Path Dependency, World Systems Analysis, or Alternative Modernity? Research Notes on Interwar Romania and the Bucharest Sociological School

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Abstract: *This article assesses the concept of alternative modernity from the perspective of the social modernization and nation-building projects undertaken by the Bucharest Sociological School during the interwar period. The analysis commences with a critique of the theoretical field that hitherto provided the principal explanatory models for understanding interwar Romania, namely the concept of path dependence and world-systems theory. It then proceeds to scale down the comparative civilization approach, underpinning alternative modernities theory into a more discrete, socially-grounded definition of alternative modernity appropriate to the specific time period and local context. This is accomplished, on the one hand, by means of a critical assessment of recent scholarship pertaining to the alternative modernity of interwar Romania and, on the other hand, by foregrounding the issues of local agency and geopolitical context. I thus argue that the vision of an alternative, quintessentially rural and "Romanian" modernity elaborated by the Bucharest Sociological School was inserted into the social structure by means of a culturally specific program of socio-economic modernization of the rural world. This program was consciously elaborated as a sociologically informed alternative to the dominant, urban forms of modernity prevailing in the West.*

Keywords: Interwar Romania; Bucharest Sociological School; path dependency; world-systems theory; local agency; alternative modernities theory.
Cuvinte-cheie: România interbelică; Școala Sociologică de la București; dependența de cale; teoria sistemelor mondiale; agenție locală; teoria modernităților alternative.

Introduction

This article pertains to a doctoral research project whose working hypothesis is that the Bucharest Sociological School, whose principal founder was Dimitrie Gusti (1880-1955), elaborated and partially inserted into the social structure the vision of an alternative, rural, and quintessentially "Romanian" modernity. The purpose here is to consider what the concept of "alternative modernity" might mean in the context of interwar Romania. To be more precise, I will attempt to sketch out a practicable and ***socially grounded*** definition of this concept in the hope that this endeavor will stimulate further discussion concerning the explanatory potential of competing macrosociological perspectives when applied to the period under examination. Since this definition of alternative modernity will be refined and further elaborated by means of empirical research, this article ought to be taken as evidence of work in progress.

The present inquiry will, therefore, commence with a critique of the theoretical field within which the working hypothesis of the overall research project is articulated. This field is structured across the related domains of historical sociology and historiography. The main

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argument elaborated here is that, in the context of interwar (but also pre-World War I) Romania, a workable definition of alternative modernity must endeavor to move beyond both the insights and limitations inherent in analyses predicated upon notions of path dependence. It must seek instead to synthesize explanations provided by world-systems theory, with understandings derived from the more recent paradigm of "alternative modernities". Consequently, I will first demonstrate why world-systems theory provides a better explanatory model than path dependent approaches, for the purposes of analyzing interwar Romania. Next, the comparative civilization approach underpinning the current "alternative modernities" theory (Eisenstadt, 2003) will be scaled down into a more discreet conception of an alternative modernity specific to interbellic Romania. This will be accomplished, on the one hand, by building on the main critical insight of world systems theory, namely that transnational relations are predicated upon asymmetrical powersaturated processes and, on the other hand, by foregrounding the autonomy of the cultural dimensions of the world system and the issue of local agency. My analysis will make clear that current "alternative modernity" models are better equipped to handle the related issues of culture and agency, particularly as they relate to the nationbuilding and social modernization program of the Bucharest Sociological School.

Last, but not least, I suggest that recent research into the alternative modernity of interwar Romania constitutes a promising start. At the same time, there remains much work done in terms of fleshing out the social as opposed to the intellectual dimension of this approach. Concretely, what the current scholarship still lacks are thorough studies of the organizational actors and specific modalities whereby visions of a specific Romanian way of constituting and navigating modernity took concrete social and economic form. In this sense, the interrelated social modernization and nation-building projects undertaken by the Bucharest Sociological School provide a pertinent case study of precisely these types of mechanisms.

Before proceeding with our discussion, it is necessary to briefly clarify some of the terms used henceforth. *Modernity*, in the classical Eurocentric perspective, is associated with processes of socio-economic, political, and cultural change unleashed by the Renaissance, Reformation, and Scientific Revolution. More precisely, these processes are associated with industrialization, complex social stratification, urbanization, rationalization, the emergence of nation-states, as well as the differentiation between the private and public spheres (Bhambra, 2011, 653; Schifirneț, 2012, 24, 31). From this customary viewpoint, *modernization* is defined as a far-reaching process of change stimulated by the rapid diffusion of ideas and techniques. Modernization processes are thus predicated upon breaking way from and/or the disintegration of traditional values and socio-political modes of organization (Lee, 2013, 410). For the Balkans in general, and for Romania in particular, the issue of modernity is tied to the agrarian problem; specifically, the persistence well into the twentieth century of pre-capitalist agrarian structures and property relations, even if in a quasi or neo-feudal form, as the sociologist Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea (1855-1920) famously put it (Dobrogeanu-Gherea, 1910).

