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Review of the Volume "Dezvoltarea regională. Teorie și practică" [Regional Development. Theory and Practice], Author: Daniela Antonescu, Lumen Publishing House, 2019

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Abstract: Regional development is a field of research and a discipline of study that transcends several fields of social sciences, and can be studied by students in the fields of administrative, political, economic, social and humanistic sciences and others that include this subject in the curriculum. Regional development is also an attribute of public administration in all Member States of the European Union, as well as outside Europe, with ministries dedicated to implementing balanced regional development policies. Therefore, the book written by the author Daniela Antonescu, "Dezvoltarea regională. Teorie și practică" [Regional development. theory and practice], published by Lumen Publishing House in Iași, Romania, in 2019, who I consider a great specialist in this field (as she is the organizer of a conference on this topic, that attracts specialists from Romania and abroad), addresses a broad public of readers: both researchers and teachers concerned with development issues, as well as civil servants, members of national governments or parliaments, MEPs, members of other international fora, concerned with regional development, which includes not only the region as a territory but also subdivisions at local level: county, municipality / city, commune, village, on a case-by-case basis.

Keywords: *regional development, public policies, Daniela Antonescu.*

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Browsing through the table of contents of the book, it can be deduced that the work of the author Daniela Antonescu (2019) represents a vast work, reflected in years of research and organized in detail on 3 sections and 11 thematic chapters. In fact, the cover page states that parts of the author's doctoral thesis are also used within the book, which can only add a note of scientific validity and academic rigor to this work. Reading the statements from the introduction, it can be deduced that the author proposes two types of approaches, the theoretical-methodological approach, respectively the analysis of territorial cohesion and economic and social inequalities at regional level approach. The chapters are presented in an alternative sequence between these approaches, in the sense that the theoretical parts are succeeded by parts of the analysis, therefore there is no classic pattern of halving approaches, which gives the work an extra note of originality.

Chapter 1, "Theoretical approaches to regional development", begins with a cliché - that regional theories have been incorporated as annexes to the main currents of economic thought, an idea that continues with the statement that much of the territorial dimension of development issues was taken into account in formulating theoretical approaches to regional development. In the author's assent, it can be argued that the macroeconomic theories of classical economists were based on far too rudimentary ideas (market, demand, supply) and did not keep in pace with the dynamics of interdisciplinary approaches (not just economic) from global, to regional or local approaches. The chapter is mainly didactic, with elements of familiarity that can be found in the theories of development, localization, inequalities, representing a very well documented material, easy to navigate in terms of concepts, time sequences of which the concepts are part of and grouping these concepts.

Chapter 2, "Indicators, models and techniques of regional economic analysis", continues in the same theoretical note and brings to the forefront the idea of disparity and a branch of the economy dedicated to it, the regional economy. Among the many concepts used, it is auspicious that the author at the same time mentions a categorization and differentiation of structural indicators - physical disparities, economic disparities and social disparities - that can intervene in any analysis at a territorial level. A slightly dull approach of the author is reflected in the confirmation of theories by mathematical formulas - although necessary in any scientific study of a technical nature, there is a growing trend of their use in social sciences, not necessarily only in this book.

Chapter 3, "Territorial planning and regional development", addresses, among others, also in a theoretical note, interesting concepts such as the relations (flows) between regions and the types of regional behaviors. Circular evolution, reconversion, restructuring, abandonment, deindustrialization, industrial conservatism, each of these is an attribute that we can attribute, on a case-by-case basis, to a region subjected to a rigorous analysis of the structural indicators mentioned in the previous paragraph. The author's idea of associating regional policy as a spatial form of manifestation of public policy is noteworthy - the state has always been considered the supreme form of authority in organizing the cyclicality and rhythmicity of implementing measures to reduce physical, economic and social inequalities. The possibility of evaluating the regional policies applied by the state proves to be a "hard nut to crack", through the issues generated by choosing the most appropriate evaluation tool: macroeconomic models, theoretical evaluations, evaluations of alternatives, respectively evaluation of adverse impacts - each of these categories of instruments give rise to limitations, doubts about the validity of the results, divergences of opinion.

Chapter 4, "Cohesion policy and regional development in the European Union" is a true mosaic of economic geography - the regions within the Member States are discussed, principles such as concentration, programming, partnership, additionality are set out. As a constructive critique, although this chapter makes the transition to Section II, the analysis is a little difficult to follow, by reading the passages in full, regarding the overall homogeneity of the author's efforts to make regional policy known at European level - too many time frames (different in length), too many numbers and histograms. It is to be appreciated, however, that from all these, the comparative analyzes set out in the chapter, and constant improvements can be clearly seen in the approaches of the supranational organization called the European Union, for reducing regional development gaps through instruments and financial leverage made available to Member States.

