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CITY PLANNING EVOLUTION – URBAN DEVELOPMENT DIRECTIONS IN THE TRANSITION PERIOD

BY

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Abstract. Urban evolution post 1989 has a series of specific characteristics mainly on a spatial–territorial plane.

Determination of the main developing factors and urban evolution directions (dimensions, rhythm, expansion level, centrifugal and axial character, concentric, centripetal, functional evolution, tendencies and social implications, etc.) represents a necessity and obligation for action from professionals in urban and landscaping fields.

This necessity even arises from the perspective of the need for realizing strategies, planning, documentation and urban studies, which must intervene correctively in the evolution of areas with structural problems and to guide urban evolution towards the main goal, namely the growth in residential quality of life in human settlements.

Key words: city; urban space; evolution; urban development; development directions; urban trends; social purpose; resources; durable development.

1. Introduction

The city can be defined as

a) an area usually comprised by several residential areas, industrial and business areas, completed with administrative functions, concerning a larger geographic zone (Wikipedia.ro);

b) complex human settlement of variable size and industrial equipment, usually having an administrative function, industrial, commercial, politic and cultural DEX;

c) a form of human community characterized by a relatively large number of people, diverse economic activity with a predominance in the secondary and tertiary sectors, and having a high degree of social and institutional organization (Gabriel Pescariu).

2. Urban Settlements

Urban settlements represent a place in which most work resources are focused on non-agricultural activities, with a diversified facility level, exerting a constant and meaningful social-economic impact, concerning the surrounding area (Law 351/2001, section h PATN – network localities).

Essentially any human settlement represents a ground settlement, on a spatial layout of society. In this way any human settlement bears the footprint of defining characteristics given by the social-economic, political and cultural climate. The city represents a social space defined as a spatial setting in which groups live, has a social structure and this groups are conditioned by ecological and cultural factors (Ch.De Lawe).

Taking into account these determinations of the spatially conditioned social settlement, it comes as a second nature for the cities to adapt to the changes in our social structure. The changes in the collective mind, in social behavior, economic, cultural of social groups of urban actors, have determined, as a consequence, fundamental changes in spatial structure of the city and they defined a series of directions in urban development.

Defining factors of urban structural diversification, of their evolution in time and space, are mainly about structural, functional and cultural diversity. Although the urban development objectives submitted in spatial studies and strategies like lowering extensive development, existing anthropic urban structure restructuring, recycling of urban areas, restructuring of the existing spatial technological configurations in durable development directions, the contemporary evolution in Romania fully contradicts this at least on some levels and directions.

3. Urban Evolution Trends

Analysing the past 20 years, we can see two distinct periods in urban evolution. The first is the transition period between 1990 and 2008, accompanied by a whole range of social phenomena, economic and cultural, developed on an undefined spatial support, chaotic at times, and responding nearly all of the time to efficiency rather than a durable and comfort based dimension of urban living.

The second period started in 2008, and stands characterize by the start of economical depression doubled by a political crisis. Also, the difference between the two periods stands only in the rhythm of evolving phenomena. If in the transition period the rhythm of urban development needed a strong spatial

dynamic, without strategic backup, coherent programs and projects on short, medium and long term basis, the crisis period continues, and deepens this phenomena, but nearly favourable, in the sense that offers the involved actors the necessary time for creating and implementing spatial development strategies – urban and territorial (not the understanding this necessities). In this setting of two periods, nearly identical to each other in structure, but developing at different speeds and acceleration (actually acceleration and deceleration) we can distinguish a series of directions of urban evolution.

A first direction is about the urban expansion, the explosion of urban functions in the territory. The development of this urban functions in a great variety from habitations, commercial, services, storage, to production, did not wait for redefining internal functions of the city, of spaces and existing urban landscaping, disorganized, in an accelerated declining process, but they looked for spatial support outside the building realm.

