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Revista de Științe Politice Politikron (Journal of Political Studies Politikron) este un jurnal academic editat de Departamentul de Științe Sociale și ale Naturii din cadrul Universității Hyperion, București.

În Revista de Științe Politice Politikron pot fi publicate contribuții din domeniul Științelor Politice, fiind de asemenea încurajate studiile interdisciplinare. Contribuțiile vor fi scrise în limba română și engleză. Colegiul de redacție își propune să încurajeze publicarea de studii de către tineri cercetători.

Department of Social and natural sciences

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The Journal of Political Studies Politikron is an academic journal edited by the Department of Social Sciences and Natural Sciences, Hyperion University, Bucharest.

In the Journal of Political Studies Politikron studies in Political Sciences, as well as interdisciplinary research, are published. All contributions are written in Romanian or English. The Editorial Board aims to encourage publishing for young researchers.

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**Regionalization – European Approaches,
Romanian Context**

**Regionalizarea – Abordări europene
în context românesc**

CONTENTS

Dorel BAHRIN, PhD. Hyperion University <i>Editor's Note</i>	9
Dorel BAHRIN, PhD. Hyperion University <i>Regionalization – between Political Goals and Romanian reality</i>	11
Monica OBREJA, PhD. Hyperion University <i>E.U. Cohesion Policy and Gender Mainstreaming: Strengthening the Neoliberal State? A Review Paper</i>	19
Alice IANCU, PhD. Hyperion University <i>Some Considerations on Neoliberalism and Cohesion Policy – the Lisbon Strategy and Multilevel Governance</i>	27
Ioana Antoaneta DODI, PhD Candidat – National School of Political Science and Public Administration <i>Conditionality and Cooperation in European Multilevel Governance. National and European Political Discourse on the Regionalization Process in Romania</i>	37

EDITOR'S NOTE

Dorel BAHRIN, PhD

Hyperion University

Regionalization and cohesion policies are currently some of the most important policy domains of the European Union. Throughout its history regionalization policies have been surrounded by debates regarding their relation to national sovereignty, social cohesion, combating inequalities across the European Union and decision-making processes. In the current context further attention needs to be paid to regionalization and cohesion policy, both in terms of how they relate to the state of the European Union after the financial crisis, but also in terms relating to the specificities of the Romanian context.

Since Romania itself is greatly influenced by regionalization and cohesion policies, two research directions would prove useful for better understanding current social realities. First, research is needed by Romanian scholars addressing and interpreting the aspects they find important in the wider European context. Second, research is needed by Romanian scholars addressing and interpreting the aspects they find important within the specific Romanian context.

This issue of The Journal of Political Studies *Politikron* is aimed to contribute to both previously mentioned directions of research. Two of the contributions to this volume focus on issues concerning neoliberalism and cohesion policy, at the wider scale of European Union level policy-making. In this sense Monica Obreja's review essay focuses on EU cohesion policy, gender mainstreaming and neoliberal state, analyzing particularly the ways in which gender mainstreaming principles and their implementation serve to support neoliberal policy effects. At the same time Alice Iancu's contribution aims to present some of the main arguments and analysis regarding cohesion policy and regionalization, with particular focus on the context of the Lisbon Strategy and on the specificities of multilevel governance. On the other hand Ioana Dodi's contribution links multilevel governance and EU-wide processes to the specific Romanian context, seeking to address how regionalization policies in Romania reflect conditionality and cooperation in governance.

REGIONALIZATION – BETWEEN POLITICAL GOALS AND ROMANIAN REALITY

Dorel BAHRIN, PhD
Hyperion University

***Abstract.** Romania does not have any longer its own industry to create surplus value as the basis for a revival, its own financial and banking system is less than 10%; the rest belonging to many banks in other countries; approx. 3 million people work in other countries a debt of approx. 37.9 billion euros – representing Public and publicly guaranteed external debt, the largest in modern and contemporary history of Romania, principally engaged in the International Monetary Fund etc. For an eventual relaunch, Romania still has the energy and mineral resources, which sooner or later will be concessioned, depending on how it will make. Also, European Funds – in the 2014-2020 budget year and the outstanding and new partnership with China could unleash economic revival. On regionalization at the European level there is a strategic plan. So, if Romania had wanted to have another administrative division, it should have notified the Commission by February 2013 for the new structure to operate in the EU system, in January 2015. Yet, Regionalization can still become in future a great opportunity, if (the project) will be placed in a Draft Country – Romania 2020 or even – Romania 2030.*

***Keywords:** Regionalization, Nomenclature of territorial units for statistics – NUTS, European Spatial Development Perspective – ESDP; Decentralisation; New administrative - territorial organization of Romania.*

1. Foreword

The issue of regional development was initially discussed at the European Council. On January 1957, the European Council took the first step towards local authority representation through the creation of Local and Regional Conference in Europe. In 1994, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe (CPLRE) was established as an advisory body of the Council of

Europe, replacing the Conference of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe.

Territorial spatial planning as a strategic priority at European level has been raised since the 60s. In 1968 was published the report "*Regional planning, an European problem*", prepared by the Working Group of the Council of the European Conference of Ministers responsible for Spatial Planning. Ratio was developed 15 years later, *The European Charter*

for *Regional for territorial-spatial Planning*, known as the Charter of Torremolinos (Spain), adopted in 1983, the European Ministers responsible for spatial planning, meeting in the 6th session organized under the auspices of the Council of Europe.

According to the Torremolinos Charter, its objectives being: balanced socio-economic development of the regions, improving quality of life, responsible management of natural resources, environmental protection and rational use of land.

By the Treaty of Maastricht on European Union, EU leaders decide to set up the Committee of the Regions (CoR) as a consultative assembly that will give regions and cities the opportunity to be heard in decision-making in the EU and will be a direct link between the institutions of the Brussels and citizens. Under the treaty, the European Commission and the EU Council are obliged to consult the CoR on key areas of regional interest. In March 1994, the CoR organizes its first plenary session in Brussels.

From a conceptual standpoint, the Committee of the Regions, in its Declaration on Regionalism in Europe, adopted by the General Assembly in Bâle on December 4, 1996, at Article 1.1 defines the Region – "*being the territorial public entity corresponding to the level immediately below that of the state and provided with a government that has its own political power*".

Committee of the Regions is currently composed of 353 members

(and as many alternates) from all the 28 member states.

In 1999, the Informal Council of Ministers responsible for Spatial Planning in the European Union approved "Perspective on Spatial Development of the Europe-ESDP", but remained only a consultative document, given that spatial planning policy or spatial development was not mentioned in the European treaties.

The Project of Spatial Development of Europe-ESDP was stopped, but the European Commission has remained consistent concerns in the field, in 2007, the year of signing of the Lisbon Treaty being also the year in which the European Union (EU) has taken aim that "*The Union promotes economic, social and territorial cohesion and solidarity among Member States*".

Ministers responsible for spatial planning and territorial development, in cooperation with the European Commission and with the approval of the Committee of the Regions launched the Territorial Agenda 2007.

Subsequently the European Commission in 2008, developed the *Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion - Transformation territorial diversity into strength*. (Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion) document referring including ESDP principles in 1999.

Ministers responsible for spatial planning and territorial development, in cooperation with the European Commission and with the consent of the Committee of the Regions, we revised Territorial Agenda launched in 2007 and we agreed on the new

Territorial Agenda of the European Union in 2020 (AT2020). "Territorial Agenda of the European Union 2020 – For a smart, sustainable and favorable to the inclusive, made of Diverse Regions" (ATUE 2020), adopted on May 19, 2011, reaffirms the common aim of EU territorial cohesion.

In section (8) they define territorial cohesion, we quote: "We believe that territorial cohesion is a set of principles for harmonious territorial development, balanced, effective and sustainable. This creates equal opportunities for citizens and businesses, wherever they are, allowing them to exploit the full potential of the territory. Territorial cohesion reinforces the principle of solidarity to promote convergence between the economies of the territories more developed and less developed."

EU territorial priorities defined by AT 2020 are:

- promoting polycentric and balanced territorial development;
- encouraging integrated development in cities, rural areas and specific;
- territorial integration in cross – border and transnational cooperation;
- ensuring the global competitiveness of regions based on strong local economies;
- improving regional connections for individuals, communities and businesses;
- managing and connecting ecological values, landscape and cultural regions.

