



ORIGINAL PAPER

**Electoral Boundaries: Local Convergence Proof of Policymaking
in Bălcești (2012)**

Narcisa Maria Mitu*

Abstract

From the political point of view, 2012 was a year full of surprises, with spectacular events, premiers and upheavals that led to important changes for Romania. Regarding the local elections, they had been expected with great interest both by the political class in Romania and the electorate, taking into consideration the PDL failure the governing process, the street protests and the discontent among all the categories of the Romanian society. In our study, we took into account the local elections from Bălcești, Vâlcea County, a small town, preponderantly agricultural, situated at the southern border of Vâlcea County. The result of the elections was not a surprise, the representative of USL, Ion Curelaru, being reconfirmed in the position of town mayor.

Keywords: general elections, local elections, 2012, Bălcești, Vâlcea County.

* 3rd degree Scientific Researcher, PhD “C.S. Nicolăescu-Plopșor” Institute of Socio-Human Researches, Craiova, Phone: 0040251523330, Email: narcisa_mitu@yahoo.com.

Electoral Boundaries: Local Convergence Proof of Policymaking ...

For the first time in the post-communist Romanian policy, we came face to face with a special situation, when a leading coalition was replaced by an opposing one, just before the legislative elections. This fact was only partially the consequence of the parliamentary fights, a significant contribution having the social street movements that had started in 2012, resulted in protests and manifestations against PDL, the government and the president. These manifestations led to the decrease of trust in politicians and the parties that had been dominated the Romanian policy during the previous three years.

The main political parties and alliances that entered the election campaign from 2012 were: Social Liberal Union (USL), integrating of three parties: Social Democrat Party, National Liberal Party and Conservatory Party, the co-presidents being Victor Ponta and the liberal Crin Antonescu, the presidents of the first two political formations: the Social Democrat Party (PSD) led by the prime minister Victor Ponta, co-president of USL; the National Liberal Party (PNL), the only “historical party”, led by Crin Antonescu, co-president of USL; the Conservatory Party (PC), led by Daniel Constantin; the Democrat-Liberal Party (PD-L), led at that time by Emil Boc; UDMR – the representative formation of the Romanian citizens of Hungarian ethnicity from Romania, led by the deputy Kelemen Hunor; the National Union for the Progress of Romania (UNPR) led by Gheorghe Oprea; Dan Diaconescu Party of People (PP-DD) founded and led by Dan Diaconescu, a populist party that lacked political identity and precise doctrine. This party was a surprise for the local elections from 2012, succeeding in changing the electoral expectations of the other political formations.

The purpose for the constitutions of the Social Liberal Union, in 2011, was that to become a strong political adversary against Băsescu’s regime. It must be noticed that, although in most of the counties, the three political parties approached the elections under the common sigle of USL, there were plenty of counties where the social-democrats, the liberals and the conservatories kept their own sigle, or combined two parties (PSD+PNL, or PSD+PC, or PNL+PC) (Pavel, 2012: 22).

Following the evolution of the political parties during 2004-2012, we can observe that they had a fluctuant direction. Thus, PSD had, in the first two mandates, a descendant course. If at the local elections from 2004, it obtained 32,715, meaning 2,957,617 votes, in 2008, it obtained only 28.22%, signifying 2,207,745 votes. Unlike it, PNL had an ascendant trend, reaching in 2004 a percent of 15.99%, meaning 1,445,674 votes, and in 2008 it managed to obtain 18.64%, with 1,458,490 votes. The situation changed in 2012, once with the constituting of USL, a moment in which it was obtained a percent of 38.46% of the votes. An ascendant course had also PD, which in 2004 obtained 12.79% of the votes (1,156,867), and after the process of reorganization, through the fusion with PDL, in 2008 it obtained 28.38%, more exactly, 2,220,313 votes. In the election campaign from 2012, PDL knew a considerable decrease, obtaining only 15.44%. A descendant route can also be met at UDMR, PRM PC/PUR. UDMR registers a slightly descendant result, from 5.67% (513,165) in 2004 to 5.43% (425,218) in 2008; PRM - from 8.1% (732,935), four years before, to 3.65% (285,475) presently, and PC/PUR also falls from 6.01% (543,860) to 3.31% (258,891) (Buti, 2008; Buti, 2012: 35).

