

## **The metropolitan area as a knee-jerk response to the multilevel governance and its derived national public decisions**

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**Abstract.** *The paper objectifies the first part of a larger projects aiming at establishing a public decision-making map pertaining to the negative externalities in the framework of the economic approach of subsidiarity in the multilevel governance (the case of Romania). The first part of the larger research project refers to testing whether the economic theory of the European Union multilevel governance, with its core consisting in the subsidiarity principle, puts more pressure on the national public decisions (more specifically those related to specific market failures), though it interferes with all state's functions and their specific decisions.*

*Our research thesis begins by establishing whether the relationship between the local political elites and public governance at the level of towns and communes is considered a very straight forward, even obvious relationship. The political parties, by means of the publicly and democratically-elected officials (mayors and local council-members), make the most important decisions concerning public affairs (i.e. pertaining to a market failure examined by a second stage of the project).*

*In an attempt to modernize the Romanian administrative system, to make public administration more dynamic, flexible and pro-active, the local political leaders decided the development of a new type of structure, the metropolitan area. The metropolitan areas, due to the constraints of the law, were established as associative organizations, composed of several administrative-territorial units.*

*The paper at hand presents the establishment of the metropolitan areas in Romania as a political decision to associate towns and communes, in view of gaining access to better-performance instruments for local economic development. The emergence of the metropolitan areas in our country is strongly connected with the local political elites, the local political actors representing, in fact, the engine of the metropolitan structures and regional development.*

*The research will focus on the comparative analysis between the metropolitan areas in Romania, in terms of their grounds for establishment, their composition, both from the organizational and the political viewpoints, and their role in the local/regional economic development.*

*The case study employed in the research paper refers to the positioning of the metropolitan areas in Romania, in relation to the development regions, discussing the particularities of the metropolitan areas created with administrative structures within the same development region, as opposed to those comprising towns and communes belonging to different regions.*

*Furthermore, an analysis will be performed with respect to the political belonging of the leadership of the towns and communes associated in metropolitan areas, attempting to identify the possible link between this political belonging and the decision to establish a specific metropolitan area.*

*Finally, the authors will present the connection between the functionality of the metropolitan area (quickness of decisions, consultations between the towns and communes, unity of decisions) and the specific political parties in power in those administrative structures.*

**Keywords:** regional development; multi-level governance; local authorities; public decision; metropolitan areas.

**JEL Codes:** D61, H11.

**REL Codes:** 13I, 13K.

## 1. The general framework

The metropolitan development comes after the urban development, both structurally and chronologically, this assuming a new phase of the urban system development by extending it outside the initial borders. With the increasing population in the surrounding areas of the cities, particularly through cities' immigration phenomenon, but also by attracting people from other places, the geographical and administrative boundaries of cities are becoming inadequate to define the resulted urban areas. This expansion is equally driven by an extensive endogenous local economic development process, which forces, in order to develop the competitiveness level, the association of several communities around an urban centre which exercises its quality of growth pole. The metropolitan development is therefore an administrative and economic challenge for the management and coordination of a greater palette of resources.

This form of city extension into the surrounding space and of its evolution that is integrated with the settlements in its peri-urban area is especially known in the developed countries, being a feature of a new phase of urban development, which comes after the stages of population concentration in the actual city and of suburbs' development. The experts (Brenner, 2003) have named these new social and economic realities metropolitan areas.

The metropolitan development process, called metropolisation, is the process of creation, building and development of the metropolis. This process needs to be examined for a better understanding of the *modus operandi* in terms of the factors contributing to its development. In this respect it is necessary to distinguish in terms of the terminology used to characterize this process, namely notions like *metropolitanism* and *metropolitanization*<sup>(1)</sup>, concepts which are strictly related to the metropolitan development. Following the same logic of Charles Ricq (1983, pp. 122-123) when drawing the distinction between "*regionalism*" and "*regionalization*" and if we consider that both concepts are strictly related to the process of regional development, we can say that the *metropolitanism* is the equivalent of *regionalism*, and *metropolitanization* is equivalent of regionalization in the metropolitan development process. Therefore, the *metropolitanism* is the result of a "bottom up" process, of certain communities' awareness for regional imbalances, economic and ethno-cultural underdevelopment, centralism of the state where they live, while *metropolitanization* is the "top to bottom process", whereby the states acknowledge the regional imbalances with all the phenomena that accompany them, the economic underdevelopment, excessive centralization and further the decentralization of the political and legal system through a institutionalization at the metropolitan level.

