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CIOT

Urban and Regional Competitiveness in the North-West Region of Romania

*“Cities need places,
not spaces.”*

European Integration and Regional Competitiveness: New Challenges

IN TODAY’S interconnected and globalized world it is more and more difficult to operate with dedicated concepts, because now the European citizen has to feel, in a concrete manner, the benefits of EU membership. We are living a period of transformation at EU level, in which Member States will have to negotiate constantly their position and future. Until now, in the European discourse we could hear, and we became accustomed to this approach, of competition between cities, regions and Member States. But now the paradigm is different: all these entities will have to collaborate on specific projects, at national, regional and local level. But the main challenge for the topic that we will bring into discussion is the possibility to approach a policy domain at European and local level, and here we are speaking about urban policies.

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The idea of writing this article comes from our past interest in the topic of competitiveness, regional competitiveness, and its expressions in our region, Transylvania, but also from our interest in trying to find a frame or a way to go for our local community and region in this transformational or revolutionary period that the European Union is going through, and to express a constructive and evolutionary view regarding the development and modernization of our local community and region at a time when we, the Romanians, are celebrating 100 years of Romanian unity.

Throughout this article, we will try to find some answers to the questions that each European citizen is asking: What is the way forward for my community? What is the way forward for me? Being an expert in European affairs, we will try to provide some scientific answers from this point of view, taking into consideration, as a basis for our proposals, our cultural local background, appealing to the public local consciousness, as it happened when the journal *Gândirea*, with Lucian Blaga and the others from Cluj, supported the concept of European integration. As Professor Vasile Pușcaș mentioned, “the work of Lucian Blaga is . . . from the point of view of culture and doctrine, one of the deepest and smartest guides for Romania’s integration in Europe.”¹ Referring to the same topic, of Transylvania’s integration in the EU, the abovementioned author said that:

*In today’s globalized world it is more difficult to operate with the concepts used by Ratzel, such as *Mittelpunkt*. Of course, for us, who are living in this region, the *Mittelpunkt* is Transylvania. But, before we could see it in the integrated European construction of tomorrow, it will be better to find its own matrix in the integration on which Romanian state is building its identity as a member of the European Union. Otherwise, only a partial valorization of the local and regional potential will be achieved, which will demonstrate the lack of willingness and of the abilities to function/operate in today’s and tomorrow’s world.*²

Urban Competitiveness in the EU

AT THE beginning of this article, we were speaking about the necessity of creating a framework, in which local authorities could define their own objectives, projects and actions. But this has to take into account the present context: “What we are about to live, is, without a doubt, a change of world order . . . Our constant answer must be to civilize this globalization by all means and to anchor our actions in a Europe which becomes more and more indispensable.”³ One good example of European reconstruction discourse belongs

to the newly elected French President, Emmanuel Macron, who provided some of the guiding lines for the EU's reform. These ideas generated intense debates across the EU during 2016–2017.

The important ideas are:

- the European project was based on three promises: peace, prosperity and liberty. To us, Europeans, these promises seemed betrayed and fragile;
- the EU seems to languish, in the sense of experiencing an exhaustion of ideas and methods: “A broken world and reality system”;⁴
- “The founding fathers of Europe believed that policy could follow the economy and that a European state could be born from a single market and currency. . . . reality has scattered this illusion. Political Europe did not appear. Or it has been even weakened, by our collective guilt”;⁵
- the EU is weakened because of the: weak EU leadership, weak organization and functioning of the European Commission, the loss of the vision for procedures, confusion between the end (a European Union) and the means (technical, monetary, juridical, institutional) through which it is realized,⁶ the lack of a real control over European policies (the options of European leaders, the habits of their administrations, the proliferation of rules, the insufficient application of the principle of subsidiarity), the incapacity of European institutions for introspection and of real defense of the values which underlie Europe;⁷
- the EU loses its power once it accepts its disintegration because of the lack of visionary conformism;⁸
- Europe needs to be revived: “The desire for Europe must be revived. For the project of peace, reconciliation, development. Nothing is more difficult to define, but a project quickly becomes what everyone believes about it”;⁹
- the EU will be the frame which will allow us to find the correct place and protection in the context of globalization¹⁰—the principle of reforming the EU.

The latest *Global Competitiveness Report 2016–2017* begins with the same description of the international context: “time of rising income inequality, mounting social and political tensions, and a general feeling of uncertainty about the future,”¹¹ in which citizens and communities will have to see the positive elements, by using the pro-active approaches, “one of the most prosperous and peaceful times in recorded history, with less disease, poverty, and violent conflict than ever before. Against this backdrop of seeming contradictions, the Fourth Industrial Revolution brings both unprecedented opportunity and an accelerated speed of change.”¹²

The term *competitiveness* has to be understood in the light of the new international context, also shaped by the main event of 2016, Brexit. The Fourth Industrial Revolution is based on the digital platform and it is characterized by a “convergence of technologies that is blurring the lines between the physical,

digital, and biological spheres.”¹³ New ways towards prosperity, growth and development will be designed by artificial intelligence, biotechnology, the Internet of Things, robotics, 3D printing, and this will have also an impact at social level.¹⁴ That is why competitiveness needs a reform that will be based on innovation. Practically, we are living a transformation, with a historic dimension in terms of size, speed and scope, a “transition to new systems that are being built on the infrastructure of the digital revolution.”¹⁵

Professor Xavier Sala-i-Martin¹⁶ identified five directions to measure competitiveness in the years of the Fourth Industrial Revolution:

- productivity, as a key driver of prosperity: “Prosperity can increase only if inputs of production are used in smarter and more efficient ways to fulfill constantly the evolution of human demands”;¹⁷

- a future orientation is central—the successful economies will have to be agile, adaptive to changes and reactive to shocks in a smooth and speedy manner;¹⁸

- the meaning of innovation is being updated—the new way of approaching innovation has do with a country’s ability to bring new products and services to market and with a balanced importance given to technical and non-technical inventions. In order to be innovative, a country should “provide a networked, connected environment that promotes creativity and entrepreneurship, fosters collaboration, and rewards individuals who are open-minded and embrace new ways to perform tasks”;¹⁹

- ICT infrastructure is an imperative—the transition to the digital economy is a must and that is why certain reforms have to be done for pillars like technology adoption, business agility, and innovation capacity;²⁰

- the world is more leveled that it used to be—“a country’s priorities evolve as it develops, with infrastructure, institutions, macroeconomic stability, and basic health and education more important for lower-income countries and innovation and business sophistication more important for higher-income countries.”²¹ Each country will define its own policy priorities.

