

POLITICAL REPRESENTATION AND GOVERNANCE: THE CASE OF SECOND-TIER COUNCILORS IN ROMANIA*

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Abstract

The notion of governance stresses interaction and co-operation between many interdependent actors and, as such, poses a challenge to political leadership and the traditional electoral-based notion of political representation. Governance-oriented reforms bring about new roles for all actors involved in local politics and policy-making, starting with the elected officials. Among these actors, councilors on both tiers of local government are called upon to take on a new role as goal-steering decision-makers, while accepting a clear separation between politics and administration and the increased interdependence with non-state actors. This paper reflects on the difficulties of accommodating the representational role orientations of local elected officials with the introduction of governance-oriented policy-making mechanisms. It explores two inter-related questions in the context provided by the second tier of local government in Romania: (1) How does the representational role orientation of Romanian councilors look like? and (2) How do Romanian councilors reconcile their representational role orientation with the introduction of governance elements in the Romanian public sector?

Keywords: second tier of local government, political representation, governance, Romania.

1. Introduction

In contemporary democracies, the shift from local government to local governance is a process involving both structural reforms of local government and a redefinition of the roles of key actors in local politics and policy-making. In the case of local elected officials this re-definition of roles seems centered around accepting they should be less involved in day-to-day administration and more focused on defining the goals to be pursued alongside increased interdependence with relevant local actors (Hansen, 2001). This is consistent with a push toward widespread use of the mechanisms of local participatory democracy. These are, however, perceived to be at odds with the traditional notion of political representation (Hendriks, 2009). So the question remains how local elected officials accommodate political representation with the networked nature of local politics and policy-making and whether there is a linkage between how they see their roles as representatives and their attitudes towards governance.

Starting from this, the paper sets out to answer two inter-related questions: (1) How does the representational role orientation of Romanian councilors look like? (2) How do Romanian councilors reconcile their representational role orientation with the introduction of governance elements in the Romanian public sector? These questions are approached in the context provided by the second tier of local government in Romania. The paper starts by reviewing literature on political representation and the challenges local governance raises in respect to the relationship between elected officials and citizens. Then, it describes the context and the data used to approach the two questions. The following sections of the paper present and discuss the main results of the analysis.

2. Literature review

Political representation defines the relationship between elected officials and voters, its simplest definition emphasizing that representation is the process of making citizens present (Pitkin, 1967). Political representation is concerned with how political and policy decisions are to be made by elected officials at all levels of government (Eulau *et al.*, 1959, p. 745). Hence, there is a strong emphasis on how elected officials see their role (role orientation) and their actual behavior (role behavior). Only more recently (see for example Saward, 2005), the emphasis has shifted towards the represented / the citizens, as well as towards non-electoral forms of political representation.

The representational role orientation of an elected official comprises expectations related to the rights, duties, and obligations connected with the position of representative (Wessels and Giebler, 2011). Two dimensions define the representational role orientation, the style and the focus of political representation (Eulau *et al.*, 1959; Eulau and Karps, 1977; Saalfeld and Müller, 1997; Wahlke, Eulau and Buchanan, 1962). The style of political representation refers to the particular criterion of judgement a representative is supposed to use when making decisions. Traditionally, the discussion on the representative style of elected officials has centered on the delegate-trustee-polit-

ico distinction (Dovi, 2011; Eulau *et al.*, 1959; Eulau and Karps, 1977), which emphasizes the choices of individual elected officials. However, empirical research suggests that this distinction better describes the more individualist American context, as political parties play too much of an important role in building representational linkages in most European countries (the responsible party model, see Bengtsson and Wass, 2011; Thomassen, 1991; Wessels and Giebler, 2011).

Recent literature puts this discussion in terms of modes of representation defined by two key distinctions: the first opposes representation run from above to representation run from below, while the second opposes *ex post* and *ex ante* opportunities by voters to control the activity of their elected representatives (Andeweg, 2003; Andeweg and Thomassen, 2005; Brennan and Hamlin, 1999; Thomassen, 1991; Thomassen, 2013; Verhelst *et al.*, 2014). Four modes of political representation are defined by these dimensions: authorization (which corresponds to the responsible party model and involves representation from above and *ex ante* control), accountability (which involves representation from above and *ex post* control), delegation (involves representation from below and *ex ante* control), and responsiveness (characterizing political representation in the United States, involves representation from below and *ex post* control) (Andeweg, 2003, p. 152). Other researchers suggest each dimension also includes a neutral position (Verhelst *et al.*, 2014). Local government is thought to be associated with a particular meaning of political representation, where responsiveness and accountability seem to supersede representativeness (Rao, 1998, p. 19), hence we would expect local elected officials to endorse the respective modes of representation.

