

Metamorphoses of Local Administration in Romania

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Abstract: In previous studies we paid attention to the idea of regional organization of Romania, but in order to understand the regions of Romania, we should first understand the administrative history of Romania. For that we intend in our research to see how the past has influenced the present, respectively the acceptance of regions as administrative units. The paper will deal with historical problems met in the implementation of regions in Romania. In the European integration process regions are seen as pillars of European cooperation. For future cooperation with European Union, Romania should know and understand the effects of its historical legacy. National and local governments throughout the region are forced to implement new strategies for meeting the needs of their populations. For these reasons we consider important to present a study of the organizational heritage of local public administration. The reform of local public administration is a complex and dynamic process that should start in the past, be implemented in the present and continue into the future. Through our study on the Romanian administrative units we will emphasize how Romania develops under the historical pressure. For this we intend to uncover the causal mechanism of the past, which influences the present and may shape the future of intermediary level of Romanian public administration. The lack of knowledge on what regions are can induce the idea that this type of administrative unit is not desired. The post-communist transition of Romania was and still is characterized by the preponderant power distribution from centre to local level. In our investigation we will use a research strategy based the documentary and content analyses. For a better view, we will have an insight look on the legal norms of Romania.

Keywords: administrative legacy; local communities; cultural identity; regionalization

1. Introduction

Stepping into the 21st century, Romania “dream” come true – the EU membership, although both the state and its institutions, and especially the society, weren’t ready for such a transformation. This was the major reason which made us suggest the present topic. We consider that the transformation process of the structures, and not only, ought to be analyzed in order emphasize the steps taken by Romania along

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the time. We will use the changes in the legal regulations and administrative realities of the time as a main source for analyzing this process. Romanian public administration should be seen as an evolutionary process, with objects, attributes and relationships specific to certain period of time.

The transformation of the territorial structure of government – its decentralization, particularly the introduction of territorial self-government – was considered an essential task in the process of rebuilding political and administrative systems in the Central and Eastern Europe after 1989. (Illner, 1999, p. 7)

In administrative reforms anywhere, the search for an optimum vertical territorial structure of government and for optimum government areas has always been highly relevant issue. As a rule, institutions of government are designed to act on more than just one geographical level – they are organized into several territorial defined tiers. Besides the national administrative institutions, there exist institutions operating at subnational level as well – typically a regional (intermediary) level and local level. The need for such a multi-tiered structure has been supported by two lines of arguments, each referring to a different aspect of a modern state. (Taylor, 1993, pp. 317-318)

Decentralization is in fact the devolution of functions of the state to autonomous territorial authorities. It may be based on two state building models. In the top-down theory, unitary state model, local and regional government is viewed as being derived from the central authority, enjoying the level of autonomy that was granted to it by the central one. On the other hand, the federalist bottom-up theory, the local and regional communities are seen as primary organizations of the state, while the central government is derived from it. This second organization of the state is sustained by a strong cultural and regional identity of the community.

Local autonomy, especially in a unitary state, can be conceived within certain limits. These limits are inherent, some of them having an economic determination, others being determined by political considerations. Local autonomy can be achieved only within the principles of the rule of law. Hence, the organic tie which has to exist between local autonomy and the law, between local interests and the national interests is expressed by the law. This explains why there is *a representative of the state*, more exactly of the central executive, with the role of overseeing the enforcement of the law by the local authorities, including those of the autonomous communities.

The principle of “democratic centralism” was abandoned in favour of *devolving* and *decentralizing* of the political power which is to be exercised under the rule of the law; the rejection of the principle of unity involved the emergence of distinct, local spheres.

The concept of “unified” or “homogeneous” state authority (in which the local authorities act as representatives of the central government, equivocally subordinated to its directive and control) was rejected and replaced with a dual system, in which the state and the local management act each in its own sphere of influence. However, we should not be surprised by the fact that the reality of local management partly lags behind the normative ideal.

