

SOME CONSIDERATIONS ABOUT URBAN PLANNING AND
URBAN LANDSCAPE RELATIONSHIP IN ROMANIA

1. Short introduction;
2. About city/urban planning and urban landscape;
3. Stages and evolutions;
4. Conclusions.

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Abstract:

The article aims to reveal some aspects concerning planning (with its derived urban/city planning) considered a relatively recent discipline and created to deal with a vast and complex array of contemporary urban problems. Some of its dimensions are very used in all systems even their name changed. By this it became relevant both for geographers and for civil servants public administration. The paper purpose is to advocate in a diachronic manner the inter-relationship between the city planning and urban landscape in Romania . The content starts with a short presentation of the sujet in local and the international literature, as a basement for understanding of actual urban landscape approach. The different stages are identified according to political and phisical planning. Planning objective appears to be implemented with a wide variety of tools including traditional planning, zoning and subdivision regulations, and some newer concepts such as urban growth boundaries and conservation easements. The article deal with the response to the question about what type and stages of planning was in Romania and how it works to influence on the urban landscape and the value of urban coherence.

Key words: planning, urban, landscape, Romania.

JEL Classification: R14,R19.

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1. Although the subject isn't new at all, since many studies have been written about urban planning (with its collateral city/town planning) and urban landscape in academic and professional western publications, its approach can be different when the analysis aims at the counties from the ex- communist area. The first main specificity of such a study comes from the fact that the references about the historiography of the problem, as required by the methodology of research, can be difficult. This is due either to the absence of studies or to the way of working out of the existing ones, using distorted, ideologized even utopian information. As a matter of fact, to be more specific, the two key collocations – city planning and urban landscape – have different histories. "City planning" is much more controversial and politicized as compared to the expression "urban landscape" which can be, at most, subject of controversial discussions in the academic world.

The second compulsion refers to the perspective of the research. The specialists' opinions upon the same subject are sometimes so different that they seem to deal with different things. The city is a subject for geographers as well as for architects, sociologists, economists or urban planners but the way they dwell on it makes communication impossible more particularly as they had been given different education that changed their way of thinking. The present paper draws attention to those two aspects as an argument in favor of accepting diversity, gaps and failure that can occur when trying to impose some inadequate patterns, no matter the cardinal direction they come from.

2. The expression "urban landscape" has different definitions, depending on the purpose had in view, inherently on the speaker's affiliation to a certain education, school or level of perception and understanding (Moles, 2000).

No science can claim it entirely but one can see the dominance of the French urban geography (as R. Blanchard, J. Bastie, M. Roncayolo, G. Chabot, J. Tricart), of the German and English schools (as Stubben, M.R.G. Conzen, J.W.R.Whitehand) or of the Italian School of Architecture (as S. Muratori, C. Aymonino). Generally, it is a concept that suggests a spontaneous and emotional-subjective perception of space, still generated by a cultural-social structure (Tudora, 2005), representing, at the same time, the visual context of the daily existence. (Relph,1987).

The Romanian geographers consider the urban landscape a result of a cumulative sequence of interventions upon an urban territorial organism (Turnock, 1987). According to Vintilă Mihailescu, the landscape (the urban one, too) is the totality of external characteristics specific for a territory, the human society being a part of the geo-system as a product and an active

integrated factor that generates change in a landscape (Mihailescu, 1968). Urban landscape is the seen face of invisible territorial system that self organizes at any settlement level and so why the landscape change is a law that becomes one of the elements of his definition (Ianoş, 2000).

For Roncayolo the urban landscape is subject for aestheticism and view in its totality: "When speaking about the relation between society and urban morphology (landscape), two main arguments come in opposition. One of them, that is trying to find the reasons and the laws of development of the city into the city itself, is compared with a structure that develops or stagnates, sensitive, of course, to its environment (the exogenous elements) but following its own logic, the same way as the human being is behaving. (...). The second argument replaces the urban patterns in the historical situation that imposed them; it invites to a research and to an identification of successive layers that compose the city, and it is ready to use the techniques of an urban archeology that, paradoxically, lives on the most violent episodes of demolition and restoration ..." (Roncayolo, 2002).

In our opinion, this one could be the point of relation between urban landscape and city planning. "Town planning, as a series of measures that aims at town transformation, was invented to defend us from our worst tendencies to exploit the others or to put into practice our utopian visions concerning the town by imagining some social, aesthetic and economical solutions." (Relph, 1987).

