



PAPER

Territorial Development and Restructurings: Comparative Perspectives in France, Germany and Romania

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Abstract: *The territorial organization of Germany, France and Romania calls for different strategies and solutions. Germany is a federal state, even though Romania and France are unitary states. These three countries are structured according to their history, which leads to very different territorial realities. Germany has been marked both by reunification and territorial reorganization around the Kreise and municipalities in its eastern part, while Romania remains on a departmental model, sitting on the communes. France, meanwhile, has undergone major territorial reforms that highlight a structuring around two poles, intercommunalités and regions.*

The purpose of this communication will be to analyze the state of territorial reform in these three countries, around the logic of continuity and renewal. It will be about seeing what are the stakes of the territorial question in these three countries? If territorial reform is an element of state reform in France, it does not seem that the reorganization of territories is also present in Romania. In the case of Germany, it is necessary to differentiate between East and West, since territorial reform is part of the competence of the Länder. Between permanence and territorial reconstruction it will be interesting to show how the territories are places of identification but also of restructurings and reconstruction.

Keywords: *(maximum 6 words) Territorial restructurings, Comparative analysis, Territorial reform*

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Introduction

Territorial development is a dynamic process, under the influence of numerous conditions and influences. Some are apparently immutable, or with high inertia, such as positioning and spatial relationship elements, natural conditions, or cultural patterns (Ianoş, 2000, Berry, 1971). Others have faster evolutions, even sudden mutations, which cause bifurcations and produce new inter-territorial balances / imbalances. This category includes historical events, political decisions or administrative reforms, some major infrastructure and economic investments, etc. (Zvirbule, Rivza & Bulderberga, 2017).

An essential element in the territorial performance is the historical traditions (national and regional) in the administrative-territorial organization, with the attribute of the degree of coherence, stability and efficiency of the public administration, practiced over time (Johannisson & Dahlstrand, 2009). This factor is closely linked to identity construction and attachment to the place, which plays a major role in the development process (Popa, 2000). They form an essential component of territorial capital (Camagni, 2009).

In the contemporary world, more than in the past, territorial development is (should be) a primarily public policies outcome (Amin, 2002). They have the role of ensuring a dynamic balance, within the limits of sustainability, between the processes of competitiveness and those of cohesion / solidarity, in order to reduce the inter-territorial disparities, which spontaneously tend to deepen (Popa, 2010, Parr, 1999). Which means wasting potential, exacerbating inequalities and weakening democracy.

The public policies in the field of territorial development are within the competence of the national and sub-national levels, with particularities that differ from one country to another (Le Galles & Lequesne, 1998). However, in the process of European integration, specific instruments have been structured, through which the European Union indirectly influences these policies: respect for the rule of law, liberalization of the movement of people and goods, financial allocations from European funds on strategic programs and projects and so on (Monastiriotis, 2008).

In this regard, in the case of a country such as Romania, the most legislative changes in the field of exercising public authority and the organization and functioning of public

administration were registered during the period of preparation for EU accession and the immediate post-accession period (Apostolache, 2014). These changes have not been translated, however, by administrative-territorial reforms.

1. The status and dynamics of territorial administration

The organization of authorities and public administration is regulated by the Constitution and by a dynamic body of laws. In Romania, the main regulatory instruments in this area are: Constitution adopted in 1991 and revised in 2003, Law of local public administration No 2015/2001 with the subsequent modifications and completions, Law no. 350/2001 regarding the Planning of the territory and the urbanism, with the subsequent modifications, respectively the Plan of spatial planning of the national territory, adopted by sections, by successive laws. To these, numerous other specific laws and regulations are added.

Article 1 of the Constitution stipulates: (1) Romania is a national, sovereign and independent, unitary and indivisible state. (4) The state is organized according to the principle of separation and balance of powers - legislative, executive and judicial - within the framework of constitutional democracy. And in Article 3, paragraph (3) The territory is organized, under administrative aspect, in communes, cities and counties. Under the law, some cities are declared municipalities (Romanian Constitution, 2003).

Thus, in Romania, there are only two levels of public administration, namely the central administration (government, ministries, autonomous administrative authorities, prefect), respectively local administration (local council, county council, mayor, local public services), functioning within a centralized state.

From the point of view of administrative division, in Romania the territorial organization is maintained by counties, municipalities, cities and municipalities, decided in 1968. Even though the status of some cities or communes has changed after 1990, the most important structural level of the territorial administration, that of the counties, has not undergone any change. The only reconfiguration occurred during in the same socialist period, in 1981, when, from 2 large counties around the Capital (Ilfov and Ialomița), three smaller counties were created (Calarasi, Giurgiu and Ialomița), plus an agricultural sector subordinated to Bucharest, which in 1997 he will obtain the status of county (Ilfov).

