

# **The changing politics of Local and Regional Development and Governance in Romania\***

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### **Abstract**

This paper investigates the changing politics of local and regional development and governance in Romania. The main aim is to explain the extent and the way that transition to free market economy and accession to the EU have impacted on concepts and models of regional development and regional governance in Romania. The paper argues that despite the systemic changes in Romania, local and regional development and governance present 'layering' effects. It is supported that the transition to a completely different socio-economic and political framework in Romania has produced marginal changes, usually on the surface of these policies, without challenging the essence and their dominant characteristics. Moreover, by investigating signs of the regionalism and regionalisation processes in Romania, this paper questions the uniform applicability of 'new regionalism' and argues in favour of a broader and more sophisticated research on the regionalism and regionalisation experiences across the world.

### **Aims and Objectives of the Study**

The central aim of the research is to explain the extent that a change from a planned to market economy has influenced the nature and character of the way that local and regional problems of development and government have been confronted in Romania. This paper examines the extent and the way that transition to free market economy and accession to the EU have impacted on concepts and models of regional development and regional government in Romania. The research utilises a conceptual framework (that is described in the next section) that draws on a number of local and regional approaches and analytical techniques that are presented later in the paper.

The social processes of 'regionalism' and 'regionalisation' and the evolution of local and regional development theories, which are mainly depicted by approaches in evolutionary, radical, institutional and cultural 'turns' in economic geography, constitute the conceptual framework of this research. By investigating signs of regionalism and regionalisation processes in Romania, this paper attempts to analyse the political and cultural assertiveness of localities towards the centralised state and to question the applicability of 'new regionalism' as it has been developed in Western Europe in the late 90s, the same time that 'revolution' was taking place in Romania.

Regionalism emerged in Europe for first time around 1960 as a reaction to the increased centralisation and nationalisation in states after the end of WWII. At this time, regionalism was based on ethnic, language and religious cleavages (Keating 1998). The effect of this tendency had a double dimension: Firstly, several regions across Europe obtained autonomy (more or less extensive) in some aspects of political and cultural life, and secondly, central government applied regional policies to confront the problem of regional inequalities where the regionalisation of state structures was the means to achieve them. Almost three decades later another wave of regionalism, the so-called 'new regionalism' emerged in Europe founded on economic and political grounds (Tomaney 2009). Claiming that economic restructuring and democratic representation are best handled by regional institutions, new regionalism was a response and a contribution to inadequacies and failures of the existing political forms.

At the same time as these processes have dominated debates of regional policies and provided a very fruitful analytical framework for social changes across the world, Romania was struggling for economic stabilisation, democratic installation and European accession. As well as the different starting point and future aspirations, Romania has a completely contrasting political, structural, cultural and institutional heritage from the western stereotype as both a post-communist country and a Balkan state. In spite of these difference however, it is evident that domestic economic and non-economic particularities have been ignored in the formation and implementation of local and regional development policies. Various international organisations, with the EU

representing the most powerful player on the field of local development and government, have exercised their influences and pressures on Romania in transplanting their 'successful' and 'experienced' patterns and concepts based on the contemporary principles of economic global competition.

After nearly two decades from the fall of communism and a few only years from the completion of the accession adventure, this paper aims to investigate the context, the processes and the actors of these policies and to question the purely economic approach of the western type new regionalism in Romania. In this way and within a rather heterodox theoretical framework, it aims to re-consider the nature of local and regional development and government in Romania and present several suggestions for the future.

### **Theoretical perspectives on Romanian Local and Regional Development and Government**

The resurgence of regional studies in the past four decades has not only prevented the 'death of the region' but also generated new ideas and meanings around local and regional development and government. This well established and increased interest in 'region' and 'local' has been accompanied by the dissemination of both, academic and political discourses, of several catchphrases such as 'regionalism', 'regional development', 'border', 'regional identity' and 'government-ance'. This new phraseology around the region was significantly triggered by the ongoing enormous transformations in global, European, national and sub-national political (government) and economic (market) regulations and it has sparked new and intense debates about the effects of these changes on regions (Pike 2007).

