

The administrative-territorial modification of 1981: a “mini-reform” of the Socialist Republic of Romania’s territorial organization of 1968

Cezar Teclean*

Abstract: In the current paper, we examine the sources that underpinned the administrative-territorial change carried out in 1981 in the Socialist Republic of Romania, the legislative mechanisms through which the aforementioned change was implemented, the goals pursued by this reform and its administrative-territorial impact. As part of the investigation, we analyzed the normative acts on the basis of which the 1981 administrative “mini-reform” was implemented and the consecutive changes in the immediately following years, and we used statistical and documentary sources for the comparative assessment of the “weight” of the four new counties established in 1981 compared to the two previous counties. Our findings demonstrate that the spatial-territorial design resulting in southern Romania by the 1981 administrative-territorial modification had an impact on the remodeling of center-periphery relations in the hinterland of Bucharest’s spatial influence, but which did not reconfigure the centralized character of the institutional-administrative system of the time. The results of this case study suggest that the 1981 administrative-territorial change was a technical-functional operation through which the authorities of the time aimed to optimize the capital’s agri-food supply system by administratively reorganizing the spaces within its area of influence. In this respect, our analysis represents a useful tool for understanding the agenda envisaged by the Ceaușescu regime for improving Bucharest’s supply chains in the last decade of Romanian communism.

Keywords: Socialist Republic of Romania, administrative-territorial reorganization of 1968, administrative-territorial modification of 1981, impact of the "mini-reform" of 1981, administrative centralism

The present investigation is not designed to be a critical administrative study nor one justifying the administrative-territorial change operated in the Socialist Republic of Romania (RSR) in January 1981. It only aims to radiograph and explain the appearance on the territory of the RSR in 1981 of four new administrative-territorial entities (the counties of Giurgiu, Călărași, Ialomița and the Ilfov Agricultural Sector - SAI) through the reorganization of the old counties of Ilfov, Ialomița and partially Dâmbovița.¹ The present analysis is rather a case study on a specific administrative event without significant reverberations in the institutional framework of the era. What did the respective administrative-territorial

* Researcher fellow, PhD, Bucharest University of Economic Studies, Romania. PhD Candidate, Faculty of History, University of Bucharest, Romania. E-mail: cezar10tc@yahoo.com

¹ Daniela Antonescu, *Studiu retrospectiv privind organizarea administrativ-teritorială a României în ultimii 100 de ani* [Retrospective study on the administrative-territorial organization of Romania in the last 100 years], Munich Personal RePEc Archive (MPRA), 2018, p. 29.

modification of 1981 consist of and what were the legislative-procedural mechanisms for its implementation? What was the administrative impact of the approach? In order to elucidate these research questions, we assume the hypothesis according to which the respective administrative-territorial “mini-reform” had a predominantly technical-functional character, aiming at attempting a better way of supplying Bucharest with agri-food at a time when the crisis and food shortage were starting to become chronic. In arguing the aforementioned hypothesis, the purpose of our analysis is to identify the spatial-territorial results of the administrative modification of 1981, to evaluate the administrative-territorial and institutional impact, as well as to explain the legal-procedural mechanisms for its implementation. To achieve this goal, we used the collection of normative acts, official speeches and statistical data, as well as press sources, scientific articles and thematic monographs.

Our study covers an area insufficiently processed in the literature, namely the investigation of the theme related to the administrative-territorial modification of 1981, compared to the multitude of analyses related to previous administrative-territorial organizations (those from the interwar period, from 1950, 1952, 1956, 1960, 1968). The paper is structured modularly, starting with an introductory section followed by a brief review of the essential elements in the literature on the subject. The next section deals with the way in which the administrative-territorial modification of 1981 was carried out and the new spatial-administrative design that resulted, and the last section presents the criteria according to which the “mini-reform” of 1981 was carried out and its consequences, followed by the conclusive interpretations.

The administrative-territorial organization of the Socialist Republic of Romania after 1968 reflected in the literature

The numerous interwar and postwar administrative-territorial organizations and reorganizations have been the subject of a multitude of approaches in the administrative, economic, geographical and historical literature of the last decades. The theme of these researches aimed at identifying and explaining the arguments that were the basis of these reorganizations, the objectives pursued and their consequences in economic, administrative, institutional and not least political terms. As for the analyses of the postwar administrative-territorial reorganizations, they focused mainly either on the regional ones from the period 1950-1968, or on the county one from 1968, or on the comparative evaluations between the two types practiced in the post-World War II period.