The EU also goes on. Under the Lisbon Treaty macroeuroregiunilor

project was launched by two projects: Baltic Sea Euroregion – 8 states and Danube Euroregion (Romania Austria). Euro-regions can be defined as areas or regions and not only economic interference, in which two or more States jointly harness human and material resources through the initiation and development of activities and programs for agriculture, industry, transport and communications, tourism, trade, etc.

2. General Aspects of Administrative-Territorial Organization of Romania in the Postwar Period

Administrative-territorial organization is an activity that aims at the establishment on the territory of a state of several administrative units that allow the state to be able to lead and govern society.

We present only the organization process, after August 23, 1944, which reached the current administrative – territorial division in Romania:

By Law no.5/1950 were abolished 58 counties (and the 424 mesh and 6,276 rural and urban communes), being replaced by 28 regions (composed of 177 districts, 148 towns and 4,052 villages).

By R. P. Romania Constitution since 1952, the number of regions was reduced to 18: Arad, Bacău, Baia Mare, Bărlad, Bucharest, Cluj, Constanța, Craiova, Galați, Hunedoara, Iași, Oradea, Pitești, Ploiești, Stalin, Suceava, Timisoara and for first time after the union it was created an

administrative entity on ethnic criterias Hungarian Autonomous Region (renamed in 1960 the Autonomous Region Mureş-Hungarian).

By Decree no. 12/1956 were abolished Arad and Bărlad.

The Law no.2/1968 returned to the interwar tradition of sharing administrative-territorial districts of the country. (those 39 counties, Bucharest, 236 cities, including 47 cities and 2706 villages shared with members 13149 – which were added along the two counties (Călăraşi, Giurgiu) – *By Decree of the State Council no. 15 of 23 January 1981*). There are currently 41 counties and Bucharest.

The current administrative-territorial organization of Romania is regulated in the Constitution in 1991, revised, Article 3. para (3) and Law no. 215/2001 on local government, republished, art. 20 – corresponding to the administrative-territorial provided by Law no. 2/1968 on the administrative organization of the territory of RS Romania, as amended by the Decree no. 15 of January 23, 1981, still in force.

Thus the Constitution, revised, provides in Article 3. para (3) The territory is organized administratively into communes, towns and counties. Under the law, some towns are declared municipalities.

Administrative-territorial units, provided by law, are legal entities of public law with full legal capacity and its heritage. These are legal issues of holding tax reference and accounts with the territorial units of treasury and banking units. In justice,

administrative units are represented, as appropriate, by mayor or county council president.

The establishment, in 1998, the 8 "development regions" was not made with the intention of administrative decentralization (in fact, the decentralization of state powers), but to attract European funds and bureaucratic order of presentation of statistical data.

In the draft of the revision of the 2013 Constitution provided in the explanatory memorandum, creating an administrative system compatible with European, introducing a new administrative-territorial level-region, changing art. 3 and 120-123 of the current Constitution.

Constitutional Court Decision no. 334/2013 published in Official Gazette no. 407 of 5 July 2013, stating that the constitutional threshold of 30 % for the validation of a referendum to amend the Constitution, provided that the application of this should be made 1 year after the adoption amendment, virtually blocked the amendment of the Constitution and thus promote a bill for a new administrative – territorial division of Romania.

3. Decentralization Fundamental Condition For the Success of Regionalization

a) Regulations

By the Treaty of Lisbon the European Union (EU) has taken aim that the Union shall promote economic, social and territorial cohesion and solidarity among Member States.

But the Union has not set a timetable or promoted in this respect a law.

The European Commission, in a recent intervention considers that the authorities in Romania should focus their efforts on the absorption of European funds through existing administrative-territorial structure.

However, current regulations providing for concrete in the field: Regulation no. 1059/2003 EC of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a common classification of territorial units for statistics (NUTS), as amended by: Regulation no. 1888/2005 EC Regulation no. 105/2007 EC Regulation no. 176/2008 EC

Regulation provides three NUTS levels:

Level		Minimum		Maximum	
NUTS 1		3 millions		7 millions	
NUTS 2		800.000		3 millions	
NUTS 3		150.000		800.000	

In Annex no. 1 it provides for Romania:

NUTS 3 – those 41 counties + Bucharest

NUTS 2 – current eight regions develop provided under Law. 315/2004 on regional development in Romania (North-West, North-East, Centre, South Muntenia, South-East, South-West Oltenia, Western and Bucharest-Ilfov).

NUTS 3 – macro: no. 1 (North-West and Centre), no. 2 (North-East and South-East), no. 3 (South

Muntenia and Bucharest-Ilfov), no. 4 (South-West Oltenia and Western).

It also provides that if in a Member State there are no administrative units of a size consistent with the nomenclature, they are aggregating an appropriate number of existing administrative units, and will be called non-administrative units.

It is not only comparable statistics. "Regulation" 1059/2003 is explicit: "NUTS classification subdivides the economic territory of the Member States ... in territorial units." It is therefore ultimately the economy of those countries.

Such data reported are processed through Eurostat – system managed by the European Statistical System Committee (the body that is responsible for statistical subordinated European Commission).

It is true that, of all European funds, 35% are allocated to regional development. But equally true is that the new EU financial year 2014-2020 was negotiated and European money will continue to run through specific mechanisms-implementing bodies as: Unit Management, Monitoring Committee, Regional IBs etc.

b) The Process of Decentralization

The new decentralization framework law no. 195/2006 defines decentralization as – transferring administrative and financial power from the central government to the local government or the private sector.

Without a genuine decentralization, regionalization process remains a purely technical operation and image, devouring new budgetary resource.

Decentralization process started with *the Law on local public administration no. 69/1991*, repealed by *Law no. 215/2001 on local government*, republished continued with the *Law 393/2004 on the Statute of local elected officials*, the *Framework Law no. 195/2006* on decentralization, repealing *Framework Law on Decentralisation 339/2004* and the recent *Law* (promoted by accountability) *on the measures of decentralization of powers exercised by ministries and specialized agencies of the central government and of public administration reform measures* (challenged in the Constitutional Court).

The new law establishes that, powers of local authorities will get:

- Public health services at the county level;
- Management of river and maritime tourist beaches of rivers, streams;
- Management of the water systems;
- Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture;
- Management of sports facilities and youth, school camps, recreation centers, houses of culture of students and sports clubs to local level;
- Development and tourism promotion;
- Organizes and conducts educational activities extracurricular / non-formal type with children's clubs;
- Protection of cultural heritage in the county.

4. Conclusions

SWOT Analysis of the Project on the Regionalization of Romania

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>1. Regions have very large budgets. They will receive both money corresponding region and the amounts counties and local government (municipalities, towns, cities. It is up to 90% of the budget.</p> <p>2. New regionalism will lead to a true decentralization and decisions and actions to focus more locally.</p> <p>3. It will also decrease bureaucracy. That will reduce the number of public's operation, especially those ministries. Since most of the decisions are taken at regional level, it is natural to give up a good portion of the</p>	<p>1. <i>Romanian decentralization model that takes into account the looming reorganization of municipalities and cities and talks about fiscal decentralization, basic conditions for successful regionalization.</i></p> <p>2. Dangers that may arise concerns the politicization of the process of regionalization, increased bureaucracy and the corruption at the local, regional and wider gaps between regions and areas of the same region.</p> <p>3. Although regionalization process will accomplish, all the European money will be managed centrally by the Ministry of</p>

<p>employees at the center, and at the county or local level.</p> <p>4. It is estimated that by forming new regions European funds as quickly absorbed targeting infrastructure projects will start more quickly, and the unemployment rate will decline, that will increase the pace of development.</p> <p>5. In view of the representatives of the EU, European regions are designed to reduce differences between rich and poor in a particular country. In this respect, entrepreneurs from the region may receive an animated series of economic facilities such as regional aid</p> <p>6. Cohesion policy and rural development policy - by their integrator character and, to some extent, sectors - are key tools to encourage balanced territorial development of the European Union.</p> <p>7. Subsidiarity principle both necessary and quite well promoted at European level, there is little applied. The allocation of funds from the central level to consider the necessity and efficiency criteria, or this is not always respected. Any local government must leave the direct needs of the community of citizens. From this point of view, regionalization can solve this problem, provided that all stakeholders in decision to sit to dialogue, to think and Action in unity.</p>	<p>European Funds, Regional Development Agencies will work a whole period as a mere public interest NGOs, without power of decision in the management of the Operational Programme (ROP) and other OPs.</p> <p>4. Hungary and Poland have benefited from lobbying in Brussels, with regional representation offices, promotion and fundraising. Hungary and Poland for the period 2007-2013 have <i>one ROP for each region NUTS 2</i>, depending on the specific needs of each area. However, regionalization for Hungary and Slovakia was not until now a successful model, although the absorption of European funds are good.</p> <p>5. Gerhard Stahl, Secretary General of the Committee of the Regions in Brussels, which brings together local and regional elected representatives in the European Union, estimated that real decentralization country may take several generations.</p> <p>6. Moreover, at local level, institutions are lacking at the computerization Chapter. So reducing the number of local public functionarilor will not be made too easy, because there is a risk that many services become inoperable due to lack of employees, and the informatization.</p> <p>7. Another problem that raises new regions is that many financial resources could be diverted preferentially local elites, given that the county is known that there clientelistic relationships, nepotism, political and local barons.</p>
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On Regionalism at the European Level There is a Strategic Planning.

