

## ROUND TABLE ON RESEARCH DEDICATED TO THE REGIONALIZATION OF ROMANIA

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### 1. Background

The 7th edition of the seventh edition of the research conference on constructions, economy of buildings, architecture, urban and territorial development organized by the National Institute of Research and Development in Civil Engineering, Urban and Territorial Development URBAN-INCERC (May 9, 2014) included a round table dedicated to research on a possible regionalization of Romania, chaired by Professor Dr. Ioan IANOȘ, PhD, from the University of Bucharest, including interventions from Prof. Octavian MÂNDRUȚ, PhD, Vasile Goldiș Western University of Arad, Professor Mircea ENACHE, PhD, President of EMI Systems and Director of Ion Mincu Center for Excellence in Planning, Professor Alexandru Gabriel SANDU, PhD, President of the Romanian Registry of Urban Planners, Professors Liviu IANĂȘI, PhD, Gabriel PASCARIU, PhD, Cătălin SÂRBU, PhD, and Petre GHEORGHIU, PhD from Ion Mincu University of Architecture and Urban Planning, and Professor Bogdan Alexandru SUDITU, PhD from the University of Bucharest. Following the request to synthesize their opinions, two of the participants sent the materials presented below. Although the initial intention was to dedicate an entire issue of "Urbanism. Architecture. Constructions" to this topic, given the scientific importance of the contributions the materials received so far are included in this article.

### 2. Opinions on the regionalization (Professor architect Cătălin Sârbu, PhD)

**The general context** (understanding not only the endogenous potential and exogenous conditions, but also conditions induced by the needs of population) must be used to **create opportunities**, meaning the identification of objectives and establishment of priorities. Therefore, the identification of actors and their role in the territory are initial core activities for the institutional development required by regional development (essential element for creating development opportunities). In order to proceed, there is a need – among others – for an analysis of the degree of **formalizing** some of the **informal** aspects of the attributes (functions) of the territory, in a dual **complementarity – competition** vision.

The analysis of the continuous "game" of **centralization** and **decentralization** of decisions is necessary for understanding the dynamic of the territory, essential for phrasing the policies required for influencing the processes induced by the many and permanent changes. In this general context general, **regionalization** is understood more than one of the **processes** specific to development, meaning one of its **instruments** that still needs a definition (conceptual elements, variables, reactivity etc).

One of the principia of regionalization is defining and adapting to a given situation

the **balance of top-down and bottom-up processes**. The adaptation of these flows (not only mass and energy, but also decision and reaction to the impacts induced by the process) is determined, among others, by the particular history of the territory, implying the cultural profile of inhabitants, deciders and specialists.

The issue of **spatial limits of the region** founded institutionally (different from the formal-administrative initial limits) implies **conceptual changes** of the interferences of inter-regional influences and involve the old issue of development engines in a territory, bringing forward in a initially simplifying distinction the spatial **concentration - de-concentration dilemma** of anthropic resources (institutional, economic, socio-professional). General **decisions** on one approach or the other are of **political nature**, and can also be interpreted in the **liberal - social** registries, and the sinuous path of decisional assumption, application and feedback require corrections. In this perspective, **the time of regionalization-defining processes** is essential for evaluating the results.

These issues are topics for continuing the Romanian regionalization debate and imply, in a first stage, **returning to concepts** which can claim the attention of the wide range of specialists, especially from the academia, and orient discussion toward the **essential reference: population and life quality**.

### 3. A proposal for the Romanian regions of development: identity-based vs. functional regions (Associate Professor architect Petru Gheorghiu, PhD)

Current Romanian regions of development are organized using as a principle the path of historical territorial routes, resulting also as a consequence of the fact that the Carpathians have constituted natural separation barriers of the regions dwelled by the Romanians. For example, many counties are

delimited by the crests of the mountains. According to a 2013 study by Altâr and Armeanu, professors at the Romanian Academy of Economics, Romania does not have the capacity for economic growth unless a new economic model is used, as the possibilities for quantitative growth are exhausted and the only remaining ones are the qualitative ones. Therefore, regionalization must bring qualitative changes (not only economically), and these can only be achieved by regions structured using the economic and social functionality criteria. Consequently, the politically-charged historical criterion - identity-based regions - will be replaced by a neutral one, oriented to the future development.

**The general principles of territorial separation** are related to the economy, geography, territorial balancing and major traffic routes. The **principles to be avoided** are ethnic and historical grouping. As a **major guideline**, mountains must unite instead of separating. Therefore, a region must include both sides of the Carpathians or banks of the Danube. The result consists of 8 groups of five counties and the special region Bucharest-Ilfov, relatively balanced in terms of area and population, *i.e.*: West (population 2384000, area 30254 km<sup>2</sup>), Nord (population 2249000, area 31912 km<sup>2</sup>), East (population 2868000, area 29950 km<sup>2</sup>), Sud-Vest (population 2203000, area 34545 km<sup>2</sup>), Center (population 2415000, area 28430 km<sup>2</sup>), Center-East (population 2527000, area 24760 km<sup>2</sup>), South (population 2287000, area 27316 km<sup>2</sup>), Sud-Est (population 2264000, area 29255 km<sup>2</sup>), special region Bucharest-Ilfov (population ~ 3500000, area 320 km<sup>2</sup>) - Fig. 1. The minimal conditions for choosing a regional capital include **the consensus of all other four counties, and have an airport and an university**. All the other four capitals will host in a balanced way the regional headquarters of the de-concentrated administrative structures.