The territorial modification carried out in January 1981 did not enjoy the same scientific attention, however, being seen only as a technical modification of the administrative-territorial reform of February 1968. However, the redevelopment of the territorial landscape in the south of the country benefited from a series of explanatory approaches from different epistemic angles. Some authors have treated the 1981 reorganization relatively tangentially, viewing it as a stage in the

historical evolution of the local administrative system in the last century.² Thus, in the excellent monograph dedicated to the administrative-territorial history of Romania from the Great Union to its accession to the European Union, Valeriu Ureche exhaustively treats all the administrative-territorial changes that occurred between 1918-2006, for each of them revealing the context in which they took place, the motivations that underpinned them, the legislative mechanisms through which they were achieved, as well as the economic, social, administrative and political impact of the respective administrative-territorial reorganizations; only for the 1981 modification does he not go through the evaluations for all these dimensions, appreciating that the 1981 administrative-territorial moment would represent a correction/adjustment on the roadmap in the margin of the broader reorganization of 1968.³

Other researchers have analyzed it as a product of government policies for administrative management of the territory, a context in which Viorel Stănică identifies the spill-over effects of the reallocation of administrative functions on the urbanization and industrialization of medium-sized and small cities in that area.⁴ This current approach model goes beyond the patterns of historical investigation of the administrative act in question and comes closer to the paradigm of territorial planning analyses conducted in the last two to three decades; the addition of this transdisciplinary approach has proven capable of bringing a more comprehensive understanding of what the respective approach meant in 1981, especially since such approaches were not even used at the time, and the current concept of territorial planning was substituted in the socialist era by that of judicious systematization of the territory of the territory.

From the geographical perspective of territorial planning, however, Dănuț-Radu Săgeată proposes a more applied explanatory vision on the spatial design generated by the administrative-territorial change of 1981, emphasizing the principle of territorial centrality in establishing the residences of the new counties,⁵ as well as the reconfiguration of Bucharest's centripetal influence area on two successive periurban belts instead of a single one⁶. In concrete-functional terms, geographer Dănuț-Radu Săgeată⁷ showed that the mentioned spatial organization

² Valeriu Ureche, *Organizarea administrativ teritorială a României: 1918-2007* [The Administrative-Territorial Organization of Romania: 1918-2007], Eurostampa, Timișoara, 2007.

³ *Ibidem*, p. 523.

⁴ Viorel Stănică, *Politici administrativ-teritoriale în România modernă și contemporană* [Administrative-territorial policies in modern and contemporary Romania], Accent, Cluj-Napoca, 2010, pp. 165-167.

⁵ Dănuț-Radu Săgeată, "Reformele administrative din România - între rațiunile politice și realitățile geografice" ["Administrative reforms in Romania - between political reasons and geographical realities"], *Geograficul*, no. 1-2, 2011, p. 19.

⁶ Idem, *Deciziile politico-administrative și organizarea teritoriului. Studiu geografic cu aplicare la România* [Political-administrative decisions and territorial organization. Geographical study with application to Romania], Editura Universității Naționale de Apărare „Carol I” & Editura Top Form, București, 2006, p. 75.

⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 222.

chart pursued the practical goal of better agri-food service for the Capital, against the background of the insufficient capability in this regard proven by the uni-administrative organization of the Bucharest area in 1968 (with a large Ilfov County). A similar conclusion was also emphasized by the historian Vasile Budrigă, who, however, explained in the 1980s the adoption of this administrative-territorial measure in an exaggeratedly glorifying and laudatory manner, in a context in which he presented endless rows of statistical data regarding the increase in industrial and agricultural production in the area as a beneficial consequence of the judicious administrative policy of the PCR and its general secretary.⁸

At the same time, Lavinia Betea demonstrates that the strengthening of institutional centralism and control over the local party bureaucracy were also effects of the administrative reforms after 1968,⁹ carried out precisely on the basis of the pre-existing centralized institutional infrastructure,¹⁰ and Andrei-Florin Sora suggests that among the goals of Ceaușescu's administrative-territorial reorganizations, a certain preventive dimension must also be admitted in the sense of limiting the power potential of local party barons eligible to become virtual pretenders to the leadership of the Party.¹¹

The administrative-territorial modification of 1981 and the new spatial-administrative design created

It must be said from the outset that the administrative-territorial modification carried out on January 23, 1981 was not a reorganization as such, but an adjustment of the administrative boundaries in the space of two counties (Ilfov and Ialomița) carried out against the background of the general organization established in February 1968 by Law no. 2/1968. The adjustment of January 1981, previously debated during the meetings of the Central Committee (CC) of the Romanian Communist Party (PCR), was carried out by Decree no. 15/1981, based on which the territories of the old counties of Ilfov and Ialomița (as they were organized since 1968) were reorganized in the form of four distinct entities, namely the counties of Giurgiu, Călărași, Ialomița and SAI.¹² Practically, we can define the

⁸ Vasile Budrigă, "Perfecționarea organizării administrativ-teritoriale a României în anii 1965-1986" ["Improving the administrative-territorial organization of Romania in the years 1965-1986"], *Revista de Istorie*, 41(1), 1988, p. 58.

⁹ Lavinia Betea, *Ceaușescu și epoca sa* [Ceaușescu and his era], Editura Corint, București, 2021, pp. 374-375.

¹⁰ Manuel Guțan, *Istoria administrației publice românești* [History of Romanian public administration], All Beck, București, 2004, pp. 87-88.

¹¹ Andrei Florin Sora, "Viața politică locală în comunism și actorii ei: prim-secretarii Comitetelor județene ale PCR, 1968-1989" ["Local political life under communism and its actors: the first secretaries of the PCR County Committees, 1968-1989"], *Arhivele Totalitarismului*, no. 3-4, 2013, pp. 117-118.

