

# THE RATIONAL ACTOR MODEL CHANGES IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION WITHIN THE YEARS 2013 -2016: A CASE STUDY

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## **Abstract:**

*The present article proposes to observe what are the changes in the local public administration, through the rational actor model, seen as the model identified as being dominant at this level, based on a research made in 2013. Based on a case study applied to the Vaslui City Hall, the article resumes the research performed in 2013, in the year 2016 in order to highlight if there are some changes in the model, in terms of the actors involved at this level.*

**Key words:** local public administration, actors, decision, rational actor model, decision making process

**JEL classification:** D60, D70, E27, E61

## **1. INTRODUCTION – THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND THE DECISION-MAKERS**

In general, through the public administration we can mean that institutional structure and institutionalised that aims to solve the public problems, to implement public policies, to provide to a community public goods and services.

Ensuring these aims is the preserve of the actors involved in the decision-making process, regardless of their form of organization. Thus, there is not only a typology of the actors involved in the public sector, they may be individual or collective; institutionalised or non-institutionalised; legislatives, executives, legals; central or regional, or local, etc. Moreover, „the level of the involvement of the various actors can vary over time and in different moments of the process of drawing up a public policy may involve new players” (Howlett, Ramesh, 1995, 29).

This is important because, on one hand, the actors are those who determine the institutional processes and mechanisms, on the other hand, their study must be maintained beyond the institutional identity itself, because the latter one has a tendency to put its mark over the identity of each decision-maker in part.

From this point of view, to the public sector, as we talk about the institutional mechanisms and processes, so we have to understand the actors make that processes, who may have their features beyond the institutional ethos.

## **2. THE ROLE OF THE ACTORS IN LOCAL PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION**

For S. Fernandez and H. Rainey, the role of the actors at the administrative level (the local administrative level) is a multiple one, as follows (Fernandez, Rainey, 2006, 168):

- ensure the needs-through the need we understood the need for change of the institution
- to provide a plan – to provide a plan to implement the administrative activities (also those who supposes changes)
- to build a certain degree of support of its activities at the level of the institution
- to take commitments at the highest managerial level
- to build links in support of the institution’s activities with external actors
- to ensure resources for its activities

-to institutionalize their activities.

Beyond these activities that determine the traits of the actors on this level, we can observe that the decision-maker, seen as well as an individually actor, shall be subjected to the administrative environment, and also brings with him a number of features that are activated at this level, with greater or lesser support.

It can be said that "the organizational actors within networks face the challenge of balancing their separate organizational missions and institutional autonomy, strategic priorities, and service delivery protocols with their network collaborative goals and roles" (Kenis, Provan, 2007, 229).

Thus, "the organizational actors must be able to sustain relationships and negotiate successfully in a terrain of multilateral ties with shifting responsibilities and fluid roles within the networks" (Romzek, LeRoux, 2012, 442).

Adding the fact that all of these traits of the actors are specific to the rational actor model, we can add a few dimensions of their work. The rational actor model started from the rational behavior analysis, analysis realised in 40's from John von Neumann and Oskar Morgenstern in „The theory of games and economic behavior" (Neumann, Morgenstern, 1944). After, the researches were continued by J. Savage (1954) (Savage, 1954), A. Downs (1957) (Downs, 1957), Simon, Buchanan and Tullock (1967) (Simon, Buchanan and Tullock, 1967), J.S. Coleman (1973) (Coleman, 1973), Turner (1991) (Turner, 1991), etc. In terms of the actors involved, this model supports the individual to the level of the administrative organizations, the individual seen as an independent entity with a degree of freedom, but supported also as a part of the organization.

We will try to keep in mind all these features at the level of this analysis on the basis of their development over time.

### 3. METHODOLOGY AND SAMPLE

The general working hypothesis. The present analysis aims to operationalise the rational actor model (A. Downs), from the perspective of the actors involved in the decision-making process, based on the results of two investigations since 2013 [1], resumed in 2016 [2] at the level of Vaslui city hall. The present analysis proposes to identify the dynamics of the actors involved in decision-making process, starting from this temporal analysis.

The research sample is made up of 212 respondents, employees of the Vaslui city, meaning about an average of 26.04% of the total population of civil servants from this institution (814). The construction technique of the sample was that of the "snow ball" (Miftode, 2003, 156) (see Table 1).