So if Romania would have liked to have another administrative – territorial division, should notify the Commission until February 2013 that

the new structure to operate in the EU from 1 January 2015. Perhaps when you complete the revision of the Constitution by referendum and change the current art. Article 3, Para. 3 (by introducing forms of administrative organization-region)

and 2015 or 2016 and then promulgate new regulations on Romania's administrative-territorial organization, we work in the EU system in 2020. Regionalization itself can not bring prosperity.

Regionalization can become a great opportunity in the future, however, if contained in a Draft country – Romania 2020 or – Romania 2030, where the technocrats will be preferred politicians.

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EU COHESION POLICY AND GENDER MAINSTREAMING: STRENGTHENING THE NEOLIBERAL STATE? A REVIEW PAPER

Monica OBREJA, PhD

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Abstract. This review essay outlines a series of arguments that problematize the link between gender mainstreaming policies and measures, and the strengthening of the neoliberal state in the context of increased poverty and social disparities. It presents in short a corpus of analyses that remain marginal still to the usual evaluation of gender mainstreaming principles and their implementation, since they focus on the broader socio-economic milieus where gender mainstreaming is expected to take effect. It also supports the important claim that any gender analysis pertaining to the overall goal of social change need have an *ex ante* relation to neoliberal suppositions, and not be situated *ex post* as it usually happens in the framework of gender mainstreaming (Bacchi and Eveline, 2003). The final argument of this essay is that gender mainstreaming will continue to produce and enhance neoliberal effects at EU level as long as its premise and mode of functioning are based on the disaggregation of an individual's situation from social, political and institutional contexts.

1. EU Cohesion Policy and Gender Mainstreaming

On 15 April 2011, in Brussels, the principles of gender mainstreaming finally became of interest for the implementation process of EU cohesion policy, a future course demanded by MEPS during a mini-hearing with external experts on "Gender Mainstreaming in the EU Cohesion Policy" organized by the Committee on Regional Development¹. The background argument

invoked coincided with the re-affirmation of the general goal of EU cohesion policy: increasing the competitiveness of the European Union. Besides a number of MEPs that made clear their position in line with the above, a series of experts also conceded that there can be no effective cohesion policy with regard to both its economic and social pillars, if gender mainstreaming is not to be seriously implemented.

Ewa Ruminska-Zimny, Warsaw School of Economics, former Head of the UN Programme on Gender and Economy UNECE, said that *modern economy cannot be build through gender-neutral economic policies*. She pointed out that the review of the

¹ Cohesion Policy: gender mainstreaming will make Europe more competitive say MEPs, <http://www.womenlobby.org/news/european-international-news/article/cohesion-policy-gender?lang=fr>

legislative and financial framework for the Social Cohesion Policy after 2013 should be used for mainstreaming gender into the economic pillar of future generation of Cohesion policy – in *all initiatives for growth, innovation and competitiveness* – and not only in the social pillar². [my emphases]

Elisabeth Schroedter, respond MEP for Gender Mainstreaming in the Committee for Regional Policy, also outlined one of the long term benefits of mainstreaming gender for the future cohesion policy as being the discovering of “the unused potential of women power [to] improve the economic and social cohesion within the EU”.³ Making sure that women participate equally and fully in the economic life at all levels – national, regional and local –, became a point of agreement during the meeting.

In fact, this discussion was not new. The EP Policy Department had already prepared in 2007 a background study on "Gender Mainstreaming in the Use of Structural Funding"⁴, that emphasized “the strong positive correlation that emerges between economic growth and gender equality”⁵:

² *Ibid.*

³ Gender Mainstreaming in the Future of the Cohesion Policy. general set of instruments and guidance for a successful implementation, <http://www.gendercop.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/4.-Gender-Mainstreaming-in-Cohesion-policy-Elisabeth-Schroedter.pdf>

⁴ Gender Mainstreaming in the Use of Structural Funding http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2004_2009/documents/dv/675/675221/675221en.pdf

⁵ *id.* iii

The direction of causality goes mainly from economic growth to gender equality since a higher economic level is usually followed by increased education, democracy and greater gender equality. But there is also a positive link going from greater gender equality to economic growth: *increased women’s participation in the labour market increases **gross domestic product** as more human resources are involved in the production system.* The inclusion of women in the labour market and in policy-making also contributes to an increase in the quality of life and in future growth due to their effects on child rearing. [my emphasis]

The task of the document was to assume a critical evaluation of the gender mainstreaming dimension in the Structural Funds 2000-2006 programming period, with regard to both aspects of this correlation: **equity** and **efficiency**; or to rephrase it, according to the document: with regard to increasing the women's chances to equal participation as resources in policies and initiatives aimed at economic growth.

The benefits for the (local) economy of eradicating discrimination come from the better utilisation of resources which may enhance the competitiveness of the (local) economy. When the economic role of individuals is defined by gender rather than merit or ability, there is inefficiency with under-utilisation of the skills of one group (women). Policies to reduce gender segregation in society and the economy may also help to develop a multi-skilled workforce and

improve work organisation patterns. An increased and egalitarian participation of women in the economy may also improve the family conditions if the shared interest of women and children are supported by policies promoting balance between work and life⁶.

I chose to quote at length since this review document outlines so clearly those arguments for the importance of gender mainstreaming that have come under scrutiny repeatedly as reinforcing the neoliberal state and its policies. The now sealed union between gender mainstreaming and the EU cohesion policy has derailed the definition of gender mainstreaming proposed by the UN Economic and Social Council in 1997. That definition centered gender equality as *a goal in itself* that could be achieved by integrating both women and men's experiences and interests in the making of all legislation, policies and programmes and at all levels of policy-making.⁷ The UN definition prioritized

the importance of equal access of women and men to all social, cultural and economic areas, whereas the 2007 EP document and subsequently the 15 April 2011 meeting turned the goal of gender equality into an *instrument* for achieving *economic growth, innovation and competitiveness*, though not exclusively. The idea of equity is still preserved, alongside efficiency, though this can only perpetuate the question, and reluctance, that many of us live with: "If we value women's freedom because it is useful in solving certain social problems, we may not value freedom when it interferes with social utility or when more expedient ways of reaching the same social results can be shown" (Zerilli 2005: 9). Or: is there still an intrinsic value to women's freedom and gender equity other than increased efficiency? Paired with efficiency, equity loses its absolute character intrinsic to human dignity; its meaning is thus redefined as part of a binary that restrains the potential for its invocation only to those initiatives that simultaneously demand higher efficiency of utilizing humans as resources. Equity becomes then the facilitated participation in a system that values economic growth from the outset; that has no interest to inquire into the reverse relation between economic growth and equity, into the reasons why the doctrine of economic growth produced the very inequity that is now trying to subsume as an argument for more growth.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ "Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality." United Nations. "Report of the Economic and Social Council for 1997". A/52/3.18 September 1997, <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/docs/52/plenary/a52-3.htm>