Chapter 5, "The evolution of administrative-territorial planning reforms in Romania" is a unique one, as the author brings to the forefront elements of history, geography, economy, in order to achieve a development profile of Romania, starting with 1918 until 2018. Although slightly out of step with the specifics of the book, a basic idea can be deduced from this chapter, that the correct misunderstanding of the past has generated confusion in administrative unification projects, and also that there is no constant either in the direction of centralization, or decentralization at regional and local level.

Chapter 6, "Regional development policy in Romania", continues the idea stated in the previous paragraph and, at a first reading, generates the feeling that, without implementing the Regional Operational Program 2007-2013, the institutional mechanisms for developing, implementing and evaluating regional development policy would not have been implemented or would have been ambiguous, marginal. The author reproduces very well the way in which these structures were organized in Romania. In terms of the structural indicators (physical, economic, social disparities) presented in the text, probably the most used idea and the one that has survived over time - to address development, as a concept, at a national level - was the use of county seat cities as engines of social-economic development at a regional level. Taking over and adapting the European model of organization in urban development, growth poles, respectively urban centers fit "like a glove" to Romania's economic geography, but a great confusion occurred when regional structures (without executive or legislative authority) were faced with the accomplished fact of elaborating integrated regional development plans for each of the 8 regions nationwide, and the trigger was accentuated when the local authorities (in this case, the town halls, city, commune, respectively county councils) started to publish regional development plans for the subordinated administrative-territorial units. According to the author, the frequent institutional and legislative changes, respectively the lack of impact assessments or economic justifications, were the main "stumbling blocks" in the planning process of regional development.

Chapter 7, "The evolution of economic and social inequalities at a regional level, in Romania" is, in fact, an x-ray of each region and is a good opportunity to account for the advantages / disadvantages on a case-by-case basis. As the author thinks, beyond the poly-centric model of approaching regional development, it must be understood that the territorial administrative units in Romania have developed rather according to several criteria related to economic geography, recalling here a much more realistic categorization, by being integrated, as the case may be, in predominantly urban regions, intermediate regions in the vicinity of a city, predominantly rural regions in the vicinity of a city, respectively predominantly isolated rural areas. The data presented in this chapter demonstrates why regional development planning in Romania was an element of novelty, generated by the accession to the European Union and which caught the central state authority unprepared in applying the concept of regional development (which ultimately involves a decentralization, at a regional level) in a centralized territory.

Chapter 8, "Economic resilience at a regional level" is a very well-developed case study, which has the capacity to demonstrate whether or not

the economy of a region (in the European Union) has the ability to resist, to absorb or overcome an internal or external economic shock. As a critical note, the part of the conclusions in this chapter could be much more developed, compared to the evolution of the indicators related to the regions within Member States.

Chapter 9, "Sustainable development at a regional level", abstracts from the general theme of the book and refers to protected natural areas. The author draws attention to the tendencies to accentuate the differences between the rich and the poor, due to the effects of climate change and unsustainable agricultural policies and discusses four possible spatial planning scenarios that can be applied to each region in Romania: scenario 1 - regions based on knowledge, scenario 2 - regions based on endogenous potential, scenario 3 - regions with significant environmental problems, scenario 4 - adaptive regions.

Chapter 10, "A model strategy on regional development in Romania, applicable to the post-2020 programming period", addresses the need to pay more attention to the issue of the evolution of regional disparities (both within regions and between regions). According to the author's opinion, as long as there is no administrative and financial decentralization at a national level, these disparities will continue to widen.

Chapter 11, "Conclusions", sums up the author's contributions to understanding the phenomenon of regional development, and from all the important ideas stated, however, a worrying question arises: will all these concentrated efforts of the European Union cause less developed regions to catch up with more developed regions?

Instead of concluding, it can be stated that the work of the author Daniela Antonescu, entitled "Regional development. Theory and practice "(2019) makes us think about this antagonism created between theorists and practitioners in the field, because it has been proven over time that the dynamics of development disparities in Romania and the European Union (spaces referred to in the book, in the vast majority of its pages) is difficult for the authorities to control and that it is almost impossible to control the natural tendencies of polarization, clustering around development poles, while disadvantaged rural or urban marginal areas, underdeveloped, with significantly low values of structural development indicators still remain.

References

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