**Table 1**

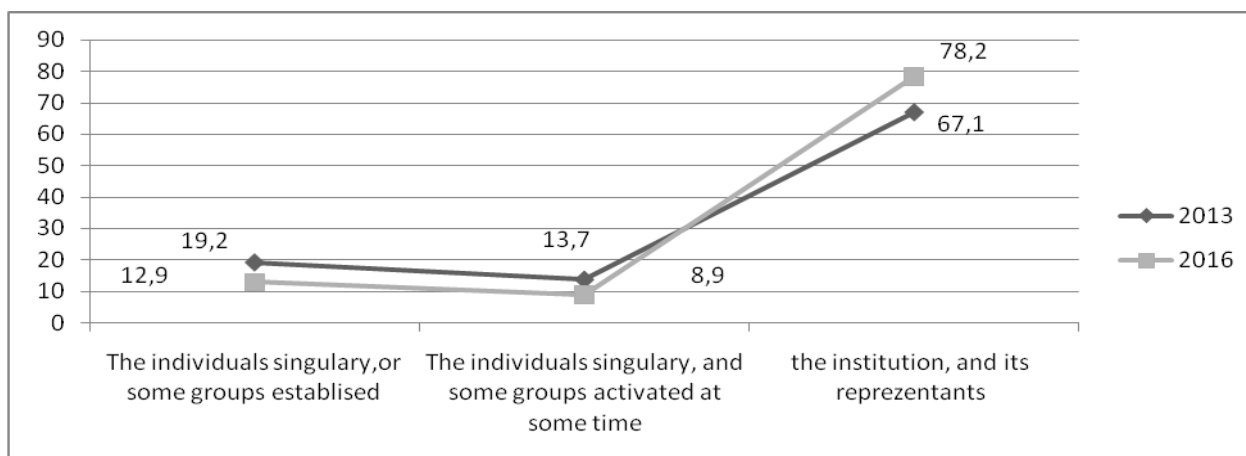
| 1.City hall | 2.No employees | 3.sample |
|-------------|----------------|----------|
| Vaslui 2013 | 407 [3]        | 106      |
| Vaslui 2016 | 407            | 106      |
|             | E: 814         | S: 212   |

The tool used at the level of this research is the questionnaire. It was drawn up to meet the auto-applied technique, having in it content also closed and open questions.

### 4. RESULTS

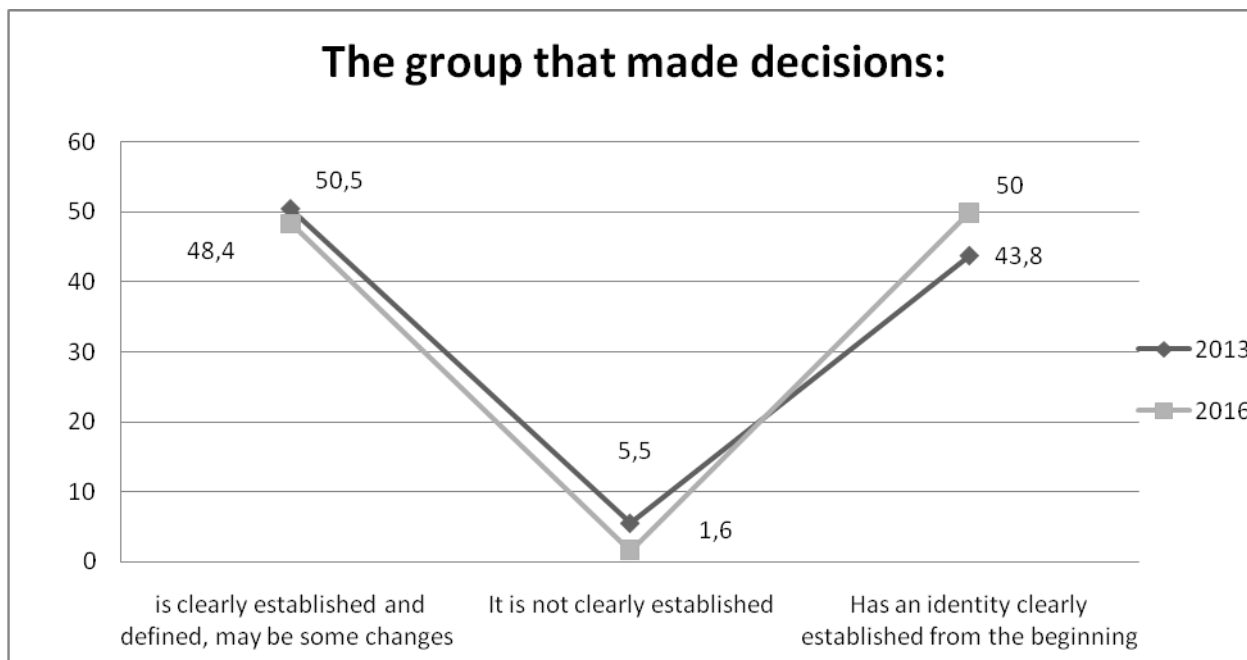
To identify who are the actors involved at the institutional level, in 2013-19.2% of respondents considered that there are individuals or certain groups especially established, and the percentage drops to 12.9%; in 2013-13.7% claimed that the individuals in singular way, and certain groups that may be involved along the process, so that the percentage decrease in 2016 at 8.9%; in 2013-67.1% claimed that the institution as a whole, so that in 2016 to increase at 78.2% (see Figure 1).