The question of whom the representative claims/aims to represent addresses what is known as the focus of representation (Weßels, 2007). The focus of representation is multidimensional, with three main dimensions identified in the literature: (1) the geographical dimension (nation, state, district or other territorial level as the focus of representation); (2) the group dimension (religious, ethnic, economic and ideological /party groups); and (3) the individual dimensions (focused on the representation of individuals) (Weßels, 2007, p. 839). These are analytical categories, in practice we find a mix/overlap of representational focuses of given politicians (Eulau *et al.*, 1959). It has been argued that, in the context of governance, the emphasis shifts from the traditional formal, territorially-defined and electoral constituency to new and more fluid notions of what one representative's political constituency is (Saward, 2005, p. 182).

The emergence of local governance and its specific mechanisms has fueled the debate on the democratic nature of political representation (Saward, 2005; Sorensen, 2002), as the political system has a role-shaping effect over elected officials (Kuklinski and Elling, 1977; Saalfeld and Müller, 1997; Patzelt, 1997; Weßels, 2007). Governance-oriented reforms of local government in Europe, bring about new roles for all actors involved in local politics and policy-making, starting with the elected officials. Councilors are called upon to take the role of goal-steering decision-makers, formulating and deciding overall goals as well as the financial frame for the local govern-

ment, in a clear separation between politics and administration (Hansen, 2001, p. 115). Moreover, the notion of representatives constrained by a group affiliation or an interest is seen as problematic in governance networks, as these produce alternative meanings of political representation (Hendriks, 2009, pp. 698-702). It is thus unclear how elected officials accommodate their political representational role orientation to their de facto roles in local governance processes.

This debate becomes particularly interesting if we focus on the second tier of local government, given its particular positioning between the more easily perceivable by citizens national and local (municipal, first tier) government. The second tier of local government is a relatively unexplored institutional setting (with the notable exceptions of Heinelt and Bertrana, 2011; Bertrana, Egner and Heinelt, 2015). The context for this paper is provided by the second tier of local government (county councils) in Romania, whose key features are briefly described in the following section.

3. The context

The post-Communist reconstruction of the second tier of local government in Romania – the county councils – is a process deeply influenced by more than a century of centralist tradition and the high degree of formalism embedded in the Romanian public sector (Stănuș and Pop, 2011). In the past two decades Romanian county councils faced the challenge of dealing with administrative and instrumental issues (how to set things up and perform the tasks allocated to them) at the same time with pressure to introduce mechanisms of participatory governance (provide meaningful participation opportunities for citizens). This pressure is related to the fact that the legal framework provides for the direct election of both county presidents (since 2008) and councilors (since 1996), the latter being elected using a proportional representation with closed party lists formula. The pressure has materialized in quite explicit legal provisions which require local governments on both tiers to increase the transparency of the decision-making process and compel them to formally consult local stakeholders before making binding decisions (see for example the provisions of Law no. 544/2001 regarding citizen access to information and Law no. 52/2003 regarding transparency in decision-making). Thus, governance mechanisms are introduced in a top-down, centralist and rather formalist fashion. They are, however, met halfway by the initiatives of the local third sector, which exercises some bottom-up pressure towards making these mechanisms more meaningful. A more challenging aspect is the introduction of metropolitan governance, as part of the wider package of legal provisions concerning inter-municipal cooperation (Pop, Stănuș and Suci, 2007; Pop and Horvath, 2008). Equally challenging, participatory budgeting is introduced by very few Romanian local governments, either by their own initiative or as a result of some bottom up pressure exercised by the local third sector¹. These mech-

¹ Participatory budgeting mechanisms were tested and/or introduced in Cluj-Napoca, see details at <http://bp.primariaclujnapoca.ro/>, and in a series of other cities, towns and communes where

anisms were introduced against the background of a rather incoherent decentralization process (Dragoş and Neamţu, 2007). There have been no significant initiatives to introduce the 'hard' governance-related mechanisms such as co-decision procedures, user boards or devolving decisions to neighborhood organizations, which all involve significantly higher degrees of informality.

A combination of legal provisions and political circumstances has led to a situation in which the county presidents are dominating the policy-making process (Stănuş and Pop, 2011) and are widely thought to exercise a far greater power than the legally warranted one (Ştefan *et al.*, 2004). County councilors are part-time elected officials, and their influence in the policy-making process is thought to be mitigated by the influence of the county president and by their political affiliation. Excessive politicization characterizes the entire Romanian local government system and influences negatively the inner workings of local government institutions (Dragoş and Neamţu, 2007). On the positive side, parties sometimes act as support mechanisms for the political activities of county councilors in relation to citizens (Stănuş, Pop and Suci, 2009). The part-time status of councilors and the influence of the political parties are elements which could influence significantly how representational roles are defined and performed.

At this point, we know very few things about Romanian county councilors as individual representatives, despite the more recent attention given to this level of government in relation to the regionalization processes and the increased number of high-profile elected officials being subject to corruption investigations. Political parties and the mass media tend to label county-level elections as political, and use them as an indicator of the electoral strength of the major political parties in face of the parliamentary elections customarily held six months later. Among the things which attract attention in this context is a high turnover rate, as approximately one third of newly elected county officials renounce their position in a year's time (Stănuş, Pop and Suci, 2009). A significant aspect is the relationship between county councilors and political parties, as well. Much pronounced than in other post-communist polities, we find a lack of stable partisan commitments on behalf of local elites leading to the unique phenomenon of large scale party-switching in Romania (Beers, 2004). These elements unavoidably lead us to an analysis which is largely exploratory.