That definition seems to meet the case of the Romanian system of urban planning. Conceived as an instrument of control and organization of the entire post-war society, the Romanian urban planning has some distinctive features. The first and the most important one, by its effects, is in connection with the very constitution of this field of activity at national extent: the town-centered planning comes after land planning crystallization (Puşcaşu, 2005).

In fact this is a specific difference from the western urban planning. The second main feature is represented by the relation between the two inner planning dimensions: the social and the economical one. The economy subordinates the society although, theoretically, it is quite opposite. The social argument is a means not a purpose of planning. By this reversal of priorities comes out the third feature of Romanian urban planning relevant for the considerations about sustainability: from side-effect of centralist planning, sustainability turns into cause-object of the contemporary planning. The arguments of these sentences are the following.

3.

3.1 The stage of centralized planning

The evolutive trajectory of urban planning from the past century is inserted into the already outlined path of the Romanian spatial planning system whose major constitutive part is. The origins of land planning are situated in the middle of the 19th century while urban planning becomes visible only after the Second World War.

The first stage that was going on between 1948 and 1989 corresponds to the centralized planning period. In the late 40's, following the newly installed communist ideology, one of the post-war national priorities was the building of a national industry based on socialism that could generate an accelerated urbanization. The nationalization of the private property is the first support that the new system uses. As this action starts shortly after the end of the Second World War and the urban reconstruction was also a priority in some of the great cities, these two processes started almost simultaneously. Both of them were carried out without a previous planning exercise because of two main objective reasons: there wasn't a planning survey (for lack of urban planning tradition, consequently of urban planners) and the new system wanted the installation of its own patterns and techniques so quickly that wouldn't offer the opportunity to fill this gap. The urban architecture *is apt to be confused with urban planning. The master plan keeps being a theoretical concept though the idea had been spread since the 30's with reference to an urban master plan of Bucharest (Sfințescu,1930).*

Sketching the relations between architecture, urbanism and spatial planning, Gustav Gusti suggests the rapidity used by the politic system to build up the working concepts and even a law for spatial planning (Gusti, 1974).

In the 50's most of the new buildings are of Soviet inspiration. For the next decades the sources of inspiration vary and the French functionalism mingles with the North Korean megalomaniac pattern. What was left from the old historical buildings was often almost completely destroyed.

In the early 70's the process is intensified by means of a clearly stated law. In 1974, the Law no. 59 concerning territorial and urban planning came with new technical, urban and architectural concepts. The outline of micro-territorial planning and the planning detail (corresponding approximately with the current zonal urban plan and the detailed urban plan establish at a minimal level the urban regulations. But the argumentation is revolutionary: "City planning must deal with the limitation of built perimeters to no more than necessary and with the best use of the land which is a national treasure. Territory and city systematization must take place according to prognosis and on the basis

of specifications given by the national and unique socio-economic development planning and must conduce to the best development of the entire territory, to the superior use of human and material resources, to the rational and well-balanced distribution of manpower, aiming at the organic union between the norms of economic efficiency and the social ones" (Law no.59/1974, art.1).

The text seems flawless. If time could run back some ideas would seem taken from European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP, 1999). But the action put in practice was devastating.

After the 80's, this progress gets grotesque dimensions. Entire villages are demolished; historical centers are mutilated following the application of the same law ("places of residence will be built particularly from downtown to uptown, building high-density residential complexes" art.9).

The industrialization process brings in towns a great number of people from the villages. A solution had to be found in order to balance this phenomenon and an extensive program of building collective blocks of flats was started. This is the case of more than 40 towns with mono-industrial profile whose functional weakness led to their socio-economic failure immediately after the dissolution of socialist organization.

Table 1: Number of towns in Romania during the 20th century

Year	1912	1930	1948	1956	1968	1989	2008
Number of towns	119	142	152	171	183	237	314
Out of which with over 100.000 inhabitants	1	4	3	8	13	19	25

The number of towns will witness a continuous growth (table.1) but their dimensions continue to be small.

The 10th Congress of the Romanian Communist Party and the National Conference from 1972 settled the objectives and the main directions of systematization that had to "ensure harmonious organization of Romanian territory, of all territorial-administrative units, to contribute to the rational and well-balanced distribution of manpower, combining organically the norms of economic efficiency and the social ones, to ensure a plan-based organization and management for cities and villages, according to the general economic and social progress. It must also be concerned with the limitation of built perimeters to no more than necessary and with the best use of their territory, with the transformation of some villages with prospects to become economic and social centers with urban characteristics, with the promotion of the entire socio-economic and cultural life in the villages and with the gradual change of

living condition in villages to meet the city standards" (Law no.59/1974). This is the referential framework for what will happen between 1974 and 1989 in the form of hard political city planning.

