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### **The Need of Politically Decentralization in Romanian Administrative System**

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**Abstract:** The need for decentralization of the administrative system is one of the most discussed and acclaimed topics, in the Romanian governing acts. Decentralization, however, cannot be achieved without political decentralization, a democratization process of democracy, achieved from top to bottom, in which the state supports the evolution of the civil society through partnership, by stimulating local initiative and community development. According to Anthony Giddens' theory, which is even more relevant due to the present economic recession, it states that the civil society represents a third option (neo-liberalism and social democracy being the other two) in achieving social welfare. The welfare type state concept is replaced by the welfare society concept, in which the state and the civil society work together for progress, development and mutual support. Apart from the need for a participant democracy, the objective of this present study is to analyze the stages of the present political decentralization in Romania. We intend to find explanations and solutions regarding the fragile voice of the Romanian participant political culture. What were we lacking: logistics or the collective mentality (a consequence of the emerging democracy...)? What are the distinctive mechanisms for proper governing, by which we can monitor the citizens' involvement in the process of public decision and the ongoing possibility of influencing the governmental authorities' policies and decisions by the people, at a national level by empowering the citizens with more authority? Respecting the existing interests of the society and not only those of the dignitaries, constitutes a condition for representation, something that the Romanian democracy lacks. Monitoring the manner in which the citizens' interests are represented by public decision, constitutes a fundamental element of proper governing. This study's objective is to create certain logistic conditions for the organization of the citizens' public policies debates, regarding the governing programs or the text of certain laws; the mechanisms should not be limited only to collecting and monitoring, but they should encompass the manner in which the citizens', the experts' and the civil society's representatives proposals are existing in the public decision.

**Keywords:** citizen empowerment; civil society; politically decentralization; politically correct

### **1. Introduction**

Reducing the costs without diminishing the services offered is one of the main concerns of the governing bodies at the present time. In order to answer to the fiscal restraints, the public institutions have implemented the institutional management as a great solution, despite the dysfunctions of the social welfare state. The *Welfare State* represents a form of governing, in which the state is responsible for promoting and protecting the citizens' welfare, by means of social policies, guaranteeing: financial income, medical care, education, support and assistance in case of illness, retirement or the lack of jobs.

The evolution of this type of state, that assures a complex social protection and assistance system, in addition to certain demographic indices (ascending evolution of life expectancy, demographic aging)

have determined the governments' increase of costs for pensions and medical services. The government's cost regarding wages and social spending increased more than work productivity did, which in turn led to an even greater financial crisis. The Neo-liberalism implemented by Margaret Thatcher represented a model for reinventing the governing act (reinventing government), by adopting solutions from the markets' mechanisms and reaffirming the government's efficiency. The public's problems cannot be solved by a single "actor", such as the state, in a world that is in a full state of globalization, with insufficient national budgets of the states, whilst the citizens' expectations are continuously changing. It's a reality that has marked the governing process at the beginning of the 80's, more so during the Reagan administration in the United States and Thatcher's administration in Great Britain. The governments are forced to attract private investments in order to solve the public problems. At this point the public-private guidelines in the governmental sector, profit and non-profit, have been established. Social evolution represents an objective that is assured by this private profit and non-profit partnership with the civil society and the private sector. Anthony Giddens (Giddens, 1999, pp. 1-10) considers that the economic basis of such a partnership is the mixed economy. The democratization of democracy it is attained by a certain governing act that is based on reciprocal partnership and control between the government and the civil society. In the Next Step Program that was implemented in Great Britain (Zamfir & Stănescu, 2007, pp. 539-546) at the beginning of the 80's, the civil society had been considered a self generating mechanism for social solidarity. The need for implementing such a reform program in the public sector has been considered as being a natural effect of globalization. The effects of globalization determined the diminishing of the importance of the nation state. The beginning of the 90's outlined an image of a state that will hold on to the cultural, economic and governmental power over its citizens, but in order to be exerted it had to collaborate with local public administration, with the non-governmental associations and transnational groups. The governing concept does not identify itself anymore with the government, the NGO's and the transnational organizations take part in the governing act.

