

BABEȘ-BOLYAI UNIVERSITY OF CLUJ-NAPOCA
INSTITUTE FOR DOCTORAL STUDIES
POLITICAL AND COMMUNICATION SCIENCE DOCTORAL SCHOOL

HABILITATION THESIS

*EMERGING GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES AND PRACTICES IN
ROMANIAN POLITICS AND POLICY*

*STRUCTURI ȘI PRACTICI DE GUVERNANȚĂ EMERGENTE ÎN
POLITICA ȘI POLITICILE PUBLICE DIN ROMÂNIA*

ABSTRACT

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ABSTRACT

This thesis reviews my main scientific and professional achievements in the past five years in the field of Political Science. This review is aimed at supporting my assertion that I fulfil the requirements for habilitation in the field of Political Science.

The thesis details my research results centred on the notion of governance in both the settings of comparative politics and public policy and administration. The perspective employed is new institutionalism (Brinton & Nee, 1998; Hall & Taylor, 1996; Immergut, 1998; March & Olsen, 2010; Pollack, 1996; Searing, 1991). The emphasis falls upon institutional transformation or the changes in structure and means of government, or otherwise put the shift from 'rowing' (government) to 'steering' (governance) (Peters, 2011). Most importantly, this new institutionalist framework for the analysis of policy and politics incorporates both the formal and informal institutional structures (Searing, 1991).

Within this context a large part of my recent research has focused on the transformation of political representation in a governance context. The emphasis falls upon new contexts, such as the little studied second tier of local government, and non-electoral forms of political representation. In this direction I was able to bring several significant contributions to the literature. Thus, was able to show that overlapping focuses of representation characterise elected officials at the second tier of local government in Europe (Stănuș, 2015c), as well as in Romania (Stănuș, 2016b), and to empirically distinguish between territorial and functional focuses of representation. Moreover, I was able to link a localisation of territorial political representation across Europe to the type of local government system. At the same time, I found evidence in support of the notion that, in a governance context, the more traditional territorial representation (a tenet of electoral representation) is being replaced by more flexible forms of political representation. I was also able to show that institutional level variables (the type of local government system, the electoral formula) explain much of the variation in territorial representation focuses found at the second tier of local government in Europe. Focused on Romania, I was able to explicit the link between the representational role orientation of local elected officials and their openness towards governance structures and practices. The most interesting finding from this perspective indicates that Romanian local elected officials are, so far, more open to the softer side of governance, which does not include giving up decision-making powers or a high degree of informality.

Another component of my research is focused on local government reforms in post-communist Romania. In my work in this area (Stănuș, 2011a, 2011b, 2015b, 2016a; Stănuș & Pop, 2011), I was able to produce significant results concerning the below the surface effects of local government reforms. Thus, I was able to show that the back and forth approach to decentralisation and the gap between decentralisation and fiscal decentralisation, combined with the centralising approach embedded in the Romanian public sector, has led to limited

meaningfulness of the decisions being made at the first tier (municipalities) of Romanian local government and, consequently, to a less than enabling context for citizen effectiveness. Also, I was able to show that policy transfer via top-down interventions has produced limited results if the proposed instruments and policies did not find enough support in the political and administrative culture. I contextualised this by focusing on two topics, the top-down introduction of legal provisions concerning transparency and citizen participation in local policy-making and the top-down introduction of intermunicipal cooperation. Concerning the latter, which is a highly technical governance-oriented instrument, I was able to show that local subjective factors are more likely to explain success than the more objective administrative capacity which is emphasized in national policy documents.

A third component of my research is focused on the governance of public service delivery, with special emphasis on education (Stănuș, 2014, 2015a; Stănuș & Pop, 2014). An essential element of this is how governments see and manage collaborative service delivery involving various non-state actors. My analysis on the attitudinal component of collaborative service delivery in Romania has shown that political polarisation transfers into this policy space and produces discontinuities in central government goal formulation and policy implementation, with consequences in terms of service delivery for the citizens. Another key finding concerns the influence of EU conditionality in creating positive attitudes within governmental structures towards collaborative service delivery. In a different direction, my research on how the privatisation of educational service delivery in Romania presents itself in relation to social goals has shown significant incongruences in national education policy. Thus, a very strict legal framework is accompanied by very lax implementation especially in terms of government financing and support of alternative service providers. This has led to quantitatively insignificant and not legitimate enough private provision of compulsory education. This has led to little or no impact in terms of ensuring freedom of choice, productive efficiency, equity and increased social cohesion. Another key direction of research has concerned the setting up of educational welfare markets in Central and Eastern European societies as a direct result of the implementation of European Union cohesion policies (national programme funded out of the European Social Fund). Several significant results, both in a comparative perspective and at national level, were produced. In a comparative perspective, I was able to show that rather than addressing educational selectivity, the institutional structures and bureaucratic regulations governing these welfare markets actually create an enabling framework for increased selectivity. This is due to the fact that the governance structure meant to steer these welfare markets is ill-fitted. This general conclusion applies to the Romanian case as well. However, there are national specificities. Bureaucratic rigidity means that the governance of the newly created market does not respond properly to the changing conditions in the education system, while increased public pressure emphasizing absorption of EU funding over more substantial social and educational goals further deteriorates the response of the bureaucratic structures to the changing market conditions.

