

## THE HISTORICAL BANAT AND ITS GEOSTRATEGIC EUROPEANITY AT THE INTERFERENCE BETWEEN THE OCCIDENT, THE ORIENT, AND THE BALKANS

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### **Abstract**

*The paper investigates, based on a thinking scheme developed by us, the influence of geostrategies/geopolitics on the development of regional and local institutional structures that are generating performance. The performance in the form of Europeanity, of the territory, is under the interference of predominantly civilizing currents, such as Ottoman Orientalization, European Westernization, Balkanization of South European influence, and Central European Europeanness. The historical Banat is the region under study, from 1716-1918. In this period, the region is characterized by continuous economic development and high-performance institutional structures, as well as a regional culture oriented towards progress. This paper is part of broader research that identifies the teachings, through conceptualization, with which we can critically evaluate the geostrategies applied to historic Banat that has contributed to the process of alignment to Europeanism and that can inspire current institutional behaviors or ones in perspective. Within the studied interval, we delimited four regional administrative periods abundant in local, regional, and even European level premieres as a level of performance. The study focuses on the analysis of data and information contained in over 500 original historical documents from regional, national, and international archives, as well as a historical reference, works. The methodology of scientific research combines multiple research methodologies by being concentrated on geostrategic approach, historical and geographical investigation as well as on cultural anthropology. Applied, the methodology contributes to the multiplication of the unique knowledge about the Europeanness of the geostrategies afferent to the researched region. The general hypothesis of the research is confirmed and according to it the imperial geostrategies, in which the historical Banat was included, left their mark on the regional institutional structures, obtaining administrative performances in the sense of Europeanness. Geostrategies implementation stimulated the amplification of European features in the region in the administrative field. Each administrative change added layers and depths to the institutional structures with the same objective, that of aligning the region to Europeanness. Nuances of the hypothesis, reflect periods of adapting centrally developed geostrategies to the local specificity ensuring a certain level of autonomy. In other periods diversification of the institutional structures, based on the changes of the geomedium factors was characteristic. Some geostrategies took into account already existing functional local administrative elements, while others transformed totally the local institutional structures.*

### **Keywords**

*Geostrategy; Institutional structures; Institutional behavior, Europeanness; Cultural interference; Performance; Regional administration;*

## Introduction

The whole work is conceived and realized by taking into account the sequentiality between geostrategies/geopolitics (imperial, royal, autonomous) institutional structures (imperial, royal, or autonomous) and performances in terms of the degree of Europeanness. Researched in the historical Banat region (Online Etymology Dictionary, 2020) between 1716-1918, Europeanness, as an expression of performance is attributed to space under the interference of predominantly civilizing currents (Bereczki, 1900, p.2). The currents identified are Orientalization of Ottoman influence, European Occidentalization, Balkanization of South-European influence, and Central-European Europeanization. Historical Banat included portions of the current territory of Romania, Serbia, and Hungary, being positioned at the interference of the civilizing currents. The study focuses on the analysis of data and information contained in historical documents in regional, national, and international archives. The portfolio of documents used in the research includes over 500 archive documents and historical reference works, several of them belonging to the interval researched. Our attention was directed to data and information that describe geostrategic approaches and regional administrative processes of planning, decision making, and control. These processes and functions are represented in research analyzes, carried out for different periods of geopolitical affiliation of the historical Banat region.

The methodology of scientific research is focused on the geostrategic approach, historical and geographical investigation, and cultural anthropology. Multidisciplinary derive due to the connection of the fields of historical research with the managerial, geographical, anthropological ones, to multiply unique knowledge about the Europeanness of the geostrategies related to the historical Banat from the researched period.

