THE NECESSITY OF CREATING A TRANS BORDER COOPERATION REGION IN THE HISTORICAL MOLDOVA SPACE

Ionel MUNTELE
„Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University, Iași

Abstract. The cultural, historical, economical, and social arguments plead for the necessity of creating a trans border cooperation region in the space of historical Moldavia. The present forms of cooperation only partially meet the needs of this space or they integrate it marginally into cooperation regions which have a very poor cohesion. The big social and economical problems of a relatively densely populated space but with poor resources, one that shows itself as one of the poverty and emigration poles in Europe, could be resolved through measures which are viable based upon the cohesion of a territory which once was the bridge head for relations between the north-west and the south-east parts of the continent. This space can become a useful interface in the collaboration between the two regional organisms, the European Union and the Community of Independent States, which, for now, don't give much importance to it's strategic importance. An essential condition is eliminating some suspicions and animosities fueled by divergent interests, including in the field of regional cooperation, of the three states involved.

Rezumat. Necesitatea de a crea o regiune de cooperare transfrontalieră în spaţiul Moldovei istorice. Argumente de ordin cultural, istoric, economic şi social pledează pentru necesitatea creării unei regiune de cooperare transfrontalieră în spaţiul Moldovei istorice. Formele actuale de cooperare răspund doar parţial nevoilor acestui spaţiu sau îl integrează marginal în regiuni de cooperare care au o forate slabă coeziune. Marile probleme sociale şi economice ale unui spaţiu, relativ dens populat, dar cu resurse sârace, dintre care una îl desemnează ca unul din polii europeni ai sărăciei şi emigraţiei ar putea fi rezolvate prin măsuri care să se bazeze în mod viabil pe coeziunea unui teritoriu care a jucat în trecut rolul de cap de pod pentru relaţiile dintre nord-vestul şi sud-estul continentului. Acest spaţiu poate deveni o interfaţă utilă în colaborarea dintre cele două organisme regionale – Uniunea Europeană şi Comunitatea Statelor Independente, care deocamdată nu acordă o mare atenţie acestei importante strategii. O condiţie esenţială este eliminarea unor suspecţii şi animoziităţi alimentate de interese divergente, inclusive în domeniul cooperării regionale a celor trei state implicate.

Key words: transborder cooperation, historical Moldova, spatial cohesion, accessibility

Cuvinte cheie: cooperare transfrontalieră, Moldova istorică, coeziune spaţială, accesibilitate

1. MOLDAVIAN TERRITORY: A UNITARY TERRITORY IN THE WAY OF ALL MISCHIEF

The aim of this study is to demonstrate the necessity of a more complex approach to the trans border cooperation at the north-east border of Romania, which is also the external border of the EU and it divides a mostly unitary space. Relying on an important volume of geographical and demographical information or deriving from specific spatial analysis measurements (Dupuy, 1994), the study is trying to reveal how this territory can be the base
A brief analysis of the physical geographical situation of historical Moldova confirms the unity of the land between the Carpathians and the Dnestr, dominated by a vast well personalized region, The Moldavian Plateau, interface between the pontic-caspian steppes and the Carpathians.

The elements the give this unity are:

a) the convergence of the river system towards the Low Danube region, the south end of the pontic-baltic istmus. This system incorporates three main rivers, almost parallel, Siret, to the west, Prut in the middle and Dnestr (Nistru) to the east, the first two being tributaries to the Danube.

b) the presence of a central area with a lower altitude, surrounded by higher forms which gives it the status of core area, a space for political convergence, which explains the success of Iaşi as a historical capital of the region;

c) the existance of complementarity, from east to west between the Carpathians and the Dnestr, as well as from north to south, between the high plateaus of the Suceava and Hotin and the vast hill areas of the south east. This complementarity is showing itself through the biological, pedological and climatic potential;

Figure 1: Physical Map of Historical Moldova (Hărta fizico-geografică a Moldovei istorice)
d) the existence of an autonomous development potential, assured by access to the
Black Sea, at the zone of maximum geostrategical importance of the Danube mouths.

Without going into the details that led to the present political dividing of this unitary
space, it is obvious that it's strategic position represented both the stimulus for the birth of a
durable state (at least from the perspective of it's continuity by participating to the creation
of modern Romania in 1859) and the main factor that led to it's dismemberment. Being in
the way of the expansion of the euro-asian empires, this area did not manage (or did not
have the time) to take advantage, only temporary, of it's position advantages. Mostly,
however, this territory had a peripheral importance (in all of it's components resulting it's
dismemberment) with major impacts on the insertion of modernity. As an attached
periphery (the ex Moldavian R.S.S. - communist) or being pushed towards negligence
through massive emigration or bad investments (in the romanian part), this territory of
historical Moldavia can represent a prototype of the repulsive space, at european level. This
is inspite of all the recent positive results, due to the efforts for european integration. Even
if the importance of it's strategic location is less than in the past, the vulnerability of this
region still remains. This is one of the reasons for which a unitary approach id more than
necessary, to take care of the contemporary problems in this area, like underdevelopment.

