

## ABSTRACT

I am currently Associate professor, PhD, with the Department of Political Science, International Relations, and Security Studies of Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities at "Lucian Blaga" University of Sibiu. As Associate professor I also teach with the Department of Public Law at "Simion Bărnuțiu" Faculty of Law (LBUS), in the field of Public Administration.

My academic career began in 2007 as a Teaching assistant with the Faculty of Political Sciences, International Relations, and European Studies (LBUS), which later became the Department of Political Sciences, International Relations, and Security Studies within the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities. Since then, I have progressed in my academic career and became Lecturer (2013) and then Associate professor (2017) within the same higher education institution.

I have significant experience in local public administration gained in more than 20 years of legal practice, including 13 years as a legal advisor at Legal Department (within the Municipality of Sibiu), that I managed for 4 years (2013-2017).

My PhD thesis, which I defended in November 2012, with the National School of Political Studies and Public Administration, Doctoral School, Specialization in Administrative Sciences, with the topic "Local authorities and their role in the European administrative space in the context of administrative decentralization", was an important step in my research and academic career, because it allowed me to understand the standards of high quality research and the requirements of a successful future academic career. At first glance, this topic might seem to be quite explored in the Romanian legal literature, but the context in which I formulated this research topic was new: Romania was a member state of the EU in 2009, a new background in which the European influence began to be perceived on public administration in many ways and to produce the so-called spill over effect.

Addressing the question: which is the role of local authorities in the European administrative space, in the context of administrative decentralisation, I have formulated two working hypotheses to provide an adequate theoretical framework for the explanations sought. I have analysed the causes and mechanisms that change the place of local authorities in the national and European administrative space, using two assumptions: because of the actions of the state and because of the actions of the European Union and the Council of Europe.

To better understand the topic of the research, I have constructed it by connecting two perspectives in theory:

- ✓ the separate and sequential formulation of the concept of local collectivity, emphasizing the mechanisms that ensure the functioning of the institution.
- ✓ the analysis of a new challenge caused by their tendency to become major actors in the context of administrative decentralisation.

In summary, the thesis comprises two approaches: a particular one, to understand the concept of local authorities and the mechanisms of the functioning of this institution, and a general one, to question the potential growth of their role and place in the administrative space. In order to analyse and explain the complexity of the administrative issues one has elected the appropriate methods that are effective and relevant for drawing final conclusions.

In the years following the completion of my PhD, I continued to be interested in the subject of decentralisation and the effects of the exercise of spatial planning powers by local authorities.

The habilitation thesis entitled “Decentralization and Local Territorial Governance” aims to synthesize an important and relevant part of my research and contributions carried out after obtaining my PhD degree (2012) and proposes to present a career development projection in research, academic and professional activity. Prior to obtaining my PhD in Administrative Sciences, I graduated (1995-1999) with the Faculty of Law of the "Lucian Blaga" University of Sibiu and, subsequently, I attended the master's degree "Management of European Institutions" (2003-2005) in the same educational institution.

This paper is based on original achievements resulting from my teaching and scientific research activities and is structured as follows:

The first part summarizes my scientific, academic, and professional work and is a reflection on the three research directions on which I have focused. The first section, scientific achievements, is organised as follows:

1. Local authorities in the context of decentralisation: Tradition and change

My research on local authorities in the context of decentralisation is guided by the normative assumption that local authorities can and should take action to manage community issues in the desired direction. In order to better understand the object of study, my contributions in the field have been made theoretically by connecting two perspectives: the separate and sequential formulation of the concept of local authorities with the illustration of the mechanisms that ensure the functioning of the institution and the analysis of a new challenge caused by their tendency to become leading actors in the context of administrative decentralisation.

2. Local democracy: A key factor in opening up to civil society

A key dimension of the research carried out over the years is local democracy. There is a rich literature on administrative transparency, defined broadly to include different elements such as freedom of information, participation in decision-making and transparency through e-government. My research in this field includes theoretical studies, focusing on a comparative analysis of the ways in which citizens participate in local decision-making in various European countries; analysis of local participatory democracy mechanisms specific to the process of drafting and adopting urban planning documents; emphasis of the lack of mechanisms for public involvement in the establishment and/or decision-making process of inter-community development associations.

### 3. Territorial governance at local level: Potential and challenges in a European framework

The topic of territorial governance at local level is perhaps the most appropriate to discuss the links between the two concepts used in this thesis, namely local collectivity in the context of decentralisation and local democracy.

Spatial planning in the context of sustainable development represents a paradigm shift, reflecting the values and objectives underlying sustainable development. The shift from traditionally organised local authorities to local authorities that must respond to the challenges of managing infrastructure, green spaces, local economic development, achieving climate neutrality objectives is linked to an understanding of the role that local authorities play in most administrative systems. In this context, it is considered that the territorial administrative unit is no longer an effective scale at which territorial development should take place, which is linked to the fact that environmental, social, and economic issues often do not fit neatly within the administrative boundaries of a local authority. The local level is now the scale at which many policies and efforts to promote territorial development are carried out.

My contribution in this field is both theoretical and practice oriented. From a theoretical point of view, I have been interested in analysing a new administrative arrangement of local authorities, cooperation in a format which the legislator refers to as the inter-community development association, metropolitan area.

From the administrative practice perspective, one has attempted an analysis of how the polycentric development of the metropolitan area is approached under the hypothesis of the growth of local authorities. In this context my contribution is practice-oriented and is intended to find out whether metropolitan governance achieves its aim of creating a polycentric region and whether these policies will bring the benefits we expect.

In the second section I have developed academic and professional achievements which I have structured on two levels. On the one hand I described my teaching career at national and international level, and on the other hand, I presented my published works, presentations at various international conferences, research projects in which I was involved, as well as the international recognition of my academic work in the form of citations in published works by other academics and researchers.

The second component of professional achievements is the career as a legal adviser and later as a lawyer. The professional work presented in this section does not constitute a change of trajectory or a dispersion of the researcher's effort, but rather a valuable addition to the work I have carried out from a national and local perspective. In short, the issues encountered in administrative practice and the social and institutional experiences gained in this context have been key factors that have decisively influenced my views on the research topics I have addressed.

Part II presents proposals for career development in the coming years from a scientific and professional point of view, and Part III lists the References of the thesis. As for future plans, in this part of the thesis I have presented my intentions

to continue the line of research outlined here - the most important of these are the continuation and consolidation of the publication activity in international journals, the application for a PhD supervisor position in the field of administrative sciences at one of the renowned Romanian universities and for a full professor position, and the development of a new course on Territorial Governance at the local level to be taught in Master's programs.