¹² Consiliul de Stat al RSR [State Council of the RSR], Decretul nr. 15 din 23 ianuarie 1981 privind unele măsuri pentru îmbunătățirea organizării administrative a teritoriului Republicii Socialiste România [Decree No. 15 of January 23, 1981 on some measures to improve the administrative

1981 territorial modification as a "mini-reform" of the 1968 administrative-territorial reorganization, which configured a spatial-administrative design at the national level consisting of 41 territorial entities (40 counties and an agricultural sector) compared to the 39 counties that made up the administrative map of Romania from 1968-1981 (Figure 1 and Figure 2).

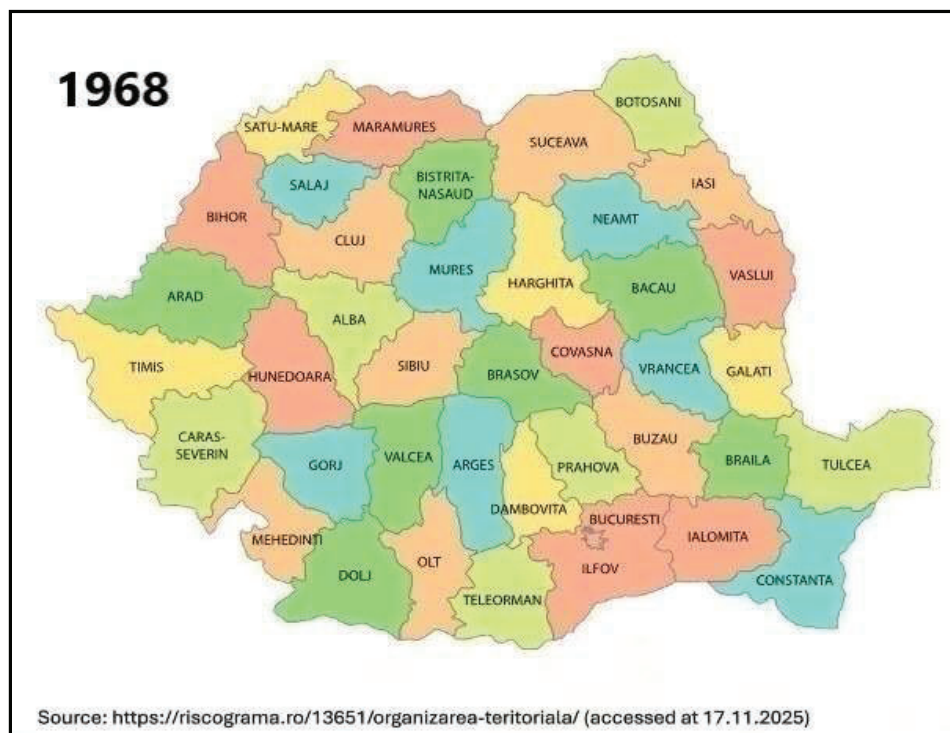


Fig. 1. Administrative map of the RSR with the administrative-territorial reform of 1968

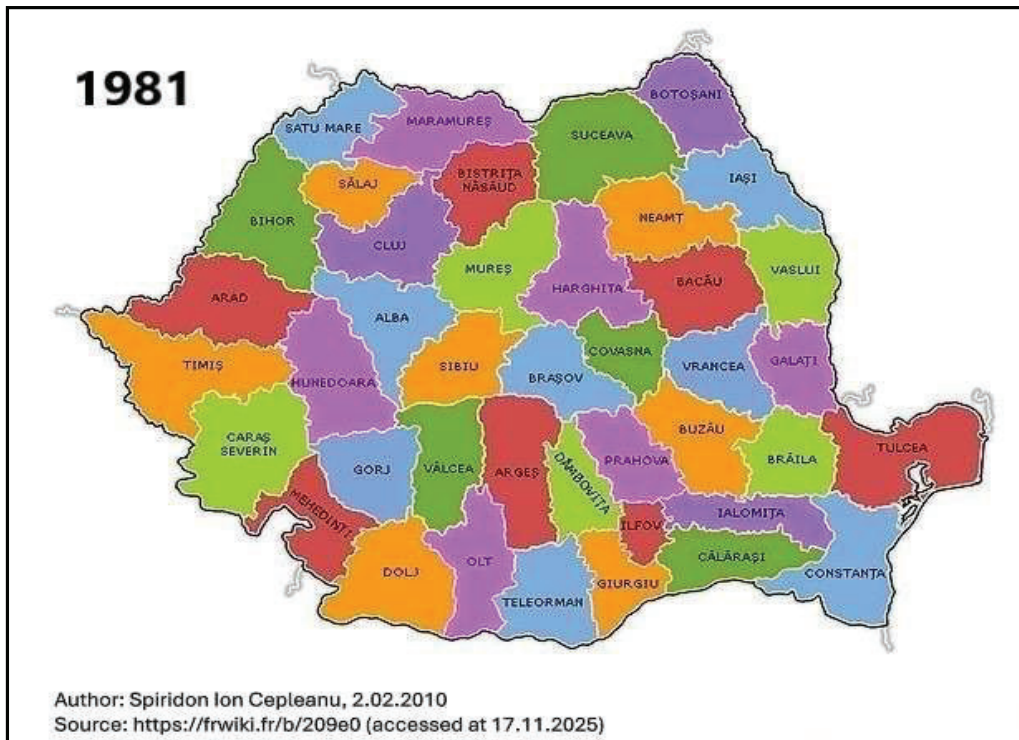


Fig. 2. Administrative map of the RSR with the administrative-territorial modification of 1981

At the same time, it is noteworthy that the return to the county organizational chart of 1968 was not identical to that of 1950, when there were 58 counties in operation, 19 more counties than those (re)established in 1968; in fact, only the term “counties” was taken from the old organizational chart. Therefore, we are not dealing with a “restitutio in integrum” on an administrative level, but only with the claim to resume the Romanian administrative tradition against the backdrop of the ideological resurgence of the national matrix in the stage of autochthonous national-communism.

