

REGIONAL DYNAMICS – DYNAMICS OF REGIONALISM:
A (CON)TEXTUALIZED EUROPEAN DEBATE

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Abstract. The present article is a first form of research dedicated to decentralized governance, part of the fundamental academic-encyclopaedic project dedicated to the *State Encyclopaedia* by the Department of Political Science of the Institute of Political Science and International Relations “Ion I. C. Brătianu” of the Romanian Academy. Maintained (still!) marginally in the central corpus of political science, the issues and relevance of the region will be reporting to the regional courts/decision-making authorities, a substantial part of the mechanisms that guide the consolidated-advanced democracies, with a wider range of political responsibilities and with growing interregional political variations. Thus, regional dynamics is strongly highlighted as a *critical space of government*, positioned between two terminals, with specified landmarks both in global requests and in local resistances/adaptations. We will follow and contextualize the approach established by European Union policies as a fundamental part of its revitalization and functional adaptation to the context of the 21st century, through those *voluntary forms and formulas of regional governance*, questioning the way in which *the logic of interregional cooperation derives from the European model of success*.

Keywords: *Regional Dynamics; Deterritorialization – Reterritorialization – Transregionalism; Regionalization; Subsidiarity; Multilevel Governance*

*Decentralized Governance
– an Articulated Projection and a Continuing Project*

The Official Journal of the European Union pivot(ingly) includes, in the series of opinion papers dedicated to decentralization¹, a set of specific

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¹ “Avizul Comitetului Regiunilor privind descentralizarea în Uniunea Europeană și rolul autonomiei locale și regionale în elaborarea și punerea în aplicare a politicilor UE – Opinion of the Committee of the Regions on decentralization in the European Union and the role of local and regional self-government in the development and implementation of EU policies (2013 / C 139/08)”, in *Jurnalul Oficial al Uniunii Europene – The Official Journal of the European Union*, C 139/39 17.5.2013, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/RO/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52012AR2214&from=ES>, accessed on 13 January 2022.

benchmarks and punctual recommendations as the argued product/result of monitoring the said process; steps to quantify post-2005 developments²; an evaluation of the advantages and principles of the phenomenon, questioning the relationship/report between decentralization, the financial field and *independentism* tendencies, but also highlighting two aspects with extra relevance for the issue of this study: *multilevel governance* (inter) related to *effective and functional regional and local autonomy, with the correct application of the principle of subsidiarity*, and a vision for the future of Europe. The latter is an articulated projection and an ongoing project integrating both the regional and local levels, stipulating that “the legitimacy of the European Union derives, inter alia, from the legitimacy of the sub-national levels”, thus inviting to an examination of the proportion and value in which “decentralization, accompanied by effective local and possibly regional autonomy, can be considered one of the prerequisites for accession to the European Union”.³ Interpreted in the light of the terminological and defining context accepted by the Committee of the Regions, decentralization is a set of “measures taken at political level to strengthen the role of subnational authorities in the decision-making process at national and European level and to transfer competencies from the central administration to local and regional institutions”⁴, the efficiency and coherence of the process being conferred by the interdependence of *subsidiarity, proportionality and the (European culture) of multi-level governance*.

Expressing an actual(ising) debate, *the option* of decentralization needs to be integrated into a changing European architecture: on the one hand, the Lisbon Treaty strengthens the principle of subsidiarity and creates the broader context for planning and implementing institutional reforms aimed at “a more comprehensive decentralization” (*amplified*); on the other hand, the financial-economic crisis (2009) and the public debt crisis (2010) are braking(ly) reducing the pace/flow of intensification of decentralization, and changing the relationship between/in national states and European institutions, a relationship disrupt(ed) even at the sub-national level. Evaluatively, the document uses the identification of the

² The fixed framework of regional autonomy, of European-normative origin, is based on precise regulations and avails itself of the legislative and instrumental context of the European Charter of Local Self-Government, the European Charter of Regional Autonomy and the Declaration of the Assembly of European Regions on regionalism.

