



ROMANIA – DIMENSIONS OF REGIONAL CULTURAL SPECIFICITY

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Abstract

An increasing importance is given to intercultural research in management. The cultural “inheritance” of individuals is of interest to us from a double perspective: a) to avoid problems that can arise from ignoring their value profile, b) for valuing it by positive “exploitation”. Cultural positioning is achieved by comparisons made according to certain criteria (cultural dimensions). They are known in the literature and for ethical approaches they emphasize cultural similarities and differences. Although they largely reflect the values of culture, they can not cover issues that come from the known sphere for the ones who propose them. Based on this idea, in this study we have adapted cultural dimensions to the Romanian cultural specificity elements, based on a comprehensive inventory of values, developed following a diachronic exploratory analysis. Furthermore, we have proposed two new dimensions that reflect regional specificities.

Keywords: culture, cultural dimensions, inventory of values, national/regional peculiarity

JEL classification: A29, I23, Z19

1. INTRODUCTION

The cultural/ intercultural analysis may be carried out by comparative means. We can describe a cultural reality only if we have a system of reference to refer to; in other words, there has to be a basis of comparison (it is obvious that the results are changing along with the changes in the system of reference). At the basis of every comparison lies a criterion or a set of criteria for differentiation. In intercultural research, these criteria are called dimensions of cultural specificity. In the literature we encounter several sets or systems of cultural specificities that vary from researcher to researcher according to the aspects identified in the investigated areas or to the particular purpose of research. However, these dimensions do not often provide enough coverage for the analysis of cultural specificity within a country/ region as unknown aspects also occur to the foreign researchers that proposed them. This is the reason why, in this article, we present such a system of cultural dimensions accomplished by building and rebuilding through adaptation to consecrated dimensions for the analysis of Romanian culture, especially at a regional level.

2. BUILDING AND ADAPTATION OF CULTURAL DIMENSIONS

2.1. *Basic references and methodological design*

As we mentioned in the above introduction, the analysis of cultural differences may be carried out based on criteria that allow comparison. For a proper knowledge of their content and for understanding the manner in which they were built, we analyzed them in detail, starting from studies carried out by reputed researchers. We analyzed the overlaps and interferences between them for the purpose of establishing the most important aspects, in order to use them in our approach - the one of composing a system of dimensions for regional cultural specificity, which is necessary for making comparisons at a regional level.

We further list the studied authors and the cultural dimensions they proposed:

- Geert Hofstede: power distance, individualism-collectivism, masculinity-femininity, avoiding uncertainty, long-term orientation, indulgence-constraint, monumentalism-self-effacement (Hofstede, 1996; Hofstede et. al., 2008);

- Edward T. Hall: monochronism-polychronism, space (proxemics, territoriality, contrast) rich cultural context - poor cultural context (Hall, 1971, 1979, 1984, 1992);

- Florence Kluckhohn and Fred Strodtbeck: human nature orientation, environmental orientation, temporal orientation, activity orientation, orientation in human relations [Hills, 2002];

- Charles Hampden-Turner and Fons Trompenaars: universalism-particularism, individualism-collectivism, detailed vision-holistic vision, achieved status-ascribed status, endogenous motivation-exogenous motivation and sequential perception of time- synchronous perception on time [Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars, 2004];

- The GLOBE project (coordinated by Robert House): power distance, institutional collectivism, in-group collectivism, gender egalitarianism, assertiveness, avoiding uncertainty, future orientation, performance orientation and human orientation [House et. al., 2004; Grove, 2005];

- Shalom Schwartz: hierarchy-egalitarianism, integration-autonomy and domination-harmony [Schwartz, 1999, 2002, 2003; Sagiv, Schwartz, 2007].

The detailed study of the content of cultural dimension gave us the possibility of understanding the internal logic of their composition.

The methodology of data gathering, processing and interpretation that lied at the basis of adaptation, rebuilding and building of dimensions of regional cultural specificity is based on an emic approach that favors inductive reasoning and qualitative methods and techniques (exploring analysis, observation, qualitative analysis, systematization, grouping, etc.).