3.2 The second stage

Although, politically and historically we consider it as only one stage, a democratic one after 1990, the analysts divide it peremptory into at least two stages according to the dynamic of the legal planning system.

The urban landscape after 1990 is dominated by two opposite directions (Granqvist,1999). The first one is the centrifugal disposition that spreads the town to the periphery generating residential areas of low or medium density (urban sprawl).

Land and real estate retrocession correlated to the industrial decline and the shortage of legal mechanism (planning is still an under-regulated field) generated an impetuous organic evolution. The rigid urban landscape created during the decades of the centralist planning gradually de-structures and it is replaced with a mosaic of urban forms. The city goes beyond its limits by unprecedented suburban forms. A certain urban and architectural indiscipline makes cities development unsustainable.

But the lack of public service infrastructure leads to a sense of frustration among inhabitants that live in that new Romanian suburbanism.

The other disposition is centripetal, producing a hypertrophy of downtown caused by the search of the central place and by the maximum exhibition, following a traditional logic. The same indiscipline insufficiently controlled bursts into the public space generating social and administrative tensions. Day after day the uncontrolled insertions in a frail urban complex change the urban morphology. New buildings force their way through limited and rigid spaces, suffocated by the sameness of the blocks of flats. Thus, new churches, rows of garages and minimarkets are crowded together. During these first years of democracy, the parks and the green areas are the sacrificed in the name of the new urbanism, the same as it had happened with the patrimonial estate in the days of communism.

The regulations are put into practice together with the obligation to draw the master plans /LUP (Local Urban Plans) and the requirements for integration in the European Union. New concepts as sustainable development are formulated (again) together with the law concerning regional development (1998) and with the national spatial planning laws. After 2007, Romania becomes a member of the European Union and thus, it has the obligation to apply the European policies regarding the urban planning and the sustainable development.

Among the most frequent reasons of actual urban landscape, there is some indirect phenomenons that explain its contemporary monotony.

The transformation of the bipolar relationship city-rural area.

This phenomenon is specific to contemporary society and is based on the following observable causes:

- Modern agriculture makes geography and territory design illegible: the local, traditional techniques were given up after the industrialisation process, and as a consequence the shape of the landscape, the roads between properties, the trees on the boundary line, the whole cultural mosaic becomes dull and poorer everyday. The (once) rural territory is taken over with methods and tools that are motivated by economic reasons, but have nothing to do with the culture of place and of setting in place. The villages turn into urban satellites or settlements with secondary residences and holiday houses.

- Tourism (in full progress as a result of the improvement of the living standard, of the development of conveyances, of people having more spare time and not ultimately because of its success as business) changes the geographical space into a consumer product, especially in sub-mountain and mountain areas.

- The traditional big city undergoes changes, engulfed into the agglomeration; the classical hierarchy of social functions and classes vanishes away. The urban management stays under the sign of 'promotion' / economic efficiency (public and private); it becomes a 'market of places' and not a 'place for market'. One can remark that another consequence of these changes is the growing instability of concepts like the 'urban shape' and of the known glossary of public space terms (markets, streets, boulevards, alleys, promenades, squares, parks, quays, bridges, banks etc), which proved to be a very useful vocabulary connecting the city with the history and geography of the territory. Their place is taken by a collection of more or less independent and conflicting programmes having as their primary target the economic efficiency on the real estate market. Moreover, the increasingly independent modern networks cause the levelling out of the arsenal of urban devices, by their measures and requirements.

- The dissolution, compression or expansion of the urban universe, with the correlative phenomenon of the disappearance of the rural landscape – the erasure of the characteristics that differentiated these two worlds give birth to a 'fuzzy' city, to a monotonous scenery. Generally speaking, one may say that the hegemonic outlook of our modern world leaves no place for the elaboration and the development of a set of principles that could maintain distinct the two domains: the city and the rural area.

Suburban and rural co-existence

As compared with the familiar, canonical landscapes of our Imaginary – built up/city- nature/rural area ('in the countryside') – the suburbs/the outskirts of today represent a sort of 'a third world' in which both the city and the rural territory are no longer distinguishable. The '*rururban*' is a neologism used to render the result of the insidious urbanisation process of the rural space, a process that mixes up the rural area and the urban peripheral zones.

