

From Community to Society – A Pattern of Modernization in Transylvania in the European Context

The Role and Implications of the State Policies (1850–1918)

The fact that makes a mark on the identity of a modern society is believed to be the consequence of the process through which a traditional society suffers alterations and transformations, gradually affecting all fields of life and taking place as phenomena such as: demographical revolution, industrialization, the low rate of the agrarian sector, urbanization, literacy and – last but not least – the new way of legitimization and solidarity that the modern state puts forward for consideration. Most analysts of the process consider the modernization process, same as industrialization, to have started in the north-west of Europe and spread to other parts of the continent step by step, a gradual diffusion process.

Historical analyses of the Habsburg Empire referring to the modernization process were all marked by a variety of views. The classical view was dominated by a negative perception of the Habsburg Monarchy capacity for modernization, and it was followed by a revisionist one.¹ Analyses, particularly of the economic and social history, demonstrated that the modernization of the Empire was a gradual process – the “Austrian model”, as John Komlos called it – in which modernization took place as a diffusion phenomenon from the western regions to the eastern ones.² This process was supported by interregional interactions, thus we can say that the Monarchy reflected on a small scale the general European process of the diffusion of industrialization from west to east.

According to this idea, our research will be based on analysing the state role and its implications in the modernization process in Transylvanian society in the second part of the 19th century. We will take into consideration the effects, as well as the limits of state intervention in this process. One of our theoretical supports will be the modernization theory based on Max Weber and Talcott Parsons’ notion of “functional differentiation”,³ which we will analyze for the Transylvanian 19th century. In this respect we analyze

1 For more details, see Max Stephan Schultze, *Economic Development in the Nineteenth Century Habsburg Empire*. In: *Austrian History Yearbook* 1997, pp. 293–307.

2 John Komlos (ed.), *Economic Development in the Habsburg Monarchy in the 19th Century*. New York 1983; idem, *Economic Development in the Habsburg Monarchy and in the Successor States*. Boulder, Colorado 1990.

3 Max Weber, *Schriften*, ausgewählt von Dirk Kaesler. Stuttgart: Krüner 2002; Talcott Parsons, *Evolutionäre Universalien der Gesellschaft*. In: Wolfgang Zapf (ed.), *Theorien des sozialen Wandels*. Opladen 1971.

the interactions the state had generated of different levels of society, all of them being engines of the cumulative modernization process, supported by particular internal forces in society. These levels are:

- economy and social changes;
- training and education;
- the relationship between State and Church.

We started our analysis from a set of historiographically well-known assertions without giving them the power of a full thesis.

As a peripheral province, Transylvania showed evident disparities in comparison with the Monarchy's western regions including the historical inheritance of a political and social system that even in the middle of the 19th century excluded Romanians even though demographically they were the majority.

The province began economic modernization and industrialization from a very low level. For the Danube Monarchy as a supranational state, relations between the state and the individual became stressed beginning in the second half of the 19th century because of the organizational structure and principles of modern European society; the particularity was given by the multi-ethnic and multi-confessional reality in the province, all of which generated a specific evolution at the political and ideological levels, an evolution characterizing the Central European space.

The two centres of power, the Austrian one from Vienna between 1849 and 1867 and the Hungarian one represented by the Budapest government after 1867, generally held different views on the Transylvanian province, but mainly their target was the same: modernization. This modernization did not depend only on state action but also on internal forces. Some of them might support the process while others became impediments.

Economy, urbanization and social change

In the 19th century, the shaping of society was influenced by the modern capitalist institutions, their practices and values, both in Western Europe and in the Central Eastern regions of the continent. While in the west economic modernization and the advance of capitalist structures were a growing process that motivated and started improvements for which state intervention only had to tackle obstacles that were already disappearing, in the eastern regions the situation was different: here the traditional structures were still strong. Modernization was partly not even possible in the absence of forces that could by themselves generate all these transformations from inside. In this situation, state intervention had a definite influence on neutralizing those institutions, practices and traditional positions that were incompatible with modernization. In quite a short period, the reform politics of the state and supported by the state succeeded in creating a base for new practices and institutions proper for modernization. A new property system based on modern civil rights and all the juridical support that generates modern social

relations were adopted as a principle of economic interaction in the free concurrence that opened the gates to modern entrepreneurship, a strong program for modernizing school education and reconsideration of the relation with the Church, from which the state tried to take a set of prerogatives directly responsible for the individual.

