# SHADOWS OF THE PAST: COMMON EFFECTS OF COMMUNISM OR DIFFERENT PRE-COMMUNIST LEGACIES? AN ANALYSIS OF DISCREPANCIES IN SOCIAL MOBILIZATION THROUGHOUT ROMANIAN REGIONS

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With 3 figures and 2 tables Received 8 December 2014 · Accepted 8 May 2015

**Summary**: An increasing number of studies dealing with democratic transitions in Eastern Europe, especially those dedicated to aspects of social capital and political culture, stress their comparative component. The newly democratic countries in this region, used as unit of analysis, are often treated as being monolithic blocks. Even though they are not as homogeneous as they appear, their regional diversity does not pass through the lenses of the majority of those comparative studies. Furthermore, the studies usually do not include considerations on social mobilization or social movements and their relationship to the regime change. The purpose of this article is, therefore, to analyze the impact of historical legacies on differences of social mobilization in post-communist Romania. Following reports on regional discrepancies – mainly concerning ethnic composition, distribution of indicators of social capital and political participation – this paper focuses on patterns of social mobilization in two regions, with a common communist, but a divergent pre-communist history – Transylvania, part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the rest of the country, part of the Ottoman Empire. Using two different time-series, monitoring protest activities throughout the two regions, we found relevant proof of dissimilar protest behavior within Romania.

Zusammenfassung: Ein Großteil der wissenschaftlichen Beiträge über demokratische Transitionen in Osteuropa hat einen komparatistischen Charakter, handelt aber die einzelnen Staaten und die Region immer wieder als monolithische Blöcke ab. Eine Differenzierung mit Blick auf den Raum als auch auf die jeweiligen Staaten findet insbesondere bei Studien, die Aspekte politischer Kultur und sozialen Kapitals untersuchen, nur bedingt statt. Darüber hinaus fehlt es oftmals an einer disziplinübergreifenden Debatte über die Beziehung zwischen Regimewechsel und sozialer Mobilisierung. Die Absicht dieser Studie liegt darin, den Einfluss des historischen Erbes ('historical legacy') auf soziale Mobilisierung im post-kommunistischen Rumänien zu prüfen. Während regionale Unterschiede in Rumänien in zahlreichen Arbeiten untersucht wurden, hauptsächlich mit einem Fokus auf Aspekte sozialen Kapitals, ethnischer Zusammensetzung und/oder politischer Partizipation, bleibt soziale Mobilisierung unterbeleuchtet. Im vorliegenden Artikel werden, unter Zuhilfenahme zweier verschiedener post-1989 Zeitserien, zwei Regionen Rumäniens, mit unterschiedlicher prä-kommunistischer/imperialer Geschichte untersucht und regionale Differenzen, Muster sozialer Mobilisierung betreffend, sichtbar gemacht.

Keywords: Social mobilization, social capital, historical legacies, democratic transition, post-communist Romania, Eastern Europe

## 1 Introduction

The analysis of political transitions, focused on the "movement from something to something else" as O'DONNEL and SCHMITTER (1986, 65) put it, has for a long time had its focus on transitions to democracy. For legions of authors, working on the newly democratic nations in the former communist bloc, it constituted the dominant analytic pattern for the political, economic and socio-cultural transformations in Eastern Europe. Even though some scholars have argued, in the early years after the fall of communism, that democratic experiences before the autocratic regime might have a positive effect on the chances for a successful democratization (e.g., MERKEL and PUHLE 1999), the main focus was on the pre-democratic configurations of the respective political system or on the influence of the "prior regime type for transition paths" (LINZ and STEPAN 1996, 55). Apart from perspectives aiming at analyzing the institutional change, proponents of a cultural approach to democratic transitions, like DIAMOND (1999, 173; 1994, 239) argued that civic attitudes become more and more influential in the long run. In time, analysts have taken a more critical stance towards the transition paradigm, underlining the lack of democratic achievements in the countries concerned, and pointing to the development of a defective form of democracy (cf. MERKEL and CROISSANT 2004;

DOI: 10.3112/erdkunde.2015.02.05

ISSN 0014-0015

MERKEL and CROISSANT 2000) or even proclaiming "the end of the transition paradigm" (CAROTHERS 2002).