## **2. Paper Preparation**

Therefore, the state's response to globalization is the implementation of decentralization, especially the decentralization of the political component. The new public management and the public sector reform are implemented with the help of the entrepreneurial government (the governmental institution will employ every resource it has at its disposal in order to maximize productivity and work efficiency). The reform of the national budget sector, in the Next Step Program has the following objectives:

- a) Organizational and financial reform.
- b) Delegating responsibility from the public services to the private players.
- c) Privatization of the public services

The thatcherian neo-liberalism states that social welfare is assured by the market's mechanisms, requiring a minimal involvement on behalf of the state, which has to assure only the legal control. (Marinetto, 2003, pp. 102-120) Returning to Anthony Giddens' concept, the civil society represents a third path, a third solution for achieving social welfare. In neo-liberalism, the role of the state is minimal and the civil society has to evolve spontaneously, whilst in the social democracy, the civil society is rather dysfunctional in providing social welfare, and the democratization of democracy would represent a new concept of public policies, a process from top to bottom in which the state supports the evolution of the civil society through partnership, encouraging local initiative and community development.

(Giddens, 2001, pp. 65-105) The concept of the welfare state is replaced with the welfare society concept, in which the state and the civil society work together for welfare and reciprocal support. When defining the concept of civil society, the Center for a civil society of the London School of Economics states that the civil society is a collective independent set of actions which aims for the same objectives, interests and values, encompassing NGO's, volunteer, informal type organizations, which represent the interests and beliefs of the socio-professional categories, of the community, women and minorities. In ancient Greece, the civil society was represented by a society led by citizens actively involved in politics. A. Ferguson defines civil society in his paper, "An Essay on the History of Civil Society", as being the opposite of the chaotic condition, in which each one fights with the others, the source for social peace being the involvement of the people in complex relations at a social level. The common interpretation in the 20<sup>th</sup> century of the civil society is that of a cultural superstructure. Civil society is an unfulfilled reality of the emerging democracies, in which there is a lack of involvement of the citizens in the socio-political life. Revitalizing the civil society determines a revitalization of democracy. In the emerging democracies, the civil society is the state's opponent, be it totalitarian or corrupt. An active civil society is not only a factor in the efficient functioning of democracy, but an indicator of it as well. The outburst of the citizens' involvement, in which a greater deal of importance is expressed towards any citizen, their relevance for the political system goes beyond one's voting choice. The civil society is the guarantor of democracy.

Etzioni (2002) (Apud Giddens, 2001, pp.10-25) considers the concept in older democracies outdated, civil society is only mentioned by western politicians as a propagandistic instrument, in order to renew their speech which in turn will gratify their own need in appealing the masses.

The term, *Community based organization* determined at the beginning of the 90's, the civil society theory as a partner of the state:

- Discussing and elaborating public policies
- Social services' provider
- Compensating for the public policies' deficiencies as a partner of the state.

Recognizing the role of the civil society in the social and economic evolution is pointed out by the international organizations: World Bank, U.N., E.U. In the areas where the institutions of the state don't function properly, the representatives fo the civil society constitute themselves in partners of the international organizations, in order to stimulate from bottom to the top, the citizens' involvement. In the young romanian democracy, (Pop, 2002) the problem of responding to globalization by means of decentralization represents one of the main subjects regarding the public sector reform. The lack of implementing decentralization is before anything else, a lack of political decentralization. This present study takes into consideration the citizens' involvement in the decisional taking process, rising importance of the democratic consultation process and expression of these decisions. When referring to the athenian citizens, in his paper on *The athenian greatness*, Pericles stated that, "...the athenian people consider that the one that does not interfere in the acropolis' affairs, is not only indolent but is also worthless". (Pavel apud Pollitt, 2004, p. 5) The vision and perception of the athenian democracy is that of a solid democracy, according to which nothing can exist outside a participant political culture. Political decentralization represents the ongoing possibility of influencing the governmental and public authorities' decisions by the people, at a national and especially at a local level, by conferring more power to the citizens. In the anglo-saxon thinking, the concept is called citizen empowerment. The political decisions that are taken after consultations at a wider level of the population and higher involvement on its behalf, will reflect more adequately the interests of the community, which are

