

GOVERNANCE ON THE NETWORK A PATH ORIENTED TO SUCCESS

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ABSTRACT

The optimal and successful solution in order to respond to the increasingly fierce complaints of the citizens of European states foresees a deep transformation, aimed at rebuilding their trust in the main democratic institutions, both at national and European level. This article develops a theme centered on the importance of this change in the current context of globalization, which will be supported by actively supporting the government, respectively strengthening the ability to solve problems and introducing citizens to active participation in the organization of civil society. At the current level, the main problem faced by the structures at different taxonomic levels is represented by the identification of the methods and principles of conceptualization, configuration and management of network-type structures, which will include public, private and non-profit decision-makers, with the aim of bringing added value to society. From this perspective, the strategic approach oriented to results represents an essential step, generating an efficient management of resources, greater responsibility, giving the governing body the chance to strengthen horizontal coordination efforts. Through this work, an attempt was made to respond to the main challenges arising from the acceptance of these new paradigms, by highlighting the risks generated by the lack of focus on long-term results.

KEYWORDS: *civil society; governance; policy; sustainable development.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the past ten years or so, governance has developed as a term specific to the idea of collaboration in public policy (Bodislav et al., 2020). Governance sheds light on the nature of changes in the public policy process. Governance reveals the increase in the variety of fields and the number of actors involved in the policy process, but also the need for them to be taken into account (Ostrom, 2008). The concept of governance is used to provide a better understanding of the multiple levels of action and the types of variables that affect performance (Rădulescu et al., 2019). Thus, the concept of governance can be framed in a general framework of multidimensional analysis of the public policy process (Crifo et al., 2019).

In this context, policy mediators work to resolve disputes over decisions made by a single agency, for example, the distribution of funds or the development of regulations (Litra & Burlacu, 2014). The boundaries of each problem that needs solving are well defined. Modern governance is the dispersion of central authority across multiple centers of authority (Ionita et al., 2009).

Governance can be interpreted as a political strategy whose attractiveness is based on: creating a favorable framework for the involvement of private actors in the provision of public services under

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the conditions of the existence of serious budget restrictions; a better understanding of the need to reduce expenses, through new arrangements of a participatory nature, which lead not only to collaboration, but also to the awareness of citizens (Rădulescu, Bran & Burlacu, 2019).

Governance implies that the interest and analysis of the previously listed issues go beyond the formal strategies of institutions and elected authorities (Aguilera et al., 2015). The result of the dual process represented by the contraction of political and economic resources and the distribution of power at sub-state and/or supra-state levels was the opening of governance to other new actors (Burlacu et al., 2019). More and more private actors collaborate with public entities, and public actors at all territorial levels cooperate in the development and implementation of policies (Florescu, Coară, & Burlacu, 2019). New networks of actors are constituted by crossing traditional boundaries between community governance and civil society (Ciobanu et al., 2019).

This movement represents the shift from traditional bureaucratic governance to governance, a decentralized-participatory approach to political management (Bodislav et al., 2020). The general approach to governance is used by theorists for abstract analyzes of the construction of social order, social coordination or social practice in specific contexts (Bevir, 2013).

2. GOVERNANCE- A NEW MODEL OF GOVERNANCE

If governance represents the decision-making process and the decision-implementation process, governance analysis involves focusing on the formal and informal structures that must be considered for decision-making, but also for its implementation (Amore & Bennedsen, 2016). At the national level, the number of actors is sufficiently large, each of the actors being able to either play an active role in making the decision, or in influencing it. In conditions where informal decision-making structures are preferred, this is either the result of corrupt practices or leads to corruption of practices (Burlacu et al., 2019).

Governance expresses the broad, mainstream belief that states increasingly depend on other organizations to secure their own intentions, deliver their own policies, and set their own rules. Similarly, governance can be used to describe any pattern of rulemaking/regulation where the role of the state becomes less and less important (Campbell-Verduyn et al., 2017). This variety of new arrangements, many of which are still in the early stages of development, reveals an ongoing evolutionary process (Bran et al., 2018).