Metropolization belongs to a process that, from the functional organization point of view, reconfigures space. In fact, the entire metropolitan development process has in mind a spatial integration factor, which to allow the unitary development of localities and not a change of the borders between them, but a redefining of the cooperation areas, a rapid integration in the European development networks, established on metropolitan areas and regions. It is a matter of an urbanization process that leads to the intensification of relations between the upper levels of urban hierarchies. From the spatial viewpoint, it is noticed the population's tendency to regroup inside and around large cities or metropolis, and from the functional point of view, we are dealing with a tendency of concentrating activities inside large cities or metropolis.

For an approach as correct as possible of the metropolitan process, it is necessary to also introduce in the current context of the concept of *metropolitanspace*<sup>(2)</sup> the definition of the notion of *metropolis*.

Metropolitan spaces<sup>(3)</sup> are the engines of growth in the national territories. There are a series of interdependences between the spatial, economic and social mutations which redefine the metropolitan space. They presuppose the establishing of links between the strategies of enterprises, the socio-economic changes, the recomposing of power relations and the transforming of metropolitan spatial organization.

The metropolitan space is constituted around a metropolis (over one million inhabitants), standing out through its capacity to support the metropolis in view of its development in the regional and national space. Seen from the quantitative point of view, the metropolitan space provides 80% of the incoming/outgoing flows. They represent a hierarchized space, in which medium and small towns or other rural localities with central place functions have diffuse influence areas.

The metropolitan space comprises a network of main and secondary poles, identified depending on a series of indicators relevant for the correct setting of the attractiveness degree of the composing settlements, being characterized by a wide range of economic specializations which, together with the specializations at the metropolis level, support its development at the regional and national level.

The metropolitan area should be analysed from a complex perspective, including a series of issues pertaining to the political organization, administrative procedures and spatial planning and providing public services to residents who are considered in different administrative and territorial units.

The town is the central element of the metropolitan space. The essence of the quality of town resides from the position it occupies in the structure of the commercial, political, social and cultural networks within a region, a country or at the global level. Regions and metropolitan areas emphasize their comparative advantages within the networks where they work.

Throughout history, the cities and the European urban regions were and still are the contributing factor to the development and economic, social, technical and cultural transfer. They are the ones who develop the effectiveness and competitiveness of the surrounding regions, of Europe as a whole.

If for a long time, the term *metropolitan* indicated the large cities, state capitals, subsequently the metropolises indicated the political and economic capitals of a region, of certain large provincial urban centres, designed to help counterbalance the influence of a country's capital<sup>(4)</sup>.

The metropolis is a concept, a term that covers, subordinates and reflects a large part of the artificial created and worked by man and implemented in the natural environment where the human society exists, works and evolves and which is represented by major cities in terms of the number of inhabitants and also of the space expansion.

The main feature of metropolis-cities is the will to fulfil their potential and to assert themselves as valuable entities in the European and global context through specific categories of options aiming at sustainable development and competitiveness.

Establishing the metropolitan areas meets the needs or opportunities stemming from organic cities' development. The process of urbanization across Europe led to the interdependent development of metropolises with localities in their area of influence, already forming primary metropolitan realities which, even if are not called metropolitan areas practically operate as uniform areas, relatively independent. The first characteristics of metropolitan areas can thus be extracted, which are distinct forms of human settlements that consisted in a large number of people living in or around a centre of great density (Miles, 1970).

Many of the strategic issues of urban planning at European level cannot be treated directly, only at the level of metropolitan areas, in order to facilitate the development of production, exchange and consumption of goods in the European Union, so as to avoid bottlenecks due to both excessive localism and national centralism. It essentially refers to the formation of metropolitan areas as growth poles and regions developed at European level included in national and transnational strategies. The development of metropolitan areas facilitate the integrated spatial planning at the regional level so that the disparities between the centre and the periphery area diminished, which were caused by the dispersion or marginalization generated by the isolation of certain settlements without opportunities, removal or mitigation of such imbalances leading to the improvement of life quality.

