

## INSTITUTIONS AND VALUES OF ROMANIANS – COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF HISTORICAL REGIONS

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*Starting from the results of a national survey, a questionnaire on the values of Romanians was applied in April 2008 which was used for a comparative analysis of historical regions of Romania: Moldova, Bucharest, Dobrogea, Transilvania and Muntenia.*

*Our main purpose is to emphasize the fact that the stereotypes regarding the characteristics of Moldavians, Transilvanians or people from other regions, their superiority/inferiority are not statistically confirmed and therefore they are not scientifically demonstrated. Moreover, we intended to analyse the manner in which certain values, associated to some negative, informal institutions, considered to be characteristic to Romanians, can be found in Romania's historical regions and if there are any significant differences from this point of view.*

*Keywords: instrumental values, formal institutions, informal institutions, culture, regions*

*JEL Classification: A30, R11, Z10*

### **Introduction**

Ever since 1944 Lucian Blaga suggested the existence of a direct connection between the occupied space and the way the collective mentality is structured; the steppe generates a collective mentality different from the one created by the hill-valley alternation. Each people is dependent on the space it occupies, the space history, on its culture; however, the resulting differences should not be discussed in terms of quality (some are better than others) but in differential, specificity terms<sup>110</sup>. This is the case because, before being a Romanian or a Chinese, a person has some deep socio-psychological characteristics, which are common to all human beings.

Recent international research focuses mainly on cultural factors which draw a line between economic performance, work discipline, economic thinking, or the respect paid to some traditional institutions like property or contracts. Culture influences institutional development. At the same time, the integration of cultural elements within the frame of the institutions of society is a mechanism which leads to their own persistence<sup>111</sup>. In this context, it is necessary to be aware of the fact that certain behavior rules have a very slow changing rhythm, finding their origin in immutable cultural factors, while others can change to the extent to which the economic game is more attractive as far as the economic results are concerned. The *inherited* behavior rules and beliefs are constituted by and, at the same time, reflect the cognitive models shared by individuals, thus representing common knowledge in terms of expected and, at the same time, socially accepted behavior. These can hardly be changed and the main reason for this is the ideology of a social community.

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110 Ovidiu Ivancu, Nu mi-e rușine că sunt român... Mi-e indiferent!, 2009-03-24, <http://www.romanioliberal.com/articole/articol.php?care=9390>

111 M. Aoki, M., Fondements d'une analyse institutionnelle comparée, Albin Michel, 2006, p.16.

There are two or three dominant cultural patterns as far as the European level is concerned: *traditionalism*, *modernism*, and *post-modernism*. Of all the European countries, Romania is among the closest to traditionalism<sup>112</sup>, having the tendency to consolidate its traditional values thanks to the population's disappointment regarding political, economic and social changes after the fall of the Communist regime. The Romanian government introduced hesitant policies, dominated by compromise which brought no feeling of positive change. As a consequence, the Romanians' reluctance, as far as the power of state and the newly-created institutions, generally perceived as corrupt and inefficient, maintained socialism-influenced beliefs or managed to push society towards traditionalism and constantly cultivated the tendency towards not accepting the modernising of values. This is why the analysis of formal-informal institutions in the context of value change becomes much more relevant in Romania's case.

### **Methodology**

The data gathering method was the survey and the questionnaire was its instrument, applied at a national level, in April 2008, through the INFOMASS IAȘI company.

Of all the procedures used in surveys practice for sample formation (aleatory, controlled and mixed sample formation procedure), the mixed sample formation procedure was chosen and the stratified sample formation method was applied. The strata were delimited according to some qualitative criteria (cultural areas, the residential medium) and quantitative criteria (the size of localities). The sample was made up of sub-samples, created through selections at the stratum level.

The following types of questions were used: cloze questions (multiple choice and dichotomic answers), open questions and partially open questions. Factologic and opinion-based questions were also included. The Likert scale was used to measure the intensity of opinions expressed during the survey. This is a response scale on which the subject places his/her opinion between „agree” and „disagree”.

The questionnaire is made up of three parts:

- one part which contains *instrumental values* (types of action), using 15 out of the 18 original instrumental values of the Rokeach questionnaire, presented as bipolar statements on a Likert scale, on which the respondents had to express their approval, disapproval or neutrality;
- one part made up of *negative informal institutions* supposed to be characteristic to Romanians (task delay, lack of ambition, taking/giving bribes or „gifts”, neglect and laziness, envy, lack of punctuality, the „assisted” mentality, negative collective identity), all these being presented in the questionnaire in the form of positive statements with the purpose of checking the respondents' honesty, considering that they would not overtly admit the fact that they are envious, lazy or oriented towards neglect;
- and one part which comprises a set of *demo-economic* variables (the level of education, the field of activity the subject activates in, the number of family members, monthly income, personal wealth etc.)