Regarding European competitiveness, the latest report is dated 2014²² and the approaches took into account the international factors and context of that time, which are outdated for the purposes of the present article. This also underlines the decline in the EU’s interest for global competition and its focus on short-term objectives. Instead, we will refer to another important report, drawn up in 2016 by the European Investment Bank, *Restoring EU Competitiveness*.²³ The European context is also defined by the new challenges, to which we will reply with increased competitiveness, in order to assure productivity, employment and prosperity. We can support the answers to these new challenges through:

- deeper European market integration;
- further cohesion and convergence;

- strengthening and developing markets;
- stepping up efforts for a stronger and more competitive Europe.²⁴

The EU's competitiveness drivers are:

- openness;
- innovation;
- skills development;
- free movement of goods and services, labour, and capital.²⁵

Other important findings of this study, which could be used as guidelines for a future framing of EU competitiveness, are:

- EU firms trail behind in their capacity to innovate and absorb new technologies and know-how;
- young, innovative and modernising firms face financial constraints in the EU;
- Europe's infrastructure is increasingly unfit to provide the foundations for EU competitiveness;
- public policy can foster competitiveness by addressing market inefficiencies;
- restoring EU competitiveness.²⁶

According to the abovementioned report, European competitiveness depends on the capacity of companies to adapt and to change through innovation and to support it financially, through long-term investments in human capital and strategic infrastructure, and an appropriate framework of competitive markets and institutions.²⁷ European competitiveness should be supported by way of financial means, provided by the European Investment Bank, the European Commission, and other European entities.

European integration is one of the ways to assure European competitiveness, and it could be realized by implementing European policies at national and local level. Regional policy is one efficient instrument which supports economic growth, sustainable development, business competitiveness, and improves the quality of life for European citizens.²⁸

The relation between cohesion and regional policies and regionalism is linked with the way in which the EU interacts in relation to regional identity issues. The aspiration of creating a Europe of regions isn't always shared by Member States willing to keep their own national identity. But the European Commission is providing a good alternative with the option of partnerships with subnational partners, aiming to increase cohesion.²⁹

The EU is addressing specific needs and supports certain categories of cities and regions and communities. Over two-thirds of the EU's population are living in Europe's urban areas, which are "the engines of the European economy and act as catalysts for creativity and innovation throughout the Union."³⁰

Urban competitiveness was described in a "classical" manner from the perspective of the following elements:

- knowledge and innovation;
- entrepreneurship;
- labour market;
- transforming economy.³¹

If we take into account the latest definition of the concept, then we have to underline that it “can be defined as the demonstrated ability of cities to attract capital, business, talent and visitors (*The Economist* 2012): those cities that become more globally linked and responsive to the competitive needs of business will attract investment and jobs while those that do not will decline (Rondinelli et al. 1998).”³²

Urban development could be achieved only through an integrated approach and a strong partnership between local citizens, civil society, industry and various levels of government.³³ The objectives for 2014–2020 of the regional policy for European cities aim at:

- investment priorities through the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), supporting sustainable urban mobility, deprived communities, improved research and innovation capacity;
- a minimum 5% of the ERDF, in each Member State, is directed to local authorities for integrated sustainable urban development;
- innovative actions will provide 371 million euro in the framework of sustainable urban development;
- an urban development network will be created in order to review the use of European funds and boost the sharing of knowledge between cities involved in integrated sustainable urban development and in Urban Innovative Actions;
- URBACT III programme acts as a European exchange and learning program promoting sustainable urban development.³⁴

The urban dimension of the EU has an integrated and coordinated approach—the EU Urban Agenda, which tries to improve the quality of life and bring prosperity to European citizens. This method will use the growth potential of cities, will address the social challenges and will promote cooperation and collaboration between cities, regions, Member States in order to stimulate growth, livability and innovation in the cities of Europe.³⁵

In a study released in December 2016, the Committee of the Regions³⁶ found that in all Member States urban policies are less represented, even though two-thirds of the EU’s population live in the cities. Most Member States give a lot of attention to regional development, granting regional administration the freedom of self-government, without a specific interest in city or urban areas. One important conclusion of the report was that current administrative structures do not adequately respond to changes caused by global challenges and that the urban policy does not support a sustainable and integrated approach. That

is why at EU level is needed a combination of top-down and bottom-up policies which better serve the integrated approach.