The spectacular evolution obtained by PDL, during 2004-2008, led to the winning of the elections from June 2008, even if the difference from the second place was relatively small. The austere measures: wages reduction, frozen pensions, increasing the retirement age, reduction of the number of employees from the public sector, reduction of public spending, income taxing, VAT increase, excise duties increase, the raise of other income

taxes, closing of hospitals along with the offending declarations as regarding the teacher, doctors, mothers or retired people, had as a result the loss of the Romanians' confidence in the governing party. The soft spot was constituted by the closing of hospitals. Even if the citizens accepted reduced income, increased taxes, they were not willing to accept their right to living, a fact that determined them to protest against the adopted political measure, which had been presented as a necessity by the government led by Emil Boc and Traian Băsescu in 2010. This decision led to the closing of 200 public hospitals from the 450 existing at that moment. The reasons for imposing this measure were petty: they were not able to have the standards of the hospitals from the university cities; they did not have and there was not possible to obtain the resources for their endowment with the necessary apparatus and the medical staff were insufficient for their proper functioning.

Moreover, the voting presence during 2004-2012, was a sinusoidal one. If in 2004, there were 9,043,072 people who reported to the polls, in 2008 the percent were reduced to 13.51%, being registered 7,812,148 valid votes. The wish for change of the existent political regime, from 2012, brought to the polls 58.9% of the people who had the right to vote, more specifically, 10,802,641, with almost ten percent more than four years earlier (Buti, 2008; Buti, 2012: 35).

Unlike the local elections from 2008, which had foreshadowed the passing from the extreme pluralism to the moderate pluralism, along with the phenomenon of tripartitism, the local elections from 2012 prefigured a return to the extreme pluralism. If the elections had been previously framed in two electoral systems, for the election of the local and county counsellors, there was used the proportional representation, with blocked lists, and for the election of the mayors and county councils leaders was practiced the majority electoral system, with uninominal voting, in 2012, the new element was represented by the organisation of a single ballot for the mayors and the county councils presidents (Bărbieru, 2013: 220-221).

At the electoral elections from June 2012, the options of the electors were presented as: 1,324 mayor mandates from USL (41.57%); 498 mandates for PDL; 378 – PSD; 264 – PNL; 203 – UDMR; 31 – PP-DD; 27 mandates – ACD (Daniel Buti, 2012: 35). According to the previously mentioned data, the victory of the formation led by Victor Ponta, Crin Antonescu and Dan Constantin was obvious, winning the elections detachedly and imposing itself to all the categories.

If studying the electoral hierarchy, we can observe, that at the national level, the political formation named USL obtained 38.46% of the valid votes, on the second place being PDL, with 15.44%, followed, at a noticeable distance, by PP-DD with 7.29% of the votes (Buti, 2012: 35). There were also registered situations when the political formations that had constituted USL to not have a common candidate. In this situation, in the electoral classification, there were included: PSD with 6.94% of the votes, PNL with 5.50% and PC and ACD, with subunit percentages. In order to counteract the force of USL, PDL was present, in its turn, in many localities from our country, as local alliances and different names: “The Alliance for Bacău”, “The Alliance for Argeş and Muscel”, “The Alliance for Constanţa”, “The Alliance for the Future of Brăila”, “Popular-Christian Alliance” etc., most of them not being able to pass the threshold of 1% of the votes (Buti, 2012: 35).

According to the Central Electoral Office, the Social Liberal Union was situated in front of the classification, both for the Town Halls and Local Councils and County Councils and County Council presidents. In the case of the voting for the local councils, on the first place there was USL with 37.77%, followed by PDL with 14.47% PP-DD with 8.75%, PSD with 6.59%, PNL with 5.11% and UDMR with 4.30% of the votes (Buti,

Electoral Boundaries: Local Convergence Proof of Policymaking ...

2012: 35; Bărbieru, 2014: 193-194; Ghionea, 2014: 203). USL victory was confirmed for the county council presidents too. Thus, USL obtained 36 from the 41 mandates, on the next places being UDMR with 2 mandates, PDL with a mandate, the Liberal European Progressive Popular Electoral Alliance, a mandate, Christian Liberal Movement, one mandate (Buti, 2012: 35). In Vâlcea County, in the election campaign from 2012, the voting was of 61.65%, the county being on the 10th place in the classification for the reporting to the polls. Ion Cîlea was re-elected as the president of the County Council from USL. The valid votes in his favour were 112,833, meaning a percent of 65.57%. At a considerable distance, there was the PDL candidate, Jurcan Dorel, who obtained only 17.58%, signifying 30,262 of the votes. On the third place, there was the PP-DD candidate, Butnaru Florinel, with a percent of 6.81%, meaning 11,733 of the valid votes. As regarding the structure of Vâlcea County Council, the situation was as following: 21 USL councillors, 6 PDL councillors, 3 from PP-DD and 2 representatives of UNPR (The Official Gazette from Vâlcea County. Special edition – II, 2012: 5-6; Ghionea, 2014: 203).

