

**POPULATION AND LAND USE PLANNING**  
**(or on the conjugation of Romanian spatial planning components)**

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**Abstract**

*The article deals with two major components of spatial planning. Population, seen as the most important component of spatial planning policy, on the one hand, and changes in terms of dimension, structure and dynamics. The land use planning has also some important tendencies, but not closely related to those of population. In this respect, the issue is focused on the main characteristics linking the two components in the same national spatial planning.*

**Key words:** spatial planning, social planning, demographic X-ray.

**JEL Classification:** R14, R23

**1. Introduction**

Some phrases are so frequently used that any reiteration of their definitions might seem confusing. A relevant case in point might be that of sustainable development, regional development or globalization. Nevertheless, most documents, whether programmatic, studies or reports, often start with a referential of a generally explanatory nature, a sui generis definition. In our opinion, this fact is salutary especially when that particular phrase is “multifunctional” and opens a door for inter- and trans-disciplinarity and, consequently, for multi-definition, as it is the case with spatial planning. Later on, once the field of work is established, the articulation of the comprising parts depends on the purpose of the research and on the author’s professional profile.

The following paper will present the results of the study made on the relationship between two of the major components of spatial planning, i.e. physical planning and social planning, done as a temporal parallelism, anchored into the Romanian administrative framework. The purpose is to identify both the interferences, and the differences of dynamics between the two levels of planning.

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## **2. Common purposes - un-unified concepts**

### **2.1 Spatial planning**

Spatial planning refers to the methods used by the public sector to influence the distribution of people and activities in spaces of various scales. Spatial planning includes all levels of land use planning including urban planning, regional planning, environmental planning, national spatial plans, and in the European Union international levels. There are numerous definitions of spatial planning. One of the earliest definitions comes from the European Regional/Spatial Planning Charter (often called the 'Torremolinos Charter'), adopted in 1983 by the European Conference of Ministers responsible for Regional Planning (CEMAT): "Regional/spatial planning gives geographical expression to the economic, social, cultural and ecological policies of society. It is at the same time a scientific discipline, an administrative technique and a policy developed as an interdisciplinary and comprehensive approach directed towards a balanced regional development and the physical organisation of space according to an overall strategy."

Different authors from the western geographical sphere try to convey a spatializing nuance by means of the definition according to which spatial planning is "the way in which different activities, land uses and buildings are located in relation to each other, in terms of distance between them, proximity to each other and the way in which spatial considerations influence and are influenced by economic, social, political, infrastructural and environmental considerations" (Paris, 2005), or "capital expenditure programmes; the way in which different social and economic programmes are implemented; as well as the management and regulation of land-use change and land development" (Faludi,2003). Finally, the spatial planning is a set of "keys" to develop the territory, the relationship among these being not only summarizing, but also qualitative.

### **2.2 Social planning**

Social planning is a process that helps communities identify strengths and weaknesses and determine ways to improve the quality of life in the community.

The planning of social intervention wishes to make the connection between an undesirable present situation and a future desirable one. The best-known component of this category of planning is represented by family planning, but at the scale of society the planning process is a complex one which implies a good knowledge and understanding of the

problems, of the existing dysfunctions within the social system. According to the approaching manner of the present problem and to the manner of relating to the future, there are four types of approaching the social planning (Brueggemann, 1996): (1) reactive planning; (2) inactive planning; (3) proactive planning; (4) interactive planning.

Reactive planning. This type of planning aims at restoring the past by identifying and removing the dysfunctions. Most projects are based on this logic, to interfere in order to reestablish the equilibrium of the social system. From the perspective of these projects, a social problem is always a social dysfunction appeared due to certain undesirable changes that took place in the system. From this point of view, the most important moments of social planning are represented by the identification of the problem, of the causes leading to its appearance, the removal of these causes and the construction of solutions to reestablish the equilibrium (Cojocaru, 2005).

Inactive planning. Inactive planning is trying to preserve the present by preventing the changes that might lead to the appearance of some dormant social dysfunctions. The present is accepted as such, it is considered as an acceptable situation, and the intervention suggested within the project is meant to maintain the existing structure. Inactive planning does not mean social immobility, freezing in structure considered ideal, but, on the contrary, it is seen as a permanent modification of the comprising elements in order to preserve the existing equilibrium. Inasmuch as social care is concerned, these projects focus especially on preventing the appearance of a new problem or the amplification of an already existing one (for instance, in child protection an inactive project is that which aims at reducing the number of institutionalized children by preventing them from entering the residential environment).