It should be noted that the administrative-territorial change in 1981 also partially targeted Dâmbovița County, to which 7 communes of the former Ilfov County were attached (Butimanu, Niculești, Crevedia, Ciocănești, Tărtășești, Brezoale and Slobozia-Moară),¹³ communes that were no longer included in the scheme of the new successor territorial entities of the former Ilfov County, namely SAI and Giurgiu County.

However, in the period immediately following the administrative-territorial change of January 23, 1981, the country's leadership at that time considered it necessary to make additional readjustments to the configuration of the new

¹³ *Ibidem.*

counties. Thus, in 1981, 1982, 1985 and 1986, four more changes were made in addition to the change of January 1981, as follows:¹⁴

- on September 2, 1981: the communes of Grădișteea, Nuci and Petrăchioaia passed from Ialomița County to SAI (by Decree no. 263/ 2.09.1981).

- on March 24, 1982: Ileana commune passed from Ialomița county to Călărași county (by Decree no. 115/ 24.03.1982).

- on November 27, 1985: the communes of Ciorogârla, Clinceni, Cornetu, Darăști-Ilfov, Domnești and Dragomirești-Vale passed from Giurgiu County to SAI (by Decree no. 368/ 27.11.1985).

- on June 18, 1986: the communes of 30 Decembrie, Berceni and Vidra passed from Giurgiu County to SAI (by Decree no. 209/ 18.06.1986).

These tiny changes following the "mini-reform" of January 1981 finalized the national territorial scheme that is still valid today. Since then, numerous other administrative-territorial changes have been made at the intra-county (communal) level through readjustments of the boundaries of some communes in different counties (mergers, divisions, establishment of new communes), but the design scheme of the country's counties has not changed.

There is, however, *a recent, exceptional situation* in which, through a final court decision of September 28, 2022, the administrative boundary between Prahova and Dâmbovița counties in the Bucegi plateau area was modified¹⁵ by allocating the land sector that includes the Babele and Sfînxul geomorphological sites to Dâmbovița county to the detriment of Prahova county, which had administered them since 1968. The situation, generated by a series of previous administrative errors by the local authorities in Bușteni, is a precedent in Romanian administrative history in which a county boundary is modified by court and not by administrative-legislative means. The precedent is all the more spectacular as the respective court decision only concerns the inter-county territorial delimitation, and not the right of ownership and public administration over the two geomorphological sites, which, according to Government Decision (HG) no. 1359/2001, remain in the ownership and administration of the city of Bușteni (Prahova County). We therefore have a completely unique situation, of a neo-medieval type, in which a public entity from one county (the city of Bușteni - Prahova) practically owns a territorial exclave enclave on the territory of another county (Dâmbovița).

The official argumentation in 1981 for carrying out the administrative-territorial modification was invoked from the very title of Decree no. 15/1981, namely on improving the administrative organization, economic-social activity and territorial management. Specifically, we can appreciate that the objective

¹⁴ Dănuț-Radu Săgeată, *op. cit.*, 2006, p. 222.

¹⁵ Valentin Bolocan, "Sfînxul și Babele aparțin județului Dâmbovița: decizia instanței, după 7 ani de proces" ["The Sphinx and Babele belong to Dâmbovița County: court decision, after 7 years of trial"], *Adevărul*, 28.09.2022, <https://adevarul.ro/stiri-interne/evenimente/sfinxul-si-babele-apartin-judetului-dambovita-2208747.html> (accessed at 20.11.2025).

considered by the authorities was the creation of a more robust polarization hinterland around Bucharest, which would ensure a better agri-food supply for the Capital¹⁶ in the context of the onset of the food crisis at the beginning of the 1980s. It is one of the few steps in which the official objective declared by the communist authorities seems to coincide with the real concrete objective pursued in carrying out the project in question.

To demonstrate this thesis, but also to evaluate the inclusion of the new territorial entities in the national territorial ensemble, we used as a working method the ranking of the demographic share at national level of the counties analyzed before 1981 and those established in 1981 (Table 1).