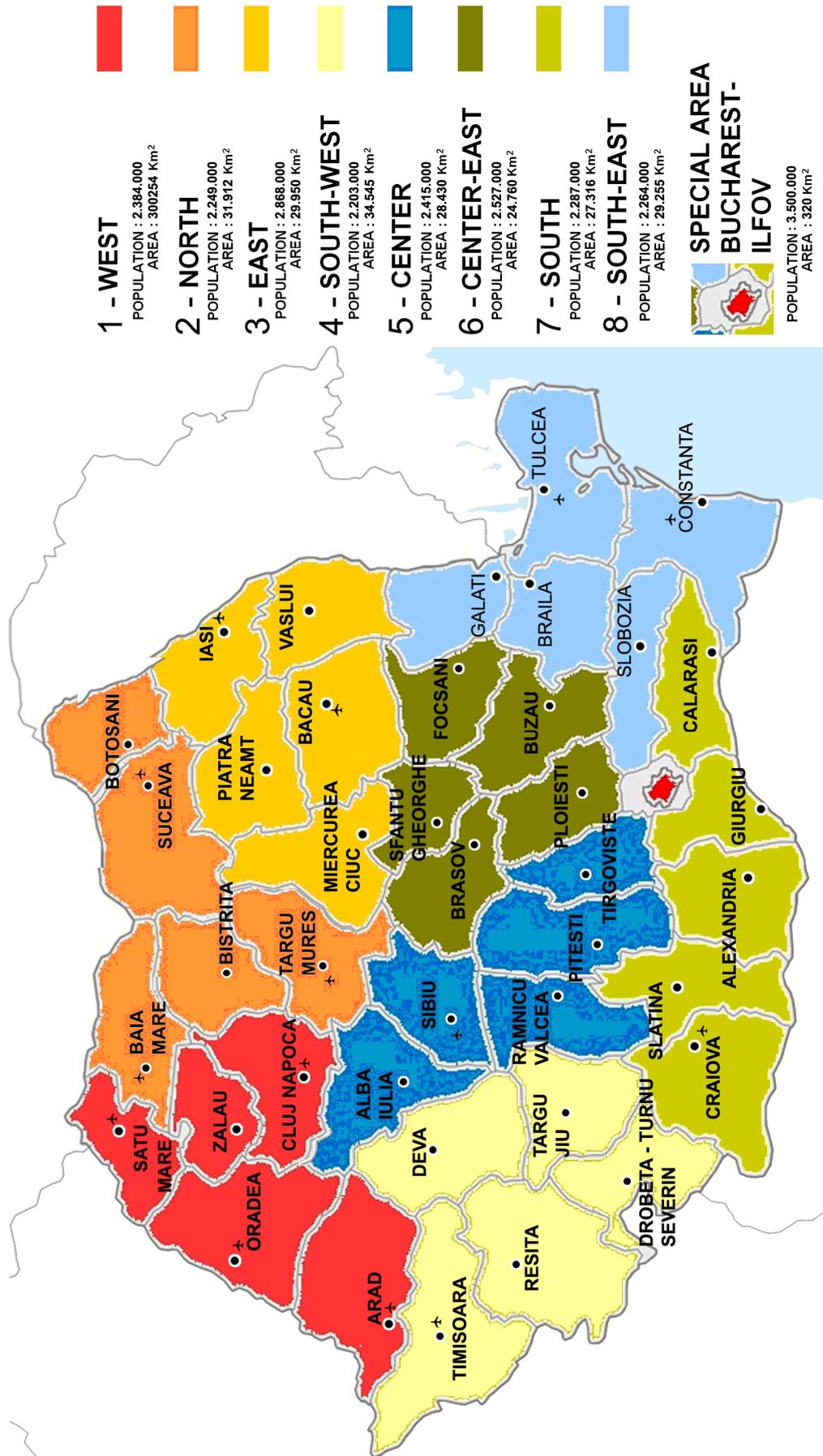


Fig. 1. Map of the proposed regions (author: Associate Professor architect Petru Gheorghiu, PhD; drawn by: student Radu-Ioan Moisescu)

**To conclude**, territorial re-organization (replacing historical criteria with the functional ones) can substantiate a national development project based on tourism, agriculture, non-polluting industry, intensive valorization of the natural potential (*e.g.*, mountain economy based on Austrian or Swiss models, according to the programs proposed by Professor Radu Ray), development of Danube and Black sea harbors, of the seaside and watercourse potential, strengthening

the role of commercial transit country (automobile, train, ship). The new emerging economic model has an added value.

**Note.** The application of the proposed model depends at large on its political acceptance, requiring fairness, loyalty of all citizens (regardless of their ethnic background) towards the Constitution, and ability of politicians to negotiate accounting for the national interest.

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