The specialists in the field sustain that there are differences between the concepts of '*rurbanisation*' and suburbanisation (that refers to the continuous development of the areas surrounding the city) as well as between '*rurbanisation*' and '*periurbanisation*' (referring to the constant process of urbanisation at the fringes of agglomerations)

Certainly, *rurbanisation* (the same way as the other two concepts) is related to the process of the constant expansion of urban areas and of the growing dependence to the city (or a group of adjacent cities). But *rurbanisation* is a process that is organised around cores of rural habitat, without developing into a new continuous area.

The urbanised areas represent a new stage in the development of the peripheral zones. The population carries out activities connected with the town, often in the town, and settles in these areas by a movement of dispersion which almost always materialises in the building of individual houses. The construction of these houses takes place at the periphery of the traditional village usually by dividing the land into lots that make possible the gathering together of a limited number of families (up to a few hundreds, case in which 'new villages' may appear). The rural area remains the dominant, but the majority of the population adopts an urban life style.

3.3. Urban growth poles – Urban development poles – Urban centers

The identification of cities - urban growth poles and cities - urban development poles was based on the analysis of the relevant socio-economic fields and on the extent that they met the following requirements:

- The economic development potential (the functional specialization degree);
- The capacity of research-innovation (universities, research institutes, excellence centers, scientific centers providing an important amount of high-quality research studies that can keep up with scientific and technologic progress);
- Adequate business infrastructure (industrial parks, incubators, scientific and technologic parks that are in charge of marketing for the results of research);

- Entrepreneurial environment and culture based on the diversity of business relation and on social connections;
- Accessibility (road, railway, airport, harbor);
- The available public departments (health and cultural infrastructure).

The existence or the inexistence of some structures related to the territorial-administrative units in the strategic areas as the example of metropolitan areas, inter-community development associations etc were taken into account.

The 7 cities - urban growth poles (Iasi, Constanta, Ploiesti, Craiova, Timisoara, Cluj-Napoca and Brasov) correspond to some concentrations of dynamic industries where investments have important results on the development of the regional economy. They also have intra- and interregional effects as they are capable to influence not only the economic structure of its own region but also the extent and the intensity of interregional fluxes including territorial distribution of population and of economic activities.

The cities - urban development poles (Bacău, Suceava, Brăila, Galați, Pitești, Râmnicu-Vâlcea, Arad, Deva, Oradea, Satu-Mare, Baia-Mare, Sibiu, Târgu-Mureș) are important administrative centers, connected to the national or the European transportation network, with significant extent of economic development and with important cultural and university functions. On one side, the urban development poles make the connection between urban growth poles and the other small and medium towns comprised in the country's urban system and on the other hand they counterbalance the development of big cities in each region and create favorable conditions for a polycentric regional development, preventing or reducing an unbalanced development within the regions in the context of some regional urban systems pre-eminently mono-centric.

The urban centers are cities of municipal town with more than 10,000 inhabitants, excepting the urban development poles and the urban growth poles.

In this new system of urban distribution and a new urban planning structure, the urban landscape will change rapidly.

4. Ideologists of the past century overlapped their conception about city with some former urban frames, by modifying them, sometimes radically, by juxtaposing new districts or even by creating brand new towns. The new ideology makes no exception. The principles are different but the urban landscape is in a continuous change. During the last two decades, Romania witnessed a change from the quasi-total domination of collective residences consisting of buildings designed on an industrialized

way to luxurious uptown residential complexes, architectural cosmopolitanism and downtown dilapidation.

The dissolution of the socialist regime didn't wipe completely the urban stains, otherwise hard to manage, and the streets uniformity determined by the penury of the commercial network was reduced by the new activities and the high competition. The transition from one mechanism of urban landscape creation to another one became possible first of all due to the adoption of a brand new one. The current urban landscape is cosmopolitan in the big cities and keeps being provincial and unpretentious for the working class for the rest of them.

The relation between city planning and urban landscape is in the planners' hands. The planner can't be anymore a simple professional that makes changes in the site with the only purpose to make the urban or the natural landscapes more beautiful. One of the strong needs of present days is a professional planner, able to generate patterns (theoretical and practical), representative for some organization and planning territorial policies, for some urban development, estate, rehabilitation or modernisation policies.

Therefore he is the professionalized image of institutions or persons that stay behind political decisions. It is a fact that brings into consideration the problem of urban landscape institutionalization. But up to this wish, the urban landscape will change permanently with or without sustainable urban planning.

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