In this context the relationship of Romanian county councilors with governance-related mechanisms can best be explored by focusing on the attitudinal level. This level is of utmost importance, as the attitudes of elected officials shape policy and implementation and the preparedness of local governments to work in a governance context. The analysis is founded on the expectation that Romanian county councilors think and act in a similar manner to other elected officials, members of rep-

the Pro Democracy Association has implemented a project focused on assisting local governments in developing and implementing such mechanisms, see details at <http://goo.gl/A8o2oe>.

representative assemblies of some kind. This expectation is supported by the successful use by researchers of the main concepts and theories developed in studies focused on members of parliaments to describe and explain the representational role orientations and behaviors of first tier councilors (see for example de Groot, Denters and Klok, 2010; Rao, 1998; Verhelst *et al.*, 2014).

4. Method, data and limitations

The paper reflects the results of elite research, namely an on-line survey on county councilors and county presidents in Romania. The survey was conducted between June and September 2013, as part of the comparative international research project titled *Second Tier Survey*. It is the first such survey focusing on local government councilors in Romania and, as such, provides a first glimpse into the values, opinions, attitudes, and behaviors of Romanian councilors. Throughout this paper we will use data concerning county councilors (response rate 13.5 percent, N=177). The sample is self-selected, all county councilors in Romania received an invitation to the survey.

The low response rate imposes some necessary caution in terms of statistical analysis and inferences being made. In order to minimize the effects of the low response rate the data has been weighted taking into account the variation in response rate between the counties and the gender of the respondents.

In the following section the paper explores the two main dimensions of the representational role orientation of local elected officials, the style and focus of political representation. Later on, the paper attempts to draw a link between the representational role orientations acquired by Romanian second tier councilors and their governance-related attitudes.

5. Results

5.1. The focus of political representation

The first dimension of representational role orientations, the focus of representation is particularly important in the context provided by the second tier of local government, specifically because of its frequent definition in territorial terms and the territorial overlap which characterizes this level of government. However, in a governance context, functional representation (representation of groups defined non-territorially) and its linkages with the territorial representation also needs to be explored.

We assess the focus of political representation acquired by Romanian county councilors asking them to respond to the following question: 'As a county councilor, do you speak on behalf of the following groups or interests?' The reference groups are 'the entire county' and 'a particular geographic part of the county' for the territorial dimension, allowing us to distinguish between a universalist and a localist view on territorial representation (see Stănuș, 2015). In order to explore functional representation, councilors were asked whether they speak on behalf of a variety of socially- and

economically-defined groups (elderly, youth, ethnic minorities, the middle class, less resourceful citizens, unemployed, religious groups, different economic sectors, civil servants, workers)².

Given the centralist tradition of local government in Romania, it can be reasonably expected that county councilors would attach greater importance to representing the county as a whole and would be less inclined towards localist views on political representation. However, previous research on county councilors in Romania has suggested that in some counties, some mechanisms explicitly seeking to link the county councilors to a particular part of the county are used, being initiated either by the council or by the political parties to which the councilors belong (Stănuș and Dragoman, 2012). This mechanism seems effective enough so that six county councilors out of ten declare to represent a part of the county, as shown by the analysis in Table 1. A significant part of these councilors combines representation of the entire county and of a part of it at the same time and thus present a case of dual territorial representation focus. The largest group, though not by a large margin, is that of councilors whom, in line with the Romanian centralist tradition, declare to represent the entire county.

Table 1: The territorial focus of representation

	No territorial representation	Representing a part of the county	Representing entire county	Dual territorial representation
All councilors	3.17%	32.18%	36.80%	27.84%
<i>By socio-cultural area</i>				
<i>Muntenia</i>	0	22.01%	37.19%	40.81%
<i>Oltenia</i>	13.30%	44.01%	26.78%	15.91%
<i>Moldova</i>	4.57%	26.65%	41.90%	26.89%
<i>Banat</i>	3.43%	39.57%	14.10%	42.89%
<i>Transylvania</i>	2.35%	38.64%	39.29%	19.71%
<i>Eastern Transylvania</i>	0	40.92%	5.01%	54.07%
<i>By employment</i>				
<i>Public sector</i>	2.25%	23.92%	36.92%	36.92%
<i>Private sector, NGO</i>	2.61%	39.50%	35.51%	22.38%
<i>Self-employed</i>	0	55.03%	15.82%	29.14%
<i>By ethnicity</i>				
<i>Romanian</i>	2.13%	30.04%	38.30%	29.53%
<i>Other</i>	4.40%	39.01%	19.57%	37.01%
<i>By residence</i>				
<i>County capital</i>	2.18%	20.50%	43.66%	33.66%
<i>Other municipality</i>	3.13%	50.57%	19.80%	26.49%
<i>By gender</i>				
<i>Male</i>	3.12%	29.81%	38.26%	28.82%
<i>Female</i>	3.13%	38.96%	32.66%	25.05%

² Councilor's attitudes in relation to civil servants and particular public services, although included in the survey questionnaire, were excluded as they were deemed to be less relevant given the relatively limited role of county councils in direct public service provision in Romania.