Advancing in the research, we discovered the region's possible source of attractive features in terms of military defense functions. These were due to the inter-imperial geoposition (due to similarities we adopted the word from Theodorescu, 2018, p. 145) along history; the region was positioned in the immediate proximity of the Ottoman Empire, the Habsburg Empire, and the Kingdom of Hungary. The isolation from external environmental factors of geographical treatment is Kaplan's (2012) ambition. This research has taken into account the influences of the region's geomedium describing factors, mainly on institutional administrative structures.

From a territorial point of view, the geometry of the region had small variations over time, due to a clear natural geographical delimitation (Kaplan, 2012). Under the Habsburg administration, the territory of the region was more restricted, compared to the Vilayet of Timișoara, administrative organization form of the Ottoman Empire. Important changes are made in the consistency of the administrative-territorial organization and the emergence of administrative structures. Important in anti-Ottoman defense, the border corridor placed at the eastern end of the Hungarian Kingdom was slid to the south of Banat. From 1768, until its dissolution in 1872, the Banat Military Border was an administrative entity directly subordinated to the Viennese court through the Aulic War Council.

During the early 18th and early 20th centuries, historic Banat (1716-1918) was administered by the Habsburg Empire, the Kingdom of Hungary, and the Austro-Hungarian Empire, offering the possibility of delimiting four regional administrative periods. These were delimited by depending on geopolitical affiliation.

The first period (1716-1778) is marked by the administrative transition from the Ottoman to the Habsburg Empire. In the second period (1778-1848) the Hungarian royal administration took the place of the Habsburg imperial one, followed (1849-1860) by the third administrative period in which the region was ruled autonomously. The last administrative period (1860-1918) although royal at first, soon became imperial (Austro-Hungarian).

Regarding the definition of the strategy, and adapted, to the geostrategy, we establish that for the Banat region, it depended on central (imperial, royal) geostrategies. Geostrategy becoming the implementation of the administrative models for regional development, centrally developed, to align the region to Europeanness. The success of geostrategies depended both on the vision and rigor of the responsible institutions in the administrative implementation processes, as well as on the personal qualities of their leaders (Somkereki & Petrişor, 2019). Military specialists, such as Clausewitz (2008, p.20), share the same view. As an example, in the case of the region in the period 1716-1778, this responsibility fell to the institution of the Provincial Administration of Banat, headed by the governor. In the case of the city of Timisoara, the attitude, vision, and performance of governor Mercy determined the direction of local development. The orientation towards progress, development, and the objective of increasing the living standards of the inhabitants, is also confirmed by Mercy's (Griselini, 1984, p.128) statements. Progress and development are perceived as a result of effectiveness (not only to meet needs) and efficiency (but also to create well-being and luxury) determining the performance of officials and the region.

We consider that another perspective for defining geostrategies is through the organic characteristics of its development. Looking at geostrategy as an intuitively or non-deliberate regional development plan that must be constantly adapted to local conditions. We find in this form, the successful example of the Austro-Hungarian geostrategies implemented between 1860-1918, that initiated institutional reconfiguration due to the increase of regional insecurity, an initially unforeseen structural process. Even the name of the region has its origins in the administrative language. The etymology of the word "ban" (Online Etymology Dictionary, 2020) indicates two sources of origin, one meaning of order, command, other is from the field of leadership, meaning a leading position in the Slavonic administrations (Croatian military chief).

At the level of state entities, the superior performance is obtained by organizing the administrative processes, thus resulting in the institutional structures. The characteristics of institutional structures ensure the superiority between multiple state entities, almost regardless of the resources they have. The existence of an institutional structure can mean the difference between stagnation and progress, as it meant in the case of Asia compared to imperial Europe. Existing in the most developed European states and empires, ensuring them priority over other forms of organization or disorganization, the institutions were the pillars of the development of ancient Greece, the Roman Empire, and the Byzantine Empire (Luttwak, 2011, pp.3-5).

To create a more balanced perspective on the administrative periods, different in terms of scope, political context, and influences of the geomedium, we outlined a thinking scheme or scheme of analysis. This highlights the influence of geostrategies, institutional structures, desirable behaviors, and performance in terms of their Europeanness. The order and direction of influence differ from one administrative period to another.