If for the first two items of variable 1, the percentages are decreasing with the passage of the time, the third increase in 2016 with 11,1%. In other words, it emphasizes the role of the institution's overall involvement in decision making process in comparison with that of the individual. There is not excluded the actors role at this level, but it seems that the institutional climate is more important and it became more important in time.



**Figure 1 – variable 1**

For the variable 2, we are dealing with an amendment to the order of the percentages of the items. If in 2013, the descending order of items was 3 - 1- 2, in 2016, this is reversed: becoming 1-3-2. Why this is important, because we conclude that in the year 2016, there is the greatest valorisation for decision-making groups laid down from the start, but that may change over time, from those who can no longer suffer any change until the end of the decision-making process (see Figure 2).

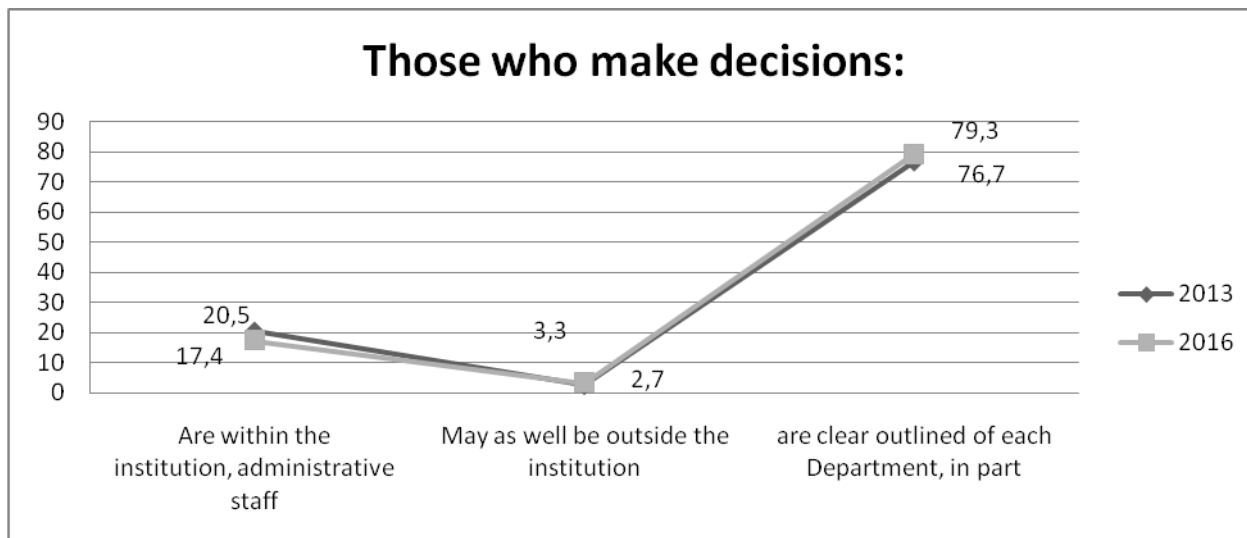


**Figure 2 – variable 2**

This shows a certain degree of decentralization at the level of the group's investment in decision making process in relation to the existing hierarchies at the level of collective administrative decision. It is worth noting that the percentages are very close to both this item for

2013/2016 and comparing the item 1 with item 3 of the variable, which stipulated the strict structure of the group (see Figure 2).

If in 2013-20.5% assert that those who take decisions are within the institution, so that in 2016 the percentage decrease to 17.4%; in 2013- from 2.2% to 3.3% increases the percentage in 2016 for the existence of the external actors; and if in 2013-76.7% supporting clear delineation of those who decide, their percentage rises from 79.3% in 2016 (see Figure 3).

