

THE REFLEXIVE APPROACH TO TRUTH IN HUMAN GEOGRAPHY: LESSONS FROM PROFESSOR VIRGIL-ACHILES GÂRBACEA

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ABSTRACT. *The Reflexive Approach to Truth in Human Geography: Lessons from Professor Virgil-Achiles Gârbacea.* This paper presents an Interview with the renowned Professor Virgil-Achiles GÂRBACEA, one of the very few visionaries who have understood and embraced the new research paradigms recognized at the international level within the scientific spectrum of Geography. Designed within a matrix of semi-open collaboration, the research questions aimed to explore the professor's perspective on the nature, perception, and construction of truth and weaknesses within human geography and within the specific context of Romania. The professor emphasized the importance of a critical and reflexive approach to the concept of truth in the field of human geography. He highlighted that truth and its weaknesses in this context are influenced by multiple social, cultural, and political variables. Furthermore, the professor acknowledged that human geography is a constantly evolving discipline, and understanding truth in this field requires a dynamic perspective and adaptability to societal changes. We underscore that the issue of truth and its weaknesses in this field is complex and fluid, and comprehending it necessitates a critical, contextualized, and open approach to dialogue. Additionally, a reflexive approach to the social and political construction of truth within the specific context of Romania is essential.

Keywords: *truth, weakness, human geography, critical approach, knowledge, Romania.*

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S.N.: *Dear Professor Gârbacea, I will begin by respectfully thanking you for the constructive academic discussions that we have had for more than a decade and that I feel honoured every time. They have, without a shadow of a doubt, contributed to the consolidation and development of the personal knowledge horizon, both in Geography's epistemological confine as well as in new research paradigms. Furthermore, I wish to share the excitement and fulfilment for the fact that you are a **Model Professor**, whose Informal Teachings have influenced me as well during the last decade. And I say informal because I did not have the honour of participating in your classes during my student years.*



*Professor Ph.D. Virgil-Achiles GÂRBACEA
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V.G.: Thank you, Sabin, for the opportunity provided by this Interview. Our discussions are always constructive and focused on hot topics in the field of Human Geography, which makes me interested every time.

S.N.: *Can Geography provide pragmatic solutions for today's problems? Which are the strengths and weaknesses of Romanian Geography?*

V.G.: The old geographic school of teaching put a lot of emphasis on description, and the curriculum was almost exclusively focused on providing information necessary for teaching preuniversity classes. The curriculum no longer focuses on the preparation of didactic classes, with multiple directions, even *specializations*, as in Territorial Planning, Cartography, Geography of Tourism³ and Hydrology-Meteorology. Academia as well as research saw the increasing development of spatial modelling within GIS, thus considerably enriching the field through quantification, statistical analysis, remote sensing, application of dendrochronology in geomorphology, geographic risk and hazard assessment, environmental sustainability, territorial planning and organization, territorial resource assessment

³ The students from this specialization say they study Tourism, not Geography.

and management (demographic, habitat, touristic, etc.), experiments using cutting edge technology and employment of the most modern methods in discovering absolute ages. Furthermore, several geographic research centres and publications were established.

Unfortunately, both geography faculties as well as preuniversity classes and professors still teach Regional Geography based on the existing continents: Europe, Asia, *America*, Africa, Australia, Oceania (only the small islands of the Pacific, and maybe including New Zealand) and Antarctica. In developed countries, the focus shifted to large global regions (for instance, North America – encompassing only Canada and United States of America, with Alaska included; Latin America and the Caribbean; North Africa and the Middle East; Sub-Saharan Africa; Oceania, including Australia). From this point of view as well, (Regional) Geography is several decades overdue. Geographic regions (“continents”, states) are taught mechanically and monographically, following a *rigid structure* containing geology, relief, climate, hydrography, vegetation, soils, fauna, population and settlements, economic geography. The structure is also present in school manuals (a sad example is the 6th grade manual which presents the countries of Europe in such a manner). Many decades have passed since the last edition of “Géographie universelle”, where territorial units were defined according to specific geographic features, where, among others, the climate and human geography characteristics could constitute the essential elements and were thus properly showcased. The curriculum of Geography (Ilovan *et al.*, 2019) contains too many classes tackling the Regional Geography of subunits or countries from every continent, including the Physical Geography of Romania, The Human Geography of Romania and the Regional Geography of Romania, which can lead to the proliferation of descriptiveness, especially when subdivisions are presented following a rigid scheme, which I have already mentioned, without emphasizing the relations between geographic components. In many states with strong geographic studies, this is almost unthinkable.