Identifying common trends of development and cooperation of the settlements within the area as well as creating new forms of institutional organization and administration, of externally representing interests, will strengthen their ability to compete and deliver public services. It must be

underlined that, in the framework of the research project of which this paper is part of, the *question* raised throughout the project mainly concerns one of the State's four functions, namely the distribution function, which embodies the decisions made to ensure equity, social justice and income distribution. Aiming at such a sensitive issue like equity, it can be said that in fact the public decision-making pertaining to this distribution function is strongly influenced by the political factor, more than other decision stages like building knowledge on public sector activities and organisation design (financing method, expenditures and local and central duties), anticipating the consequences (the effects of a tax on return – price increase, wage cut, increasing the retirement age), or assessing the alternatives (Matei, 2006, p. 3). These stages apply for all public decisions taken in the framework of the other state's functions. For example, in the case of the allocative function, due to the fact that the public decisions pertaining to this function aim at the government's intervention in the market's allocative function so to correct its negative effects (e.g. negative externalities), the stage referring to consequences' anticipation proves to be quite important (Matei, 2003, pp. 26-27). A similar situation can also be found in the decision context of the stability function, which intervenes in case of macroeconomic imbalances seen in the case of inflation, unemployment, economic downturn, deficits of the trade balance and balance of payments etc. (Ailenei, 2002). In turn, the public decisions pertaining to the regulatory function aimed at reducing the tendencies towards monopoly or, in the context of this research, the negative externalities refer to setting limits for the discretionary behaviour and freedom of individuals by imposing certain rules (through a functional juridical system), thus emphasising the decision-making stage that aims at building knowledge on the public sector activities and organization.

Going back to the public decision-making, no matter to which state function pertains to, the decision variables specific to the field where the decision is applied are difficult to be defined. In the public decisions' case the problems at stake are specific to both the private sector such as efficient allocation, productivity, performance (Constantin et al., 2011, pp. 889-910) and to the issues that only concern the public field (provision of public goods and services, collective choice, externalities).

All in all, the economic competitiveness growth of localities in the metropolitan area will be ensured against the neighbouring regions. Development policy making usually involves a good cooperation between municipalities in the areas of spatial planning, housing, infrastructure, economic development, environmental protection, and human resources. The best performance actions are usually those related to public transportation, water supply, waste management and investment projects.

The political, social and economic relations between the city and the region that surrounds have always been linked. The symbiotic relationship

between the compact city and suburbs with low population density is how it influences the economic and political destiny of the suburban areas.

From an administrative point of view, the metropolitan structures are dependent on the political, social, economic, historical, geographical factors, and therefore cannot be designed and manufactured as finished form in a laboratory/office. Administering the metropolitan areas may raise a number of challenges, these referring to a series of “changes in the patterns of development of territories with low densities through a voluntary cooperation between existing local administrations through state intervention in the provision of urban services, through a public-private coordination, through the existence of regional agencies in addition to the administrative structures and through providing public facilities aimed at stimulating regional institutionalization” (Downs, 1994).

The operation of the metropolitan area requires a careful analysis of the administrative implications in terms of metropolitan coordination as well as an analysis of the economic implications that such a structure can generate. The metropolitan leadership role is to determine the expected results from various forms of administration in the same dynamic of the urban economy in the field of economic strategies’ formulation and development, land market regulations, infrastructure development, fiscal policy making.

In ensuring the sustainable development of the metropolitan area, this implies a strategy that takes into account the social and economic needs of the population, based on the scheduling option that, following impact assessment, best compensates the resources’ losses that cannot be immediately repaired or replaced, so do not limit the future development of the area. The sustainable development perspective assumes a picture of the state of the environment, evaluating the means to improve the quality of the urban framework, urban renewal and regeneration of resources by which to reduce the negative impact of certain area development strategies and thus ensuring a sustainable metropolitan development.

## 2. The legal regime of the metropolitan areas

A first legal base in the activity of urban and rural space development, in line with their potential, aspirations of residents, pertains to the Law No. 350/2001, where for the first time the legislator defines the “metropolitan territory” as “*the area lying around large urban areas delineated by research studies, in which mutual relationships are created, influencing the field of communications, economic, social, cultural and urban infrastructure. Usually the metropolitan territory limit exceeds the administrative limit of the metropolitan municipality and may exceed the county limit to which it belongs.*”<sup>(5)</sup>

This definition corresponds to the general principles contained in art. 5-9<sup>(6)</sup> of the Law, which aim to sustainably develop on long, medium and short-term the localities in Romania. At the same time, the legislature defines the “localities’ network” as “all urban and rural areas of the national territory, county, functional area whose existence and development are characterized by a set of relationships developed at multiple levels (economic, demographic, service, political and administrative). The Law No. 351/2001 approving the National Spatial Improvement Plan – Section IV – Localities’ Network<sup>(7)</sup>, the first legal steps were made regarding spatial development planning. For a balanced development of the territory around the Romanian capital and of tier I cities, the basic administrative and territorial units in these areas may join a voluntary partnership for the establishment of metropolitan areas corresponding to the urban space. The association helps to strengthen the complementarity between these units and the decision makers interested in developing the territory.

