
SUBURBAN LANDSCAPES IN ROMANIA

FROM ‘FORTING-UP’ TO ‘INFORMAL-UP’ AND LIMITS OF PUBLIC ACTION

**Bogdan Suditu^{*1}, Mariana Nae¹, Sivi Neguț², Liliana Dumitrache¹
and Aurel Gheorghilaș¹**

¹*University of Bucharest, Nicolae Bălcescu Av. 1, Bucharest, 010041, Romania*

²*Bucharest Academy of Economic Studies, Piața Romană 6, 010374, Bucharest, Romania*

(Received 20 November 2013)

Abstract

The transformation of (sub)urban spaces in the former communist countries was dependent on multiple driven factors and know how of all actors. Fragmentation and heterogeneity of urban and suburban areas can be studied only in the context of globalization and cultural paradigm change related on housing of living and ownership status. Urban planning process involves the presence of power relations and its political and conflictual nature. This article aims to extend its contribution to literature residential developments, emphasizing the effects of uncontrolled urban development and change options for individual housing residents, the ideal type of post-communist Romanian society, and therefore inconsistencies and challenges of the legislative framework for private and residential mobility.

Keywords: suburban landscapes, urban planning, housing tenure, limits, public action

1. Introduction

Post communist transformation of urban spaces, associated with the challenges of economic restructuring, followed the same pattern generating institutionally and structural adjustments since the privatization and difficulties in restitution of properties. The effects of these changes, especially in the 1990s, were translated into inadvertencies on restitution properties, difficulties in updating the urban development plans, legislative instability and weak governance.

In almost all post-communist countries, the development practice in urban planning in the 1990s was considered liberal (central government) and highly individualised ad hoc decision by local politicians. „Current urban changes in CCE capital cities have been associated predominately with changes in land-use patterns and the physical upgrading of built structure, influenced by the

* E-mail: b_suditu@yahoo.fr

restitution of private property, privatization process, and the activities of foreign agencies.” [1]

This article aims to extend its contribution to literature residential developments, emphasizing both the effects of uncontrolled urban development and residents’ options changes for individual housing, as ideal type of post-communist Romanian society, and inconsistencies or challenges of the legislative framework for private and residential mobility. It also tries to explain the effects triggered by the changes and transformations on housing policies and urban planning. First, there will be explained and described the deficiencies in urban housing urban policies in the former communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe, and particularly, in Romania. Secondly, we will focus on the effects of restructuring urban housing policies, paying attention to the absence „of tenure choice and affordable rental housing and tenure – secure” [2].

The expansion of the residential space is associated with the pace of housing construction and with the implementation of housing policies across different urban regimes specific to Romania. The particular context of Romania modernization created both the opportunity of cities multiplication and of housing policies implementation. Ruptures were significant between the community and society, between transition and modernity trough a massive deconstruction process [3]. The gaps between villages and towns remain important in postmodernity condition. We still speak of the inertia of the village and the dynamism of the city, of the internal orientation regarding the rural communities and the exterior orientation in case of the city [4]. Local community and family are essential sacral referential frameworks and the church conserves the local identity role. Rural societies present specific characters against secularization, resistance to change and relatively unwieldy access to the stimuli of modernity [5]. For the rural peripheral communities, the Church had a decisive role because it had authority, a clear status, and precise rules of operation and was indispensable to the existence of human beings. Moreover, it filled the structural gaps when other institutions were absent [6].

By the end of the communist period, the housing policy changing and its related ideological concepts determined profound changes in rural fringe of the big cities. The residential development in the post-communist period contributed to the intensification of urban–rural relations, leading to the modification of the latter, to its differentiated valorisation and, ultimately, to different forms of suburban developments.

Over the past two decades, residential processes were rising with their extensive territorial manifestations. The size and intensity of flows have led both to the production of new spatial and functional realities, and to the building of new relations within the suburban areas. Legal restrictions removing and the liberalism expressed in urban housing policies of Eastern European states have allowed the rising of new residential blocks in urban-rural fringe and the change of old functions’ residential manifestations of those spaces. The new residential developments are functionally related to major cities, being, at the same time,

the outcome of their socio-professional changes, and the effect of the lack of integrated planning policies of suburban and metropolitan areas.