Proactive planning. This form of planning is oriented towards the future, the latter being seen as a sum of opportunities. The change is understood only as a progress and this can be achieved only if it is being prepared. This type of planning is constantly aiming at development; it is focused rather on planning than on solving the existing situations (Gharajedaghi and Russel, 1986), especially by accelerating the events in order to make the desirable future appear. Consequently, proactive planning implies high costs related to research and anticipation (Cojocaru,2005).

Interactive planning. Interactive planning is more flexible and innovative. The purpose of this type of projects is to dissolve the problem, fact which requires a change of the system that is experiencing this

problem, thus being seen as the most efficient manner of removing the problem (Cojocaru,2005).

### **3. Romania – Demographic X-ray and options of social planning**

According to the demographer Vladimir Trebici, Romania entered the demographic transition later than the northern and western countries of Europe, the gap being the result of the delayed economic, social and political development as compared to Western Europe (Trebici, 1996). In the 1930-1940 period, the Romanian population manifested its first great tendency to rise, while during the next period, 1940-1946, it fell as a result of a decreased birthrate and of the human loss caused by the war. The highest growth rhythm of the population of our country was recorded in 1966-1977 period, due to abortion forbidding measures. During this interval the natural growth rates were approximately 3 times higher than the 1946-1966 interval.

The maintaining of an approximately 20‰ birthrate (20 births at 1,000 inhabitants) and of an approximately 9‰ death rate (9 deaths at 1,000 inhabitants) materialized into high natural growth rates, on the basis of which, the population reached 21,914,163 persons in 1978, which meant a total growth of 2,811,000 persons as compared to the year 1966.

As a matter of fact, the 1955-1966 was the period that conspicuously marked these characteristics of the demographic transition in Romania. The significant drops of the demographic variables of those years lay at the basis of the political and administrative policy of sustaining the population growth for the next period.

The 1979-1991 period marks another atypical evolution of the Romanian population, which witnesses a growth of approximately 1,300,000 persons. The continuous decrease of the natural growth rate (from 8.7‰ to 1‰) was due exclusively to the decrease of the death rate which reached 11.9‰ in 1991 as compared to 18.6‰ in 1979. The beginning of the transition process towards a competition-based market economy marked, among other things, the change of the direction of evolution of country's population. Unlike the 1950-1991 period when the dynamics of Romania's population was following a continuous rising trend, starting with 1992 this was characterized by a tendency to decrease. Practically, the year 1991 was the bending point in changing the direction of the evolution of Romania's population. Thus, the 1992-1998 periods witnessed a drop of population number as a result of the accelerated decrease of the birthrate, of the tendency to increase of the death rate, to which the negative result of the external migration can be added. Some of the causes of these

phenomena are the following: the decrease of the living standard materialized into a decrease of the real income, unemployment, inflation, insufficiently developed health services, and the housing problems. The external migration, in its turn, contributed to the general decline of population, to a lesser degree though.

Romania's population has constantly decreased since 1992 from 22,810,035 inhabitants (after the 1992 census) to 21,442,955 inhabitants in 2006.

This drop was mostly due to the negative natural growth rate of the population, as a result of a diminished fertility and low level of birthrate at 1,000 inhabitants. After 1990, the birthrate decreased from 11.8‰ in 1991 to 9.77‰ in 2003 while the death rate grew from 10.9‰ (1991) to 12.3‰ (2003). Consequently, the natural growth rate went from -0.18‰ in 1992 to -2.5‰ in 1996, -2.75‰ in 2002 and -2.49‰ in 2006.

The old age population has constantly grown and in some rural regions the ageing phenomenon is much accentuated. At regional level, only the northern part of the country still preserves a significant positive value of the natural growth rate (*PHARE RO 9907-02-01, Studies of pre-adherence impact*). In 1948 the proportion of persons older than 65 was 5.6%, in 1999 it was 13% and in 2006 it reached 15.60%.