The metropolitan areas are thus organized as legal entities without legal personality, and can work within a perimeter independent of the boundaries of the administrative and territorial units, mutually agreed by local authorities.

Based on the analyses drawn from the study of the constitutional norms, art. 120-123<sup>(8)</sup>, in conjunction with those from the local government law<sup>(9)</sup>, governing local authorities in Romania, we can say that the legal regime established for the local government is a decentralized administrative system (Vida, 1994, p. 18, Popescu, 1999, p. 33, Apostol Tofan, 1997, p. 317), based on the principle of local autonomy. Also, the same legal ground ensures the dual nature of the village and the city, as “local communities and administrative and territorial units” (Iorgovan, 2001, p. 537).

Through local communities are designated municipalities, cities and counties and they represent legal persons of public law, defined by territory, determined property, financial resources and election of its representative by universal, equal, direct and secret vote.

According to the constitutional norms and the Local government law, the local authorities work as “independent authorities” with “the right and ability to solve and manage within the law in their own name and in the public interest, an important part of public business”<sup>(10)</sup> to manage public property belonging to the village, town or county and the right to own and sufficient resources of which it can dispose freely in exercising their powers, to establish local taxes, and to develop, approve and execute local budgets.

Based on the principle of local autonomy, the local authorities have the right to cooperate and associate, under the law, establishing associations of intercommunity development, with legal status, of public law and public utility, so to achieve local public services of local interest, but also to cooperate,



collaborate and associate with other administrative and territorial units in the country or abroad, or to participate in international associations.

All of these duties established by law in the task and responsibility of local authorities have, as the main ground and purpose, solving public affairs and meeting local needs and interests. The local territorial communities meet a determined territorial space what causes them to be based on their classification into communes, towns, municipalities or counties.

In the local government system in Romania, in addition to the non-governmental organizations that can be established at the initiative of individuals or legal entities and that operate to promote the interests of various community type, the autonomous local authorities themselves can form associative structures.<sup>(11)</sup>

The current legislation especially recognizes the local authorities' right, within their powers, to cooperate and associate with other local government authorities in the country or abroad. At the same time to protect and promote their interests, the local authorities have the right to join national and international associations in accordance with the legal provisions.

Under the legislation, the association is a legal entity of three or more persons, which based on an agreement, put together without the right of return, the material contribution, knowledge and their work contribution for solving general activities, community or, where appropriate, in their private patrimonial interest.<sup>(12)</sup>

The strongest and most important legal form of local association in Romania, in accordance with the legal provisions in force, is represented by the Intercommunity Development Association with public utility status, which is assuming and exercising, in the interest and in the name of the associated local authorities, all powers and duties, rights and obligations of the limited scope of a public service that have been transferred.

The purpose of such institutionalized forms of association is the cooperation of administrative-territorial units, represented by the local authorities so to establish, finance and provide communal services of public utilities, including appropriate technical infrastructure and to mutually organize, operate and explore such services. The reason for establishing the Intercommunity Development Association is set in the Constitutive Act and in the Association Statute specifying the purpose of establishing the association as an instrument designed for the promotion and protection of the common interests of the associated local authorities.

The development association model is used as a form of coordination of administrative fragmentation (management forms) with the functional one (of the public services) to identify a response to the growing economic size of services and equipment of the metropolitan territory. This model provides the

continuity of projects operating in the medium term regardless of the changes generated by the electoral cycles.

The Intercommunity Development Associations are an organized form by which the local authorities delegate certain powers of local interest to an organization outside the local administrative structure.

This organization can be a new or existing public organization that went through the process of privatization. During operation, the development association meets the statutory institutional terms including the law, the forms of local authority, as well as the devolution state organizations in the territory.

The Intercommunity Development Association exploit the local economic potential of the metropolitan area for the purpose of which is created and attracts external funds, in order to promote its economic and social development. The intercommunity associations have the power to decide how to manage the community services of public utilities, either directly or through delegated management.