Exploring analysis was used to clear the field of Romanian cultural specificity. Our interest aimed at following two directions: on the one hand, we aimed at the concerns and research on Romanian specificity during the pre- and inter-war period (especially emphasizing the contributions of Dumitru Drăghicescu, Constantin Rădulescu-Motru, Mihai Ralea, Lucian Blaga, Emil Cioran and Mircea Vulcănescu), and we analyzed the studies and research of Romanian cultural specificity after 1989, on the other hand (forecasts, studies and research on the values of Romanian national culture belonging both to Romanian researchers – anthropologists, sociologists, psychologists, imagologists, ethnologists, economists – and foreign ones).

Further to the analysis carried out, we reached the conclusion that there was a common “origin”, a cultural “background” beyond all variations, a proof of this cultural specificity.

Despite all these, Romanian cultural reality is not identical on the entire national territory. Moreover, there are differences between society values and practices that lead to tensions.

The benefits of the exploring analysis have materialized in extracting the national specific elements, systematized finally in an “inventory of values”. Exploring analysis and the data gathered based on observation lied at the foundation of selection, adaptation and building of the most appropriate cultural dimensions.

2.2 Inventory of values and delimitation of cultural dimensions and orientations

In *Figure no. 1* the basic values specific to Romanian culture following the exploring analysis are shown.

Some of the inventoried values are among the ten basic motivational values shown by Shalom Schwartz (*power, benevolence, tradition, security, conformism, hedonism*); others clearly shape Romanian cultural specificity (*adaptability, duplicity, gregariousness, creativity, anti-authority spirit, anabatic-catabatic attitude, mistrust, concrete preference for the concrete, religiosity, etc.*).

