly endogenously-conceived reality.<sup>28</sup> Amid changes in concepts like communitarianism and national identity,<sup>29</sup> systematically turning it towards an EU mainframe will probably induce extra-territorial, unhistorical assumptions that would axiomatically contradict this paragraph's opening lines.

It is indeed true that giving territorial developmental consistency to a certain spatial historical approach would not be an easy task in the case of Romania. One should observe first of all the manner in which the diffusion of knowledge happens in time, as the transfer of good practices and success and failure stories become historical facts, as well as the outflow of technical and managerial solutions. Simply put, how economic and business culture diffuse in time and space has been largely an issue of microeconomics. This cannot happen anymore and consequently can be properly revealed only in a larger territorial framework.<sup>30</sup>

Does the Romanian history of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century show structural regulations and institutions, indicating several layers of regional governance that could be replicated, improved or simply considered as archetypes to be adapted and adopted for this purpose? Or does the legacy of communist industrialization, with all its ups and downs, bear any sort of significance in a moment when the re-industrialization of Europe seems to go beyond the very slogan? In order to properly answer these questions, we are extremely aware of the fact that pre-

liminary investigative work, much more complex than what we could undertake in this paper, is needed. Unless a triad of micro, intermediate (*meso*) and macro levels of facts, figures and consequently sets of policies that were implemented over time are effectively accounted for and interpreted, such a challenging task cannot be properly achieved.<sup>31</sup> But as an objective observer would indicate, industrialization did not help Romania only in terms of structural changes in production output, but, even more importantly, it helped in creating an industrial culture that continuously shapes the human capital of the country, making it indeed competitive while evolving in the proper international environment.

So if a politically-induced momentum for a regional developmental pattern would emerge soon, as predicted before the crisis hit in 2008, it seems to us as an adequate path, full of historical consistence, to discuss the option of theoretically shaping another “By Ourselves” approach as opposed to unconditionally adopting (without adaptations!) EU regional policies. Of course, this does not mean that Romania should not fully implement the European legislation, but just that this implementation should be done by considering a series of particularities that define the *de facto* patterns of regional development and accommodate the need for a smart adaptation of the internal production processes to the global market. We acknowledge the fact that the interpretation of the texts was done from a slightly distorted (by time) economic history perspective. However, the endogenous view concerning the protectionist analysis of the Romanian economy of the '30s, carried out by Manoilescu and depicting somehow the generic situation of all emerging economies,<sup>32</sup> seems to us an appropriate example of the necessity to enhance by all means the *territorial driving factors* for the sake of accomplishing a balanced sustainable development, hopefully in today's Romania, mandatory in tomorrow's Romania. Unfortunately, the present-day legislation in the field, notably the Law of Regional Development (151/1998, modified in 2004) managed to split Romania into 8 development regions that hardly suggest a regional outlook, as much as this could be explicitly or implicitly identified in the documentation depicting the recent past.

In this context, another important issue should be brought into discussion. How open can national economies be, following the structural crisis that hit the world economy between 2008 and 2010?<sup>33</sup> The blunt answer is that the East European economies that were less open (towards the world through free trade) fared better during the crisis than those depending on foreign partners. Could a return to the domestic market, a slowdown in the pace of “becoming more international and global,” solve the issue? At this stage of development, Romania's economy is heavily dependent on external capital flows. Under such conditions, the slowdown of the EU's economy for instance, which absorbs three quarters of

Romanian exports, correlated with a slowdown of FDI flows, could generate a shockwave that could induce severe structural damages to the economy. Such a scenario could be partially mitigated if domestic policies would, in the pre-crisis period, implement a series of economic and social measures that would ensure optimal regional development leading, in the medium term, to more efficient production processes. Consequently, the solution could lie in encouraging a certain degree of economic independence by, on the one hand, setting in place regional networks that would encourage the consumption of domestic products, and, on the other, by providing, without breaching EU regulations, for targeted fiscal incentives and, in some particular cases, even direct government financing, that would allow domestic production to mature and become more competitive on international markets even when such facilities are withdrawn. Such an approach on the economy could be described as an adaptation to the current reality of a selected set of policies that generated positive results in the past century, mainly stemming from the interwar ideal of development through our own means, but also partially from the industrialization process of the communist period.