The Europeanness of the institutions consists in their orientation towards values such as rationalization of resource consumption, rigor, consistency, progress, the public character of management processes, ethnic and confessional tolerance, ensuring a regulated legal framework of economic exchange, concern for raising the living standards of the population, efficient use of common resources, flattened hierarchies, interinstitutional communication.

### **The first administrative period**

The Habsburg administration and the transition from the Ottoman to its in 1716 represent the first period of administration analyzed and lasted until 1778. Banat had the status of the province of the Archdiocese of Austria, which was a reference administrative institution of the Roman Empire of the German Nation. It has developed leveling geostrategies in the spirit of Europeanness, of the regions in which it has been divided. With the idea of efficient reconfiguration of territories (DWDS, 2020), the Crown and the Imperial Chamber of Vienna, central institutional entities of the Archdiocese, developed a model of regional administration (RNATCD, 1/1718, pp.1-6). It was meant to ensure administrative unity and institutional concordance at the imperial level, regulating elements of structure and administrative institutions similar to those of Central Europe. The model, described in detail (RNATCD, 2/1718, pp.1-11) was implemented, without adaptation to local specificities, in all regions of the Habsburg Empire, including in historic Banat, under the desideratum of alignment to administrative Europeanness as performance.

The implementation of the Habsburg institutions contributes to the formation of the institutional administrative vocabulary (Șăineanu, n.d., p.29), since 1718 (RNATCD, 1/1718), by appearing in the same form (*administration*), had led to sustainable regional institutional innovations, due to their already confirmed functionality. The new institutions of the region start and support the process of regional Europeanization, present important perspectives of regional development, and differ radically from the Islamic ones.

Implemented by dispositions, instructions, and regulations issued by the Aulic Chamber and the Aulic War Council, through the Provincial Administration (RNATCD, 1/1724, pp.1-2). At the regional level, the institutional administrative processes were assigned to the military and civilian governor, respectively to district administrators at the district level. Even if the central administration's approach to the implementation of imperial geostrategies was a rigid one, precisely for reasons of maintaining multiethnicity as a mark of Europeanness, at the level of villages and cities it allowed the differentiation of leading institutions according to ethnic considerations. Thus, in the Romanian and Serbian villages, the principalities were installed and the settlers' villages were led by a county. To achieve uniform leveling and to compensate for ethnic differences, at this level, personalized institutional structures have been created, having

a control function, to form institutional behaviors that support the advance towards Europeanness.

Regionally the process of structural reframing started in 1718 by establishing and regulating the institution of Magistracy, as the first local administrative institution of Timisoara. This institution was meant to implement the Habsburg imperial geostrategy through education and discipline. This administrative structure was institutionally subordinated to the Provincial Administration. In the aspects related to the regional imperial geostrategy, it will be sent provisions and instructions for implementation, by the Imperial Commission directly.

To have the possibility of comparison to Oriental influences, we described Ottoman administration in Banat in which the perception of progress is quantitative regarding both territorial expansion and the increase of state wealth. Institutional behavior is focused on setting up institutional structures of a fiscal nature to monitor and collect taxes, as the main operational tools for ensuring Ottoman performance. This can be explained by the first measure taken by the Ottoman administration (Theodorescu, 2018, p.143), after the installation of its administration in the Banat region. The fiscal census, from the middle of the 16th century, carried out by the Ottoman tax institution (Vicze, 2006, pp.98-99), resulted in the registration of all possible sources of income as well as the transfer of private property to the personal property of Pasha (Vicze, 2006, p.103).