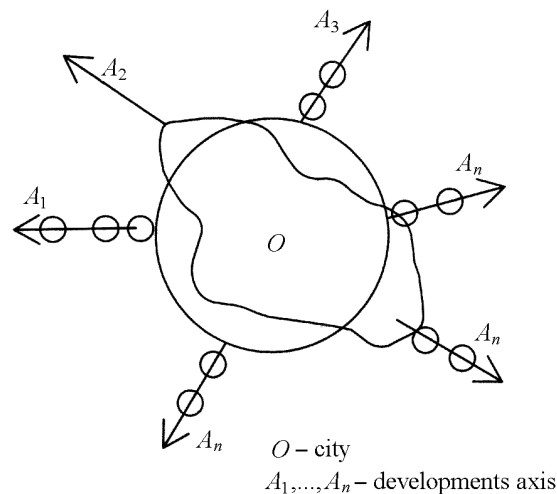


Fig. 1 – Representation of urban axial expansion.

Sometimes this expansion, centrifugal development was done at great social expense and not always located with the necessity of the urban organism in mind. One of the predominant characteristics of this spatial-territorial expansion of urban functions is the form and trends of development. A first level is represented by the evolution and occupation of development directions, generating evolutionary poles, with tendencies towards influencing and justifying future developments (Fig. 1). If we take a closer look at the city of Iași, the main development axis is represented by the direction of national road 28 (DN28) Iași–Târgul Frumos and followed closely by the axis Iași–Vaslui, Iași–Ungheni, Iași–Breazu, Iași–Ciurea.

The second level, which was developed nearly at the same time, is the centrifugal evolution in the area, of some urban functions, especially housing, namely the concentric occupation of peri-urban zones (Fig. 2).

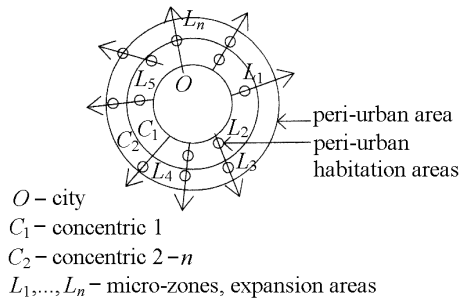


Fig. 2 – Concentric urban planning occupation.

These concentrically developed functions are generally habitation in groups, micro-areas and housing areas. Example – in Iași building complexes like Copou–M. Sadoveanu, I.C. Brătianu, housings in Bucium and Miroslava areas. One characteristic for both types of evolution represents the development with the lack of main urban utilities which give dimension for a durable development: water, sewage system, gas, appropriate means of communication, compatible functions (commerce, education, culture, religion, etc.).

Another characteristic is the explosion of these urban functions (although they mainly damage the city of Iași) on administrative areas, belonging to other entities (ex. Miroslava, Bârnova, Aroneanu, Lețcani, etc.) (Fig. 3).

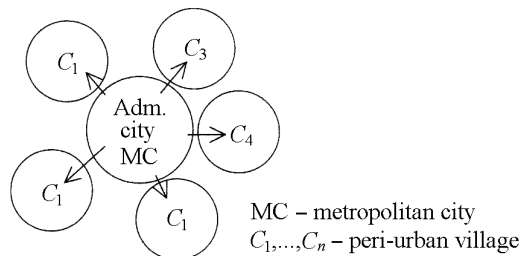


Fig. 3 – Spatial expansion representation.

In this context, the spatial expanding of the city was made including functions (non administrative-judicial) territories in peri-urban areas, belonging to neighboring villages, areas occupied with urban functions but lacking urban facilities (utilities, transport, culture, education, etc.).

This phenomenon is accompanied by a diverse range of other phenomena related to movement and population dynamics, generating transport modules varied in size and time frame. Thus we keep an eye on

- a) workers commute;
- b) transportation to commercial areas school and pre-school commute;
- c) weekends transportation to cultural, fun and leisure activities;
- d) transportation to intercity and international transport nodes: train stations, bus stations and airports;
- e) transportation for different administrative and judicial needs, etc.

I would like to emphasize a constant and important urban phenomenon in inhabited areas. The tendency (natural when 80% of people in Iași, used to live in collective apartment buildings) of housing system development per lot, coupled or (seldom) rows (Fig. 4). This phenomenon is a great spatial consumer, to the detriment of natural landscape and terrain used in agriculture or other purposes.