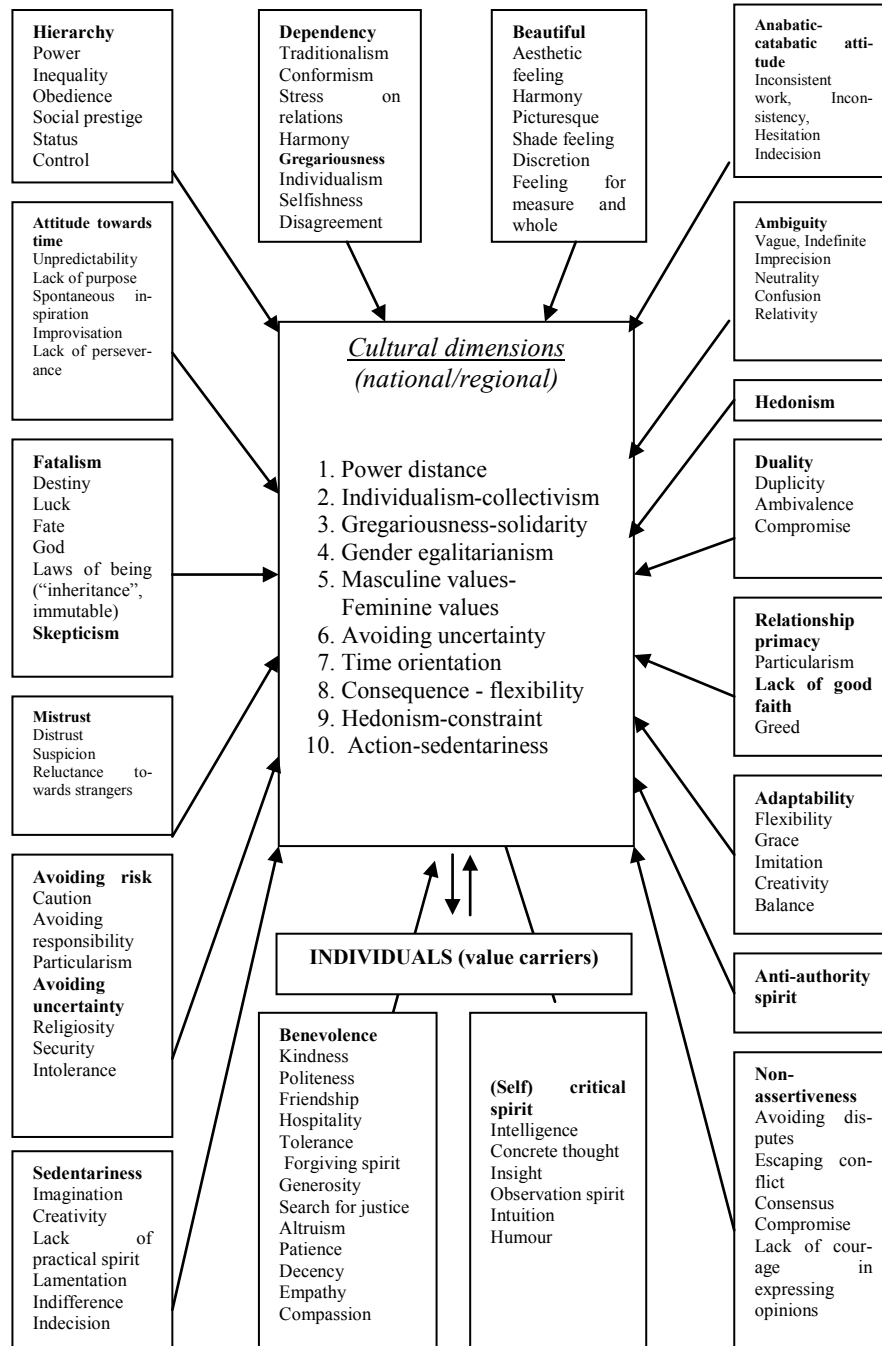


Figure no. 1 Romania - values and dimensions of culture

Further to classification, grouping and ordering of values, we identified ten cultural dimensions¹, comprising a number of twenty-three value accents (integrating values) that described Romanian reality based on which we could analyze regional cultural specificity. We grouped these dimensions in the following five cultural orientations: environmental orientation, activity orientation, time orientation, orientation related to others and the instinct of self-preservation (*Table no. 1*).

Table no. 1 Romania - cultural orientations and dimensions

Cultural orientations/dimensions	Integrating values	Integrative values
Environmental orientation <i>Masculine-feminine values</i>	scepticism	diffidence in one's own forces
	fatalism	destiny, luck, fate, God, "inheritance", "laws of being"
	non-assertiveness	empathy, understanding, favourable climate, benevolence
Activity orientation <i>Action-sedentariness Hedonism-constraint</i>	sedentariness	contemplation, imagination, originality, "unfinished", lack of will, lack of entrepreneurial spirit, neglect, lamentation
	beautiful	aesthetic and artistic feeling, sense for measure, harmony, whole, picturesque, discretion
	hedonism	hedonism (enjoying life, living the moment, living in the present)
Time orientation <i>Past-present-future Long-term Short-term</i>	unpredictability	not giving importance to time, unpredictability, lack of planning, leaving tasks for the last minute especially the most urgent ones, lack of economical skills, lack of the concern for investment, lack of attention in planning one's agenda
	superficiality	lack of purpose, culture of the present moment, inspiration of the moment, improvisation, lack of perseverance
Orientation related to others <i>Power distance Individualism-collectivism Gregariousness-solidarity Gender egalitarianism</i>	inequality	authority – importance of power, status, social position, prestige, control and domination of individuals and resources
	collectivism (dependence)	traditionalism (respect, engagement, loyalty, accepting traditional and religious customs), conformism, harmony (avoiding confrontations, assertiveness attenuation, stress on good relations)
	gregariousness	selfishness, individualism, disagreement, fight for one's own profit, individual interests
	mistrust	distrust, suspicion, reluctance towards strangers
	benevolence	kindness, friendship, sympathy, hospitality, generosity, justice, altruism, patience, forgiveness, tolerance