Table 1. County counsellor 2012-2016 – Mandate

No. crt.	Surname and name	Profession	Function	Political affiliation
1.	Cîlea Ion	Engineer	President	PSD
2.	Andreianu Mihaela	Economist	County counsellor	USL
3.	Belciu Ion	Economist	County counsellor	PSD/PNL-PC (PNL)
4.	Bulacu Romulus	Engineer	County counsellor	USL
5.	Bușe Dumitru Gery	Engineer-Economist	County counsellor	PSD/PNL-PC (PSD)
6.	Bușu Adrian	Jurist	County counsellor	PDL
7.	Butnaru Florinel	Engineer	County counsellor	USL
8.	Cârstea Aurelian	Teacher	County counsellor	PSD/PNL-PC (PSD)
9.	Filip Teodosie	Economist	County counsellor	PP-DD
10.	Folea Gheorghe	Medic	County counsellor	USL
11.	Grigore Petre	Jurist	County counsellor	PSD/PNL-PC (PNL)
12.	Grigorescu Remus	Teacher	County counsellor	UNPR
13.	Jinaru Adam	Engineer	County counsellor	USL
14.	Liță Ioana	Economist	County counsellor	PSD/PNL-PC (PNL)
				USL
				PSD/PNL-PC

Narcisa Maria MITU

15.	Lupu Alina	Administrative Science	County counsellor	(PSD) PDL
16.	Marin Victor	Economist	County counsellor	USL PSD/PNL-PC
17.	Militaru Claudia	Jurist	County counsellor	(PSD) USL PSD/PNL-PC
18.	Moise Iuliana	Engineer	County counsellor	(PNL) PDL
19.	Nicolae Ion	-	County counsellor	PP-DD
20.	Oproaica Alexandru	Engineer	County counsellor	USL PSD/PNL-PC
21.	Păsat Gheorghe	Engineer	County counsellor	(PSD) USL PSD/PNL-PC
22.	Persu Dumitru	Economist	County counsellor deputy-president	(PNL) USL PSD/PNL-PC
23.	Petrescu Remus	Engineer	County counsellor	(PSD) PDL
24.	Pistol Bogdan-Alexandru	Economist	County counsellor deputy-president	USL PSD/PNL-PC
25.	Pîrvu Constantin	Technician	County counsellor	(PNL) USL PSD/PNL-PC
26.	Poenaru Mircea-Constantin	Engineer	County counsellor	(PSD) USL PSD/PNL-PC
27.	Popescu Victor-George	Engineer-Physician	County counsellor	(PNL) USL PSD/PNL-PC
28.	Prală Ștefan	Economist	County counsellor	(PNL) PDL
29.	Rădulescu Constantin	Economist	County counsellor	USL PSD/PNL-PC
30.	Simion Aurel	Engineer	County counsellor	(PSD) PDL
31.	Stănculescu Victor-George	Jurist	County counsellor	USL PSD/PNL-PC
32.	Tărășenie Dumitru	Economist	County counsellor	(PNL) USL PSD/PNL-PC
33.	Trancă Teodor	Jurist	County counsellor	PP-DD

Source: The Official Gazette from Vâlcea County. Special edition – II, 2012: 5-6

Electoral Boundaries: Local Convergence Proof of Policymaking ...

A considerable difference between the first two competitors was also noticeable as regarding the establishing of the local councils, where the situation was: the reporting to the polls was of 65.76%, and of the 923 attributed mandates, on the first three places were USL, which obtained 302 mandates, PDL – 184 and the Electoral Alliance PSD-PNL Vâlcea – 122. As regarding the distribution of the mayor mandates: USL and the Electoral Alliance PSD-PNL won 74 of the 89 town-halls from the county, PDL – 8 mandates, PC – 3, UNPR – 2, independent candidates – 2. In Rm. Vâlcea Municipality, the position of mayor was obtained by Emilian Frâncu (USL), with a percent of 39.6%. On the second place there was Romeo Rădulescu (PDL), with 24.1%, followed by Eusebiu Vețeleanu (UNPR) with 23.5% and Ion Nicolae (PP-DD) with 4,9% (Ghionea, 2014: 206). In the electoral race for the town-hall of Bălcești town, there were 8 candidates. The nomination files of the main political forces were registered in May 2012, at the County Electoral Office. In the race, for filling the position of mayor in Bălcești, entered: *Ion Curelaru*, that time mayor, from the Social Liberal Union, *Aleca Constantin* from the Social Democrat Party, *Mircea Chirca* from UNPR, *Radu Aurel* from PP-DD, *Marin Văduva* from PRM, *Maria Petroșanu* from Civic Force, *Aurel Bușoiu* from PNȚCD and *Nicolae Gădoiu* from the Green Party.