Subsequent to PUTNAM's (1993, 664) conception of social capital, understood as "features of social life - networks, norms and trust - that enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared goals" an additional theoretic lens gained popularity in the field of analysis of regime change in Eastern Europe. Starting from this perspective, numerous analysts have turned towards the study of the relationship between dictatorship and indicators of social capital. Countries with recent history of non-democratic regimes seem to have lower indicators of social capital, especially social trust and voluntary associations, culminating in PALDAM and SVENDSEN's (2001) statistical account that dictatorship, including communist regimes, destroys social capital. Even though DEKKER et al. (1997) have found no significant relationship between social trust and political participation in western nations, most of the studies dedicated to social capital in Eastern Europe argue that newly democratic countries have lower rates of civic engagement, volunteering and associational membership, somewhat mixing up 'social capital' and 'civil society' (cf. HOWARD 2003, 41f.). Concerning political participation MANSFELDOVA and SZABO (2000) report a decline in social mobilization in several former communist countries after 1989. Factors often evoked in support of the argument regarding a link between low engagement/low rates of social capital and the communist past are, amongst others, the effect of the economy of scarcity and the black market producing what ROSE (1998) calls 'negative social capital'. Strongly related to the black market we find accounts of citizens' lack of time in the predemocratic regime, keeping them from social and political involvement (DI PALMA 1991). A second argumentation is mainly focused on the experience with communist mass-organizations, and the resulting mistrust in associations (Howard 2003, 105ff.). Contrariwise, LETKI (2003) finds that communist party membership increased conventional political participation. Due to the fact that the conception of social capital combines both structural and cultural components (cf. KUNZ 2006, 335), and that it takes into account historical developments, analysts of social capital in Eastern Europe argue that the past (strongly) impacts on features of today's societies, resulting in low participation in mass-protests, low civic engagement and low social trust. While both institutional changes and elements of social capital,

including aspects of civic involvement and (explicitly) volunteering, have a prominent place in the analysis of regime change in Eastern Europe, only a few works have been dedicated to its relationship with social mobilization or social movements (cf. EKIERT and KUBIK 1998, 550f.; MERCEA 2014). ROSSI and DELLA PORTA (2009, 172f.) even find a lack of interest for the waves of democratization by analysts of social movements, or for social movements by scholars of the transition processes. This seems to be reason enough to study one post-communist country and to focus on the effects of historical legacies - both communist and pre-communist experiences - in what concerns social mobilization. Following reports of several distinguishing features (mainly social capital and civic involvement) in two main regions of post-communist Romania - Transylvania and the rest of the country - this study focuses on regional differences in patterns of social mobilization.

#### 2 Regional differences

Arguing with both institutional configurations of the pre-democratic regime and aspects included in the social capital conceptions, analysts underline the lasting influence of communism in Eastern European countries, distinguishing them from their Western counterparts. What is common to most of the approaches is the analytic unit of the research: in a considerable number of works the analysis focuses on the country level. Especially in terms of cultural transformations, scholars mainly study the 'national political culture', focusing on the political system as a whole. Various studies, dealing with questions surrounding the political culture of nations, have shown, in recent years, that there is "significant cultural diversity within some countries [...] compromising the concept of national culture (MINKOV and HOFSTEDE 2012, 133). Eastern Europe's historical legacies, dating back longer than the communist rule, have been approached from different angles, including ethnicity, former imperial influences and the importance of "historical experiences that shaped regional political cultures" (BADESCU and SUM 2005, 118). BADESCU and colleagues (in several studies) are puzzled by the fact that, even though the communist regime influenced the society in the whole country - notably via social engineering efforts aimed at the destruction of collective memories and the erosion of cultural norms - there are noticeable differences

within post-communist Romania (BADESCU and SUM 2005). Concerning this case, studies report, in the last decade, lower indicators of social capital than in other former communist countries regarding volunteering, associational membership, trust and bridging ties (MONDAK and GEARING 1998; MUNGIU-PIPPIDI 2005; BADESCU et al. 2004; VOICU 2008), as well as lower rates of 'unconventional political participation' such as signing petitions, contacting politicians or participating in rallies (GABRIEL 2004). In regard to social mobilization, analysts attest lower levels of political involvement, arguing with a negative influence of a 'non-participatory culture' (VOICU and BASINA 2005), or with the backwardness of the Romanian civil society hampering democratic claim-making (ROISSARD DE BELLET 2001).

