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In search for an optimal level of decentralization in Romania

Cătălin Dumitrică¹

1. General framework

Starting with year 1990 and until the present, the Romanian administrative system was subjected to continuous reform measures, which had as main objective to increase administrative efficiency and flexibility, recording a substantial increase of the autonomy and competences of the local public administration.

The important place that public administration occupies in our constitutional system derives from the consecration of the principle of separation and balance of powers, emphasizing both the defining traits of the state of law, and the type of democratic regime, the pluralism of the Romanian society and local autonomy.

The reform process presupposed the redefining of the principles of organizing and functioning of public administration by replacing the principle of centralization with the principle of decentralization on the basis of local autonomy. Therefore, the local public administration reform in Romania was based on the adoption of the decentralization law, which represented the legal framework that contributed to the development of a new set of administrative relations, both between the central and local authorities, and within the administrative-territorial units.

In the conditions of the state of law, in which separation of powers, decentralization of public services, as well as *administrative* and *financial* local autonomy, constitute fundamental coordinates, the organizational and functional structures of the administration are set up

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both at the state level, situation in which we have *central* or state *public administration*, and at the level of the local collectivities, where the *local public administration* is organized and functions.

Romania's accession to the European Union in 2007, as well as the need to absorb European funds, represented the main reasons that were at the basis of the emergence of new structures – the development regions.

Thus, to the Romanian administrative system, made up of the central and local levels, the regional level is added. The development regions, due to the impediments of constitutional and legislative nature², could not be organized in a similar manner with the administrative-territorial units; they have no legal personality, being organized outside the administrative system.

In the Romanian administrative system, both the central public administration, and the local public administration³ have their own organizational structures, institutions, functions and duties, specific to the activity for which they were established.

Central public administration is present in the territory by means of deconcentrated organisms, which have as main objective the monitoring and coordination of the activities of the local public administration, as well as the notifying of the possible decisional differences that may occur between the central and the local administration.

The administrative system in Romania allows, at present, the transfer of competences from the central administration to the local

² According to Art. 3 of the Romanian Constitution corroborated with Art. 18 para (1) of Law no. 215/2001 „Law of local public administration” - Published in the Official Gazette no. 204/23: „The territory is organized, from the administrative viewpoint, in communes (857), towns (217) and counties (41), resulting a total of 3115 administrative structures, endowed with local decisional administrative capacity. There can be established a strong administrative defragmentation that raises significant difficulties in what concerns the administrative coordination. In the conditions of the law, certain towns are declared municipalities (103).” “The communes, towns and counties are administrative-territorial units within which local autonomy is exercised and in which there are organized and function authorities of the local public administration”.

³ Local public administration in Romania functions on the basis of the principles of: local autonomy, decentralization, subsidiarity, openness and decisional transparency, partnership and cooperation, non-discrimination, proportionality, responsibility, efficiency and efficacy, state of law and legality.

administration in view of enhancing the efficiency of the administrative act.

The transfer of competences does not presuppose the withdrawal of a certain set of attributes from the decentralized collectivities, but, on the contrary, it confers new duties upon them, meant to increase their degree of autonomy and responsibility towards the needs existing at the local level. Therefore, the regulations adopted do not have to target a redistribution of the current missions between the state and the local collectivities, but to confer new missions to the local collectivities, missions that until now had been exercised by the state. This process of the transfer of competences must in no way damage the state characteristics⁴, as they are defined in the Constitution, but must allow it to dedicate more to its fundamental missions related to national sovereignty, such as: justice, police, defense, foreign affairs, security.

The transfer of competences from the central to the local level presupposes the development of an ample coordination process with respect to the local decisional process.

Decisions with an important *strategic weight*, developed at the central level, require a high degree of coordination, vertical and horizontal, of the administrative system, as well as the improvement of cooperation between the public and private organisms⁵.

Thus, the decisions adopted at the local level, when we are speaking of strategic decisions, must not enter into conflict with those adopted at the:

- European level, for establishing the general actions and objectives;
- National level, for adapting the general actions to the national context, as well as for monitoring their implementation and the supply of administrative assistance;
- Regional level, with fundamental role in selecting the projects, in allocating the resources for them and the monitoring of their implementation;

⁴ Romania is a national state, sovereign and independent, unitary and indivisible.

⁵ Adaptation after: F. Barca, M. Brezzi, F. Terribile, F. Utili (2005), *Measuring for Decision Making: Soft and Hard Use of Indicators in regional Development Policies*, OECD, <http://www.oecd.org/oecdworldforum>, p.2.

- Local level, with role in involving the local actors, in elaborating projects and in promoting their implementation;

In the same order of ideas, the transfer of competences must not allow a territorial collectivity to exercise its tutelage on another collectivity, the development of hierarchic relations being excluded in the relations between the territorial collectivities existing in the Romanian administrative space. However, through a series of regulations of legislative nature, is encouraged the possibility to develop cooperation relations between the administrative-territorial units, when they will wish to associate in view of exercising the competences that were delegate to them, in view of making the administrative activity more efficient.

On the basis of the new competences transferred, the collection of incomes was largely decentralized, the local institutions having now the responsibility to self-finance.

Also, a large part of the expenses were transferred from the center to local administration, from the financing of education and health until the subsidizing of public utility services, in the situations when this represented a desiderate, and if the local budget allows it.

While this reform process continues, other social services were delegated for exercising to the local level, considering that the authorities of the local public administration have the *administrative, human and financial* capacity to efficiently administer the local problems.

The transfer of competences also presupposed the decentralization of resources that generated the emergence of unbalances between different local authorities, which, quantified, were seen at the level of the development regions, contributing to the development of intra- and inter-regional discrepancies.

Even if decentralization and the transfer of power to the local administration were proclaimed as major political objectives within the development regions, there are too few studies to explain the differences between the performances of the different administrative authorities at the local, national or regional level. There must be underlined the fact that these differences are, most of the times, remarkable.

The analysis of the performances of the development regions, from the viewpoint of administrative performances and of the coordination of the decisional process of the composing local authorities,

constitutes an element of real interest in the conditions in which the aim is more efficient administrative and strategic decisions.

Such an analysis may constitute the basis for identifying the factors that determine the direction and the success or failure of local policies: the economic environment, the political affiliation of the local decision-makers, the political culture, or none of these elements.

Thus, the nature of these regional discrepancies must be analyzed, together with the identification of the elements that contributed to the existence of these unbalances. The question raises if this cleavage existing between the central and local level, which generates a lack of coordination in what concerns the implementation of development strategies elaborated at the central level, by the local level, may constitute one of the essential factors of the intra and inter-regional unbalances, as well as if the decentralization of certain competences at the level of the administrative-territorial units represent an efficient decision or not.

2. Aspects of decentralization

The process of decentralization, characteristic to the subsidiary state, allows the achievement in optimum conditions of social justice, develops solidarity, ensures the nearness of decision to the place where it produces its effects, facilitating the citizen's involvement in the local decisional process and, therefore, in solving the public interest problems.

Territorial decentralization differs from the so-called technical decentralization or decentralization through services (the differentiation is grounded in the distinction between territorial collectivity/public establishment). Numerous authors see decentralization through services as a technique of administrative management close to deconcentration⁶ or as a procedure of management of public services different from decentralization or deconcentration⁷. This opposition is not always determinant in terms of decentralization.

⁶ R. Chapus (1988), *Droit administrative général*, Ed. Montchrestien, coll. Domat – Droit public, 4th edition, volume I, p. 263.

⁷ O. Dugrip and L. Saidj (1992), *Les établissements publics nationaux*, L.G.D.J, pp. 15 and 54.

Decentralization relates to a determined geographic space, which incorporates, in fact, all administered persons found there, and which allows local collectivities to execute different activities, entrusted by law, in order to administer the interests of the populations within these circumscriptions.