On the other hand, the Habsburg administration ensured a stable economic environment in which trade in goods was constant and regulated trade (RNATCD, 6/1718, pp.1-2) starting from the first instructions given in the process of administrative transition. At the local level, the imperial geostrategy aimed at developing multiple competencies (RNATCD, 2/1718, pp.1-11) by diversifying its attributions. Thereby becoming an institution in a permanent process of development, valuable progress of European inspiration. The institution of Magistracy was competent in the field of land administration, the commercial one, with competences in solving judicial cases, population monitoring, and correction of behaviors incompatible with those governed by the European spirit.

Occidental discipline became constant from the first administrative period. Not all cohabitation behaviors have formed by themselves. There were indeed institutionalized processes of social discipline, which significantly contributed to the formation of civic spirit, using the taxation of fines on citizens who were not involved in community emergencies. The historical event (RNATCD, 1/1773, pp.1-2) is part of a disposition of the Provincial Administration of Banat given to the German Magistrate. These actions ensure efficiency in the implementation of social and cultural policies, encourage cohabitation and contribute to the formation of cross-cultural character through community empathy, civic spirit, leaving aside the differences between social classes, characteristics of societies in which hierarchical structures are flattened. The continuity of the formation of the civic spirit derives from the existence in 1738 of the document with similar content, of sanctions in case of non-exercise in time, of the right to elect the Magistrate (RNATCD, 1/1738, pp.1-2).

Institutionally disciplined, enabling power to inhabitants through the Habsburg institution of Magistracy signified local institutional innovation, contrary to those within

the Vilayet Timișoara (Vicze, 2006, pp.98-99) administered by highly hierarchical and rigid structures, with strict rules on power distribution. These steps marked the beginning of what we can call today regional imperial proto-institutionalism (delegating the power to citizens), the concepts related to leadership and decision-making power from the hierarchically higher to the lower level, have slipped into the public sphere. They thus became a collective function (sustainable Magistrates with long-lived activity from 1718 until the present, in the form of the City Hall), determining the moment of appearance and use, *de jure* and *de facto*, of the concept of “public space” in the Banat region, an administrative innovation of absolute novelty. The *de facto* appearance of the public space represents the interference with the Occident, and by the fact that public space was formed by the imperial administration of Central European inspiration adds the Central European character of the public space and implicitly to the administrative institutions of Timișoara.

The performances in terms of Europeanness of the imperial model of regional administration materialized through the successful implementation of public projects and generated local and European premieres, as proof of alignment with European cities. Successful public projects have come from the field of sanitation (construction of three hospitals in 30 years, similar, but built long before, like those in Budapest or Vienna (RNATCD, 1/1728, pp.1-44), public drinking water supply services, river public transport, public street lighting services (in 1760, Timișoara became the best lit city of the empire), etc.

### **The second administrative period**

Due to external pressures, between the Habsburgs and the Kingdom of Hungary, there is a structural rupture marked by the operationalization of institutions in the paradigm of royal structures from 1778 to 1848. The Banat region became a subordinate province of the Hungarian Diet, the institution of the supreme royal rule of the Kingdom. Judging from the prism of the thinking model of the analysis, the influence, which describes the royal administrative intention, is between royal institutional structures that desire to form institutional behaviors in accordance with the policies of Hungarianization and institutional subordination. This explains the establishment of the Incorporation Commission, a support institution that investigated the situation (RNATCD, 1778) of the regions, cities, and their citizens' wealth, as a first step in the incorporation process. Due to the incompatibility of the royal institutional structures with those existing in the region, the local inter-institutional links with Vienna (RNATCD, 7/1780, pp. 1-8) were maintained. At the level of the city of Timișoara, these connections determined the local Europeanness, due to the attribution of the status of a Ronly free city, thus benefiting almost autonomy in the institutional structures. Institutional relations of subordination were changing, judicial institutions were becoming autonomous (has the right to choose its own judges and jurors) opportunities for trade development were emerging and royal tax obligations were being eliminated. Timisoara aligns itself to Europeanism (by reducing the social category of noble rank), from a position of equality with the big cities of the Kingdom of Hungary. At the royal level, regarding the Banat region, we observe changes in the elements of sequentially eliminatory behavior, imposition, and subordination of institutional structures and institutional destructuring. In detail, the royal administration did not recognize the privileged status of the city and imposed the

implementation and subordination of institutional structures. In response, local military institutions developed cooperative relations with the Aulic Council of War in Vienna.