monitored at the citizens' level and not only the interests of the political representatives of the population, the interests of the dignitaries, which tend to represent by their public actions an insignificant percentage of the population. The legitimate supervisor of the public policies must be the citizens, and due to the economic recession, an alternative to social democracy which will find difficult to apply the welfare governing model is governing and administering by means of culture and participant democracy. The civil society governing type, represents the best approach in preventing the effects of manipulation of the democratic electoral system, by the political leaders, who take decisions and implement policies that will favor themselves or the ones that they promoted in key positions. Political decentralization dictates the extension of the administrative duties be carried out at the public sector level, in order to create the proper conditions needed for public debating of certain public policies or normative acts, collecting policies from the citizens and civil society and their analysis, as well as creating information centers regarding the citizens' rights. The lack of political decentralization in the country's reality might be determined by the inexistence of a democratic framework regarding:

- The distinction of the state's powers;
- Political pluralism;
- Proper functioning of the state's institutions;
- Informing and educating the citizens to become more involved.

The causality analysis presents a double inadequacy: in the collective mentality and in the institutional logistic to organize citizens' debates. For example, organizing a debate with the civil society's representatives from a certain area of action with regard to a certain political strategy project in that certain area, arises at least a few essential problems. What is the criteria used when selecting which NGO's to take part, what are the designated locations for public debate and how can the public institutions provide these locations (is social determination enough or does a reason has to exist from top to bottom, by subscribing to the institutional objectives)? Logistical problems are the manner in which the collection of proposals and commentaries launched during the public debate regarding a certain text and forwarding these proposals to the group of experts. The conclusions of these specialized groups, technical in nature, must be presented to the deciding political members, who will decide how the strategy is going to be changed after the public debate. It is without a doubt that due to this logistical inadequacy as well as the collective mentality, a bottom to top manner of action, from the communities to the governmental level cannot constitute a stimulating solution of the civil society's reactiv response. The process must take place from top to bottom, by means of public policies included in the governing programs, such that the role of the civil society be a dynamic one. Decentralization is an umbrella type concept, which refers to a transfer of the decisional and implementation authorities of the public system from the central level to the local or/and to organizations which belong to the private system. In brief, decentralization represents a transfer of power which changes a subordinate relationship in a coordinating relationship; it is a relative concept, which is defined in connection to other levels of institutional organizations. The decentralization term can be applied to other organization, except in the public sector; however, in general it is used in connection with providing public service, in the administrative system. Before the neo-liberal speech, decentralization was marginal, in the speech regarding development based on a centralized state. In the 80's, the neo-liberalism promoted by the Reagan administration in the United States and Thatcher in Great Britain considers decentralization as an essential policy for the minimal involvement of the state, by privatizing the public services. In the 90's the acknowledgment of the state's role in development as well as decentralization become key elements in the reform of public administration. The new path, the new public management, refers to the reform of the public system, following the private management

guidelines. The new public management confers decentralization the main role in improving the provided services by the public administration, its objective being the transition from a single unit administration regarding the management of services, to a system that is based on a larger number of players which administer and implement these services. Decentralization as a solution to globalization and as an answer to the informational society it is interpreted by Osborne and Gaebler as follows: *In today's world, things would function much better if the ones that work in the public organizations, schools, housing construction, parks, training programs, would decide in most of the activities they are involved in. The proper governing agenda* promoted by the majority of the development agencies (The World Bank, as an actor in the social development, PNUD) includes decentralization amongst the main components of the new institutional reform.