Policy of the center, decentralization is built depending on the opposite system that was at the basis of its emergence. It is not an autonomous notion and remains conditioned by a dialectic that brings it near to the central state from a rather political than legal point of view. Thus, the definition of decentralization knows nuances susceptible of doctrinary controversies, controversies accentuated by the forms decentralization may take in time and which translate in fact the same concern of the center towards society involved in its structures⁸.

Maurice Hauriou stated that „decentralization is a manner of being of the state”, as centralization, in fact, prevailing solely to the administration⁹. The principle of the unitary state implies, indeed, the refusal to hold certain sovereignty by the intra-state public collectivities.

Decentralization, thus, is not built except from the administrative point of view, as particular legal organization of the state collectivities. „From the point of view of law, decentralization is characterized by the fact that the state resumes to a certain number of administrative persons who have the characteristic of public power and who ensure the functioning of the public services, exercising these rights, or, differently said, achieving administrative acts”¹⁰.

Jean Gicquel defined decentralization as a “delegation of certain duties of the central power at the local level, to the benefit of the representatives elected by the citizens”¹¹, but emphasizing a transfer of administrative competences, conditioned by the election of the local representatives. However, this author omits numerous situations, especially those in which the local collectivities, endowed with their own competences, are administered by bodies appointed, in their entirety or in part, by the central power.

⁸ L. Matei, Ch. Chabrot, D. Dincă (2000), *Colectivitățile teritoriale. Experiența franceză*, Economică Publishing House, Bucharest.

⁹ M. Hauriou (1992), *Etude sur la décentralization*, Ed. p. Dupont, excerpt from *Répertoire du Droit administrative*, Paris, p. 482.

¹⁰ Idem, p. 483.

¹¹ J. Gicquel (1993), *Droit constitutionnel et institutions politiques*, Montchrestian Publishing House, coll. *Precis Domat -Droit public*, p. 65.

Francois and Yves Luchaire consider that “decentralization consists in the transfer of certain duties of the government or its agents to the representatives of the territorial collectivities that in no way depend on the government or its agents”¹².

Numerous authors defined decentralization depending on the tutelage exercised over the acts of the organs of the collectivities. Detaching itself from the hierarchical power that characterizes the internal relations of an administration, tutelage presupposes, indeed, the dissociation from the center and from the territorial collectivities and the exercising of competences by the latter, of course, under state control.

Maurice Hauriou even considers that decentralization may coexist with very strong tutelage¹³, while Maspétiol and Laroque, in their works, see this tutelage as „an institution of freedom” favorable to collectivities, forecasting that they will be stronger than the local authorities who had become “free”.

In this ensemble of equivocal definitions, decentralization appears as a true problem. For the moment, it is not necessary to establish, as Leon Duguit does, that „existence in a country of territorial collectivities distinct from the State and their investing with public power rights is in contradiction to the French conception of unique and indivisible sovereignty”¹⁴ and, thus, to push decentralization into a legal nebula.

On the contrary, the bases for defining decentralization are known, but even their simplicity leads to a development of the complexity of the analysis that may cancel their significance.

The Romanian doctrine sees decentralization as an indispensable corollary of democracy, which presupposes the existence¹⁵:

- of a local territorial collectivity, divided into administrative circumscriptions that coincide with the state’s administrative-territorial

¹² François and Yves Luchaire (1983), *Le droit de la décentralisation*, PUF, coll. *Thémis Droit*, Paris, ed. 2, p. 26;

¹³ M. Hauriou, *Repertoire de Droit Administratif*, op. cit., p. 11, but sees the existence of this coexistence as related to the popular election of the local authority;

¹⁴ L. Duguit (1928), *Traité de droit constitutionnel*, Publishing House de Broccard, vol. II, p. 120;

¹⁵ The enumeration uses as adapted sources: Bălan, E. 2002. *Drept administrativ și procedură administrativă*. Bucharest: Universitară Publishing House, pp.61-64; Alexandru, I. Et all. 2005. *Drept administrativ*. Bucharest: Lumina Lex Publishing House, pp. 148-155 and Butaru, Gh.2003. *Știința administrației*. Ploiești: Prahova Publishing House;

units. The collectivities in question are particularized by specific needs, however possible to classify within the general ones, satisfied at the central level;

- of the local interest and the recognition of the responsibility of the local collectivity in managing the needs of the citizens they serve;

- of the own resources of the local collectivity, possible to use in managing local public matters;

- of the own administrative authorities of the local collectivity, autonomous towards the state and elected through free elections. The establishing of the authorities of the local public administration through free elections by the population in the respective administrative-territorial unit does not presuppose the changing of the legal nature and content of the competences they may exercise. The local administrative authorities remain in the subordination of the government, which exercises the „general management of public administration”¹⁶;

- of an action of monitoring of the authorities of local collectivities, exercised by the executive power;

A source of inspiration that can be used in order to establish an own definition in what concerns decentralization is also represented by the classical theories of democracy¹⁷ belonging to A. Tocqueville¹⁸ and J.-S. Mill¹⁹. According to these authors, decentralization represents:

Hypothesis 1 (Ip 1) – a necessary condition for ameliorating the planning of and for putting into practice territorial development. The hypothesis is supported if we positively interpret the causality relation between the proximity of authorities with respect to the bearers of preferences and the improvement of public service, by formulating local development plans and projects. The territory and its resources present a fundamental element for local development, process primarily based on endogenous resources. Territory management must take into account the sustainable capitalization of the patrimony and resources of a territory.

¹⁶ Art 102, para(1) of the Romanian Constitution;

¹⁷ Information taken and adapted from the PhD Thesis: “The Europeanization of the Local Public Administration in Romania” (2008), Author Univ.Lect. Diana–Camelia Iancu, PhD, National School of Political Studies and Public Administration, Faculty of Public Administration, Bucharest.

¹⁸ A .Tocqueville, (1835-1840) 2001. Democracy in America. New York: Signer Classic

¹⁹ J.-S. Mill, (1961). Representative Government. London : Blackwell Publishing House.

Ip 2 – a promoter of civic participation to the planning and putting into practice territorial development projects²⁰; situation in which decentralization becomes a sustainable development process²¹;

Ip 3 – an instrument of mobilizing the financial resources necessary for starting the territorial development projects.²²

Ip 4 – a means for better coordination of the public action. It is presupposed that by delegating powers to the local level, decentralization contributes to the reduction of conflicts generated by the distance government-governed.

Thus is induced a causality relation, according to which: „*as the magnitude of decentralization is higher, the development activities are more harmonized and more integrated, and the control of ongoing projects is more efficient.* This hypothesis raises, from the perspective of the author of this paper, a series of question marks with respect to the capacity to locally coordinate administrative decisions, the hypothesis launched for analysis within this paper being that *excessive, uncontrolled decentralization* – without solid foundation, may lead to a series of negative effects that may influence the coordination process in what concerns the horizontal decisional process, having direct implications at the regional level, through the discrepancies generated.

Decentralization is the product of the reform measures that targeted, during time, the reduction of bureaucracy through the transfer of decisional competences at the local level. Thus, local structures and mechanisms were developed, which facilitated the implementation of decisional autonomy procedures which had as effect the limiting of the state intervention and, implicitly, of the central level in the local economy.

²⁰ The existence of decentralization allows the implementation of “Local Agenda 21”, which represents a development plan at the local level, promoted by the United Nations Organizations in 1992 at Rio de Janeiro, within the World Conference on the Environment and Development. Chapter 28 of Agenda 21 appeals to all local communities that they create their own agenda, which takes over the general goals of Agenda 21, in order to transmit them in real plans and actions for a certain locality.

²¹ D.A. Rondinelli (1981).” Government Decentralization Policies in Comparative Perspective. Theory and Practice in Developing Countries” in International Review of Administrative Sciences, vol. 47, pp.133-145.

²² N. Uphoff / M. Esman (1974). Local Organizations for Rural Development in Asia. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

lp 5 – a mechanism for increasing the governing party's responsibility²³ towards the governed²⁴.

lp 6 – a method of maintaining equity and improving poverty²⁵.

lp 7 – a factor of political stability, preliminary condition of development²⁶.