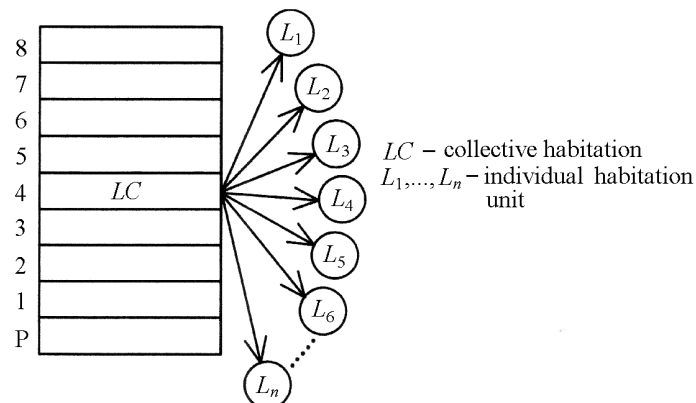


Fig. 4 – Evolution of urban living trend.

This first urban development phenomenon is simultaneously reduplicated by a complementary phenomenon, equally accelerated and present in our cities.

Until now I have discussed about centrifugal development; now we define the phenomenon of centripetal development. This phenomenon is characterized by the following aspects:

- a) functional modifications;
- b) functional adaptations and restructuring;
- c) functional implementation: thickening;
- d) overlapping (overbunking);
- e) expansions.

This phenomenon takes place on the entire urban city area but especially in the downtown area, in areas with central features, in areas with great development potential. In Iași this phenomenon is summarized by transforming habitation spaces in offices and services all around the first floor of apartment buildings, positioning of commercial modules on the main axis of

circulation, the occupation in great percentages of free areas, demolition of constructions with lower heights and erecting medium to high buildings, reassigning first floor spaces in apartment buildings (commerce, services, banks, etc.), outcasting cultural functions (cinema, bookstores, etc.) in peripheral areas.

A peculiar instance represents placing supermarkets and hypermarkets in downtown areas. Iași was one of the “beneficiaries” of such placing, in relatively central areas of these functions. The consequence wasn’t late to arrive. Placing these functions downtown succeeded to destroy a part of the small boutiques and neighborhood shops commercial network, with their charm, but especially it destroyed the nature of these commercial avenues as social contact areas. The social life, the conscience of belonging to a community, the conscience of the existence of a personal urban area with its traditional features, of the legacy and conservation of habits and specific behavior aspects, was replaced by the globalization, standardization and the maximum efficiency phenomena. These phenomena are accompanied by the centrifugal development, by a cohort of adjacent sub-phenomena to the type of concentration, the dilution of urban functions, of social contact. If the central areas heavily concentrate the town’s life, there are areas (some with tradition) transformed in peripheral or extremely peripheral (without mentioning the peri-urban areas) which if they won’t become the object of some social, economical, spiritual restructuration programs, on a spatial-territorial support, are condemned to involution, to a quality of life degradation, in between their limits. Other consequent phenomena are defined by the quality vs. quantity difference (ex. Offices – in the first phase, any space was arranged seconded for this type of function, later special structures are buildly for offices), functional increase and decrease (commercial function increase – hypermarket, and habitation dilution in the central zone).

The horizontal-vertical binomial is another characteristic of contemporary urban development.



Fig. 5 – Aereal view – central zone, Europa Hotel.

Thereby some functions – especially commerce, services, storage and economic have gained horizontal spatial and volumetric expressions, others imposed (by force) a vertical development. The issue with high rise buildings in

Iași has a distinct place, determined by the spatial configuration of the city, placed on two elevation levels, namely

- a) cornice – the traditional geometric birthing place of the city, of urban significance, of perception;
- b) the under cornice areas, with great development potential for putting forward the cornice by altimetry and silhouette.

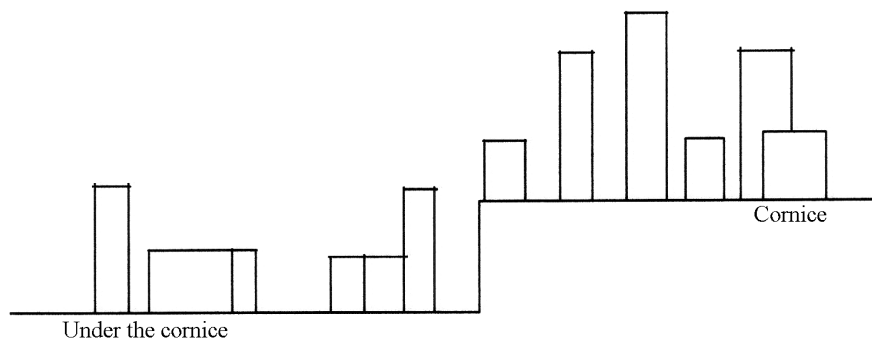


Fig. 6 – High buiding phenomenon in Iași.