Taking a closer look at this case, the interested observer will find several regional differences within Romania, distinguishing Transylvania from the rest of the country. Apart from distinct voting patterns in Transylvania (cf. ROPER and FESNIC 2003), analysts find many distinguishing features of this part of the country, including aspects of social capital, of ethnic composition and of socio-economic modernity.

# 2. 1 Regional differences regarding features of social capital

BADESCU et al. demonstrate that Transylvania holds unique characteristics in what concerns social capital, arguing with a higher awareness towards NGOs, higher propensities for donating (BADESCU and SUM 2005, 118ff.), more voluntary associations (BADESCU 2006), as well as slightly higher indicators of aggregated trust (BADESCU and SUM 2003). They argue that Transylvania might "benefit from denser social networks facilitating greater communication and mobilization" (ibid. 19). A similar explanation stems from MARINO (2005, 18ff.), who underlines a "backwardness of critical spirit and social solidarity in Walachia and Moldavia" - regions under the influence of the Ottoman Empire, until 1877 - compared to Transylvania - part of the Habsburg Empire until 1918.

## 2.2 Regional differences regarding ethnic composition and religion

A more apparent difference consists of features related to ethnic composition and religion, Transylvania being ethnically more diverse than the rest of the country: according to the national census of 2011, a Hungarian minority accounted for 1,227,623 of the Romanian population of 20,121,641, most of which (1,216,666) living in Transylvania (1,125,965 in Macroregion 1 [North-West and Center] and 90,701 in the region 'West'). Also a small German minority (36,042 on a national level) is present in Transylvania (32,825 on a regional level). Going several steps back in history, ROPER and FESNIC (2003, 121) point to the fact that during the two world wars, ethnic minorities constituted around 40% of Transylvania's population. This ethnic diversity translated into a bigger religious pluralism, leaving the Greek Catholic Church to be an influential player in Transylvania (STAN and Turcescu 2000), in an otherwise Orthodox country. During communism a policy of "induced ethnic assimilation", consisting of nationalist (unifying) messages and measures of ethnic mixing (influx of ethnic Romanians to Transylvania, sending Hungarians in ethnic Romanian regions) aimed at leveling these regional differences (cf. BADESCU and Sum 2005, 122).

# 2.3 Socio-economic modernity and additional distinguishing features

An additional distinguishing aspect concerning Transylvania's historical development, according to BADESCU and SUM (2005, 119), is related to its higher socio-economic development at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, including decreasing birth rates and higher literacy rates. LIVEZEANU (1995, 48) reports a 51.1% percent literacy rate for Transylvania and 39.3% in the rest of the country in the period of 1897–1912 and 67% compared to 55.8% in 1930.

In a more 'organizational sociology' oriented study, NECULAESEI and TATARUSANU (2008, 202f.) find a higher degree of uncertainty avoidance, on the micro level, which translates into risk taking, tolerance and achievement-based motivation, and an unique medium-term focus in Transylvania, leading to more perseverance and concern for longterm investment in this region.

Different legal traditions and socio-political configurations during the imperial period have led to different manifestations of political power, with accountable authorities (Administrative apparatus) in Transylvania and arbitrary power (sultanic) in the other part, leading to no centralized order in the South and East, where "law was often mixed up with the ruler's will" (MARINO 2005, 164).

### 3 Argument

As all other forms of strong in-group solidarity, ethnicity, as a "constructed claim to common origin, shared culture and linked fate" (MCADAM et al. 2001, 231), or "family resemblance" (HOROWITZ 1985, 57) is a considerable factor concerning social mobilization and conflict. VANHANEN (1999) considers ethnic heterogeneity as being a source of conflict in itself. GURR and HARFF (1994) identify an ethnic cultural identity together with existing grievances as a major source of group mobilization, even though he reports a decline in ethnic violence since the 1990s (GURR 2000). The reconfiguration of the political space after World War I, and the emerging question of ethnic minorities, has been reported as being a source of conflict due to a mismatch between cultural and political boundaries (BRUBAKER 1996, 55). Conflicts often arise via secessionist movements mobilizing on ethnic grounds and religious differences. Furthermore, the aforementioned aspects of socioeconomic modernity may be considered a source of contention for, at least, two reasons: modernity leads to structural inequality (and the awareness of it) and to the appearance of social movements and social conflict (cf. EYERMAN 1992, 37ff.)