Sources of authority and influence are becoming more diffuse. There are many voices who claim that, under these conditions, the state is becoming weaker and weaker. Whether strong or not, governance structures are influenced by the complexity of the organizations with which they find themselves in interdependent relationships.

The new differentiated forms of governance are distinguished by a number of governance and institutional characteristics (Table 1). In the context of new forms of governance, public policy involves a mix of interdependent relationships between government, networks and markets, and institutional networks, where sources of influence are fragmented, take the place of traditional hierarchical procedures, formal organization, rules and conventions.

Table 1. Characteristics of differentiated forms of government

Governance features	Institutional characteristics
Functional decentralization	Privatization of public enterprises
Specialized agencies	Competition on the market
Fragmented policies	The new public management
Outsourcing	Alternative delivery systems
Greater use of markets and networks	State agencies with special purpose The involvement of non-state actors
More interdependence	Professionalization of advocacy activity

Source: Carter, 2015

Governance is a new type of governance, involving non-state actors, where the boundaries between the public, private and voluntary sectors are becoming increasingly permissive (Carter, 2015). As a result of the profound changes in contemporary society, this traditional role of public service is changing. Mechanisms of coordination are changing, as are ways of achieving results. Command loses the battle in favor of cooperation and coordination, processes carried out at the level of network structures (see Table 2).

Table 2. From command to coordination, cooperation and collaboration

Command	Centralized control process - lines of hierarchical authority
Coordination	Collective decision-making process- involves the participation of institutions
Cooperation	Sharing ideas and resources - for mutual benefit
Collaboration	Common innovation process - mediated by autonomous institutions

Source: Carter, 2015

Collaboration adds public value to the governance process, offering participants the opportunity to learn about new ways of behaving and acting. These mutual benefits for participants stimulate the development of inter-organizational culture and contribute to the creation and management of knowledge (Carter, 2015). Governance implies a recognition of the interdependence of actors in the network, implicitly accepting mutual interests (Keating, 2014).

2.1. Governance in the network

The concept of governance is used to provide a better understanding of the multiple levels of action and the types of variables that affect performance. Thus, the concept of governance can be framed in a general framework of multidimensional analysis of the public policy process (Agarwal, et al., 2010).

In this context, policy mediators work to resolve disputes over decisions made by a single agency, for example, the distribution of funds or the development of regulations. The boundaries of each problem that needs solving are well defined. Modern governance is dispersion along multiple centers of authority (Keating et al., 2014). There is a general understanding that decisions about a variety of public services, such as fire, police, school, community transport and planning, are better made at the local level.

While a few authors approach governance as an alternative to hierarchical governance, other authors interpret governance from the perspective of policy networks, as bundles of formal governance institutions. More recently, theorists have begun to examine the ways in which globalization facilitates the diffusion of political authority at the level of subnational and international institutions. The key to achieving these advantages is appreciating the characteristics of the network structure and taking advantage of the opportunities it provides. It should be noted, however, that the success or failure of governance lies not only in emerging network structures.

New forms of behavioral leadership are also needed, especially from the perspective of civil servants, who continue to be at the center of most discussions of public policy and administration. Public policies can no longer be imposed, their initiation must be the result of negotiation processes, and carrying out negotiations requires public officials to build a climate of trust at the level of the network, by understanding the perspectives and particular interests of all actors in the network.

A first advantage of network governance is that it provides the optimal framework for identifying pressure factors and problems that need to be solved, but also a framework where stakeholders can harmonize their views on decision making or setting some directions of action (Carter et al., 2016).

Consistent with this statement, the network structure can be considered a common place of decisions whose value increases, on the one hand, due to the contribution of interested actors, and on the other

hand, because of substantial community support. In addition, it creates the possibility of formulating new visions on problems, but also opportunities for the application of change strategies.

A second advantage resides in the fact that the networks represent a favorable framework for the exchange of ideas and experience, but also for carrying out a process of mutual learning. Thanks to this fact, the networks contribute to establishing the directions for the development of the organizational capacity, internally and externally.

The presence of networks in the implementation process has a number of advantages stemming from the fact that, firstly, roles and responsibilities are clarified, and secondly, relevant skills and capacities are combined so that, ultimately, the policy implementation process to succeed.