Path Analysis and Modernization Theory

One way of accounting for the phenomenon of Romanian modernity, which I will endeavor to criticise, is to employ a path-dependent approach. By deploying arguments drawn from Henri Stahl (1980) and Maria Todorova (2005 & 2010), I will start by demonstrating the vulnerabilities of this type of analysis. Subsequently, I will reveal the theoretical shortcomings of more recent forms of path analysis.

Originating among economists and economic historians, the concept of path dependency has influenced many historically oriented sociologists. One variant of path analysis focuses on self-reinforcing sequences that reproduce institutional and/or cultural patterns over time.

Within this analytical framework, it is possible to explain cases of "exceptionalism" where outcomes "predicted by theory did not occur", as well as identify sets of conditions that may cause or impede the "reversal" of path dependence (Mahoney, 2000, 508-511). This implicitly deterministic approach is consonant with the traditional modernization and convergence theories of the 1950s and 1960s. These theories asserted that "structural differentiation and the growth of institutions such as liberal democracy, capitalism, and bureaucratized states are inevitable in modernizing societies throughout the world and will naturally be accompanied by individualism, a secular world view, and other cultural dimensions" (Fourie, 2012, 54).

In this context, the fundamental questions become as follows: Why did Romanian modernity diverge from its ideal-type Western counterpart and in what ways and to what extent did it do so? This way of asserting the problem is reinforced by the fact that modernization processes evidently unfolded at different speeds and in different fashions throughout the various Romanian social subsystems, most importantly, in terms of economic development. It is in this way that social scientific discourse incorporates interwar Romania into a wider trope of "Balkan exceptionalism" underpinned by notions of "failed" or "partial" modernization.

On a general theoretical level, traditional modernization theories have been extensively criticized because of their teleological assumption and because they take the "West" as the standard according to which success is evaluated. Yet, despite these critiques, notions of "partial modernization" remain influential in the extant scholarship on interwar Romania. This latter point is sufficiently evident so as not to require a lengthy explanation[1]. I wish to offer, instead, two theoretically distinct, yet ultimately converging arguments for the need to dispense with linear, quasi-deterministic notions of social development in the Romanian context.

As mentioned before, the first argument is borrowed from Henri Stahl (1980). Based on the extensive fieldwork undertaken under the aegis of the Bucharest Sociological School in the 1920s and 1930s, Stahl had, by the 1960s, managed to develop his concept of "tributalism" as a *sui generis* social formation. Briefly, Stahl showed that just because feudalism occurred before capitalism does not mean that it necessarily evolves towards the latter. In fact, he rejected the notion that Romania's pre-capitalist development was "feudal" in the Western European sense of the term, and showed that the period between the 15th and mid-19th century was characterized by a movement away from communal forms of social organization towards a type of "belated" feudalism. The key-point here is that the advent of this "second serfdom" was the consequence of a domestic process of primitive capitalist accumulation that was unleashed by the entry of Western-originating market forces into the lands inhabited by Romanians (Stahl, 1980, 212-221; Babinskas, 2010, 74). Put another way, it was the very process of economic modernization that produced "backwardness" effects and the concomitant (self) perceptions thereof.

The second, more general argument is of origin that is more recent. It was articulated by Maria Todorova (2005) and has to do with the link between modernity and nationalism in the Balkans; more specifically, nationalism and, by extension, the nation-state as the embodiment of political modernity and political modernization. Taking issue with the ubiquitous concept of a "temporal lag" in western representations of Balkan nationalism, Todorova challenges the assumption that nationalism arrived in Eastern Europe as an import from Western Europe that was transplanted and modified. This assumption, she contends, subjects nationalism to the "same evolutionary paradigm as industrialization, modernization and so on" (Todorova, 2005, 145-147). It also carries the corollary of regarding East European ethnic nationalisms – as opposed to the their presumably "civic" western counterparts – as somehow deformed in the process of adaptation to local contexts, in the sense that are inherently prone to engendering illiberal forms of politics. Yet this way of defining the issue, the author contends, is tied to a long tradition in

Western scholarship of treating Eastern Europe as an anthropological object of study, and which contributed to framing the Balkans as Europe's internal "other" against which of the positive self-image of West Europeans was constructed. As a means of avoiding "the trap of backwardness" to which Eastern Europe has been relegated by dominant discourses of modernity and modernization, the author counterposes a *longue durée* framework of relative synchronicity that decenters the question of origins.