Another conclusion of the study is that the new EU Urban Agenda will have to address the most pressing urban challenges, by respecting the contextual differences of cities and urban areas, seeking homogeneous key parameters to pressing challenges across Europe and empowering cities and urban authorities to follow their own individual integrated approach to climate change and social and demographic change.³⁷

Another important conclusion to be taken into consideration states that the growth impact of urban areas is based on four business cases (and a horizontal one) built around the most important policies with the highest impact at local level:

- urban economy (policies: culture, public amenities, ICT networks education, RTDI, business development);
- resource efficiency (policies: public procurement, zoning and land use, waste and water management, urban transport, energy efficiency, education);
- social fabric (policies: education, housing, health and social care, social security);
- transport is considered to be a transversal theme for urban areas;
- modern urban governance is understood in a broad sense as the capacity to administer and govern the urban territory through cross-sectoral coordination implementing participatory approaches and more open forms of government in order to attract the interest of a diverse society.³⁸

Urban growth will depend on the ability of urban economies to shape new development paths and one of the major approaches in this sense is smart specialisation.³⁹ Special attention should be given to European Innovation Partnerships (EIPs), which is challenge-driven for research and innovation and focuses on societal benefits and the modernisation of the associated sectors and markets, by bringing together relevant actors at EU, national and regional levels. The smart urban technologies can contribute to the sustainable development of European cities. We mention in this context the Smart Cities and Communities EIP (SCC), which includes the areas of energy, transport and information and communication and focuses on industry-led innovation, by promoting actions across the innovation cycle and different sectors.⁴⁰

The main important guideline for European integration which the EU Urban Agenda provides is the consideration of the main EU policies and their urban dimension, which we outline in the following synthetic table:

TABLE 1. EU POLICIES AND THEIR URBAN DIMENSION

EU policies	Urban dimension
Agriculture, fisheries and food	Food industries are often concentrated in/around agglomeration areas. Cities are the main markets for food products. Urban lifestyles and habits are crucial for trends in production (and thus for the energy consumption of the sector).
Business	The service sector has been the driver for job growth. It is concentrated in urban areas.
Climate action	Cities present manifold options for economies of scale in climate action through sustainable transport and energy efficiency of buildings, on the one hand, and, on the other, by capacity building, awareness raising and exchanging knowledge and good practices in order to ensure effective adaptation strategies.
Cohesion policy	Strengthened urban dimension in ESIF period 2014–2020.
Cultural policy	European capital of culture as a driver of urban development and growth.
Economy, finance and tax	The sector has been the driver for job growth and is concentrated in urban areas.
Employment and social rights	Growth of employment concentrated in urban areas Urban poverty in Western Europe; most diverse social fabric in urban areas.
Energy and natural resources	Health and environment protection are essential policy elements but these are also sectors that have contributed and will continue to contribute to sustained economic growth.
Environment, consumer protection and health	Health and environment protection are essential policy elements but these are also sectors that have contributed and will continue to contribute to sustained economic growth.
External relations and foreign affairs	Cities are hubs in trade and major targets for migration, etc. External relations are thus vital for larger conurbations. A second aspect is that the transfer of knowhow and practices of sustainable development is crucial, given the global developments in urbanisation with their numerous adverse impacts.
Science, Technology and Innovation (STI)	Cities are the centres of tertiary education and STI infrastructure. Funding is usually concentrated in cities and in agglomeration areas, respectively.
Transport	Urban areas are the nodes and hubs in national and European transport networks.

SOURCE: Committee of the Regions, *The growth potential of an integrated EU Urban Agenda*, 2016, pp. 41–44 (cor.europa.eu/.../Growth_potential_integrated_urban_agenda.pdf).

“Smart city regionalism” is the concept introduced in an interesting study by Tassillo Herrschel⁴¹ who intended to identify a bridge between economic competitiveness and sustainability. This concept derived from the principles of smart growth and new regionalism, as a policy-shaping mechanism and analytical framework. The concept of “smartness” refers not only to “smart” and “smart growth” (focusing on energy and transportation), but also to innovation, participation, collaboration and co-ordination. The new concept of “smart city regionalism” is circumscribed “by the interface between the sectorality and territoriality of policy-making processes.”⁴² So, the smart-city strategies will offer the technological solutions to link urban challenges, ICT support, meeting the needs and challenges of social exclusion.⁴³

EU Models for Increasing Urban Competitiveness

IN ORDER to analyze the urban competitiveness of an important Romanian city from the North-West region, it is useful to identify the guidelines for measuring urban competitiveness in other EU regions. We will refer to representative studies not only from the specialist literature, but also from the European region to whom they belong: Belgium (Flanders), Poland, Italy, Spain, Lithuania.

As a former Ph.D. student at the University of Ghent, based on the similarities that we could find with our hometown of Cluj-Napoca (the main city of the North-West region of Romania), we consider that one good example would be the city of Ghent, located in Flanders, Belgium. The two cities are similar: the second important city in their region (Flanders and Romania), both cities have a substantial student population (Ghent has about 70,000 students and Cluj-Napoca about 100,000), both are a small European metropolis (150 square km for Ghent and 179.5 square km for Cluj-Napoca), both have a similar population (Ghent with total population of around 500,000, and Cluj-Napoca about 400,000), both cities underline the importance of innovation and are trying to use it for urban development and for the benefit of their citizens.⁴⁴

The urban development strategy model could be used as an inspiring model, because it is based on the concept of *redevelopment, exploring the drivers of revival* and identifying the factors which will assure its growth and development for the future. This action has a suggestive motto: “Cities need places, not spaces,”⁴⁵ and is concentrated around three factors, which will generate an *innovative ecosystem*:

- physical assets—public and private areas and assets (houses, streets, parks, etc.), and the intent to stimulate new forms of connectivity and collaboration. They create the framework for generating innovative solutions to urban issues, for example for traffic management;

- economic assets—revenues and employment;
- networking assets—networking the flow of information.⁴⁶

In order to become competitive, Ghent has to find the answers to the challenges of the 21st century:

- viability—the city represents an environment which has to satisfy the aspirations of the young and the old population alike, the need to connect the green areas, and also has to provide a response to the questions of identity and density;
- economy—economic growth, a modification of the structures of the economy with “spatial” consequences for the city;
- sustainability—response to the climate question (in the light of COP 21, Paris 2015);
- demographics—understanding and responding to the needs of a changing and growing population;
- mobility—guaranteeing selective access to the city and its peripheral districts (suburbs).⁴⁷

Aiming to become a European neutral energy city by 2030, the city of Ghent is transforming urban competitiveness into urban attractiveness through the following actions:

- creating a relationship between all of the functions of the city: socio-economic, socio-ecological, political (structures and lines of power) and cultural factors;
- seeking a compromise between quality and efficiency in areas destined for a number of objectives (housing, economic, cultural);
- starting the thought process, beginning with the principle that the city is a place of ownership and of coproduction which has to remain accessible and affordable for all;
- abandoning the notion of nimbyism (Not in My Back Yard) and considering the city as a place for the spatio-social process;
- recognising that an urban layout is not neutral and reflects on whom (which socio-economic groups) it benefits.⁴⁸

Another important study is that referring to Poland’s urban competitiveness,⁴⁹ which, in the beginning, underlines the territorial and productivity dimensions of the concept of competitiveness in order to better understand the abovementioned concept. Also, the author mentions that the competition between cities

is based on investment, human capital, tourism, technology, cultural and sports events.⁵⁰ One of the classifications of factors for the measurement of the city's competitiveness identifies two groups: those related to enterprises (including productivity and employment policy) and those related to city policies aimed at increasing the city's attractiveness. In her analysis, the author used Begg's model of city competitiveness,⁵¹ which is based on three factors: employment rate, productivity, standards of living, and four determinants: top-down sectoral trends and macro influences, company characteristics, business environment, capacity for innovation and learning. For the year 2013, when the analysis was made, the results were important, because Poland was one Member State to be taken into consideration as a model of development for Central European states.

The conclusions of the study were: most drivers of competitiveness are executed at the central level in Poland, cities rely mainly on incentives from higher levels of government when it comes to their development, the "top-down" or "macro" policies are the major determinant, local governments create incentives for innovation by attracting a chosen group of workers and companies or encouraging contacts between business partners and the sharing of good practices. As the author said, the results of the quantitative analysis showed that Polish cities present similar levels of competitive positioning, but are less competitive than other cities in the European Union, and the only Polish city that stands out in this comparison is Warsaw.⁵² The competitive strategies of Polish cities include sources of competitiveness such as innovation (Kraków), human resources (Warsaw), and cultural opportunities (Wrocław).⁵³

Another relevant study for our research topic belongs to four Italian experts, who tried to analyze the urban competitiveness of all Italian cities.⁵⁴ They used a model with 31 variables, divided in two groups: determinants (12) and factors (19). Some of the variables (determinants and the specific factors) were: mobility and communication (international airports, passengers on international flights, networks for telephony and telematics, high-speed connections), economy (per capita income, number of bank branches, etc.), production (number of firms, exhibitions, etc.), environment (population density, residential square meter price, etc.), research and training (universities, number of patents, etc.), human capital (population, population of the provincial capital, etc.), etc.

The 110 Italian provinces in the study were classified into five categories:

- first class—provinces with a consolidated role on the international scene;
- second class—provinces with international potential;
- third class—provinces with national relevance;
- fourth class—provinces with national potential;
- fifth class—provinces of local relevance.

Even though the model is an updated version of a former model from 1995 and does not have a European policy with an urban dimension approach, it is important to see the cultural and academic specificity of approaching this topic in a certain EU region. It is important to see which is the basis from where the local governments will prospect the development strategy.

Another concept that Italian researchers resort to is *urban smartness*, which is described as a new urban dimension. The indicators of urban smartness are: economy, environment, mobility, governance, people, living.⁵⁵

By using to classification, the main findings of the study are: the North-South divide, noticeable in both classifications: a leader North-Central Italy includes urban systems of international or potentially international competitiveness and, at the same time, cities with a high smart quotient, despite a laggard South Italy that hosts almost only provinces of local level and cities with a quite low smart quotient;⁵⁶ the case of Rome represents another point of convergence between competitiveness and smartness.⁵⁷ The conclusions of the study were that the research provided a contribution for a better understanding of the label of “smart city”; the idea of smart city comes from that of competitive city, with a different evolution (if a competitive city aims to attract human and financial capital, a smart city aims also to improve the quality of life of its users by using ICTs to maximize the efficiency of urban spaces) and that means that “today a city needs to improve its smart quotient in order to be more attractive and so more competitive.”⁵⁸

The Italian study is relevant for the present article because it shows the cultural specificity in approaching the urban dimension of competitiveness.

Another interesting study belongs to a Spanish researcher⁵⁹ and is important because he links urban competitiveness with urban governance and with the urban regeneration process, focusing of the role of the involvement of the private sector in this process: “The aim of this new approach was to promote public-private partnerships that combined the interests of the public and private sectors. . . . The challenge was to merge both positions in order to increase the residents’ quality of life; however, rather than ‘socialising’ private sector’s objectives, cities became converts to the tenets of business.”⁶⁰ The abovementioned author stated that in Spain there are two models of successful urban renewal: the renovation of Bilbao’s image with the inauguration of the Guggenheim Museum (1997), and the Olympic Barcelona’s new maritime front (1992) and forum (2004); both models created “a delusory vision of Spain at the turn of the century.”⁶¹ These two models were taken up by other important Spanish cities, but the public spending was exorbitant and the EU asked for a drastic reduction in the public deficit, which by 2009 had reached 11% of the GDP.⁶² Then austerity was imposed on the

public agenda with cuts of all kinds, so the “urban governance was prohibited by law, or more specifically, from December 2013, all local governments in Spain were forbidden to establish new consortia or public-private entities.”⁶³

It is relevant for our study to underline the factors which characterized urban renewal: transport infrastructures, museums, convention and exhibition centres, gentrification and new residential districts. The main important conclusion of the cited study is that Spain has to change its model for urban renewal/competitiveness to one which encompasses social empowerment, in which economic parameters take into account the characteristics of the specific urban area, in which urban planning takes into account the needs of the disadvantaged social categories of population (women, elderly, youth, children) and in which the cultural ecosystem takes into account the creativity and the talent of the inhabitants and the roots of their identity.⁶⁴