Most often, students read only the class notes. Many geography faculties fail to check the knowledge accumulated through other means (compulsory reading, a written course or optional bibliography). Taking into account the reality, we believe that long term education including preuniversity studies mostly takes place in a *formal framework*, especially when it comes to knowledge verification. Surprisingly, the Minister of Education announced on TV news that the results (simulation) of the National Assessment of March 2021 are more than encouraging (65.5% at the Romanian language and literature written examination, 59.97% in mathematics), emphasizing *student performance*. Not mentioned was that a third of the students had not attended the exam due to improper conditions, that the supervision (I wonder how effective it was?) had

been done by the same school's teachers (all directors aiming for the best results), that the audio-video equipment had not worked properly or had not even been used, and the tasks had been undemanding (at a Geography examination, the students had to name only four natural resources found in Russia). Furthermore, the final National Assessment and Baccalaureate examinations had deficient audio-video supervision (not even considering the fact that no one asked to review the footage). This explains how a student declared on TV, after the Baccalaureate, that: it was very easy as we had a very "smart" colleague who gave us all the answers. When it comes to final written papers, cheating is a generalized phenomenon, tolerated by teachers and directors. It is thus clear why we ranked last in Europe at the December 2019 PISA tests, with 44% functional illiteracy. This shows us that we are far from a proper human resource reform.

Another negative aspect is that some Geography faculties do not encourage the *individual work* of students, that is the assimilation of knowledge through other means than class notes. In reality, students *do not study*. We are light years away from what Mihail Eminescu said, that he is emboldened by an: "*unbounded desire, a thirst for study, a mind awakening*".

Another major problem is the manner in which *knowledge evaluation is conducted*. Examinations are mostly just a written paper (I do not refer to multiple-choice exams, which also have their own flaws). The task almost always involves a sub chapter or a part of course, the resolution being a *reproduction*, without any mention of relations among the elements. There must be synthetic subjects, where the student should make use of *select information*, which can be found in different chapters of that particular class, and then adapted to the proposed subject! The examination must test *cognitive levels*, not the ability to reproduce something.

The answer to whether Geography can provide pragmatic solutions to today's problems is at least a partial yes: through Geographic Information Science (G.I.S.), through natural risk and hazard analyses and their consequences, to the complex negative effects of climate change (coral reef contraction for instance), through planning, statistical methods, map applications, the map being an indispensable tool for the comprehension of current events (conflicts, political instability, the prediction of social and natural elements that influence pandemics), as well as through research on sustainable development, fragile rural environments, maintaining the authenticity of the Romanian village, territorial nanostructures.

Taking into account paleo-climatic data, such as the worldwide effects of glacial and inter- glacial periods, when ocean levels changed by tens of meters, leading among others to inversions that modified the extension of land masses. Taking into account global warming, which could, even with the slightest rise in sea

levels, flood considerable tracts of land (such as coastal plains, usually intensely populated and urbanized), lead to the impossibility of using current harbours, flooding beaches in all marine resorts, atoll disappearance, etc. *Geographic studies could shed a light on the territories affected by such phenomena.*

S.N.: *I remember that five years ago we had a discussion and you mentioned that you had never been active as Ph.D. coordinator within the Geographic Doctoral School, a fact that left me speechless, especially taking into account your scientific and academic work. Could you please state the reasons behind this decision?*

V.G.: I believe that, at this moment, there are too many professors at the Doctoral School of Geography. During my professional career, there were fewer (in Romania). I also believe I did not meet the necessary requirements, including suggesting themes poignant enough for the current and future directions of geography to doctoral candidates.

S.N.: *What does **Model Professor** in the field of Geography mean to you?*

V.G.: In any field it is adamant to have a *rich scientific research activity*, a large part of it aimed at the classes taught. Thusly, the content of the class will mostly correspond with the results from your own research. Each class should change its material every year such a thing is possible (and highly desirable). Some years could focus on certain aspects, while some years on others. Likewise, in some occasions, professors could introduce the newest international or even national trends, which also incurs an opening towards novelty, or their latest scientific breakthroughs. *I believe that scientific activity is the most important requirement for a faculty member.* It is also necessary to have a personal publication (a course) containing (in a proper volume) *the basic elements and aspects* of that class, later required for the exam. Add to the above mentioned a sufficiently high level of demand and the necessary pedagogic and communication skills, short of an actor even. The education one practices should be collaborative (this is why student relations and mutual respect are crucial). Finally, I would like to emphasize a correct usage of two methods, which at first seem at odds with each other: technology and traditional teaching.