Another law governing the metropolitan area is provided by Law No. 215/2001, amended by Law No. 286/2006, which, although it does not alter the content of the concept of “metropolitan area” brings a major addition to its legal status, giving it legal personality of private law and public utility.

The recognition of the legal personality of the metropolitan area requires the ability to enter into legal relations in its own name, but within the mandate granted by local authorities to exercise delegated or transferred tasks. Its legal status is of private law, which means, on the one hand, the agreement of the local authorities elected in the component administrative-territorial units, and the freedom to establish legal relationships based on the free agreement will, with patrimonial or non-patrimonial character.

Even though it has private nature, the important feature of this association is to maintain the independent nature of each component administrative-territorial unit. Therefore, the association does not create a new administrative-territorial unit, which are still the associated towns, cities or villages that delegate or transfer their duties under the law, to achieve common services in the interests of all local communities that form them. As a result of the preservation of the autonomous nature is the participation of the inhabitants in establishing goals and objectives of this association, as well as the transparency of public services and joint activities they carry out in the interest of the local communities.

### **3. The impact of the metropolitan areas on the territorial development**

The development of cooperation relations within the development regions presupposes the achievement of territorial development.

By means of territorial development, additional economic growth is added to the overall economic growth, surplus coming from the local character of the action which cannot be achieved through economic policies adopted at the national level.

Metropolitan development is mainly centred on the economic ability of the local actors, on the resources held by them, and on the complexity of the relational interdependency developed between different administrative-territorial units.

Under these conditions emerges the problem of the optimum ratio between territorial development and the development of the national economy, in its entirety.

The achievement of this ratio presupposes the organic integration of the elements composing the territory of the administrative-territorial unit, of the sectors of activity, within the national economic ensemble, in conditions of high economic efficiency.

Optimum, in territorial development, means the selection of that development alternative for a territory or area which ensures either the maximization of effects at the level of the resources existing in the territory, or the minimization of efforts per unit of consumed resource.

It is considered that only that territorial economy which aims at maximum efficiency, at smallest efforts per unit of useful effect, targets this ideal.

The fundamental criterion of territorial optimization is represented by the minimization of the consumption of material, human, financial and any other nature resources, involved in the territorial development process.

The economic optimum presupposes its achievement in each of the national economy compartments: sectors, production units, geographic area - namely, the achievement of the partial optimums. This means that one can speak of an economic optimum, both at the level of an activity, of a sector, and at the territorial, zonal or regional level.

The territorial or zonal economic optimum may be defined as: that state of the economy determined by the natural conditions, climate and soil, the structure of the available and attracted resources for the development process, population structure and its needs, the economic and social connections in the territorial profile, the specific manner of integration in the national economic system – which requires the smallest consumption of resources, per unit of useful effect obtained.

The essential condition for achieving the economic optimum is the state of balance. Starting from the fact that economic balance “is a state of concordance between the interdependent sides of social production, the results of the conjugated action of the technical, economic, social and political factors”, it targets in territorial profile the achievement of certain necessary correlations

between the economic sectors and between the activities producers of material goods in the different areas of the country, on the basis of the resources they have, in correlation with the real social need.

This is the reason why the achievement at the level of the administrative-territorial units of the economic optimum presupposes first the satisfaction of the needs especially on the basis of the endogenous resources and the entrepreneurial activity performed by the local economic agents, as main promoters of regional economic progress.

In this context, the main duty of the administrative-territorial units is to create that favourable environment, in which the economic agents are able to express, on the basis of rationality and efficiency economic/competitiveness criteria. At the same time, it is necessary to stimulate the complementarity of the companies' activities, in conditions of initiative, innovation and cooperation.

Complementarity does not exclude competition between economic agents within the territorial areas, each of them being interested in producing goods and services at the lowest costs, which means with increased possibilities of capitalization of production, with the emergence, in this sense, of the conditions for its achievement and for re-running production at a wider, more diversified scale, in consensus with the existing needs, with the request expressed by the inhabitants of the own and of other territories.

In such a competition-based economic context, the role of the administrative-territorial units is essential, through their ability to attract investments, the emergence of the metropolitan areas within the administrative system contributing to the development of local and regional development.

The case study has as main objective the performing of an analysis of the structure of metropolitan areas in Romania. Within this analysis, we shall attempt to identify a series of particularities of the metropolitan areas, such as:

- The positioning of the metropolitan areas in the development regions in Romania;
- The identification, as well as the number of administrative-territorial units which are part of the metropolitan structures;
- The degree of association of the administrative-territorial units in metropolitan structures;
- The role of the political factor in the creation, development and functioning of metropolitan areas.