2. MOLDAVIAN SPACE: A DENSELY POPULATED TERRITORY, A
DEMOGRAPHIC "ANOMALY" AT THE EUROPEAN LEVEL

A second argument for the unity of this territory is the demographics. Both spatial
distribution and ethnic composition of the population show a concordance with the natural
favourability elements or with the social and political evolutions. Comparing it to the
neighbouring spaces, which usually have a superior potential, historical Moldova's territory
appears with a higher population density, approximately 106 inhabitants/km² according to
the last census in the three corresponding states (2001 in Ukraine, 2002 in Romania, 2004 in
Republic of Moldova), value which is superior to the average in Romania (91
inhabitants/km²) or Ukraine (77 inhabitants/km²). This gap increases if we compare the
values with those from smaller territories. For example, in Transylvania (only the intra
carpathian depression), this is no higher than 75 inhabitants/km² and in Podolia (including
the Vinniţa and Hmelniţki regions and partially the Odesa and Kirovograd regions) only 64
inhabitants/km². Only towards south-west, in Muntenia the values become similar, because
the proximity of the romanian capital and towards north-west, in Galția, the middle part of
the pontic-baltic istmus, another argument of the importance of this area as a cohesion
element in a Europe that is much extended to the east.

The answer for this "anomaly" is found not only in the favourability of the
dovian space for living, but also in the effects of it's peripheral condition:
– the existence of complementarity between natural regions that imposed from early
times a convergence towards areas with a high favourability for living (the case of the
subcarpathian zones, some major valleys);
– the statute of conservative area, predominantly rural, with a population less receptive to
demographical modernization, even in the post bellic period (everywhere within the
region and regardless of ethnicity);
– the strategic interests of the Russian, Habsburg empires and later on those of the Soviet
Union, which were expressed in a semi-colonial manner, through systematical implantations of allogeneous population, usually more than the natural potential could cope with (for example in Bugeac or the mountainous region of Bucovina).

The analysis of population distribution in the moldavian space reveals the existence of two major population axis: one oriented north-south, parallel with the Carpathians and one from east-west, towards the Low Dnestr, which today is the main urban agglomeration, mainly because of the evolutions mentioned earlier (Muntele, 1998). These axis justify the viability of a trans border cooperation region extended at the historical Moldova scale and some other adjacent regions, indicating the the force lines that can be used as development axis.

Also remarkable are the differences resulted from the consistence of the populating system: population is more dense in the west, with an urban network that is more coherent and complex, resulted from an earlier modernization; more lax in the east, with a weaker urban network, as a result of the soviet model in organizing the territory, which favoured the regional metropolises and the elementary echelon. The different density of settlements is explained through the physical characteristics and through differentiation of the social
organization forms, especially through the perspective of land ownership, after the dismemberment of this unitary space.

Beyond these differences the unity of the recent demographic evolution is remarkable. The analysis of the two main demographic indicators between 1980-2007 is suggestive (table 1)

**Table no.1 : Comparative evolution of the demographical values (1980-2007)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Values</th>
<th>Period</th>
<th>ROMANIA</th>
<th>West Moldavia</th>
<th>REP. of MOLDOVA</th>
<th>UKRAINE</th>
<th>Region of Chernivtsi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Births rate</strong></td>
<td>1980-1984</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>20.3</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>17.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1985-1989</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>19.3</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>18.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1990-1994</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>14.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1995-1999</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2000-2004</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>10.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2005-2007</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>11.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Deaths rate</strong></td>
<td>1980-1984</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>10.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1985-1989</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1990-1994</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>11.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1995-1999</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>11.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2000-2004</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>12.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2005-2007</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>13.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Natural growth</strong></td>
<td>1980-1984</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1985-1989</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1990-1994</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>-2.1</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1995-1999</td>
<td>-0.7</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>-4.1</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2000-2004</td>
<td>-2.0</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>-1.2</td>
<td>-7.6</td>
<td>-2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2005-2007</td>
<td>-1.8</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>-1.4</td>
<td>-6.7</td>
<td>-2.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Republic of Moldova and the region of Chernivtsi have followed in general the same tendencies, closer to the west part of historical Moldova or Romania in general, rather than those in Ukraine. Thus, it is visible the unitary evolution during the 1980's and the first part of the 1990's, as an expression of a specific model, opposed, in some manner to the evolutions found in the neighbouring states (fig. 3).
It is remarkable that the west part of Moldova appeared as being more conservative on fertility (a higher rate of natality until 1995), but more advanced regarding mortality, in the conditions of an age structure almost identical to that in The Republic of Moldova, or Chernivtsi region (explained through the slightly lower life expectancy in the former Soviet space). In other words, these latter territories followed an almost identical demographic model to that of the European part of the former USSR. These influences can also be considered a manifestation of an ethnic structure substantially modified through massive colonization of groups of Russian and Ukrainian population.