2. The Problems With Gender Mainstreaming: A Few Arguments

Gender mainstreaming has been the focus of feminist analyses for some time already, from both an institutional and discursive perspective, concerning the manner in which gender mainstreaming policies have been implemented in institutional settings and/or have constructed meanings of gender and equality in diverse contexts, thereby instituting new forms of power (True 2010). Particularly, from the discursive perspective, gender mainstreaming has been shown to be paradigmatic of how policies construct possibility fields for what can be done, for whom and by whom, an approach known through Carol Bacchi as “What’s the problem?” approach (1999). Like any other policies, gender mainstreaming ones also *frame*, that is, construct social problems in certain ways, are contingent on the limited standpoint of policy-makers and on their understanding of social reality, and, in effect, they delineate the social field, social actors and also certain solutions to the social configuration they circumscribe, a configuration which is thus context-dependent, but which ultimately comes to appear as given, necessary and unavoidable. In reviewing the theoretical history of frame analyses, from cognitive modes of processing information, to forms of explaining social collective behaviour and organization, to unconscious or intentional shaping of political claims,

Carol Bacchi makes an argument for *reflexive framing*, that would allow “social reformers” to examine “their conceptual and theoretical commitments” (2009:21). In the absence of such reflexive framing, actors involved in social movements and policy-making might allow themselves to be led by the dominant political agenda and leave aside previous guiding principles. One example for Bacchi is precisely, for the point of this article, women’s willingness to accept the argument of “women as resources” in the name of national economic growth, an argument that is oblivious, for instance, to the practice, amount and importance of women’s unpaid labour, that ceases to make sense in this frame/work. (ibid)

Reflexive framing thus requires that we pay attention to those presuppositions inbuilt in policies, presuppositions that are often naturalized in the process of conforming to acceptable and positively-sanctioned goals, in this case, economic growth and efficiency. However, this particular point illustrated by the above example is not new. In fact, according to Jacqui True’s critical overview (2010: 190-1), gender mainstreaming was born in the 1980s as a reaction to individualized policies promoted by the Women in International Development paradigm (WID) and institutionalized in the 1970s by the United Nations action programmes for women. Often times, country reports from the International Labour Organization would not take into account paid or unpaid productive

labour when reviewing national economies or development projects. Instead, the focus of policies back then, as is also the case still nowadays, was on encouraging small women-only projects that would generate income, projects that would eventually led to increased marginalization and precarity.⁸ Critics of WID asked for an immediate integration of social justice and equity for women concerns in development frameworks, up to that point still elaborated in the language of economic efficiency and market economy, and unconcerned with underlining structural gender inequities. Shahrashoub Razavi and Carol Miller (1995) have critically presented in detail all these aspects that led to the transformation of WID into what became GAD (gender and development) framework, a framework that set out to address structural problems that women, for instance, are confronted with, like poverty, among many others.

It is not only ironic⁹ that the gender mainstreaming discourse came to be

⁸ This concern would later come to be addressed in 1995 by the Beijing Platform for Action: "Women/gender units are important for effective mainstreaming, but strategies must be further developed to prevent inadvertent marginalization as opposed to mainstreaming of the gender dimension throughout all operations." (Paragraph 309). <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/pdf/BDPfA%20E.pdf>

⁹ More so since Razavi and Miller (1995: 13) identify as one turning point from the WID framework to GAD, a workshop where participants made use of Marxist frameworks pertaining to the analysis of world economy.

associated nowadays, due to the new liaisons with EU cohesion policy but not only, with what initially it aimed to combat: the logic of economic efficiency (Razavi and Miller 1995: 18) or with policies focused not on advancing, for instance, women's interests but on making use of these for advancing other agendas. This little piece of history is perhaps invaluable in establishing the kind of presumptions that are thrown in the policy game, but also, in revealing the sinuous history of a social transformation claim that has been turned upside down and that eventually has become naturalized as having one possible meaning only. It also shows that neoliberal frameworks managed to co-opt eventually the very critique that once showed how these frameworks further women's marginalization, thereby proving the radical character that gender mainstreaming once had in its very beginnings.

Bacchi and Eveline argue that "one reason mainstreaming has become so popular and spread so quickly is that dominant models pose no real threat to neoliberal projects." (2003:101). Within the current neoliberal logic governments become less and less involved in delivering public services and only manage the funds by redirecting them towards other agencies and organizations providing services, as is the case with Structural Funds, while withdrawing any control over private sectors – a set of practices all aiming at dismantling what is left of the welfare state, maximizing corporate profits and regulating the

capital in specific ways. All these have direct consequences on women, for instance, and this realization is no foreign to increasingly more and more feminist analyses of the neoliberal state. Sylvia Walby makes the point that the cutting down on public expenditures has effects particularly on women since it is they who both work in greater numbers in public sector, and they are also poorer and more dependent on public services (2011: 118). However, Oksala refutes Walby's claim that the neoliberal configuration of social democracy when it comes to both gender and class is more prevalent in the US, while within the EU it takes on a more social democratic form, and further insists that "neoliberal policies and economic principles have been adopted systematically also by the EU and sometimes their application has been even more consistent than in the US." (2013: 36). Building on Foucault's understanding of neoliberal governmentality, Oksala shows how the idea of good governance came to be associated with providing the best possible life by means of economic growth, defined as GDP growth, an association, as she claims following Foucault, of modern origin (37). As shown above, gender mainstreaming is arguably one instrument for increasing the GDP, and an important principle and area of action for the EU cohesion policy. This, however, leaves unquestioned the gendered consequences of neoliberal policies. Another point of Bacchi and Eveline's is that to the extent that gender mainstreaming

efforts pay no attention to the way in which all these practices function to marginalize and oppress certain people, they are complicit with the neoliberal state and the chances to contest it are seriously compromised (2003: 101). This is what they call an *ex post* process of gender mainstreaming, one that builds upon an already established social and economic structure that is neoliberal in nature. Still, they do envision a series of solution to question and overcome this usual business.

3. Gender Mainstreaming As *Ex Post* The Neoliberal State

On the assumption that "[p]olicy is a <creative>, rather than a <reactive> process" (Bacchi, Eveline, 2003: 111), the authors propose the method of Deep Evaluation of the policy-making process, that would potentially reveal the kind of subjects policies "create", who often times are taken to be not creations, but entities that already exist in an already-existing configuration, configuration that policies presumably need to respond to. However, Bacchi and Eveline argue for an understanding of gender mainstreaming policies that do not "respond" to problems subjects are confronted to, but that *produce* (112) gendered subjects while simultaneously naming the supposed gendered problem. The value of this perspective resides in the possibility it creates for disentangling what and who gets produced from what is left out in the process, for considering the overall context of this

construction, and for discerning the array of interests and standpoints of both policy-makers and of the social and economic milieu where these are embedded and take effect.

So, for instance, when the EP policy document on the use of Structural Funds cited above defines discrimination in terms of the underutilization of women as resources, and gender as a subjective value attached to a person, instead of, ideally, merit or ability as the only valid evaluation criteria that would promote equity and efficiency, what it does is that it simultaneously constructs both the meaning of gender and discrimination in a strict relation to the idea of economic efficiency. This move makes it impossible to understand how gender is otherwise connected with economic efficiency other than being defined by it. Gender thus becomes economic efficiency gone bad: economic inefficiency. Gender is a quality that is ascribed to a person, a misjudgment, a stereotype that should be eliminated since it sabotages economic efficiency. This framework offers no space for inquiring into the very logic of economic efficiency that creates gender (structures, relations, symbols), while simultaneously creating the

figure of the *deserving subject* in an efficient economy: according to “merit or ability”. But if equity is only ever taken to mean access according to merit or ability – a very liberal individualized understanding of resource redistribution and civic participation –, we are left with an unquestioned assumption that merit and ability are equitable in themselves. This is what Bacchi and Eveline call an *ex post* gender mainstreaming process anchored in an already accepted view of the world. As a top-down enterprise and a feature of the EU cohesion policy, gender mainstreaming is bound to reinforce its legitimacy as a policy strand that is disconnected from most people's lives and realities. On the contrary, an *ex ante* process requires that we question this view and how it both generated and perpetuated social hierarchies and oppressive mechanisms of exclusion and marginalization that gender mainstreaming initially aimed at disrupting; that we question the logic of structures, forms and networks of social organization that we want to mainstream gender into. We are yet to see this *ex ante* perspective mainstreamed and yet to incorporate with it a solid critique of the neoliberal state.