Elsewhere, Todorova (2010) extends her critique of evolutionary approaches towards comparative nationalism by arguing that her model can be applied to industrialization as well. According to the author, industrialization faced challenges similar to the spread of nationalism and the development of the nation-state. Not only did European industrialization unfold over the span of several centuries, but even in its "core space" (i. e. England) "it took several centuries for its accomplishment and penetration into different areas of the country and into different branches of industry…" (Todorova, 2010, 16).

In response to these kinds of wide-ranging critiques leveled at traditional modernization theories, as well as to the "cultural turn" in the social sciences that occurred in the 1990s, path analysis has lately evolved into a more nuanced direction. A pertinent example is the approach taken by Ronald Inglehart (2000). Moving beyond the predominantly national focus of classic modernization theories, the author elaborates an empirical framework that draws on extensive cultural values surveys conducted in a large number of countries. Thus, he endeavors to show that economic development, cultural change, and political evolution cohere into somewhat predictable patterns. Finding the world clustered into cultural zones (i.e. Orthodox, Protestant, Catholic, Confucian, Islamic, Latin American, ex-Communist), Inglehart maintains that economic development, specifically in the form of industrialization, produces a shift in societal values that is supportive of political democracy (Inglehart, 2000, 91-95). By this logic, societies that are nearer the "traditional" pole, that is less industrialized, tend to exhibit more deference to authority. Applied to interwar Romania, Inglehart's model might account for the dysfunctionality of interwar democracy, in terms of its insufficiently developed industrial base and the concomitant persistence of traditional as opposed to secular-rational value orientations towards authority; values presumably rooted in village traditions and the Christian Orthodox heritage.

Inglehart's model has two major shortcomings. The first weak point is that the author conflates political modernization and democratization. There is certainly nothing wrong with the notion that democratization is an eminamently social process. This the author demonstrates convincingly via the cultural dimension of his argument. However, one might contend in good Weberian and even Foucauldian fashion that political modernization is tantamount to the rationalization and enhancement of state capabilities of power and control. After all, biopolitical technologies of power and disciplinary institutions are enacted in all types of formal political regimes, while their existence is by no means incompatible with a "democratization" of societal values. In fact, I have argued elsewhere that the intellectual activities and social interventionist actions in the rural world of the Bucharest Sociological School rearticulated national space into an epistemic regime eminently suited for the dual task of supra-communal administration and state control over patterns of social loyalties and interactions (Costinescu, 2012, 2013).

The second flaw of the model is that it does not adequately account for the relationship between the various cultural zones. Though he acknowledges the influence of colonial ties in shaping cultural heritage, such as in the case of Latin America, Inglehart does not engage with the central fact that asymmetrical economic and political power relations marked the interaction between these cultural zones. Such relations of domination may have indeed shaped or imposed the choice of institutions and ideologies in ways that other sociological approaches usually ascribe to underlying socio-economic structures.[2]

World Systems Theory and the Question of Dependency

From this standpoint, I would argue, world-systems theory offers a model of superior heuristic power for understanding the modern condition of interwar Romania. World-systems theory locates the origins of the modern world in the interaction between the global capitalist economic system and multiple local political configurations. The interdependent world system is dominated by a core of urbanized, diversified, manufacturing-based economies that impose power relations upon overspecialized, primarily agrarian peripheral societies and semi-peripheral states, for the purposes of extracting primary resources and labor power. The subjection of peripheries and semi-peripheries may be direct or indirect, achieved through both economic and political means. In this theoretical framework, asymmetrical economic development is regarded as a constitutive feature of the world system, rather than being predicated upon domestic socio-economic structures. In this context, the economic and political dependency of peripheral and semi-peripheral countries resides not only in the extraction of their economic surplus, but also in a type of "dependent development" in which economic growth (including industrialization) occurs alongside increasing "economic denationalization" (Chirot, 1982, 85-86, 91; Marshall, 2003, 525-526).

In broaching the issue of interwar Romania's position within the world system, I will not engage with the debate about whether the dependency of Romania fits into a broader Eastern European pattern of economic backwardness compared to Western Europe because regional differences in agricultural conditions extending as far back as the late Middle Ages created different potentials for economic growth, or because it played a peripheral role in the West's development. This question has been fruitfully debated elsewhere (Chirot, 1989). Suffice it to say that Daniel Chirot's (1976) approach, which stakes a middle ground between these positions, still has much to offer in terms of answering this question. In tracing Wallachia's transition from the Ottoman world system to a "neocolony" of the advanced Western economies, the author demonstrates how changes in the international setting shaped the historical configurations of the Wallachian political economy and attendant changes in social structure in a manner that was only partially determined by the autochthonous mode of production. The point Chirot emphasizes is that, by the early twentieth century, Romania had definitely become dependent in the world-systems theory sense of the term (Chirot, 1976, xii, 63, 89).