The last set of studies relevant for the present article have Lithuanian authors. The first study gives us important data regarding the most useful methods used for analysing urban competitiveness (understood in terms of economic competitiveness, social competitiveness and environmental status competitiveness).⁶⁵ We will present the synthetic table of analysis methods used for urban competitiveness:

TABLE 2. ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF THE MOST FREQUENTLY USED
NON-ECONOMETRIC-QUALITATIVE METHODS
FROM THE URBAN COMPETITIVENESS MEASUREMENT PERSPECTIVE

Method	Description	Advantages	Disadvantages
SWOT	The most frequently used method. Facilitates identification of the strong and weak sides of the city, its possibilities and threats.	Does not require much data. Both quantitative and qualitative (e. g. provided by experts) information can be used. Convenient to use because it facilitates analysis of various spheres and aspects. Frequently serves as the initial source of information for identification of the urban development priorities and competitive advantages. Does not require much method application-related costs.	Requires a comparison of the city data with the same data outside its borders—other cities, region, country (external information). Falsely interpreted and applied methodology on application of this method determines a false defining of strong and weak points and their confusion with possibilities and threats.

Method	Description	Advantages	Disadvantages
Problem analysis	<p>Facilitates identifying the essential problem/challenge of the city. The analysis is conducted in four stages:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. making a long initial list of problems and challenges (or description of the undesirable situation and its characteristic features); 2. identification of one or several basic – essential problems causing the occurrence of other problems; 3. identification of the problems-causes and problems-consequences; 4. setting up the hierarchy of problems identified. 	<p>Most frequently qualitative data is used.</p> <p>Various data interpretation forms are available: by setting up a problem tree, objectives tree, etc.</p> <p>Possibility to describe visually the problems hierarchy and causes-consequences chain.</p> <p>This method does not require econometric knowledge.</p> <p>Does not require much method application-related costs.</p>	<p>Complicated stages of conducting analysis.</p> <p>Practically the problem hierarchy and causes-consequences chain is not always successfully identified, because majority of problems are determined by many problems.</p> <p>There is a demand for the experts, involved in the analysis, to be well aware of the situation in the city and specificity of the local economy.</p> <p>Quality of the obtained results often depends upon the problem analysis moderation process and concern of people involved in the analysis process.</p>
Competitive advantage analysis	<p>Facilitates measuring the competitive potential of the city, create and maintain competitive advantage with respect to other competitive rivals.</p>	<p>Due to the lack of standardized methods of analysis, there is a possibility for various data interpretation forms by applying different models of competitiveness, combining majority of factors determining competitiveness of the city into a common system.</p> <p>Encourages a novel approach to the competitive potential and advantages of the city through other competitiveness determining factors, which constitute the model.</p> <p>This method does not require econometric or other methods application-related knowledge.</p>	<p>Methodological justification of the competitiveness model used in the measurement is requested.</p> <p>The model adaptation to the city specificity is important.</p> <p>Usually requests for a more comprehensive information, both quantitative and qualitative, by each factor of competitiveness identified in the model.</p> <p>For the purpose of making comparisons between the cities, identical information on other cities is required.</p> <p>Excellent proficiency of experts, conducting the analysis, knowledge on competitiveness theory and its application to the city and regional economy is required.</p>

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Table—*continued*

Method	Description	Advantages	Disadvantages
Scenario planning (identification)	<p>Facilitates identification of possible future changes, and based on them, selection of appropriate strategies for the development and maintenance of competitiveness of the city.</p> <p>Scenario planning involves three measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – qualitative scenario planning (by employing experts' knowledge and prognosis); – quantitative scenario planning (by employing economic prognosis methods, in pursuit to identify how particular microeconomic changes can affect competitiveness of the city; frequently the qualitative and quantitative scenario planning methods are combined together; – identification of the future (first describing what the city will be in the future, and then preparing the strategy and forming measures for the achievement of specified objectives). 	<p>Future perspective-oriented and facilitates preparing for particular challenges in advance.</p> <p>May act as an aid of measuring the efficiency of current strategies on the increase in competitiveness of the city and preparation for future changes.</p> <p>Scenario planning can be based on both quantitative and qualitative information.</p>	<p>Not all forecasted future changes can occur in reality, or not all changes can be forecasted and measured.</p> <p>Although the number of scenarios is not specified, usually in practice two or three scenarios are identified.</p> <p>There is a demand that experts who conduct the analysis were creative and distinguished themselves by dynamic approach.</p> <p>There might be a need to employ econometric methods and computer-based modeling programs.</p>

SOURCE: Bruneckiene, Cincikaite, and Kilijoniene, 2012, p. 260 (inzeko.ktu.lt/index.php/EE/article/viewFile/1272/1561, accessed on 8 August 2017).

The second study is important for providing us with a very complex model of city competitiveness.⁶⁶

CITY COMPETITIVENESS

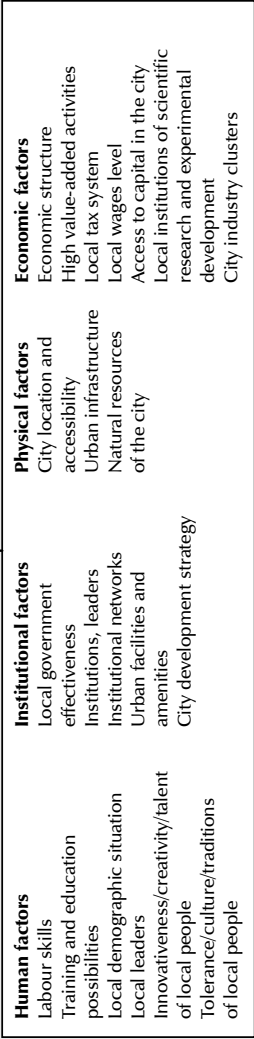
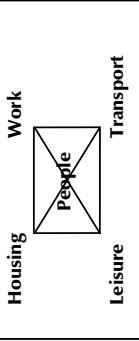
Internal city environment