The main directions of Community European regional policy can be found in the approach guided and coordinated by the Associations of the Regions, the Departments of Community Affairs and the “Information Offices” which, through the Maastricht Treaty, set the legitimat(ing) creation of the Committee of the Regions. This institutional architecture brings together the Assembly of European Regions and, within the Council of Europe, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities (Local Chamber and Chamber of Regions) – see, in this regard, Romeo Ionescu, “Experiența europeană în materie de federalizare și de regionalizare – The European experience in matters of federalization and regionalization”, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/308657171_EXPERIENTA_EUROPEANA_IN_MATERIE_DE_FEDERALIZARE_SI_DE_REGIONALIZARE, accessed on 14 January 2022.

³ “Avizul Comitetului Regiunilor privind descentralizarea în Uniunea Europeană și rolul autonomiei locale și regionale în elaborarea și punerea în aplicare a politicilor UE – Opinion of the Committee of the Regions on decentralization in the European Union and the role of local and regional self-government in the development and implementation of EU policies (2013 / C 139/08)”, paragraphs 65 – 68.

⁴ *Ibidem*, paragraph 1.

current situation (referring to 2013), that of decentralization in Europe, highlighting – with recourse to three specific individualisations (paras 29 – 31)] – that “three of the 27 EU Member States have, from the formal point of view, a federal structure, one Member State is quasi-federal, and the others can be characterized as unitary states/states with different forms of organization, some of them having a heterogeneous territorial organization structure, despite their formal status of unitary states (asymmetrical system); eleven Member States have a single level, nine have two levels of government and seven are organized at three sub-national levels.”⁵ It is stated that “in some states (*in the context of the catalysing context of the economic and financial crisis*, we note) various processes of territorial reorganization of local and regional authorities have occurred, sometimes leading to considerable changes in the institutional organization of power structures”⁶, without these changes leading to “wider decentralization”.⁷ The fair application of the political-legal *principle of subsidiarity*, as a “decisive driving force for decentralization” (in addition to *proportionality*), determin(ingly) co-implies *multilevel governance* as well as effective and functional regional-local autonomy, through the guaranteed cooperation approach between the government and the administration levels.

Regional Dynamics – Dynamics of Regionalism

The “regions of Europe” demand to be studied in depth in theory, using a philosophical phrase laden with imagery expressing what Roger Scully and Richard Wyn Jones⁸ mentioned through a “series of images from those parts of Europe whose evidence, confident sense of identity and importance distinguishes them from the status of simple *localities*”, integrated into a tradition and history

⁵ *Ibidem*, paragraph 29.

Within the constitutional-administrative structure, the European space knows and applies a provision of regionalization related to five key elements, recognized in/through: *administrative regionalization* (Greece, Portugal, England, Sweden); *regionalization mediated by local authorities* (Germany, Denmark, Finland, Ireland); *regional decentralization* (France – with a full implementation formula; administrative regions in Portugal, Wales, Sweden, Poland and the Czech Republic); *political regionalization or regional autonomy/institutional regionalism* (Spain, Italy, Belgium; areas of Great Britain and Portugal); *regionalization facilitated by the federal authorities* (Switzerland, Belgium, Germany and Austria) – see Romeo Ionescu, *quoted article*.

⁶ *The European Charter of Regional Autonomy* (Council of Europe, June 2016) specifically addresses the conceptual significance of the phrase “decentralization of power”. The first regulations stipulate “building a Europe based on the principles of democracy and *decentralization of power* (we underline)” – p. 11; the second argument concerns one of the Charter’s guiding principles, that of “the essential contribution of local self-government to democracy, efficient administration and the *decentralization of power* (we underline)” – p. 41; the third details the mechanism of *decentralization of the exercise of public powers* (we underline), a clause that does not imply the need for *systematic decentralization of functions* (we underline), in favour of local authorities (p. 46).