The town of Bălcești is situated at 44 km distance from Craiova Municipality, 86 km from Râmnicu Vâlcea, the capital of the county, and 52 km from Drăgășani, at the southern border of Vâlcea County. Former agro-industrial centre, the commune of Bălcești was declared town in 2002, according to Law no. 353 from the 6th of June (Official Gazette, 2002). In its structure entered the localities: Benești, Gorunești, Chirculești, Ulicioiu, Irimești, Otetelișu, Preotești and Poieni, former villages, which are today districts of the new town administration. In Bălcești, a small town, preponderantly agricultural, is difficult to prove people that you can do something good for them, as much as the funds are not sufficient and the projects are hardly approved. Nevertheless, Ion Curelaru, who has been filling the position of mayor since 2004, managed to implement some important works, meant to lead to the modernisation of the locality, which were urgently necessary for a town that was just starting a journey: the asphaltting of streets and county roads, rehabilitation of the cultural centre, the pavement of streets, the building of playgrounds for children, the rehabilitation and modernisation of sidewalks and access streets, rehabilitation of schools and kindergartens, the building of a new sports halls at European standards.

The administrator *Curelaru Ion*, who had been an engineer before being a mayor, worked at the Agency for Payment and Intervention in Agriculture from Bălcești. In the election campaign, he started as one of the favourites. His recommendations were the two previous mandates, during which he managed to implement most of the electoral promises. In front of his elector, he appeared with the slogan: *the prosperity of the locality and your (citizens') welfare*. He was depicted as “a modest and a person of few words. He likes to work and to demonstrate that he succeeded in doing, rather than talking about it” (Dințoi, 2012).

During the election campaign, the USL candidate insisted on the achievements of his previous mandates: the asphaltting of the County Road between Bălcești and Preotești, on a distance of 12.5 kilometres, with 374 bridges, a work accomplished through the Regional Operation Programme, started in August 2010 and finished in October 2011. For the finalisation of this work, there were assigned total funds of almost 11.7 million lei. Among his other achievement, he also mentioned the asphaltting of the communal road Bălcești-Poeni, on a distance of 3.5 km, made in 2009. The investment value of this work

Narcisa Maria MITU

was of 3.3 million lei. Another necessary and useful investment was the rehabilitation of the sports hall, with a capacity of 150 seats, a work started in the fall of 2010 and finished in the fall of 2011. The total value of the work was of over 3.8 million lei, the funds being mostly given by the National Company of Investment.

Another extremely important work, in the area of the urban service and utilities developing, was represented by the rehabilitation of the town's water supply and sewage system. The project was in 2006, a Phare Programme of Economic and Social Cohesion, and was assigned the sum of 1.1 million euro, from which 1 million came from the granted funds by the European Community, and the difference of 133,205 euro was represented by the financial contribution of Vâlcea County council (Tănase, 2010). Using his own funds, he managed to asphalt the streets of Irimeștii de Jos and Bâlcuiului, 1,300 linear metres long; to introduce running water in the villages of Irimești and Benești, an investment on the Decree no. 7, which was began in 2008 and finished in 2011; to rehabilitate the cultural centre, an investment of 2.8 milliard of ROLs; to rehabilitate the sidewalks from the locality on a length of 650 square metres, a work for which were allocated 700 million ROLs. The temporary refuse collecting and depositing station was also finalised.

As regarding the plans for the future, the mayor Ion Curelaru mentioned as a priority the rehabilitation and the modernisation of all streets and sidewalks from the town centre; the introduction of running water and sewage on all the streets and areas, where it was not already present; the building of a system for using the renewable energy, on solar panels with a power of 8 megawatts. "I want to mention that we are registered in development master-plan and we are allocated 8.7 million euro. Therefore, by 2015, the water supply and the sewage system are going to be introduced in the last house of the locality. I intend that, according to Measure 1.2.5, to asphalt some commissioning roads from la Bălcești to Sticlărești, Popești, field roads that connect the national road and the county roads. I want to clear the main roads, which should not be crossed by heavy cars or carts" (Dințoi, 2012).

Among the projects that he proposed to finalise during the 2012-2016 mandate, there were also: the rehabilitation and the modernisation of the agro-alimentary market; the building of a 40 places nursery; the rehabilitation of the after-school kindergarten; the founding of a weekly fair; the applicability of the land laws and the solving of the litigations according to the competences and, the most important, the re-opening of the Town Hospital from Bălcești. Both during the election campaign and in the previous mandates, the Mayor Ion Curelaru enjoyed all the support of Vâlcea County Council, the engineer Ion Cîlea, PhD, declaring: "I guarantee that his promises will come true".