In the search of the Romanian identity in the European public space we, the academics and the reformers of the public administration, should pay more attention to the necessities of the local communities, to their historical legacy and, moreover, to their identity and their values. We should build a future European administration by taking into consideration the past organization of the Romanian local administration. A stable and efficient public administration cannot be copied. The Western model should be used only to inspire us, each model is build on its own national values, that is why in our quest of reform of the state and administration we should pay more attention to our national and local values.

2. The Romanian Constitutional Road

In the Romanian society the need for a constitution as the foundation of institutional and political organization has emerged in terms of the modernization of the entire socio-economic life, politics and culture from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century in the context of entry and dissemination of ideas of the French Revolution.

A first draft of the Constitution, the so-called ‘Constitution of carbonaro’¹ (n.a. cãrvunãrilor)’ developed in Iași, on 13 September 1822, showed a trend towards the introduction of a modern system of government, by asserting, indirectly, the need for separation of powers. Accepted by the sovereign, the ‘constitution’ did not move beyond the project due to the opposition of Russia and Turkey.

Romanian boyars’ projects in the years 1827-1828 aimed at improving the country’s political-institutional organization were completed in 1831 by introducing the Walachia and Moldavia, The Organic Regulations (Regulamentele organice), a kind of Constitution, approved by St. Petersburg and Istanbul, which remained in force until 1858. Based on principles identical to the constitutional ones, The Organic Regulations played an important role in the modernization of Romania and indirectly facilitated the union which appeared after 1859.

The emancipation of Romania beyond the political and military domination of Russia after the Crimean War had been structured under the Paris Convention of

¹ Participant to the reform movement, initiated in the XIX century, representing the interests of the liberal nobility and merchants.

1858 which was the result of an agreement between the suzerain power - the Ottoman Empire - and the major European powers (the Paris Peace Treaty of 1856). In the United Principalities, conceived as the confederate states, for the first time, the concept of state was introduced explicitly. Thus, marking a radical break from the authoritarian and absolutist rule specific eras of Ottoman domination, Romania entered the modern era.

Through the coup de état of 1864, A.I. Cuza imposed a new constitutional act, the Statute, a short term experiment, which combined the democracy with autocracy (Alexandrescu et al., 2000).

Romania's Constitutional true trajectory began with the 1866 Constitution, which enshrined the constitutional monarchy, Romania's first modern Constitution inaugurating a political system based on principles of liberalism and democracy. It was inspired by the fundamental law of Belgium of 1831, considered at that time the most liberal Constitution in Europe. This Constitution remained in force, with some modifications, until 1938, the year in which the parliamentary regime was replaced with the King Carol II authoritarian one, a fact enshrined in the new constitution. After the Second World War in 1948 and 1952 new constitutions were adopted after the Stalinist model, which were not mirroring in any way the Romanian reality.

What should be the fundamental law of each State? Dimitrie Gusti¹ said: 'A Constitution cannot be borrowed and thus cannot be inspired by the work of an inspired legislator, because it would not create and invent anything, but it would only reflect a political, judicial status, its social psychology and economic status, the social justice and the wishes of another nation's ethical aspirations. A constitution is the national consciousness encoded in a modern form that is more than technical legal rules applied to the functioning of the totality of the public powers.' It should 'be according to the social experience of time and at the same time, to have a particular character, which has to be adapted to the specific social experience of the nation'.

The Constitutional road was opened, but this was interspersed by various theories and theses that we do not propose to treat in this paper. What interests us in our little historic approach is how the local public administration was regulated over time. To achieve this historic journey we felt the need to dwell on a few items on the administrative-territorial government of Romania.

The administrative organization of the Romanian principalities and then that of the unitary state was derived from the circumstances in which the Romanian people was formed and then adapted to the needs of political, social and economic times,

¹ Gusti D., The President of The Romanian Social Institute, in his speech held at the opening of the 23rd political symposium for the new Romanian Constitution, cited in Alexandrescu et al., 2000, p. 8.

said Ioan C. Filliti, in 1929, in a study devoted to the organization of administration of the Romanian principalities. He outlined four distinct stages in the evolution of the administrative organization of Romania. The first one, from its origins to the sixteenth century, developed amid a growing tax burden imposed by the requirements of the Ottoman Porte. The second one – servant like (*slujitorească*) – which was based on excessive taxation, from the sixteenth century until 1733 and the third one, ‘the administrative reforms attempts in vain’, from the eighteenth century to the first modern legislation – The Organic Regulations, which marks the beginning of the fourth - the administrative organization.