The phenomenon of tall buildings is on the rise, in Iași, the magnitude of this projects is random, dictated by the necessity of efficient capitalization or extremely efficient in using the potential on terrains owned by urban actors (especially private sector, developers, realtor agencies, investors, business men, international corporations, etc.) (Fig. 6).

If the cornice emplacements in analysed areas by means of strategies, studies, developing programs, or in access areas of the city (Nicolina, Copou, Păcurari, etc.) which constitute sub-highlights of urban spaces is understandable, not understood and unacceptable is the placement of high rise buildings in areas that undermine and damage the cities silhouette (Fig. 7).

Other directions of urban evolution which appeared in the two stages of urban space evolution, could be highlighting the extinction of certain functions in the detriment of others, newer functions that didn't exist before (wholesale stores, hypermarkets, etc.)

The entire spectrum of urban phenomena had a series of consequences or has gained momentum based on real trends. In this respect we can mention

- a) The structuring of mental and behavioral adaptation faced with the new spatial, territorial, social, economic and cultural conditions.
- b) Structural phenomena and destructuring of existing urban textures.
- c) The change in urban, cultural, and traditional landscapes, which give way in the face of globalization, a phenomenon generating new spatial and aesthetic landscaping, in the continuity of tradition, inherited, imagined, lived, reflected and projected in the existing public consciousness.

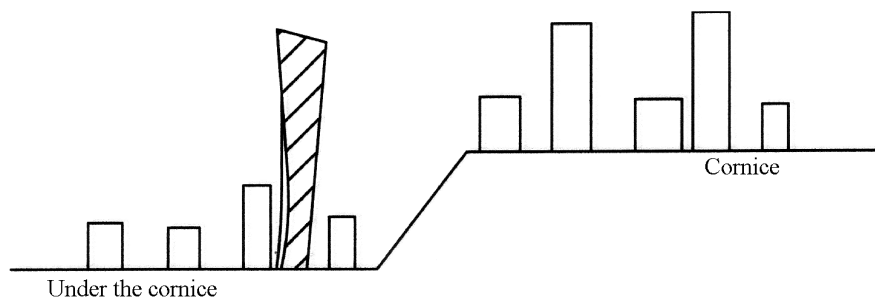


Fig. 7 – High buiding phenomenon in Iași.

Infact this level of globalization requires as a tendency two levels and namely

a) the level of adequacy and overlapping adequacies, additional natural over the traditional urban structure perceived by the subject (social groups, individuals) as an essential , known, friendly and specific matrix;

b) the level of irreparable damage, alienation of spatial succession in the network of public and traditional private spaces, of great importance in the existing cultural landscape (for instance emplacement of hypermarket functions with a traditional urban texture).

This phenomenon of globalization in the spatial and territorial evolution of the city doesn't take into account the rate of consciousness adaptation, buildings, urban implementations of the new development trends.

There are great discrepancies of speed in adapting to new urban phenomena related to

- a) Education.
- b) Level of culture.
- c) Professional training.
- d) Age.
- e) Assimilation capability.
- f) Adaptability.

It can be said that the adaptation speed of individual and socio-cultural consciousness is in rhythm disadvantaged vs. the phenomenological reality of function dynamics, models, methods, procedures and materials used in urban development, functional development, and spatial–volumetric development.

Another development direction of great importance for the urban phenomenon is given by the use of national resources. Among the top resources is space, territory, the necessary terrain of urban settlement expansion. Terrain occupation is no longer a problem of human developing, but more so of durable development in the respect for future generations, to the environment in which we live in, and our children.



Fig. 8 – Aereal view – Podu Roș.

A great aspect of city developing direction is the metropolization phenomenon (Fig. 9). This phenomenon represents urban development based on

external administrative entities, thus cooperation and cohabitation in that system implies a biunivocal relationship.