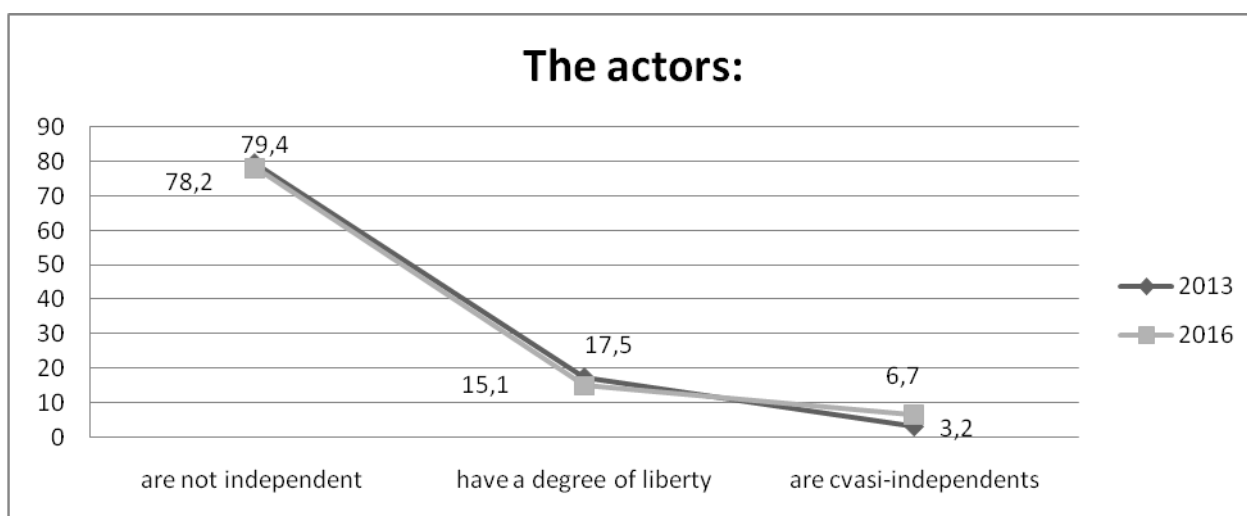


**Figure 3 – variable 3**

It should be noted that there is a certain degree of administrative decentralization, both external, but mostly internal, features that are generally specific to the public space.

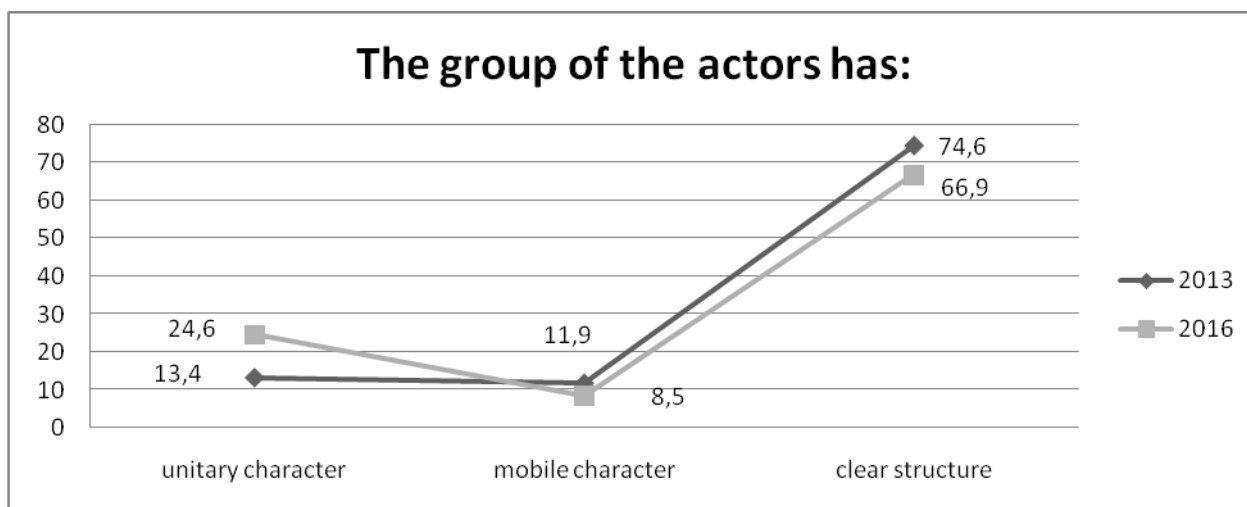
If in 2013 - 79.4% claimed that those who take decisions are not independent, their percentage drops to 78.2% by 2016; in 2013-17.5% claiming that there is a certain degree of freedom, the percentage drops to 15.1% in 2016; 3.2% claimed that they are quasi-independent, so that in 2016 the percentage to rise to 6.7% (see Figure 4).

Thus, the degree of independence of the actors seems to follow the same general dynamics as well as in other of the previous variables: it tends more towards the institutional consolidation, not being totally excluded a degree of decentralization, of freedom.