In turn, this raises the question of whether the mechanisms of dependency were primarily economic or political.

I will avoid giving a straightforward answer to this question for the following reasons. First, because relations of dependency are always rooted in particular historical conjunctures and at this stage of my research I cannot take a definitive stance as to whether the post-imperial disentanglement that followed the Great War warrants the privileging of political factors over economic ones or vice versa. Second, because for the purposes of the present analysis what matters is that interstate relations have always been a privileged domain for the enactment of dependency relations, in the sense that the superior power of one state over another leaves ample scope for the imposition of the strategic interests of various economic and political actors upon peripheral and semi-peripheral countries. Consequently, I will instead provide a critical assessment of some of the answers given by scholars who have previously engaged with this topic.

Echoing Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea, Ken Jowitt (1978) diagnoses the dependency of small countries with peasant-based societies – such as Romania – in the vital need of their elites to prematurely adopt political, institutional, and ideological formats for which the social base is lacking. This is "not so much

a choice by which to define its [the country's] internal social organization, but rather an effort to make a special claim on a great power patron in order to survive as a political unit" (Jowitt, 1978, 20-21). Consequently, dependency rests on several interrelated bases. First, there is the imperative of recognizing the claims of a great power and the need of domestic elites to adjust domestic institutional features in a manner corresponding to those of the patron, in order to gain international recognition. Second, (is) the desire of local elites to use the resources of the great power in order to accomplish ends otherwise not possible within the current domestic social organization. Third, (is) a domestic socio-cultural orientation that expects the foreign patron to allow local elites control over their own country in exchange for various services. Finally, (is) the accurate perception of local elites that, both behavior and formal political organization in the international arena are structured in terms of status. This corresponds to the domestic status organization of peasant countries and reinforces the status conceptions of power and authority held by local elites (Jowitt, 1978, 23).

In this context, modernization policies appear as elite efforts to create effective socio-economic bases for the modern institutional forms they have adopted – not least in order to achieve genuine sovereignty as opposed to formal national independence. At the same time, the structural constraints inherent in such countries' position within the international political economy limited the types of domestic power available to local elites to achieve their modernization objectives.

Alina Mungiu-Pippidi (2007) developed these insights into a more radical – albeit theoretically and methodologically narrower – thesis in order to explain the "unfinished modernization" of Romanian society. The author defines the modernization project in quintessentially political terms, ascribing its failures to "external factors, but less so than democratization" (Mungiu-Pippidi, 2007, 120). Underlying this argument is a particular conception of political culture, a definition with considerable methodological and explicative implications. Rejecting culturally determinist theories (*sicut* Samuel Huntington), the author foregrounds intellectual history by paying particular attention to the great interwar "modernization" debate that implicated, virtually, all segments of the intelligentsia. In her view, it is very important to understand this particular debate because political culture consists of competing, *elite* social representations of the political order. These representations include not only widespread beliefs, but also "theories and branches of knowledge in their own right that are used for the discovery and organization of reality" and which, in turn, provide "common reference points for individuals and communities at a given point in time" (Mungiu-Pippidi, 2007, 121). To address the specific features of Romanian political culture from what might be termed a "bottom-up" perspective that looks at "cross-sectional societal patterns of aggregate cognition", the author maintains, is (in my opinion) methodologically incorrect (Mungiu-Pippidi, 2007, 120-121).

For Mungiu-Pippidi, the two determinant factors shaping the social representations articulated by intellectuals were foreign influence and the legacy of economic underdevelopment. The failures of interwar democratization are, thus, ascribed to the opposition of large swaths of the *intelligentsia* to the modernizing policies imposed from above by a "westernizing" political oligarchy affiliated with the monarchy. For these policies were widely perceived as doing violence to the organizational forms and values of traditional society. So brittle was the social consensus behind modernization policies, she maintains, that "whenever Romanian Liberals pushed ahead with democratization as the natural consequences of their modernization project, they discovered that widespread participation was very likely to endanger the modernization project itself" (Mungiu-Pippidi, 2007, 122).