### **The third administrative period**

The regional autonomy marks the third period in the administration, delimited with the establishment of the administrative entity called Voivodeship of Serbia and Banat of Timișoara, with its capital in Timișoara city. Subordinated to the Austrian Empire, the entity becomes an imperial province administered by a governor, benefiting from its own civil and military leadership. At the level of the city of Timișoara, there was a city council, the institution of the mayor's office being subordinated to the State Administration. The return of institutional structures under Austrian influence meant institutional reconfiguration and realignment to the Austrian imperial geostrategies, a continuation of the Habsburg ones. Thus, the reintroduction of the geostrategy element in the administration processes, but in a different form. If in the first administrative period the imperial geostrategy implemented at the level of the region, was a model taken over, in this administrative period, the structures of the institutions created parts of their own regional geostrategy. Thus, we highlight the imprinting of the imperial geostrategies of Habsburg inspiration in the memory of the Banat administrative institutions.

Judging in terms of sequentiality, due to the benefits of regional autonomy and the European multicultural context, there was a temptation to empower both geostrategies and institutional support structures. The sequentiality, thus characteristic, is constituted between geostrategy with a tendency of autonomy, that requires own institutional structures that ensure Euroregional performance. Thus, in 1850, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Serbian Vojvodina and historical Banat was established. Due to the right to collect customs and store goods, benefits of free city status, the commercial institution facilitated alignment with the European commercial spirit, by constantly shaping trade relations. The cooperation of the administrative institutions with the existing confessional organizations in the city, on the development of the European cross-cultural character in the region, stands out in 1848. Religious services were held and prayers were said after 4 rites including Roman-Catholic, Evangelical, Greek Unified (Orthodox), and Mosaic rites (Preyer, 1995, p.213) for military and administrative freedom. Multiconfessionalism in the middle of the 19th century, Timișoara city, was represented by the harmonious cohabitation of Catholics, Greek Catholics, Greek Orientals, Protestants, and Jews. Most having representation/churches/synagogues/parishes even in the town (Preyer, 1995, p.239). Moreover, in 1852, Jews became lawful citizens by oath and in the middle of the 19th century, almost 10% of marriages were of mixed confessions between rites like Christians, Jews, and even Muslims (Preyer, 1995, p. 234). The acquisition of shared values in the intercultural context, through the institution of the confessionally mixed family, marks the beginning of transculturality in the Banat region.

At the level of the local institutional structures of Timișoara, the benefits of the status of capital of the province, of the free royal city, and the establishment of the governor's residence in the city, determined the modeling of the institutional behavior (magistrate/city hall), the performances in the sense of Europeanity began to appear. Timișoara aligned with the Europeaness of Central European cities through multiple

local premieres. We mention cultural premieres of the famous European shows, the construction of the Vienna-Timișoara and Sibiu telegraph line, the development of public gas street lighting services as well as the Timișoara-Baziaș railway line maintaining the regional connection with the Balkans.

### **The fourth administrative period**

In the fourth administrative period, Banat, as an incorporated province, was ruled by the institutional structures of the future Hungarian part of the Double Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, through the Diet of Buda. The royal administrative organization returns due to the full integration of the region into the Hungarian political and administrative structure. Compared to the rigid administrative system from the middle of the 18th century, there is a tendency of the Hungarian administration, with the establishment of the double monarchy, to adapt the structures to the local specifics, attributing to them a higher degree of regional autonomy. The new regulations aim at a continuous and ample process of institutional structural diversification due to the dissolution in 1872, of the administrative entity Military Border of Banat, by the monarchical central institutions. The external influence of geostrategic nature determined that the issue of regional security be transferred to institutional structures belonging to the legal field. Diversification is highlighted by amplifying the establishment of institutions, some with extended competence at the level of areas or the whole region. Thus, numerous and various legal institutions were established since 1871, before the dismantling of the military border. The first such institution was the Royal Court in Timișoara year 1871, the Royal Court in 1881 having regional authority, followed by the Royal Notary Chamber, also with regional competence, and in 1900, the Royal Prosecutor's Office.