The PP-DD candidate, *Radu Aurel*, an economist, graduate of "The management of public organisations" master courses, was among the equal chances candidates for filling the position of mayor, the proof being the fact that he was on the second place. Furthermore, he was one of the people who knew the situation in the town-hall, working as an economist at Bălcești Town-Hall. The motivation for which he decided to run in the race was, according to him, the fact that he was convinced that he could change the city through dynamic acting. His slogan was very suggestive: "I want, I know and I can make a positive change. Give me the chance to prove it".

In the letter addressed to his electors, Aurel Radu announced that "it is the moment to say stop to indifference and to get involved as much as I can, in order to do something good for the community that I belong to and in the locality where we all live. I consider that we need a fresh and healthy beginning, to be able to look confidently and

Electoral Boundaries: Local Convergence Proof of Policymaking ...

proudly towards our and our children's future". He was also aware of the fact that "I cannot perform miracles, but I know that I can do a lot of things that are still wished and dreamt by each of us". In front of his electors, the PP-DD candidate presented his main objectives: the asphaltting of streets, sidewalks and alleys from the entire city; the closing of the taking into possession of the farming and forest lands; the desilting and the arranging of the channels that carry the rain water; the opening of a permanent centre in the place of the former town hospital, and, in perspective, the re-opening of the hospital; the reorganisation of the locality's districts, so that the taxes paid by the citizens to correspond the utilities they enjoy; the creating of new parking spaces; the extension of the gas supplying network; the extension of the water supply and sewage; the extension of garbage collecting in the entire locality, and, for the blocks of flats, the arranging in their exterior area of some enclosed spaces; the creating of a bus terminal; the opening, under the subordination of the local Council of a local interest commercial society, whose main speciality to be building materials; the support given by the specialists from the town-hall to the citizens interested to have access to external or governmental funds; the rehabilitation of the stadium and the organisation of the football team; the rehabilitation of schools and kindergartens; the arranging of the sports field from the secondary school, with artificial grass and its enclosure; the reviving of the cultural and artistic life by creating a cultural-artistic assembly and the reorganisation of the music and dance traditional festival called „The songs of Olteţ”; the organisation of periodical meetings with the citizens from the villages, to talk the problems specific for that area and to look for solution together.

The candidate of the Democrat Liberal Party, *Aleca Constantin*, started the election campaign with a huge disadvantage for his credibility rate, a disadvantage determined by the unpopular actions of the party for which he was running. Graduate of Political Sciences Faculty and "National and Euro-Atlantic security" master courses, at the University from Craiova, he is a teacher of Civic Culture at "Petrașche Poenaru" Technological High-School from Bălcești. Considering that the position of mayor of Bălcești was filled by a PSD candidate, his slogan that he entered the battle was "the solution is the change and the evolution". Among the promises that the teacher Aleca was trying to use to defeat his opponents, there are: the improvement of the communication with the citizens through the organisation of periodical popular meetings in every area, the displaying of the public interest information in more places from the town and the improvement of the communication between the town-hall's staff and the citizens for solving their problems; the creation of a multifunctional health centre in the building of the former hospital with permanent ER staff and the attraction of a higher number of specialised doctors; the opening of a consulting room, in the building of the former store from the village of Preotești; the identification, the establishing and the solving of conflicts of possession and the providing of consultancy for solving the problems related to property (the inheritance tax, leasing and the issuing of the title of property etc.); the sustaining of the development of micro-companies and micro-farms, the encouraging of new ones and the attractions of investors and programmes to create new jobs; the building of a playground for children, in the yard of Oțetești Secondary School; the realisation of a platform for the temporary stationing of the buses and coaches from the town; the elaboration of new projects for the extension of the water supply and sewage in the areas that do not have these facilities; the rehabilitation of the civic centre, the solving of the problem with the rain water from the streets and sidewalks, the rearranging of the parks through the planting of trees and ornamental plants, creation of

Narcisa Maria MITU

entertainment places; the solving of the problem with the rain water that affects Târgul Vechi, Piața, Delureni, the desilting of the entire sewage system from the town; the arranging of the sidewalks; the construction of bridges over the rivers Aninoasa and Pesceana; the constant functioning of the street lighting in the entire locality; the acquisition of machines for the prompt intervention in case of heavy snowing; the modernisation of the market, through the introduction of all the facilities (running water, sewage), the increasing in number of the stands for the farmers, the creation of a parking lot behind the market, a public toilet, the extension of public lighting inside the market, the arranging of the space for selling small animals and birds, the authorisation of dairy products from the local people; the modernisation of the football field and the reorganisation of Oltețu Bălcești team; the reviving of the cultural activities, by organising a folk assembly, the support of the cultural activities of the children from “Petrache Poenaru” School; the rehabilitation of the buildings from “Petrache Poenaru” Technological High-School; the finalisation of the works from Otetelișu Secondary School; the rearrangement of the sports field from “Petrache Poenaru” Technological High-School; the creation of a transportation route for the children from the locality; the finishing of the asphaltting for the road between Bălcești and Poieni; the rehabilitation of Cârlogani-Chirculești-Palei road. Mircea Chirca (UNPR), Marin Văduva (PRM), Maria Petroșanu (FC), Aurel Bușoiu (PNȚCD) and Nicolae Gădoiu (PV) had a very small possibility to expose their electoral offers. They led discrete election campaigns, with reduced investments, because of the minor chances they had in front of the main candidates.