The endeavors that support decentralization base themselves in general on two traditional arguments:

- Political- the individuals become more involved in the decision taking regarding themselves
- Economic- improving public service efficiency. From this point of view the basic principal is represented by Oates' decentralization theory. Every public service should be provided by the jurisdiction that controls the smallest geographical territory, where the benefits and the costs of this service should be within.

Decentralization of the public services provider sector reflects what federalism represents for the governing systems. It has evolved in the 50's in the U.S. and it is exemplified by the Tiebout Model: since the local public administrations carry out and implement policies themselves, the individuals will be able to choose among them, which in turn will lead to a higher competition and quality. An important difference exists in the cases where decentralization has emerged as a result of a strategy, in comparison to the ones in which it represented the result of the collapsing state due to its impossibility to sustain the public services. In some states, such as the post communist and the ones in Eastern Asia and Africa, decentralization has emerged as a reaction against the authoritarian regimes and the state's inability to provide certain services. At that moment, it represented the only feasible solution, not being the result of a strategic planning. This type of "forced" decentralization generates certain applicability problems, in a sense that the transfer of power is taking place over time. Decentralization is a generic term that encompasses many types of transfers. Depending on the area where is applied, decentralization can be:

- **Political decentralization**- implies the transfer of power to the citizens, by democratically electing the representatives in the administration office and by improving the individuals' ability to control their local representatives' decisions. The extreme form of political decentralization implies that local levels (cities and counties) have absolute independence in deciding and implementing policies.
- **Economic decentralization**- implies the transfer of authority from the public sector to the private sector in providing certain goods and economic services. The deregulation/backing out of the state from imposing certain rules on the market represents a type of an economic decentralization.
- **Fiscal decentralization**- improving the local levels' autonomy in taking decisions regarding the local budget. The local budget resources can be gathered by: taxing the services' users, taxes at a local level, with a certain level of responsibility in spending, with regard to the state's budget.
- **Administrative decentralization**- includes the redistribution of the decisional and implementing authority on different levels of the public system.

Depending on the degree decentralization is carried out, it can have the following forms:

- **Deconcentration** – transferring the implementation role, the decision is still centralized

- **Delegation** – the transfer of the decisional authority as well as the implementing authority, thus the central level is maintaining its authority, which the local administration has to answer to. The city halls' budgets are constructed at the local level; however, they answer with regard to spending to the city councils.
- **Devolution**- the local authority is autonomous and does not answer to the central authority. The devolution of the tertiary education due the university's autonomy represents such an example.
- **Deregulation**- withdrawing of the state in imposing rules in a certain field; dissolution of the legislation regarding public acquisitions at the state's level and transferring it at the local administration level would be an act of deregulation.

Decentralization determines as expected, improved quality of the services offered by the public administrations. The main argument underlines the alignment of the decisional level to the actor's affected by the decision, thus the services offered should answer more to the needs on a local level. Local diversity will influence in good the public services' offer. Another positive effect is efficiency improvement of the public administration authorities. By accepting a higher responsibility, the competence that derives from the transfer of power from the government to the local authorities, the local administrations will implement the efficiency principle, satisfying a greater number of public services' beneficiaries/users. The application of total decentralization implies efficiency through itself, because the administration-citizen relationship will become closer to the firm-client relationship (initiator-agent type relationship). By means of decentralization the level of the state's democracy improves, thus the basis is set for what we call proper governing. Transparency and the responsibility of the decisional players are improved due to the high level of control carried out by the beneficiaries of the local public sector. A major role in the feedback offered to the public administration will be conferred to the citizens and the civil society, which will improve the cohesion and social capital at the local level. As a conclusion to the afore mentioned, decentralization has favoring development role, first by a greater motivation on behalf of the citizens to attract resources for the projects that will influence them directly and second, by focusing more efficiently on the groups that are in vulnerable situations.

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