At the economic level there were three essential components that contributed to the industrialization process in Eastern and Central Europe: the capital, the state and import of technology.⁴ In most occidental states the increase in capital came from inside, but in other regions the state imported capital as promoted and motivated by state actions – a feature that can be considered distinctive and prominent for economic modernization in Central Europe. Thus the economy and social structures in Transylvania and in the other eastern provinces of the Austrian Empire were indissolubly linked to and influenced by some forces able to start a modernizing process using mainly politics promoted by state actions.

The modernization process embarked on first by the 1848 revolutionaries then by the political parties, by local and imperial authorities, by the political and intellectual elite but at the same time also by some socio-professional categories had a significant influence on the reconfiguration of social and economic features in the territory between the Carpathians.

The evolutions and transformations in Transylvanian society between 1850 and 1918 had as a result a slow passing of the old economic structures and traditional mentalities, the transformation of the role and rate of agriculture in economic life, the creation of a new social structure, and the political process becoming laic. Definite from the economic and social perspectives is the fact that the evolutions in the second half of the 19th century were a result of the transformations after the agrarian legislation in 1853–1854 and the industrial laws, the custom law and the industrial and trade laws, as well as the rules of monetary politics. The liberal economic policy by the neo-absolutist reign in Vienna in the 1850s was overthrown by a very conservative political reign, a centralist and unifying one that generated a chain of deep transformations that were not reversed. Expressing a pragmatic policy, the dualistic Austro-Hungarian reign did not abandon Vienna's bureaucratic policy of the 1850s–1860s in Transylvania.⁵ In the same way, at the economic level, in 1875 there was the same free expression of essentially liberal economic and social politics, unspoiled by the economic crises that occurred all over Europe and replaced by a protectionist policy in which state intervention was much more evident. At the economic and social levels the transformations that state politics

4 I. Berend, G. Ránki, *Underdevelopment in Europe in the Context of East-West Relations in the 19th Century*. Budapest 1980; idem, *East-Central Europe in the 19th and 20th Centuries*. Budapest 1977; idem, *Foreign Trade and the Industrialization of the European Periphery in the 19th Century*. In: *Journal of European Economic History* 9 (Winter 1980) 3, pp. 539–585.

5 Marin Iosif Balog, *Politica fiscală a Vienei în Transilvania la mijlocul secolului al XIX-lea: între centralism birocratic și modernizare regională*. In: Teodor Pavel, Marin Iosif Balog (coord.), *Opțiuni democratice la popoarele central-est europene în secolul al XIX-lea*, [The Fiscal Policy of Vienna in Transylvania at the Middle of the 19th Century: between Bureaucratical Centralism and Regional Modernization. In: *Democratic Options for Central-East European People in the 19th Century*]. Cluj-Napoca 2006, pp. 212–241.

adopted were obviously full of meaning, having as a goal to uproot the old structures of traditional origin and to replace them with modern structures of capitalist essence. State legislative and institutional functions were carried out by imperial and regional-local organizations and support of some economic, social and educational projects contributed to economic and social favouritism but did not do so all the time.

We must not leave out the local factors that reacted negatively and then became the main impediments to the modernization process. First, the level that the province's economy came from in the capitalist modernization period was very low. Against the background of a traditional economy and social structure, modernization brought with itself the beginning of a differentiation process that assured the coexistence of industry and agriculture and embraced the economic tendencies of the Monarchy and the traditional ones.⁶ The industrial sector was, of course, more dynamic than agriculture, but because of the geographical and historical conditions, this had a disproportionate distribution; while the south and the south-east of the province were the parts with the most impressive industry, the north, excluding the Cluj, remained at the edge of the process. Thus, the modern sectors and the wealthy regional centres did not achieve the necessary rate in the economy to assure self-sustained growth of the whole economy.