In our paper we will pay attention only to the fourth period, the period in which Romania started the organization of the state and the public administration.

3. The State Devolution along the Time

For the first time, on 31 March 1864, Alexandru Ioan Cuza promulgated the laws for administrative organization of urban and rural municipalities and set up the county councils, laws designed to give a new administrative settlement for Romania. The law organized the rural communes for the first time, invested them with legal personality, regulated the distinction between the urban and rural municipalities and ensured the independence of all villages, towns and communes. Each of them was bound to have a house of the village, mayoralty/city hall, and was obliged to take care of its slots worship. Each municipality was represented by a local council, headed by a mayor, assisted by councillors chosen by a census - established by law. The local council was an advisory board to the mayor called to “preserve, improve the image of communal property administration”. The rural mayors were approved by the prefect, while those from urban municipalities were appointed by the sovereign, according to the obtained votes in the election process.

The law of April 1864 for the establishment of county councils set up that they were going to represent the local, collective and economic interests of the counties. The county (before 1877 33 counties were registered) had as subdivision arrondissement (*plaşa/ocolul*), which grouped on more urban or rural communes based on the geographic and economic standards. The election for the county council had to take into consideration this subdivisions, each of it had two councillors. They in turn had to elect the members of the standing committee composed of three members, chaired by the prefect, who was the government commissioner to the Council. Subsequent laws concerning the organization of urban municipalities from 1874, 1894 and 1906 did not affect the administration itself.

Through the peace treaties that followed the Russo-Romanian-Turkish War and the Balkan one, Romania was forced to give up or accept several counties to its administrative organization.

The 1923 Constitution provided in article 4 that ‘the Romanian territory is administratively divided into counties which consists of municipalities’, the number, the extent and their territorial subdivisions will be determined by the laws of the administrative organization.

Also, the constitution stated as a primary administrative principle the decentralization of the state organization. The essential element of decentralization was the election of the counties and local councillors “by universal, equal, direct, secret vote and with minority representation, as provided by law’ and the possibility to add by law ‘co-opted members and rightful members.”

A new administrative reorganization and unification was made by Decree in October 1925. The new regulation kept almost unchanged the administrative functions and divided the territory into 66 counties, 66 urban municipalities and 8170 rural municipalities.

The new regulation of 1925 did not answer to all the needs of Romanian administrative life, each province had its own administrative system, which could not be immediately replaced by a completely new administrative system. The experience gathered in the implementation of this law justified the preparation of a new administrative reform implemented in August 1929. The new law was aimed to achieving greater administrative decentralization, it established a series of new institutions designed to provide greater autonomy in local life. This experience did not last long because through 11 successive amending laws the law of 1925 was rebuilt.

The concern to give an active role to public administration in the life of the state resulted in the new administrative law voted in March 1936. Through it and its implementing regulation, in February 1937, the country was administratively divided, in accordance with article 4 of the 1923 Constitution, into counties and communes, which were vested with legal personality, assets and leading bodies. The arrondissement was defined as an administrative district of the county, meant to control the activity of local authorities.

Urban municipalities were of two types: cities which were home towns of the county or not. Towns which the county considered of a particular cultural importance could be declared, by law, municipalities. In terms of competence and custody, they were subjected to the same rules as the county. The law also established a special administrative regime for climatic spa villages and for the rural municipalities which were in the immediate vicinity of the cities, namely the possibilities to be declared suburban municipalities.

The 1938 Constitution allowed the establishment of new principles for the local administrative organization. Thus, there was a manifested preference of the legislature for nominated rather than elected bodies. They maintained and created new administrative units, the provinces (*ținutul*), which by their nature and scope were a 'moral, cultural, economic and financial unity'. It maintained the commune as an administrative unit that was the 'natural core of Romanian society' and abolished the legal personality of the county, considered an artificial creation of the legislature. The county and the *arrondissement* become control units, for example the *arrondissements* were driven by a *pretor*, who was the representative of the government and the chief of police.