On the basis of the opinions expressed, we can define decentralization as being that system according to which the administration of the local, communal, city or county interests is performed by the authorities freely elected by the citizens of the respective collectivity. Having at disposal own financial means and benefiting from autonomous decision power, this system answers to the idea of freedom. If centralization corresponds to the imperatives of unity, administrative decentralization corresponds to those of diversity.

The transfer of responsibilities from the state to local collectivities must, therefore, be accompanied by the equivalent and simultaneous transfer of financial resources. This transfer must correspond to the real cost of exercising the new competences transferred.

Thus, the collectivities must benefit of a sufficient maneuvering margin, hence of real financial autonomy for these expenses, which becomes the true stake of successful decentralization.

Thus, the responsibility for managing the resources is transferred almost entirely to the local authorities (also on the basis of the concept of democracy) to the local community, „thus reducing the distance between the governing and the governed”²⁷.

A delimitation of competences is thus achieved, which can be grounded on the „Theory of optimum decentralization”, according to which: „For a public good whose consumption area extends over several

²³ At the national level, governments influence the local development policies. An important role is played by the citizens' participation to the rational approach of decisions on the basis of indicators and evaluation processes. The informing and public access to information also represent an important component of development.

²⁴H. Maddick (1963), *Democracy, Decentralization and development*. New Delphi: Asia Publishing House.

²⁵ United Nations (1979). *Rural Development in India. Some emerging policy issues*. New York: ESCAP, Un.

²⁶ H. Maddick (1963) op. Cit. and D.A. Rondinelli (1981). op.cit.

²⁷ K. Steyvers et al. (2007), Introduction. *Towards DIY-Politics at Local Level?* in P. Delwit et all, *Towards DYP-Politics. Participatory and Direct Democracy at the Local Level in Europe*, Brugge: Vanden Broele Publishers, pp.11-12.

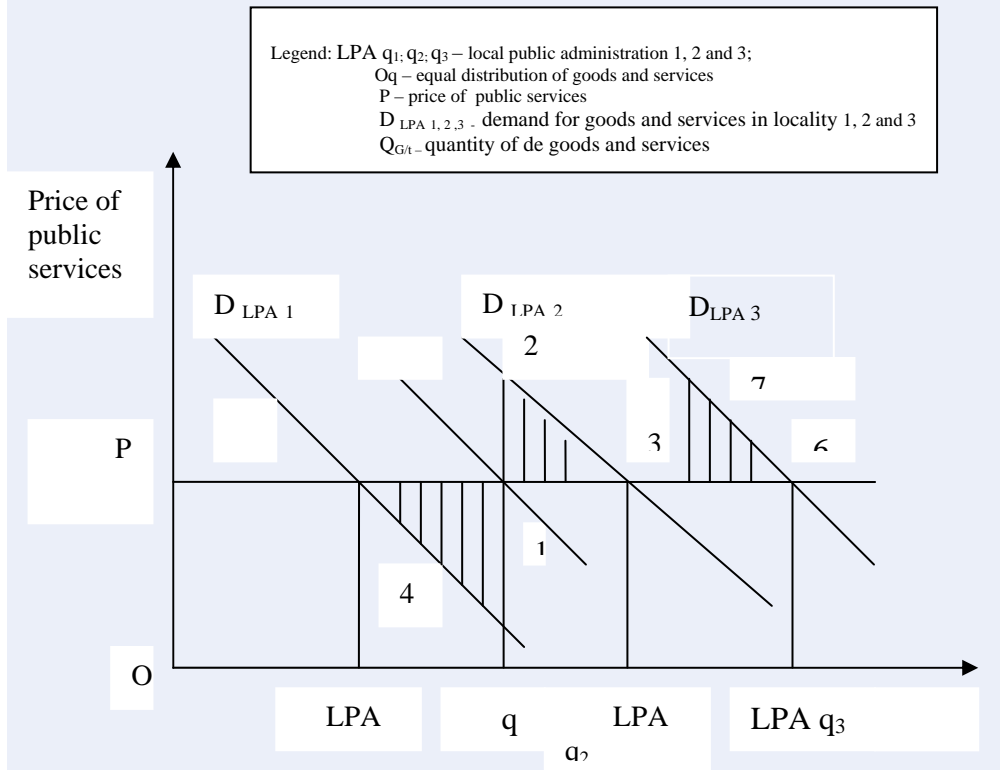
geographic areas (local collectivities) and whose production cost is the same, both at the central, and at the local level, it will always be easier, or at least as easy that the respective good is produced in optimum quantities in Paretian sense at the local level as at the central level"²⁸.

The graphic representation of the theorem of optimum decentralization constitutes sufficient grounds for emphasizing the advantages generated by the existence of a process of decentralization. The theorem presupposes the existence of two administrative-territorial units, of different sizes, within a state. The hypothesis on the basis of which the graphic representation is built assumes that a public good is produced at the central level and subsequently equally distributed to the two localities in question, although the demand for that public good is different, and the costs are equally shares by the residents.

²⁸ W.E. Oates (1972), Fiscal federalism, New York, Hartcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1972.

Fig. 1 Adaptation after: Theorem of decentralization optimum

Source: Cullins, Jones, 1998, n.293



According to the graph, the centralized system will equally distribute the public good for each locality (LPA q₁, LPA q₂), fact that generates a compromise between the demand of the individuals in the two localities. The quantity is smaller than the demand of individuals in locality (LPA q₂), but greater than the demand in locality LPA q₁. In the situation when we have different demand, the losses of both localities can be indicated by means of triangles 123 and 145. The area of triangle 123 indicates the losses that may occur because the consumers in locality (LPA q₂) consume less than they would if they wouldn't have to compromise, having the possibility to purchase (q₂₃q₂) through the additional unit (q q₂), paying, in addition, (q 13 q₂). The area of triangle 145 reflects the losses occurring because the consumers in locality (LPA q₁) should consume more than they are usually consuming, if they make this

compromise. They are paying ($q_1 - 51 - q$) for an unwanted additional unit ($q_1 - q$).

The area of triangle 376 indicates the losses incurred by consumers in locality (LPA q_3).

The analysis performed by means of the “Theorem of optimum decentralization” presupposes the quantity of the public good demanded by a collectivity, independently from the one determined by another collectivity. The analysis must be particularized depending on the nature of the public good, the decentralization scheme suffering modifications if the nature of the public good, as well as the absence of wide-scale savings in the production of goods and services differ.

The main conclusion to be extracted from this graphic representation of the theorem of optimum decentralization is that each locality would produce only the necessary quantity of goods and services, there is a possibility to avoid these loss areas, decentralization allowing each administrative–territorial unit to produce the optimum quantity of goods and services, depending on the demand.

Decentralization presents, therefore, clear advantages in what concerns the prosperity of a country²⁹, as follows:

- Provides the favourable climate for the local interests to develop naturally, in accordance to the habits of the inhabitants and with their real demands, which cannot be better known by anyone other than themselves;
- Generates the spirit of individual initiative (centralization reduces the role of the inhabitants to that of mere administered persons, preserving within the local collectivities an indifference towards the local administration, incompatible with the progress of the localities);
- Generates the system of local freedom, interest for the general good, which determines the multilateral development of the human collectivity and the value of the entire nation.

It remains to be seen to what extent Ip no. 4, which perceives decentralization as a means to ensure a better coordination of the public action may be considered, from the perspective of this paper, a positive or a negative aspect. The questions raised target exactly the capacity to

²⁹ M. T. Oroveanu (1994), *Tratat de drept administrativ*, Cerma Publishing House, Bucharest, p. 400-401.

coordinate decisions in an *excessively decentralized* administrative system that may encourage the development of an economic behaviour of endogenous nature, with strong isolationism tendencies. Therefore, the lack of cooperation at the level of the local authorities represents a decisive factor contributing to the emergence of discrepancies in what concerns the implementation of certain coherent development strategies at the regional level, which aim at the main fields of development, such as: environmental protection, social development, economy and market, governance and regulations, territory arrangement, education and training, science and research³⁰.