Even if a favourable legislative state of affairs created a liberal economic ambience towards the end of the 19th century, the beneficial effects were diminished and limited by many factors: the limited resources of capital, the late development of infrastructure, i.e. railways in the province, essential in that period, including the assimilation of modern technology and mainly the improvement of a modern internal market. At the same time the state, set up as a firm promoter of modernization, had enough formal mechanisms to intervene in economic life, but lacked needed resources for this. Only beginning in the 1880s, based on a great wave of foreign investment, did the industrialization process and support of the modern economic sectors increase. Only these sectors partly succeeded in assuring some capital accumulation at the internal economic level and thus in promoting a modern entrepreneurial sense for the new-born economic elite.

Above all there was a lack of skilled, trained workers and large numbers of untrained hands, people who had to assure their existence by seasonal activities in industry or agriculture. This reality was caused by the too slow process in education and literacy, which had to provide and promote a social basis for capitalist economic life.

Training and education as prerequisites for modernization

In the middle of the 19th century the state was vastly implicated in school policy, having a great overall influence on educational organization, namely to organize the compulsory access of children between 6 and 12 years of age to elementary school, and for this

6 Iosif Marin Balog, *Dilemele modernizării. Economie și societate în Transilvania (1850–1875)* [The Dilemmas of Modernization. Economy and Society in Transylvania (1850–1875)]. Cluj-Napoca: Ed. International Book Access 2007.

reason it strongly intervened mainly in 1857–1859. Financial punishments (fines) were even introduced for parents opposed to letting their children attend school.⁷ This strong policy bore fruit in a short time, and despite weak financial support from the state all Romanian improvements in that period showed that within a few years the new Austrian administrative authorities had done much more to promote teaching and learning for Romanians than had been done before 1848. Indeed, a simple statistical appreciation of the number of schools in Transylvania reveals an increase from 742 in 1851 to 981 in 1858 and to 1625 in 1867.

The years of political liberalism (1860–1867) brought a relaxation of state compulsion in educational politics matched with the weak role of the Church in the school problem. All the conflicts between Church and State, along with inter-confessional animosities about the implications of the school policy⁸ limited one of the basic functions of the modern school: that of forming in young people a practical spirit and a new ethic based on the values of a capitalist society. Beyond young people's familiarity with Church customs, the prayers and the religious songs, the confessional school was limited to transforming the minimal knowledge of writing and reading that the pupils had to use only very little in everyday life. In that education in most cases was limited regarding attendance at confessional schools, it offered only a small stimulus to reform mentality and abandon at least some traditional practices. In addition there was another strong obstacle: the precarious material situation of the communities, for whom the financial effort in supporting the school was sometimes seen as an additional material obligation that the new reign had imposed. Considering all this, the tenacity and perseverance shown by some of the local community leaders determined to action for building and achieving good schools, putting together little by little mostly small amounts of financial contributions stood out as an honourable model for the willingness to modernize education. After 1867, the new policy initiated by law XXXVIII/1868 by Joseph Eötvös supplemented the state role in educational policy. In addition to the confessional schools, the law claimed the creation of state and communal schools and the confessional ones had to have all the material achievements and quality of education.⁹

Even if through its liberal character the law of 1868 aimed at improving the material situation of schools and the quality of education, at the same time it was promoting a policy to subordinate schools to the political power, which had as a first target to

7 T. Pavel, Date privind legislația școlară din anii neoabsolutismului în Transilvania (1849–1860) [Dates Concerning School Legislation in Transylvania in the Era of Neoabsolutism (1849–1860)]. In: *Lucrări Științifice, seria B* (Oradea 1970), pp. 238–239; Simion Retegan, *Satul românesc din Transilvania, ctitor de școală 1850–1867* [The Romanian Village in Transylvania as Schools Founder 1850–1867]. Cluj-Napoca 1994, p. 44; Marin Iosif Balog, Teodor Pavel, *Societatea rurală transilvăneană în tranziția spre modernitate în lumina legislației austriece din perioada neoabsolutistă 1849–1859* [Rural Transylvanian Society in its Transition toward Modernity in the Light of Austrian Legislation from the Neoabsolutist Era 1849–1859]. In: *Studia Universitatis Babeș-Bolyai, Historia* XLVII (2002) 1–2, pp. 41–54.

8 Simion Retegan, *Politică și educație la românii din Transilvania în epoca liberalismului austriac, 1860–1867* [Policy and Education for Romanians from Transylvania at the Time of the Austrian Liberal Era 1860–1867]. In: *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie din Cluj-Napoca XXX* (Cluj 1990–1991), p. 74.