This explanation is open to challenge on several grounds. In the first place, the National

Liberals did not hold an intellectual monopoly on socio-economic modernization and political democratization projects. Even if we proceed from the author's own methodological assumptions, there is a good case to be made that the primary impulse for a genuine, socio-economically grounded political democratization came from thinkers associated with the National Peasant Party and the cooperative movement, such as Virgil Madgearu. Second, as several recent works have shown, it is factually incorrect to assert, as Mungiu-Pippidi does, that "the appeals of the Iron Guard for building or restoring old Orthodox churches were far more popular than Gusti's attempt at enrolling students as field operators in his ethnographic studies of Romanian rural society" (Mungiu-Pippidi, 2007, 139). The available evidence is overwhelmingly weighted towards the view that there existed a serious competition between the Legion and the Bucharest Sociological School for influence amongst both the youth and the peasantry (Rostás, 2009; Momoc, 2011).

More important, however, are the perceptual limitations inherent in Mungiu-Pippidi's elite-based definition of political culture. This frame makes it difficult to perceive the societal impact of the Gustian social modernization project, as evidenced by the author's (mis)characterization of Dimitrie Gusti as a "moderate conservative" (Mungiu-Pippidi, 2007, 139). This type of conventional political/ideological labeling is, in many ways, misleading. For the Gustian monographic sociological surveys of rural Romania, undertaken first by the monographic teams and later by large interdisciplinary teams of researchers and social activists, engendered, among other things, a genuine, albeit elite-driven social movement whose declared goal was to actually empower peasants, as opposed to idealizing village traditions as a genuine conservative would do.

The fact of the matter is that Gusti sought to stake out a distinct, militant middle ground between interwar "traditionalists" and "modernizers". Convinced that authentic Romanian culture was rooted in the village, Gusti believed that the building of the modern nation and state must start with rigorous social-scientific studies of rural life. His synthesis of sociological theory and monographic research-action was, therefore, an active instrument of social engineering aiming to fashion peasants into engaged citizens of the nation-state in a manner comparable to what Eugene Weber described as the transformation of "peasants into Frenchmen" (Weber, 1976). His vision of citizen-peasants, autonomous in their own social domains yet guided by elites was malleable, being equally compatible with the 1923 constitutional framework of parliamentary democracy/universal male suffrage, and with the later (1938) corporatist vision of the Carolinian constitution. As such, the formal nature of the political regimes by means of which this project was implemented was not of crucial importance to the overall undertaking.

Finally, the author's conception of political culture as the privileged domain of intellectual elites begs the classic Gramscian question of the extent to which these elites were able to exercise cultural hegemony in a society that retained significant agrarian structures, and therefore, a sphere of popular culture possessing a vast reservoir of potentially counter-hegemonic symbols and practices. In this sense, interwar sociologists, such as Mircea Vulcănescu and Henri H. Stahl, have made a formidable case that the Romanian village constituted a distinct social world possessing a high degree of self-organization and meaning generating capacities (Butoi, 2011, 27-46).

By contrast, Andrew Janos (1978) offers a more wide-ranging approach in situating the crisis of Romanian liberalism and, implicitly, democratization during the interwar period within a wider legitimacy crisis of the capitalist world system; a crisis engendered by the devastation of the Great War and the political realignments that occurred in its wake. He combines Weberian and Marxian perspectives, as well as historical and economic analyses, in order to demonstrate how classical liberalism began to lose its hold over political elites outside

the core area. This was partly out of frustration over the unsatisfactory result of previous modernization projects, and partly because the war had called into questions the liberal principles of "pioneering countries" (Janos, 1978, 101). The war and subsequent peace settlements had shown that they were, perhaps, more interested in conquest and plunder, rather than equal economic exchange. What had previously constituted only ideological challenges to liberalism from both left and right, now became actual political challenges once the lower classes entered the formal political arena in large numbers via the extension of the suffrage. In the Romanian case, postwar political elites enacted universal male suffrage and an ambitious agrarian reform project as a means of insuring "political stability and a new domestic market providing stimulus for industrial development" (Janos, 1978, 103).

By this logic, one might say that the shortcomings of the agrarian reform produced a crisis of democracy at both elite and popular levels. Political elites became convinced that the socio-economic problems of the country could not be solved by redistributive policies, however generous, but rather by the "forced draft mobilization of its resources". In turn, this would require fundamental changes in the political structure, as well. At the time, the economist and corporatist theoretician Mihail Manoilescu was the leading proponent of this conclusion. Concomitantly, the lower classes, which had largely not been inculcated with the instrumental means-ends rationality inherent in the experience of the market, not to mention insufficiently acculturated to the "impersonal norms of modern *Gesellschaft*" before entering the political stage, had learned how to articulate political demands, but were unable to implement them effectively. This is because they continued to look for the "moral and emotional support of household, kinship, community", presumably as opposed to forming broad social movements capable of actually imposing popular demands upon the ruling elites (Janos, 1978, 101-103).