⁷ “Avizul Comitetului Regiunilor privind descentralizarea în Uniunea Europeană și rolul autonomiei locale și regionale în elaborarea și punerea în aplicare a politicilor UE – Opinion of the Committee of the Regions on decentralization in the European Union and the role of local and regional self-government in the development and implementation of EU policies (2013 / C 139/08)”, paragraph 30.

⁸ Roger Scully, Richard Wyn Jones (eds.), *Europe, Regions and European Regionalism*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.

(*bourgeois virtues*) imprinted with the landmarks and reflections of a perpetuated *bürgerliche Gesellschaft*, a dynamic horizon foreshadowed and supported by a successful motor/moving matrix (see, in this respect, the success of the regions of Baden–Württemberg, Rhône–Alpes, Lombardy or Catalonia).

For Roger Scully and Richard Wyn Jones, the evaluation register of the regions must be reported to a series of well-known European developments and projects. A first initiative would target the projected horizon of an increased role of the regions in European governance, through the Delors Commission, the regions being positioned as beneficiaries of a process that highlighted the devolution of the powers of the traditional sovereign state, a development direction belonging to the European federalists according to whom “developing the links between the Commission and the regions was the only available step towards a truly federal system”. The second criterion belongs to a hierarchical direction, considering (against the background of the 80s) that “a Europe of regions can completely eclipse the Europe of states” (a construction eroded both horizontally and vertically), a perspective whose prominence lies in attaching the increased independence of the regions to the integration agenda. The option was materialized by the creation of the Committee of the Regions, part of the prospective trend towards the creation of a *pan-European Bundesrat*. The third tendency lists the reluctance of the role and place of European regions, with stated precautions/scepticism regarding the possible erosion of the state through the practice of European regionalization. Integrated in a retrospective look, the mentioned directions are affixed by Roger Scully and Richard Wyn Jones to stagnant realities: geopolitical developments have surpassed and postponed the possibilities of concretization of regional Europe; following the collapse of Communism, the dominant issue in European politics (in the mid-1990s) was not the rise of regionalism, but the enlargement of the European Union towards Central and Eastern Europe; diminishing to annihilation the intentions that underpinned the agenda of regionalism, by referring to the consumption of capital and political substance invested in the enlargement process. Roger Scully and Richard Wyn Jones highlight three key interdependent factors in this regard: the enlargement of the Union, which helped to strengthen the dominant position of the states within the so-called construct; the lack of a tradition of regional governance; and the lack of resources to strengthen the regionalist point of view. *Dimension counts* and becomes the motto of action, a component of a quantifiable reality: “The Europe of 27 states is also a Europe of many, many more regions.”⁹

More than a philosophical syntagm, the issue involves a statistical-standardized request, attributed to the French nomenclature – *des unités territoriales statistiques* – mapping a Europe that totals (approximately) 268 regions and whose challenge lies in coordinating a common position either by reporting or extrapolating real/potential actors; or by reducing the prerogatives of implementation (to the detriment of coordination and development) of regional policy¹⁰: “There is a

⁹ *Ibidem*, pp. 1-2.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 3.

world (*European* – we underline) of difference between the regions of Bulgaria or Hungary, on the one hand, and Scotland and Catalonia, on the other hand. (...) The differences between the regions are much greater even than those separating the sovereign states. ...) (...) The expansion of entities ranges from historical nations to mere administrative conveniences which represent political-constitutional units that differ from something approaching proto-states, to essentially notional shells fully subject to state governance, as well as more localized levels of government”¹¹.

Difficult to include in a functional definition framework, but maintained in the scheme of reporting regionalism to a landmark considered flexible and ambiguous, the definition of regions can only be deduced from/through the theory and practice of European policy, with reference to three guid(ing) directions recognized in/by the following qualifications: *statistical* (with a key role in collecting, presenting and quantifying data to determine the proportion of structural funding, in an attempt to develop a relatively standardized system of regions), *administrative* (with distinct bureaucratic variables and prerogatives) and *affective* (one that refers to the identification image)¹². The perspective takes into consideration all clarifications of the constitutional status of the regions (insofar as they are incorporated in the fundamental principles of state governance itself), of the powers, autonomy and administrative capacity of the regions (the extent to which they are structures/ centres of power in their own right) and the ability of regional structures to attract diffuse public institutional support (public attachment providing a plus-argument to the region as a distinct entity).