Therefore, to what extent would it be reasonable to believe that the interwar experience, supposedly a relevant benchmark for Romania, could be replicated via a new territorial, EU compatible, “By Ourselves” doctrine? It is true that the regionalization process that started in the ’90s and proved to be a failure almost two decades later reiterated the main administrative features of the interwar approach, but it lacked the economic component, which could prove to be a real game-changer. Consequently, if analyzed from a truly modern historical aggregated perspective, taking into consideration the productive factors, the business environment, infrastructure, security, culture or social life and overall living standards, as measured through the Human Development Index (HDI), the Romanian regionalization issue might suitably be solved by adopting precisely such a new “By Ourselves” approach. □

## Notes

1. Valentin Cojanu, *Logica raționamentului economic* (Bucharest: C. H. Beck, 2010), 50–60.
2. See Jeanine Bukovski, Simona Piattoni, and Marc Smyrl, *Between Europeanization and Local Societies: The Space for Territorial Governance* (Lanham–Boulder–New York–Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2003), 2–7; Daniel Dăianu, *Încotro se îndreaptă țările postcomuniste?* (Iași: Polirom, 2000), 137–148.

3. See Iulia Trăistaru and Carmen Păuna, "The Emerging Economic Geography in Romania," in *The Emerging Economic Geography in EU Accession Countries*, eds. I. Trăistaru, P. Nijkamp, and L. Resmini (Ashgate: Aldershot, 2003), 242–283.
4. Adrian Covășianu, "Regiunile de dezvoltare în România europeană: Între dezerat politic și realitate teritorială," Ph.D. thesis, Iași, 2011, available at [http://www.academia.edu/1165575/Regiunile\\_de\\_dezvoltare\\_%C3%AEn\\_Rom%C3%A2nia\\_european%C4%83.\\_%C3%8Entre\\_deziderat\\_politic\\_%C8%99i\\_realitate\\_teritorial%C4%83](http://www.academia.edu/1165575/Regiunile_de_dezvoltare_%C3%AEn_Rom%C3%A2nia_european%C4%83._%C3%8Entre_deziderat_politic_%C8%99i_realitate_teritorial%C4%83), 34–36, last accessed on 7 April 2015.
5. Nicolae Păun, *Viața economică a României, 1918–1948: modernizare—dezvoltare—europenizare* (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2009).
6. Gheorghe Popescu, *Dezvoltarea economică în profil teritorial a României, 1900–1985* (Cluj-Napoca: Sincron, 1994), 77.
7. Sorin Mitu, "Local Identities from Transylvania in the Modern Epoch," *Transylvanian Review* 22, Suppl. 3 (2013): 237–248.
8. Iosif Marin Balog, "Networks of Economic Relations between Rural and Urban Areas: The Economic Modernization of Transylvania in the Second Half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century," *Transylvanian Review* 19, 1 (2010): 11–21.
9. See Mircea Teodor Maniu, "A treia modernizare a României: Socio-cultura dimensiunii economice a modernizării," in *Relația rural-urban: Ipostaze ale tradiției și modernizării*, eds. I. M. Balog, R. Grăf, and I. Lumperdean (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2010), 479–494; Horațiu Dan and Paula Mureșan, "Romanian Agriculture during the Interwar Period and the Demographic Effects of Its Development," *Transylvanian Review* 23, 1 (2014): 132–147.
10. Legea 167/1929 (2015) at [Lege5.ro](http://lege5.ro), Bucharest, available at <http://lege5.ro/Gra-tuit/gezdiobuge/legea-nr-167-1929-pentru-organizarea-administratiunii-locale>, last accessed on 7 August 2015.
11. Victor Axenciuc, ed., *Evoluția economică a României: Cercetări statistico-istorice*, vol. 1 (Bucharest: Ed. Academiei, 1992).
12. Tudorel Postolache, ed., *Economia României în secolul XX: noua tranziție la economia de piață: Premise istorice și perspective* (Bucharest: Ed. Academiei, 1991).
13. Radu Săgeată, "A Proposal for Romania's Administrative Organization Based on Functional Relations in the Territory," *Transylvanian Review of Administrative Sciences* 46 E (2015): 183.
14. Florin Grecu, "Centralizare versus descentralizare: Reforma administrativă de la 1938," *Polis: Revista Facultății de Științe Politice și Administrative* (Iași) 1 (3) (2014), available at <http://www.revistapolis.ro/arhiva-revista/numarul-1-3-2014/86-numarul-3-2013/221-centralizare-versus-%E2%80%9Edescentralizare-%E2%80%9Ereforma-administrative-de-la-1938-centralization-versus-decentralization-%E2%80%9Ead-administrative-reform-from-1938.html>, last accessed on 6 May 2015.
15. Nicolae Păun, "Le paradigme du développement économique en Europe centrale et orientale pendant l'entre-deux-guerres: Des contributions françaises en Roumanie," in *Disintegration and Integration in East-Central Europe*, eds. W. Loth and N. Păun (Cluj-Napoca: EFES and Nomos, 2014), 63–69.