Within this analytical framework and against the backdrop of the advent of the Great Depression, it is not difficult to understand the increasing popular appeal of organicist right-wing discourses, particularly in corporatist, but also fascist iterations. The pervasiveness of such discourses goes a long way towards explaining Romania's drift into political catastrophe – namely, the royal dictatorship and the subsequent "National-Legionary State" –, particularly since these discourses were eminently suited to masking, and, at the same time, legitimizing[3] the desire of the Carlist regime to "rationalize" rural life and the agricultural economy. The regime aimed to achieve this goal by "supporting large units capable of producing surplus, industrialization by means of enforced savings, and the transfer of labor-saving 'high' technology" (Janos, 1978, 105-106).

We might therefore be tempted to conclude that interwar Romania was characterized by a type of double dependency, as evidenced in the international arena by the import substitution policies promoted by both Liberals and the governments of King Carol II and, internally, by the transfer of economic surplus from the peasantry, for the purposes of domestic capitalist development. However, this way of framing the problem might lead to an overdetermined[4] reading of the interwar Romania, in that the prevalence of both international and domestic structure of dominance at that particular conjuncture presumably left little space for the impact of human agency and the possibility for different historical outcomes.

Alternative Modernities and Interwar Romania

It is precisely for this reason why the paradigm of alternative modernities can build upon the insights regarding the importance of relations of domination offered by world systems theory and at the same time offer a corrective to some of its deterministic implications. This it accomplishes by foregrounding the relative autonomy of the cultural dimensions of the world

system and by emphasizing the issue of local agency.

In this section, I will briefly outline some of the premises of the alternative modernities paradigm, and then assess how recent scholarship has applied this model to interbellic Romania. Finally, I will argue that the Gustian projects of nation-building and social reform constitutes a more convincing model of a "scaled-down", discrete type of alternative modernity than that proposed by the extant scholarship.

Theorists of multiple modernities situate themselves critically in relation to earlier debates on modernization theory, and subscribe to the critiques of Eurocentrism elaborated by postcolonial studies. Combining Weberian comparative sociology of cultures with the work of Karl Jaspers on the emergence of Axial Civilizations, this approach is concerned with examining the trajectory of modernity into different forms (Bhambra, 2010, 133-134). For Shmuel Eisenstadt, who is widely acknowledged as the principal founder of alternative modernities theory, the Axial Age (ca. 800-200 BC) was characterized by a fundamental breakthrough "into the theoretical stage of human reflexivity"; an advance which consisted in the appearance of transcendental visions of the world. This development occurred independently, but synchronously in several areas, specifically in China, Iran, India, Greece, and Palestine. He further clarifies that the fundamental impact of these ideas is that "they became the basic, predominant, and indeed, hegemonic premises of the cultural programs and institutional formations within a society and civilization (Eisenstadt, 2011, 202). The core of the multiple modernities approach, therefore, resides in assuming the existence of multiple modernities shaped by distinct cultural heritages and sociopolitical conditions. Historically speaking, these alternative modernities emerged with the global rise of the West and therefore evolved in a mutually constitutive relationship with the hegemonic Western form(s).

It is for this very reason that Eisenstadt characterizes the history of modernity as "the story of the constitution and reconstitution of a multiplicity of cultural programs". Furthermore, these "ongoing reconstructions of multiple institutional and ideological patterns are carried forward by specific social actors in close connection with social, political, and intellectual activists, and also by social movements pursuing different programs of modernity and holding different visions of what makes a society modern". It is through the "engagement of these actors with broader sectors of their respective societies [that] unique expressions of modernity are realized (Eisenstadt, 2000, 2).

Now, this way of approaching the history of modernity makes clear that it is possible for a variety of competing modernities to exist even within the confines of a particular society. By extension, the key to explicating these modernities lies not only in identifying their ideational construction, but also in explaining their articulation at the institutional level and their interaction with various sectors of society. This is not, however, how a recent volume coordinated by Cristi Pantelimon (2013a) approaches the problem. The main thesis which the authors endeavor to substantiate is that the diverse visions of the modern world associated with the seminal figures of Nae Ionescu, Mircea Eliade, Mircea Vulcănescu, and Mihail Manoilescu coalesced into a revolutionary program of national regeneration engaged in a "dialectical war" with liberal modernity (Pantelimon, 2013a, 8). Asserting that "every nation has its own revolution" (Pantelimon, 2013a, 8), the volume thus applies, nuances, and reinterprets the concept of conservative revolution or – to use Roger Griffin's (1994) term – "conservative palingenesis" typically used to explain Fascism in order to describe various aspects of a *Weltanschauung* that became dominant during the interbellic period. Yet it is precisely because the rise of right-wing authoritarianism and extremism are such well-established matters that this volume does not significantly advance our historical understanding of the period. Rather, it is a primarily hermeneutic exercise of transposing the variegated discursive field of illib-

eral nationalism into the register of "alternative modernity". In fairness, it must be said that it is entirely legitimate to interpret this program of national regeneration in a philosophical key. Unfortunately, this choice of method comes at significant analytical cost.