S.N.: *Were you ever influenced by such Model Professors during your professional geographic formation? Please share some of your views and experiences during your bachelor and especially doctoral studies, where we all know Professor Tiberiu Morariu, considered by many to be one of the greatest Romanian geographers, was your scientific supervisor.*

V.G.: During my formative years (bachelor and Ph.D. studies, the start of my university career), my Model Professor was Gheorghe Pop, in terms of teaching as well scientific research. His classes were impeccable, and his scientific activity precise, superior to others, which put me on the path of rigorousness. Other professors include Valer Butură, who taught the Geography of Continents, and I tried to follow his example as best I could, especially when it came to teaching. I was also guided and influenced in my research by geographer Vintilă Mihăilescu, who I have personally met and had professional collaborations with (including field research). I studied his works with great interest and admired the results of his outstanding and prolonged scientific activity. When it comes to professor Tiberiu Morariu, *I choose not to associate myself with the admiration contained by the question*, despite the fact that some geographers, even exceptional ones such as Grigore Posea, expressed approval and commendation, evoking enduring memories from the time he had been his Ph.D. student. *He did not contribute, neither in content nor in theme and ideas, to many of the books and published scientific papers where he almost always appeared as first author.* I say this fully aware of the situation, from my own personal experience. When it comes to the class he had taught for tens of years (Geomorphology), one thing is certain: he never published it. Certain *essential aspects* regarding classes could have been explained by the colleagues from the University of Iași (unfortunately, Professor Constantin Martiniuc, who taught the aforementioned class, passed away).

From the first days of my Ph.D. studies, my coordinator (professor Tiberiu Morariu) told me that one of the fundamental research objectives was to define the enlarged Bistrița Valley as it exited the mountains and that I need to prove that this is in fact *an old valley of Moldavian Bistrița*, after going through catchment process. As further presented in a chapter of my thesis, the characteristics of the valley in that particular are marked by geomorphological erosion processes in the Sarmatian deposits, which are much more brittle than the eruptive ones in the mountain area, and then by the accumulation of alluviums in the most extended terraces. All this took place during the Quaternary, while the presumed catchment took place much earlier, thus disproving the idea. I do appreciate however the seriousness displayed by professor Tiberiu Morariu during my Ph.D. studies (thoroughness in preparing and conducting examinations).

S.N.: *Professor, our numerous meetings led me to reach the conclusion that you are an indisputable defender of the truth (analysed in a true ontological matrix) even though you have frequently dealt with issues and ideas that exceed the conceptual confines of Geography. I do wish that your ideas on such matters see the light of day as soon as possible.*

V.G.: This reinstatement of the truth, in Geography (Geomorphology, Regional Geography) as well as in many other fields, has always been *the endgame* in my activity. In my Ph.D. thesis⁴, I have argued convincingly enough, with the help of samples taken in the field (a mere example) that there is no geomorphological unit named Călimani Piedmont, despite it being put forward (declared) by one of the country's top tier geographers. I can also recall the disapproval of some inconsistent explanations regarding the process of river deepening which contributed to the creation of river terraces or the invalidation of published false claims on deep-seated landslides ("glimee" in Romanian), regarding their age or the processes that had created them.

Outside of geography, I have identified (and wrote in detail about) thousands of situations where the truth is actually very little known. Among them:

- Herodotus non-truncated views on the Thracians;
- the outcome of the battle of Călugăreni (including from the perspective of the definition of victory put forward by the illustrious Carl von Clausewitz), when the army led by Michael the Brave – made inclusively of mercenary forces – faced the advanced units of the Ottoman army, the fact that the Ottoman Empire *never actually wanted to conquer the Romanian voivodeships* (providers of taxes, bribes and many other enticements, a far superior advantage than a costly Ottoman administration), the chance of Walachia (and partially Moldavia) to have been located in Istanbul's sphere of influence, one of the world's main urban centres;
- the fact that in 1600 there was no drive for the unification of the Romanian states, the idea of a national state being born much later;
- the statue on top of Trajan's column and the reason why the column was never torn down;
- the psychology of the Romanian people (taking into account the publications of Dumitru Drăghicescu and Constantin Rădulescu-Motru);
- the place held by the "King" (Gheorghe Hagi) among the world's top football players;
- the colour of the Romanian flag and so on, things that only a handful of people know the actual truth. I will detail only two cases: *one religious* and another from the *world of sports*.