The successful implementation of public policies is reflected in the development of markets, but also in the possibility of widening the network by integrating new players, who were not involved in the previous stages. At the same time, governments can be made aware of the dysfunctions likely to compromise the success of the implementation (Cowls et al., 2021).

Thus, a major dysfunction is the possible disinterest of ministerial officials towards the creation of such negotiation structures. They may interpret networking as a threat to their own position, as a surrender/loss of control they have over a certain domain and, above all, over the expected results.

The abandonment of the traditional model and the adoption of the network model is a global development determined by a multitude of forces generated by the business environment, the social environment, and, in general, the complex changes that are continuously happening in the real world. There is an accelerated increase in public demand for personalized and integrated services amid a positive trend in the number of complex issues requiring intergovernmental and cross-sectoral responses. Networked governance has also enabled governments to extend their influence and responsibilities to the needs and values of local communities.

Another challenge for network governance is that of human resources. Human resource management within a network structure raises a few skills and capabilities issues other than those associated with a hierarchical structure (Katina, 2015). In addition, network management requires the development of collaboration, negotiation, communication, and service management skills provided by supplier partners (Popescu, 2014). In other words, a new organizational culture is needed, totally different from the traditional culture dominated by the mentality of self-protection or that of ownership, characteristic of traditional structures. In network governance, collaboration is dominated by organizational culture, and policymaking involves agreement and consensus (Burlacu et al., 2021). This requires skills in diplomacy, promoting dialogue, shared appreciation, participatory engagement and deliberative democracy (Profiroiu et al., 2019).

New theoretical models of public policies and new understandings of the governance process are needed, not only by active participants, but also by the media and the general public (Burlacu et al., 2019). In these circumstances, the question of taking responsibility for the decisions made arises. This is brought into discussion if the decisions taken do not lead to the achievement of the established objectives.

2.2. The current state of governance and results orientation in Romania

Trust represents the main component that goes into the construction, so difficult, of new structural arrangements. From this perspective, Romanians give more trust to international institutions - 60% to the European Union, 54% to the United Nations, while national institutions know a lower degree of trust- 34% local or regional public authorities, 25% Government, 18% Parliament. Although Romanians' trust in the European Union and the United Nations is above the European average, the results are still down by 10 percentage points compared to those recorded in the previous year (EU 68%, UN 64%).

The lack of trust shown by citizens towards the main national democratic institutions is only one factor among the multitude of factors that contribute to the relatively modest rating regarding the stage of democratic governance at the central level, recorded by Romania.