During the post-communist period, the residential areas surrounding major Romanian cities were transformed and moulded under the pressure of residential mobility and the acquisition and construction of secondary residences by urban dwellers. Residential mobility and the new forms of housing territorialisation triggered the urban expansion and reconfiguration of the forms and functions of localities affected by this phenomenon. In the context of new urban-rural relationships, one can identify elements that contribute to the foundation principles of new residential geographies in the suburbs of the large cities in Romania.

2. Suburban residential landscape during the communism – espaces vécus and territories of exile beyond the urban boundaries

The nationalization of housing is considered by Chelcea as a special kind of urban process [7]. The socialist housing policy was based on the idea of abolishing private property, and therefore the ownership status pose a significant challenge. Confiscation of property was done according to the Decree 92/1950 covering all properties belonging to former industrialists and employers „to ensure proper maintenance of the housing stock subject to degradation due to the sabotage of the big bourgeoisie”. In the new nationalization of all productive forces and the imposition of centralized planning and intervention, the territorial and principles policy development of cities and villages from the communist period have led to the creation of distinct spatial structures without the possibility of interfering or creating forms of mediation spaces in the contact area. The standing concern for farmland preserving, eventually its extension, had the effect of limiting or reducing of built-up area for housing construction within the plots of the administrative territory of towns and villages. The first act that clearly sets limits to any city in Romania is the Decree 545/30 December 1958, which prohibits any construction outside the outline established by systematization act. The work projects of urban planning were known as ‘systematization projects’. They clearly and strictly stipulated provisions relating to the ‘socialist reconstruction’ of villages and towns, which led to an obvious difference in landscape between villages and towns, even if they were settled in a neighbouring relationship.

The signal for the restriction limits of built up area was given since 1960, when general and specific rules of centralized planning stipulated among others that urban plots will be designed as: a) territories or built up area with buildings with access by streets fitted with minimal public utilities, namely paving and lighting grids; b) single family plots located on the outskirts of the city, which have been approved by the Decrees no. 221/1950 and no. 144/1958, if the plot had more than 30% of the coated batches of housing construction. According to the legislation of communist era, home property land in towns and cities which, according to the outline of systematization, were not necessary for the execution

of general interest works, could be used for the construction of private housing. With compliance of outlines and details of systematization regarding the height regime and taking into account the shape and size of the land, it was allowed to build only housing construction with more dwellings. It is the document that confirms the end of the 'freedom' to build single houses in Bucharest!

The Law no. 19/1968 related to the legal regime of land without construction in built up area of cities and towns declared that all lands without built up area are unavailable and expropriated, whether they are owned lands by natural or legal persons. This regulation, according to a preamble of the law, was initiated "to systematization and building housing, as well as stopping the speculation of land without construction in the built up area of towns and cities". Unavailable land could not be alienated or encumbered; the real owners could preserve their possession and use, and could be transcribed by inheritance. The law recognizes the owner's right to build a personal home and for his family on the land available, with the conditions provided in the systematization plan, and to build it within two years after its authorization, a term which may be extended by one year to the completion of works. The promotion of those regulations represented the signal for a new approach to the problem of housing living, and the management and reorganization of the territories of the urban areas in Romania.

The development programme of localities, subsequently moulded on the Law of systematization nr.58/1974 related on planning of urban and rural areas, required functional zoning of land use, a density of buildings so as to achieve efficient urban development, and at the same time to reduce the plots area within settlements. Efficiency of land use of urban area plots was spatially translated by restrictions on construction dwellings. It also stated that "the acquisition of land in urban and rural plots areas is allowed only by lawful inheritance, being prohibited the alienation of these lands by legal acts". By this act, the possibility of access by purchasing any free land in Bucharest of other citizens who had not "permanent residence permits" in Bucharest became quasi-impossible. Limitation of access to buy land or homes in outlying areas was accompanied by local delimitation and systematic enrolment documentation of the "future demolish areas", by the popular councils.