Therefore, we are witnessing the longest-running administrative-territorial organization in the history of Romania, whose basic principles and territorial configuration have remained practically unchanged for more than half a century. Currently, the territory of Romania is structured in 42 counties, with areas between 8,697 km² (Timiș) and 3,526 km² (Giurgiu), the smallest being the former agricultural sector around the Capital, later declared county (1,583 km²). At this administrative level, the differences are minor compared to the year of county establishment, 1968 (table 1).

Table 1. The administrative-territorial units in Romania, in 1968, 1990 and 2016 (no.,%)

	Number of ATUs			Population average (inhabitants)	
	1968	1990	2016	1990	2017
Urban: cities and municipalities	236	260	320	48,496	32,520
- from which municipalities	47	56	103	167,660	94,764
Rural: villages	12,366	13,088	12,957	810	749
- (grouped in) communes	2,561	2,688	2,861	3,943	3,390
Județe (Counties)	39	40	41	526,988*	432,878*

**Resident population, without Bucharest*

(Source: processing according to the Statistical Yearbook of Romania: 1970, 1990, 2017)

In contrast, in the case of the basic administrative-territorial units (ATUs), the communes, cities and municipalities, major factual changes took place, especially after 1995. As a result of depopulation of many deeply rural areas, the number of villages decreased by 1% compared to 1990. In fact, the decline is greater, but many depopulated villages have not yet been officially abolished. Paradoxically, although Romania's demographic fund is declining, the number of rural communes increased (by 6.5%), but especially that of urban UATs (by 23%), in which the number of municipalities almost doubled (table 1). The consequence is that most UATs are less and less viable demographically and economically. Exceptions are some of the big municipalities, many communes in suburban position, especially those near the big cities, as well as some smaller cities and rural communes, located along the main transport corridors, or some tourist localities.

These changes took place mainly for political reasons, without being the result of accumulations of social-economic potential or in urban modernity. The Law 351/2001, through which section IV of the National Territory Planning Plan was adopted, provides the criteria for the delimitation of UATs between rural and urban, depending on the structure of the workforce, respectively on the importance and the socio-economic influence on the Neighborhoods (Antonescu, 2018). According to the law, the basic

UATs are cities and communes, the latter being composed of one or more villages. This law lists 16 indicators whose fulfillment allows a settlement to be declared a city or municipality, if in advance the majority of its inhabitants has decided in this regard, by referendum. The number of the population is a decisive criterion (over 25 thousand in the case of municipalities, over 5 thousand in the case of cities), but in practice, at the pressure of local politicians animated by electoral intersections, many derogations have been made. Thus, at the last census (2011), there were 29 cities with less than 5 thousand inhabitants, of which 10 passed to the urban rank in the period 2002-2004. The number of cities that do not meet the technical-urbanistic calls provided in the law is much higher.

2. Elements of decentralization

During Romania's preparatory period for accession to the European Union and in the years that followed, steps were taken to decentralize the EU requirements. According to the current administrative law, the local autonomy is ensured by administrative decentralization. Autonomy is thus a right, while decentralization is a process that involves autonomy (Popa & Cernicova, 2003). However, we emphasize that, in the case of Romania - a unitary state -, decentralization remains administrative in nature and does not imply territorial autonomy (Manda & Manda, 1999).

Thus, there appeared forms of territorial association between UATs, without administrative role, set up on a voluntary basis, in order to carry out larger and more efficient development projects, financed with priority by European programs. The most successful was the development of Local Action Groups (LAGs), supported by the Leader Program, for which rural areas and cities below 20 thousand inhabitants are eligible. In the financial cycle 2014-2020, the number of local action groups (LAGs) financed by this program almost doubled from the previous cycle, reaching 240 in 2018, which covers 98% of the eligible territory of Romania (according to FNGAL data: <https://www.fngal.ro/?p=267>).

In the case of large cities, a certain success has been the establishment of metropolitan areas, although they have encountered more resistance, due to the fear of UATs from the suburban area that will be swallowed by the "metropolis" around which they gravitate. These are regulated by Law no. 351 from 2001 as "an area constituted by association, on the basis of voluntary partnership, between the major urban centers (the

capital of Romania and the first rank municipalities) and the urban and rural localities located in the immediate area, at distances of up to 30 km, between which have developed cooperative relationships on multiple levels” (Law 351/2001). Starting with 2011, as a result of the modification of article 6 of the law 351/2001), all the capital municipalities of the county are authorized to constitute such areas, thus trivializing the notions of metropolis and metropolitan area. In Romania, there are 8 major metropolitan areas, constituted between 2004 and 2009, and others appearing later, in total 22 such areas are likely to become functional. Due to the opposition of UATs from its suburban area, Bucharest has not been able to form a metropolitan zone, due to the high land and economic stakes and local political rivalries.