The data analysis was achieved by using a series of statistic methods and techniques: tables, graphs, percents, correspondence analysis, analysis of variance.

### **Results**

As far as the first set of questions over instrumental values within the Rokeach value questionnaire is concerned the region analysis is synthesised in table no. 1 where the affirmative answers are presented in percents.

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112 Bogdan Voicu, Mădălina Voicu, Valori ale Românilor 1993-2006, Institutul European, Iași, 2007, pp. 306-309.

**Table no.1** *The Regional instrumental values evaluation*

Statement- value	Moldova	Buuresti	Dobrogea	Transilvania	Muntenia
A 1 / Afectiveness	71	83	94	90	85
A 2 / Ambition	84	67	85,4	85	82,4
A 3 / Obedience	48	35	53,4	61	57
A 4 / Competence	84	69	99	95	87,5
A 5 / Courage	76	44	61	60	60
A 6 / Cleanliness	84	73	98	96,4	91
A 7 / Creativity	57	47	55	55,4	52
A 8 / Independence	78	68	85	80	76
A 9 / Tolerance	57	62,5	80	75	70
A 10 / Inteligence	62	53	61	65	60
A 11 / Politeness	86	78	97	97	88
A 12 / Receptivity	78	48	61	58	61
A 13 / Responsibility	92	75	77	85	85
A 14 / Sincerity	56	45	73	60	72
A 15 / Cheerfulness	45	35	65	44	49

Therefore as far as representative characteristics are concerned, with over 75% positive answers, the following instrumental values are present in the historical regions:

1. for Moldova – ambition, competence, courage, cleanliness, independence, politeness, receptivity, responsibility;
2. for Bucuresti – affectiveness, politeness, responsibility;
3. for Dobrogea – affectiveness, ambition, competence, cleanliness, independence, tolerance, politeness, responsibility;
4. for Transilvania - affectiveness, ambition, competence, cleanliness, independence, tolerance, politeness, responsibility;
5. for Muntenia – affectiveness, ambition, competence, cleanliness, independence, politeness, responsibility.

We notice that, at the regional level, the most frequent values (present in at least 4 regions out of 5) are *affectiveness, ambition, competence, cleanliness, politeness, responsibility*. Values such as sincerity, receptivity, creativity obtained poor results, which confirms the idea that individual initiative still needs to be cultivated in the Romanians' case, for whom the competition mentality is not part of the socially accepted values yet. The correspondence analysis led us to the following associations between the above-presented instrumental values and regions in table no. 2, where the  $\checkmark$  sign indicates the presence of the characteristic.

**Table no.2** *The Association of instrumental values with the Regions*

Statement- value	Moldova	București	Dobrogea	Transilvania	Muntenia
A 1 / Afectiveness			✓	✓	✓
A 2 / Ambition	✓		✓	✓	
A 3 / Obedience				✓	✓
A 4 / Competence			✓	✓	✓
A 5 / Courage	✓				
A 6 / Cleanliness				✓	✓
A 7 / Creativity				✓	
A 8 / Independence				✓	
A 9 / Tolerance				✓	
A 10 / Inteligence				✓	
A 11 / Politeness			✓	✓	✓
A 12 / Receptivity				✓	
A 13 / Responsibility	✓	✓		✓	✓
A 14 / Sincerity					✓

A 15 / Cheerfulness				√	√
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From the perspective of the two dimensions of the above-mentioned axiological orientations – *traditionalism* and *modernism* or *postmodernism*, we notice that the region which gathers most of the modernism characteristics (8, out of which 5, of the most representative, are exclusively found here) is Transilvania, which leads us to the conclusion that this region is the closest to modernism.

As far as the questions regarding negative informal institutions – considered to be representative for Romanians – (slink attitude, task delay, lack of involvement, neglect, shallowness, taking/giving bribes, laziness, envy, lack of punctuality, the „assisted” mentality, negative collective mentality) are concerned, the hierarchy patterned by the respondents in the five historical regions is synthetised in table no. 3, by gathering the *total agreement* and *partial agreement* percents.