Table 1. Demographic share of administrative-territorial units before and after the 1981 reform
(according to the 1977 Census)

| Administrative-Territorial Unit | Population | |
|--|-------------------|---------------|
| | Inhabitants (no.) | % per country |
| OLD ENTITIES (1968-1981) | | |
| Ilfov County | 787,326 | 3.65 |
| Ialomița County | 434,525 | 2.01 |
| <i>Average of a county in the country</i> | 552,818 | 2.56 |
| NEW ENTITIES (after 1981) | | |
| SAI | 287,738 | 1.33 |
| Ialomița County | 295,965 | 1.37 |
| Giurgiu County | 327,494 | 1.51 |
| Călărași County | 338,807 | 1.57 |
| <i>Average of a county in the country</i> | 525,851 | 2.43 |
| Legend: administrative-territorial units with a demographic weight above the national average administrative-territorial units with a demographic share below the national average | | |

Source: Author's processing based on Institutul Național de Statistică, Statistical Yearbook of Romania, 2007

We note that during the period 1968-1981, Ilfov County (excluding Bucharest Municipality) was above the county demographic average for the country, while Ialomița County was below this average. In the post-1981 period, all four newly created entities were below the county demographic average in the country, which shows that until 1981 the polarization area of Bucharest was

¹⁶ Vasile Budrigă, *op. cit.*, p. 58; Dănuț-Radu Săgeată, 2006, *op. cit.*, p. 222.

intended to be organized exclusively in the spatial format of a single administrative-territorial entity, that is, the much larger old Ilfov County, while through the administrative reorganization of 1981 the centripetal polarization hinterland of the Capital was disjointed in the margin of two territorial-concentric belts to serve the Bucharest agglomeration: the Ilfov Agricultural Sector (SAI), much smaller compared to the former Ilfov County (the close belt) and the counties of Călărași, Ialomița, Giurgiu and Teleorman (the second belt, much more rural, therefore very polarized by the Bucharest city).

The 1981 administrative-territorial “mini-reform”: a technical spatial-territorial touch-up without major institutional implications

Evaluations in the specialized literature reveal two categories of arguments to explain the successive administrative-territorial reorganizations in the post-war period: political-ideological and opportunistic-political motivations, respectively motivations of an economic-functionalist nature.

The category of political explanations assumes the thesis of unconditional copying of the Soviet model for the regional organizational charts from the period 1950-1968¹⁷ or the thesis of returning to the autochthonous concept of counties together with the emulation of the ideology of national communism to explain the organizational chart from 1968.¹⁸ Regarding the explanations that assume the arguments of political pragmatism, the theses regarding the 1968 reorganization as an opportunity for Nicolae Ceaușescu to marginalize a series of former local “barons” loyal to Gheorghiu-Dej stand out. Another explanation circulated is that of the preventive nature of the 1968 operation, which aimed to reduce the power potential of some local leaders by reducing the administered territorial units, in order to prevent the building of rival capacities against Nicolae Ceaușescu.¹⁹

At the same time, some recent approaches identify among the reasons for the administrative-territorial reform of 1968, but which can also be assumed in the case of the territorial reorganization of 1981, Ceaușescu’s desire to dismantle some informal networks of corruption coagulated at regional level with the aim of increasing political control over the party bureaucracy.²⁰ Exemplary in this sense are the corruption schemes identified and punished by the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Romania in Pitești and Slatina on the eve of the administrative-territorial reform of February 1968 (in January 1968), but

¹⁷ Dănuț-Radu Săgeată, *op. cit.*, 2011, p. 17.

¹⁸ *Ibidem.*

¹⁹ Andrei Florin Sora, *op. cit.*, pp. 117-118.

²⁰ Cosmin Popa, “Agricultura și reforma administrativă în strategia anticorupție a regimului Ceaușescu (1965-1968)” [“Agriculture and administrative reform in the anti-corruption strategy of the Ceaușescu regime (1965-1968)”], National Conference ‘The Romanian Communism’, November 24-25, 2022, University of Bucharest.

popularized by the unofficial Scântea only in October 1968²¹ in order to remove any perceptual link between the administrative reorganization and the phenomena of intrasystemic corruption.

Without trying to minimize some of these argumentative discourses, we believe that in addition to these explanatory apprehensions, each of the post-war administrative-territorial reorganizations was also based on robust functionalist arguments. Thus, beyond the obvious Soviet philosophical motivations that underpinned the organization by regions between 1950-1968, the regional composition scheme was based on the criterion of homogeneity of natural and economic conditions in each region.²² In a different way, for the territorial organization scheme of 1968, the criterion of functional complementarity of the natural and economic potential of each county had priority.²³

For the small administrative-territorial retouch in 1981, however, as we showed in the previous section, the technical-functionalist criterion of the double territorial-concentric development of Bucharest prevailed, as a measure for a hoped-for better service to the Capital in the conditions of the onset of the agro-food crisis at the beginning of the 1980s. Most likely, the 1981 model was designed as a result of the failure of the 1968 model based on a single polarization area around the Capital built on the structure of a single oversized county – Ilfov.²⁴

The legal-procedural and institutional mechanisms for implementing the 1981 reorganization were represented by the normative acts through which the institutions of the new territorial entities were created. Thus, by Decree no. 16 / 27 January 1981, local institutions of state power (County People's Councils) and state administration institutions (Executive Committees of County People's Councils) were created in the counties of Giurgiu, Ialomița, Călărași and SAI, and by Decree no. 70 / 30 March 1981, the socialist units (deconcentrated enterprises and institutions) in the newly established territorial entities were reorganized. The aforementioned legislation provided for an exceptional manner of constituting local bodies of state power, through which provisional People's Councils were created, made up of representatives of the old People's Councils originating from the territories included in the new counties,²⁵ which functioned in this format until the next elections on March 17, 1985.²⁶ To ensure that the institutional structures in the new counties would be thoroughly established, the decision-makers in Bucharest used the personnel rotation method by which they installed party activists with

²¹ Victor Bârlădeanu, "De ce nu ați dat curs hotărârilor de partid și sesizărilor cetățenilor?" ["Why didn't you follow party decisions and citizens' complaints?"], *Scântea*, no. 7860, October 19, 1968, pp. 1-2.