Each collectivity will attempt to find and implement its own development strategies with impact at the local level, ignoring, in fact, their global character³¹. The efficiency of the individual behaviour generates the inefficiency of the collective/regional behaviour.

Thus, from the perspective of the development strategies and of the effects generated by it, it is desired to avoid what in economy is called „the Pareto optimum”, which transposed in the situation of adopting distinct measures for strategic development, at the level of each local collectivity, would generate the implementation of strategic measures at the level of one local collectivity to the detriment of other local collectivities.

Through the development of an efficient cooperation system at the regional level and through the identification of an optimum level of decentralization, we can obtain what is called „the Pareto improvement”. This presupposes the adoption of a set of strategic measures at the regional level, which can determine, on the basis of certain coherent action measures, a change with respect to the allocation of resources from one administrative-territorial unit to another, without, however, affecting the economic regeneration process at the regional level.

The lack of optimization of the strategic measures will generate their uneven intensity and direction, determined by the lack of a regional vision and the establishing of a unitary strategic direction. The weak

³⁰ D. Dincă, C.Dumitrică (2010), Dezvoltare și Planificare urbană, Pro Universitaria Publishing House, p. 126

³¹ Thus, a series of development strategies considered efficient at the microeconomic level (local collectivities) can be adopted, but they may cause a series of adverse reactions in the macroeconomic context (central, regional level).

coordination, generated by the existence of an „administrative fragmentation”, determined the emergence of an „amplification effect” of the decisional discrepancies, of the optimization of the reaction time, fact that will lead to the emergence of a cumulative causality process.

3. The battle of concepts: New Public Management (NPM) vs. Joined-Up Government (JUG)

The reform policies that targeted the reorganizing of the Romanian administrative system, started after year 1990, found solid grounding in a series of managerial policies known under the name of New Public Management³².

At the middle of 1990's, the New Public Management offered a new alternative in what concerns the managerial approach of public administration. NPM would emphasize the values of efficiency, economy and efficacy within the public sector, having as main foundation the conviction that governmental actions must be targeted towards results, not processes. Efficiency represents the main objective of the administrative reform, together with responsibility and accountability towards the consumers.

The supporters of the administrative model grounded on the NPM principles (Hood³³, Farazmand³⁴, Manning³⁵, McGrew & Lewis³⁶, Peters³⁷,

³² New Public Management, having a wide range of mechanisms, emerged in Great Britain at the beginning of the 1980's, during the Thatcher government, covering a global area. NPM seeks to reduce the role of the state by applying management principles of the private sector to governmental organizations.

³³ C. Hood (1991), „ A public management for all seasons?”, *Public Administration*, 69, 1, 3-19; C Hood (1994), „Contemporary public management: a new global paradigm?”, *Public Policy and Administration*, 10, 2, 104-17.

³⁴ A. Farazman (1994), „The new world order and global public administration”, in Garcia-Zamor, J.-C., Khator, R., „ Public Administration in the Global Village, in McGrew, A., Lewis, P., *Global Politics: Globalization and the Nation state*, 1992, Policy Press, Cambridge.

³⁵ O. James, Manning, N (1996) „Public management reform: a global perspective”, *Politics*, 16, 3.

³⁶ A. McGrew, P. Lewis (1992) „Conceptualizing global politics”, in McGrew, A., Lewis, P., *Global Politics: Globalization and the Nation State*, Polity Press, Cambridge.

³⁷ B.G. Peters (1996), *The Future of Governing*, University of Kansas Press, Lawrence, KA.

Ridley³⁸) consider the bureaucratic Weberian model as being rigid, constrained by rules, generator of slow-moving and expensive bureaucracies, inefficient and which do not react in any way to the needs of those using them, as the policies promoted by NPM, while others (Wilensky³⁹, Common⁴⁰) consider the emergence of NMP as convergent policies generated by the emergence of similar socio-economic development stages.

The traditional model of organizing and functioning of the public services, based on principles such as bureaucratic hierarchy, administrative planning, decision centralization, direct control and economic independence, are replaced by a management of public services based on a direct relation to the market.⁴¹

The idea of „reinventing government” manifested both in the United States and in Europe, as indicated by Osborne and Gaebler⁴²: „the emergence of an entrepreneurial government constitutes an evolution inevitable”: government after government and public system after public system, reinventing is the only possible option”.

In what concerns the new approaches in the matter of public management, they are described as a „modernization” of the public organizations: „governments in the most developed countries are about to reconsider or review the fundamental hypothesis regarding the public/private sector ⁴³”.

The supporters of NMP consider, thus, that the limits between the public and the private sector will diminish or will fade away and, in time, within both sectors we will find the same practices aiming at the development and implementation of an efficient management.

³⁸F.F. Ridley (1996), „The new public management in Europe: comparative perspectives”, *Public Policy and Administration*, 11, 1, p.26

³⁹ H. Wilensky (1975), *The Welfare State and Equality*, University of California Press, London, p.xii.

⁴⁰ K. Richard (1998), „Convergence and transfer: a review of the globalization of new public management”, *International Journal of Public Sector Management*, Volume 11, Number 6, pp. 440-450.

⁴¹ E. Ferlie, L. Ashburner, L. Fitzgerald, A. Pettigrew (1996), *The new public management in action*, Oxford University Press Inc, New York,

⁴² D. Osborne, T. Gaebler (1993) *Reinventing Government: How the Entrepreneurial Spirit in Transforming the Public Sector*, Plume, London.

⁴³ L. Metcalfe, S. Richards (1990) *Improving Public Management*, Sage, London, 1990.

According to the opinions of famous authors with respect to public management reform (G. Bouckaert⁴⁴, Ewan Ferlie, Laurance, E. Lynn Jr, C. Pollitt⁴⁵, Kate Mc Laughlin et al⁴⁶, Osborne and Gaebler⁴⁷), decentralization represented one of the most important principles to be developed within the concept of NPM.

The managerial authority must, according to the theoreticians, be decentralized in the public service providing organizations. Organizational division, the promotion of new forms of cooperative governance, as well as the creation of directing committees in the public institutions represented the main objectives of decentralization, together with an increased autonomy, focused on the promotion of flexible organization forms with a low level of hierarchization.

Organizing the Romanian administrative system according to the principles and vision of New Public Management concept, based on customer orientation, the principle of decentralization, separation of public policy making, use of private sector partners to provide services, are just a few representative elements of a new Romanian public administration dimension according to the NPM standards.

NPM intends to reduce the rigidity of the administrative system and replacing it with a more flexible form of public management. This not only involves a simple change of the management style, but also a changing role from the government in society and a more complex relationship between the government and citizens.

The NPM⁴⁸ theory emphasizes the importance of public administration, considered to be a key actor in conducting the government business. It is claimed the replacement of the bureaucratic

⁴⁴ C. Pollitt, G. Bouckaert (2004) *Reforma Managementului Public, Analiză Comparată*, Epigraf Publishing House, 101-105

⁴⁵ E. Ferlie, E Laurance, J Lynn, C. Pollitt (2005), *Public Management*, Published in the United States by Oxford University Press.

⁴⁶ K. McLaughlin., S. P. Osborne, E Ferlie (2002), *New Public Management – Current, trends, future prospects*, First Published by Routledge.

⁴⁷ D. Osborne, T. Gaebler op. Cit.

⁴⁸ Pollitt 1990 called the new trend "managerialism" in 1992 Barzelay brought together its views under the name "post-bureaucratic paradigm" and Osborne and Gaebler had associated this concept with the title of "entrepreneurial government"

management⁴⁹ model with a new model based on flexibility and decentralization, paying a special attention to achieving objectives, empowering local decisional makers, increasing the degree of autonomy and management flexibility.