	anti-authority spirit	contestation, denial of values, achievements, the others' qualities, giving credit to external factors for the others' accomplishments (relationships, luck, etc.)
	circumstantial morality	relation primacy, greed, lack of good faith
Instinct of self-preservation <i>Uncertainty avoidance</i> <i>Consistency-flexibility</i>	risk avoidance	caution, disclaiming responsibilities
	adaptability	flexibility, grace, imitation
	duality	duplicity, ambivalence, compromise
	ambiguity	vague, indefinite, imprecision, confusion, relativity
	security	family security, social security, primacy of relationships with returning favours
	religiosity	authority of religious explanation, respect of rules and religious rituals
	superstitiousness	prejudices, observing practices, rules that are based on faith in charms, spells, signs, fatidic numbers, etc.
	anabatic-catabatic attitude (forward-backward)	inconsistency, hesitation, indecision, inconsistent work

The above considerations refer to national culture. However, it is important to mention that, although we can define national culture by a certain system of values (as the aforementioned, incomplete one, which is not necessarily the best); national culture is not homogenous within our entire national territory (as the intensity of values varies in their regional manifestations).

2.3. Dimensions of regional culture – comprising sphere

1. Power distance – the acceptance degree of the unequal dispersion of power among the members of a society; the extent to which a society has expectancies of hierarchical differences and accepts them, submitting to authority.

- *High power distance* involves a division of society in different social classes where power ensures order; climbing the hierarchical ladder is limited and the resources and information are available to a restrained part of society; society is characterized by a well-established order, build on hierarchical structures; the source of power is the force of manipulation; powerless individuals perceive inequalities as expectancies and they accept them;

- *Low power distance* characterizes a society in which: the middle class is the majority; individuals have equal rights and responsibilities, resources are at everybody's disposal, and information is widely shared; climbing the hierarchical ladder is easy; the sources of power are respect and knowledge.

Overlaps and interferences with: *power distance* (Hofstede), *orientation related to inter-human relations* (Kluckhohn and Stroedtbeck), *hierarchy-equality* (Schwartz)

2. Individualism-collectivism – the extent to which the individual follows the independent meeting of his own objectives.

- *Individualism* (autonomy) is the feature of a society in which everyone decides on important issues in life, on the ways of action, where the individual is himself concerned by himself and his own family; the stress is on rationality, individual freedom, challenge, self-accomplishment; the relations between individuals are weak and individual interests come before those of the group;

- *Collectivism* (dependency) characterizes a society in which: the others' opinion is taken into account when choosing the ways of action; manifestations in accordance with traditional and religious customs are encouraged; the stress is on respect, loyalty, devotion, politeness, harmony, obedience in exchange for protection from the group; the relations are strong and stable; the interests of the group are ranked the highest.

Overlaps and interferences with: *individualism-collectivism* (Hofstede), *dependency-autonomy* (Schwartz), *individualism-communitarianism* (Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars), *in-group collectivism* (GLOBE)

3. Gregariousness-solidarity – *the extent to which a society encourages segregation.*

- *Gregariousness* characterizes a society in which individuals are concerned with their own good, are motivated by the need for power and material possessions (authority, social prestige and status, control, domination on individuals and resources), hence community segregation in multiple “interest centres” or “importance poles”. Other features: lack of cohesion, mistrust, caution in human relations, anti-authority spirit, racial discrimination;

- *Solidarity* is specific to a society in which individuals pay attention to the needs of the others and are motivated by the need for belonging and affiliation. Other characteristic elements: preservation and increase of the welfare/ prosperity of the people that establish rapport with the individual, solidarity, social involvement, trust, encouraging positive messages on human nature, acknowledgement, respect and value rewarding.