The dynamics of regionalism are defined by directions of action, recognized in *Euro-regionalism* (regionalization of government structures as part of the extended integration process, integral with the *communitary acquis*), *state-regionalism/ state regionalism* (context in which government efficiency and development economics become forms of regionalization emanating from the state level, as a prime decision-making factor) and *regional-regionalism* (forms of manifestation of regional identity from within the region). The mentioned directions are (inter) related: “the tendencies of *state-regionalism* can be an attempt to contain, direct and balance certain *regional-regionalizing* pressures. *The regionalizers* will offer to ensure the recognition of the region within a larger project of state regionalization. *The regionalizers* are also trying to take advantage of the open possibilities of Euro-regionalism and the integration process, in a more general sense”¹³. However, the role of the regions remains limited in European policy processes, not so much through political decision-makers as through the involvement of the “contributor in the policy-making process” and the intervention of project “implementers”. What is perceived is an integrated situation of a common European tradition/philosophy, *but* with particular accents and a recalculated trajectory – from Jacobin centralism to formal federalism: “in some cases, the

¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 4.

¹² *Ibidem*, p. 6.

¹³ *Ibidem*, pp. 8-9.

regions have extensive capacities and powers to create and implement policies; in other cases, the regions are little more than mere administrative channels for the implementation of policies decided at higher levels”¹⁴.

The evaluative context proposed by Roger Scully and Richard Wyn Jones summarizes evidence stating that the forces of Euro-regionalism remain marked by a temperate dynamics (by reference to the European Regions Agenda of the 1980s and 1990s), but are not irrelevant yet, despite the persistence of a background with a diminished regionalized impulse, marked by the relaxation of the attitude (*affective* dimension) regarding the realization of the maximalist-integrative vision: “for example, the regional-regionalists of the Länder seem to have concluded that the constitutionally sanctioned state-regionalism of the Bundesrepublik offers stronger guarantees for its own position than the weak and amorphous force of Euro-regionalism. Recognizing and empowering regions at European level is in the interests of the strongest decision-making centres in the EU”¹⁵. Size/ dimension remains a relevant criterion (small states, such as Ireland and Estonia, have less “space” at regional level than Germany), in the absence of a formal constitutional text (see the UK’s inability to grant integrative status regionalism to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland), but also manifestations of regional attachment (in Catalonia, Scotland and Flanders regional autonomy is equivalent to the minimum-absolute formula of sub-state nationalism; with the necessary provision that not every sub-state nationalism demands regional autonomy and that not all regional pressures correspond to some form of manifestational identity)¹⁶.

Focusing on the deepening-conceptualization of Europe as a region, Boyka M. Stefanova¹⁷ maps the region/regions by reference to the sum of premises of structural interdependence, in the Buzan-ian sense, considering them “distinct and significant subsystems of security relations between states, whose fate is to be connected to each other through geographical proximity”. The approach is a retrospective recovery of regional configurations, via the Cold War period (through static matrices related to the balance of power and commented on by syntagms such as *regional security complex*, *hegemonic alliance*, *security community* or *state-regional societies*), in the sense that “territory has never been a defining factor in determining regional cohesion”; hence the logical conclusion that, geopolitically, Europe cannot be linked to any “conventional notion”, nor can it be dependent on any “general model of structural interdependence”. Through these cross-cutting, multi-layered and multidimensional assessments and *patterns*, “regions are defined in terms of geographical contiguity, structural interdependence, common institutions, threats and responses, functional opportunities and cultural identities”, the territorial configuration of regionalism representing – contextually and practically – a key objective for the European

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 9.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, pp. 243-244.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 244.