Population's natural decrease is 3 times higher in the rural areas as compared to the urban ones, and the urban areas have a migration 4 times higher than the rural ones. The lower decrease rate of the rural population is explained by the high level of migration from the urban area towards the rural one, especially since many urban inhabitants lost their jobs due to the economic reform (Dumitru, Diminescu, Lazea, 2004).

Population's age structure reveals a *sustained process of demographic ageing*, especially due to the decrease of birthrate, the ageing process being more accentuated in the rural area. Population over 65 in the rural area exceeded the number of the same category in the urban area by 589.826 persons in 2003. The percentage of the old population in the rural areas is 1.47 times larger than the one in the urban areas at the level of the year 2003.

The post 1990 social and economic changes also determined the decline of life expectancy at birth, which was 68.9 years in 1996. Life expectancy at birth and its evolution in Romania witness one of lowest values in the European context. According to World Health Organization (*The World Health Report 2005, [www.who.int](http://www.who.int)*) Romania has been stagnating at this indicator for more than 30 years. In 2002, the average life expectancy in Romania was 7 year lower for men and 6 year lower for women as

compared to the average recorded in the 15 EU member states (Romanian men: 67.6 years vs. 75.2 years in EU 15; women: 74.9 years vs. 81.2 years in EU 15). In the recent years the use of the *life expectancy at birth* indicator has been contested by demographers since a larger number of years lived on average by a generation does not always mean a healthier life. For this reason, *World Health Organization* has recommended another indicator called *average healthy life span* to establish the level of economic and social development of a country. In Romania's case, this indicator was, in 2002, *61 years for men and 65.2 years for women*.

Romania's population is decreasing and, according to all estimates regarding the future evolution of Romania's population, it will keep decreasing at least until 2050. The 2002 census of population and buildings confirmed this decrease and the demographic forecasts announce the continuation of the decreasing trend that began in 1992 with an even greater intensity. This phenomenon of population decrease in our country is also noticed by the studies of The National Institute of Economic Researches. Professor Vasile Ghețău, the director of the "*Vladimir Trebici*" *Demographic Research Center*, sustains the theory according to which by the year 2050 Romania's population will decrease to approximately 16 million people.

This decrease is determined by the decrease of birthrate and the increase of life expectancy. The decrease of fertility is determined by the factors which, even since 1960-1970, triggered the massive recoil of fertility in almost all European developed countries, under the circumstances of social and economic progress: woman's emancipation and her growing participation in economic activities outside the household, the increase of length and level of education, the growing social mobility, the high costs of raising a child, etc.

On the other hand, the new economic and social realities have certainly influenced the descending evolution of the phenomenon: degradation of the living standards, unemployment, uncertainty, stress, changes of attitude and behaviour regarding marriage, birth control, and divorce. The time gap regarding the massive decrease of birthrate in our country as compared to the developed European countries can be explained by the forced pro-natality policies of the old regime.

Another cause of the decrease of Romania's population is the still high death rate. As soon as the living standards, the quality of medical assistance and the access to health services have witnessed sensible improvement, and the population's life style is oriented to a greater extent

towards a good state of health, the reduction of death rate per age and the increase of the average life span will witness the desirable evolution.

*The atypical situation of Romania's population decrease* consists of the size of the decrease, accentuated by the migration phenomenon, especially under the circumstances of a lack of viable statistical information regarding this phenomenon. Moreover, the future evolution of external migration is unpredictable today, being directly dependant on the economic and social evolution of Romania, on the immigration policies of the developed countries, on EU integration.

#### **4. Physical planning and land use planning**

As far as the use of the phrase territory planning is concerned, this may be applied to two distinct situations:

⇒ *in a narrow sense*, with concretely technical significances, of equipping, supplying, repairing or functional improving of a territory (e.g. landed, touristic, forestry, urban improvement, etc.), case in which the consulting and involvement of the geographer differ from situation to situation and it makes use especially of those competences belonging to physical geography (geomorphology, pedology, hydro-meteorology, etc) and/or human and environment geography;

⇒ *in a general sense*, relating to all major sectors of the life of a society (political, economic, juridical, ecological, social and cultural, technical), case in which the involvement of the geographer does not go into sectorial details, but it is based on an action of evaluation of the produced system, in its entirety, situation in which the geographer becomes an "interpreter" of the system, and regional geography becomes the branch best suited for connection.