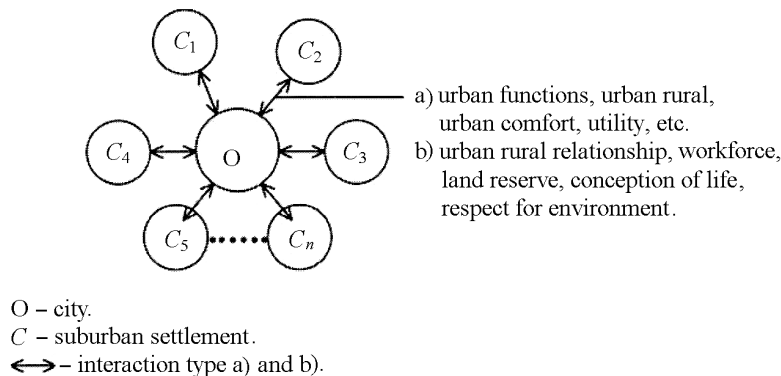


Fig. 9 – Metropolisation phenomenon.

The main resource of urban space, besides terrain, is the labor force, and the benefits in that relationship being represented by (urban services)

- a) utility;
- b) transport;
- c) education;
- d) culture;
- e) healthcare.

Besides all of the above, another dimension of great value, is the management and maintenance of green spaces as an integral part of urban structure.

The metropolization phenomenon – metropolitan areas – must consider a management adapted to urban–rural cohabitation, oriented towards feasible, realistic and beneficial objectives for both parties involved, namely

- a) peri-urban rural restructuring in regard to resources and natural and human capital;
- b) limitation of urban expansion to functions and utilities, urban services by preserving rural individuality and characteristics;
- c) avoiding social and economic isolation of peripheral rural areas;
- d) eco-systematic approach to management practice in the metropolitan area;
- e) the concept of diversity as a vital operational principle.

These objectives are feasible taking into account a series of two-way action that will lead to

- a) increasing functional integration;
- b) metropolitan system integration with the regional, national, European system;
- c) increasing the competitiveness of the system.

4. Conclusions

Finally, contemporary urban development requires an urban structure adjustment and its reorganization based on the analysis of relationships between urban system elements, realized by

a) The evolution in time of local urban relationship caused by the process of adaptation to urban space.

b) The processes of adapting existing urban relations to the needs requirements appeared during development.

c) Introducing the new urban context of new relationships required by contemporary evolution that are not contradictory but complementary in relation to existing relationships and socio-cultural and economic context of existing and budding.

Inevitably we are witnessing a process of fundamental transformation of urban structures, a process that requires knowledge, understanding, self-regulating and constant control.

“To change means knowing well the existing fund” (Octav Doicescu).

Changes, transformations, adaptations to urban body evolution and contemporary society competition doesn't have to do with sacrifice essential for efficiency and comfort of living. Urban development and the evolution of urban functions have to consider at least two aspects namely: a) the delivery of the social comfort and efficiency (the ratio between social community effort for investment and change and the sum of social qualities) and b) achieving economic efficiency through economic development (quantitative and qualitative) in relation with social and global investment effort.

The last to be followed in defining, knowledge and action on trends of urban evolution must be quality of life for city residents through planning, restructuring, implementation, monitoring and control of spatial and territorial effective development.

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EVOLUȚIA URBANĂ – DIRECȚII DE DEZVOLTARE URBANĂ ÎN PERIOADA DE TRANZIȚIE

(Rezumat)

Evoluția urbană post 1989 are o serie de caracteristici specifice mai ales în plan spațial, teritorial.

Determinarea principalilor factori de dezvoltare și a direcțiilor de evoluție urbană (dimensiuni, ritmuri, nivel de expansiune, caracter centrifug axial, concentric, centripet, evoluție funcțională, tendințe și implicații sociale etc.) reprezintă o necesitate și o obligație de acțiune a profesioniștilor din domeniul urbanismului și a amenajării teritoriului.

Această necesitate apare și din perspectiva necesității realizării strategiilor planurilor documentațiilor și studiilor de urbanism care să intervină corectiv în evoluția zonelor cu probleme structurale și să orienteze evoluția urbană către scopul principal al acestora și anume creșterea calității vieții locuitorilor din așezările umane.