9 Ioachim Lazăr, *Învățământul românesc din sud-vestul Transilvaniei, 1848–1883* [Romanian Education in South-Western Transylvania, 1848–1883]. Cluj-Napoca 2003, pp. 43–50.

enchain non-Hungarian nations' possibilities. Through their actions in the next years (1876-1900) the schools became an instrument in the hand of a political class more and more intolerant of any attempt at giving their natural rights to the nations. Thus, a mutually hostile climate was created whose causes were the attempt to impose the legal obligation of Hungarian, some school-books and the curriculum, and all this prevented the young pupils from developing the enthusiasm needed to embrace school with all nationalities.¹⁰

The school situation was directly linked to economic development and at the same time represented an opportunity and a requirement for the success of the process. That was one of the elements that determined social mobility and mobility between rural and urban areas. Through school the urban population became more accessible and familiar. If the elementary school could not achieve this step, this could also be done in the secondary and upper schools, whose graduates were looking for a better life in small or bigger urban communities. They were integrated in the social circuit but this time at another level. Most young people who graduated these schools became office workers, at an inferior level but they were included in a modern socio-professional category.

The evolution of the schools and the level of literacy in 1850–1900 reveals a sinuous but gradually increasing process which implies state and local community support and promotion of school. In this context, quantitative data is even more illustrative: in 1869, 311,847 citizens (13 % of the population) knew to read and write, in 1910 this figure was at 823,053 citizens (28.3 % of the population). The doubling of the educated population in four decades presented an opportunity to adopt and increase the specific professions for a capitalist economy: office workers in justice, army, the banking system, trade, and technical specialties.¹¹

One of the phenomena directly influenced by the modernization and industrialization process was social and professional mobility. First, modernization brings a fundamental change in social structure; it develops from a complete structure to mobility and heterogeneity. The dominant social form is not the community anymore but society as a whole, organizationally mediated through the legality principle first promoted by the state and its institutions. If in traditional society aggregating forms of interests were based on the virtue of tradition and on the system of values and firm rules, in modern society the main interest was realized at an economic level.

The elimination of feudal relations and the transformation of the property structure in agriculture influenced social mobility mainly in areas with possibilities to produce for

10 Liviu Maior, *Politica școlară a guvernelor maghiare față de români 1900–1914* [The Educational Policy of Magyar Governments regarding Romanians 1900–1914]. In: *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie din Cluj-Napoca XXX* (1990–1991), pp. 123–128.

11 Ioan Bolovan, *Aspecte privind populația Transilvaniei între 1850-1910: schimbare, progres și/sau modernizare*. In: *Schimbare și devenire în istoria României. Lucrările Conferinței internaționale „Modernizarea în România în secolele XIX–XXI”*, Cluj-Napoca 21–24 mai 2007 [Aspects regarding the Population of Transylvania between 1850–1910: Change, Progress or/and Regress. In: *Change and Becoming in the History of Romania. Proceedings of the International Conference “Modernization in Romania in the 19th–20th Centuries”*, Cluj-Napoca, 21–24 May 2007]. Cluj-Napoca 2008, pp. 603–618.

the market. Thus the situation on one hand generated a need for temporary workers to move from regions limited in auto-sufficient production to those with production mainly for the market. On the other hand the agrarian reforms claimed a direct or indirect effort of economic adaptation from the peasants. For those with very little land this meant the necessity to give it up and reorient themselves, if not to the town, at least to the zones where working hands were needed in agriculture. The second stage of industrialization, which in the Transylvanian space took place in the years after 1880, was a process much more evident of social transformation. If the Transylvanian socio-professional structure in 1850 was one distinguished by the traditional, the evolutions before and during the First World War revealed a clear process of transition to what can be called a society in the process of modernization.