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SOME CONSIDERATIONS ON NEOLIBERALISM AND COHESION POLICY – THE LISBON STRATEGY AND MULTILEVEL GOVERNANCE

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***Abstract.** Mainstream policy-making and policy analysis usually frames cohesion policy within the setting of the Lisbon Strategy and its objectives, as well as within the setting of the Europe 2020 Strategy, and also focuses on multilevel governance as one of the specific aspects of social cohesion policies. Neoliberalism and neoliberal undercurrents are present in discussions of cohesion policy not only in the sense that cohesion policy might or might not be a proper countermeasure to neoliberal globalized market forces, but also in the sense that neoliberalism is present within cohesion policy itself. This short article aims to present some of the main lines of argument and research linking neoliberalism, cohesion policy and multilevel governance, with particular focus on the context of the Lisbon Strategy and on some specificities of multilevel governance.*

1. The Lisbon Strategy, Cohesion Policy and Multilevel Governance

The Lisbon Strategy was presented as based both on an economic and a social pillar, with the social pillar being fundamentally determined by cohesion-oriented policies. It was set up in 2000 in order to “to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion”, through: “preparing the transition to a knowledge-based economy and society; modernising the European social model, investing in people and

combating social exclusion; sustaining the healthy economic outlook and favourable growth prospects by applying an appropriate macro-economic policy mix”¹.

The Lisbon Strategy was re-launched in 2005 in the face of perceived failure “to deliver the expected performance in terms of growth, productivity and employment. Job creation has slowed and there is still insufficient investment in research

¹ Presidency Conclusions, Lisbon European Council, 23 and 24 March 2000, http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/00100-r1.en0.htm

and development.”² In 2010 an overall evaluation report was released and again it stated “what ultimately counts is the impact on growth and jobs”³, with both the quantity and quality of jobs being a criteria for evaluation.

Cohesion policy has been transformed in light of the Lisbon Agenda, and in 2007-2013 cohesion policy funds were allocated with regard to the priorities of the Lisbon strategy: the knowledge-based economy, research, development and innovation, human capital and business development, thus focusing on three main elements: investing more in knowledge and innovation; unlocking business potential (particularly of SMEs); improving employability through flexicurity; better management of energy resources⁴. After 2007 and up until 2013 there were two clear objectives set for cohesion guidelines: “to strengthen the strategic dimension of cohesion policy with a view to

² Communication to the spring European Council of 2 February 2005 “Working together for growth and jobs. A new start for the Lisbon strategy”, http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/employment_and_social_policy/eu2020/growth_and_jobs/c11325_en.htm

³ p. 2-3

⁴ Cohesion policy to deliver the Lisbon Strategy (2007-2013), Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions of 11 December 2007 – Member States and Regions delivering the Lisbon strategy for growth and jobs through EU cohesion policy, 2007-2013, http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/regional_policy/review_and_future/g24246_en.htm

ensuring that Community priorities are better integrated into the national and regional development programmes; and to ensure greater ownership of cohesion policy on the ground, as reflected in a reinforced dialogue in the partnerships between the Commission, the Member States and the regions and the creation of a clearer division of responsibilities between the Commission, Member States and the Parliament.”⁵ Under the influence of the Barca report⁶, new directions and analysis of Cohesion Policy focus on territorial cohesion, while the Europe 2020 Strategy establishes the framework for future policy changes and analysis.

Multilevel governance and multilevel governance analysis are deeply rooted in European Union studies, developed particularly in the context of EU integration and regionalization (Bache and Flinders, 2004, p. 2; Radzyner et al., 2014, p. 23-24). In a 2009 *White Paper of Multilevel Governance*, from the very beginning, the Committee of Regions linked explicitly multilevel governance

⁵ Cohesion Policy in support of growth and jobs - Community Strategic Guidelines, 2007-2013, Council Decision 2006/702/EC of 6 October 2006 on Community strategic guidelines on cohesion [Official Journal L 291 of 21.10.06], http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/regional_policy/review_and_future/g24230_en.htm

⁶ Fabrizio Barca *An Agenda for a Reformed Cohesion Policy. A place-based approach to meeting European Union challenges and expectations*, April 2009, http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/archive/policy/future/pdf/report_barca_v0306.pdf

with the Lisbon Strategy and stated “Multi-level governance means first of all making maximum use of the Lisbon Treaty's potential for consultation and participation.”⁷, with “A new form of governance is sought in order to accept and survive the globalization process, to continue and deepen European integration and to ward off two main dangers: the attack on diversity and inequalities between and within member states”⁸. The White Paper goes on to detail the necessity for building a Europe of partnerships, for increased participation and lays out some main recommendations in order to increase the effectiveness of Community action⁹. In the context of this White Paper cohesion policy is presented thusly:

“For 20 years cohesion policy has consistently proven its added value and has become for citizens, through the development of specific projects, the perfect example of European solidarity. It has developed over time: created to accompany the launch of the single market in order to ensure the

development of the weakest regions, it has helped to mitigate the socioeconomic disparities generated by successive enlargements of the Union. It has also become an important tool for supporting the strategy for growth and jobs in all the EU territories. Recently it has been required to support the European Economic Recovery Plan”¹⁰.

while a follow-up to the White Paper from 2012 presents multilevel governance as:

“coordinated action by the EU, the Member States and regional and local authorities according to the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality and in partnership, taking the form of operational and institutionalised cooperation in the drawing-up and implementation of the European Union's policies”¹¹

Demand for governance is understood as increasing and could be viewed as developing in a context where “innumerable rule systems are sought where none existed before because steering mechanisms have not previously operated to perform the desired social processes.” (Rosenau,

⁷ Committee of the Regions, *The White Paper on multi-level governance*, http://cor.europa.eu/en/activities/governance/Documents/mlg-white-paper/0387_inside-en-last.pdf, p. 4

⁸ Committee of the Regions, *The White Paper on multi-level governance*, http://cor.europa.eu/en/activities/governance/Documents/mlg-white-paper/0387_inside-en-last.pdf, p. 9

⁹ Committee of the Regions, *The White Paper on multi-level governance*, http://cor.europa.eu/en/activities/governance/Documents/mlg-white-paper/0387_inside-en-last.pdf, p. 28-45

¹⁰ Committee of the Regions, *The White Paper on multi-level governance*, http://cor.europa.eu/en/activities/governance/Documents/mlg-white-paper/0387_inside-en-last.pdf, p. 29

¹¹ Committee of the Regions, *Opinion of the Committee of the Regions, Building a European Culture of Multilevel Governance: Follow-up to the Committee of the Regions' White Paper*, http://cor.europa.eu/en/activities/governance/Documents/vdb-opinion-mlg/cdr273-2011_fin_ac_en.pdf, p. 2

2004, p. 33). This increased demand stems from the multitude of problems needed to be addressed, from clashes between local and global forces, from the changing capacities of the states, from increasing complexity and interdependence brought on by electronic and transport technologies (Rosenau, 2004, p. 34-35). In terms of how the need and context for multi-level governance is understood, the following extensive quote I believe is useful:

“reinforced by the collapse of time and distance, the weaknesses of states, the vast movements of people, the proliferation of networks, and the ever-greater complexities of modern life, the question of how to infuse a modicum of order, a measure of effective authority and governance into the course of events looms as increasingly urgent. It is being asked within and among states as well as within and among associations and organizations at every level of community and in every walk of life as frammegrative tensions intensify and as citizens and leaders alike ponder how to better govern their affairs in the face of transformative dynamics that are often bewildering and seemingly out of control.” (Rosenau, 2004, p. 37)

With different and mostly competing and contesting levels of authority in decision-making, what marks multi-level governance is a general framework of diffusion of central authority. How and in what sense is that authority diffused are important questions. For example the multiple understandings of what multi-level governance entails could be organized in two ideal-types ways of

understanding. Type I multi-level governance is one that takes into account multiple general-purpose jurisdictions at a limited number of levels, non-intersecting memberships and a certain system-wide architecture. Type II multi-level governance takes into account specialized jurisdictions with limitless jurisdictional levels, intersecting memberships and flexible design (Marks and Hooghe, 2004, p. 16-17).