In this case we witness the direct contact with the other phrases that environmental planning is assimilated with – *systematization, planning, regional policy, regional development, economic and social cohesion policy, etc.*

Each country or region holds its own cultural model which is translated into the manners of intervention upon space and into the characteristics of the created territories. The general meaning of planning has different significances and translations in various cultural spaces, although the common goal is everywhere tot of organizing space, even if the purpose itself is not always defined in the same way. Thus, one can encounter *planning/urban and territorial planning* of American origin, *regional policy* of Scandinavian origin, the former Romanian *systematization, environmental planning* in the French acceptance of the term or the

comprehensive *spatial policy/economic and social cohesion* of European “nationality” in the shape of *European Spatial Development Perspective* (ESDP)<sup>9</sup>. The purpose is the same, the ways are different.

*Urbanism*, that environmental planning is frequently correlated with, has also two different meanings coming from:

⇒ the narrow sense corresponding to a *practical, technical action* with old historic roots, which today constitutes first and foremost the prerogative of the urbanists and architects,

⇒ the large sense, which includes both the technique, and the theory, the science of urbanism, the *political action* and the *analytic enterprise* where competences from geography, sociology, ecology, economy, administration, etc. become useful and which corresponds to the simplified translation of *urban planning*.

*Urban planning*, which has become by generalizing translation *urbanism*, is a component of both environmental planning, and of spatial planning. In this relationship of hierarchy and structuring of some areas that are not clearly separated but, moreover, interfere variably from one system of beliefs to another, urbanism is undoubtedly included in all variants of spatial planning. As it will be shown, urbanism constituted for many times the starting point in the system of actions requested by the planning /arrangement /organization trio, being the end of “Ariadna’s string” in spatial planning.

If we relate the recent history of environment planning to the entire evolution framework of the Romanian society, and then particularly to the changes recorded at the demographic level, we will notice politically generated simultaneities, gaps deriving from different inertias of the two opposing systems and trajectories due to the specific systemic connectivity with external determinants.

## 5. The links between population and spatial planning

Land is an asset. Land is scarce. Land is fragile. Population is an asset. Population is scarce. Population is fragile. These three double statements reflect the basic relationships of humankind with land: social, economic and environmental. Humanity's association with land springs

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<sup>9</sup> ESDP represents the framework for the Community’s and member states’ sectorial policies with spatial impact, as well as the framework for local and regional authorities, whose purpose is to reach a sustainable and ballanced development of the European territory.



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from the enduring nature of land: it is the basis of food, shelter and livelihood. The important insight is to realize that humanity must decide how *negotiable* the organizing principles of the linkages between society and the landscape are. *Negotiable* are the ways in which human society adapts to the constraints given by the natural system, and how people act in the landscape in their efforts to cope with the environmental pre-conditions while satisfying human needs and demands. These interactions more often than not happen in such an unwise fashion that the quantitative and qualitative sustainability of society itself may be undermined.

The provision of life-support systems require interferences with the landscape where the natural resources, like bio-mass, energy resources, minerals, water, land-space, are to be found. Physical interference in the land, like building, clearing and drainage, takes place, and chemical interferences are introduced: thus humanity creates its cultivated life-worlds on the earth.

What is clear is that life-support of the population is a very basic, pro-active imperative expected from the leaders of society. Human activities in the landscape are not only driven by demands for life-support, but also by population growth and decrease in terms of number, and permanent growing aspirations within the social sector. National leaders must secure and facilitate the availability of services that accommodate these needs, as well as giving due attention to hazard prevention.

In Romania, after 1990, the government has not yet discovered that the key to successful local spatial planning, land use management and land development is the establishment of an effective link between the forward planning and development control functions and population. Most of the principles of spatial planning are imported from European territory, but, the exercise is still absent. Traditionally, the development control function is seen as the means for implementing forward planning. In practice though, the functions have generally been exercised quite separately from each other. Historically, government performed development control functions, in the past period 1948-1989, in the form of building regulations, by the Law concerning systematization of settlements and land use planning/1974 before it started doing any form of institutionalized forward planning. Planning requirements were generally superimposed upon existing legal frameworks for development control, having only a negligible effect on that body of rules and regulations. This meant that planning tended to have very limited impact on actual patterns of land development. Significant resources were expended on the making of elaborate plans which had little prospect of ever being implemented,

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especially where their planned outcomes differed from what was permitted by the existing development control rules, such as zoning or town planning schemes.