¹⁷ Boyka M. Stefanova, *The European Union and Europe’s New Regionalism. The Challenge of Enlargement, Neighborhood, and Globalization*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2018.

Union: “regional integration in Europe alleviates the conditions of Westphalian sovereignty by pooling state resources and creating supranational institutions and territorial structures of government, which will collectively modify the types of interactions through which sovereignty is implemented. Territorial, functional and cultural boundaries do not necessarily overlap, converging into an emerging post-national political system”¹⁸.

According to Boyka M. Stefanova, the internal-external problem of *European territoriality-become-regionalism* disposes of the attributes of institutional cohesion and system of governance on several levels (in itself, a mechanism to support accentuated regional mobility and interactions with plus-convergence and efficiency), by “pluralizing territorial and functional interests” and by (externally) projecting its economic efficiency, maximizing welfare and valuing geopolitical tectonics, by transgressing fixed political patterns (*enlargement*, *neighbourhood* and *representation*), stating that “the EU has changed the territoriality of the national state by establishing a post-territorial political order and a multi-perspective policy.” The nominated proposal can be quantified both by delegating powers at supranational level and by decentralizing responsibilities at the subnational and regional levels, respecting the principle of subsidiarity. *Detente* recovers the principles of constructivism (as spatial-identity architecture) and liberal regulations for the valorisation of Euro regionalism, in the sense that “sovereignty maintains its constitutional validity within regional arrangements”¹⁹.

Through an analytical-comparative approach, Boyka M. Stefanova assesses the processes of regional restructuring accentuated by/in Western Europe in the context of European integration, considering (in the process of extending the 2004 – 2007 interval) that the effects directly felt in the territorial policy of Eastern Europe were marked by a low incidence, recognized in/by “state sensitivities and resistance to decentralization”. Easily mutable, *the old regionalism*, reflected by the primacy of regional cohesion, by the institutionalization of regional interdependence, by multilevel governance and macro-political structuring, becomes a formula revalued through *the new regionalism*, which emphasizes – on parity – regional integration and cooperation, paying attention to the internal – regional – global axis through the decision of “progressive remodelling, through the common market of trade and investment, in an emerging political system of regional representation”²⁰. From here, Boyka M. Stefanova also questions the possible data of an *open regionalism* of Europe (whose priority is the global system of international trade and investment) and announces/marks *the end of the conventional regionalism* of the European Union, considering that *the new regionalism* (a formulation of *open regionalism*) “challenges both the classic Westphalian notions of territoriality and the more recent understandings of the region. It captures the effort to reap the full benefits of regional liberalization without jeopardizing the continued vitality of the multilateral system”²¹.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 163.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 165.

²⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 168.

²¹ *Ibidem*.

The displayed perspective implies an accumulation of particularized concepts – *detrterritorialization* (a philosophically recovered construct, via Deleuze and Guattari, inside the cultural matrix of post-sovereignty and globalization, as a disjunctive formula between/in culture and space); *supranationalism* (deep regional integration strategy); *transnationalism* (questioning the role of territory as an attribute of sovereignty); *reterritorialization* (detrterritorialisation of regional integration projects) or *diffusion* (interconnection of cross-border transactions, communication and detrterritorialisation of loyalties, by outsourcing state functions, in particular by privatizing security and supranational governance).²² Boyka M. Stefanova critically analyses the change of territorial dynamics in the post-enlargement stage of European regionalism, following the manifested changes stemming from the first stages of European integration through the development of the Union as an inward-oriented regional system problematizing territoriality through resources and policy-making, later extended to include open regionalism as a formula for elasticising trans-regional and global interactions. The European internal market, freedom of movement or the enhancement of interregional relations become landmarks of the *relative detrterritorialization* of European regionalism, a process added to the creation of new territorial structures of structural interdependence. Brexit, the negotiations of the Free Trade Agreement between the European Union and the United States or the *One Belt One Road* Chinese regional projects are characteristic examples of the detrterritorialization and reterritorialization processes of the policy of European regionalism²³.