Despite the great importance of the region and the repeated use of the related phraseology in many academic fields, the meanings of these terms are far from homogeneous and generally accepted (Pike et al 2007). The basic reason behind this ambivalence is that region and locale and several other major categories that are crucial for understanding

their roles in socio-political and economic terms, are often taken for granted in most of regional development literature. This in turn, is directly related to the universalisation of certain scripts (Paasi 2009) that has led to the phenomenon of ‘the tragedy of the commons’ (Yeung and Lin 2003). Although it is generally accepted in local and regional studies that dominant theories and articulations have always emerged from particular historical (Scott 2000) and national and international contexts (Pike et al 2007), the mainstream local and regional theories seems to suffer from a narrow sectorial and geographical character that at least challenge their uniform application across space and overtime. In their work, Yeung and Lin stigmatise the fact that the majority of local and regional development theorising derives from a significantly marginalised research into spheres of industrial only activity, conducted mainly by researchers originating from the Anglo-American countries and focused almost exclusively on advanced industrialised local and regional economies (2003, p.112).

As a result of this idiosyncratic discrimination in theorising, many key terms and notions of local and regional development as ‘region’ and ‘regionalism’ are often used without a contextual reflection (Lajendijk and Cornford 2000). It is therefore necessary, as Ansii Paasi suggests to ‘scrutinise the way(s) that region is understood, theorised and practically ascertained’ (2009, p.122) in each particular research. This conceptualisation however, constitutes a rather complicated issue as it brings together both material and ‘virtual’ elements (Paasi 2009, p.131) and results in too many kinds of regions (Tomaney 2009), defined in different ways and for different purposes (Armstrong and Taylor 2000). It would only be after this critical and close examination of the notion of regions however, that the broader study of local and regional development and government in Romania could proceed.

There are a number of theories that are relevant to the conceptualisation of region which all offer a valuable framework on which to base the study of local and regional policies in Romania. However, no single theory adequately explains the shifting of local and regional politics in Romania due to the mismatch between their major principles as they have developed in the Anglo-American context (Yeung and Lin 2003) and the particular

socio-political and economic dynamics developed in Romania, a post-communist and Balkan state (Chiaburu 1999; Schrieder et al 2000; Constantin 2002; Stenning 2008). Thus, specific adjustments of the existing theories and explanations must be presented in order to formulate a most appropriate theorising of the 'region' and the 'locale' within a Romanian context. This in turn, will allow studying the local and regional level of Romania as 'space for (*changing*) politics' (Carter and Pasquier 2010, *parenthesis added*) and, following the incitement for 'reverse discourses' (Slater 1999) to contribute in the so-called 'new economic geographies' (Yeung and Lin 2003, p.111).

## **Methodological Approach**

The methodology adopted through out this research moves beyond the simple and conventional economic growth model and embraces a political economy perspective of local and regional economic development and government. Studying the changing nature of local and regional policies during systemic transformations in Romania constitutes a multi-factor project of geographical political economy. This study has taken a realistic approach to the issues surrounding Romania's local development and government. In doing so, it focuses on pragmatic changes in distinctive time periods without becoming too embroiled in spatial economic theory and simplistic comparisons of economic indices.

The examination of local and regional development in a political economy framework in this thesis forms a rejection of the conventional orthodox hegemony through the use of alternative approaches. The methodology applied for examining the research aim and objects stated in the previous section uses mixed analytical techniques and theoretical approaches relevant to the subject concerned. Thus, rather than being a study of spatial theory and methods of regional analysis, this study utilises such disciplines and together with the creative synthesis – of the new and the old (Loving 2001) and of the broader and the specific (Lajendijk 2007) - formulates the contextual framework where the local and regional development and government of Romania will be considered.

This paper has decided to adopt a different methodology based on the so-called ‘heterodox’ approaches to economic development and governance (see, for examples Storper 1997; Amin 1999; MacLeod 2000; Pike 2004; Lajendijk 2007; Moulaert et al 2007; Moulaert and Mehmood 2009). While still valid and scientific in its approach, it reflects the necessity for a combined theoretical synthesis that would allowed the usage of various empirical techniques. In addition to considerations of spatial economics and theories, the methodology is a very clear acknowledgement of the important influence that non-economic factors exercise into formulation of local development policies. Alongside the application of new-regionalism debates (Keating 1997; Rodriguez-Pose 1998, 2002; Tomaney 2002, 2009) and its critics (Hadjimichalis 2006; Hadjimichalis and Hudson 2007), various insights have been used from a range of institutional (Amin and Thrift 1995; Amin 2001; Jessop 2001; Wood and Valler 2001), historical /path dependency (Storper et al 1998; Sunley 2000; Pike et al 2006), and democratic/participatory (Swyngedouw 2000, 2005; Moulaert and Cabaret 2006) turns.