The new administrative units, the provinces, were created, with economic, cultural and social responsibilities in mind. Their administration was entrusted to the royal resident (appointed by a royal decree for six years) and to the province council. The 10 provinces were larger than the old limits of the historical provinces, and they comprised more than 10 counties that were grouped so as to 'constitute a defined geographical and economic entity'.

The communes, the second administrative unit at that time, were headed by the mayor and the communal council. The mayor was appointed for six years and could be maintained for a further period and the council consisted of elected members and their number was unclear.

At the end of June 1940, as relations between Romania and her neighbouring countries were seriously strained, the Romanian government gave in to a Soviet ultimatum, and allowed Moscow to retake Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina, which had been incorporated into Romania after World War I.

However, the Hungarian government saw in the fact that Romania gave up some of its territories, an admission that Romania no longer insisted on keeping its territory intact. So the Soviet occupation of Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina inspired Budapest to escalate its efforts to resolve the question of Transylvania. Peace in the Balkans was very much in the interest of the Axis Powers, and so they suggested to the parties concerned that they should solve their problems by direct negotiations.



Figure 1. Romanian historic and cultural areas (between the Wars)¹

The negotiations started on August 16, 1940 in Turnu Severin. The Hungarian delegation hoped to gain as much of Transylvania as possible, but the Romanians submitted only a small region for consideration. The Hungarian-Romanian negotiations fell through entirely and the Romanian government asked Italy and Germany to arbitrate.

Meanwhile, the Romanian government had acceded to Italy's request for territorial cessions to Bulgaria. On September 7, under the Treaty of Craiova, the 'Cadilater' (southern Dobrudja) was ceded by Romania to Bulgaria.

The ministers of foreign affairs of the Axis, Joachim von Ribbentrop of Germany and Galeazzo Ciano of Italy, announced the award on August 30, 1940 at the Belvedere Palace in Vienna. According to it, Hungary regained 43,104 km² of its territories lost to Romania after the First World War. Romania had 14 days to evacuate concerned territories and assign them to Hungary. The Hungarian troops stepped across the Trianon borders on September 5 and completed the re-annexation process, on September 13.

¹ Romanian maps. Retrieved from <http://www.artlitera.ro/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/>
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Historian Keith Hitchins (1994, p. 486) summarized the situation created by the award in his book 'Rumania: 1866-1947:

Far from settling matters, the Vienna Award had exacerbated relations between Romania and Hungary. It did not solve the nationality problem by separating all Magyars from all Romanians. Some 1,150,000 to 1,300,000 Romanians, or 48 per cent to over 50 per cent of the population of the ceded territory, depending upon whose statistics are used, remained north of the new frontier, while about 500,000 Magyars (other Hungarian estimates go as high as 800,000, Romanian as low as 363,000) continued to reside in the south.

On September 12, 1944 the Allied Commission in the Armistice Agreement with Romania, at Article 19 stipulated: 'The Allied Governments regard the decision of the Vienna award regarding Transylvania as void and are agreed that Transylvania (the greater part thereof) should be returned to Romania, subject to confirmation at the peace settlement, and the Soviet Government agrees that Soviet forces shall take part for this purpose in joint military operations with Romania against Germany and Hungary.'

The Treaty of Paris, 1947, reaffirmed the borders between Romania and Hungary, as originally defined in Treaty of Trianon, 27 years earlier. After 1944 and until 1948 the Constitution of Romania of 1923 was reinstated.

The 1948 Constitution, maintained the division of administrative units, as they were before the war: municipalities, arrondissement and counties, but stated that by law, those divisions can be altered. The local bodies of state power were local people's councils, elected for four years.

In September 1950 the Grand National Assembly passed Law no. 5 for the administrative-territorial division of the Romanian People's Republic, and so Romania was divided into regions, towns, districts and communes.