	No territorial representation	Representing a part of the county	Representing entire county	Dual territorial representation
<i>By age</i>				
<i>Under 30 years</i>	0	63.82%	0	36.18%
<i>31-40 years</i>	6.25%	21.12%	41.23%	31.40%
<i>41-50 years</i>	3.59%	40.88%	27.87%	27.67%
<i>51-60 years</i>	0.74%	39.09%	31.94%	28.22%
<i>61-70 years</i>	3.70%	14.77%	61.18%	20.34%
Significant at * 0.000. Weighted data. N= 177.				

Source: Second Tier Survey, 2013

The next step in this analysis involved exploring regional differences, following the classification of cultural areas in Romania used by Rotariu and Iluț (1997, p. 148). At this point of the analysis we were unable to include Dobrogea and Crișana – Maramureș due to the small number of respondents. The analysis shows interesting differences between regions. Councilors in Eastern Transylvania, where Hungarians are the dominant ethnic group, have the strongest localist view on territorial representation, as most councilors declare either to represent just a part of the county or dual representation. A similar, but less strong tendency is to be found in the case of councilors from Banat. Partially, this could be probably explained by a historically stronger tradition of local self-government in these areas.

Next, the paper explores differences in views on territorial representation by looking at individual characteristics, which are generally deemed important in explaining an official's choice of representational focus (Itzkovitch-Malka, 2014; Russo, 2011). The strongest localist view on political representation comes from the very significant group of self-employed county councilors, while councilors working in the public sector have a more centralist view on political representation. Romanian councilors hold a more centralist view on territorial representation when compared to their counterparts belonging to an ethnic minority. This is consistent with the reasonable expectation that councilors belonging to ethnic minorities in multi-ethnic settings are more oriented toward their local communities. In line with expectations stemming from research on the political representation of women (for an overview see Navarro and Medir, 2015), women councilors are more oriented towards representing strictly their local community (a part of the county). A quite significant difference is that between councilors resident in the county capital and those residing in other municipalities, with the latter displaying a quite strong tendency toward a localist view on territorial representation. This is consistent with the suggestions in the literature that core-periphery divides are relevant for the representational role orientations of elected officials (Bengtsson and Wass, 2011). Contrasting between different age groups points out a distinctive pattern. Councilors at the extremes of the age continuum are significantly different from their colleagues, in line with literature suggesting age and seniority are important determinants of the political representation role orientations of elected officials (de Groot, Denters and Klok, 2010; Itzkovitch-Malka, 2014). The youngest councilors show no inclination towards focusing on the entire county. The eldest among councilors are the most strongly inclined towards representing the entire county.

The next step of the analysis involves exploring the non-territorial focuses of representation adopted by Romanian county councilors. We use univariate analysis, as well as principal components analysis (see Table 2). The univariate analysis shows a very strong identification of Romanian county councilors with the middle class. At the opposite side of the spectrum we find the church and/or religious groups. In reference to other groups included in the analysis two dimensions of functional (non-territorial) representation could be identified, a social and an economic one.

Table 2: The functional focus of representation

Do you speak on behalf of ...?	Yes	Social representation	Economic representation
Elderly People/ Pensioners-Retired	66.76%	0.44	
The Youth	78.16%	0.43	
Ethnic minorities	56.30%	0.49	
Workers	65.81%	0.30	
The middle class	84.60%		
Less resourceful citizens	74.92%	0.31	
Unemployed	65.58%		
The Church / Religious groups	52.10%		
Private Business Employees	73.69%		0.44
Primary Sector (farming, fishing etc.)	65.97%		0.40
Secondary Sector (industry)	62.60%		0.41
Construction/Real Estate Sector	47.95%		0.31
Trade Sector	56.57%		
Tourism Sector	61.57%		0.39
	<i>Explained</i>	0.41	0.39

PCA of tetrachoric correlation matrix, varimax rotation with Kaiser normalization. Explained variance Rho = 0.80.

Source: Second Tier Survey, 2013

The first dimension, which could be labelled social representation, reflects a propensity towards representing specific demographic groups and a feeble propensity towards representing worse-off groups. The inclusion of ethnic groups, alongside more generic groups such as youth and pensioners, is reflective of the fact that, at least in Transylvania, Romanian local government is a focus of ethnopolitics (Veres and Salat, 2003). The feeble representation of worse-off groups is focused on citizens unable to help themselves, while the unemployed (presumably less needy) are excluded. The second dimension reflects a propensity towards representing various business groups as well as employees in the private sector. The notable exception of the trade sector, as well as the lower propensity towards representing the construction sector, are probably explainable by the notion that agriculture and/or industry are the key motors of local economic development³.