Level of quality of life

- Productivity
- Value added/person
- Income/Purchasing power
- Corporate profit
- Inward investment
- Growth of work places
- Immigration
- Physical city growth
- City image/ attractiveness

OUTPUTS

PROCESSES



INPUTS

- Human factors**
 - Labour skills
 - Training and education possibilities
 - Local demographic situation
 - Local leaders
 - Innovativeness/creativity/talent of local people
 - Tolerance/culture/traditions of local people
- Institutional factors**
 - Local government effectiveness
 - Institutions, leaders
 - Institutional networks
 - Urban facilities and amenities
 - City development strategy
- Physical factors**
 - City location and accessibility
 - Urban infrastructure
 - Natural resources of the city
- Economic factors**
 - Economic structure
 - High value-added activities
 - Local tax system
 - Local wages level
 - Access to capital in the city
 - Local institutions of scientific research and experimental development
 - City industry clusters

Feedback

External city environment

- Political-legal factors**
 - Political and legal stability
 - International agreements of higher authorities
 - External security
 - Activity of external interest groups
 - Activity of external institutions

- Technological factors**
 - Development of ICT
 - Establishment of new industries
 - development of production technologies
 - Polity of technology development

- Economic factors**
 - Macroeconomic situation
 - Fiscal Policy
 - Regulatory Policy
 - Development of scientific research and experimental development
 - Development of communications

- Social-cultural factors**
 - Demographics
 - Gender equality
 - Life style specifics
 - Effectiveness of health care and educational systems
 - External employment opportunities
 - Income level
 - Crime level

- Ecological-environmental factors**
 - Climate
 - Water resources
 - Waste treatment systems
 - Land and land use
 - Biological assets
 - Energy resources
 - Natural disasters

Analysis of Urban Competitiveness in Romania's North-West Region

THERE ARE a lot of studies which analyze the competitiveness of Romania and its regions, drawn up by Romanian or foreign authors. The common approach is the economic one. We are more interested in a European affairs approach, in terms of urban renewal, development, and increased competitiveness.

In the *Global Competitiveness Report 2016–2017*,⁶⁷ Romania is ranked 62nd, losing 9 places since the previous classification (2015–2016).

A descriptive analysis, based on the data of the RCI Index from 2013,⁶⁸ took into consideration the following sub-indices and dimensions of competitiveness:

- (a) basic sub-indices:
 - a.1. institutions
 - a.2. macroeconomic stability
 - a.3. infrastructure
 - a.4. health
 - a.5. basic education
- (b) efficiency sub-index:
 - b.1. higher education
 - b.2. labour market efficiency
 - b.3. market size
- (c) innovation sub-index:
 - c.1. technological readiness
 - c.2. business sophistication
 - c.3. innovation.⁶⁹

The results of the study revealed that, except for the Bucharest–Ilfov region, all other regions are positioned among the least competitive of the European Union (ranks lower than 240 among 262 positions), and that the South-East region is classified as the penultimate in the European Union (the lowest score for overall competitiveness between regions in the new Member States, next the Severozapaden region of Bulgaria as early as 2010). Also, for some sub-indices of competitiveness, Romanian regions are ranked among the last: all Romanian regions in the case of basic education, the region Bucharest–Ilfov in the case of institutional quality, the region of South-West Oltenia in the case of infrastructure, the West region in the case of the basic skills pillar, the South-East region in the case of healthcare, higher education, lifelong learning, efficiency of the labour market, as well as in the areas of efficiency drivers and drivers of innovation, the North-East region, in the case of market size, technological readiness

and the innovation drivers pillar, and finally the South Muntenia region in the case of business sophistication.⁷⁰

Regarding innovation, the regions of the EU member countries have been classified into four performance groups: the innovation leaders, innovation followers, average innovators and modest innovators. For Romania, it has only one region that surpasses the class of modest innovators (the Bucharest–Ilfov region).⁷¹

Regarding urban competitiveness, we take into consideration in our analysis of the North-West region of Romania the city of Cluj-Napoca, because it is one of the seven urban growth poles in Romania, with great chances of developing high competitiveness, also supported from the European investment funds.

We begin our analysis with a short presentation of the North-West region of Romania, one of the poorest regions in the EU, with a GDP/capita of less than 50% of the EU average. This characteristic was one of the arguments for which the EU decided to support this region with a project called “Less developed regions,” which included 21 regions from the EU, of which two belong to Romania: North-West and North-East.

We mention that we do not have updated statistical data from 2017 or 2016, the public information available regarding the city characteristics is poor, referring mainly to the region to which it belonged and dating—the most recent—back to 2011.

Even though Cluj-Napoca belongs to an underdeveloped European region, it is the main city of the region, which has the characteristics needed to increase its potential, its urban competitiveness: universities, entrepreneurial initiatives, companies, outsourcing companies, medical excellence centers, cultural and leisure activities. The competitive cities from the EU are: Debrecen and Szeged (Hungary), Graz and Linz (Austria), Bonn and Mannheim (Germany), Karlovy Vary (Czech Republic), after a simulation performed on specific indices (universities and medical centers, cinemas).⁷²

We won't discuss here the urban development strategy for Cluj-Napoca, but we shall present the data (as competitiveness potential) taken from the urban development strategy for Cluj-Napoca, based on a questionnaire applied to its inhabitants, and not on the statistical data from the National Institute of Statistics. One indicator is the quality of life. This was measured in keeping with seven indices (self-evaluation of life, safety, health, education, environment, local government quality and economic prosperity), which were organized into 18 themes and 196 sub-indices. The main results indicated that the main factors which positively influence the quality of life in Cluj-Napoca are family life, living conditions and the healthcare system (a general European perspective on life quality). The citizens have a positive opinion of the healthcare system, especially

the family doctors. Referring to the economic-financial sector, the citizens consider that they are not rich, but also not poor, and that they spend their money on food and living conditions. The quality of the environment is seen as moderate by the citizens, especially when it comes to water and air quality. Safety scores quite high in the perception of citizens. Regarding the local government efficiency, the level is moderate but increasing. A high level of appreciation is enjoyed by the local cultural and identity indices and the educational system.