The transformation in agriculture and the removal, through state action, of economic borders determined important changes in the rate of the urban population. The first stage of urbanization was registered between 1850-1880 when the urban population increased by 68 % due to the fast transformation of industry and agriculture. The second wave of urbanization started after 1880 and closely followed economic growth. The population of Transylvanian towns grew by 18.7 %, between 1900-1910 by 15 %, parallel to the moderated rhythm of economic growth in this period.¹²

Relationship between the triangle Church-State-Community

Looking into the problem of the relationship between Church and State and its effects on society and individuals is absolutely necessary to understand the way in which modern society was constituted in Transylvania, the way in which State and Church acted in forming and educating conscience and human personality in the second part of the nineteenth century.¹³ Two stages can be identified in the evolution of the relationships between Church and State in the Austrian Empire and the way in which these were transposed in the Transylvanian space in the second part of the nineteenth and at the beginning of the twentieth century (1849-1918).¹⁴ The first one, corresponding to neo-absolutism and political liberalism, concretized in a new form of collaboration between these two fundamental institutions, the apogee of which was reached by the Concordat between Vienna and the Vatican (1855). This act had as its primary purpose to arrange the relations between Church and State in Austria concerning restoring the Catholic Church and the plenipotentiary of the empire in their old rights, which were seriously

12 See Ioan Bolovan, *Transilvania între Revoluția de la 1848 și Unirea din 1918. Contribuții demografice* [Transylvania between 1848 Revolution and 1918 Unification. Demographic Contributions]. Cluj-Napoca 2000.

13 Rémond René, *Religie și societate în Europa* [Religion and Society in Europe]. Bucharest 2003.

14 Nicolae Bocșan, Ana Victoria Sima, *Statul austriac și bisericile românești din Transilvania la mijlocul secolului al XIX-lea* [The Austrian State and Romanian Churches from Transylvania at the Middle of the 19th Century]. In: *Österreichisch-Siebenbürgische Kulturbeiträge: ein Sammelband der Österreich-Bibliothek*, ed. Rudolf Gräf, Lenke Varga, Lukas Marcel Vosicky. Cluj-Napoca 2005.

affected by Josephine legislation. Secondly, through its articles the Concordat pursued the (re)institution of the Church-State condominium in the Austrian Monarchy. Thus the Church recouped a privileged position, with supervision rights on education, and the ecclesiastic tribunals were recognized as the only ones competent concerning matrimonial problems.

The new way of collaboration between Church and State must be seen from another perspective, too, the one concerning State intervention on society through the Church. We have to consider the fact that in the middle of the nineteenth century, the majority of the Romanian population was anchored in traditionalism, in common laws and patriarchal habits (a situation which has its roots in the socio-political evolution and which limited Romanians' access to education). Consequently the Church exerted a great influence on this population, many times as the instrument through which the State acted towards its citizens, e.g. in its attempts to train, inform and educate. So, even if the following statement seems bizarre, we have to consider the fact that the change in attitude of Saxon communities in Transylvania with regard to their political, cultural, mental, and economic modernization, was first the effect of efforts to inform and educate the parishioners, efforts made by the institution and the servants of the Church. For about two decades and half, the Concordat made the alliance between Church and State function, which proved to be the fundamental bond in maintaining the integrity of the monarchy. But even for this period (1849–1867) we have to consider the ambivalent character of the Church, at least for Transleithania, where the Church acted as the instrument of the state in relation to individuals, but as leader and spokesperson of the nationalities (Romanians, Serbs, Hungarians) in front of Vienna's political circles to assert and recognize national autonomy.¹⁵

Concerning the Romanian Church in Transylvania, either Greek-Catholic or Orthodox, we have to mention the fact that until around the 1848 revolution it was the dominant social force in the society it represented. The Church played a leading role in the events of 1848–1849 through its representatives. Now the first signals arise of the pasoptist generation of intellectuals contesting this leadership role of the Church in the movement for national Romanian emancipation in Transylvania. After the revolution, the Church resumed its leadership role, at least in relations with Vienna, and since then it had recorded the beginning of the substitution process of the ecclesiastic movement with the laic one. We must regard the complex modernization of Romanian society as an immediate consequence, too. The Church played a significant role, conscious or not, voluntary or less voluntary, in the dissemination of modernity principles (political, cultural, economic, social, medical and mental), which was realized through catechism, preaching and circulars, many of them transmitting the messages of different state institutions, some with real innovative content.

The second stage of the relations between State and Church in the Austrian

¹⁵ Adriányi Gabriel, *Lo stato ungherese ed il Vaticano (1848–1918)*. In: Pál Cséfalvay, Maria Antonietta De Angelis (eds.), *Mille anni di cristianesimo in Ungheria*. Budapest 2001, p. 111.