To be sure, the authors do make an effort to reveal the interaction between text(s) and sociopolitical context that configured this "national revolution" as an alternative program – elaborated primarily by the 1927 "Young Generation" of intellectuals – of modernizing Romania through "culture", as opposed to hitherto predominantly political/institutional strategies (Goian, 2013, 20-23). In this sense, the volume does a creditable job of illuminating the cross-fertilization between diverse disciplines ranging from literature to sociology to philosophy that shaped the intellectual field of the national revolution. Read in this key, even the economist Mihail Manoilescu appears as distinct type of metapolitical moral philosopher "whose nationalism was nothing but an attempt to morally rebalance the world, anti-liberal in its essential nature, but aiming solely towards a better modernization of Romania" (Pantelimon, 2013b, 249). Be that as it may, and even if we grant that the cultural figures examined here effectively transferred the prestige obtained in "practicing their 'intellectual' professions into the domain of political life" (Goian, 2013, 33), there still remains the vexing question of how, exactly, were these elite visions of the world transferred to and/or imposed upon the citizenry at large, particularly in the countryside, where most of the population actually lived.

For example, there is scant description of Manoilescu's multiple political and organizational affiliations, relationships that might reveal some of the means whereby the national revolution inserted itself into state policies. Nor does the volume engage with the "hard", biopolitical and statist dimension of this program of national rebirth, except only by means of elucidating some of the cultural-ideological coding of interwar anti-Semitism. But as other scholars have shown, the concern with national revival traversed the ideological spectrum, with many intellectuals and organizations actively engaged in refashioning the state, education, public health and other areas of policy-making and social life, according to biologized conceptions of the nation (Bucur, 2002; Turda, 2008).

Moreover, if the "mystique" of the Legion represented the "last hypostasis" of Nae Ionescu's thought as an eminamently cultural philosopher concerned with identifying and removing the imported "parasitical" structures inhibiting a political regeneration organically connected with the "profound spiritual structure" of the Romanians (Müller, 2013, 66, 80, 138), then surely such an account might have benefited from a juxtaposition of Ionescu's thought against the Legionary system of voluntary work camps. By 1934, these camps had been set up as a means of channeling youth discontent into the creation of the "new man", and for sustaining the ambitious campaign of rallying the peasant masses to the Fascist program of national rebirth.

In the final analysis, then, interpreting the revolutionary reality of the interwar national revival in a philosophical key risks rendering even the vaunted intellectual "vibrancy" of the period into an arid construct bereft of a genuine sense of historical movement, of the social struggles and the sheer will to power without which this project of alternative modernity could not have been born, much less triumphed. Moreover, this interpretation neglects the interaction of the national revolution with other competing modernities simultaneously produced within the Greater Romanian state. These modernities were, likewise, positioned in a contestatory relationship with outside modernities nested within the capitalist world economy.

Concluding Remarks on the Gustian Project of Alternative Modernity

And this is what brings us to the program of the Bucharest Sociological School. In a domestic context, the Gustian project of modernity contended against the National-Liberal, Fascist

and, to a much lesser extent, the Marxian socialist variants. All of these visions of modernity were based on social-scientific analyses and connected with well-defined organizational actors and/or social movements. For example, the National-Liberal vision of Romanian modernity was predicated upon rapid industrialization and found its most lucid advocate in the sociologist Ştefan Zeletin. Zeletin agreed with Manoilescu on the need for industrialization, yet argued that the root of economic backwardness resided less in Romania's dependency on the international market and more in the historical imperative of proceeding more rapidly through stages of development analogous to those traversed by the West (Zeletin, 1925/1991). This implied, on the one hand, the proletarization of poor peasants and, on the other hand, the creation of a prosperous peasant class that would insure a viable internal market for domestic industry.