We can affirm that these results could be used as a basis for a prospective strategy for urban development, but we need longitudinal statistical data, in order to create a framework in which we could maximize the city's potential for competitiveness. In the figure presented in the above sub-chapter, the city competitiveness model featured five important categories of factors that have to be taken into consideration: political-legal, technological, economic, socio-cultural, and ecologic-environmental, which will push on inputs (human, institutional, physical and economic factors) with effects on processes regarding the quality of life (housing, jobs, leisure, transport), and will generate outputs (productivity, value-added/person, income/purchasing power, corporate profit, inward investment, more workplaces, immigration, physical city growth, city image/attractiveness, ecological situation), which will influence the level of the quality of life and thus generate city competitiveness.⁷³ So, in order to see the potential for urban competitiveness, we will have to focus more on the outputs, not on processes.

The official data stated that the urban area of Cluj-Napoca was established in 2008, with 18 administrative entities, with a surface of 1,625 ha and 418,153 inhabitants (official data from last general census of 2011). The density of the population is 272 inhabitants/km², with an accentuated tendency of concentration.⁷⁴

The health status of the population is defined by: high mortality, short life expectancy and healthy life expectancy (13 years less than the life expectancy). In the whole North-West region a special situation is represented by the access to medical services for the persons from the rural areas or with disabilities. There are important intra-regional discrepancies. To be mentioned is the role of the excellence center for medical services of Cluj-Napoca, with effects on the health of its inhabitants.⁷⁵

When we refer to education, the targeted age groups (0–4 years, 5–9 years, 10–14 years, 15–19 and 20–24 years) have been steadily decreasing, according to statistical data from 2005–2011. In the North-West region, in 2011, the school population was of 516,575 persons (10.4% less than in 2005).⁷⁶ Pre-school education had an ascending trend (according to the number of enrolled children), but for primary and secondary education the trend is slightly decreasing.

ing. The dramatic decrease in the number of pupils from professional and vocational education is linked with the decision to abolish vocational schools or turn them into technological highschools, as well as with the attitude of the parents and pupils towards vocational schools. A significant decrease is also seen in the number of college students: 19.2%.⁷⁷

The estimations regarding the preschool and school population in 2015 and 2025, in comparison with 2005, indicate a strong decrease by 33.27% till 2025, especially for the population 15–24 years of age (38.71%). This is accompanied by consistently low percentages of students in the population aged 20–24 (51.3% in 2012, decreasing from 55.3% in 2008, according to Eurostat), and this could seriously affect the quality of human resources and regional competitiveness in the long term.⁷⁸

Another challenge for the educational system is the reorientation towards lifelong learning, taking into account the increase in the adult population. Without any data at regional level, we could affirm that we have a serious deficiency in this case. The percentage of adults aged 25–64 years who participated in training programs was 1.4%, as compared to the 9% European average, according to the EU Labour Force Survey from 2012.⁷⁹

One of the biggest educational problems in Romania, and also in the North-West region, is the school drop-out rate: it was 14.9% in 2012, as compared to the 12.8% European average, the target being to bring it under 10% in keeping with the Europe 2020 strategy.

Regarding the number of employees, in this region, 22.6% of the stable population of the region was working, with the following distribution: the agricultural sector with 1.5% of workplaces, industry with 33.4%, construction with 6.99%, and services with 58.09%. The distribution of the employees is the following: manufacturing industry (29.41% of total), commerce (17.58%), education (9.70%), health and social work (7.90%), and construction (7.05%).⁸⁰ Regarding the level of salaries, in the Cluj area we find the biggest salaries in the region, according to the official data from 2011, 21.5 % higher than the regional average.⁸¹

In the North-West region, in 2011, the employees in the energy field had the biggest salaries, followed by the financial-banking sector and IT. At the opposite pole are the employees from the hotels and restaurants sector, the administrative sector, and culture. Interestingly, in this region, the employees from the public administration are in the top category of big salaries, and at the bottom we find the construction and commerce sectors, the level of professional training having a direct effect upon this distribution.⁸²

One of the challenges of this region is the demographic decrease and population aging, amplified by the phenomenon of external migration, especially

among the highly-skilled workforce (brain-drain): specialists from fields like medicine, education, computer science, engineering, research and development. One particular example is that of Cluj-Napoca, the only city in Romania where there is no decrease in population, which counterbalances the migration from the region. This city has a long tradition in the field of high quality education, especially higher education, being also the most specialized medical center in Romania, after Bucharest.⁸³

Regarding the infrastructure, we take into account the following types: road, rail and air transport (with the possibility of connecting with the TEN-T network from a territorial perspective), public urban transport, street infrastructure, utilities infrastructure, communications infrastructure, social infrastructure, infrastructure for emergency situations, health infrastructure, education infrastructure, RDI infrastructure, cultural infrastructure. Accessibility and reduced mobility represent important weak points of the region, with a potential of increasing the discrepancies at interregional and intraregional level. From the point of view of business or research, the region has a varied but territorially unbalanced offer, the innovation infrastructure is insufficient, and the one that would stimulate entrepreneurial development is inexistent.⁸⁴