Monarchy, corresponding to the time during the dualist era (1867–1918), manifested in the dissociation between State and Church. This phenomenon started in the Habsburg Monarchy with the differences between the imperial circles, which did not approve of the liberal ideas of that epoch, and the Hungarian nobility, which promoted liberalism (moderate or radical) as a form of protest against Vienna, as an expression of its own identity and autonomy. While in Cisleithania the collaboration between the Roman Catholic Church and the State continued during the dualism period, in the territory controlled by the Budapest government the collaboration between these two institutions eroded gradually, and at the end of the century it reached an irreparable rupture. Since the civil war of 1848–49, the Catholic Hungarian episcopate constantly supported the position of liberal groups (especially the moderate ones), because the bishopric pursued its confessional independence from the Catholic Church in Austria and Rome. Instead, even if the liberal legislation during the first years of dualism had an anti-religious tint, it pursued the unhidden delimitation of Church business from that of the state, a policy that would sustain the idea of total separation between these two institutions.

This separation of Church and State emerged as a natural solution in a modern state, based on liberal principles, and represented a problem which most European states confronted in the second half of the nineteenth century. The new line promoted by the Hungarian governments, according to secularization principles, pursued a drastic limitation of confessional education, laicization in all fields of social life, expropriation of goods belonging to the Church, elusion of the Concordat, which did not have Hungarian church approval and whose forethoughts were not respected after 1867 in the Hungarian part of the monarchy. As proof of non-recognition of the Concordat of 1855, but as an act of secularization, the Hungarian politicians decided to dispossess the king of the right of *ius patronatus*, which was given to the government.¹⁶ The secularization and laicization policy, which determined the relegation of the Church to second fiddle and to a subordinate position next to the liberal Hungarian state, culminated in modernizing matrimonial right through the laws of 1894, introducing marriage and civil divorce and transferring the responsibility of keeping civilian registrations from priests to state officials. The first effect of the new matrimonial legislation was an increase in mixed marriages, which also meant the elimination of Church constraints on marriages. These civil laws legalized, in fact, the statute of the prominence of the state over the church and indicated the irreversible evolution of society on the road of secularization, an evolution in which the social and public role of the Church would experience profound changes.

Modernity meant the gradual reduction of the political prerogatives of the Church for the benefit of the State. This was an extremely complex process because it was determined by the relations that had been stressed at the time between the two spheres of power. The secularization tendencies exhibited by the state authority but also by society generated a conflict between the religious sphere and the civil one, and the multi-

¹⁶ Ion Cârja, *Biserică și societate în Transilvania în timpul păstoririi mitropolitului Ioan Vancea (1869–1892)* [Church and Society in Transylvania at the Time of Metropolitan Ioan Vancea (1869–1892)]. Cluj-Napoca: PUC 2007, pp. 173–197.

confessional character in the region made finding adequate solutions more difficult. Some problems, such as the introduction of civil marriage, had important effects also at the political level because they assured the separation between the liberal Protestant and the conservationist Catholic wing. In 1895 the Catholic Peoples' Party came into existence in Hungary, and this was the result of the conflict between Church and State after the dispute about the introduction of civil marriage. Non-Hungarian nationalities from the Hungarian Empire were opposed to the adoption of these rules because they had seen in this a new attempt to undermine national church rights.¹⁷

Due to the emerging national ideology, the from a confessional point of view extremely diverse situation, which was above national identity, determined the "nationalization" of the Transylvanian Church and its gaining a political dimension.

17 Aurelian Cosma, Căsătoria civilă ca aspect al modernizării: atitudinea bisericilor românești din Transilvania față de instituirea căsătoriei civile reflectate în ziarele "Unirea" și "Telegraful Român". In: Teodor Pavel (ed.), Tradiție și modernizare în societatea transilvană 1850–1918 [Civil Marriage as an Aspect of Modernization: the Attitude of Romanian Churches from Transylvania to Introducing Civil Marriage, reflected in "Unirea" and "Telegraful Român" Newspapers. In: Teodor Pavel (ed.), Tradition and Modernization in Transylvanian Society 1850–1918]. Cluj-Napoca: Accent 2003, pp. 192–203.