³ Due to the low number of cases we were unable to explore whether the role orientations depend on the particular social group to which an elected representative belongs as suggested in the literature (Thomassen and Andeweg, 2004).

Table 3: Linkages between territorial and functional representation

	<i>Social representation</i>	<i>Economic representation</i>
<i>No territorial focus of representation</i>	-0.28**	-0.31*
<i>Representing a part of the county</i>	-0.12	-0.08
<i>Representing the entire county</i>	-0.03	0.10
<i>Dual territorial representation</i>	0.25***	0.10
Point bi-serial correlation, significant at *.002 **.007 ***.008.		

Source: Second Tier Survey, 2013

A theoretically reasonable expectation is that it is more likely that councilors who endorse dual territorial representation will also declare more interest in representing social or economic groups. A point-biserial correlation analysis between a series of variables reflecting the four different categories of territorial representation and the factorial scores corresponding to the two dimensions of functional representation was conducted in order to explore this relationship. As shown in Table 3, this expectation is met in part, as there is a statistically significant positive relationship between dual territorial representation and functional social representation.

The same analysis points out to a statistically significant negative relationship between both dimensions of functional representation and the situation in which councilors declare they do not have a territorial focus of representation. This latter aspect leads to the possibility that some councilors might dominantly focus on representing their political party. This is most likely reflective of the intense participation of Romanian county politics. Also, it can be connected to the unfinished debate in the literature on whether the relationship between parties and councilors should be confined to the focus or to the style dimension of political representation (Itzkovitch-Malka, 2014). We explore the political representation style of Romanian county councilors in the following paragraphs.

5.2. *The style of political representation*

Of the two dimensions of the representational role orientation of elected officials the style of political representation has received increased attention. This paper approaches the style of political representation following the more recent emphasis on the direction of the representative relationship (from above or from below), alongside the choice of moment (*ex ante* or *ex post*) when citizens get to exercise their control over the representative (Andeweg, 2003; Andeweg and Thomassen, 2005; Verhelst *et al.*, 2014). Taking into account literature exploring the relationship between electoral formulae and political representation (Bradbury and Mitchell, 2007; Gallagher and Holliday, 2003; Bowler and Farrell, 1993), it is reasonable to expect that, given the proportional representation formula in-use and the above-cited characteristics of county politics in Romania, county councilors tend to emphasize representation from above and *ex post* control by citizens (accountability).

To delineate their style of political representation, Romanian county councilors were asked 'How important do you believe the following tasks are for a councilor to

perform?’ in relation to four different tasks. On the direction of representation dimension these tasks are: ‘Taking part in implementing the program of the political party’ (representation from above) and ‘Representing the requests and issues emerging from local society’ (representation from below). On the timing of control dimension these tasks are: ‘Publicizing debate on local issues before decisions are taken’ (*ex ante* control) and ‘Explaining decisions of the council to the citizens’ (*ex post* control). This allows us to represent the choices of representational style made by Romanian county councilors in a bi-dimensional field. Following Verhelst *et al.* (2014), we assume that each of the two dimensions also implies a neutral position, a situation in which the elected official adopts either one position or the other depending on the issue at hand.

On the average, local elected officials seems to value a neutral position on both dimensions of political representation. On the ‘direction of representation’ dimension local elected officials at the second tier of local government in Romania slightly favor representation from below. On the ‘control over decision-making’ dimension there is a tendency to favor *ex post* control, closer to the traditional electoral-based view on political representation.

Table 4: The style of political representation

Direction of representation	Timing of the control exercised by citizens			
	<i>Ex post</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Ex ante</i>	Total
<i>From above</i>	Accountability 6.55%	10.86%	Authorization 1.27%	18.68%
<i>Neutral</i>	18.41%	All-round 35.26%	2.09%	55.76%
<i>From below</i>	Responsiveness 8.27%	16.46%	Delegation 0.84%	25.57%
<i>Total</i>	33.23%	62.58%	4.19%	

Significant at * 0.000

Source: Second Tier Survey, 2013

The next step of the analysis involves exploring regional differences (see Table 5). Due to the small number of cases, this part of the analysis contrasts between councilors endorsing different views in terms of direction of representation. The analysis shows a regular pattern of differences in socio-political attitudes between the western part of the country and the rest persists. Thus, councilors in Banat, Transylvania and Eastern Transylvania seem more favorable to representation from below, while those in Muntenia seem more open to representation from above. In all regions except Eastern Transylvania, where the influence of ethnic factors persists, the dominant category is that of councilors endorsing a neutral style of political representation. Differences are more pronounced when we explore the choice of representational style in relation with some individual level characteristics.

Comparing the choice of representational style between councilors employed in different sectors produces the most striking difference (see Table 6). Councilors employed in the public sector are by far the most open towards representation from below, while those employed in the private sector are the most open toward representation from above. This suggests that in terms of attitudes the Romanian public sector might be at the forefront of more participatory governance. In terms of gender, fe-

male councilors are slightly more open towards representation from below. In terms of age, two clear tendencies can be observed. The younger the councilors are the more inclined towards a neutral representational style, the older they are the more inclined towards endorsing representation from below. This seems counterintuitive, as there is a reasonable expectation that older councilors are more inclined towards a more traditional view of political representation defined by representation from above and a focus on the entire constituency, which is characteristic of a representative democracy mindset. No differences were found between councilors residing in the county capital and those residing elsewhere in the county.