In the first stage, we shall attempt to identify the metropolitan areas within the Romanian administrative system, following that afterwards to analyse the composition of the metropolitan areas.



**Figure 1.** Identification of the metropolitan areas in Romania

As can be seen, in Romania there are at present ten functional metropolitan areas, in all eight development regions of the country. Metropolitan areas are established around rank 0 or 1 municipalities, observing the existing legislative framework.

Another important element in continuing the analysis is represented by the administrative structure of the metropolitan areas. The analysis of the administrative structure presupposes the identification of the number of administrative units which are part of the metropolitan area, by administrative units understanding the number of towns, communes, villages entering the metropolitan area. All these elements are correlated from the territorial development perspective with the development regions they are part of, in order to better dimension the metropolitan area within the development region.

From the Table 1 it can be seen that a relatively small number of administrative-territorial units identified at the county level are currently associated in metropolitan areas, from the table deriving a significant difference between the number of towns and communes belonging to a metropolitan area and the number of those not included in a metropolitan area.

A first example is given by Iași Metropolitan area, from whose analysis is derived the fact that from a total number of three towns in Iași County only one belongs to the metropolitan area, this being, actually, the town around which the metropolitan area was developed. The same analysis is also extended to the level of communes, where from a total of 93 communes included in the county only 12 belong to the metropolitan area, the rest of 81 being excluded.

The ratio with respect to the other metropolitan areas in what concerns the number of administrative-territorial units included and, respectively, excluded from the metropolitan area is relatively identical with the situation of Iași metropolitan area, fact from which it can be easily seen that the number of administrative-territorial units outside the structure of a metropolitan area is predominant.

Another significant element in our attempt to analyse the structure of metropolitan areas is represented by the association degree of the administrative-territorial units in metropolitan structures at the national level, on the basis of the information presented, this degree being of 4.52%.

The percentage of 4.52% which reflects the association degree is very low compared to the number of communes and towns not part of the metropolitan structures.

Table 1

**Composition of the structures metropolitan**

M.A. Establishing year	No. of counties	No. of towns included/ excluded	No. of communes included/ excluded	Region/ Macro-region		Intra- regional M.A.	Observations
Iași (2005)	1	1/2	12/81	Nord - East	Macro-Reg 2	1	- no inter-regional metropolitan areas were identified; - the association degree of the administrative-territorial units at the national level in metropolitan structures is of 4.52%; -there are identified five M.A. within Macro-region 1; - there are identified three M.A. within Macro-region 2; - there is identified a single M.A. within Macro-region 3; - there is identified a single M.A. within Macro-region 4
Bacău (2007)	1	1/4	17/68	North - East	Macro-Reg 2	1	
Constanța (2007)	1	6/3	8/50	South - East	Macro-Reg 2	1	
Brașov (2006)	1	6	8/40	Centre	Macro-Reg 1	1	
Craiova (2008)	1	1/5	5/99	South-West	Macro-Reg 3	1	
Timișoara (2008)	1	1/7	12/76	West	Macro-Reg 4	1	
Oradea- Bihor County (2005)	1	1/5	11/79	North- West	Macro-Reg 1	1	
Cluj (2007)	1	1/1	16/59	North- West	Macro-Reg 1	1	
Târgu-Mureș – Mureș County (2006)	1	6/1	9/82	Centre	Macro-Reg 1	1	
Baia-Mare – Maramureș County (2007)	1	5/6	9/54	North- West	Macro-Reg 1	1	
Total	10	29/34	107/688	8		8	

One of the reasons why in Romania the percentage of association of administrative-territorial units in metropolitan structures is relatively low can be identified in the former legal framework on which the organizing and functioning of the metropolitan areas is based, which allows the association in metropolitan areas of administrative-territorial units located within a distance of up to 30 km from the rank zero or one town around which the metropolitan area is created.

The political factor may also represent one of the reasons that contribute to the development of metropolitan areas.

In this sense, we considered necessary the performing of an analysis in which we included the metropolitan area of Iasi.

We attempted to identify, on the one hand, the administrative-territorial units entering their composition, as well as the political belonging of the decisional structures of these administrative-territorial units. We aim to identify to what extent the association of the administrative-territorial units in metropolitan areas is influenced by the political belonging of the rank zero or one town around which the metropolitan area was created.