In the spirit of projective evaluations, Antonio Cantaro²⁴ investigates the approach of overcoming theory on several levels, positioning its rise in the tendency to overlap with the ideology of the Union, by (inter)relating “judicial maximalism” and “political minimalism”; an effect recognized, on the one hand, through unconvincing institutional-political integration and, on the other hand, through “overcoming the limits and dilemmas of the monistic, dualistic and pluralistic paradigms that have contextualized the correlation between legal systems for far too long”. The decline of the paradigm lies in the constitutional crisis, as a result of different sources of conflict and legitimacy overvalued by contemporary legal systems and public decision-making processes.²⁵ Developments in the process are signalled in the post-Lisbon Treaty context by the weaknesses of the Constitutional Union, by increased asymmetry and by the lack of a *locus decidendi* and a *modus decidendi* (see, in this sense, the sovereign debt crisis in/from the old economic governance framework). The paradigm stake is considered by Antonio Cantaro to be a doctrinaire one, that of maintaining

²² *Ibidem*, pp. 170-173.

²³ *Ibidem*, p. 191.

²⁴ Antonio Cantaro, “Overcoming of Multilevel Theory, Within Relationships Among Europe, Member States and Subnational Levels of Government”, in Stelio Mangiameli (ed.), *The Consequences of the Crisis on European Integration and on the Member States. The European Governance between Lisbon and Fiscal Compact*, Springer, 2017.

²⁵ *Ibidem*, pp. 19-20.

legal pluralism by ensuring the guarantee and legality of the European legal system of constitutional origin, demanding a combined decision regarding the crisis and a punctual approach through legitimate institutions with clear powers at the level of parliamentary representation and national governments: “if each National Court could propose its *own* interpretation of EU law, it would add up to 29 different versions, and its effectiveness would remain closed within national borders”. Antonio Cantaro identifies two sources of different-conflict legitimacy, mentioning, on the one hand, *the legitimacy of the welfare of citizens* through participation and rights codified in the corpus of national Constitutions of the democratic and social states and, on the other hand, *the legitimacy of financial markets* through which “the sovereign debt crisis has shown the existence of these two different areas, removed and ignored by multilevel constitutionalism, regarding the total belief in *balancing* the interests of the governing powers as the one and only performance to be accomplished by a pertinently good legal doctrine.”²⁶ One possible solution is to re-evaluate the conflict doctrine itself, with realistic recognition of conflicting requests addressed to public authorities through visible-legal and binding decisions taken in the public sphere.

Issues and Relevance of the Region

Maintained (still!) marginally in the central corpus of political science, the issues and relevance of the region²⁷ demand to be reported to the regional courts/ decision – making authorities, substantial parts of the mechanisms that guide consolidated/advanced democracies, with a wider range of political responsibilities and with growing interregional political variations. According to Charlie Jeffery, the secondary status of the field lies in the perpetuated effect of theories of fundamental modernization for the key fields of post-war political science, subsumed to the coordinates of the national state received as a unitary construct and condition/criterion for demarcating problems and phenomena integrated in the social sciences. The appeal is dependent on “methodological-nationalist”²⁸ hypotheses that minimize territorial effects, distorting them by assimilation into the state: “even if there was a strong trend of institutional decentralization in all states, the new federal structures did not lead to regionalization of voting

²⁶ *Ibidem*, pp. 26-27.

²⁷ Ailsa Henderson, Charlie Jeffery and Daniel Wincott define the region as “a coherent territorial entity located between the local and state level of government, with the capacity to make decisions”. Regional institutions, actors, and processes transform the (national) state by “denationalizing” and reformulating it as “a more complex form of multilevel political organization that must meet the requirements of distinct regional political communities as well as the organized political community at the state level”. What comes after the “national state” is not its regional disintegration or the emergence of the “Europe of the Regions”, but the process of consolidating levelled statehood: “Regions now matter directly to voters, political parties and interest groups”, health, education, the environment, regional economic policy and in some cases security and taxation becoming the responsibilities of regional institutions (see in this sense, Ailsa Henderson, Charlie Jeffery, Daniel Wincott eds. *Citizenship after the Nation State Regionalism, Nationalism and Public Attitudes in Europe*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2014, pp. 7-10).