The Law no. 5 for administrative-territorial division entered into force in September 1950 and produced its effect until December 1967 when the new law established other administrative units: the counties, towns and communes, organization which is still on nowadays.

The discussion over the new administrative organization of the Popular Republic of Romania started at the General meeting of the Central Committee of the Romanian Labor Party (Plenara CC PMR) of 15 - 17 May 1950. Some members argued that Romania should keep the old administrative units because its territory is not as big as the USSR one and there is no need to be divided into regions. So Miron Constantinescu¹ sustained that: 'the term of raionation (district) is the correct one,

¹ Miron Constantinescu (December 13, 1917 - 1974) was a Romanian communist politician, a leading member of the Romanian Communist Party, as well as a Marxist sociologist, historian, academic, and

because it underlines the characteristics of this reorganisation and the expression used in Stalin's quote is raionation', also he underlined the fact that 'all of the content of the criteria proposed here is drawn up after the study of the soviet material, on the basis of the soviet teachings and on the basis of the concrete support that the soviet counsellors gave to us, to whom we thank for their help'.

The region was the administrative and economic unit, bounded territory which directly included the state organs and carried out the Party and Government policy. The region was consisted of districts and cities, all subordinated to the region and the latter one to the state. The place of residence of the regional council was declared a regional centre. (art. 3 and 4 of the Law no. 5)

By the Decree no. 259/1950¹ the regional administrative authorities were the Popular/People's Council and the Executive Committee. The members of the regional popular council were elected directly by the local collectivities for a mandate of 4 years. The council was the political support of the democratic popular regime and was considered the local authority of the state power. The executive committee was indirectly elected through the members of the council and it consisted of a president, vicepresident, register/secretary and members. The two leading bodies of the region had the right to annul all the acts adopted/emitted by their correspondent councils or committees organized at the districts, cities and communes level. Along with the committee at the regional popular council, we could find 14 sections such as: financial, agricultural, commercial, cultural, public health, public education etc. and different departments (legal and human resources office, administrative service and technique secretariat).

Cities were of three categories, depending on the importance they had: of republican subordination, of regional subordination and of district subordination. The city district was a subdivision of Bucharest and of those cities which were subordinated to the republic. This division was created to ease the administration of the city.

The district was the territorial unit 'operative economically, politically and administratively', consisting of cities and communes and directly subordinated to the region.

The communes were administrative-economic units, a bounded territory, consisting of one or more nearby villages and directly subordinated to the district.

Once they finalised the new administrative division, the governors pompously organized the elections for the People's Councils on December 3, 1950.

journalist. During the 1950s was sidelined and reinstated under Nicolae Ceaușescu, he became a member of the Romanian Academy.

¹ The Decree no. 259 of December 28, 1950 for the organization and functioning of the Popular Councils was repealed by the Law no. 6, published in the Official Gazette no. 11/28 March 1957.



Figure 2. Romanian regions 1950-1952¹

In 1952 a new constitution was promulgated but without making any changes in the organization of administrative units.

By the Law no. 5 for administrative and economic planning of RPR instead of the 58 districts, 424 arrondissements and 6,000 communes they created 28 regions, 177 districts, 4,052 communes and eight cities of republican subordination, with a status similar to the regions. On September 1952 by Decree no. 331 the number of regions was reduced to 18 and for the first time in Romania after the unification, an administrative unit was created based on ethnic criteria – The Autonomous Magyar Region (with light yellow in the centre of the map). Subsequently, by Decree no. 12 of 1956, the number of regions was reduced to 16 (by abolishing the regions Arad and Bârlad) and in 1960 the delimitation and their name was changed.

¹ Romanian maps. Retrieved from <http://www.artlitera.ro/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/>



Figure 3. Romanian regions 1952-1956¹

Law 6 of 28 March 1957 on organization and functioning of people's council made some changes to the previous decree. It established that the people's council of regions and cities with republican subordination are subordinated in their activity to the Grand National Assembly (GNA). Subordination was seen as the compliance with the normative acts of the GNA and its right to annul the disobedient decisions and regulations.