One particular challenge addressed in relation to multilevel governance is its relationship to democracy and democratic decision-making. While the Committee of Regions emphasized in its 2009 White Paper the need for increased participation, issues relating to lack of democratic accountability in the context of governance networks and multilevel governance have been raised. Papadopoulos detailed the ways in which multilevel governance is problematic relating to this, stressing the lack of visibility of governance networks and their separation from the usual democratic circuit. At the same time these networks “are largely composed of bureaucrats and other policy experts on the one hand, of interest representatives, NGOs, and purely private actors on the other” (Papadopoulos, 2010, p. 7). Such issues relating to accountability are compounded by multilevel principles and ways of policy-making, since “there is a duplication of accountability problems, due to the coexistence of a cooperative logic between vertical levels with the “horizontal” logic of public-private

cooperation” (Papadopoulos, 2010, p. 9) and since peers become the most important assessment actors (Papadopoulos, 2010, p. 10). As far as the implementation of multilevel governance within cohesion policy is concerned, the main challenges in the implementation of MLG identified were lack of experience and resources (including relating to resources needed to deal with the complexity of Cohesion Policy rules, managerial conflicts, rising complexity of bureaucracy, democratic deficit (Radzyner et al, 2014, p. 31).

The Committee of Regions remains steadfast in its support of multilevel governance and has been releasing a yearly Scoreboard, in order to “monitor on a yearly basis the development of MLG at European Union level”¹², with two such Scoreboards already published addressing various policy domains and policy agendas of the EU (Radzyner et al, 2014, p. 28). Also the Committee of Regions called for a draft of a European Union Charter for Multilevel Governance¹³.

The European Union’s cohesion policy regarding, but not limited to, regionalization, is set in a Lisbon

context and within the aftermath of the Lisbon Strategy and will continue to be a main policy domain for the articulation and consolidation of multilevel governance. While mainstream theories often address the issue of legitimacy, democracy and the democratic deficit with regards to European Union policies, the arguments presented here have a different starting point. Thus while mainstream criticism and analysis have touched upon a variety of problematic factors relating to cohesion policy, I focus on presenting a few arguments dealing with the implications such policies, their context and their make-up, have in relation to neoliberalism.

2. Cohesion Policy, Multilevel Governance and Neoliberalism

From the very beginning the adding of a social dimension to the Lisbon Strategy has sparked debates. The extent of commitment to the social pillar, the rationality behind its emergence as well as the various ways in which the achievements of its goals could be assessed have all been at the center of much research. Some minimal agreement exists regarding the introduction of the social pillar as a way to harness more legitimacy and to attempt a reconciliation of the economic and social goals of the European Union (Vural, 2011, p. 4).

At the same time approaches have been developed, mostly neo-Gramscian approaches, focusing on power, legitimacy and the role of

¹² The Multilevel Governance Scoreboard, <http://cor.europa.eu/en/activities/governance/Pages/mlg-scoreboard.aspx>

¹³ Committee of the Regions, Opinion of the Committee of the Regions, Building a European Culture of Multilevel Governance: Follow-up to the Committee of the Regions’ White Paper, http://cor.europa.eu/en/activities/governance/Documents/vdb-opinion-mlg/cdr273-2011_fin_ac_en.pdf, p. 4

neoliberalism in the determining of new social and political arrangements. Some arguments focus for example on European integration, as well as on the main theories usually used in analyzing it, stating that mainstream integration theories:

“assume either explicitly or implicitly that market forces are expressions of an inner rationality of universal human nature that is held to be the essence of the realm of freedom in political affairs. This assumption makes these theoretical frameworks *inherently incapable of grasping fundamentally the structuration* of power relations on a social terrain, where market forces have come to constitute the dominant principle of social organization to which all other principles and media of social organization have become subordinated.” (Van Apeldoorn, Overbeek and Ryner, 2003, p. 18).

It is this assumption that also informs cohesion policy, in the context of the Lisbon Strategy, and it is an assumption that needs to be made visible. Vural identifies two strands of neo-Gramscian approaches, in relation to the Lisbon Strategy (Vural, 2011, p. 6). One strand understands the introduction of the social pillar as a tool for gaining support from social classes by introducing certain concerns on the agenda, all the while maintaining and consolidating governance directions that would sustain neoliberal frameworks by promoting competitiveness at the supranational European level, all the while maintaining social cohesion as a concern to be addressed at the national

level. Another strand of neo-Gramscian approaches focuses on the Lisbon Strategy simply as an instrument for undermining welfare states, by not addressing the social deficit of the European Union while at the same time generalizing social policies meant to be subordinated and conformist in relation to the markets (Vural, 2011, p. 6).

Of significance within the first strand of neo-Gramscian approaches is the development of “embedded neoliberalism” as a concept aimed at illuminating the ways the neoliberal project in effect works to incorporate and eliminate alternatives, and in doing so functions as a hegemonic tactic. In the end embedded neoliberalism characterizes the European Union’s project concerning the internal market, by consolidating a seemingly contradictory project of both social protection and liberal markets, however it does so only by subordinating any other concern under the neoliberal goal of competitiveness (Van Apeldoorn, 2009, p. 22).

This subordination is consolidated further within the Lisbon Strategy, understood as a “‘hegemonic moment’ of embedded neoliberalism” (Van Apeldoorn, 2009, p. 28). In effect, through its objectives and goals the Lisbon Strategy functions as a marketization of the labour market, services and the capital markets. At the same time through its governance project, the maintaining of social protection policies at the national level while simultaneously imposing an Open Method of Coordination for this

domain results in both a subordination of social policies, as well in a distortion of social policy as market-enabling (Van Apeldoorn, 2009, pp. 29-30).

Viewed in this way cohesion policy becomes not as much a way to correct social injustices determined by the markets, but rather as a sort of appeasement strategy that appears to make some concession to the social-protection demanding social forces, but only within a framework where they are inextricably subordinated to market interests.

Another type of analysis centers on the more normative implications of a shift towards multi-level governance. Such an analysis questions in what ways does multilevel governance, particularly in the context of European Union's Cohesion Policy, link to issues of neoliberalism?

Adam Harmes offers three arguments in theorizing this link. Firstly, it underlines the implicit multi-level governance aspect of neoliberalism, in the sense that neoliberalism has a stake in a weaker government capacity for intervention, with one way of achieving that being the diffusion of authority and power able to limit and regulate the markets. Secondly, the "underlying logic of the neoliberal project for multilevel governance" (Harmes, 2006, p. 727) is apparent in different understandings of the separation between what is political and what is economics. Thirdly, understanding the previously two points enables a policy analysis that can account for how neoliberal parties

argue for a certain kind of policies. Thus

"while neoliberals will seek to separate the 'economy' and the 'polity' across different levels of governance, social democrats will promote their reintegration in order to limit the disciplinary effects of inter-jurisdictional competition. In the latter case, this can be done either by 'bringing the economy back down' to the level of market-inhibiting policy competencies or by 'bringing the polity up' to the level of capital mobility." (Harmes, 2006, p. 727).

Using Gill's understanding of the new constitutionalism and disciplinary neoliberalism, Harmes details the ways in which the separation of the political and the economic is crucial and at the center of neoliberalism, keeping and consolidating a position where market-enabling forces are out of the reach of democratic control and the ways in which multilevel governance in a European Union context is an important factor in such analysis (Harmes, 2006, p. 727).

Gill's account of disciplinary neoliberalism underlines the ways in which "neoliberal forms of discipline are neither necessarily universal nor consistent, but they are bureaucratized and institutionalized, and they operate with different degrees of intensity across a range of "public" and "private" spheres. In this sense discipline is both a transnational and a local dimension of power" (Gill, 1995, p. 411). New constitutionalism refers to the political project of making liberal democratic capitalism transnational and the sole model of

development, and this political project is related to market civilization (Gill, 1995, p. 412). Harmes illuminates how this translates into a European Union context and focuses on the push for a market-preserving federalism “This need to “rigidly oppose” any centralization of market-inhibiting policy competencies has, in fact, been vigorously promoted by a number of European neoliberals, particularly through the notion of “subsidiarity” (Harmes, 2006, p. 741).

A central concept in Harmes’ analysis is disembedded federalism, drawing on Polanyi’s double movement. This type of federalism is achieved through a deliberate neoliberal project for multilevel governance in an attempt to promote not only a separation between the political and the economic, but also a setting there the economic operates above the polity, with important implications including in terms of jurisdictional competition. This is achieved either by bringing the economic up, or by bringing the polity

down (Harmes, 2006, pp. 743-744). As a consequence contesting the present framework would entail two possible strategies, either bringing the economic down, either the polity up (Harmes, 2006, p. 745).