3. Peri-urban spaces in the modernization, demolition and fortification process

The systematization aimed among other things to limit the spatial expansion of cities and villages, imposing clear limits without any opportunity to develop neighbouring relationships and forms of habitat to their limit. The last three decades of communism contributed to increase the gap between cities and villages, the reconstruction of each habitat type being controlled by strict rules imposed by the communist state. Between 1975 and 1990, the built space limits of villages and towns in Romania will no longer expand. In many towns and villages new residential construction of 'Block-houses' were made by the

demolition of single-house areas. In villages, the law of regarding the systematic development required that the action is following the systematization rules: grouping households from small villages into villages that have prospects for development, the rural localities with the best conditions for development to be converted, in a period of 10-15 years, into economic and social centres having urban patterns. The new buildings usually had two storeys. In some cases, by redrawing the public space of the village heart, the new Civic Centre took the place of the Church!

The housing living condition, approved by the communist ideology, was common to the collective habitat, in urban blockhouses. As during the communist period, for the 'working people, builders of the Golden Age', the designated habitat was the city, it benefited from investments and funds for housing construction. Conversely, the village became a space of the 'others', a retrograde space for farmers or for those who failed to integrate into the new 'socialist order'. Lifestyles of housing living conditions in the city or in a village were very different.

Functional and ideological differences lead to a negative perception, derogatory on rural areas, which in practice translated to a lack of public investment, constant political pressure, and ideological replacement and transformation of rural habitat type. These processes were valid for all villages and towns in Romania. Administrative and political-ideological barriers of the city - regardless of its size - made it an absolute centre, turning villages into some economic and social periphery, even if they were situated in the vicinity of large cities. The strict rules imposed by the state on the extension built space created clear limits for each type of habitat, limits which were transformed into hard barriers to cross. Social distances between cities and rural landscape became increasingly larger in recent communist decades, even if the physical distances are only a few kilometres.

During the communist period, the residential suburban landscapes developed and transformed under the influence of a series of public policies aimed at:

- Limiting the residence permits within the cities;
- Mandating a single family for real estate properties - this resulted in the impossibility to purchase a possible second residence;
- Enacting rules to purchase houses and land (Law 4/1973 and 58/1974), which actually limited the possibility of purchasing land. It also stated that "the acquisition of land in urban and rural plots areas is possible only by lawful inheritance, being prohibited the alienation of these lands by legal acts";
- Implementing of systematic planning - this established the 'viable' villages and proposed several villages to become towns. Following this policy, many villages in the suburbs of large urban cities have changed, by their centre demolition in order to make place for a new 'civic centre', by the demolition of significant parts to construct modern buildings or even by their entirely destruction.

- Limiting the permit residence within cities – this determined the accumulation of migrant populations in suburban municipalities situated along their penetration corridors.

4. Residing in rural surroundings - constraint or opportunity

Although it had already begun to be implemented, the measures relating to the evacuation of homes and home setting was covered in 1950. The series of measures aimed at securing domicile, compulsory for all those affected by the Decree 83/1949 on the expropriation of estates, limited the access in major cities of the ‘elements hostile’ to the regime and continued by promoting HCM nr.1154/1950 on the establishment and residence in the crowded centres. According to the mentioned regulation, the following cities were considered crowded centres: Bucharest, with an area of 20 km around the city, City of Stalin (Braşov) - name worn between 1949 and 1961, Ploieşti, Cluj, Oradea, Timişoara, Reşiţa, Hunedoara, Cugir, Constanţa, Galaţi and Iaşi.

The establishment of residence in ‘crowded centres’ stipulated by the Board of Ministers on the proposal of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (M.A.I.) was restricted to the “employees of state institutions, business and cooperative organizations and of universal nature, career militaries moving for work, and spouses, descendants and ascendants of the mentioned persons”.