²² Dănuț-Radu Săgeată, *op. cit.*, 2006, p. 73.

²³ *Ibidem.*

²⁴ *Ibidem.*

²⁵ Vasile Budrigă, *op. cit.*, p. 59;

²⁶ Comunicatul Consiliului de Stat al RSR cu privire la rezultatul alegerilor de deputați în consiliile populare de la 17 martie 1985 [Communiqué of the State Council of the RSR on the results of the elections of deputies to the People's Councils of March 17, 1985], *Scântea*, no. 13242, 20.03.1985, p. 1.

experience in similar positions at local or central level in the leadership positions of the new entities: Vasile Martin - first secretary in Călărași, Ion Tarachiu - first secretary in Ialomița, Vasile Mușat - first secretary in Giurgiu and Gheorghe Istrate - first secretary in SAI.²⁷

The most illustrative case is the appointment of Petre Duminiță as first secretary of the Giurgiu County Party Committee (1983), after having previously worked in similar positions in Argeș (1968), in Botoșani (1973-1978), as well as as deputy head of the Party Economy of the Central Committee of the PCR (1969-1971) and then as head of the Central Committee Chancellery of the PCR (March-October 1978).²⁸

Another dimension taken into account was the assurance of institutional centralism in the new administrative-territorial units²⁹ based on centralized local institutions very suitable for this purpose.³⁰ The exercise of tight control over the party nomenclature in the new counties was in line with the centralized system adopted during the 1968 reorganization, which was facilitated by the cumulation of party and state functions through which the new first secretaries who became simultaneously presidents of the people's councils were directly subordinated to the general secretary of the Party.³¹ From this point of view, the administrative reorganization of 1981 did not bring any significant institutional discount from the general rule of administrative hypercentralism, so that the diversification of the spatial-administrative organization scheme was not accompanied by the flexibility or decentralization of the institutional system.³²

However, the new administrative-territorial organization chart has boosted the urbanization process, especially benefiting the capital cities of the new counties.³³ The territorial changes of 1981 increased the developmental effects of the 1968 reorganization locally, boosting investments in connection infrastructures (transport, communications) and thus optimizing the integration of the cities that became county seats into the entire national territory.³⁴ At the same time, the

²⁷ *Scântea*, no. 11955, 28.01.1981, p. 1.

²⁸ Florica Dobre (coord.), *Membrii C.C. al P.C.R., 1945-1989. Dicționar* [Members of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party, 1945-1989. Dictionary], Editura Enciclopedică, București, p. 241, *apud* Andrei Florin Sora, *op. cit.*, p. 122.

²⁹ Daniela Antonescu, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

³⁰ Manuel Guțan, *op. cit.*, pp. 87, 122.

³¹ Lavinia Betea, *op. cit.*, p. 374.

³² Cezar Teclean, "Institutional Mutations in the Architecture of Power and Local Public Administration in Romania in the Socialist Period (1945-1989)", *Litua - Studii și Cercetări*, XXVI, 2024, pp. 187-188.

³³ Viorel Stănică, *op. cit.*, p. 167; Dănuț-Radu Săgeată, "The Administrative-Political Function of Human Settlements and the Role It Plays in Organizing Geographical Space. Case Study - Romania", *Human Geographies - Journal of Studies and Research in Human Geography*, 5(1), 2011, p. 78, 92.

³⁴ Cezar Teclean, "Macroeconomic Impact of Transport Investment in Romania during the Socialist Period (1950-1989)", *Studia Historiae Oeconomicae*, 43(1), p. 59; Idem, "Relationship between Transport Investment and the Contribution of Transport Systems to National Income in

administrative-territorial change in 1981 facilitated the lowering of the industrialization process to the level of medium and small urban areas, paving the way for urban-industrial development for cities without previous significant industries, such as Călărași, Giurgiu and Slobozia.³⁵ Some of them had lost their administrative function after 1950 and regained it in 1981, resuming their development (Călărași, Giurgiu), while others (Slobozia) had acquired the status of residence only in 1968 and with it the industrial take-off.

Conclusions and interpretations

The last major administrative-territorial reorganization of Romania carried out on January 23, 1981 created 4 new territorial entities (Giurgiu, Călărași, Ialomița and SAI counties), instead of the former Ilfov and Ialomița counties, so that since 1981 the territory of the RSR is made up of 40 counties plus SAI, compared to the 39 counties existing between 1968-1981 or the 16 regions existing in 1968.

The long series of territorial reorganizations carried out during the socialist regime highlights a striking administrative-territorial instability generated by the obsessions of the central power not to lose hegemony over its own structures in the territory and consequently fueled by the regime's constant tendency to permanently increase its political control over its own party bureaucracy. It is a phenomenon that illustrates a true culture of ubiquitous distrust that had to be continuously managed, and one of the forms of management aimed at administrative-territorial management through which local leaders were not allowed to take solid roots in the form of informal networks of endogenous power/corruption.