Table 5: The choice of representational style by region

Direction of representation	By region					
	Muntenia	Oltenia	Moldova	Banat	Transylvania	Eastern Transylvania
From above	31.74%	-	27.52%	2.84%	21.62%	3.82%
Neutral	53.66%	81.35%	51.43%	53.23%	46.99%	38.87%
From below	14.60%	18.65%	21.05%	43.93%	31.39%	57.31%

Significant at * 0.000

Source: Second Tier Survey, 2013

Despite the differences between the dominantly Hungarian inhabited Eastern Transylvania and the rest of the county, no differences were found in terms of ethnicity. Romanian councilors and those of other ethnicities endorse in almost equal proportions the different representational styles. This perhaps reinforces the idea that the different administrative culture might be used to explain regional differences. Due to the small number of cases, at this point, we must regard this with caution.

Table 6: The choice of representational style by individual level characteristics

Direction of representation	*By employment			*By gender		*By age				
	Public sector	Private sector, NGO	Self-employed	Male	Female	< 30 years	31-40 years	41-50 years	51-60 years	61-70 years
From above	8.95%	35.89%	22.53%	15.76%	27.73%	6.45%	19.74%	11.28%	22.47%	22.83%
Neutral	50.71%	44.89%	55.86%	57.35%	50.80%	86.14%	60.96%	61.27%	51.49%	39.93%
From below	40.33%	19.23%	22.11%	26.89%	21.47%	7.41%	19.30%	27.45%	26.04%	37.24%

Significant at * 0.000

Source: Second Tier Survey, 2013

The endorsement of representation from below, dual territorial representation and functional representation by Romanian county councilors, although limited in some directions, suggests openness towards the emerging governance context. With these elements in mind, the following section of the paper explores more specific governance-related attitudes of Romanian county councilors in relation to their representational role.

5.3. Governance-related attitudes and political representation

The literature suggests that, in a local governance context, the role of councilors involves retaining key decision-making powers, yet exercising them to formulate goals and strategies while taking into account the opinions and suggestions of all main stakeholders (Hansen, 2001). Consequently, attitudinally, three elements are relevant in terms of political representational roles and behaviors: whether the councilors accept that prior to any decisions being made the views of the citizens should be listened to (locus of decision-making), whether they accept the inherent interdependence between actors in local policy networks, and whether they accept they should not be involved in implementation (acceptance of the goal-steering role of the assembly). In what follows we explore these general attitudes towards governance among Romanian county councilors and their relationship with representational role orientations. The main expectation is that, to the extent local elected officials endorse a more flexible representational role they will also exhibit positive attitudes towards governance and governance-oriented mechanisms.

The analysis shows that, attitudinally, county councilors in Romania embrace governance (see Table 7). There seems to be a little reluctance to the goal-steering role of the councilors, as well as to the idea that negotiations with stakeholders are necessary prior to making a decision. There is less resistance to the idea citizens should be consulted when the decision finally rests with the council. Thus, it seems that Romanian county councilors are more open towards the ‘softer’ side of governance and find it still difficult to cope with the idea that they are supposed to give up on intervening in day-to-day administration and accept constraints on their voting behavior.

Table 7: General attitudes towards governance

Locus of decision-making	Residents should have the opportunity to make their views known before important local decisions are made by elected representatives.	Neither agree nor disagree	3.30%
		Agree	60.36%
		Strongly agree	36.33%
Acceptance of interdependence	Political decisions should not only be taken by representative bodies but be negotiated together with the concerned local actors.	Strongly disagree	4.21%
		Disagree	4.39%
		Neither agree nor disagree	14.96%
	Consultation and negotiation with key actors (main stake holders) prior to decision is necessary for efficient and effective decision-making and implementation.	Agree	52.81%
		Strongly agree	23.63%
		Strongly disagree	0.81%
Acceptance of the goal-steering role of the councilor	Politicians should only define objectives and control outputs, and never intervene into the task fulfilment of local administration	Disagree	0.70%
		Neither agree nor disagree	6.35%
		Agree	68.43%
		Strongly agree	23.72%
		Strongly disagree	2.66%
		Disagree	14.19%
		Neither agree nor disagree	14.20%
		Agree	42.93%
		Strongly agree	26.01%

Source: Second Tier Survey, 2013

Nevertheless, if we attempt a categorization, we can actually divide Romanian county councilors into three different categories in terms of acceptance of governance. As shown in Table 8, there is a high and very high acceptance of governance amongst Romanian county councilors.