In order to have a good relationship between population (in terms of number, structure, dynamics) and aspiration and any regulation of land-use, the administration should assume the term land use management including activities as mentioned below:

- The regulation of land-use changes such as the rezoning of a property from residential to commercial use;
- The regulation of 'green fields' land development, i.e. the development of previously undeveloped land;
- The regulation of the subdivision and consolidation of land parcels;
- The regulation of the regularization and upgrading process of informal settlements, neglected city centers and other areas requiring such processes;
- The facilitation of land development through the more active participation of the municipality in the land development process, especially through public-private partnerships.

Land-use management has two main underlying rationales. The first is the widely felt resistance to the idea of uncontrolled land development and the second is the commonly expressed wish by particular sectors in society to promote various types of desirable land development.

The *resistance to uncontrolled development* is motivated by a number of concerns, the precise mix of which is determined by the particular social, economic and political contexts of different times and places. Essentially, however, these concerns include the following:

- Environmental concerns: uncontrolled development of land can have adverse effects on natural habitats, cultural landscapes and air and water quality.
- Health and safety concerns: uncontrolled development can lead to overcrowding and unsafe building construction. Certain land uses can also be detrimental to the health and safety of neighbours.
- Social control: the control of land uses and building types has long been a means of exerting social control, particularly through the exclusion of certain types of person, household or economic activity from certain areas through the application of particular development controls limiting, for instance, plot sizes, plot coverage and home industries.

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- Efficiency of infrastructure provision and traffic management: increasingly it has become clear that where the granting of development permissions is not coupled with the provision of adequate infrastructure and traffic management the consequences can be severe. Similarly, where infrastructure is provided, generally at high financial cost, without taking into account likely and relevant land-use and settlement patterns the opportunity costs to society are very high.
- Determination of property values for purposes of rating: the market value of land is the basis on which property valuation is determined and the extent and nature of the development permitted on the land is a key factor in that determination.
- Aesthetic concerns: the control of land development enables government to prescribe certain design parameters for buildings.

The *wish to promote desirable development* is also driven by a number of different concerns:

- The land development needs of the market seldom match precisely the social and political needs of government: government may well want to promote a type of land development in an area that the market neglects. It then has to take certain steps to facilitate that development or provide incentives.
- Investment promotion: changing the applicable land-use management instruments is often seen as a prerequisite for attracting certain types of investment to certain areas. This can take the form of both relaxing controls in those areas and increasing controls in other areas which might be more favored by the market. These strategies are likely to be linked to local economic development initiatives.

### 6. Conclusion

We conclude that, from a normative point of view, in territorial planning sector, the urbanism plans and the land use planning introduced after 1991 are a new exercise for the local communities. Opposite, the population is already at the end of its demographic transition and the perspectives are not too optimistic. From these perspectives, the two major components have a quite different sense and speed of evolution. The strategic spatial planning is more coherent for at least two reasons: a national experience cannot be lost even if the doctrine changes and the

development strategy preserve the top to bottom component, which is so well-known (and even convenient sometimes) to the Romanians.

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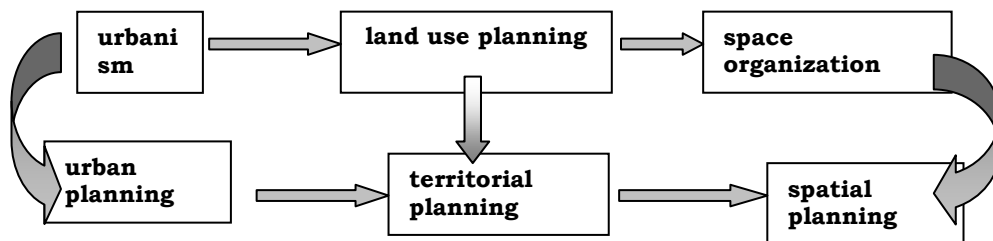


Fig. 1 Double relationship between theory and practice