16. Dragoș Valentin Dincă, *Sistemul administrativ românesc—inspirație franceză și adaptare autohtonă* (Bucharest: Ed. Economică, 2012), 12–16.
17. Maria Mureșan, *Evoluții economice, 1945–1990* (Bucharest: Ed. Economică, 1995), 71–86.
18. Ibid., 76.
19. Constantin Florea, ed., *Starea națiunii 1918–1996: concluzii și opțiuni pentru România de mâine, pentru viitorul poporului român* (Bucharest: Ed. Fundației “România de Mâine,” 1996), 40–44.
20. Ionel-Claudiu Dumitrescu, “Inexistența unui plan Valev în 1964,” *Historia* (Bucharest) 163 (2015), available at [http://www.historia.ro/exclusiv\\_web/general/articol/inexistenta-unui-plan-valev-1964](http://www.historia.ro/exclusiv_web/general/articol/inexistenta-unui-plan-valev-1964), last accessed on 12 August 2015.
21. Andrei Vela, *Civilizația industrială* (Bucharest: Ed. Politică, 1984), 102–116.
22. Florea, 60.
23. Popescu, 145.
24. *The State of Food and Agriculture 1985* (Rome: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 1986), 178.
25. Mircea Teodor Maniu, “Why is Romania Different? A Perspective on the Economic Transition,” in *The Political Economy of Transition in Eurasia*, eds. N. Graham and E. Lindahl (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2006), 237–254.
26. See Valentin Cojanu, “Către un concept operațional al dezvoltării competitive în plan teritorial,” *Revista transilvană de științe administrative* (Cluj-Napoca) 1 (23) (2009): 19–38; Valentin Cojanu, Ileana Pătru-Stupariu, and Robert Răzvan Dobre, “An Exploratory Study of the Regional Context of Competitive Development in Romania,” *Transylvanian Review of Administrative Sciences* 33/E (2011): 67–89.
27. Anibal Teodorescu, *Tratat de drept administrativ*, vol. 2 (Bucharest: Institutul de Arte Grafice, Ed. Marvan, 1935), 409, apud Z. Györke, “Instituția Prefecturii în perioada interbelică (1923–1938): Proiecții legislative,” *Revista transilvană de științe administrative* 3 (27) (2010): 79–96.
28. Jan Kregel, Egon Matzner, and Gernot Grabher, *Șocul pieței*, trans. (Bucharest: Ed. Economică, 1995), 29–36, 39–47.
29. See Ciprian-Adrian Păun and Adrian-Gabriel Corpădean, “European Regions and Multiculturalisms: Beyond the Nation?” *Transylvanian Review* 24, Suppl. 1 (2015): 55–63.
30. Dragoș Pîslaru, *Identificarea clusterelor emergente în România* (Bucharest: GEA, 2006), available at <http://www.gea.org.ro/documente/ro/clustere/identificareclusteredragospislaru.pdf>, last accessed on 25 March 2015.
31. B. Martins-Rodríguez and J. M. Viedma-Marti, “The Region’s Intellectual Capital Benchmarking System: Enabling Economic Growth through Evaluation,” *Journal of Knowledge Management* 10, 5 (2006): 41–54.
32. Mihail Manoilescu, *Forțele naționale productive și comerțul exterior: Teoria protecționismului și a schimbului internațional* (Bucharest: Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1986), 128–138.
33. See Daniel Dăianu, “Întoarcerea la rațiune este necesară,” in *România după criză*, eds. M. Malița and C. Georgescu (Bucharest: Compania, 2010), 48–51.

## **Abstract**

### Revisiting Romania's Regional Approach: Lessons from the Recent Past

This paper seeks to determine whether the regionalization presently occurring in Romania could be traced back to certain historical events of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, events which, summed up, could be seen more or less as a regionalization attempt. Our research looks at the interwar years, the Soviet-influenced postwar years, and the era of national-communism. After identifying facts and actions of economic, political or administrative relevance that illustrate and sometime epitomize the economic dimension of the regional evolution of the country, we conclude with some interrogations concerning the historical endogenous vs. exogenous grounds for establishing the proper coordinates of today's Romanian regionalization policy.

## **Keywords**

Romanian regionalization process, regionalization policies in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, spatial development