Furthermore, the methodology has been inspired by the creative theoretical synthesis of the ‘critical-realist’ approach (Moulaert and Mehmood 2009), the ‘social innovation’ model that combines regulation theory, cultural political economy and discourse analysis (Moulaert et al 2007), the ‘strategic relation approach’ (Lajendijk 2007) and the ‘holistic, progressive and sustainable local and regional development’ model proposed by Pike et al (2007). Although not identified exhaustively with any of these approaches, their usefulness and value lies in the fact that they all offer a critical and open perspective on the factors and dynamics of social reality within a specific spatial environment, allowing for diverse and complementary explanations (Sayer 1992).

What has been the driving force for the methodology of this study is the ‘unorthodox’ approach with its novel and highly challenging agenda for economic development (Pike 2004). This ‘heterodox’ approach recognises the complex, fast changing and uncertain of economic development (that actually represents the case for the recent Romanian economic history) and suggest a threefold analytical framework based upon the main

dimensions and characteristics of the heterodox agenda: the experimentation, with new, innovative strategies and practices, the context specificity of local and regional economies, and the governance connection that not only moves beyond state and market but also shows sensitivity to local path dependencies (Pike 2004). These features formulate such a mode of inquiry that it is better able to understand the real dimensions of the changing politics of local and regional development and government in Romania by surpassing positivist and ahistorical analysis.

The analytical investigations have been materialised through a variety of qualitative techniques. Comparative dynamic analysis, which refers to comparison throughout different time periods, is used as the basis of much of the empirical analysis and information is elaborated throughout the thesis to build upon abstract and theoretical arguments. The emphasis is on using theory to interpret and explain pragmatic events rather than treating them separately.

The paper draws on a case study approach because it enables a more systematic investigation of the wide range of factors that influence the local development policies in Romania. It focuses on the experiences of Neamt County, in the North East Development Region (NEDL) in Romania, as the changes from the communist era throughout the transition and the accession periods have contributed to different articulations of the context, the processes and the participants of local and regional policies. This method relies on the consideration of a large number of variables of both, economic and non-economic character, where a singular statistical methodology is often impractical. Also, the basic characteristics of case studies are the real-life setting and the multi-perspective in-depth study of a topic in a particular selected time and space dimension (Kitchin and Tate 2000), which is in agreement with the theoretical framework and the approach adopted for the research.

The reasons for employing a stand-alone case study are not related with the recent trend towards this direction (Young 2001) but most importantly with the emphasis put on the local peculiarities and the formation of different patterns of response to local and regional



development problems. Furthermore, the case study is not intended to find an average example or value. On the contrary, it aims to identify the key sets of relations that contribute in the final form of development and government articulations within a locality. In that sense, the major limitation of case study approach that refers to generalising and patterning weaknesses has been overcome by this study as the aim is not to be representative of entire levels of development and government, but indicative of the specific influences upon and challenges faced by the Neamt Judet at particular socio-political environments and time periods.

After the philosophical underlying layer, the theoretical framework and the methodological approach, the last but equally important link on the methodology chain concerns the research techniques. Apart from the interviews, literature review, documentary analysis, participatory ethnography and visual interpretation constitutes the research means for the production and management of information related to the research topic. There is not an exclusive connection between aims and questions/hypothesis with one or more specific techniques as all the research tools have contributed in the final output. The implementation of a multi-method technique or triangulation is very useful as it allows to exploit the advantages of every method and to cover/overcome the limitations of each one of them. Thus, the final research output will have an increased scientific validity and credibility.

### **The Changing Politics of Local and Regional Development and Governance in Romania**

As has already stated earlier, the central aim of this paper has been the analysis of the extent that a shift from a planned to market economy has change the nature and character of local and regional development and government in Romania. The main conclusion derived from the dynamic analysis of the context, the process and the actors involved is that despite the systemic changes in Romania, local and regional development present 'layering' effects. This argument however, does not imply that changes have not

happened at all. On the contrary, many elements and features of local development policies have changed throughout the years, from the pre-1945, to communist, transitional and pre-accession period. Besides, one of the central messages of the theoretical framework adopted for this study was that these particular policies are determined from place to place and over time according to specific political decisions. However, in the case of Romania, as the case study on Neamt County reveals, the different socio-economic and political frameworks have induced marginal changes, usually on the surface of these policies, without challenging the essence and their dominant characteristics. In short, it is more a 'change in the continuity' that emphasises more on the continuity instead of the change on the politics of local and regional development and government. In this sense, this thesis argues that the combination of the important domestic changes and external shocks in Romania were not adequate enough to put a 'delocking path mechanism' (Martin 2010) for local and regional development and governance in operation.