The increasing level of autonomy and management flexibility while carrying out an extensive process of decentralization, have contributed to reshaping the role that the authorities have to achieve in developing and animating the local business sector, by stimulating local entrepreneurship and development of some premises to help the emergence of synergies among local actors and between them and foreign investors.

NPM in terms of decentralization becomes an essential condition for the local development process, becoming a promoter for local actor's involvement in implementing development projects, decentralization providing some clear advantages that have been previously identified and developed.

We may conclude that the main characteristic, from the NPM perspective research hypothesis is excessive decentralization, Romania facing at the moment with such a government initiative, whereby a number of areas and basis services for a sustainable economic development, such as education and health are targeted to be fully decentralized.

It is believed that local authorities have both the financial and human capacity that will justify delegation at this level of the entire management and development vision throughout these areas.

As a form of response to the reforms developed by NPM, which involved an "increased fragmentation", but also as a possible anti-crises measure, the appearance and development of a new set of reforms, promoted inside the concept of "Joined-up government⁵⁰" (JUG) can be considered, to the extend that they will find applicability within the

⁴⁹ Bureaucratic model contributes to the development of a "tunnel vision", that presumes waiting to trigger a crisis situations and after that to intervene in order to solve the problem

⁵⁰ The JUG concept was first introduced by the government led by Tony Blair in 1997 with the main purpose to reduce the decision-making disparities between public sector organizations. We can find the same reform policy under the name "Whole-of-government '(WG) term used mainly in countries such as Australia, USA, New Zealand and others.

Romanian administrative space, essential elements that will compete to the development of an extensive process of regional and metropolitan coordination.

The concept was seen as an opposite solution to the “tunnel vision”, “administrative fragmentation” and also to a decisional thinking “strictly vertical” JUG assumes the achievement of a horizontal and vertical coordination with the purpose to eliminate duplication of strategies. Achieving such coordination has as a main purpose a better use of resources, development of a competitive dialogue through the involvement of interested stakeholders in developing an anti-crisis policy. JUG approach intends to complete and not to replace the vertical⁵¹ structures, in an attempt to gain extra efficiency, effectiveness, capacity and legitimacy.

JUG is not a coherent set of ideas and tools, such as NPM, and it can be best interpreted like an umbrella meant to describe a set of answers to the problems that were generated by an increased public sector defragmentation, hoping to improve the degree of integration, coordination and empowerment⁵². JUG brings into discussion the necessity to develop a set of reforms with the purpose of promoting necessity of horizontal coordination and collaboration, reforms that the NPM reforms have completely ignored it.

Development of vertical administrative relationships requires the reinforcement of the center, rethinking the coordination relationship from a unique perspective, meant to reduce the redundancy of the development strategies.

JUG approach in the administrative system proves to be effective when it comes to solving the strategic issues such as regional development, crime, sustainable development, economic crisis, problems which by their complexity can not be delegated to be resolved at the local level.

For developing an efficient government approach JUG proposes four essential conditions:

⁵¹ T. Christensen, P. Laegried (2006), NPM and beyond: The second generation of reforms. National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration Annual Conference, Minneapolis, USA

⁵² T. Ling (2002), Delivering Joined-Up Government in the UK, Dimensions, Issues and Problems, Public Administration 80(4): 615-42

- precise identification of the critical objectives;
- precise delimitation between decisional authorities and recourses that will enable them to reach the proposed objectives;
- the existence of a clear vision at the central/local decisional level regarding the strategy that needs to be followed;
- the existence of an optimal level of decentralization, freedom and flexibility, necessary to reach the objectives;

Once those conditions are fulfilled JUG can be identified at the next levels:

- Within a government tier;
- Across different administrative tiers;
- Between the executives and decisional bodies;
- Between the public and private sector⁵³;

We may easily conclude that the JUG concept can be applied both within the state administrative structures, at the level of public organizations, but it can also be the result of public-private interplay, facilitating the development of an extensive relation of decisional coordination.

Graphical representation: NPM vs. JUG – From these paper perspectives:

Legend:

P₁ – problem identified at the level of Local public administration

LPA_{1,2,3} – local public administration

S_{1,2,3} – different solutions adopted by the Local public administrations

NPM = excessive decentralization,
decisional coordination,

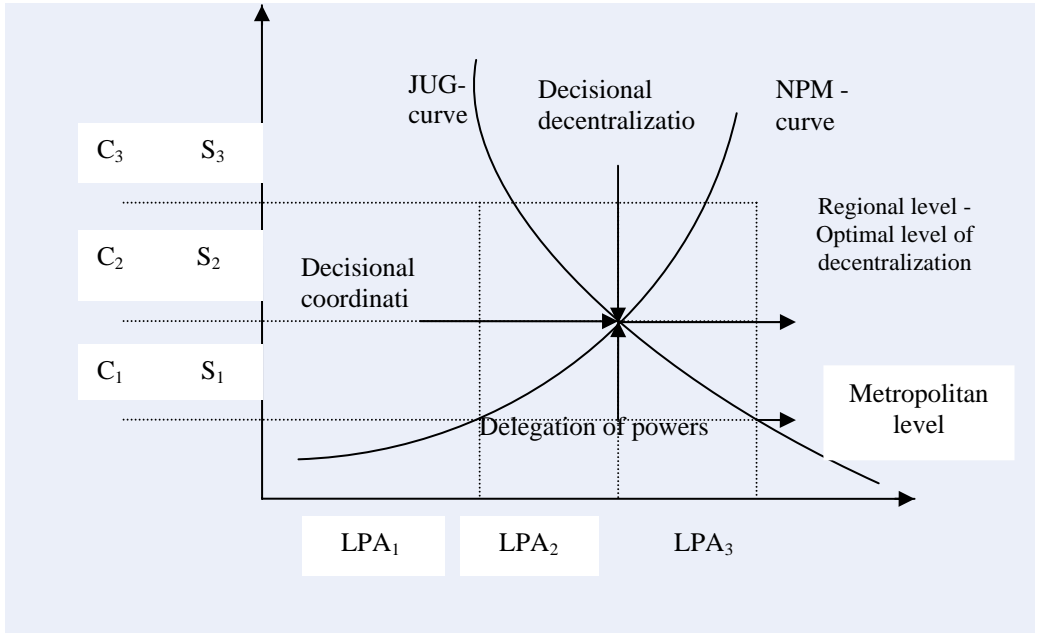
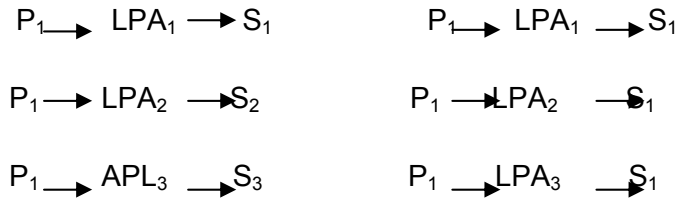
- Identical problems, different solutions
identical solutions

JUG=

identical problems,

⁵³ Andrea Di Maio, (2004), Move Joined-up Government from Theory to Reality, Gartner INC

Fig. 1



Graphic behavior - generated from the comparative analysis of NPM and JUG

4. Regional level. A possible optimal level of decentralization

Based on the research hypothesis, which aims to identify the optimal level of decentralization able to allow the applicability of the JUG concept, we will try to identify these levels in the Romania administrative system.

Regions⁵⁴ are the intersection of many interdependencies that have been identified as an important feature of contemporary governance. These are functional interdependence, where a function is closely related to another, and institutional interdependence. In this manner, regions are playing an important part as “middle governments” – developing an important function as intermediaries, both in territorial and functional purpose, a place where you can meet central and local government, a level of government policies integration and coordination.

Political requirements for the territorial and functional intermediaries’ roles may be different. The territorial role can be achieved by a regional level without its own political base, being used as a meeting place and as an administrative level for negotiations between the center and the local forces.