Overlaps and interferences with: *hierarchy-equality* (Schwartz), *human orientation and institutional collectivism* (GLOBE), *individualism-communitarianism* (Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars), *masculinity-femininity* (Hofstede), *human nature orientation* (Kluckhohn and Stroedbeck)

4. Gender egalitarianism – the extent to which society minimizes or encourages gender role differences.

- High egalitarianism refers to the encouragement of gender equality (equal access to education, positions, etc.), sharing and interchanging the same roles between sexes;

- Low egalitarianism characterizes the societies with unequal access to society roles according to gender.

Overlaps and interferences with: gender egalitarianism (GLOBE), masculinity-femininity (Hofstede)

5. Masculine values-feminine values – the extent to which the members of a society prefer masculine values to feminine ones.

- Masculine values focus on aspects such as: the desire for accomplishment, success by one's own means, ambition, audacity, competitiveness, material success, influence, determination, personal analysis and judgment, reasoning, looking for and giving one's personal explanations, success self-awarding and failure externalization;

- *Feminine values* are especially emphasized by societies that present the following features: concern for the environment, social justice, understanding, intuition, focusing on the quality of life, avoiding social isolation, scepticism, faith in predestination, looking for and giving external explanations, diminishing of the feeling of responsibility; success externalization and failure self-awarding.

Overlaps and interferences with: *domination-harmony* (Schwartz), *endogenous motivation - exogenous motivation* (Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars), *environmental orientation* (Kluckhohn and Stroedbeck), *masculinity-femininity* (Hofstede)

6. Uncertainty avoidance – *the extent to which the members of a society feel threatened by uncertain, unknown, ambiguous or unstructured situations, preferring a static ordered environment and trying to minimize changes and ambiguity perceived as disturbing.*

- *Strong uncertainty avoidance* is a feature of societies in which: individuals are looking for explanations and employ norms, rules and procedures to diminish the unpredictability of future events – they need structuring, instructions, organization, prioritization; relations are mainly formal; it comes the emotional need to be busy; time pressure is felt; individuals take moderate risks; individuals provide religious or other explanations for everything that happens and show intolerance for what is different.

- *Low uncertainty avoidance* is found in societies in which: inter-human relations are more informal; events are not strictly followed; time pressure and the need to be busy do not strongly show; individuals take higher risks; social discrimination is absent; changes are more easily accepted; there are few rules, mainly unwritten ones.

Overlaps and intersections with: *avoiding uncertainty* (Hofstede), *avoiding uncertainty* (GLOBE)

7. Time orientation – *the way in which individuals in a given culture relate to time.*

a) *Past-present-future orientation* refers to the dominant temporary horizon that is given the greatest importance in a given society (emphasis on the past, present or future), as well as the distinction between temporal horizons (past, present and future or overlaps and interferences – sequential or synchronic perception on time);

b) *Future orientation* is the extent to which individuals get involved in future oriented actions (planning, saving money, reward postponement); it privileges the temporary horizon in which important effects are attained, as a result of the consistency of the undertaken efforts. Extremes may be:

– *long-term orientation*: moderation, sobriety, hard work, audacity, perseverance, sacrifice, late awarding, planning, saving money, investment, balance between material success and spiritual fulfilment;

– *short-term orientation*: lack of purpose, forecast, and perseverance; the importance of immediate success, spiritual compromises (in favour of material success), favour reciprocity, importance given to past.

Overlaps and interferences with: *long-term orientation* (Hofstede), *time orientation* (Kluckhohn and Stroedbeck), *sequential perception-synchronic perception on time* (Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars), *monochronism-polychronism* (Hall)

8. Consistency - flexibility – *the extent to which a society encourages consistency in relationship with self and with others.*

- *Consistency* implies stability, immovability, firmness, principles observed irrespective of the conditions. Other elements: situations barely change personal features; avoidance of contradictory concepts and paradoxes; looking for paths to personal development to face various situations; dignity, honour, feelings, faiths and true intentions, deep religious feelings;

- *Flexibility* – flexibility, duplicity, ambivalence, duality, ambiguity, adaptability, persuasion; people change their characteristics to adapt to situations, becoming “others”; they are inconsistent towards themselves and the others, accept paradoxes, are dominated by dialectical thought, positive feelings combine with negative ones: “bitter joy”, “tragic serene”,

“optimistic melancholy”, “smiling sadness”, “humour of troubles” [Iacob, 2003]; a little interest for personal development as this chameleonism supplies this need; obedience, feelings, faiths and superficial intentions.