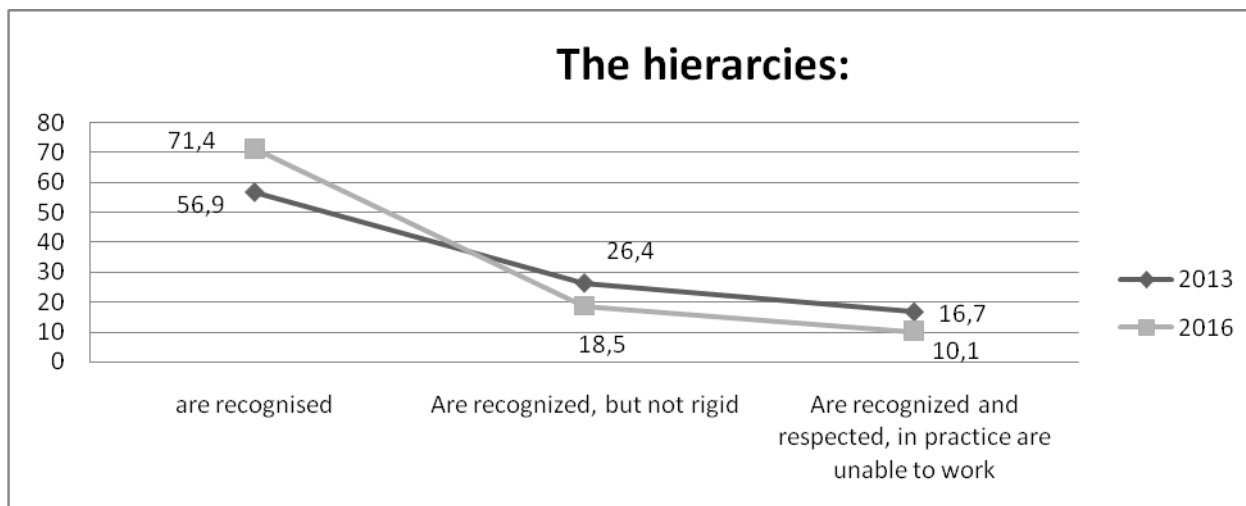
**Figure 4 – variable 4**

According to Figure 5, if in 2013-13.4% claimed that the group has a unitary character, in 2016 the percentage increased to 24.6%; in 2013-11.9% hold his mobile character, then the percentage drops to 8.5%; and if in 2013-74.6% supporting the clear structure, the percentage drops to 66.9%.



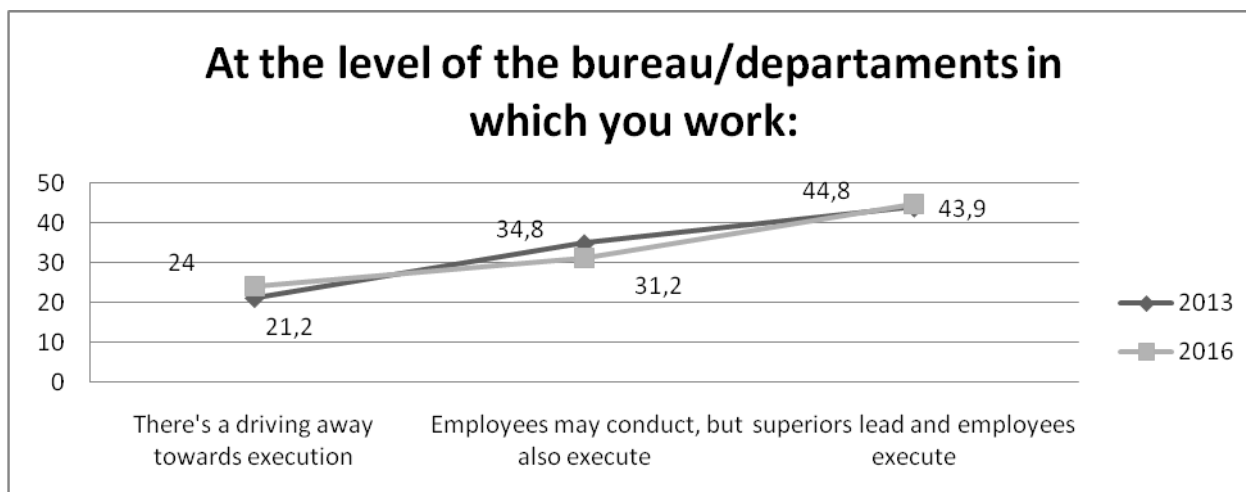
**Figure 5 – variable 5**

If in 2013-56.9% claimed that hierarchies are recognized, the percentage increase in 2016 at 71.4%; 26.4% claimed in 2013 that are recognized, but not rigid, in 2016 the proportion falls to 18.5 percent; If in 2013-16.7%-sustained that are recognized, but in practice they are impossible to achieve, by 2016 the proportion falls to 10.1% (see Figure 6). For all the itemii of this variable, there is a fairly large difference according to their evolution in time, of more than 5%.