Table 2. Local elections-10th of June 2012. Local councils – Bălcești

No.	Party	Votes			Mandates		
		No	% in aprox.	% in county	No	% in aprox.	% in county
		2.542	100.00	1.28	15	0.00	0.00
1.	Partidul România Mare	97	3.82	0.05	0	20.00	0.28
2.	Partidul Democrat Liberal	521	20.50	0.26	3	0.00	0.00
3.	Forța Civică	25	0.98	0.01	0	0.0	0.00
4.	Partidul Național Țărănesc Creștin Democrat	16	0.63	0.01	0	0.00	0.00
5.	Partidul Verde	19	0.75	0.01	0	0.00	0.00
6.	Partidul Poporului-Dan Diaconescu	536	21.09	0.27	4	26.67	0.37
7.	Uniunea Social Liberală	969	38.12	0.49	6	40.00	0.56
8.	Uniunea Națională pentru Progresul României	359	14.12	0.18	2	13.33	0.19

Source: The Official Gazette from Vâlcea County. Special edition – II, 2012: 33-34

Electoral Boundaries: Local Convergence Proof of Policymaking ...

It is well-known the fact that, during the election campaign, the candidates enjoys the opportunity to make known their policy intentions through the media, blogs, social networks - Facebook, and under its own brochures, flyers, posters, bags, balloons, pens, shirts, etc. The parties shall exchange such messages shall submit their programs, promote their candidates, and get back the feedback as analysis, editorials, commentaries, reports. They are simultaneously available to the public, whose reaction is measured in surveys. So, the communication and the promotion are ways in which the population is informed about their political program and also to stimulate the interest in the tender policy (Mihalache, 2012: 73; Pripp, 2002: 101-102; Beciu, 1996; Beciu, 2002; Rus, 2002: 24; Rus, 2005; Thoveron: 1996; Ghilezan, 2000, Balaban, 2009a; Balaban, 2009b, Teodor, Nicula, 2012; Stoiciu, 2000; Foux, 2006). In the most cases, during the election campaign, the media have played an important, if not decisive, regarding the influencing election results. "If not always it changes the winner – noticed Vâlsan C. – then it certainly modifies some percentages" (Vâlsan, 1992: 15). The real confrontation, sometimes, became a personal attack. The election campaign did not lack, in this area of the country too, unpleasant events. There were registered assaults, aiming especially the mayor who was holding the position, Ion Curelaru. There were also small altercations between the competitive teams PSD and PP-DD. The result of the elections was not a surprise, the representative of USL, Ion Curelaru, being reconfirmed in the position of town mayor, and obtaining 35.58%, that is 937 of the valid votes. The surprise was represented by the unexpectedly high result obtained by the candidate of Dan Diaconescu Party of People, Aurel Radu, who came on the second place, with 23.88% (629 of the votes). On the third place was the PD-L candidate, Constantin Aleca with 19.59% (516 votes), followed by Mircea Chirca (UNPR) with 16.40% (432 votes), Marin Văduva (PRM) - 3.34% (88 votes), Maria Petroșanu (FC) - 0.53% (14 votes); Aurel Bușoiu (PNȚCD) - 0.41% (11 votes) and Nicolae Gadoiu (PV).

Table 3. The situation of the local election people from Bălcești 2012-2016 mandates

No. crt.	Surname and Name	Profession	Function	Political affiliation
1.	Curelaru Ion	Engineer	Mayor	USL (PSD)
2.	Beiu Ion	Engineer	Deputy mayor	USL (PSD)
3.	Oprea Nicolae	Teacher	Local counsellor	USL (PNL)
4.	Marin Victor	Economist	Local counsellor	USL (PSD)
5.	Geica Marian Marius	Economist	Local counsellor	USL (PSD)
6.	Ioja Marian	Economist	Local counsellor	USL (PNL)
7.	Ionilete Robert Cosmin	Economist	Local counsellor	USL (PSD)
8.	Radu Aurel	Economist	Local counsellor	PP-DD
9.	Negri Iuliu Constantin	Technician	Local counsellor	PP-DD
10.	Șerban Maria	Teacher	Local counsellor	PP-DD
11.	Otea Cornelia	Teacher	Local counsellor	PP-DD
12.	Aleca Constantin	Teacher	Local counsellor	PD-L
13.	Filip Florin	Driver	Local counsellor	PD-L
14.	Tudor Gheorghe	Veterinary technician	Local counsellor	PD-L
15.	Chirca Mircea	Mecanical foreman	Local counsellor	UNPR
16.	Dolofan Gheorghe	Commercial worker	Local counsellor	UNPR