The dilemma between growth and equity constitute the core decision on the character of local and regional development policies throughout different time periods and places. During the communist period and despite the ideological proclamations in favour of equality, the main goal of local and regional development policies adopted was the acceleration of growth. Following a 'donor-recipient' model, it was anticipated that the surplus of capital would be adequate to cover both the demands for economic expansion and for re-distribution of income to the localities lagging behind. Although sporadic examples of re-distribution of income, mainly through the establishment of new factories in specific localities existed in literature, equality has never characterised the nature of the local and regional development in Romania.

In the post-communist period, the free market and liberal democratic system has changed several elements of these policies. During the first stage of transition (1989-1996), local and regional development policies hardly existed within the political priorities of this period. Strong impact of the fluidity of its political situation, local development policies acquire an 'ad-hoc' character aimed at the achievement of neither growth nor equality,

but the establishment and strengthening of central government's power. Thus, instead of well- developed or under-developed localities, the initiatives for local development targeted limited number of areas that were considered dangerous for the central post-socialist governments. When more stable policies for local development were formulated in the latter years of the first transitional period, they did not cover all the country, were aimed exclusively at growth and retained their 'ad-hoc' intervention character.

During the second stage of transition, the pre-accession period (1997-2007), local and regional development policies have been exposed to the influences of the EU's *acquis communautaire*. The strength of the EU requirements, combined with disequilibrium of power between the EU and the candidate member state of Romania has certainly made important changes in the way that local development policies were designed and delivered. The formulation of successive regional strategies from 2000 to 2006 had more the meaning of practical exercise for the post-accession time than of a genuine intervention in favour of local and regional development. Moreover, strongly affected by the new-liberal agenda and the global competition, these strategies were clearly persuaded growth. Besides, competitive advantage and local/regional growth are completely compatible with the central aims of the EU's Lisbon Strategy and the directions of regional development policy.

As far as the process of local development and government policies is concerned, there are certainly several changes over time. What appears as a common denominator of the design and delivery process throughout the different periods however, is the substantial gap between theory and practice. During communism for example, the ideologically supported equal and wide-ranging participation of people in the decision-making process had never been confirmed in practise. Party patronage, ideological propaganda and personal networks have dominated the formulation and implementation of local and regional development policies in spite of the professional planning of central authorities and the integrated networking (horizontal and vertical) of local and central level. Furthermore, the domination of family/relative ties and Party members in local authorities combined with the secret police's repression have undermined any idea of

effective representation of local interests by the local and regional government institutions.

The political democratisation in the aftermath of revolution in Romania has significantly impacted on, at least in theory, the process of local development and government. The free elections and the freedom to be a candidate have been overshadowed however from the continuing domination of ex-communist people in power. From the national to local level, former high ranking people of the communist period have managed to retain and/or occupy most of the decision- making positions. The absence of coherent local development policy, combined with the same process followed in local government, has a minimal impact on the process of the already limited local and regional development policy. The design, approval and delivery of development initiatives remained the exclusive prerogative of a few people in charge, raising important issues of transparency, accountability and jurisdiction.

The situation seemed to be improved during the pre-accession period. The adaptation by law of the EU requirements concerning the formulation, managing and implementation of local development and government policies has considerably changed several elements of the process of these policies. However, as the analysis regarding the implementation of the partnership principle can demonstrate, most of these changes remained on the surface without challenging the core essence of these processes. Any consultation at the lower level has an advisory only character that does not dictate the final outcome of the local and regional policy as the difference between the North East Regional Strategy and the uniform ROP 2007-2017 has proved.