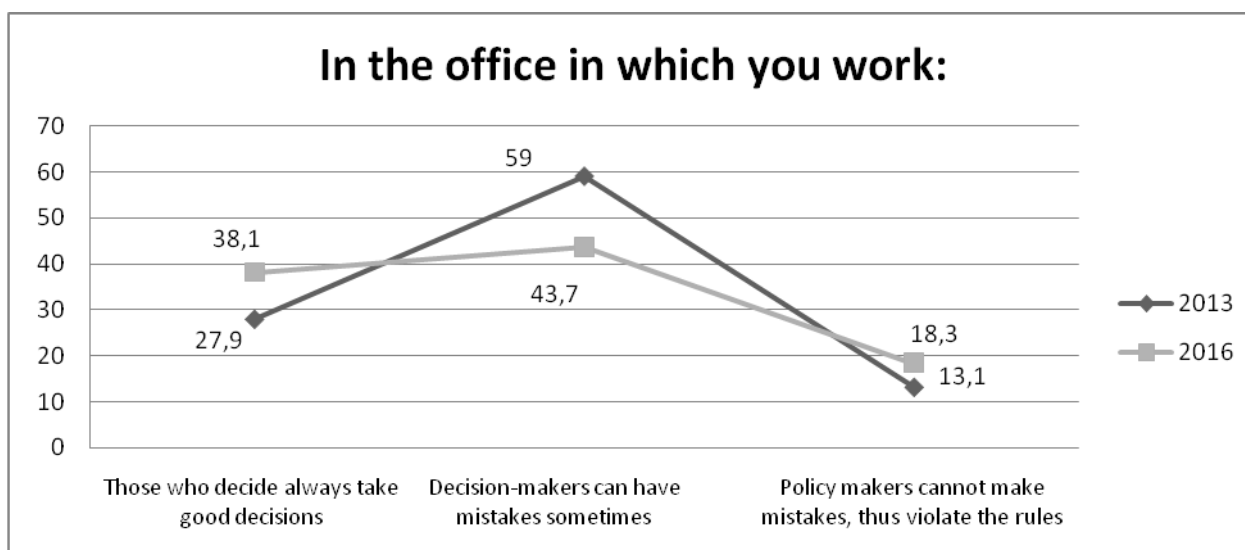
**Figure 6 – variable 6**

If in 2013-21.4% believed that there is a distance between driving and running, in 2016 the percentage increases to 24%; for 2016-the percentage falls to 31.2% for those who believe that employees can drive and execute; and for those who think that superiors lead and servants execute, the percentages are increasing in 2016 to 44.8% (see Figure 7).



**Figure 7 – variable 7**

In 2016 the percentage of those who argue that actors always take good decisions increases (38,1%); if in 2013-59% claiming that actors can go wrong sometimes when they are making decisions, the percentage drops to 43.7% in 2016; and if in 2013-13.1% claimed that the actors can't go wrong as such they would violate the rules, the percentage increase in 2016 at 18.3% (see Figure 8). The whole trend of this variable seems to express that the errors of the actors were increasingly excluded from the decision making level.