The executive committees of local people's councils were organs of state administration with general competence throughout the administrative units. The secretaries of executive committees were appointed according to rules established by the Council of Ministers and they participated in the work of the executive committee as an advisory. Also the number of vice-presidents and members of the executive committees of the People's Council were established according to rules set by the Council of Ministers. By Law no. 3 of 24 December 1960 the state made sure that it is close to all people collectivities and reiterated the previous organization of the territory according to economic, social, political, geographical and historical conditions: regions, districts, towns and communes. The region was

¹ Romanian maps. Retrieved from <http://www.artlitera.ro/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/>

made up of regional cities and districts. The latter one was composed of communes and district cities. The commune consisted of one or more villages. Although the Constitution of 1965 maintained the division of the country into regions, districts, towns and communes, the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party of 5 - 6 October 1967 proposed new principles for the reorganization of the administrative division of Romania, which were adopted at the National Conference PCR of 6-8 December 1967. The reorganization was intended to get closer the central government to the basic administrative units, remodelling their names into districts and regions.

The new administrative organization acquired the force of law on 16 February 1968. Law no. 1 amended some articles of the RSR Constitution and changed the administrative units to county, towns and communes, organized Bucharest sectors and major cities as municipalities.

The county was planned as a unit, consisting of cities and communes, depending on geographical, socio-political, ethnic conditions and on the traditional links of the population. The city was the 'centre of population more developed economically, socially, culturally. Major cities could be organized as municipalities. The rural commune, the basic administrative territorial unit, includes the rural population in one or more villages, according to the economic, geographic, socio-cultural and demographic status. According to Law no. 2 of 1968, Romania was divided into 13,149 villages, 2,706 communes, 189 towns, 47 municipalities, 39 counties and Bucharest, with eight sectors.

The division remained valid, with additions or changes to date. Thus, in 1981, there were 40 counties, Bucharest – an assimilated county divided into six sectors plus Ilfov Agricultural Sector, 56 municipalities (including Bucharest), 180 cities, 599 localities belonged to towns and cities, 2,705 communes out of which 135 suburban, 13,124 villages out of which 232 belonged to cities and towns. Keeping the administrative-territorial organization of 1968 till after the 1989 Revolution, in 2000, Romania had 41 counties and Bucharest with county status, 263 cities and 82 municipalities and 2,685 communes which groups 13,285 villages.

4. The Development Regions

In the preceding lines we have seen how the Romanian administrative organization of the territory evolved in time and also that after 1968 no other regulation changed the territory division. In 1998, with the support of EU, we adopted the first law on the organization of development regions in Romania, Law 151/July 1998. Eight regions were constituted and function as tools for promoting economic and social development and automatically became the eight statistical regions affiliated to the European Commission Statistical Services (EUROSTAT). These regions are formed on the basis of the existing system at EU level, i.e. the system of

classification of territorial units NUTS. According to it, they are regions at NUTS II level (i.e. to have a population of 2.8 up to 3 million inhabitants).

The regional development policy, as defined by the current statutory, means the whole set of policies developed by the Government through central public administration authorities, by local public administration authorities and specialized regional bodies, in consultation with socio-economic partners, in order to ensure economic growth and sustainable social development of geographical areas formed as development regions.

The second law in this domain, Law no. 315/2004 regarding regional development in Romania, as amended and supplemented, established that the development regions are areas that include counties in the territories concerned, Bucharest respectively. They form the basis of agreements between representatives of county councils and, where appropriate, the General Council of the City of Bucharest and operate under the provisions hereof. Development regions are not administrative-territorial units and they are organized without legal personality.



Figure 4. The Romanian development regions¹

¹ Romanian maps. Retrieved from <http://www.artlitera.ro/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/>
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Almost 14 years of experience in operating the system of regional development in Romania, shows that the system requires certain measures designed to improve and complete (in legal, institutional and procedural terms) to meet all the requirements of the European Union.

Therefore, the question is whether the current development regions are the best solution for promoting regional development policies or there are other alternatives. At least, in terms of efficient management of EU funds, an alternative might be the administrative regions, which give regional councils greater powers and a regional approach to development rather than as a communion of local interests.