Overlaps and interferences with: *monumentalism-self-effacement, avoiding uncertainty* (Hofstede), *universalism-particularism* (Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars), *performance orientation* (GLOBE)

9. Hedonism-constraint – *extent to which the individuals of a society are oriented towards the consumption of resources (time, money) to satisfy their own needs.*

- *Hedonism* refers to the extent to which society encourages individuals to enjoy life, satisfy their needs, enjoy the moment, look for the richness of life; it refers to the orientation towards what a person enjoys, whether it is about *spiritual hedonism* (pleasure given by art – theatre, film, music, etc., religious or mystical experiences, etc.) or *profane, secular mundane hedonism* (food, sex, shopping, parties, etc.); it means to find time for one’s self, family, friends, etc.

- *Constraint* is the extent to which society rewards individuals for a reserved attitude on satisfying their needs, self-elimination, retention;

Overlaps and interferences with: *indulgence-constraint* and *uncertainty avoidance* (Hofstede), *dependency-autonomy* (Schwartz) the *to be* variant of *activity orientation* (Kluckhohn and Stroedbeck)

10. Action-sedentariness – *the extent to which the individual obtains results by putting his actions into practice.*

- *Action* puts an emphasis on facts with visible results, on active entrepreneurial spirit oriented towards pragmatism and utility, the implementation of ideas towards achievement, progressive attitude and concrete thought;

- *Sedentariness*: 1. *Active-contemplative sedentariness* – contemplation, imagination, primacy of beauty when in relation to utility, artistic and aesthetic sense, search for picturesque, harmony and colour that lead to creative imaginative innovatory abstract solutions that are most often not put into practice (they are left in the project stage); 2. *passive sedentariness* – lament, monotony, passivity, physical and creative inactivity, past recalling, and abandon to past; withdrawal attitude.

Overlaps and interferences with: *activity orientation* (Kluckhohn and Stroedbeck), *masculinity-femininity*, *indulgence-constraint* and *long-term orientation* (Hofstede).

These cultural dimensions are not new, yet they are adapted according to the values shown in the exploring analysis. Some were even renamed to express in a clearer manner the new content they make reference to (*consistency-flexibility*, *hedonism-constraint*, *masculine values-feminine values*). We also introduced two new dimensions (*gregariousness-solidarity* and *action-sedentariness*) even if we identify partial overlaps with some consecrated cultural dimensions in their case, as well. Interferences are natural, they even occur at the level of dimensions proposed by the same author. And in our case, there are also common elements as in the case of *short-term orientation* and *sedentariness*, *gregariousness* and *short-time distance* or *consistency* and *long-term orientation*. This is due to value coherence and the fact that cultural dimensions do not come as an axis in real life as we describe them to be understood. *Cultural dimensions are multilayer, multilevel, and the dimension layers or levels may “intersect” so that common areas occur. According to the degree of value coherence, cultures may be homogenous, clear, consensual or, on the contrary, heterogeneous, blurred, conflicting* [Gelfand, op. cit.; Schwartz, 2003].

The analysis of culture is an extremely complex phenomenon. Besides the two new aforementioned dimensions and the adaptations by completion or adjustment, we had other suggestions for clarification. For instance, for the masculinity-femininity dimension proposed by Hofstede, we decomposed the analysis on two areas, i.e. according to the GLOBE pattern and in keeping with the original content. We associated an area to each dimension (1. gender egalitarianism with reference to roles' interchangeability; bipolarity at an axiological level; *masculine values-feminine values*).