Source: The Official Gazette from Vâlcea County. Special edition – II, 2012: 8-9

If analysing the campaign local strategies of the candidates, we notice that their electoral offers were almost similar. Generally, they militated for infrastructure, playgrounds for children, introduction of water supply and sewage, reopening of the town hospital. The Government's decision to close, on the 1st of April 2011, some of the small hospitals, as a request of the International Monetary Fund for reducing the number of beds and financings, led to the closing of the hospital from Bălcești. The hospital served for the entire south-western area of Vâlcea County, meaning over 50,000 people, Bălcești being an important junction, a meeting point for the roads to Slatina, Râmnicu Vâlcea, Târgu Jiu and Craiova. This "abusive" measure was harshly contested by the authorities and unleashed a strong protest among the population. In April 2012, the mayor of Bălcești was visited by the Minister's Counsellor Lazăr Iordache, the special delegate of the Health Minister and doctor, Vasile Cepoi, to check on the spot, the degree of covering of the specialised medical services in the area. The representative of the Health Minister was informed, and then he checked and noticed the justness of the imperative request for the reopening of the hospital. In his conclusions, he said: "indeed, in the south of Vâlcea County, there is no other medical unit to serve the population from the 9 localities that belonged to the former hospital and that the distance between these localities and the closest hospitals from Drăgășani, Horezu or Rm. Vâlcea is of 50-100 km". He also noticed the poverty and the weak financial resources that the people from this part of the county had and still have reduced financial resources, making impossible the visit to the above mentioned hospitals, reason for which, the general mortality, the infantile mortality and the birth rate decreased considerably.

For the reopening of the hospital, engineer Ion Cîlea, the president of Vâlcea County Council, pleaded many times: "*I considered that it is my duty and that of the Mayor from Bălcești to detail the problems in a memoire. This touching and entirely justified appeal, was sent by us to the Minister of Health at the end of the last week, addressing the request to initiate as soon as possible a bill as a Governmental Decision regarding the reopening of the hospital from the town of Bălcești, curing in this way a painful wound that the GD no. 212 from the previous year had caused*" (Tănase, 2012).

The proof of the fact that this was not just an electoral promise is represented by the repeated intervention of the mayor Ion Curelaru, near the parliamentary members from Vâlcea, after his election as a mayor. Following these measures, he managed to obtain from them the commitment that he will be supported in this approach and that they will even accompany him for the Health Minister meeting. The mayor has already had several meetings with the leader of the county, president of Vâlcea County Council and, in the same time, the leader of the PSD members from Vâlcea, Ion Cîlea, with Georgeta Săliște, the manager of Emergency Hospital from Vâlcea, with the leaders of DSP Vâlcea, and with other decisional factors. There are currently being made efforts, starting with this year, the Town-Hall of Bălcești filing to the Ministry of Health the documents for the reopening of the hospital from the locality. The intention of the mayor is that, on the 1st of August 2015 the latest, to inaugurate the Multifunctional Centre of ER, opened non-stop, that will function near the Emergency County Hospital from Vâlcea (Nicolae, 2013).

We cannot end our discussions about the electoral year 2012, without mentioning the parliamentary elections organised on the 9th of December 2012. According to the information given by the County Electoral Office from Vâlcea, the victory of USL was a clear one too. For Senate, USL obtained 68.39% of the votes, being followed by PP-DD with 16% and ARD with 12.40%, while in the Chamber of Deputies, USL obtained 65.9% of the valid votes; PP-DD – 15.2% and ARD – 14.2%. In the Electoral Body from

Electoral Boundaries: Local Convergence Proof of Policymaking ...

Bălcești, for the Chamber of deputies, the victory was of Dumitru Mazilu, the UNPR representative obtaining 65% of the votes, followed by Elena Holban, the representative of PP-DD, with 20% and Milorad Cumpănașoiu from PDL, with 10,6%. For Senate, in South Vâlcea Electoral Body, Laurențiu Coca (USL) obtained a new mandate of senator, with a percent of 66.3% of the votes, followed by Florinel Butnaru (PP-DD) with 20% of the votes and Ion Oprescu (PDL) with 11,2%. As a conclusion, we can say that on the political map of Romania, there appeared considerable changes after the local and parliamentary elections from 2012, USL being, by far, the great winner. For this time, PDL had to be satisfied with the second position, the democrat-liberals losing an important number of local administrations and county councils.