The convergence of the natality tendencies evolution to the averages observed in the two reference states, Romania and Ukraine, can be looked at as a consequence of the increased international mobility, historical Moldova being today one of the major transmitters at European level. These conclusions are completed by the analysis of Romanian population distribution in this region, especially the rural characteristic which is dominant in the ex-Soviet space, this being a blockage in the way of assuming objective trans border cooperation (fig. 4).
3. THE MOLDAVIAN SPACE – A WEAKLY ARTICULATED TERRITORY BUT WITH A GREAT POTENTIAL FOR REGIONAL COHESION

The abstract analysis of the way in which the transport networks of the studied region could constitute the base of a territorial (re)articulation demonstrates the remaining of some divergent structures which give the impression of a disjunct territorial ensemble.

Practically, the logic of creating a railway transport network dominated by Russia or the old Austrian-Hungarian empire is still visible, with the all subsequent adjustments (fig. 5). Thus, the river Prut, which naturally should be one of the longitudinal privileged axis, is more like a barrier. If the western part presents some cohesion and a certain degree of autonomy, imposed by the presence of many nodal points, the rest of the region has a formless network, organized and administrated from outside the region, being dependent, or of secondary importance.

Also, in the case of the road network some similar spatial effects can be invoked, the river Prut having the same barrier role (mainly political, if we think that before 1812 it directed the main roads from the convergence center, which was in it's middle, towards the Iaşi area). Extremely obvious is the existence of some major convergence road nodes, firstly Chişinău, as an expression of the soviet centralism. Some of these nodes are in a somewhat dissonance with the natural conditions (the already cited case).
A more thorough look at the concordance between the communication potential in the studied region and the reality in the territory has been made by calculating some accessibility indicators: absolute (natural) accessibility and relative (territorial) accessibility (Muntele, 2004).

The natural accessibility indicator has the following formula:

$$ \text{Ian} = 100 \cdot \frac{d}{k} $$

where:
- $d$ – the average distance between every studied settlement and the neighbouring settlements;
- $a$ – the average altitude of every place, and $ea$, the average relief energy necessary for establishing contacts with neighbouring settlements on the shortest route;
- $k$ – coefficient with a value from 0 to 1, expressing the importance of the position near the river network.

The territorial accessibility indicator has the formula:

$$ \text{Iar} = 0.5(\text{Iar}_1 + \text{Iar}_2) $$

where:
- $\text{Iar}_1$ – indicator similar to Ian, but taking into account the real distance on road and introducing in the $k$ coefficient their quality;
Iar2 – is the result of pondering Iar1 with a demographic coefficient, cd, in which Po is the population of the reference settlement and Pv is the population of the neighbouring settlements.

The results of this analysis shows the fact that the space of historical Moldova, despite it’s relatively low altitude and the advantages derived from the presence of large rivers, with many important confluences (especially in the Siret basin), is still marked, in large areas by enclaves. Low concordance between the natural conditions and the major communications network is doubled by the severe barrier effect generated by the frontiers that cross this territory. In this context, to be able to create the basis for an efficient trans border cooperation, urgent measures are necessary, to reduce the isolation effects that affect not only rural areas but urban centers as well, which do not always have efficient connections.

4. CONCLUSIONS

This brief analysis of some of the criterions that represent the basis for creating a cooperation region, generates some important conclusions:

- trans border cooperation in this region is more than necessary, being a premise for giving dynamics to the economical activities, which are still marked by the communist politics that were inherited. Also, communism came over a profound crisis generated by the second world war (which included a cronical demographic decline);
- beyond this necessity a lot of political will is needed and a transparent strategy, with well directed objectives, in concordance with the proximity of the EU, respecting the universally recognized principles of minority rights, citizen travelling etc.;
- the relatively unitary characteristic of the region (both physical and human) can represent an advantage to improve trans border cooperation, if the communication barriers are removed. Starting a good cooperation calls for major investments for better transport networks, a key element in the articulation of geographical space.

REFERENCES


Muntele I. (1998), Populaţia Moldovei în ultimele două secole, Corson, Iaşi