1. The religious case

There are more than two billion Christians (roughly a third of the world's population) that celebrate Christmas on 25th December. The birth of Jesus Christ

⁴ PhD thesis: Dealurile Bistriței. Studiu geomorfologic (The Bistrița Hills. Geomorphological study).

is one of the most important dates in Christianity. In fact, Jesus Christ, if he ever existed⁵, was not born on this date, neither the year, nor the month (the season), nor the day were in line with reality.

The season (month)

a) When Jesus Christ was born, the shepherds were in the field, tending to their flocks (Luke 2:7-8), if we believe the Gospels. In Judaea, the month of December was cold and damp, sometimes even with snowfall, as depicted in Pieter Brueghel's painting (1566) (paleo- climatic studies have determined that, 2000 years ago, the climate in the area was very much similar to that of today) and consequently the shepherds must have taken their animals to shelters during the night. It is highly unlikely for them to be in the field during the night, with their animals, in that time of year. Therefore, most sources agree that this event (the birth) did not take place in winter, between November and February (The Interpreter's One Volume Commentary states that the birth could not have occurred in December), but between March and October. According to *The Complex Book of American Holidays, volume Festivities*, the account of Luke "suggests Jesus was born in summer or early autumn" (Myers, 1972, p. 300).

⁵ There is *no historical proof* of the existence of a person named Jesus Christ. No historical record from that period mentions such a person making miracles or being crucified, dying, and resurrecting. The Gospels and the Bible are not historical documents. The Gospels were written by anonymous writers, long after the period in which Jesus Christ had supposedly lived. These writings are riddled with errors, contradictions, translation errors, rewrites, omissions. An American author, Michael B. Paulkovich, who analysed the writings of 126 historians from that particular period, found no clear evidence that would attest the existence of the Saviour (the Christian one, as there have been many saviours across the ages) (Daily Mail, 2014). Paulkovich concludes that Jesus Christ is a mythological figure. Flavius Josephus, the Roman-Jewish historian, who wrote the "Jewish Wars" in 95 CE, lived in Japhia, a mile away from Nazareth and had never heard of Jesus. History has countless information on other religion founders (Buddha, Luther, etc.). Broadening the scope, Stephen Hawking once said: "There is no God, I'm an atheist. Religion believes in miracles, but these are not compatible with science" (Villa-Vicencio, C., 2021, p. 15). Similar ideas come from Albert Einstein: "For me, the word *God* is nothing else but an expression and product of human weakness and the Bible" (Kleinknecht, 2019, p.152) (referring to the Old Testament, which comprises the Jewish religious doctrine). "For me, Judaism, like every other religion, is an expression of primitive superstitions" (Mainstream Weekly, 2022) wrote Einstein, from Princeton University, New Jersey, in a letter to philosopher Erik Gutkind, a year before his death (18 April 1955). It is time to say that there have never been any miracles, despite what the Church tries to prove. Taking the consideration, the percentage of people who do not believe in supernatural powers, in different countries (New Zealand 35%, Germany 40%, South Korea 40-50%, The Netherlands 42%, Czech Republic 59%, Norway 72%, Denmark 80%, Sweden 85%) (Der neue Fischer-Welt-Almanach, 2014, p. 238; Zuckerman, P. (2007, p. 56), it is clear that these are the most developed countries on the planet (with one exception, part of the Western world). It can be said that the mutual can be true as well.

b) When Joseph and Mary travelled from Nazareth to Bethlehem to be registered, they had already been married and Mary was pregnant (Luke 2: 1-4). The distance between Nazareth and Jerusalem is roughly 105 km (65 miles), and Bethlehem is approximately 10 km (6.2 miles) south from Jerusalem. It would have taken them more than a week to cover that distance on foot. Romans did not hold censuses in winter, when temperatures were below freezing and the roads in poor condition, which would have made it difficult for anyone to travel. Jesus may have been born on 15th Tishri (the seventh Jewish month), on the first day of the Sukkot, which corresponds to the month of September.

c) The conjunction of Jupiter and Venus occurred on the 17th June. “The Star”, which suddenly appeared, became extremely bright, thus placing the phenomenon during summer and not winter.

d) According to Jewish tradition, Jesus was born on the holy day of Rosh Hashanah (Tom Ternah) in September (on 15th Tishri – the seventh Jewish month, the first day of the Sukkot).