Table 8: Acceptance of governance and representational role orientations

Acceptance of governance	<i>Very low and low</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>High and very high</i>
Total population	1.33%	23.70%	74.97%
<i>By direction of representation*</i>			
From above		6.50%	12.18%
Neutral	1.33%	12.18%	42.25%
From below	-	5.02%	20.54%
<i>By timing of control*</i>			
Ex post control	-	9.56%	23.67%
Neutral	0.31%	13.15%	49.12%
Ex ante control	1.02%	0.99%	2.18%
<i>By territorial focus of representation*</i>			
No territorial focus of representation	-	1.54%	1.64%
Focus on a part of the county	-	6.05%	26.13%
Focus on the entire county	-	7.26%	29.54%
Dual territorial focus	0.39%	5.11%	22.34%
* Significant at .000			

Source: Second Tier Survey, 2013

If the acceptance of governance is explored in relation to the representational role orientations, an unclear pattern emerges (see Table 8). At this point we focus on the political representation style endorsed by councilors, as it is widely seen in the literature as the dominant dimension of the representational process. While a large number of councilors with high and very high acceptance of governance endorse the neutral position on the control dimension, there is also a significant number of councilors from the same category endorsing ex post control by the citizens. Relatively similar numbers of councilors from the high acceptance category are divided between focusing on a part of the county, focusing on the entire county and a dual territorial focus, with a slightly larger number in the more centralist category (focusing on the county). Therefore, we need to explore the relationship between representational role orientations and attitudes towards more specific symptoms of governance.

We focus on the desirability of a set of governance and new public management related mechanisms. Some of these are currently being used in Romanian local government (citizen consultation procedures, some form of metropolitan government, participatory budgeting and decentralization to municipalities), while others are not (co-decision procedures, devolution to neighborhood organizations, user boards).

Table 9: Desirability of a set of governance and new public management related mechanisms

Desirability of ...	Highly undesirable	Undesirable	Neither desirable nor undesirable	Desirable	Highly desirable
Co-decision procedures, where citizens can discuss and make binding decisions on certain local issues	1.43%	13.55%	27.65%	44.90%	12.47%
Devolution of responsibilities to neighborhood organizations	2.18%	28.52%	36.22%	23.35%	9.73%
Citizen consultation procedures, where citizens are informed about and can comment on proposals of the county council	1.92%	5.08%	7.73%	57.62%	27.66%
Transferring the powers of scrutiny over county services to user boards	4.23%	27.01%	30.99%	30.78%	7.00%
Creating metropolitan government(s)	6.77%	21.11%	20.12%	39.25%	12.75%
Participatory Budgeting	3.15%	9.76%	23.67%	49.51%	13.91%
Decentralization of tasks to the municipalities	3.05%	5.85%	17.74%	50.97%	23.39%

Source: Second Tier Survey, 2013

The focus on specific governance mechanisms shows that some necessary nuances need to be taken into account when assessing the governance related attitudes of Romanian county councilors. Data in Table 9 shows significant variation from one governance related mechanism to the next. While there is a wider trend towards accepting these mechanisms, there is strong reluctance towards the mechanisms loaded with more informality or involving explicit shifts of decision-making loci outside the more traditional local government structures, such as the devolution of responsibilities to neighborhood organizations, user boards controlling county services or metropolitan government.

Table 10: Acceptance of governance-related mechanisms and representational role orientations

Acceptance of governance-related mechanisms	Low	Very low	Average	High	Very high
Total population	2.46%	10.60%	38.92%	27.83%	20.19%
<i>By direction of representation*</i>					
From above		2.76%	7.87%	4.17%	3.88%
Neutral	1.85%	5.16%	20.09%	15.15%	13.50%
From below	0.61%	2.68%	10.96%	8.51%	2.81%
<i>By timing of control*</i>					
Ex post control	0.61%	3.89%	14.42%	5.90%	8.41%
Neutral	0.83%	6.31%	23.17%	21.48%	10.78%
Ex ante control	1.02%	0.39%	1.34%	0.44%	1.00%
<i>By territorial focus of representation*</i>					
No territorial focus of representation	0.67%	-	0.87%	0.77%	0.87%
Focus on a part of the county	0.78%	4.09%	11.36%	7.39%	8.57%
Focus on the entire county	-	4.00%	11.70%	13.34%	7.76%
Dual territorial focus	-	2.17%	11.86%	9.80%	4.01%
* Significant at .000					

Source: Second Tier Survey, 2013

Councilors whose focus of representation is the entire county, followed by those endorsing a dual focus of territorial representation, seem more inclined towards high acceptance of the governance and new public management related mechanisms, when compared with councilors who endorse other focuses of representation. Most likely, the size of the constituency (the entire county) to be represented comes in a package with the acknowledgement by county councilors that they need to relinquish control over day-to-day administration (quite difficult to follow if attempting to cover as many issues and interests as possible) and accept a goal-steering role.

Councilors favoring *ex post* control by citizens over their activity dominantly place themselves in the average acceptance of governance related mechanisms category. Councilors who seek balance between *ex post* and *ex ante* control seem slightly more open toward such mechanisms, with the same applying to councilors seeking balance in terms of direction of representation. In line with our expectations, assuming a neutral representational style comes in a package with more openness towards governance and its mechanisms.