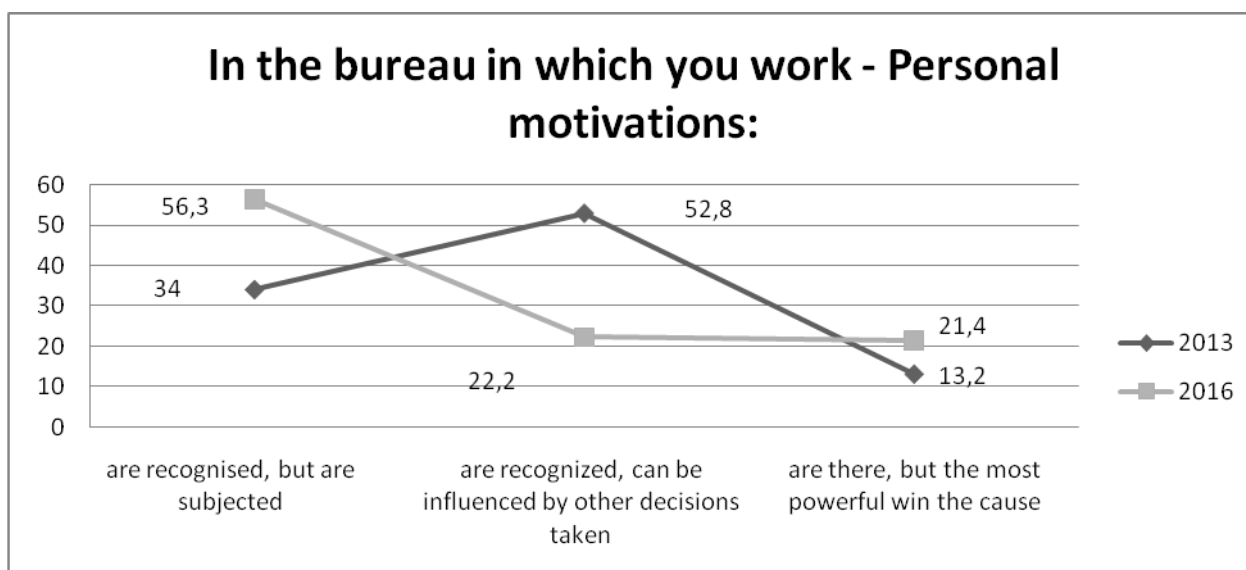
**Figure 8 – variable 8**

For the variable 9, the dynamics over the years 2013-2016 is different: If in 2013 was the most recognized that the personal motivations are recognised and can be influenced by the decisions already taken, in 2016- it matter most to recognize that personal motivations, but there are subjected (see Figure 9).

In this case, for the year 2016, the percentage of those who argue that personal motivations are recognised and can be influenced by the decisions already taken is similar to that of those who believe that individual motivations exist, but the most powerful actor wins.

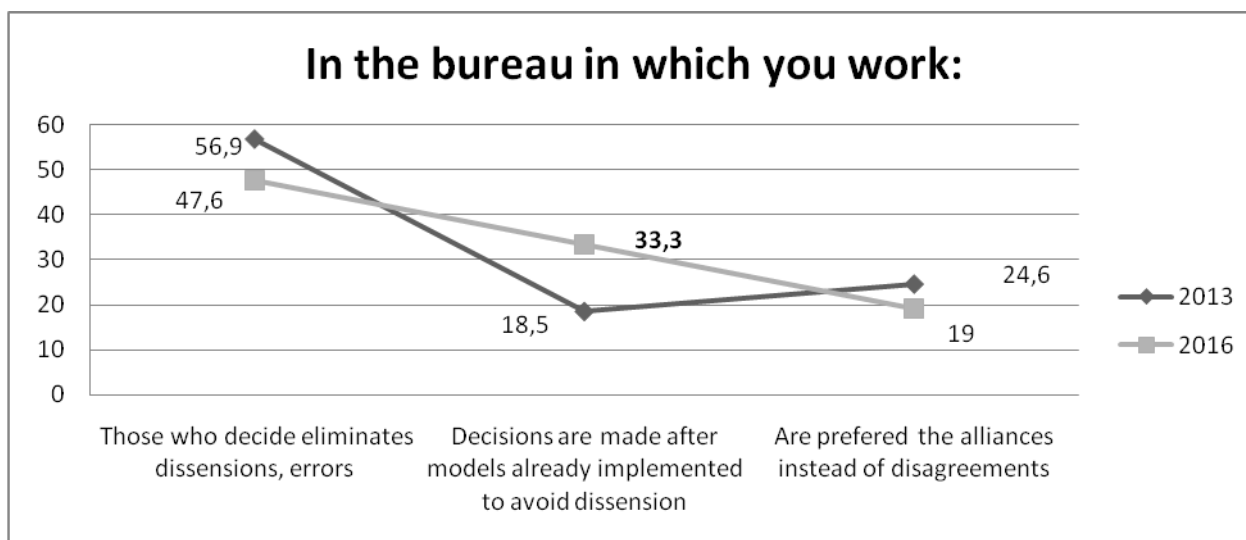
The evolution of this variable produces (as in the case of variable 2) a totally different mutation at the level of general rational actor model. If in 2013, at the level of administrative institution, the items of two variables (2 and 9) showed more incremental developments and of the

bureaucratic organization, at administrative level in 2016, they produce a stronger activation of the rational actor model.