Coming back to the arguments on the weakness of social capital and civil society in countries with recent regime change, one might expect that the same mechanisms affect social mobilization, protests, etc. The question whether social capital impacts on all other forms of political participation as well is raised by LETKI (2003, 23), even though she reports "limited usefulness of the concept of social capital in explaining political activism". On the other hand, VOICU (2005) reasons that participation in mass protests might be an indicator of social capital. DIANI's (1997) considerations on the relationship between social capital and social mobilization are mainly oriented towards the understanding that the former is an outcome of movement activity.

Nevertheless, social capital analysts are postulating a connection between social and political participation, stating that social activity creates the context where participants get the resources and competences necessary for political activity, through the internalization of common values and norms, and by providing an opportunity to become acquaintance with political active persons, eventually stimulating political participation (cf. KUNZ 2006, 339f.). LA DUE LAKE and HUCKFELDT (1998) report that 'politically relevant social capital', which increases a citizen's propensity to political participation, is generated in personal networks. Also, VERBA et al. (1995, 41) argue that the reasons for political involvement often lie within the personal context of individuals, especially in their circle of friends, without talking about social embeddedness or social capital, though. Aspects close to key-features in social capital conceptions, notably norms, networks (especially pre-existing networks), group solidarity and collective identity are extensively discussed in the literature dedicated to social movements (cf. PASSY and GIUGNI 2001; KLANDERMANS and OEGEMA 1987), but until very recently those aspects where not described as 'social capital' (cf. EDWARDS 2013). The importance of the existence of networks for collective action - including here informal organizations or informal networks and/or pre-existing collective ties - was underlined by 'networking approaches to social movements' (DIANI and MCADAM 2003), even though they could not demonstrate an universal link between networks and collective action (DIANI 2003, 2). This aspect is systematically discussed under the umbrella of social embeddedness: KLANDERMANS et al. (2008) indicate that participation in civil society networks positively impacts on collective action; MAYER et al. (1997) demonstrate that integration in friendship networks influences the decision to participate in social mobilization; finally, VAN STEKELENBURG and KLANDERMANS (2013) assert that 'structural social capital' (as distinct from 'social capital as a relational resource') encourages social cooperation and, therefore, facilitates social mobilization. Hence, social capital appears to ease social mobilization on an individual level, as well as on a macro-level. One has to take into consideration its impact on aspects included in the resource mobilization approach to social movements. Since one of the main effects of social capital is to facilitate cooperation and is often described as a means to overcome the problem of collective action in the sense of Olson (cf. PETERS 2002, 164; VOICU 2005), it appears reasonable to hypothesize about a relationship between social mobilization and social capital. The latter diminishes transaction costs and facilitates the cooperation social mobilization might benefit from, in the first place by increasing the chances of organizing claims and, in the second, by enhancing cooperation between a social movement and its environment. Furthermore, our presumption is that more bridging ties and/or denser networks ease a movement's access to resources (mainly participants and their time). Trust appears to be not merely a result of voluntary activity, but also a prerequisite for participation, and not just in

voluntary associations, but in social mobilization as well. Mobilization, aiming at common goods, seems to be less likely, if either little generalized trust or a strong Binnenmoral stemming from negative social capital is existent. Norms of reciprocity might ease resource mobilization as well, by diminishing expected costs for potential participants in collective action and social mobilization. Even though the resource mobilization and the social capital approach have different temporal localizations, one focused on a given situation in time, the other one taking into consideration historically more distant developments, we believe that there is a relationship between the two. In countries with a recent transition background, social mobilization might not only be an indicator of social capital, but social capital might also be an influential factor for social mobilization. Generalized trust influences an individual's decision to join associations as well as to participate in social mobilization and networks; cross-cutting horizontal/bridging ties strongly influence resource mobilization and a movement's positioning within the movement field.

Taking into account the factors presented, distinguishing Transylvania from the rest of the country, including the above mentioned ethnic/religious diversity (as potential sources of social conflict), as well as reports of higher indicators of social capital and higher rates of voluntary association (as potential sources of higher political participation), we hypothesize that one will find higher rates of social mobilization in this region as well.

#### 4 Empirical analysis

In order to test whether there are higher rates of social mobilization in Transylvania than in the rest of the country, we used data from the 'European Protest and Coercion Data' (EPCD) project. The data can be considered as a 'protest event analysis' (PEA), defined as a method to map occurrences of protests by means of content analysis (KOOPMANS and RUCHT 2002). The advantage of this data source is that it provides comprehensive accounts of protest in Romania by allocating protest to localities (cities mainly, but also regions). In our analysis we use the data with a timeframe from January 15 1992 to December 15 1995 adding a variable 'region' we derived from the city (if mentioned). Protests that occurred all over Romania or without exact localization were ignored. Table 1 shows the distribution of protest in Romania based on the 'EPCD' by regions.