Beyond the substantial results of scientific research, a completely different set of arguments can be invoked in support of my statement that I fulfil the formal criteria and I possess the necessary skills and knowledge to be able to supervise doctoral students in the field of Political Science. I am currently Associate Professor of Political Science at the Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities. I have joined my current department in 2012 as lecturer and I obtained my current position in 2015. I teach courses focused on public policy analysis, governance and research methodology at undergraduate and postgraduate level. I am involved in national and international research networks in my areas of expertise (for example in the network of local government and politics specialists grouped around the European Urban Research Association) and in several national and international professional associations. As a researcher I have managed to establish a national and international profile and to successfully win funding for my research projects from both public and private sources. I have successfully managed complex research projects, including multi-national research teams, and I have been part of multi-national research teams doing comparative research. I have published my research results internationally (in academic journals and books edited by international publishers such as Routledge, Policy Press, Taylor & Francis) and my work has been cited in prestigious journals such as *Public Administration*, *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy* and *Journal of Economic Policy Reform*. My research activity has a significant policy component and, as a consequence, I was asked to provide consultancy to public and private organisations (most notably the United Nations Development Program and the Open Society Foundations) from Romania and abroad.

LIST OF SCIENTIFIC PAPERS REFLECTED IN THE HABILITATION THESIS

- Stănuș, C. (2011a). Fine Tuning Inter-Municipal Cooperation Policy in Romania. In P. Swianiewicz (Ed.), *Working Together: Intermunicipal Cooperation in Five Central European Countries* (pp. 268–329). Budapest: Open Society Foundations.
- Stănuș, C. (2011b). Patterns of Inter-Municipal Cooperation and Local Government Characteristics in Romania. *Southeastern Europe*, 35(2), 191–208.
- Stănuș, C. (2014). Private Pre-University Education in Romania: Mixing Control with Lack of Strategy. *European Education*, 46(2), 8–31.
- Stănuș, C. (2015a). Government engagement in co-operative service delivery in Romania: knowledge and acknowledgement. *Romanian Journal of Political Science*, 15(1), 80–106.
- Stănuș, C. (2015b). *Romania* (Country report. Self-rule Index for Local Authorities. Final Report by Andreas Ladner, Nicolas Keuffer and Harald Baldersheim, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union).
- Stănuș, C. (2015c). The political representation focuses of second-tier councillors in Europe. In X. Bertrana, B. Egner, & H. Heinelt (Eds.), *Policy Making at the Second Tier of Local Government in Europe: What Is Happening in Provinces, Counties, Départements and Landkreise in the On-Going Re-scaling of Statehood?* (pp. 77–94). London: Routledge.
- Stănuș, C. (2016a). *Între detalii formale și semnificație democratică: o analiză calitativă a rapoartelor de activitate ale aleșilor locali* (Raport de cercetare elaborat în cadrul proiectului Cetățenie activă pentru o bună guvernare locală transparentă). Cluj-Napoca: Centrul pentru Politici Publice.
- Stănuș, C. (2016b). Political Representation and Governance: The Case of Second-Tier Councilors in Romania. *Transylvanian Review of Administrative Sciences*, 12(48), 124–144.
- Stănuș, C., & Pop, D. (2011). Romania. In H. Heinelt & X. Bertrana (Eds.), *The Second Tier of Local Government in Europe: Provinces, Counties, Départements and Landkreise in Comparison* (pp. 223–241). London: Routledge.
- Stănuș, C., & Pop, D., eds., (2014). *The Governance of Educational Welfare Markets A Comparative Analysis of the European Social Fund in Five Countries*. Pieterlen: Lang, Peter Bern.