Regarding the actors of these policies, either individuals or organisations, the combination of transition, Europeanisation and legacies have considerably changed the formal only structures and institutions of the participants involved in local government and development policies. The communist model of 'specialist' and 'experts' in issues relating to local development policies continued to exist, under several typical adjustments, during the transition and pre-accession periods. Driven by the socialist

ideology in practice and the needs of central planning in Romania, a specific set of actors had emerged in the post-1945 period throughout all the government levels and economic sectors. The central aim of this group of people was the elaboration of local development policies as well as the promotion of local democracy, according to the standards and the goals of the communist period in Romania. This rather diverse set of expertise, in terms of qualifications and skills, has transformed the professionals of local development and government in Romania, into something akin to the wise-people of planning. The communist technocratic background, the Party membership and loyalty and a peasant or worker family background were the most important common characteristics of these actors, alongside the lack of accountability and transparency for their actions.

Given the extremely limited degree of changes during the first stage of transition, the actors involved in local policies remained similarly stable. As long as the ex-communist nomenclature succeeded in remaining in power, without any significant changes in the process and the context of local development initiatives and local government practices, the set of individuals and organisations involved in the design and delivery of these policies remained stable too. Furthermore, the inherited label of expertise and professionalism has often become synonymous with a lack of accountability and transparency.

The situation has significantly changed during the second decade of transition, once again, because of the Romanian dedication to the EU accession project. The compliance to the acquis requirements has, at least theoretically, widened the spectrum of actors that could potentially be involved in different phases of the local development and government policies. The pressures of the EU towards an institutional and administrative homogeneity in local and regional policy produce considerable changes in institutional structures as well as their operation in Romania.

Certainly, the creation of the eight Development Regions constitutes the major uniqueness in terms of both development policies and government norms, despite the fact that regions existed in Romania during the first decades of the communist period. Most

important with the foundation of new institutions however, is their functional operation and contribution to local development and government paradigms. From one point of view, the loose connections of the Development Region with local societies and the failure effectively to represent the aspirations and needs of the localities challenge their role as actors of local policies. Moreover, its inability to influence the centrally planned and approved regional strategies, as the experience of the successive regional strategies 2000-2006 and the ROP 2007-2013 has demonstrated, question further their operation. Finally, the characteristics of the personnel appointed in these institutions, as well as the final role they acquired in the post-accession time as a simple intermediate body for the ROP, challenge the description as new and important actors. From another point of view however, the cumulative experience that the Development Region, especially the Regional Development Agency, has acquired concerning the procedures and standards of the EU regional policy rank this institution not only as a new but also a powerful actor in local development and government. These signs that argue for the status of DRs as new actors, are accompanied by questions of legitimacy, accountability and transparency.

As far as the existing actors of local development and government are concerned, they have managed to improve their status slightly, in terms of local government and development. Through successive legislative amendments and in line with better democratic functions, local authorities have strengthened their role in local politics. Although haven't reached the Western European standards, the increase of the Municipality's financial autonomy and the direct election of the president of the County Council has, partially at least, enforced the autonomous role of these actors in local development and government politics.

Regarding the rest of the actors getting involved, phenomenon of exclusion and being side-lined perpetuate the discrimination against certain social groups and undermine the effectiveness of local development initiatives. However, many of the excluded group present evidence of institutional maturity and through strategies of limited or broader alliances, as the local elections of 2008 in Neamt has shown, attempt to gain a formal role of participation in the sphere of local and regional development policies.

Overall, in spite of the partial changes regarding the context, the process and the actors, the major characteristic of local and regional policies in Romania remain over time and through different socio-political and economic conditions basically the same: a centrally planned strategy that allowed a very limited role to local and regional authorities, part of a broader national growth strategy that correspond to current economic, political, diplomatic and social interests of the State instead of the needs and aspirations of local and regional societies. Certainly, there are differences from period to period. These differences however, refer to the margins of local development and government in Romania and usually refer to typical amendments of each period and socio-economic system without challenging the dominant characteristics of these policies.

### **Theoretical and Conceptual Reflections**

Regarding the broader theoretical conceptual and theoretical queries as developed in the beginning of this paper, the analysis of the changing politics of local and regional development in Romania question the uniform applicability of New Regionalism. Echoing the observations regarding the mono-geographical and mono-sectorial dimension of the regionalism literature, this paper argues in favour of a broader and more sophisticated research on the regionalism and regionalisation experiences across the world.