It may consist of advisory bodies⁵⁵ and multiparty institutions. Functional integration, on the other hand, involves giving power to regional bodies to make political forces to work together and to impose a set of priorities.

This process involves not just a simple dialog between interests, but redefining problems from a regional perspectives and programs development in accordance with this issue. Regions are identified based on a regional identity.

There are three elements which must be taken into consideration when we are analyzing regional identity: „cognitive element⁵⁶ – according to which people should be aware of the region and its geographical boundaries, emotional element - which refers to how people feel about the region and degree to which it provides a framework for solidarity and common identity, instrumental element - the

⁵⁴ In accordance with the Law No.315/2004 on regional development in Romania, published in the Official Gazette of Romania, Part I, no. 577, in Romania where established 8 development regions which are not administrative units and have no legal personality.

⁵⁵ Development regions of Romania have the following administrative structure: 1. Regional Development Council - a deliberative body, without legal personality, operating based on partnership principles in each development region, having as its main purpose the development and monitoring activities under the regional development policies. 2. Regional Development Agency - nongovernmental body, nonprofit, public benefit, with legal personality, 3. National Council for Regional Development, Partnership body type, with decision role in developing and Implementing regional development policy objectives.

⁵⁶ This item requires knowledge of neighboring regions, which can be compared to its region, becoming aware of possible differences

region is used as the basis collective mobilization and action when seeking for social, economic and political objectives⁵⁷.

Instrument element becomes the first argument that will allow us to associate the concept of JUG with the regional level, while representing an important argument to identify an optimal level of decentralization at regional level.

Identifying and establishing an optimal level of decentralization, involves first of all, a collective effort at the local level, local authorities are required to delegate a number of powers given to the principles of specialization to the competent administrative levels, and also an approach from the central local authorities responsible for providing the necessary administrative framework to enable an efficient management of the delegated powers and recourses.

The same kind of relationship is being found into the logic developed by Charles Ricq⁵⁸. According to this author the regionalism is the result of a process from “bottom up” of some community awareness of regional imbalances and economic underdevelopment, while regionalization is the process of “top-down” by which the state acknowledge regional imbalances with all the accompanying phenomena, economic underdevelopment, excessive centralism, and moving to the decentralizations of the political and legal system through a regional institutionalization.

Therefore, we can state that the decentralization process⁵⁹ is similar or even identical to the regionalization process, the complexity of decentralization requiring an ample central political will to ensure process sustainability, as well as support at the bottom, by delegating competences of strategic nature to an intermediary, regional, administrative level, thus achieving an optimum level of decentralization with respect to competences of strategic nature.

The achievement of the decentralization process depending on the central decisional policy, without taking into account the real capacity

⁵⁷ M. Keating (2008) *New Regionalism in Western Europe*, European Institute Publishing House, p.99

⁵⁸ C. Ricq, *La region, espace institutionnel et espace d'identité*, in *Espace et Sociétés*, published in *Espace Magazine* pp.1 22-123

⁵⁹ Decentralization represents, along the principles of subsidiarity and partnership, one of the principles of regional development in Romania.

of local authorities with respect to managing in an efficient manner their own problems, constitutes an essential factor that may lead to the increase of intra- and inter-regional unbalances. The decentralization process must not fulfill the same parameters; it must take into account the particularities of each development region.

We can know easily identify the first two arguments (instrumental element, and the relation between regionalization and regionalism) based on which we can state that the first JUG level and the optimal level of decentralization is at the regional level.

As an argument in view of supporting the research hypothesis that presupposes the identification of an optimum level of decentralization at the regional level, an empirical research was performed, which aimed at analyzing the manner in which the political belonging of the heads of administrative-territorial units may have an impact on the decisional coordination degree at the level of the development region.

The performance of local public administration represented a permanent preoccupation for different schools of thought, being elaborated four general types of explanations for the differences registered in case of administrative fragmentation.

The first explanation is given by a certain type of contextualist thinking that considers the different socio-economic conditions existing at the local level as representing the main cause of performance differences between the local public administrations.

The factors considered are the demographic structure, citizens' incomes, development level, structure of the economy and size of the locality. Such elements represent a series of external characteristics, which cannot be changed by an administration, reason for which this type of explanations are called „contextualist”.

In this situation, the main concern of the political decision-makers is to react to the external stimuli, and in similar conditions, the local public administrations will have the tendency to act in the same way.

The *Model of political affiliation* also represents a local decisional model. It analyzes the belonging of mayors to one party or another. The classical distinction left-right is emphasized in terms of development strategies (ex: focus on taxes and redistributive policies in the first case, reductions of taxes and privatization for the second. It is considered that

this model has a higher explanatory value in case of continental Europe, where the ideological cleavages tend to be more clearly limited, while the contextualist explanations seem more appropriate for the USA, where the political parties are quite diffuse, and the policy is subordinated to the local interests.

The model of the political culture⁶⁰ represents the third model, according to which, in a certain locality or region there are established and deep norms and values that mould public behaviour. These norms are unchanged in time, are shared by all individuals or all organization, regardless of the political belonging, and do not directly depend on the changing socio-economic conditions.

The model of the cohort effect⁶¹ analyzes the role played by the personal factors such as age, education or prior experience in case of political decision-makers (mayors, in our case). The research showed that the younger generations, raised in a different social climate and who have a longer education, will have political preferences different than their predecessors and will guide themselves after different behavioural models. It remains to be seen to what extent this theory applies to the former communist countries and is the change of generations in the local administrations brings forth certain changes in the nature of options.

The research at hand focuses on the model of political affiliation of the deciding factors in Romania, which corroborated with administrative fragmentation and with the existence of excessive administrative decentralization may represent an true obstacle in achieving an efficient coordination process at the regional level, thus justifying the identification and development of an optimum level of decentralization.

The manner in which the political parties in Romania share, from the administrative viewpoint, their influence areas will be analyzed.

The main political parties in Romania will be presented: the Social Democrat Party(PSD), the Democrat Liberal Party (PDL) and the

⁶⁰ G. Almond, S. Verba (1963), *Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1963 and R. Putnam, (1993) *Making Democracy Work*, Princeton , Princeton University Press.

⁶¹ R. Inglehart (1977), *The Silent revolution: Changing Values and political Styles among Western Public*, Princeton, Princeton University Press.

National Liberal Party (PNL), as well as the number of administrative-territorial units politically controlled by them.

We must mention that from the perspective of the political cleavage of left-right, PSD is classified, from the doctrinary point of view, as well as judging by the measures adopted, as being a left-wing party, while PDL and PNL are classified, on the basis of the same elements, as being right-wing.

The administrative-territorial units will be grouped and analyzed depending on the development region they belong to, and which may constitute, in view of developing the process of institutional coordination, an optimum level of decentralization.

The coordination function within the administrative system in what concerns the local public administration is exercised at present by the County Council, which benefits to an equal extent of a political influence from the above-mentioned political parties.

The question thus raises to what extent such an administrative organism that may be influenced in the development of its activity by the doctrine of the political party under whose management it is can exercise in a coherent manner the coordination function, considering the political belonging of the other administrative-territorial units.

Development region N-E.