²⁸ Ailsa Henderson, Charlie Jeffery, Daniel Wincott (eds.) *quoted work.*, pp. 1-2.

behaviour in the last decades ... the period after the Second World War has witnessed a fundamental stability of the territorial configurations of the vote in Europe”²⁹.

The perspective draws attention to the (distinctive) regional character in voting behaviour, inventorying the repercussions of “denationalization”. The named attitude/option measures regional fluctuations and differentiations, validating the hypothesis that strong regional identities relate to regional elections through a distinct, denationalized logic, even if identity effects fade within general-state elective mechanisms by disconnecting elections from regional issues and policy dynamics at the state level: “Where regional political communities aspire to political goals other than those that adhere to the state-level understanding of policy goals, the regionalized perspective is often described as harmful or regressive, undermining social solidarity rather than an alternative outcome based on legitimate electoral preferences”³⁰. The argument is dismantled by Charlie Jeffery by resorting to three obvious findings: the region decides the level of involvement based on a legitimate political program, through regional electoral competition; regional governments must consider raising welfare standards, as opposed to bringing them into a harmful and downward spiral of interregional competition; none of the implemented regional projects argues in favour of the hypothesis that the nation-state would become redundant or insignificant as regional policy becomes more important.

Regional dynamics stands out strongly as a “critical space of government” positioned between two terminals, with landmarks specified in global demands and in local resistances/ adaptations, as a framework highlighted by “complex networks of power, interaction and identity”³¹. The policies of the European Union are key parts of its revitalization and functional adaptation to the 21st century context, through those “voluntary” forms and formulas of regional governance that give states and peoples the opportunity to better manage security issues, to benefit from the economic gains of globalization, to fully express themselves culturally and identitarily and to influence world affairs”³².

Interregional relations and hierarchies play a decisive role as approaches in the management of the Union’s external relations although, in theory, the concept of “interregionalism” remains, in its turn, a “vague and changeable” alternative (only when and where multilateralism and traditional bilateralism fail). Although punctually undefined, the concept denotes a deductive reality (“interregionalism provides a natural response to managing global interdependence”), allowing for a specific analytical framework (at the intersection of realistic perspectives and landmarks of the institutionalist school of thought) which relies on the formulation of five conjugated functions/ prerogatives, expressed in/by

²⁹ *Ibidem*, pp. 3-4.

³⁰ *Ibidem*, pp. 5-6.

³¹ Joren Selleslaghs, Mario Telò, Madeleine O. Hosli, “The European Union: Integration, Institutions and External Relations in a Globalised and Regionalised World”, in Hosli, Madeleine O., Joren Selleslaghs (eds). *The Changing Global Order: Challenges and Prospects*, Springer, 2020, pp. 163-177.

³² *Ibidem*, p. 165.

balancing (of international actors), *institutional strengthening*, *rationalization*, *agenda setting* and *collective identity building*, all with a decisive role in expressing the view that “regional integration and regionalism can enhance peace, prevent conflicts, support regional economic convergence and promote cross-border problem solving and better use and management of natural resources”³³. The guiding assertion insists that “the logic of interregional cooperation derives from the successful European model”, a project accepted in/by promoting liberal internationalism, building the Union’s global player identity and promoting its power and competitiveness. The regional level requires to be considered as a conjugate inter-relationship of bilateral, sub-regional and interregional relations, multifaceted in form, without being an export model, but the result of “mutual inspiration, obtained from different, combined regional experiences”³⁴.

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³³ *Ibidem*, p. 169.

³⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 173.