At the local level, the attribution of the rank of a municipality to the city of Timișoara transforms the administrative institution of city administration into one of municipal rank. The development of novel institutional structures provided the institutional framework for economic development, the proliferation of industrial enterprises (RNATCD, 17/1899), and the increase of living standards by ensuring higher working and learning conditions (RNATCD, 14/1884, 5/1890, 9/1893), rail transport (RNATCD, 22/1895), diversification of educational institutions (RNARCD, 7/1891), the emergence of social institutions protecting vulnerable groups (RNATCD, 28/1878), professional organizations and associations (RNATCD, 7-15/ 1887), etc.. In fact, in general, the framework for the formation of a rich and active society in the European spirit of well-being.

The success of the alignment to the Europeanness of the region and especially of the city of Timișoara was also due to the formation of the cultural tradition, in which the mayor's office was affirmed at the local, regional and European levels by premieres. These include the introduction of electric street lighting for the first time in Europe (RNATCD, 8/1884), the first horse-drawn tram in Southeast Europe (RNATCD, 20/1896), the opening of the first public library in the Austrian Empire, etc.

If initially aimed to change behaviors through Hungarianization processes, transformed into geostrategies, the focus has been switched to security, institutional diversification, and autonomy and to align with the European spirit and performance.



## Conclusions

Although the governing administrative structures in the Banat region have changed, the oscillation between the Austrian and Hungarian-inspired administrative structures remained constant between 1716 and 1918. Characteristic to the whole period is the fact that successfully implemented institutional structures ensured autonomy, even if its level was reduced, openness to the local existing functional elements. Thus, it can be seen that the Habsburg institutions were more open to the preservation of specific local elements while the Hungarian administration changed completely institutional structures. Non-alignment forced the Hungarian-inspired institutional dismantling, which on the next incorporation of Banat under his leadership (Austro-Hungarian one) succumbed to regional cultural pressures (strong due to the autonomous administrative episode), adapting institutional structures, such as defense, to local characteristics.

As a comprehensive example, following the reconstruction of the citadel of Timisoara by the Habsburg administration, elements of the defense system specific to the Ottoman-inspired eastern village were taken over and even improved. The water towers, used in the geostrategies for the defense of the plains, steppe territories (Luttwak, 2011, p.21) have been streamlined through relocation processes, necessary to obtain better visibility (Vicze, 2006, pp.98-99). The use of elements or even similar defense strategies, depending on the properties of the relief, are aspects also identified by Lutwack (2011, p.21), existing during the Byzantine Empire, draw our attention to a new interfering link, namely between the East and the Balkans.

Regional administration passed on the spirit of multicultural cohabitation and cooperation, the core of what we call today transculturality. Transculturality, as a value shared at the regional level, is represented symbolically by water towers existing even today. The period of regional autonomy between 1849 and 1860, at the level of the city of Timișoara was completed with the status of city-residence of the provincial governor and the status of a royal free city. Taken together, the benefits of this state have played an important role in supporting large-scale urban development. In other words, the success of the Banat region is due to the combination of autonomous, Habsburg-inspired geostrategies and Austro-Hungarian-inspired institutional diversification strategies adapted to the European spirit of the region.

Thus, the general hypothesis was confirmed, by proving that the geostrategies in which the historical Banat was included, left their mark on the regional institutional structures, to obtain administrative performance in the sense of Europeanness.

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