The day

The date of 25th December is said to have been adopted around 350 AD as the celebration for Christmas, by Pope Julius I, for a smoother transition from the old polytheistic religions to Christianity. This was not very well received by the old Christians and the custom was temporarily abandoned, only to be reinstated in 400 AD. 25th December is never mentioned in the Bible as the day Christ was born or that such an event even took place in winter. Likewise, the word “Christmas” does not appear in the Gospels, unlike the word Passover/ Easter. Consequently, 25th December is not a representative date for Christianity or Jesus Christ. Christians admit that winter customs and traditions are linked to the pagan celebrations of Roman Saturnalia and Sol Invictus (from Mithraism). According to Biblical Archaeology Society (2022), the establishment of 25th December has been a compromise with paganism. It is however an example which backs the idea that tradition is not a precise criterion for establishing the truth. The year does not correspond because it is very well known that Herod the Great died four years before our age, that is before Jesus; if we presume that this event occurred at the end of Herod’s reign and life, it took place 5 or 6 years before the traditional Christian date (view of many specialists who connected the birth of the Saviour with Herod’s reign). Regarding the day He was “born”, Mithra was also born on 25th December (Mithraism being a pagan religion predating Christianity). But before Mithra, there was Horus, the son of virgin Isis (other virgins gave birth as well:

Buddha, who died 400 before our time, was born from the virgin Maya, on 25th December, Attis/Atys of Phrygia was born of the virgin Nana, on 25th December etc.). It is surprising how unimaginative religion creators were; there have always been miracle doers, people who have walked on water, cured deadly diseases, there have been Saviours, teaching people, preaching (Buddha at 12 years of age, after being baptized in water, Mithra feeding 500 people with one bread, there were crucifixions and resurrections after three days), Osiris, the protector of Ancient Egypt was also born on 25th December. Some claim that Krishna, a Hindu deity, was born on that date as well.

Dan Brown (2003) declared that Christianity has nothing genuine. It is said that there are almost 200 coincidences between the events in the life of Horus and the life of Jesus Christ. This day had a special significance for the ancient populations in the northern hemisphere, being connected with the winter solstice, as one of the moments after this astronomical phenomenon when the day was longer and sunlight more intense. Primitive people were scared when the Sun disappeared. Shamans, witch-doctors, priests invoked the gods and of course offered sacrifices, and “thus” the negative tendency subsided. *It was a rebirth of the Sun.* People have always venerated the Sun and solar deities: Egyptians, Babylonians, and Persians. The cult of the Sun can also be found in cultures from the southern hemisphere, for instance the Incas. The flag of Uruguay for example depicts the Sun.

2. The case from the world of sports

It is known that at the 1976 Olympic Games of Montreal, Nadia Comăneci received the first 10 in the *history of gymnastics*. “The first 10 in the history of gymnastics” (without further details) belongs to Romanian Nadia Comăneci. This achievement took place on 18th July 1976”. A newer report mentions that there have been 35 years since the first 10 in *gymnastics*. “On 18th July 1976, a 14-year girl astounded the world of sports with an unparalleled performance: a perfect 10”. In fact, the first 10 in history *was not actually the first one, the truth being somewhat different.* During the Canada – Romania gymnastics showdown, which took place in Kitchener in *February 1976* (won by Romania), *Nadia got six 10s.* The first one being at the vault. New York’s Madison Square Garden held a gymnastics tournament named “America Cup”, celebrating United States bicentennial. “Madison is on its feet, chanting. A few seconds ago, the contestant finished *the routine.* For the double vault, double screw, for the acrobatic cascade, for the “swan song”, for the Waterloo, for the Fred Astaire worthy stop frame” (Ioan Chirilă).

- *the electronic board reads 10.*
- date *29th March 1976* (more than three months before the Montreal Olympics)
- the gymnast: *Nadia Comănechi.*

And still, such facts are almost unknown. I would like to point out that everything in mentioned was the *truth*.

S.N.: *Which are the current greatest threats to Geography?*

V.G.: A worrisome situation is that geography is not perceived as a science the same way physics, biology and others are in some states. There are cases where the preuniversity education encompasses a reduced number of classes for this *discipline*, even associating history with geography and sciences. Some developed states do not even have geography faculties, while a series of geographic concepts are studied in other fields, such as Earth Sciences, Environmental Studies or even incorporated into other sciences or faculties (for example Geomorphology is included in geology as external dynamics). The geomorphological evolution of the Scubland territories, North-Western United States was done by a geologist; similar situations can be found in Italy and other countries.