They could not definitively establish their domicile without non resident permits, although meeting the above conditions, but “through their manifestations against working people, damages the building of socialism in the People’s Republic of Romania”. For those concerned, based on a decision of the minister of internal affairs, they could establish mandatory home anywhere. Provisions of this decision was amended and supplemented by HCM no. 344/1951 about moving from the crowded centres of any person not justifying their presence in order “to safeguard the democratic gains and implement the best conditions of the laws and orders given by the authorities”.

The Ministry of Internal Affairs applied specific regulations such as: the problem of removing from the cities and establishing compulsory domiciles for certain categories of persons - “landowners, industrialists, the families of those convicted of treason and espionage, elements released from prisons proved to endanger state security” or “those who by facts or events were trying to endanger people’s democratic regime” [8].

In the following decades, the situation of access constraints in large cities has been preserved, but the list of cities has changed. Thus, in 1968, as decided by the Council of Ministers no. 1651/1968 for the application of Law no. 10/1968 regarding the administration of housing and regulating relations between landlords and tenants were declared major cities (municipalities) the following: Arad, Braşov, Brăila, Bucureşti, Cluj, Constanţa, Craiova, Galaţi, Iaşi, Piteşti, Ploieşti, Sibiu, Timişoara and Târgu Mureş. Employees who had work in Bucharest and in other cities decreed as ‘closed cities’ to new residents,

but were residing in villages around them, were helped to build their own home in the village in which resided, if they had their own property.

Bucharest situation reveals paroxysmal effects of the phenomenon. In the context of emphasizing the development gap between the capital and other regions of the country, significant flows of migrants were moving to Bucharest. In the late 70s is set that obtaining residence in the category of 'closed cities' was allowed only through marriage with a resident. Bucharest offered numerous career opportunities, but the new waves of migrants stopping firstly in the villages around Bucharest, where they obtained residency papers. Many of them managed later to settle in the city. So in the next decade, rural fringe around Bucharest became the official residence and bedroom space for a population working in Bucharest although legally they were not allowed to live there. This background determined a permanent increase of the legal population from the communes until 1990, when only those who officially lived there have moved to Bucharest, clarifying in this way their housing status.

5. Invasion of the city or in-between (post)communist suburban reconfiguration?

Since the post-communist period, political changes have allowed the mechanisms and principles of construction and allocation of housing, with immediate effect on redrawing the socio-spatial structures of Bucharest and residents' relationships of major cities and surrounding rural areas. The removal of restrictions on mobility, of those related to access to the property to the freedom to build themselves, the freedom choice of desirable place to live are considered fundamental elements that have transformed the structure of cities and settlements in the vicinity.

The legalization of free market housing and land, the restricting role of state in urban housing production, the disappearance of control system and the awarding by the state of allocations to housing enterprises underpinned the pronounced dynamic of the free housing market and therefore the dynamics within the residential and suburban areas. Administrative barriers are abolished and the freedom to move, change or build houses induced flows and new spatial development principles. Immediately, after the communist regime change, the rules imposed on unique property, the urban domicile restriction and the restriction of expansion of built up areas in villages and towns were repealed. The Decree-Law no. 1/1989, published in the Official Gazette 4 from 27 December 1989, repealed the Decree no. 68/1976 regarding the relocation of other decreed localities and cities and Law 58/1974 on the systematization of planning of urban and rural areas.

In general, the land regime change has led mostly to operational changes of urban projects. If during the communist period we witnessed a reduction of the private space, after 1989 appeared a reverse trend - the privatization. This constituted a response to the forced collectivization and nationalization of the

past. The public space undergoes a profound change in function, use, forms of ownership and maintenance.

This section of the article seeks to analyze the reconfiguration of peri/suburban space in terms of relationship between the uncontrolled urban development and the hiatus created by urban policies implementation and the reaction of decision makers. Based on Lefebvre's idea [9] that urban phenomenon is a dialectic one, to urban centrality being opposed a centrifugal dispersion and fragmentation, we will try to identify the features of suburban space reconfiguration which was driven by some limits of urban action and policies.