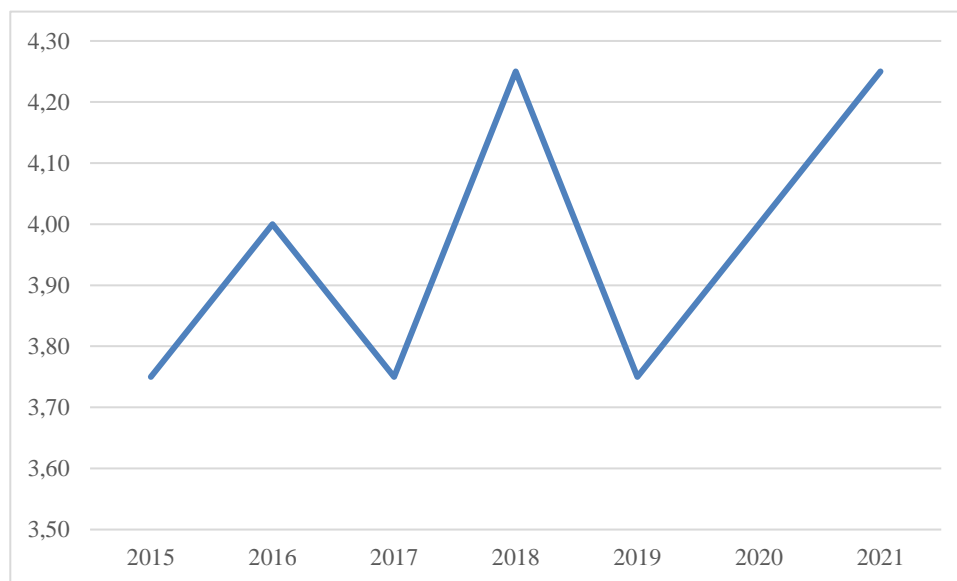


Figure 1. România – ratingul guvernării democratice la nivel central

Source: Freedom House, 2021

Regarding the Parliament's activity, the process of adopting laws is far from being transparent. Parliament continues the practice of removing representatives of civil society and the media at key moments in the process of adopting important laws. Consultation with civil society in the legislative process begins poorly in this term as well, and the procedures through which interested citizens can express their opinions in relation to the initiated bills are non-functional, and there is no real interest from the parliamentarians to use them.

For an effective and consistent consultation, such mechanisms should be institutionalized at the level of parliamentary committees, where, in fact, debates on draft laws take place. From the perspective of local governance, the issue is even more complex. The year 2013 represented the moment when the Government launched the project related to the decentralization and regionalization of Romania (Popescu, 2014).

The implementation of such a project represented a consistent step towards achieving governance at the local level. Although promoted through extensive debates, organized both at the central and local level, the project did not have the success that the politicians expected. The rating of local governance, according to the report prepared by Freedom House, is proof of the fact that there are still enough dysfunctions at the level of local governance (see Table 3).

Table 3. Romania – the evolution of the local governance rating

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Democratic governance locally	3	3	3	3	3	3	3

Source: Freedom House, 2021

3. CONCLUSIONS

Today, increasingly complex societies exert constant pressure on governments to develop new governance models. The challenges of the 21st century and the strategies to overcome them are more numerous and more complex than ever. The current context is characterized by the accentuated dispersion of power, but also by the fluidization of the boundaries between problems that manifest simultaneously, at the global and local level.

Governments, considered the main actors in economic and social life, face numerous and serious barriers in exercising interventions at the level of national sectors and activities. Governance is not a process for which success is assured, because such success depends, first of all, on the socio-behavioral environment, which is an already existing reality at the beginning of taking over governance. After the takeover, the decisions and actions of the government can influence this reality in the sense provided by the public policies, strategies and objectives that it assumes, implements and actually achieves. The increasing role of non-state actors in public services has led to the improvement of the state's ability to engage in dialogue with other actors.

The state has become much more interested in different strategies for creating and managing networks and partnerships. In this context, the state must put in place a multitude of arrangements for auditing and regulating other organizations. The increasing role of non-state actors in public policies raises a number of questions regarding the limits to which this expansion of the involvement of unelected actors can be taken in the context of an accountable democracy.

Similarly, the rise of transnational exchanges and international constraints on states suggests that a rethinking of the nature of social inclusion and social justice is called for. The private sector and community-created institutions have an increasingly important role in providing public services outside of traditional governance structures.

Public sector networks often continue to implicitly reflect hierarchical relationships between actors. Frequently, the government imposes from the outside the existing structure within the government structures. Under these conditions, the government bureaucracy can exercise its power covertly through its access to information and its ability to provide resources (Gras-Gil et al., 2016).

The abandonment of the traditional model and the adoption of the network model is a global development determined by a multitude of forces generated by the business environment, the social environment, and, in general, the complex changes that are continuously happening in the real world. There is an accelerated increase in public demand for personalized and integrated services amid a positive trend in the number of complex issues requiring intergovernmental and cross-sectoral responses. Networked governance has also enabled governments to extend their influence and responsibilities within the scope of the needs and values of local communities.

Knowing the objectives and measuring the results are two imperatives of this change, on which the managers of administrative units must focus, demonstrating that they are able to organize and streamline the way resources are used, engage in setting objectives and find the motivation to achieve them. In other words, a different kind of managerial approach is needed, focused on defining and accepting performance.

In European countries this way of working has become a fairly widespread practice, the network structure can be considered a common place of decisions whose value increases, on the one hand, due to the contribution of interested actors, and on the other, as a result of substantial community support. In addition, it creates the possibility of formulating new visions on problems, but also opportunities for the application of change strategies.

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