The administrative-territorial reform, due to its importance at the state level, requires solutions needed to be studied and subjected to public debate in order to find the most viable, the most accepted solution by our society, by the local communities.

5. Conclusions

Remaining the basic structure of social organization, the state is subject to a double evolutionary process - firstly the process of reunion of states in joint structures, and secondly the decentralization process and / or recognition of regional autonomy within a united Europe. If the first challenge is to follow a process of growing comprehensive military, political, economic, technological and cultural development, the second results from a process started within national states. Its local protagonists are trying to support their political and cultural identity. These challenges have weakened the state in the world but especially in Europe. He sees a crisis of legitimacy faced and in some cases even loss of political and economic power. (Cărăușan, 2010)

The future of Europe will be affected by the 'reallocation of authority' that belongs to the state, the smaller units, sub-state, through sub-national fragmentation. Therefore, we consider that in line with the economic and social cohesion objectives of Romania and the European Union's regional policy, our country should take into account other types of organization. In this regard, we expressed our opinions more fully in the papers of the Pertinence of regionalization project and in the Romanian public administration reform (Cărăușan, 2010).

So, the contemporary understanding of regional development has four aspects: economic development, social integration and redistribution, cultural development and identity, and environmental considerations. (Keating 1997, p. 31)

Having in mind Keating's idea we would like to affirm that Romania once focused on the concept of 'regional interest' requires the study of the existence of the socio-cultural values which underlie the sense of affiliation to a regional community.

This configuration implies the emergence of identity areas in the form of ‘variables, relatively durable, highly structured, which lead to the phenomenon of group identity’ that may be materialized in historic areas. We have to take into consideration the rural-conservator and urban-innovator plans and distinguishes between them:

- regional identification is stronger than the communal one, ownership increases with the size of the reporting community;
- local identification is stronger than occupational one.

This approach requires a broader range of actors and policies besides a high degree of decentralization and regionalization of the governance. Therefore, it involves extensive cooperation at the regional/local level between various level of government, as well as private sector and civil society actors on the basis of shared territorial and cultural identity and a direct interest in the economic fate of the community and its residents. In this sense, the region will be tied to the geographical space but it will be a product of human construction.



Figure 5. Past and present in Romanian administrative organization¹

¹ Romanian maps. Retrieved from <http://www.artlitera.ro/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/>
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The regional feeling of belonging in our country was affected in the last century by the standardization of administrative, cultural and also economic needs; leading to changes in the complex of values, this generates in social and cultural coherence, which in turn induced breaking cultural borders that delimited the cultural areas.

As we can see in Figure 5, during the years, Romania ‘suffered’ different division plans and so in the present days it is hard to bring a new regional strategy without taking into consideration the unrest in the past. In the mention figure with red we have delimited the present counties, with grey dotted line we have the counties as they were in the inter-wars period (after the administrative reform from 1926). And, the different colours distinguish the historical regions: Dobrogea, Moldova, Bucovina, Muntenia, Oltenia, Banat, Crişana, Maramureş and Transilvania.

These brief reflections on what a region may be, the processes of (re)discovery of historic regional area or community, the identity, the dialogue and participation, we hope, will enable a better understanding of the threefold relationships which is established directly among regions, between regions and state and between regions and European Union institutions.

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*** The Constitution of July 1, 1866, published in the Official gazette no. 142 of 1/13 July 1866.

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*** The Law no. 2 of February 16, 1968 on the administrative organization of the Socialist Republic of Romania, published in the Official Gazette no. 163 of December 20, 1968.

*** The Law no. 3 of 24 December, 1960 for improving the administrative division of the territory of the Romanian People's Republic, published in the Official Gazette no. 27 of December 27, 1960.

*** The Law no. 5 of December 8, 1950 on the administrative-territorial division of the Romanian People's Republic, published in Official Gazette no. 77 September 8, 1950.

*** The Law no. 6 on the organization and functioning of the People's Council, published in the Official Gazette no. 11 of March 28, 1957.

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