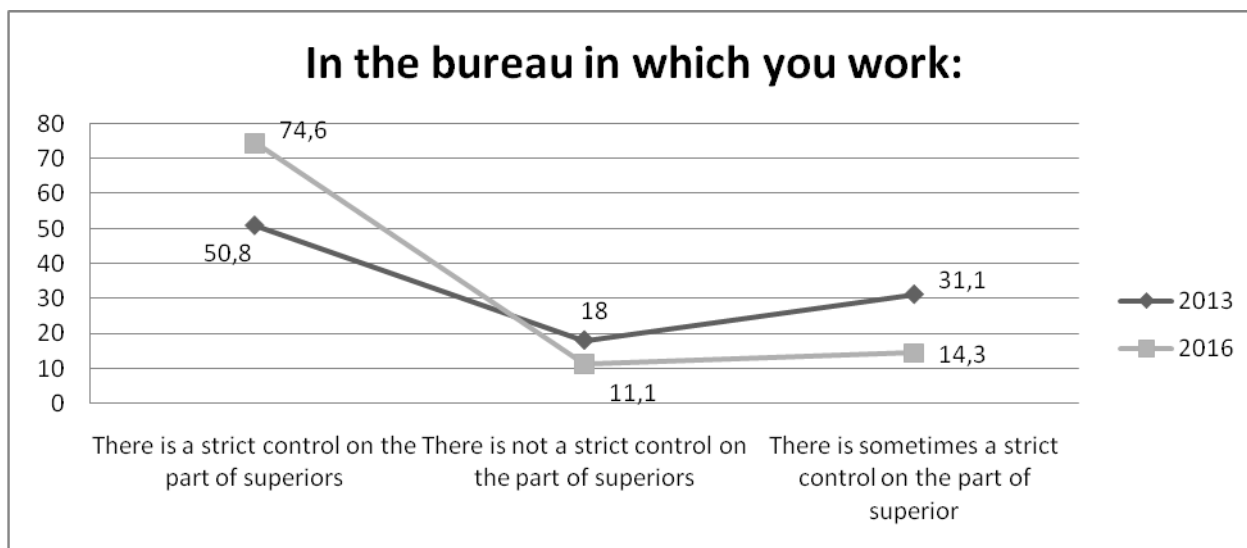
**Figure 9 – variable 9**

If in 2013-56.9% claimed that those who decide eliminates dissensions, errors, in 2016 their percentage drops to 46.7%; in 2013-18.5% claimed that decisions are made after models made in practice in order to eliminate the dissensions, and in 2016 the percentage rises to 33.3%; and if in 2013-24.6% claimed that they prefer the alliances between those who decide instead of the disagreements, so that the percentage decreases then to 19% (see Figure 10).



**Figure 10 – variable 10**

If in 2013-50.8% claiming that there is a strict control on the part of the superiors, the percentage increases in 2016 to 74,6%; If in 2013-18% claimed that there is not a strict surveillance, the percentage drops to 11.1% in 2016; and if in 2013-31.1% claimed that they prefer alliances between those who decide in order to cause some degree of control over employees, the percentage drops to 14.3% in 2016 (see Figure 11).



**Figure 11 – variable 11**

It may be noted that during the three years, the largest percentage difference occurs in the case of this variable: for the year 2016, the percentage of those who believe that there is a strict control on the part of superiors increased with 23.8%. In the case of the three items of this variables, the differences between percentages over years are high: over 7%.

In relation to the rational actor model dynamics at the level of the local government in the city of Vaslui (in this case, the City Hall), we can state that the administrative evolution is not an extremely different one for the variables 1, 3, 4, 5, 7; the variables 6, 8, 10, 11 record at least in the case of an item more visible differences in the evolution of the percentages in the range 2013-2016, and the variables 2 and 9 produce a modification of the hierarchy of the variables items.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

The public administration is in a continual dynamic both locally, regionally or at the national level, which is produced both of the changes arising from the environment and which can have a prejudice to the public sector (in the present case, for example, involving the diversification of the actors coming from outside the administrative institution), and inside the institution, by activating differently the institutional actors.

The present analysis has shown that the local public administration (in this case, the city of Vaslui) is subject to a general dynamics involving both the maintain of a certain degree of bureaucratic centralization, and the granting of a degree much greater to the actors, both the centralisation on the basis of the organisational structure, as well as of a type of freedom of movement of the institutional structures (Office, department, etc.), both the actors recognition and of the decisions of the individual, of the group, or the holistic ones, at institutional level.

It can be noticed that over the years, the local public administration has developed a model of the rational actor with incremental dimensions and of the bureaucratic organization, but in time, the evolution at this level has been one of the rational actor model features, and of the rational logic of the actors.

This evolution at the level of the local government may be assimilated in the evolution of society itself, in the sense of not losing sight of the principles of the marketisation, the application of the principles of the market in the public sector with the aim to measure much more the performances, the amount of the goods and of the services, etc. From this point of view, the present analysis seems to open up a line of the new public management that could be applied (with each institution mostly, in separated cases) at the level of the romanian local public administration.

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