Starting with the problematic around the region, this paper suggests that the Romanian experience refers exclusively to the traditional understanding of fixed scales and territorial regions. The emphasis of, the creators and the critics of regional institutions, on the boundaries and the delineation conditions and results demonstrates the understanding of regions in Romania as closed and bounded territorial entities. Furthermore, the false interpretation of the concentration and integration principles in the design of local and regional development strategies, which have resulted in a common set of actions for all the regions and the complete absence of intra-regional co-operations, revealed an

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understanding of regions as container spaces and not as connected and unbounded territories.

Being profoundly influenced by the national and local legacies on one hand and the external supranational pressures on the other, there is an on going process of region building in Romania. Although the stages of territorial shape and institutional shaping seemed to have progressed to a relatively advanced level, the symbolic shaping that refers to creation of regional identity and the establishment stage that depicts the acceptance of the region in the broader system have not reached a satisfactory degree of accomplishment in Romania. This retardation of recognition and acceptance of the regional institutions from both below (the local inhabitants and authorities) and above (the central and supranational institutions) is mainly, as the case of the NEDR has shown, a consequence of the peculiar dependency path of Romanian local and regional politics in the post-socialist era. Moreover, this uncompleted region- building process, which can not be clearly characterised either as an early stage or a flowed to failure, has a negative impact on the effectiveness of local development initiatives and perpetuates the question of ‘what kind of regional policy and for whom’?

Concerning the relation between the establishment of the region in Romania and the broader phenomenon of regionalism, the paper highlights first of all the difference, between regionalism and regionalisation, something not recognised and a common mistake in literature. From the views of local and central authorities in Romania, at least for the case study examined, it becomes clear that the Development Regions were the outcome of a totally top-down or the so-called regionalisation process. This of course does not imply that several localities within the North East Region or even anywhere else in the country were not in support of the idea of an intermediate level between the central and the local, but it underlines the absence of a strong demand from the bottom towards the creation of regions in Romania.

The central conceptual message that emerges from this paper is the inadequacy of both, the Old and the New Regionalism and Regionalisation, as it has developed through the



Anglo-American academic tradition, to explain the emergence and functional operation of regions in Romania as well as the design and delivery of local development and government policies. First of all, the broader economic framework is completely different. The post-socialist Romania might have encountered a serious de-industrialisation problem but this was not related to the failures of the Fordist and post-Fordist economic models that took place in Western Europe during the 1990s. It was directly linked with the collapse of the whole economic system in the country as well as the destruction of the existing production structures and trade markets. Additionally to the nature of de-industrialisation problems, the prior industrial development's characteristics were also completely different regarding to the reasons, the aims and the stages of the industrial development. All these differences have created a completely different set of explanation and cause that supports the inapplicability of New Regionalism as the new orthodoxy of local and regional development in the post-socialist Romania.

Similarly, the diverse social and political peculiarities of the post-socialist Romania compared to the conditions and demands of the Western societies, reveals additional weaknesses of the existing regionalism and regionalisation movements to explain the emerge of Region. The existence of linguistic, ethnic and historical claims for instance, constituted the basis for the creation of regions in Western Europe during the 1960s but the same issues represented the major reason for the rejection of regional autonomy in post-socialist Romania. Furthermore, the involvement of state and non-state actors from all the levels in economic restructuring was one of the most important novelties of regional administrations during the 1990s in Western Europe, whilst in Romania the cultural and historical legacies did not allow a substantial engagement of actors with a similar orientation.

Notwithstanding the significant socio-political and economic conditions, reasons and outcomes, the peculiar globalisation phase in the post-1989 period and especially in the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century advocates the rejection of the existing regionalism and regionalisation orthodoxies into analysis of the Romanian experience. Despite the failed

transplantation of institutions and norms from the EU, the major characteristic of the emergence of region in Romania was the fulfilment of the EU condition. The disequilibrium of power between the EU and the candidate state of Romania, combined with the trends of institutional homogeneity across Europe has led to the adaptation of regional institutions, or the so-called NUTS II classification, in Romania, not as response to the local and regional needs and demands but as a requirement to fulfil the broader political aim of accession to the EU. It is the first time in the history of regionalism and regionalisation that alongside the local and national authorities, supranational bodies have such an active role in the determination of local and regional development and government institutions. Together with the questionable effectiveness and efficiency of Development Regions of Romania emerging in that way, the decisive engagement of the EU in the creation and operation of regions, generates further challenges related to the legitimacy and accountability of such an intervention.

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