References:

- Balaban, D. C. (2009a). *Advertising. From strategic planning to media implementation*, Iași: Polirom Publishing.
- Balaban, D. C. (2009b). *Media communicating*, Bucharest: Tritonic Publishing.
- Bărbieru, M. (2013). The elections for local administration in 2012. The results and their validation in Dolj County. *Arhivele Olteniei*, 27: 219-226.
- Bărbieru, M. (2014). The electoral policy in 2012: the local and parliamentary elections from Dolj County (Romania). *Revista de Științe Politice. Revue des Sciences Politiques*, 42: 190-200.
- Beciu, C. (1996). *Politica discursivă. Practici politice într-o campanie electorală*, Bucharest: Antet Publishing.
- Beciu, C. (2002). *Comunicare politică*, Bucharest: Comunicare.ro Publishing.
- Bulut, I. (2013). Some considerations about the new communications paradigme, *CBU International Conference on Integration and Innovation in Science and Education*, April 7-14, pp. 61-67.
- Buti, D. (2008). The winners of the local elections. *Cadran politic*, 61. Retrieved from: <http://www.cadranpolitic.ro/?p=3697>.
- Buti, D. (2012). Local elections 2012. Domination and equilibrium. *Sfera Politicii*, 171: 34-42.
- Dințoi, R. (2012). Ion Curelaru really changed the face Bălcești city, *Viața Vâlcei*. Retrieved from: <http://www.viatavalcii.ro/index.php/component/content/Article/46-politici-administraie/4928-ion-curelaru-a-schimbata-cu-adevrat-faa-oraului-blceti.html>.
- Foux, G. (2006). Consumer-generated media: Get your customers involved. *Brand Strategy*, May 8, 38-39.
- Ghilezan, M. (2000). *Manual de campanie electorală*, Bucharest: Active Vision Publishing.
- Ghionea, G. (2014). The 2012 Romanian local elections. An Analysis of the local strategies, voting choices and final results in Drăgășani (Vâlcea County). *Revista de Științe Politice. Revue des Sciences Politiques* (42), 201-215.
- Mihalache, D. (2012). *Marketing politic*. Retrieved from: <https://marketing-politic.files.wordpress.com/2012/01/dan-mihalache-curs-de-marketing-politic.pdf>.
- Nicolae, I. S. (2013). The mayor Ion Curelaru is going to open the UPU Bălcești on 1th August. *ProExpres of Drăgășani*, 1. Retrieved from: <http://www.publipro.ro/proexpres-dragasani/primarul-ion-curelaru-vrea-sa-deschida-upu-balcesti-pe-data-de-1-august-13672>.
- Pavel, D. (2012). The new repetitive tendencies. A contextual analysis of the local elections from 2012. *Sfera Politicii*, 171: 17-33.
- Pripp, C. (2002). *Marketing politic*, Bucharest: Nemira Publishing.

- Radu, A. (2012). The mechanisms of the local elections in Romania. Continuity vs. Change. *Sfera Politicii*, 171: 3-16.
- Rus, F. C. (2002). *Introduction to science communication and public relations*, Iași: Institutul European Publishing.
- Rus, F. C. (2005). *The progress in the form of interpersonal communication in the political and media*, Cluj: Accent Publishing.
- Stoiciu, A. (2000). *The political communication. How to sell ideas and people*, Bucharest: Libra Publishing.
- Tănase, A. (2010). Four major project opened in the Bălcești city. Retrieved from: <http://www.ziare.com/rm-valcea/proiecte/4-proiecte-importante-inaugurate-in-orasul-balcesti-1821957>.
- Tănase, A. (2012). An important step towards the establishment of the hospital Bălcești. *Realitatea Vâlceană*. Retrieved from: <http://www.ziare.com/rm-valcea/stiri-actualitate/un-pas-important-spre-infiintarea-spitalului-balcesti-3257870>.
- Teodor, B. A., Nicula, V. I. (2012). Propaganda vs. Political Communication – Theoretical perspectives in the information era. *Analele Universității “Constantin Brâncuși”*, 2.
- The Official Gazette (425), 2002, The law no 353 of 6 June.
- The Official Gazette from Vâlcea County (2012). Special edition – II. The results of the local elections from June 2012, 6: 1-43.
- Thoveron, G. (1996). *The political communication today*, Bucharest: Antet Publishing.
- Vâlsan, C. (1992). *Politics*, Bucharest: Didactică și Pedagogică Publishing House.

Article Info

Received: January 8 2015

Accepted: March 12 2015