An important element to be mentioned is the number of employees from the RD field, which increased systematically in the North-West region, 9% of these employees being from this region, of which 89% are from Cluj County, respectively Cluj-Napoca city. The RD fields and projects implemented in the region are: raw materials, machines and equipments, energy and fuels, nano and biotechnologies, health, environment, agriculture/food industry, ITC and creative industries/art and design. The GDP ratio for RD activities in the North-West region is low, with an average of 0.34%/year, under the national average of 0.49% and the European average of 1.89% (for 2005–2010). However, since 2011 the situation has been improving, with RD activities increasing as a percentage of the GDP. Also, the companies have increased by 18% the level of spending for RD activities carried out by universities, 2.4 times more than in 2010, and this is a positive result of the absorption of the funds for this sector, with an impact on urban and regional competitiveness.⁸⁵

Regarding the economy of the region, the GDP increased (for 2005–2011) with 78% (16.3% increase till 2008 and then by 2.6% since 2009). For 2011, the region contributed with 11.32% to the national GDP (third place at national level), regional GDP/capita was 5.200 euro in 2010, 21% of the European average. For gross value added we have 11.32%, 9.5% below the national average. For labour productivity (gross value added/occupied population) the figure is 9% under the national productivity. Inside the region, Cluj County is the biggest contributor, with 34.93%.⁸⁶ The economy of the region is based on the

tertiary sector, namely: commercial, public, financial, real estate and construction services, and industries.⁸⁷ As compared to the European average, the region has low scores in all economic activities: 6 times less productivity in agricultural activities, 3 times less in industry, 2 times less in construction and 4 times less in services.⁸⁸

Regarding entrepreneurial development, Cluj County was ranked second in Romania, in 2011, with 36% local active units in the North-West region,⁸⁹ in fields such as: research and development; software production and IT services; pulp and paper industry; pharmaceutical industry; rubber and plastics industry; electrical equipment industry; medical devices, equipment and instruments; production and delivery of electrical energy; construction; hotels and restaurants; finances and insurance and real estate transactions.⁹⁰

In 2011, as to the business turnover, in the North-West region the SME sector contributed with 74.12% to the total turnover of the region, with a level of contribution over the national average. The sector in question employs 77.44% of the workforce and accounts for 62.92% of the net investments in the region.⁹¹

Investments are crucial for economic development, with a direct impact on labour productivity for the physical ones (buildings, works, machines, machinery). From the point of view of the most relevant indices, in 2009 the region had a level of investment above the European one (19.1%), but below the national one in 2011 (24.4%). After the financial disruptions of 2008–2010 (a 60% decrease), 2011 marked a turnaround (a 26% increase).⁹²

In the North-West region, the biggest investments are in industry (between 35 and 41% of the total investments), and in Cluj County we find 44% of all investments in the region.⁹³ From the point of view of foreign direct investments, in 2011 the value was of 2,454 million euro, only 4.5% of the total value for Romania.⁹⁴ The countries of origin for these investments are: Italy, Germany, Austria, France, the UK, Spain, and Hungary. Cluj-Napoca is among the most attractive cities for outsourcing IT services, and an important role is played by the workforce, because it is a university center. Also, the outsourcing for financial services was done for companies such as: Emerson, Office Depot, Sykes Enterprises Eastern Europe, Genpact, and Steelcase.⁹⁵

Another important element for regional development is the evolution of foreign trade, seen in the volume of exports and imports, as well as their structure on the outlets and product markets. For 2007–2011, we see an increase in the volume of exports at regional and national level, with a contraction during the economic crisis. The average degree of covering of the imports through exports was about 80%.⁹⁶

We can say that in the case of an emerging economy, the North-West region—with an increasing share of services and a decreasing share of the agri-

cultural sector, the latter employing one third of the population, and with two thirds of all services activities represented by commerce, to which we can add an intensive industry in terms of human capital and resources, with a lower labour productivity than the national average and far below the European average—shows that a model focused on added value is not anchored in the region's reality. The regional model of economic development, influenced by polycentric development, is focused on economic growth through polycentric territorial development, by using a functional specialization given by the sectors with high economic performance, which take into consideration the dynamic of soft indices (ITC, creative industries, scientific and technical activities).⁹⁷

Conclusions

AS THE EU Urban Agenda stated and the Committee of the Regions affirmed, urban areas across the world and in EU are confronted with enormous *transversal challenges* (climate change, demographic change and immigration),⁹⁸ which lead to urban social change, structural change, and environmental pressures. There is no single path to be followed, or a single typology or generalisation that could provide a scenario for European cities in terms of competitiveness. It will depend on contextual aspects such as Member State size, administrative structures, political systems, geographical location and size of the urban area.⁹⁹ New challenges require integrated approaches.

At European level there are some policy areas with an explicit urban dimension, but the cohesion policy explicitly addresses it, by providing several levers which are important in strengthening an integrated perspective and deserve particular attention in urban policies.¹⁰⁰

The recommendations from the Committee of the Regions are: Smart Specialisation Strategies (S3), Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI) and Community Led Local Development (CLLD). Also, it is important to support and disseminate guidance on the European instruments and encourage the exchange of experiences.¹⁰¹

As the example above demonstrates, regarding urban competitiveness in the North-West region of Romania, we can say that the evolution of the city is not based on strategical thinking, even though we are in the EU, and the financial context forces us to pursue it, as well as the convergence and regional development programs. For the moment, it is a local evolution, based on electoral/political short-term interests.



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Abstract

Urban and Regional Competitiveness in the North-West Region of Romania

We are living now a period of transformation at EU level, in which Member States will have to constantly negotiate their position and future. Until now, in the European discourse we could hear, and we became accustomed to this approach, of competition between cities, regions and Member States. But now, the paradigm is different: all these entities will have to collaborate on specific projects, at national, regional and local level. The present article analyzes the newest approaches to urban and regional competitiveness in the light of the latest EU released documents and reports, and, after presenting some EU examples of urban competitiveness, it focuses on a particular case, the Transylvanian city of Cluj-Napoca, aiming to identify the potential for developing its urban competitiveness.

Keywords

urban competitiveness, regional competitiveness, urban renewal, urban transformation, EU Urban Agenda, cohesion policy