These structures, supported in their development by European and national funds, are an expression of decentralization and have gradually introduced some autonomy in the functioning of administrative structures. The decisive step would have been the introduction of the regional level in Romania, with administrative functions and functions, an aspect that has been discussed since the early 1990s.

3. The problem of regionalization

For many years now, the issue of regionalization has been a topic of scientific and political debate, with periods of exacerbation of positions and solutions, alternating with periods of calm. The advanced solutions usually deal with the aspect of the territorial design of the administrative units, less than the debate - very important - of the scaffolding of tasks and competences of each administrative level. This is explained, on the one hand, by the apparent simplicity involved in drawing administrative boundaries, and on the other, by the much greater impact on the electorate. Comparatively, the reflection on the distribution of competences, which involves in-depth debates, among specialists, is less accessible to the general public, so it has less electoral impact.

Regarding the administrative division of the territory, the debates are heated by the opposing views of the parties. They have their roots both in the long and short time of national history in modern and contemporary times. For a long time, because, practically, there are no traditions of regional administration of the post-medieval Romanian space. From a short time, as most of those who debate this issue embrace two opposing conceptions (Popa & Cernicova, 2003). One of the concepts remains faithful to the Romanian tradition of administrative division in counties (*județe*), of modest size,

on average 5-6 thousand km², a tradition resumed and conceptualized during the Ceausescu regime (60-70s of the 20th century). Their supporters, consider that the counties are still viable, are better adapted to the situation of the country's infrastructure (Săgeată, 2013) and that they enjoy the identity attachment of the population (Bottyan & Bălțătescu, 2016).

The second conception is fed by those who refuse any inheritance from the socialist period of the country (even though the counties date from the medieval period). Some of them embrace the globalist principles of large spaces, while others are seduced by the nostalgia of a pre-modern past that should be reinvented (Popa & Cernicova, 2003). The latter argue for the introduction of a regional administrative level, by reactivating the historical provinces (Săgeată, 2013), old vassal states or episodically autonomous regions within imperial political structures. There are also some followers of the regions drawn in the years 50-60, according to the Soviet model, with the argumentation of the time, updated.

What is certain is that, under the pressure of the European institutions, through the Law 151/1998 were established the statistical regions of Romania (equivalent NUTS 2), structures transformed then into development regions. Although each of them has a regional development agency since 2001, they have no legal personality nor administrative functions. In contrast, regions have increasingly broad powers and competences in planning development and managing European funds for regional development (<https://www.mdrap.ro/regional-development/>).

4. Regional development policy

Despite the European support, the regional development policy in Romania has not made significant progress in reducing the socio-economic disparities between the development regions. The gaps that had accentuated throughout the 90s and 2000s could not be reduced even after Romania's accession to the EU (2007), due to the installation of the economic crisis, prolonged long after 2008. Some gaps were even accentuated, the performing regions proving to be more resilient, then growing faster than the regions lagging behind. This phenomenon was doubled by significant demographic transfers, from the low performing regions (North-East, South-East) to the high performing ones (Bucharest-Ilfov, West, North-West), which attracted the most investments. These phenomena happened in parallel with the increase of emigration,

Romania having the highest annual emigration rates in Europe, the regions that lost the most being the least performing ones (especially the North-East region).

Thus, according to the data of the National Institute of Statistics (INS), on January 1, 2019, the percentage difference between the number of stable population with domicile in Romanian regions and that of stable residents in each region shows decreases between 15-20% in North-East and South-East regions, respectively 8-11% in the South, Bucharest-Ilfov, North-West, South-West and West regions, compared to the country average (-12.5%). In fact, the current differences are much greater than the 2.76 million as shown in the INS statistics for January 1, 2019. Proof is the stock of Romanian citizens who went to work abroad, which was evaluated by the OECD at 3.5 million people in 2015/2016 (www.oecd.org/els/mig/dioc.htm), and emigration continued in the following years.