**Table no. 3** *The regional evaluation of negative informal institutions (%)*

Statement- institution	Moldova	București	Dobrogea	Transilvania	Muntenia
B 1 / Slink attitude	9	3	6	6	9
B 2 / Task delay	45	48	56	47	42
B 3 / Lack of involvement	11,4	5	11	6	8
B 4 / Shallowness	22	8	8	5	16
B 5 / Bribery	15,4	11	9	7	9,4
B 6 / Laziness	6	1	1	9	5,4
B 7 / Envy	36	44	40	36	31
B 8 / Lack of punctuality	20,4	7	21	10,4	18
B 9 / „Assisted” mentality	74	60	89,4	74	76
B 10 / Negative collective identity	57	48,4	72	67	63

Thus, a strong negative characteristic, with over 74% of the answers, is the „assisted” mentality for Moldova, Dobrogea, Transilvania and Muntenia. As far as Bucharest is concerned, this characteristic is present in over 60% of the answers. *The negative collective identity* is present in over 50 % of the positive answers in Moldova, Transilvania and Muntenia and in over 72% in Dobrogea. *The task delay* characteristic is to be found at the limit between 40 and 50% in all the regions, the greatest approval percentage being identified in Dobrogea with 56% percent. The well known Romanian *envy* is not statistically confirmed as a dominant characteristic, the result being between 31% and 44% in all regions.

The simple correspondence analysis led us to the following negative types of behavior (institutions) associations:

- as far as the „*assisted*” *mentality* is concerned the association is made between the „total agreement” and Dobrogea and Moldova; Muntenia and Transilvania are related to „partial agreement”;

- as far as *the negative collective identity* is concerned, we notice an association between the „total agreement” and Dobrogea; „I hardly agree” or „neither agreement nor disagreement” and Bucharest; „total disapproval” or „partial approval” and Transilvania, Muntenia and Moldova;

- as far as the task delay characteristic is concerned, the association was confirmed by „total approval” in the case of Bucharest, while the inhabitants of Transilvania totally disapprove this.

The multiple correspondence analysis led us to the following associations between negative behavior (institutions) and regions:

- for Moldova – the „assisted” mentality and envy;
- for Bucharest – envy;
- for Muntenia – the „assisted” mentality.

The corelation between **the negative informal institutions** and the respondents’ income according to the region criterion registered a significant value for:

- for Bucharest– *the lack of involvement, shallowness, and the „assisted” mentality*;

- for Dobrogea– *the slink attitude, lack of involvement, punctuality, the „assisted” mentality and negative collective identity;*
- for Transilvania – *lack of involvement.*

Although it is a well-known fact that Moldova is the poorest among Romania’s regions, no significant correlation between negative cultural characteristics and the respondents’ non-performant status was identified.

### Conclusions

The most frequent instrumental values (present in 4 regions out of 5) are *affectiveness, ambition, competence, cleanliness, politeness, responsibility*. Values such as *sincerity, receptivity, creativity* obtained only a poor percentage, a fact which confirms the idea that individual initiative still needs to be cultivated in the Romanians’ case, for whom the competition mentality is not part of the socially-accepted values yet. The simple correspondence method demonstrated that the region which gathers most of the modernity characteristics, (8 out of which 5, among the most representative, are to be found exclusively here) is Transilvania, thus being different from the rest of the regions.

Out of the negative informal institutions, considered to be representative for Romanians, the hierarchy created by the respondents confirms the initial hypothesis of the dominance of the *„assisted” mentality* and of *the negative collective identity*, which had a clear impact and with a poorer percent *the task delay* and *envy*. They demonstrate that even after 20 years of communism, the free and self-determined man’s mentality is not rooted, as far as the collective mentality is concerned. The simple correspondence method showed an association between the *„total approval”* response and Dobrogea and Moldova for the *„assisted” mentality*, and between Dobrogea and *the negative collective identity* and *task delay* and Bucharest.

The results of the present research confirm the fact that if motivation exists, behavior can improve by internalising efficient formal institutions, and economic agents can thus appreciate those values which enable the behavioral adjustment to the new institutional context, even though this is a long-term learning process. The gradual increase of the population’s welfare doubled by corruption diminution at the level of national institutions are conditions which, added to the population’s *diffuse support*, are imperatives for transition at the level of values and behavior.

Romanians lack *social trust and involvement*, a fact which is demonstrated both by the present research and by studies performed by international studies: nevertheless, they increase capital and social welfare; this is why we consider that the *alfa* and *omega* for any institutional reform or of any socio-political policy should be their support and development on a social level. Just like identity, trust is built by having as a point of departure the past –the sum of values and traditions, actions and motivating facts – all given value, widely-recognised and cultivated both at the group as well as at the community level.

We are convinced that the Romanians’ pessimistic obsessions regarding their own flaws can righteously be abandoned. We have tried to demonstrate so far that the Romanians, as people, are neither superior nor inferior to others, and this is why we believe that only by trusting each other can we have the life we desire.

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