Table 2

**The role of the political factor in the creation, development and functioning of the metropolitan areas**

Metropolitan area	Zero or one rank town	Political belonging of the zero or one rank town			The administrative-territorial units part of the metropolitan area	Political belonging of the administrative-territorial units part of the metropolitan area					
		PSD									
Iași <sup>(13)</sup>	Iași	PSD			Aroneanu		PDL				
					Bârnova				PNL		
					Ciurea	PSD					
					Holboca						USL
					Letcani						USL
					Miroslava				PDL		
					Popricani						USL
					Rediu						USL
					Schitu Duca	PSD					
					Tomești						USL
					Ungheni					PDL	
					Valea Lupului	PSD					
					Victoria						PNL

From the analysis performed for the Iași Metropolitan Area it can be observed that there is a balance between the political affiliation of the centre-city (Iasi) and the political affiliation of other administrative-territorial units that make up the metropolitan area of Iasi. A similar situation can be observed if we would extend the analysis to all metropolitan areas in Romania. We infer that the reasons for the association and operation of the metropolitan areas in Romania exceed the purely political considerations in favour of the economic

ones. A common denominator is therefore identified pertaining to the operation of the metropolitan areas. They are established on the basis of political decisions, which, however, are based on a series of economic necessities. The decision makers of the metropolitan areas realize that the metropolitan areas functioning must be based on a number of common needs that can only be met by the association of the administrative - territorial units.

In the context of economic integration and globalization, the actions of metropolitan areas' improvement can generate, in addition to the efforts on economic growth, a series of negative economic consequences on the environment and social cohesion, with the possibility to only grow on the so-called *islands of growth* around the metropolis, while other administrative-territorial units of smaller size can be disconnected from the growth process.

Considering these aspects, a polycentric development can help to reduce the environmental pressures and social tensions leading to democratic structures' stabilization.

The academic and practical concerns related to the metropolitan areas cover a variety of issues. The first issue is the expansion of the urban area, seen as the result of the action of three powerful forces: "population growth, rising incomes and falling transport costs" (Brueckner, 2000, pp. 160-171).

The urban sprawl and the establishment of the metropolitan areas raise a great concern regarding the sustainable development of this area. A first requirement concerns the planning and management of the metropolitan areas in order to develop a strategic management.

The environmental issues relate to the use of water, energy, solid waste issues, land use and areas conservation (Rojas-Caldelas et al., 2007, pp. 33-42).

Establishing the metropolitan areas also raises the need to adopt certain decisions on the population and on the management of the space created, being generated new production and strength techniques. The need for evaluation of the urban space and to clarify the economic value of this space is another consequence of the development of the metropolitan areas.

In the economic activities' plan, the metropolitan development helps optimizing the existing resources, supporting and attracting industries to the area within the scope of products and services.

#### **4. Conclusions. Consequences of the metropolitan areas' development**

The development of the metropolitan areas primarily refers to policy making pertaining to a better planning of space. The need for a spatial planning is manifested under two main aspects covering the preparation of implementation conditions, the strategy of economic development, and correcting malfunctions or developmental errors that occur precisely because of a lack of spatial planning. The



unplanned evolution of a socio-economic phenomenon, such as the urban development inevitably leads to disruptions. Such failures have been created due to the lack of a strategy for urban development planning. This development, largely unrestricted, caused some imbalances and urban errors that affected how the urban system has been developing in Romania.

In the context of the balanced development of the metropolitan areas, the guiding principle should be urban spatial improvement policy, growth oriented, supported by a greater integration with regional policy, on a more sustained cooperation with the private sector and taking into account the requirements of environmental protection through the environmental impact studies.

An important role in metropolitan areas' spatial improvement policy belongs to the private sector, an important element of social development and also territorial development, one of the main tasks of spatial development consisting in the provision of development opportunities, and ensuring security in the management of private investment.

In addition, the territorial improvement policy should contribute, together with the appropriate sectoral policies, to the attractiveness growth of municipalities and regions for private investment on a local and regional level.

In the overall development policy of the urban space, providing basic infrastructure and public services is central to the concerns of the local authorities to ensure their citizens an ideal framework for the activities' operation so that the requirements of resource conservation and environmental protection are met.