Table 2. Basic indicators for the development regions of Romania

Development region	Area (km ²)*	Resident population* (1st Jan. 2019)	Density (inhab./km ²)	Nominal GDP 2018** (Euro per capita)	GDP disparities from national average (%)**	Stock of FDI*** (1st Jan. 2018 - Mil. Euro)	Unemployment rate (% - 2018)**
North-East	36,853	3,196,028	86,7	6,246	61,7	1,686	4,8
South-East	35,774	2,395,240	66,9	8,836	84,8	3,800	4,6
South	34,467	2,928,957	85,0	8,486	81,5	4,791	4,0
South-West	29,206	1,926,235	65,9	7,791	74,8	2,414	5,9
West	32,042	1,776,739	55,4	10,940	105,0	6,428	1,8
North-West	34,159	2,551,234	74,7	9,380	90,0	4,258	2,3
Centre	34,092	2,317,511	68,0	10,023	96,2	6,727	2,9
Bucharest-Ilfov	1,804	2,313,212	1282,3	23,349	224,1	45,747	1,2
ROMANIA	238,397	19,405,156	81,4	10,419	100,0	75,851	3,3

(Sources: *insse.ro*, 2019 *; *National Commission for Statistics and Forecast*, 2019 **; *National Bank of Romania*, 2018 ***)

In parallel with the decline of the Romanian economy after 1990, as a result of the bankruptcy or unsuccessful privatization of the vast majority of the enterprises of the socialist industry (Deacu, 2018, Popescu, 2000), a process of socio-territorial polarization of the economic and human resources took place. Thus, for example, at the level of the present development regions (without Bucharest-Ilfov), the economic performance gaps have increased much compared to the socialist heritage. Thus, if in 1993 the most performing region today (Western Region) had a GDP of 1.3 times higher than the least performing region (North East), in 2016 the indicator would have reached 1.6, after, in 2008, had exceeded the value of 1.8!

Relying on the European funds and on the strategic assistance of the World Bank, during the financial cycle 2007-2013 the Romanian state tried to concentrate its resources in several regional polarization centers, from which subsequently to radiate the development to each region. Thus, through GD 998/2008, 7 growth poles (Braşov, Cluj-Napoca, Constanţa, Craiova, Iaşi, Ploieşti, Timişoara) were set up, one for each development region, corresponding to the main regional polarizing center (except Bucharest). These poles constituted local territorial structures of an associative type, on a voluntary basis, together with the UATs in their immediate vicinity. There were also designated 21 development poles, chosen from the cities of the second rank, with the role of sub-regional coordination or with the function of balance between regions. The development of all these would be supported by European and national funds, allocated on priority projects. As the financial allocation to the growth and development poles diminished in the next financial cycle (2014-2020), the relevance of these structures decreased.

However, the poles that have used the funds on projects with high capacity for economic growth and which have intelligently associated them with other development resources, have succeeded in starting and consolidating their positions at national level. This is the case of the cities of Cluj-Napoca, Timişoara and Iaşi, to which, on another level, Braşov, Constanţa and Oradea are added. At the same time, although it retains its primacy at national level, the Capital (Bucharest) no longer has an economic position as dominant as in the mid-2000s, when the policy of the regional poles had not yet been implemented. Thus, in 2008, Bucharest had a GDP / inhabitant 2.3 times higher than the national average, so that in 2018 it will be 2.1 times higher (CNSP, 2019). We mention, however, that, according to Eurostat data, the Bucharest-Ilfov region is the only one in Romania that has exceeded the average GDP of the European Union.

Table 3. Population evolution of the main functional urban areas in Romania

<u>FUA</u>	<u>2011</u>	<u>2018</u>	<u>2018/2011 (%)</u>
<u>Bucharest</u>	<u>2,419,425</u>	<u>2,478,618</u>	<u>102,4</u>
<u>Iaşi</u>	<u>433,163</u>	<u>500,668</u>	<u>115,5</u>
<u>Constanţa</u>	<u>419,171</u>	<u>419,033</u>	<u>99,9</u>
<u>Braşov</u>	<u>397,419</u>	<u>401,516</u>	<u>101,0</u>
<u>Cluj-Napoca</u>	<u>364,085</u>	<u>396,339</u>	<u>108,8</u>
<u>Timişoara</u>	<u>353,485</u>	<u>364,325</u>	<u>103,0</u>
<u>Craiova</u>	<u>330,147</u>	<u>321,329</u>	<u>97,3</u>
<u>Galati</u>	<u>324,503</u>	<u>322,953</u>	<u>99,5</u>
<u>Ploieşti</u>	<u>297,936</u>	<u>289,394</u>	<u>97,1</u>

(Source: EUROSTAT, 2019)

The differentiated dynamics of the regional poles is also partially surprised by the EUROSTAT data, which record the evolution of the population in the functional urban areas (FUAs) of the large and medium-sized European cities (table 3).

While some of these areas have recorded steady demographic growth during 2011-2018 (FUAs Iași 115.5%, Cluj-Napoca 108.8%, Timisoara 103% etc.), stimulated by the investment attractiveness and the orientation towards economic activities with high added value, others have declining populations (Ploiești 97.1%, Craiova 97.3% etc.), reflecting the difficulties they have in providing opportunities and becoming especially attractive to young people and to the workforce highly qualified.

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