All these reconfigurations of suburban space have indissoluble links with the social space. The emergence of post-communist suburban residential development was influenced by the configuration of residential options. Suburban municipalities' adjacent to major cities in Romania have become important levers of affirming lifestyles and behaviours specific to a middle class loose. These behaviours are associated with some early forms of rural gentrification or asserting a hedonistic hybridization [10].

With the affirmation of postmodernism condition, the urban and suburban areas are subject to unequal processes of transformation under a new regime which assumes the extension of urbanization phenomenon of postmetropolization and intensification of social control and space [11]. Heterogeneity and fragmentation are the main characteristics, they are found „always edging in new directions” [12], leading to debate issues on population dynamics, environmental pressures and growing smart cities.

The phenomenon of urban sprawl does not enjoy unanimous definition in literature, having more ‘shifting meanings’ and attracting numerous polemics. In this paper, we use the definition given by Bruegmann [13]: „as low-density, scattered, urban development without systematic large-scale or regional public land-use planning”.

The phenomenon of urban sprawl has been studied in terms of its positive and negative effects. From the first perspective, taken as a whole, is considered a „horizontal landscape phenomenon”, which means „further articulation because people concerned with landscape, environment, and sustainability issues almost never consider sprawl a positive opportunity, even though it is largely dominated by landscape development” [14]. From the second perspective, taken as a part of the whole, „urban sprawl has been spontaneous and chaotic driven by local developers” or has generated „shifts between land ownership and land use policy” [15]. It is also perceived as a phenomenon compared with housing living conditions and residential developments.

The effects of urban sprawl are numerous. We will retain only those evoked by Willmer [16]: „physical and environmental impacts such as traffic congestion and its resultant air pollution, water quality concerns, sewage disposal; community character is altered by loss of open space, the conversion of agricultural and forest land to other residential and non residential uses; and

fiscal considerations, including the cost of community services provided to new development and need to provide new and improved infrastructure”.

The problems associated with urban sprawl, privatization of urban space, the emergence of gated communities in post-communist countries were privileged as subject of research, interpreted in the context of: „balkanization and housing privatism” [17], the role of elites and housing privatism [18], local regeneration initiative supported by central government as well as by local policies entrepreneurial-oriented politicians [19], the crisis of legitimacy of policies on urban planning amid neoliberal doctrines, relying on the superiority of the free market system [20], difficulties in introducing reforms of housing finance, and neglected housing policy [21].

These problems are found in the cities of Romania and can be translated/explained in the context of nationalization from 1948, the gradual privatization of 1990-1998 and the controversy and slowly process of property restitution. Approximately 34% of the population lives in metropolitan areas. For geographers and architects, the analysis of land use changes in metropolitan areas of Romania by using GIS techniques represented a focus theme [22, 23], as well as the relationship between urban sprawl and urban shrinking [24], the legal and territorial typologies, etc.

Fragmentation and heterogeneity of urban and suburban areas can be studied only in the context of globalization and the cultural paradigm that change the housing way and ownership status. These common features were found different in all communist countries. For example, Hirt discusses the fragmentation of the public space, characteristic of post-communist states, based on the example of Sofia, which he calls ‘privatism’: „a cultural condition which comes in reaction to the perceived gross failures of the socialist and post socialist public realm” [17, p. 4]. Hirt attempt an analysis of post socialist transformations involving, on the one hand, the privatization of the socio-economic process, with privatism as cultural production on the other hand.

Based on these different contexts, we will try to outline some elements that led to the fragmentation and heterogeneity of urban and suburban areas. The causes of urban fragmentation can be multiple and complex. They are: deregulation associated with both disparate decisions of investors, developers and local government and the phenomenon of functional and visual fragmentation of the city; speculative market; the accelerating pace of change in industrial structures; functional locations; housing costs and transforming organization of production [25].