At research and analysis level one strategy of contestations is illuminating the links between neoliberalism and cohesion policy. Neoliberalism and neoliberal undercurrents are present in policy-making not only in the sense that cohesion policy might or might not be a proper countermeasure to neoliberal globalized market forces, but also in the sense that neoliberalism is present within cohesion policy itself, both with regards to its determining context and to its specific multilevel governance. While by no means comprehensive, this short article aimed to present some of the discussions and research illuminating the ways in which neoliberalism is linked to cohesion policy, in an effort to contribute to the development of more similar discussions, including in a Romanian context.

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CONDITIONALITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPEAN MULTILEVEL GOVERNANCE NATIONAL AND EUROPEAN POLITICAL DISCOURSE ON THE REGIONALIZATION PROCESS IN ROMANIA

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***Abstract:** The European Union and its member states are involved in a multilevel governance system that implies collaboration, shared decision-making process and state and non-state actors from different levels of governance (local, regional, national or European). The question that arises is how to reach a balance in this continuous (ex)change of demands, recommendations, regulations or practices as to avoid the situation in which one of the parts is mostly on the giving side and the other on the subjected one. This is the starting point of this paper that aims at analyzing if the regionalization project in Romania is an example of conditioning from the European Union or one of cooperation within the European multilevel governance. The methodological instruments are document analysis and discourse analysis (involved political actors' declarations or press notes and the Chamber of Deputies Chamber's transcripts of sittings of 2013 and 2014).*

1. EU: Regional Policy for Economic, Social and Territorial Cohesion

The European Union has enlarged gradually, reaching in 2014 more than four times its original size when created. If at first the countries that

adhered to the European Communities had political, social and economic comparable frames, the following enlargements since the 80's until now targeted states that were coming out of totalitarian regimes, either fascists (as Spain or Portugal) or communists (as Poland or Romania).

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These countries had numerous political, social and economic disparities among themselves and especially when compared to the “old” member states. This has led to the necessity for the creation of a cohesion policy¹ that would bring at a more similar level these unequal components. But because significant differences exist even within a country, this policy’s instruments were aimed at regions rather than states in order to tackle the obstacles as exact as possible. So the tool for this cohesion ideal (economic and social cohesion: boosting competitiveness and green economic growth in regional economies and providing people with better services, more job opportunities and a better quality of life, territorial cohesion: connecting regions so that they capitalise on their respective strengths and work together

¹ “The Union shall aim at reducing disparities between the levels of development of the various regions and the backwardness of the least favoured regions. Among the regions concerned, particular attention shall be paid to rural areas, areas affected by industrial transition, and regions which suffer from severe and permanent natural or demographic handicaps such as the northernmost regions with very low population density and island, crossborder and mountain regions”, according to article 174 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, pg. 127

in new, innovative configurations to tackle common challenges -such as climate change-, thus benefiting and reinforcing the EU as a whole²) was set to be the Regional Policy.

The regions that comply with the criteria³ established in order to receive EU full financial support are mainly in South and Eastern Europe and some even form entire countries: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovenia, Poland, Croatia, Bulgaria and Romania.

Could this mean a more vulnerable position of these countries in relation to the European Union? Does this represent a pressure for these national institutions to comply with the European ones’ requirements? A research that would give the answer to these questions has to be an extensive one that takes many other variables into account, but this paper focuses on the particular case of the regionalization initiative in Romania.

² European Commission, Making Europe’s regions and cities more competitive, fostering growth and creating jobs, 2014, 2014, pg. 5

³ For less developed regions (gdp < 75 % of the eu-27 average), transition regions (gdp 75-90 % of the eu-27 average) and more developed regions (gdp > 90 % of the eu-27 average), according to European Commission, Making Europe’s regions and cities more competitive, fostering growth and creating jobs, 2014, pg. 10.

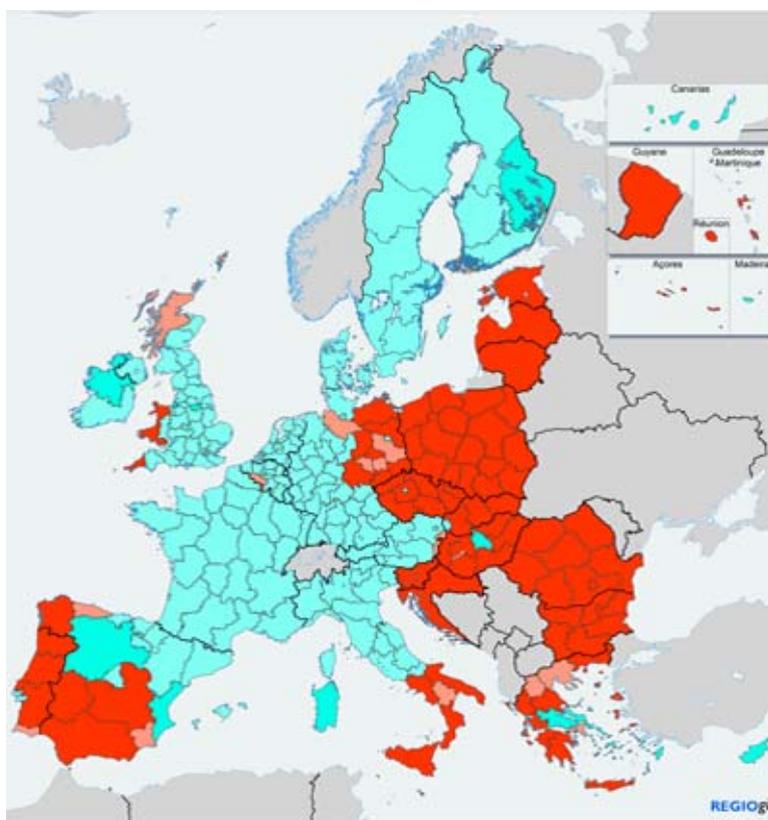


Figure 1: Eligible areas in the EU under the Convergence Objective and the European Competitiveness and Employment Objective⁴.

2. National Implementation of the European Regional Policy

The Regional Policy has two main financial instruments⁵: a) the European Social Fund that targets workers difficulties on the internal

⁴ European Commission, Regional Policy, http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/atlas2007/index_en.htm

⁵ These funds are part of the European Structural and Investment Funds, alongside the Cohesion Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund.

market⁶ and b) the European Regional Development Fund that targets

⁶ “In order to improve employment opportunities for workers in the internal market and to contribute thereby to raising the standard of living, a European Social Fund is hereby established in accordance with the provisions set out below; it shall aim to render the employment of workers easier and to increase their geographical and occupational mobility within the Union, and to facilitate their adaptation to industrial changes and to changes in production systems, in particular through vocational training and retraining.”, according to article 162 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, pg. 119.

regions' disparities on the internal functioning of the Union⁷. These two are implemented in cooperation with national institutions, both central and local. Thus, Romania coordinates the Sectorial Operational Programme and the Regional Operational Programme. In this paper, the attention is set on the latter because of the fact that it targets the regions, which are this paper's subject.

The aim of the Regional Operational Programme 2007-2013 (REGIO) is that of "supporting and promoting sustainable local development, both economically and socially, in Romania's regions, by improving the infrastructure conditions and business environment, which support economic growth"⁸. That formulation seems like a general umbrella, so it is important to have a clear image of what does this main objective refer to and who are the actors involved.

First of all, a considerable step is defining the concept of development, due to the dual significance that it can have in the context of the European Union's actions and policies. Thus, on

⁷ „The European Regional Development Fund is intended to help to redress the main regional imbalances in the Union through participation in the development and structural adjustment of regions whose development is lagging behind and in the conversion of declining industrial regions.”, according to article 176 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, pg. 127

⁸ Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration, Operational Regional Programme 2007-2013, <http://www.mdr.ro/en/dezvoltare-regionala/-2257/programul-operational-regional-2007-2013>

one hand there is the external policy perspective, the Development and Cooperation Policy that addresses third countries with the primary objective of reducing and, in the long term, eradicating poverty⁹. The second understanding of development refers to the internal situation of the EU, the socio-economic growth inside its member states. The latter is the one used in this paper, as it is the one linked to the regional policy of the EU.

Secondly, the regional funds are allocated according to Operational Programmes (OPs) that are established by the European Commission and the member states and that are carried out by the countries and their regions, fact which involves "selecting, monitoring and evaluating hundreds of thousands of projects"¹⁰. Consequently, the design of these regions is highly important not only from the point of view of its economic data taken into account for the eligibility criteria for funding, but also for the decision making in respect of configuration of European regional funds.