Protests in the Bucharest region, which is the administrative and political center of a mediumcentralized country, outnumber by far occurrences of protests in other regions. North-East and South have low frequencies of protest. Since we were interested in regional differences between Transylvania and the rest of the country we aggregated the regional data, receiving three main regions 'Transylvania' (North-West, Center and West), 'Bucharest' and the rest. Before turning to the aggregated data, it is important to understand the demographic structure of Romania at the time of the analysis. According to the Romanian Institute of Statistics, Romania had in

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent	
Valid		1193	77.2	77.2	77.2	
	Bucharest	160	10.3	10.3	87.5	
	Centre	86	5.6	5.6	93,1	
	North-Est	4	0.3	0.3	93.3	
	North-West	14	0.9	0.9	94.2	
	South	2	0.1	0.1	94.4	
	South-East	13	0.8	0.8	95.2	
	South-West	10	0.6	0.6	95.9	
	West	64	4.1	4.1	100	
	Total	1546	100	100		

Tab. 1: Distribution of protest in Romania by region 15.01.1992–15.12.1995 based on 'EPCD' data

1992 an overall population of about 22,811,392. By region, the Institute reports 7,723,732 for Transylvania (Macroregion 1 [North-West and Center] and West) or 34% of the population, for Bucharest region 2,354,721 or 10% and 12,732,929 or 56% for the rest of the country. As seen above, the region with 10% of the population (Bucharest) accounts for an overall preponderance of protest. Figure 1 shows the aggregated figures on the three regions.

By using the numbers of the aggregated regions, we can observe that the superiority in weight of the Bucharest region disappeared, leaving protest now equally distributed between Transvlvania and the Romanian capital. Very few occurrences of protest were reported in the rest of the country. The two regions (Bucharest and Transylvania) with 44% of the Romanian population account for over 90% of the reported protests. Once more, one should underline that Bucharest is the political center and plausibly the majority of protests with national demands took place in the capital. In a second step, we will use newer data (August 2012) on the regional distribution of attempts to register protest-events (demonstrations, rallies, meetings), provided by the Romanian NGO Apador-CH. Apart from the statistics the report provides, it also gives an account of the difficulty of collecting such data in Romania, since there are no centralized figures available. The data was collected by sending inquiries to all Romanian municipalities. According to Apador-CH, the collected data was not complete, since several municipalities refused to provide such information, but it is overall representative since the non-respondents were distributed equally

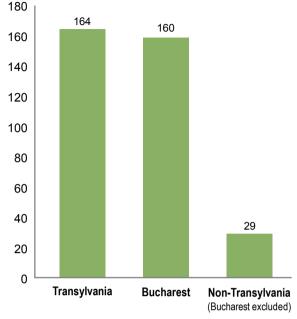


Fig. 1: Distribution of protest in Romania by aggregated region 15.01.1992–15.12.1995 based on 'EPCD' data

over the regions. Table 2 shows reported attempts to register protest-events by region for 2011 and 2012.

For 2011 and 2012, the table indicates once more high figures of attempted protest events in the Bucharest region. As in table 1, records of protest attempts have a significantly smaller frequency in the southern districts. For the other regions, the figures display a more or less similar distribution of attempts. Once more, we will concentrate on the results for the aggregated regions, included in figure 2.

	2011		2012	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Bucharest	2226	54	1260	44
Centre	328	8	233	8
North-East	165	4	249	9
North-West	542	13	475	17
South	453	11	295	11
South-East	90	2	93	3
South-West	43	1	60	2
West	305	7	178	6
Total	4152	100	2843	100

Tab. 2: Frequency of attempts to register public gatherings in Romania by region based on 'Apador-CH' data

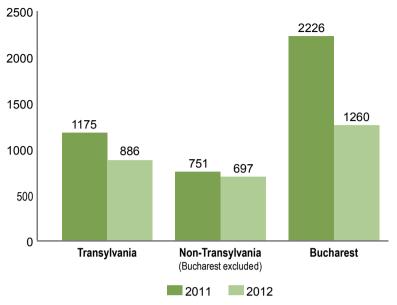


Fig. 2: Frequency of attempts to register public gatherings in Romania by region based on 'Apador-CH' data