As far as the two new dimensions are concerned, we mention the following:

a) *gregariousness-solidarity* dimension² completes the individualism-collectivism dimension except for the fact that it refers to the type of individualism described by Rădulescu-Motru, namely gregariousness or segregation whilst for the individualism-collectivism dimension; we analyzed the so-called "classical values" that described it;

b) *action-sedentariness* is a dimension we proposed as a result of the observation made during several years. Even if the *action* pole partially overlaps with the "to do" one included in the action orientation dimension of Kluckhohn and Stroedbeck, the other pole, the *sedentariness* one describes two possibilities that may be stressed or not. From our observations, the charge of "laziness" is fake and cannot be generalized in the sense that when the Romanian does not make something useful and apparently "sits" around and does nothing, his mind is at work, he has a plan, is creative, intelligent, makes connections and thinks of plans and solutions even if he does not apply them. We could say that we are dealing with a mental activity, an *active-creative sedentariness* more than a withdrawal passive abandoning attitude corresponding to *passive sedentariness*, yet related to lament without any consequences in practice. As far as the cultural dimension of *hedonism-constraint* is concerned, built after the indulgence-constraint model of Hofstede etc. (2008) but adapted to the observations of our national culture and renamed in such a way in order to express the constituents more clearly, we mentioned that we updated it by taking into consideration the analysis of the type of "sacred" and "profane" hedonism according to the emphasis on spiritual or mundane pleasure. We made another classification according to the allotted resources: "cheap" or "expensive" hedonism. This information can be relevant especially in marketing.

The *consistency-flexibility* reflects well an important part of national specificity by means of the *flexibility* pole. It has as source of inspiration the Monumentalism-Self-effacement dimension (Hofstede et. al., 2008) which refers to two plans of analysis (pride-modesty and consistency-flexibility) only that, in our case, the stress falls on the latter area that is given all importance due to subsumed values shown further to exploring analysis.

3. CONCLUSIONS

In this research we identified the specific Romanian cultural values, managing to group them in cultural dimensions. To have the inventory of values we have systematized information from Romanian and foreign authors from a variety of professional fields, but concerned about the subject, following both the interwar period and literature since 1989. We have guided upon the dimensions developed in dedicated intercultural research, but we have made a reconstruction to adjust them to the Romanian cultural specificity elements, in order of their use in regional comparative analysis.

Following the inventory of Romanian values we have concluded that some of them could not be found in the consecrated cultural dimensions, which indicates that our approach

is justified. Some of these values were included in the area of some known cultural dimensions due to their coherence degree with their subsumed values, leading to reconstructions and adaptations; others have formed the basis of new constructions.

The contribution consisted not only in this inventory, ordering, grouping, systematization of values and reconstruction of cultural dimensions, but also in proposing two new dimensions, which group values that do not appear in cultural dimensions systems from the ethical-type approaches. Thus we proposed a system of ten regional cultural differentiation criteria, with an adjusted content that allowed in-depth survey on aspects not found in Western studies, but raised as a result of exploratory analysis (performed after collecting opinions of valuable cultural figures and participatory and non-participatory observations). By this procedure we have extended the research area of the Romanian regional cultural specificity elements.

Due to the aforementioned, we conclude that *cultural dimensions should be adapted to national specificity to describe as well as possible the analyzed reality*. Therefore, the qualitative approach, an emic one, should precede any quantitative approach, serving to cultural adaptation of the research methodology in cultural and intercultural studies.

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Notes

¹ The researchers of national cultures who carried out studies so far indicated as optimal number of dimensions for probing national cultures from five to nine. Too many overlaps are considered when there are more than nine cultural dimensions. Because our case deals with differences between regional cultures, more dimensions are needed to highlight them, so that a number of ten dimensions seems more than reasonable to us.

² We did not choose the *institutional collectivism* dimension proposed by the GLOBE study as it describes better organizational cultures and this is because, among the values we identified, the values corresponding to this dimension do not occur that often, at least not as often as the ones corresponding to “gregariousness”.