The REGIO Programme is based on a division of Romania into 8 development regions that were voluntarily formed by the counties that compose them, as they don't have a legal personality and do not represent

⁹ Lisbon Treaty, Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, consolidated version, pg. 141

¹⁰ European Commission, Making Europe's regions and cities more competitive, fostering growth and creating jobs, 2014, pg. 9

a territorial administrative unit¹¹. This is going to change if the regionalization project will pass, as it will introduce legal entities replacing these informal arrangements. This aspect is further developed in the next section, which will compare the national and European outlooks on this dimension and on the one of the regions' composition.

3. National and European Perspective of the Regionalization Process in Romania

Romanian political actors present the regionalization process as a necessary condition that the European Union imposes, but seem to take advantage of this perspective in order to force the rapid passing of this set of regulations that would require otherwise a deep social and political consultation. Referring to national political actors, NLP's¹² deputy V. Coifan states in the Chamber of Deputies of the Romanian Parliament that "some invoke it as a necessity imposed by the European Union, others bring into the discussion the spectrum of federalization that would crumble the country"¹³. Another NLP

representative, involved in the party's leadership, D. Motreanu, states that "discussions of establishing the number of regions have been smoldering in secret for months, feeding on dreams of greatness of local or national officials with fixed ideas or obsessions caused by heavy silence built on fears, fears and moments of indecision, up to a point that is already arousing passions and uncontrollable immeasurable pride"¹⁴.

So is this measure an obligation from the European Union or is it just an excuse that political parties use in order to restrict other stakeholders' access (for example, citizens, organizations or local institutions) to the debate regarding this change? Neither one of these situations would be a democratic put into practice of the multilevel governance system, so it is important to determine if either one is the case. The stake is high indeed because the changes that the regionalization project would bring are on one hand, the redesigning of the regions and implicitly, the reconfiguration of the power relations system between local authorities (which can determine a struggle between local interest groups and local authoritarian politicians) and on the other, the conferring legal personality to the regions, which would lead to a makeover of the power relations

¹¹ Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration, Operational Regional Programme 2007-2013, Development regions, <http://www.mdrt.ro/en/dezvoltare-regionala/-2257/programul-operational-regional-2007-2013/-2975>

¹² The National Liberal Party, opposition party.

¹³ Chamber of Deputies, Parliament of Romania, Transcript, ...

<http://www.cdep.ro/pls/steno/steno.stenograma?ids=5392&idm=1,06&idl=2>

¹⁴ Chamber of Deputies, Parliament of Romania, Transcript, <http://www.cdep.ro/pls/steno/steno.stenograma?ids=5392&idm=1,06&idl=2>

system between local and central authorities.

European preconditions for effective investment refer to the development of smart specialization strategies, strategies to reduce youth unemployment and promote non-discrimination, compliance with environmental laws, business-friendly reforms and measures to improve public procurement systems¹⁵. There are no formal¹⁶ conditions regarding the legal personality of the regions, as it appeared in Romania's political discourse.

SDP¹⁷ Minister of Regional Development¹⁸ L. Dragnea argues that "in parallel we are working on the accreditation of each region to become the managing authority in order for each region to have direct relationship with Brussels and not to pass through the filter in Bucharest, which means loss of time and a lot of European money"¹⁹. Consequently, it may seem that awarding the regions with legal personality is a way of

facilitating the European funds absorption, which would be an example of informal conditionality by part of the European Union, but in fact, the core problems of fund absorption in Romania are the national bureaucratic excess and the lack of cofinance for the projects. Not only that none of these two obstacles would be overthrown in the new configuration, but this could deepen the second problem, that of the cofinance that is insufficient in the condition that it is granted at the central level, that of the government, which is the management authority; if the regions become management authorities, they would have to ensure the financial "infrastructure" of the functioning of this regional policy.

I highlight the need for various variables to be taken into consideration as for regionalization criteria settings, because otherwise it would become a national political fight for power, as resembled in NLP deputy I. Ghise's observation that "regarding the capitals of the region, they should be established on the basis of criteria established by the Constitution. This is not between the muscles of Johannis, Ghise, Nitu or Mazare. If the Constitution accepts regions as administrative units, set your criteria. Otherwise Bacau will argue Iasi, Brasov and Sibiu, Targu Mures, Cluj and Oradea, Timisoara and Arad, Pitesti and Ploiesti"²⁰.

¹⁵ European Commission, Making Europe's regions and cities more competitive, fostering growth and creating jobs, 2014, p. 11

¹⁶ Informal conditions imposed are taken into account further in the paper.

¹⁷ Social Democrat Party, in government.

¹⁸ MRD is the Romanian government minister that is in charge of the regional policy implementation and hence, of the regionalization project.

¹⁹ Ziare.com Press Agency, Dragnea, despre regiunea Mures-Harghita-Covasna: Doar doua cuvinte - Ex Clus, <http://www.ziare.com/liviu-dragnea/stiri-liviu-dragnea/dragnea-despre-regiunea-mures-harghita-covasna-doar-doua-cuvinte-ex-clus-1243331>

²⁰ Ziare.com Press Agency, Nu functioneaza tara asta dupa cum doresti dl. Dragnea, <http://www.ziare.com/politica/reorganizare-teritoriala-romania/ioan-ghise->

Moreover, in order to gain electoral support from nationalist citizens, Romanian politicians drift the attention towards a nationalist discourse, emphasizing on the so called “danger” of the Székely Land, even if this is an artificially constructed political aspect of the regionalization question. Even the SDP minister Dragnea, which coordinates the project and should be an arbiter between conflicting parts, avoiding the derail of debates and keeping the discussions away from nationalist influences, claims that he only has two words²¹ regarding the possibility of the three counties of Mures, Covasna and Harghita to form a single region: *EX CLUS*²². Through his remark, he emphasizes the fact that within the regionalization debates, two elements are taken into account: the Hungarian ethnic majority in those administrative units and the DUHR’s²³ political claims of forming an autonomous Székely Land.

On the other hand, although Hungarian politicians speculated the

regionalization theme at a Summer School in Romania, Ministry of Foreign Affairs official George Ciamba issued a note that emphasized that the regionalization is a technical issue and it is not ethnically oriented²⁴.

Nevertheless, even if the National Council for Fighting Discrimination ruled²⁵ that leading political figures’ declarations regarding the effects that the regionalization would produce in the Hungarian communities were not discriminatory, the repeated use within the regionalization debate of a discourse against a homogeneous ethnic space is problematic because it brings under the spotlight nationalist elements.

4. Conclusions

The European interest in regionalization differs from that of the Romanian one mainly in that the national actors reverse the logic of the debate from what are the characteristics of each region to how should we redesign each region in

nu-functioneaza-tara-asta-dupa-cum-doreste-dl-dragnea-1240325

²¹ Ziare.com Press Agency, Dragnea, despre regiunea Mures-Harghita-Covasna: Doar doua cuvinte - Ex Clus, <http://www.ziare.com/liviu-dragnea/stiri-liviu-dragnea/dragnea-despre-regiunea-mures-harghita-covasna-doar-doua-cuvinte-ex-clus-1243331>

²² The translation from Romanian is “no way”.

²³ Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania, an organization that functions as a political party and participates in the executive exercise, currently part of the government.

²⁴ Mediafax Press Agency, Oficial MAE: Lucrările Şcolii de Vară de la Băile Tuşnad seamănă cu o şedinţă a Guvernului Ungariei, <http://www.mediafax.ro/social/oficial-mae-lucrarile-scolii-de-vara-de-la-baile-tusnad-seamana-cu-o-sedinta-a-guvernului-ungariei-11152074>

²⁵ National Council for Fighting Discrimination, CNCD a solutionat dosarul constituit in urma declaratiilor despre regionalizare ale unor politicieni romani, <http://www.cncd.org.ro/presa/Comunicate-de-presa/CNCD-a-solutionat-dosarul-constituit-in-urma-declaratiilor-despre-regionalizare-ale-unor-politicieni-romani-176/>

order for it to have certain characteristics they have previously established, trying to bypass public debates on regionalization by diverting

the attention on internal political issues as the theme of the formation of the Hungarian autonomous Székely Land in Romania.

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