However, the numerous regionalizations undertaken were based, in addition to the aforementioned obtuse political arguments, on objective technical-functional criteria. Thus, the regional-district organizations practiced in the period 1950-1968 were based on the criterion of territorial homogeneity of the regions, while the 1968 reform took into account the criterion of complementarity of natural and economic resources within the counties. From this point of view, the administrative-territorial reorganization of 1981 was based on a technical-functional criterion that aimed at structuring the centripetal polarization hinterland around Bucharest into two concentric areas (instead of one) in order to ensure a better agro-food supply for the Capital at a time when the chronic food shortage of the 1980s was beginning to take shape.

The 1981 administrative-territorial modification only partially achieved its stated objective, despite the public clamor of the success of the new reorganization by Nicolae Ceaușescu at the Third Congress of People's Councils in 1985.³⁶ If on

Socialist Romania (1961-1980)", *Revista Română de Istorie Economică / Romanian Journal of Economic History*, tom IV, p. 154.

³⁵ Viorel Stănică, *op. cit.*, p. 165.

³⁶ Nicolae Ceaușescu, *Cuvântare la cel de-al III-lea Congres al consiliilor populare. Cuvântare la încheierea lucrărilor Congresului, 10-11 septembrie 1985* [Speech at the Third Congress of

the administrative dimension the "mini-reform" of 1981 did not have any major impact in terms of institutional decentralization, on the level of socio-economic development it nevertheless succeeded in the urban-industrial growth of some cities that until then had not had many prospects (Călărași, Giurgiu), together with the (re)allocation of the administrative residence function.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Documents

Ceaușescu, N. (1986), *Cuvântare la cel de-al III-lea Congres al consiliilor populare. Cuvântare la încheierea lucrărilor Congresului* [Speech at the Third Congress of People's Councils. Speech at the conclusion of the Congress, September 10-11, 1985], 10-11 septembrie 1985, Editura Politică, București.

Regulatory

Consiliul de Stat al RSR [State Council of the RSR] (1981), Decret nr. 15 din 23 ianuarie 1981 privind unele măsuri pentru îmbunătățirea organizării administrative a teritoriului Republicii Socialiste România [Decree No. 15 of January 23, 1981 on some measures for improving the administrative organization of the territory of the Socialist Republic of Romania], *Buletinul Oficial*, no. 3 / 23.01.1981.

Consiliul de Stat al RSR [State Council of the RSR] (1981), Decret nr. 16 din 27 ianuarie 1981 privind constituirea consiliilor populare provizorii ale județelor Giurgiu, Ialomița, Călărași și al SAI, precum și a comitetelor executive ale acestora [Decree No. 16 of January 27, 1981 on the establishment of the provisional people's councils of Giurgiu, Ialomița, Călărași counties and of the SAI, as well as their executive committees], *Buletinul Oficial*, no. 5 / 27.01.1981.

Consiliul de Stat al RSR [State Council of the RSR] (1981), Decret nr. 70 din 30 martie 1981 privind unele măsuri pentru organizarea unităților socialiste din județele Călărași, Giurgiu și Ialomița, precum și din SAI din subordinea municipiului București [Decree No. 70 of March 30, 1981 regarding some measures for the organization of socialist units in Călărași, Giurgiu and Ialomița counties, as well as in the SAI subordinated to the municipality of Bucharest], *Buletinul Oficial*, no. 23 / 31.03.1981.

Consiliul de Stat al RSR [State Council of the RSR] (1981), Decret nr. 263 din 2 septembrie 1981 pentru modificarea anexei la Legea nr. 2/1968 privind organizarea administrativă a teritoriului Republicii Socialiste România [Decree No. 263 of 2 September 1981 amending the annex to Law No. 2/1968 on the

People's Councils. Speech at the conclusion of the Congress, September 10-11, 1985], Editura Politică, București, 1986, pp. 21-22.

administrative organization of the territory of the Socialist Republic of Romania], *Buletinul Oficial*, no. 65 / 3.09.1981.

Consiliul de Stat al RSR [State Council of the RSR] (1982), Decret nr. 115 din 24 martie 1982 pentru modificarea anexei la Legea nr. 2/1968 privind organizarea administrativă a teritoriului Republicii Socialiste România [Decree No. 115 of March 24, 1982 amending the annex to Law No. 2/1968 on the administrative organization of the territory of the Socialist Republic of Romania], *Buletinul Oficial*, no. 32 / 29.03.1982.

Consiliul de Stat al RSR [State Council of the RSR] (1985), Decret nr. 368 din 27 noiembrie 1985 pentru modificarea anexei la Legea nr. 2/1968 privind organizarea administrativă a teritoriului Republicii Socialiste România [Decree No. 368 of 27 November 1985 amending the annex to Law No. 2/1968 on the administrative organization of the territory of the Socialist Republic of Romania], *Buletinul Oficial*, no. 65 / 2.12.1985.

Consiliul de Stat al RSR [State Council of the RSR] (1986), Decret nr. 209 din 18 iunie 1986 pentru modificarea anexei la Legea nr. 2/1968 privind organizarea administrativă a teritoriului Republicii Socialiste România [Decree No. 209 of 18 June 1986 amending the annex to Law No. 2/1968 on the administrative organization of the territory of the Socialist Republic of Romania], *Buletinul Oficial*, no. 36 / 19.06.1986.