County	Total no. of adm-ter units	Political membership															
		Political membership				County executive authority				City executive authority				Communes executive authority			
		PSD	PDL	PNL	Others	PSD	PDL	PNL	Others	PSD	PDL	PNL	Others	PSD	PDL	PNL	Others
Bacau	94	37	24	25	8	1	-	-	-	4	1	2	1	32	23	23	7
Botosani	79	27	23	23	6	-	1	-	-	3	2	2	0	24	20	21	4
Iasi	99	38	22	35	4	1	-	-	-	2	0	3	0	35	22	32	3
Neamt	84	34	37	10	3	-	1	-	-	0	5	0	0	34	31	10	3
Suceava	115	48	50	12	5	-	1	-	-	5	7	4	0	43	42	8	5
Vaslui	87	45	11	21	10	1	-	-	-	3	1	1	0	41	10	20	10
Total	558	229	167	126	36	3	3	-	-	17	16	12	1	209	148	114	32

Western Development Region

County	Total no. of adm-ter units	Political membership															
		Political membership				County executive authority				City executive authority				Communes executive authority			
		PSD	PDL	PNL	Others	PSD	PDL	PNL	Others	PSD	PDL	PNL	Others	PSD	PDL	PNL	Others
Arad	70	14	47	10	8	-	1	-	-	1	9	0	0	13	3	10	8
Caraș-Severin	78	15	43	15	5	-	1	-	-	1	5	1	1	14	38	14	4

Hunedoara	70	19	18	32	1	-	-	1	-	4	5	5	0	15	13	27	1
Timiș	99	24	44	0	31	-	1	-	-	3	5	0	2	21	39	0	29
Total	326	72	152	57	45	-	3	1	-	9	24	6	3	63	127	51	42

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Nord-West Development Region

County	Total no. of adm-ter units	Political membership															
		Political membership				County executive authority				City executive authority				Communes executive authority			
		PSD	PDL	PNL	Others	PSD	PDL	PNL	Others	PSD	PDL	PNL	Others	PSD	PDL	PNL	Others
Bihor	101	15	30	31	25			1		0	4	3	3	15	26	28	22
Bistrița	63	30	23	9	1		1			3	2	0	0	27	21	9	1
Cluj	82	17	28	23	14		1			1	4	0	1	16	24	23	13
Maramureș	77	17	23	28	9		1			2	5	4	3	15	18	24	6
Satu-Mare	65	16	11	9	29			1		1	0	1	5	15	11	8	24
Sălaj	62	21	13	11	17	1				2	1	1	1	19	12	10	16
Total	450	116	128	111	95	1	3	1	1	9	16	9	13	107	112	102	82

South East Development Region

County	Total no. of adm-ter units	Political membership															
		Political membership				County executive authority				City executive authority				Communes executive authority			
		PSD	PDL	PNL	Others	PSD	PDL	PNL	Others	PSD	PDL	PNL	Others	PSD	PDL	PNL	Others
Vrancea	74	48	8	17	1	1				5	0	1	0	43	8	16	1
Galați	65	24	13	17	11	1				3	1	0	1	21	12	17	10
Brăila	45	23	10	9	3	1				3	2	0	0	20	8	9	3
Tulcea	52	15	21	10	6		1			2	4	0	0	13	17	9	6
Buzău	88	31	25	31	1		1			2	0	0	1	29	25	31	0
Constanța	71	43	14	11	3	1				8	3	2	0	35	11	9	3
Total	395	184	91	95	25	4	2			23	10	3	2	161	81	91	23

South-Muntenia Development Region

County	Total no. of adm-ter units	Political membership															
		Political membership				County executive authority				City executive authority				Communes executive authority			
		PSD	PDL	PNL	Others	PSD	PDL	PNL	Others	PSD	PDL	PNL	Others	PSD	PDL	PNL	Others
Argeș	103	72	16	12	3	1	-	-	-	5	1	2	0	67	15	10	3
Dambovița	90	42	41	4	3	-	1	-	-	2	5	1	0	40	36	3	3

Prahova	105	29	36	20	20	1	-	-	-	3	6	2	3	26	30	18	17
Ialomița	67	36	14	11	6	1	-	-	-	4	0	2	2	32	14	9	4
Călărași	56	11	19	20	6	-	-	1	-	1	1	4	0	10	18	16	6
Giurgiu	56	16	7	30	3	-	-	1	-	1	1	2	0	15	6	28	3
Teleorman	98	50	15	29	4	1	-	-	-	4	1	1	0	56	14	28	4
Total	575	256	148	126	45	4	1	2	-	20	15	14	5	246	133	112	40

Bucharest-Ilfov Development Region

County	Total no. of sub adm-ter units	Political membership															
		Political membership				County executive authority				City executive authority				Communes executive authority			
		PSD	PDL	PNL	Others	PSD	PDL	PNL	Others	PSD	PDL	PNL	Others	PSD	PDL	PNL	Others
Bucharest	6	1	2	1	2	-	1	-	-	1	2	1	1	0	0	0	0
Ilfov	41	7	19	13	2	-	1	-	-	1	3	3	1	6	16	1	1
Total	47	8	21	14	4	-	2	-	-	2	5	4	2	6	16	1	1

Central Development Region

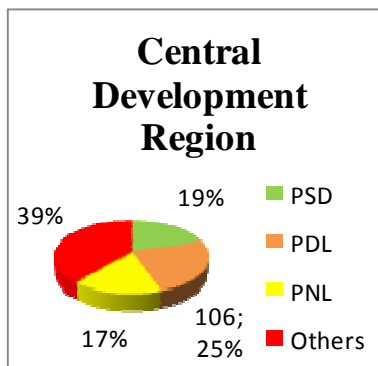
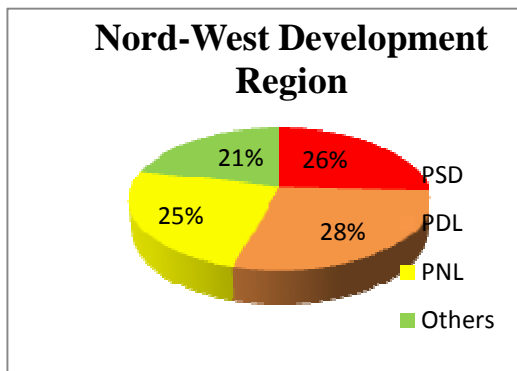
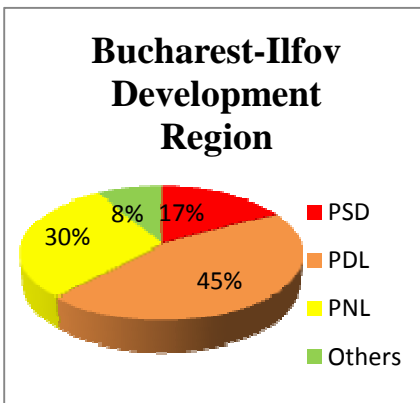
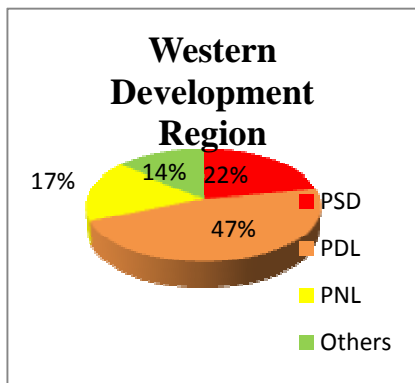
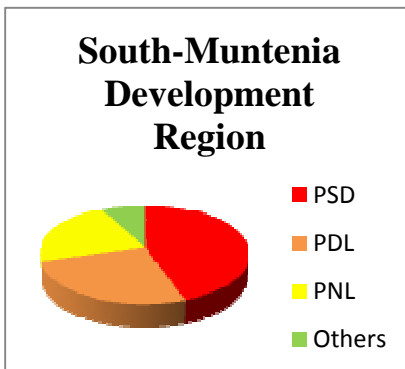
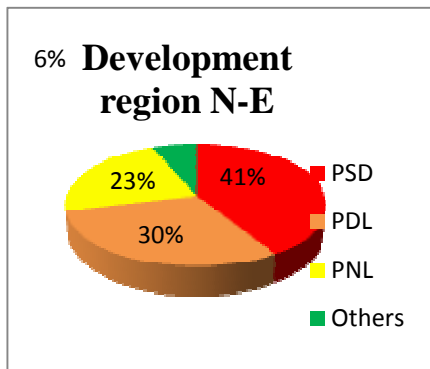
County	Total no. of adm-ter units	Political membership															
		Political membership				County executive authority				City executive authority				Communes executive authority			
		PSD	PDL	PNL	Others	PSD	PDL	PNL	Others	PSD	PDL	PNL	Others	PSD	PDL	PNL	Others
Alba	79	6	45	25	3	-	1	-	-	0	4	1	0	6	40	24	3
Sibiu	65	25	22	7	11	-	-	-	1	2	3	3	4	23	19	4	7
Mureş	103	25	16	17	45	-	-	-	1	2	3	2	4	23	13	15	41
Harghita	68	4	1	2	61	-	-	-	1	0	0	1	9	4	1	1	52
Covasna	46	7	1	0	38	-	-	-	1	1	0	0	5	6	1	0	33
Braşov	59	14	21	19	5	-	-	1	-	2	6	3	0	12	15	16	5
Total	420	81	106	70	163	-	1	1	4	7	16	10	22	74	89	60	141