Likewise, there is too strong a convergence between Population Geography and Social Sciences, between Economic Geography and Economic Sciences, between Urban Geography and Urbanism. Compared to our own Geography of Tourism, Economic Science faculties have a more refined course on tourism management, graduates having a “wider” opening in the work environment. In short, the greatest threat to this field of study is the *loss of identity*.

Geography is a not an encyclopaedia and the current descriptiveness must be avoided at all costs, as it is totally anachronistic. This includes *monographies* as well since they are over-represented among geographic papers. Romanian geography made a mistake by almost entirely separating itself from the environment when Romanian schools invented Environmental science as an independent field many years ago. This rarely takes place in the West. The environment is one of the central themes of geography.

In a way, geography risks becoming a theoretical science, and consequently lose the necessary depth for an applied science (including due to an exaggerated focus on regional geography, of land territories). However, as Dragoş Şimandan has already stated, I do not exclude a focus on Geographic Theory as *a consolidation program of metatheoretical research* with important positive effects on the future of geography. One of geography’s main problems is that of *unity*, as geographic fields are now over-fragmented, even though research largely tackles limited subjects.

S.N.: *What should decision makers (from universities and research-development) do to connect the internationally recognized geographic paradigms?*

V.G.: Research and innovation are the engines of development. It is expected that the Education system create *superior human resources* and a reform of this is needed. We must start at the basic level as previously said, from encouraging *the individual work* of students as well as *knowledge assessment*, to inspiring brilliant students and then stimulating the first years of their professional service, taking into account that young people such as Dragoş Şimandan, Raularian Rusu, Ciprian Corpade, Titus Man, Lucian Drăguţ, Florin Pendea, Sabin Nicula (some of them being former students of mine) have considerably contributed to geographic science and its development, including the requirements stated in this question. The aim, as previously stated, is to achieve an upsurge of individual work and a novel way of evaluating knowledge.

I truly believe, alongside Dragoş Şimandan, that one of the core problems of geography is that of *unity*. It is crucial to have a course on general geography. In the current situation of geographic fragmentation, a geographic theory as a *research programme* provides the basis for development and consequently should have a larger share of the curriculum. General geography must not be regarded as a mere introductory course at the start of one's geographic education, but as a development of the general theory of the terrestrial shell, a coordinator of the entire "tree" of geographic disciplines. Earth must be viewed globally, its fullness must be highlighted, and *zonality* must be treated as geography's most important concepts. A wider scope is needed as well, by creating mathematical, graphical, complex *methods*, that present the reality of the geographic content. Furthermore, *international relations must be continually cultivated*, including the development of interdisciplinary research projects with scientists from other countries (some centres such as Suceava, Timișoara or Bucharest already do that). The endowment of geography libraries with foreign books, including recent works on different branches of geography, is below the level registered in other fields of study.

S.N.: *Here is also a hot topic, increasingly circulated in the press: the new regionalization of Romania ...*

V.G.: In Romania, there is only one level of administrative-territorial organization from the level of communes, towns, and municipalities (LAU2) up to the national level, which is the counties (NUTS3). The new administrative-territorial organization is primarily motivated by financial reasons, as it would lead to a smaller budget for mayors' salaries and the entire administrative apparatus.

They aim to reduce the number of counties to lower the financial burden. It is claimed that NUTS 1 and NUTS 2 exist, although they do not have the same functionality as in other medium-sized or large countries in the EU. The proposed counties are not within the limits intended by the EU for NUTS 3 in terms of area and population, as they are much bigger. Without an official structure to govern the territories, it is necessary to have an administrative-territorial organization similar to the ones in medium-sized and large countries in the EU because that is the only way to organize activities within our country's territory effectively. I believe it is necessary for the organizational structure of the three NUTS levels to be as simple as possible, not burdening the budget, and granting more rights to the regions. Reducing centralization and granting increased rights to the main sub-regions would make sense in the future.

S.N.: *Thank you for your answers and I wish you good health and success in your research activities!*

S.N.: Sabin, it was a pleasure ... as always! Thank you, too, for the opportunity to make my research activities, which concern me constantly, even more popular.

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