Overall, there seems to be a not very strong but statistically significant linkage between the representational role orientation and the attitudes toward governance related mechanisms used in contemporary local government. The fact that we found an inconclusive relationship between the representational role orientation and more general attitudes towards governance is perhaps suggestive of the fact that, when it comes to the sometimes quite blurry notions of governance, Romanian councilors find it more difficult to position themselves in relation to abstract notions.

5. Discussion and conclusion

This paper aims to explore the representational role orientations of second-tier councilors in a new democracy in a governance context. On the one hand, an emphasis has been placed on how representational role orientations look like and to what extent they reflect trends similar to those from Western European countries. On the other hand, the emphasis has fallen on the compatibility between representational role orientations and the changing *de facto* roles of elected officials in local governance processes. The analysis has been exploratory in nature, as it has focused on an unexplored institutional setting (the second tier of local government) and a still little researched local government system (that of post-communist Romania). Moreover, the Romanian local government system is making slow progress in terms of introducing governance-related mechanisms and seems to display a clear preference towards governance mechanisms which involve lower degrees of informality.

The analysis has resulted in three different categories of results, with the first two categories of relevance for the case at hand and the third category of relevance in a broader context. The first category of results refers to how the representational role orientation of Romanian second-tier councilors looks like. The data depict a situation in which the shift from the traditional formal, territorially- and electorally-defined view on what the representative's constituency is to more fluid notions is on-going.

Thus, the dominant focuses of representation of the councilors studies here are the entire county (the 'traditional' view) and a combination between the representation of the entire county and a part of it at the same time (dual territorial representation focus, the more flexible view on political representation). This suggests a push and a pull factor working at the same time and influencing the representational role acquisition of Romanian county councilors, namely the top-down centralist tradition and the bottom-up mechanisms many county councils create to fill what they most likely perceive to be a representation gap. Individual level differences in terms of defining a focus of representation are in line with expectations stemming from the literature, suggesting Romanian county councilors are very much in tune with their Western European counterparts in terms of how they define their roles. A quite interesting aspect is the fact that Romanian county councilors see themselves as representatives of the middle class (a significant portion of them is self-employed/owner of a business) and this influences the choice of representational focus (and quite possibly their voting behavior in the council).

In the same category of findings, on the average, local elected officials seem to value a neutral style of political representation, both in terms of direction of the representative relationship and the timing of the control exercised by citizens). This probably reflects the councilors' awareness that they need to balance things depending on the issue at hand. An interesting finding is that councilors employed in the public sector are by far the most open towards representation from below, while those employed in the private sector are the most open toward representation from above. This suggests that in terms of attitudes the Romanian public sector might be at the forefront of more participatory governance.

The second category of findings concerns the attitudes of Romanian second-tier councilors towards governance in general and specific governance-oriented mechanisms in particular. In terms of general attitudes towards governance we find most of the Romanian second-tier councilors in the high and very high acceptance of governance categories. Nevertheless, it seems that Romanian county councilors are more open towards the 'softer' side of governance and find it still difficult to cope with the idea that they are supposed to give up on intervening in day-to-day administration and accept constraints on their voting behavior. While there is a wider trend towards accepting governance-oriented mechanisms in Romanian local government, we find a strong reluctance towards the mechanisms loaded with more informality or involving explicit shifts of decision-making loci outside the more traditional local government structures, such as the devolution of responsibilities to neighborhood organizations, user boards controlling county services or metropolitan government. Overall, we find limits in the openness of Romanian county councilors towards participatory governance and its mechanisms.

In the third category of findings, while we observe high and very high acceptance of the broad notion of governance, we also notice an unclear pattern in relation to representational role orientations. The pattern becomes clearer and we find a not so

strong but positive relationship if we switch to analyzing the relationship between the representational role orientation and more specific attitudes towards governance mechanisms which are familiar to county councilors (mechanisms already introduced in the Romanian public sector). The most interesting and unexpected result points out to a potential linkage between a more traditional focus of representation (representing the entire county) and openness towards the use of various governance-oriented mechanisms. Focusing on a large constituency brings about increased complexity to a representative's tasks, which in turn may increase his or hers openness towards relinquishing some of the prerogatives traditionally associated with such an elective position. The relationship between the representational style endorsed by second-tier councilors and their attitudes towards governance-oriented mechanisms is more in line with our expectation, as there seems to be a connection between endorsing a neutral style and higher acceptance of such mechanisms. Due to the limitations of the data used, these aspects merit further investigation.

There are at least two inter-connected variables whose impact on this needs to be assessed in future research. Namely, the impact of knowledge, as councilors seem to be more open towards things which are reasonably more familiar, and the impact of the top-down introduction of specific governance-oriented mechanisms. Previous literature has shown that the institutional settings provide powerful cues for councilors seeking to define their own role as representatives. We can reasonably suspect that Romanian county councilors adjusted their role orientations to the governance context. What we do not know is how this adjustment would have looked like if, instead of introducing 'soft' governance mechanisms, the central government opted for 'hard' governance mechanisms.

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