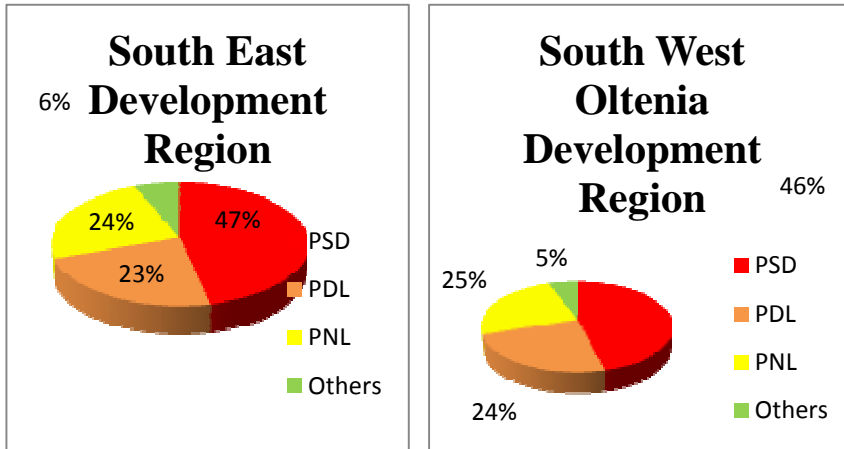
South West Oltenia Development Region

County	Total no. of adm-ter units	Political membership															
		Political membership				County executive authority				City executive authority				Communes executive authority			
		PSD	PDL	PNL	Others	PSD	PDL	PNL	Others	PSD	PDL	PNL	Others	PSD	PDL	PNL	Others
Mehedinţi	67	19	27	19	2	-	1	-	-	1	4	1	0	18	15	18	2
Gorj	71	36	14	15	6	1	-	-	-	3	3	3	1	33	11	12	5

Valcea	90	32	13	35	10	1	-	-	-	4	4	4	0	28	9	31	10
Olt	113	71	19	20	3	1	-	-	-	4	1	4	0	67	18	16	3
Dolj	112	50	35	23	4	1	-	-	-	3	4	1	0	47	31	22	4
Total	453	208	108	112	25	4	1	-	-	15	16	13	1	193	84	99	24

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5. Conclusions

The paper at hand aims to bring into discussion the need to identify an optimum level of decentralization, which to contribute to the development of coordination and cooperation mechanisms in vertical plan, of the public administration authorities, elements that correspond, from the scientific point of view, to the application of the concept of Joined up government.

The identification of an optimum level of decentralization will have to represent a major challenge for the decisional factors positioned at the central level of administration. The concentration of a high power at the local level may have as effect the development of decisional incoherence, which will compromise the implementation and development of the development strategies generated by the central level.

The dimension of administrative and decisional fragmentation, specific to the NPM concept, is presented following a research that aimed to emphasize a series of aspects of decisional nature that may represent an impediment in the current administrative context.

The analysis was performed for each separate development region, attempting to emphasize the complexity of the decisional process when we speak of excessive administrative fragmentation, fact emphasized by the high number of administrative-territorial units endowed with administrative and financial, and within certain constitutional limits, decisional autonomy.

From the data interpretation, it is easily seen the existence of approximately equal ratios of the decisional poles in what concerns local public administration, between the main political parties analyzed individually. If we analyze the results from the perspective of the political cleavage between left-right, and if we take into account the fact that two of the three main political parties are right-winged, we can deduce an advantage in what concerns the implementation of development strategies that can find strong foundation in the right-wing doctrine.

This conclusion is relevant if we analyze the data strictly from the perspective of political doctrines.

However, in reality, the two right-wing political parties (PNL and PDL) have not identified, until the present, a common platform regarding decisional cooperation, PNL developing a process of cooperation and decisional coordination with the other opposition party, PSD, having as main objective the blocking of the political actions started by PDL. Thus, the right-wing government supported by PDL faces strong opposition from a party with which, at least from the doctrine point of view, it should be in a partnership relationship.

This situation can be easily seen from the data presented at the county level, as well. The counties within the same development region are controlled, from the decisional viewpoint, in approximately equal shares, by the three main political parties, following that at the level of the administrative-territorial units in each county, administrative and, implicitly, decisional fragmentation to become much more obvious.

Thus, important question marks are raised with respect, on the one hand, to the capacity of the county decisional organisms to implement, according to the legislative abilities they were endowed with, an ample coordination process among the local decisional factors, as well as, on the other hand, their administrative capacity to develop their own coordination network, which, most times, faces a strong obstacle generated by the distinct political belonging.

Decisional flexibility certainly represents a positive effect of administrative fragmentation due to decentralization and, implicitly, of the policies promoted by NPM; however, in the absence of an ample coordination process generated by the existence of a divergent political context, it may transform into the main opponent of the implementation of development strategies with impact at the regional level.

The recommendation that the paper at hand makes, from the perspective of developing an ample intra- and inter-regional decisional coordination process, targets, on the one hand, the need to reduce the number of administrative-territorial units existing at the bottom of the administrative system (we refer here to the joining of local public administrations of small dimensions) and, on the other hand, the delegation on the basis of the principle of specialization, from the bottom to the center (regional level) of certain competences of strategic nature.

Therefore, it is necessary to develop intermediary administrative structures, between the central and the local levels, at the same time with reducing the number of the present administrative-territorial units, structures that can be placed at the regional level.

Thus, the regional level will have to undertake the role of „middle government” between the central and the local level, thus contributing to the efficient implementation of the measures of strategic nature, as well as to the applicability within the Romanian administrative system of the concept of Joined-up government.

By diminishing the number of administrative-territorial units and by delegating a certain set of competences from the bottom to the regional level, we obtain the diminishing of administrative and decisional fragmentation at the same time with an increase of the coordination level by developing strong decisional centers at the regional level.

These regional administrative structures, developed together with the transformation of the regions in administrative-territorial units, will have competences regarding the development and implementation in a uniform manner of sustainable development strategies aiming at essential development areas.

The identification of an optimum level of decentralization at the regional level will not have as effect the annulment of diminishing of the current local decentralization, but merely the delegation of certain competences of strategic nature at the level of the development regions.

On the basis of the existing data, as well as on the basis of scientific arguments offered by the comparative analysis between the two concepts analyzed, NPM and JUG, the optimum level of decentralization is identified by means of a graphic representation at the intersection between the two theoretical concepts applicable to administrative systems, namely, at the regional level.

If the NPM curve is a descending curve presupposing the delegation of competences from the central level to the local level, the JUG curve represents a movement both from the center to the bottom, and from the bottom to the center, the development of a coordination process requiring the delegation of competences from the bottom and from the center to an optimum level of decentralization.

Concluding, the paper at hand aims to bring back into discussion the need to develop certain administrative coordination mechanisms and to establish an optimum level of decentralization in the detriment of excessive decentralization which will have as effect a fragmented administrative system, incoherent from the decisional viewpoint, at the local level.

The identification of an administrative level that facilitates the application of the JUG concept does not presuppose the annulment of the principles of organizing and functioning of NPM, but their completion, in order to obtain an efficient administrative system.

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