The uncontrolled urban sprawl of cities in Romania (usually cities) was accompanied by two ambivalent tendencies: on one hand a tendency of ‘forting up’, associated with the development of gated communities, and on the other hand a tendency of ‘informal-up’, expressed on the paradigm of ‘privilege of poverty’. How can these two types of development coexist? We will try to argue on the uncontrolled urban sprawl relying on political context and the pattern of post socialist transition.

The post communist transition process was a delicate one, generating structural difficulties. The dichotomy between the private and the public sector has been interpreted in terms of sociologically generating inequalities in the context of transition [26], and entrepreneurial elite status was seen as important in power and knowledge [27].

In Romania, the 1990s have brought important changes in residents' lifestyle, including rethinking the paradigm on housing, home address and prestige. It is obvious that the notions of home and space began to be reassessed. Because the lack of a national urban integrated and assimilated plan, new urban forms that occur, whether primary or secondary residence, are a mimetic model already present in European or American cities [28]. The new urban residential development, including gated communities has attracted media attention and was popularized especially during the housing boom and easing mortgage (2003-2006). "Gated communities are residential areas with restricted access where normally public spaces are privatized, and are typically advertised as a 'community' where residents own or control common areas, shared facilities and amenities while simultaneously having reciprocal rights and obligations enforced by a private governing body." [29]

Beyond the contested origins of this phenomenon, the rising of gated communities, closely related to the privatization of space, has been explained in the light of path dependency theory, according to which capitalism is built with the remains/ruins of socialism ("capitalism is built on but not with the ruins of socialism") [27]. The role of urban elite was decisive. Arthur Silvestri [30], in his series of articles on the residential development of the city, relying on the expression 'Kisseleff principle', found that new homes that appeared, particularly in the north-central part of Bucharest, are a kind of 'villages of billionaires'. He argues that their origins is in the mythology of Primăverii neighbourhood, the first millionaires, belonging to the former communist classes (nomenclature), have begun to legitimize themselves by the adoption of elitist values and principles [28].

The rising of these new residential development followed a centrifugal direction (at least for the city of Bucharest), from inside to outside the city (the first generation of houses), followed by the second generation of individual houses, extended in suburban area. Beyond the mimetic cultural pattern, which was rapidly adopted by the new residents, the second generation of individual homes continued to be a specific representation of the middle class, but continued to fail on the idea of content (lack of public amenities: sewage water, infrastructures, paved streets). In some areas, the members of the new communities built also a church in the middle of the neighbourhood. The adoption of cultural forms without substance [31] led practically to offset the notion of individual single family housing and its imbued paradoxes (mostly located in the open space, relatively at large distance from the main roads, with unpaved streets and access difficulties at public utilities). This cultural model of individual house adoption, beyond its paradoxes, holds as an alternative model the collective living within the city.

The essential question that arises here is: this mimetic model followed the strict rules of modern European urban or it adapted in situ specifically to Romania? We talk about a re-appropriation of spaces, in which all users are involved: from the owner of a small ex-agricultural plot to various construction companies that have parcelled a medium-side property in order to build small houses to create extensive residential developments. Housing, as home is a relational concept dependent on social networking for its meanings.

The phenomenon of urban sprawl associated with property rights has generated impressive growth in the number of owners, but also increased the chances of informal houses. Amid the housing concept privatism, the confusing legislation lead at two forms of cohabitation residential development - gated communities and informal houses. Residential developments are characteristics of the post-communist type 'superownerships' [21] and the "degrees of owner involvement and housing informality" [32]. These new communities were formed by what experts call 'privatization of space' based on territorial and institutional elements.

The reasons of urban sprawl are multiple depending on social context and key decision makers. Suditu gave some explanations: the explosion of population mobility from the beginning of '90 being a response to the housing needs that Bucharest could not satisfy at the end of the communist period and also the lack of minimal urban rules in designing and building of new constructions in Bucharest [33]. The urban legal framework adopted in the post communist period, even if it stipulates the role of the actors and the plans for the future residential developments, was and is not rigorously applied. The author also underlined that urban sprawl was generated by private initiatives, without a public coordination.