The figures clearly indicate a higher rate of attempts in Transylvania than in the rest of the country (Bucharest excluded), even though this difference decreased somewhat in 2012. The Bucharest region, especially in 2011, had an immense share of attempted protests, while the difference between Transylvania and the rest shrunk, compared to the 'EPCD' data from 1992-1995. A statistical reason for the enormous preponderance of protest in Bucharest compared to the rest of the country might be the weight of one valid response of the whole region (Bucharest municipality) in the absence of complete data from other regions. On the other hand, Romania was struck by protest over austerity measures in both years, taking place in October 2011 as well as in the winter 2011/2012, concentrated in Bucharest. It appears plausible, that protest against the national government, located in Bucharest, also attracted protesters from other parts of the country, diminishing the number of potential participants in these parts. The decline of attempts in 2012 might be partially explained either by the fact that the attempt to register protest events took place in late 2011 for early 2012, or by a change of the predominant protest culture. Regarding the latter, it appears possible that the protests emancipated themselves from following the administrative rules of the game (e.g. by not attempting to register planned protests), culminating in violent street protest in January and February 2012. Even though the extreme disparities in the 'ECPD' data between Transylvania and the rest of Romania diminished, what might be related

to the fact that, after the 'ECPD' series ended, the Hungarian minority party (UMDR) was included in almost every national government coalition, eventually channeling political grievances in the more intermediary directions of party politics and political partisanship. Despite the fact that the difference between Transylvania and the rest of the country (Bucharest excluded) decreased in 2012, there is still a three percent difference in protest attempts compared to a 23% difference in population (Transylvania about 7.1 million or 33%, the rest of the country [Bucharest excluded] about 11.9 million or 56%). Individual figures for Cluj (included in Transylvania) and Ploiesti (included in Non-Transylvania) are extremely high. They both account for almost one third of protest attempts in their respective aggregated regions. In the following graph, we will consider them as statistical outliers and exclude them, regardless whether it is related to reporting errors or a different manner of counting, or to confounding variables, such as the fact that Cluj and Ploiesti are big industrial poles in their region or Ploiești's geographic proximity to Bucharest.

Having excluded the two outliers, the difference in the amount of attempts to register protest-events between the two regions becomes more obvious, especially in 2011, displaying figures almost three times higher. While witnessing an overall decline of attempts in the aggregated regions with the two outliers included, figure 3 shows an increase in the Non-Transylvania region, due to slightly higher figures in 12 out of 18 municipalities.

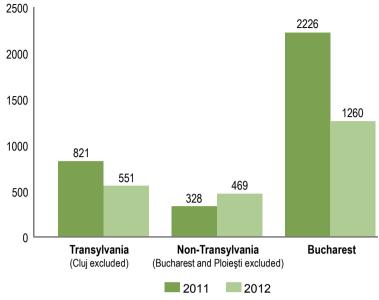


Fig. 3: Distribution of attempts to register public gatherings in Romania by aggregated region based on 'Apador-CH' data (Cluj and Ploiești excluded)

#### 5 Findings

Considering arguments about Transylvania's distinct character, we hypothesized that we would find higher rates of social mobilization there than in the rest of Romania. Using two independent data-sources, we found similarities between the distribution of (attempted) protests and reports on the distribution of indicators of social capital. What might be 'circumstantial evidence', as a result of coincidences, might also be a hint regarding the connection between social capital and social mobilization. Continuously higher reports of occurrences or attempts of social mobilization, in both time series, in the aggregated region 'Transylvania' compared to the rest of the country (Bucharest excluded) persists as the main finding. Even though the impacts of the economy of scarcity and the effects of the communist claim to shape society were experienced in the whole country, the pre-democratic regime in Romania did not equalize the levels of social contention across the country. This coincides with BADESCU's reports that "the communist legacy cannot explain the difference for Romania in simple terms if we assume that all regions of Romania had a similar experience under the communist regime" (BADESCU and SUM 2003, 9) in what concerns indicators of social capital. Social capital might not just help to create a "vibrant and virtuous community where people know their neighbors, join together in voluntary associations, give of themselves, and commit themselves to moral codes",

as USLANER (1999, 121) emphasizes, but it might also favor social mobilization. Further research is needed to explain whether such findings are related to Transylvania's ethnic/religious diversity, as a source of social conflict or to a link between social capital and social mobilization.

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