Marea Adunare Națională a RSR [The Great National Assembly of the RSR] (1968), Legea nr. 2 din 16 februarie 1968 privind organizarea administrativă a teritoriului Republicii Socialiste România [Law No. 2 of February 16, 1968 on the administrative organization of the territory of the Socialist Republic of Romania], *Buletinul Oficial*, no. 17 / 17.02.1968 (republished with modifications in *Buletinul Oficial*, no. 54 / 27.07.1981).

Press

Bârlădeanu, V. (1968), "De ce nu ați dat curs hotărârilor de partid și sesizărilor cetățenilor?" ["Why didn't you follow party decisions and citizens' complaints?"], *Scânteia*, no. 7860, October 19, 1968, pp. 1-2.

Bolocan, V. (2022), "Sfinxul și Babele aparțin județului Dâmbovița: decizia instanței, după 7 ani de proces" ["The Sphinx and Babele belong to Dâmbovița County: court decision, after 7 years of trial"], *Adevărul*, September 28, 2022, <https://adevarul.ro/stiri-interne/evenimente/sfinxul-si-babele-aptin-judetului-dambovita-2208747.html> (accessed at 24.11.2025)

Scânteia (1981), no. 11955, 28.01.1981.

Scânteia (1985), no. 13242, 20.03.1985, Comunicatul Consiliului de Stat al R. S. România cu privire la rezultatul alegerilor de deputați în consiliile populare de la 17 martie 1985 [Communiqué of the Council of State of the Republic of Romania on the results of the elections of deputies to the People's Councils of March 17, 1985].

Statistic database

Institutul Național de Statistică (2007), *Anuarul Statistic al României* [Statistical Yearbook of Romania], București.

Literature

Antonescu, D. (2018), *Studiu retrospectiv privind organizarea administrativ-teritorială a României în ultimii 100 de ani* [Retrospective study on the administrative-territorial organization of Romania in the last 100 years], Munich Personal RePEc Archive (MPRA), <https://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/90620/> (accessed at 17.11.2025).

Betea, L. (2021), *Ceașescu și epoca sa* [Ceașescu and his era], Editura Corint, București.

Budrigă, V. (1988), Perfecționarea organizării administrativ-teritoriale a României în anii 1965- 1986 [Improving the administrative-territorial organization of Romania in the years 1965- 1986], *Revista de Istorie*, 41(1), pp. 47-66.

Guțan, M. (2004), *Istoria administrației publice românești* [History of Romanian public administration], Editura All Beck, București.

Popa, C. (2022), Agricultură și reforma administrativă în strategia anticorupție a regimului Ceașescu (1965-1968) [Agriculture and administrative reform in the anti-corruption strategy of the Ceașescu regime (1965-1968)], Conferința Națională Comunismul Românesc [National Conference ‘The Romanian Communism’], November 24-25, 2022, Universitatea din București.

Săgeată, D. R. (2006), *Deciziile politico-administrative și organizarea teritoriului. Studiu geografic cu aplicare la România* [Political-administrative decisions and territorial organization. Geographical study with application to Romania], Editura Universității Naționale de Apărare “Carol I” & Editura Top Form, București.

Săgeată, D. R. (2011a), Reformele administrative din România - între rațiunile politice și realitățile geografice [Administrative reforms in Romania - between political reasons and geographical realities], *Geograful*, no. 1-2, pp. 3-26.

Săgeată, D. R. (2011b), The Administrative-Political Function of Human Settlements and the Role It Plays in Organizing Geographical Space. Case Study - Romania, *Human Geographies - Journal of Studies and Research in Human Geography*, 5(1), pp. 77-94.

Sora, A. F. (2013), Viața politică locală în comunism și actorii ei: prim-secretarii Comitetelor județene ale PCR, 1968-1989 [Local political life under communism and its actors: the first secretaries of the PCR County Committees, 1968-1989], *Arhivele Totalitarismului*, no. 3-4, pp. 115-129.

Stănică, V. (2010), *Politici administrativ-teritoriale în România modernă și contemporană* [Administrative-territorial policies in modern and contemporary Romania], Editura Accent, Cluj-Napoca.

Teclean, C. (2024), Institutional Mutations in the Architecture of Power and Local Public Administration in Romania in the Socialist Period (1945-1989), *Litua - Studii și Cercetări*, XXVI, pp. 181-190.

Teclean, C. (2025a), Macroeconomic Impact of Transport Investment in Romania during the Socialist Period (1950-1989), *Studia Historiae Oeconomicae*, 43(1), pp. 45-62. doi: 10.14746/sho.2025.43.1.003

Teclean, C. (2025b), Relationship between Transport Investment and the Contribution of Transport Systems to National Income in Socialist Romania (1961-1980), *Revista Română de Istorie Economică / Romanian Journal of Economic History*, tom IV, pp. 139-158. doi: 10.33993//RRIE.2025.07

Ureche, V. (2007), *Organizarea administrativ-teritorială a României: 1918-2007* [Administrative-Territorial Organization of Romania: 1918-2007], Editura Eurostampa, Timișoara.