By contrast, the alternative modernity envisioned by the Bucharest School sought to build upon the existing social structure, as opposed to radically altering it. Consequently, it may be characterized as a socio-culturally specific program of economic and political modernization. At the core of this program was the selective pruning and the social-scientific modernization of social tradition and customs. Deeply engaged with contemporary European-wide social-scientific debates regarding the form(s) of modernity associated with the West and hence acutely aware of its power, the members of the Gustian School were, at the same time, important actors in the wide-ranging interwar debate concerning the character of Romanian society. Their investigations of the rural world by means of sociological monographic survey sought to determine Romania's "authentic" culture as the basis for directing the country's subsequent development. The monographic research – social action thus illustrates an array of panoptical techniques well suited to the requirements of consolidating nation-states aspiring to supra-local coordination of their territories, socio-economic modernization, and homogenization of cultural space.

In this sense, the Gustian project of bolstering state consolidation with the help of the epistemic apparatus of the social science illustrates a European-wide shift towards more sociologically astute technologies of nation building. Partially built out of transnational materials, the nationalist epistemic regime by means of which the Gustian School inserted its vision of an alternative modernity was structured across a stratified, multidisciplinary field of discourse and articulated at the institutional level. The international scope of the intellectual activities undertaken by the Romanian Social Institute and the social interventionist policies of the "Prince Carol" Royal Cultural Foundations in the rural world, both of whom were led by Dimitrie Gusti, substantiate the above observations. These organizations facilitated policies of rural economic development and enabled discursive practices that sought the transformation of the peasants into "national" political subjects. The ideological transformation of the peasantry was, thus, predicated, on the one hand, by the continuing elaboration of interwar nationalism as a traveling modular form embedded in transnational networks of knowledge and power, and, on the other hand, by domestic configurations of said power/knowledge complex.

Consequently, the alternative modernity elaborated by the Bucharest Sociological School was simultaneously a subjugated and subjugating modernity; subjugated in that it defined itself against the dominant urbanized forms prevailing in the West, and subjugating in the sense that it sought to instill in the countryside a type of instrumentalized economic rationality and political identity quite alien to village traditions. Yet in a paradox typical of modernizing projects in general and nationalisms in particular, the subordination of the peasantry to the prescriptions of the Gustian agenda also represented an attempt to elevate it to a determinant social role. It also represented a quest, so common in those times and in ours, for the resources and energies of popular mo-

bilization. This was to be achieved by means of additional land reform, popular education through Peasant Schools and Cultural Houses established for this purpose, the creation of credit cooperatives, and through initiatives designed to improve sanitary conditions in rural areas. As such, the efforts of the Bucharest Sociological School to construct a modern nation and state constituted a powerful motor for political and cultural innovation. This is in itself a good argument for the need to reclaim the submerged richness and diversity of Romanian social history within an explicit transnational perspective.

Notes

[1] For example, Berendt (1998) explains the interwar drift into authoritarianism and dictatorship in terms of unsuccessful or only partially successful socio-economic modernization imposed "from above". More recently, Bogdan Murgescu (2010) identified "the impact of the First World War, the extremely unfavorable conjuncture for agriculture, the penury of capital… and the conservatism of social structures" as key factors in limiting Romania's capacity to "accelerate economic modernization", thereby leading to the "deepening" of the "gap" between it and the "developed countries" (p. 314). It must be mentioned, however, that Murgescu bases his analysis on a somewhat different set of assumptions than the standard modernization theories, although he incorporates their insights. He approaches the issue in a more nuanced, *longue-durée* framework that takes as its starting point the existence between the 15th and 18th centuries of three "economies-universes": Occidental, Russian, Ottoman [in itself partly overlapping with the larger Mediterranean one]. For the author, the "tendency towards convergence" at the European level was not the norm throughout the long period under examination. Rather, it occurred only in the post-World War II period. Yet even then, convergence was interrupted by the structural crisis of state socialism (p. 25, 483). All translations from Romanian are mine.

[2] This point was made in an East-Central European context by Andrew Janos. He developed the thesis that political changes in small powers should not be understood merely as responses to evolving socio-economic conditions. Rather, they are adaptations to the interests and rules of hegemonic powers in an international system (Janos, 2000, 410-411).

[3] Drawing on Althusser's concept of "ideological state apparatus", I emphasize the imposition of respect for the techno-social division of labor by means of which domination is reproduced. See Marshall (2003, 50) for a broader definition of the concept.

[4] For Althusser, overdetermination is a hierarchy of economic, political, and ideological practices conjoined into a structural dynamic of "super – and subordination" that create a "'pre-given complex'" whole or "unconscious social formation". In this vision, individuals are "'bearers'" of structural relationships. Therefore, the real "subjects of history are particular human societies" (Pierce, 1994, 100-103).

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