Therefore, the main issues to be addressed in the metropolitan areas concern the development of basic infrastructure and providing access to the public, the industrial consumers and tourists to this infrastructure, promotion of strategies for improving housing, providing modern transport strategies and traffic management, protecting the environment, promoting the sustainable development principles.

Being a part of the process of globalization, the metropolitan development has a number of advantages and disadvantages. In terms of benefits, it should be noted that the metropolitan areas are a real process resulted from the development of relations of interdependence between the localities in the area of influence.

From a strategic perspective, the urban development requires the development of growth poles, which are recognized as such in the national and transnational strategies, ensuring the integrated development of the territory by reducing imbalances between the centre and the surrounding areas.

Strengthening the administrative capacity of the area is another advantage generated by the establishment of the metropolitan areas, efficiently contributing to the implementation of the development and spatial planning policies through the cooperation of the localities involved.

The disadvantages of the metropolitan areas are caused by the lack of legislative coherence, which can have the effect of non-involvement of communities and local authorities in the development of these areas. The lack of a public law regime enshrined in the constitution of metropolitan areas likely to determine and ensure the consensus among local governments in terms of infrastructure, land use, environmental pollution, and other areas of cooperation constitutes a significant impediment in increasing the national metropolisation effect on a national level.

The establishment of metropolitan areas in Romania proves to be a difficult process that must face resistance to change generated by the administrative system. The experience of the EU states shows that the well-run metropolitan areas come in a short time at a high level of economic competitiveness, thus having the ability to efficiently draw funds and investors, which will boost the construction, services and tourism sectors.

The development of the metropolitan area contains all the features of sustainable development, if the economic, cultural, social and environmental policies are successfully harmonized.

The uncontrolled development of cities in the recent years has caught unaware the administrative-territorial units. A number of buildings were built without previously developed coherent planning plans. The urban development based on large projects that facilitate the emergence of metropolitan areas is a viable solution that can help develop an efficient urban system.

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## Notes

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- (1) It can be the birth, development process of an element of the metropolis.
- (2) Unlike the metropolitan area, established through the legal association of towns and communes with the metropolis, the metropolitan space also includes other communes and towns which did not wish to associate with it. As a consequence, the concept of metropolitan space is much more appropriate from the point of view of academic analysis, than the one of metropolitan area.
- (3) The metropolitan space is characterized by multiple effects on a wide scale: the systemic rehabilitation of the historical centre, necessary operation of a “landmark imagine” of the metropolis; the rebirth of the town centre, through the emergence of a modern business centre, of the CBD type (Central Business District); the emergence of new centres in the peripheral areas, parallel with an accentuated peri-urbanization phenomenon, it is a matter of technopoles, multi-modal platforms, centres integrated in the landscape etc. The metropolitan space tends to identify with a multi-polar urban tissue. It can be stated that the functions of the metropolitan space are transposed into the landscape, exercising a strong influence on the modality of organizing the territories.

- (4) The case of Liverpool city in the UK – Irish Sea port – with 492 000 inhabitants. It became an important commercial, industrial, and academic centre. The city of Nice – Mediterranean Sea port with a population of 345 000 inhabitants – is an important administrative, industrial, university centre, representing a real academic centre.
- (5) Law no. 350/2001 on territorial improvement – published in the Official Gazette no. 373 of July 10, 2001
- (6) Law no. 350/2001 on territorial improvement – published in the Official Gazette no. 373 of July 10, 2001
- (7) Law no. 351/2001 approving the National Spatial Improvement Plan – Section IV – Localities’ Network – published in the Official Gazette no. 408 of July 24, 2001
- (8) Romanian Constitution – published in the Official Gazette no. 767 of October 31, 2003.
- (9) Law no. 215/2001, republished, on local government law – published in the Official Gazette no. 123 of February 20, 2007
- (10) Art. 3-10 of Law no. 215/2001, republished, on local government – Published in the Official Gazette no.123 of February 20, 2007.
- (11) In accordance to Art. 8 of Law no. 215/2001, republished, on local government – published in the Official Gazette no. 123 of February 20, 2007, the associative structures are represented by the Communes Association of Romania; Cities Association of Romania; Municipalities Associations of Romania; The National Union of Counties Councils of Romania, as well as other associative forms of general interest, established by law.
- (12) Art. 4 of Government Ordinance no. 26/2000 on associations and foundations – published in the Official Gazette no. 39 of January 31, 2000.
- (13) Retrieved from [www.acor.ro](http://www.acor.ro) retrieved on 12.04.2013

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