

BOOK REVIEWS

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT. THEORY AND PRACTICE

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Viewed as a continuous and sustainable process, the regional development concerns a number of interdependent, legislative and institutional elements, establishing new types of relations between different sectors and areas of activity, between central and local institutions and collectivities, in order to increase living standards and to ensure the welfare of the inhabitants. This process is also related to mentality, traditions and behaviour, to vocational training and adaptation to the new changes occurring at local, regional, national and international level.

The European Union is today on the verge of a new transformation process: The UK's exit from the Community, the economic recession, the creation of a "banking union", the extreme and sudden climate changes, increasing pollutant emissions, a new security policy, managing the flow of migrants, terrorist attacks, etc., that leaves a mark on the regional development as well. On the background of these phenomena, the economic and social disparities between different states and regions continue to persist and amplify. For this reason, the cohesion and regional development policy is one of the most important instruments of the European Union, which has the strategic objective to reduce economic and social disparities and to promote balanced development within its states and regions.

In Romania, the regional development has emerged as a necessity, on the one hand, to correct the existing regional disparities and, on the other hand, to take up and enforce European Union legislation in this area, after its accession to the community structures. Regional development aims to stimulate and diversify economic activities and the investment processes, helping to reduce unemployment and increase quality of life.

From this perspective, the book entitled *Regional Development. Theory and Practice* aims to provide a global overview of the process of regional development in general, on how territorial inequalities and the economic convergence process have evolved, under the impact of the current cohesion policy and the *Europe 2020 Strategy* and in the context of profound changes at community and global level.

To support this scientific approach, two types of approaches are proposed. A first approach is *theoretical-methodological*, which seeks to analyse the entire palette of more or less recent theories of regional science, analysis techniques and patterns of the territorial policies impact, conceptual approaches and critical analyses, opinions and contributions of specialists who have influenced the evolution of the field.

The second approach seeks to *analyse territorial cohesion and economic and social inequalities at regional level*, in the European Union and in Romania.

The scientific value of the book *Regional Development. Theory and Practice* is given by the experience gained by its author, Daniela Antonescu, in the research of various aspects of regional development. We mostly appreciate the overview of the main theories of regional economy in their evolution and of the most important influence factors: the analysis of regional inequalities in Romania and in the European Union, the overview of the cohesion and regional development policy in Romania and in the EU, the identification of the main administrative-territorial reforms from the year 1918 until present, the presentation of some specific elements of sustainable development at regional level (protected areas, mountainous areas), the identification of the main directions and developments of regional policy after the year 2020, taking into account the actions and measures proposed for the upcoming programming period and also in the context of *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*.

The interest in the issue of the transitional and post-integration period of Romania in the European Union, but also for attracting the community funds, is a relatively large one, which confers on this subject a theoretical and practical importance. The book attempts to provide documented and scientifically supported answers to the following questions:

- What are the recent trends in the evolution of regional theories?
- What are the most suitable spatial analysis models and techniques that can be applied in the field of regional science?

- How has the theory of regional science influenced the practice and application of territorial policies?
- What are the main coordinates of regional policy in the European Union?
- How large are regional inequalities in the European Union (EU-28) and in Romania in the period 2007-2017?
- How important is territorial cohesion at Member State level and what are the main tools to support it?
- What are the prospects for territorial cohesion policy after year 2020 and the horizon of 2030?
- What are the prospects for regional development in Romania after the year 2020?

In order to achieve this, the book proposes to the reader, based on an appropriate conceptual-methodological framework, a balanced analysis of the regional convergence process in the European Union and the territorial development policy in Romania. Thus, the book is structured on three main sections, 11 chapters, plus a chapter of conclusions.

In a first section – Theoretical and methodological approach – the literature on integration, cohesion, convergence, the main theories that have tried to provide answers to a general and persistent question: *why are some regions growing faster than the others?* are reviewed. To these questions, the answers came mainly from regional economic science, which was sustained throughout its evolution by other sciences, such as mathematics, statistics, geography, sociology, etc. The analyses carried out revealed that regional theories and policies had experienced important transformations recently in their attempt to respond to new challenges caused by globalization, the financial crisis, resilience, structural changes, etc. Recently, new concepts and approaches have emerged and have “deposed” the old regional theories. These are much more complex and sophisticated and appeal to innovative elements, complex techniques and methods of econometric analysis, etc. From this perspective, trends in regional policy after the year 1990 focused on the regions of knowledge, regional networks (clusters), research and innovation, without losing sight of the specificity and the differences in development and potential of each region.

In the second section of the book, the practical aspects of regional policy are discussed, and territorial inequalities are analysed using specific indicators, statistical and econometric evaluation techniques and methods. The methodology used in the book is mainly supported by econometric/statistical assessments (concentration/diversification indicators, variation indicators, central trend indicators, structure analysis,

etc.), applied to NUTS-2 regions in the EU-28 and in Romania. These methods of scientific research and analysis are frequently used nationally and internationally and consider the fact that the identification of the evolution of regional inequalities can be achieved mainly by means of convergence indicators (total GDP and per capita). The data and information presented in the book are reported at the average, maximum and minimum levels of the analysed indicators. Using existing information in the Eurostat database, but also in national statistics, the analyses present trends and developments that have taken place at regional level in certain areas of activity and in different periods of time.

The historical context in which the administrative-territorial reforms were conducted in Romania, in the 100 years of the Great Union, is also presented. During this period, 38 governments succeeded in the leadership of Romania, which attempted to provide institutional structures and mechanisms corresponding to the requirements of modernity, unity and stability of the Romanian unitary national state. Related and integrated with economic and social changes, the administrative reforms have sought to create territorial structures that contribute to streamlining the implementation of measures and actions aimed at reducing certain imbalances between different regions and also to ensure a better control over them.

In the third section of the book, the aspects and characteristics of sustainable development at regional level are presented, targeting certain areas with important natural specificities, which play a strategic role in the smooth maintenance of a clean and sustainable natural environment.

At the end of the book, a possible regional development strategy for the 2021-2027 programming period is proposed, taking into account the current conditions and developments, as well as the challenges given by globalization, sustainable development and extreme climate changes, social inclusion, migration, etc.

Combining recent theoretical elements and spatial analysis patterns/techniques with statistical, legislative and institutional data and information, the book ***Regional Development. Theory and Practice*** can contribute to a better understanding of the positive and negative aspects that have influenced the evolution of regional development in Romania, as well as to formulate directions and actions for the next programming period in order to reduce the regional disparities both in Romania and in the EU.