6. Limits of public action in urban planning

Following the development planning process in the post-transition for most former communist countries, we can say that the same problems were presented through most Romanian cities. In fact, we can speak of a crisis of legitimacy regarding the planning by the lack of consistent specific measures for the city development.

Practices and urban policies can become instruments of the social control mechanism. Theorists analyzed and criticized the 'dark side of planning theory' [34, 35]. In doing so, many aspects and critical dimensions of urban planning could be redrawn [36]: the spatial content (the territorial dimension), the power relations and decision-making processes (the procedural dimension), its long-term material consequences (the socioeconomic dimension) and its repercussions to our identities and 'ways of life and thinking' (the cultural dimension). However, there are several factors that determined legal and post-communist institutional planning: the problem of ownership transfer from state to private limitation and/or obsolete legal reforms regarding planning and the emergence of new master plans. „Urban change in post-communist cities has

been significantly shaped by the character of institutional reforms and transformations in social practices.” [37]

The planning can directly affect power relations in society by controlling access to the ‘communicative infrastructure’ and decision-making processes highlighting the practical communicative action [38].

7. Conclusions

Post communist transformation of urban spaces, associated with the challenges of economic restructuring, has led to a configuration of ‘landscape of homes’ or of a new ‘geography of residence’. Knowing that the urban planning process involves the presence of power relations, we aimed to emphasize the effects of uncontrolled urban development and the options’ change for individual housing residents.

The nationalization of all productive forces and the imposition of centralized planning and intervention together with the policy principles regarding the development of territorial cities and villages during the communist period have led to the creation of distinct spatial structures without the possibility of interfering or creating forms of mediation spaces in the contact area. In post-communist countries, the transfer of ownership from state to private was done separately, at different pace and with many difficulties. This transfer was mandated by a set of laws for the municipal self-government. It was obvious that local authorities lack a clear expertise in the planning process.

The exacerbation of taxation, bureaucracy and legislative instability derived from successive amendments of laws and decisions could be the possible causes of the delay process of the restitution of nationalized houses confiscated by communist leaders.

Since the post-communist period, political changes have allowed the mechanisms and principles of construction and allocation of housing, with immediate effect on redrawing the socio-spatial structures and residents’ relationships of major cities and surrounding rural areas. Some new residential areas became real communities built around a church. In general, the land regime change has led mostly to operational changes of urban projects.

References

- [1] K. Andrews Dimitrovska, *Mastering the posts-socialist city: impacts on planning the built environment*, in *Transformation of Cities in Central and Eastern Europe: Towards Globalization*, I.F.E. Hamilton, K. Andrews Dimitrovska & N. Pichler-Milanović (eds.), United Nations University Press, New York, 2005, 161.
- [2] W. Amann and A. Mundt, *International Journal of Law in the Built Environment*, 2(2) (2010) 157-177
- [3] I. Bădescu, L. Dumitrescu and V. Dumitrașcu, *Geopolitica noului imperialism*, Mica Valahie, București, 2010, 22.
- [4] V. Miftode, *Elemente de sociologie rurală*, Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, Bucharest, 1978, 25.

- [5] R.M. Necula and M.-C. Vicol, *Revista Teologica*, **1** (2013) 85-110.
- [6] R.M. Necula and S.I. Damian, *Revista Românească pentru Educație Multidimensională*, **3(8)** (2011) 97-107.
- [7] L. Chelcea, *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, **36(2)** (2012) 281-296.
- [8] N. Ionescu-Gură, *Stalinizarea României*, ALL, București, 2005, 500.
- [9] H. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, Blackwell Publishing, Oxford, 1991, 32.
- [10] S. Totelecan and Ș. Mann, *International Journal on Humanistic Ideology*, **5(2)** (2012) 13-42.
- [11] E. Soja, *Postmetropolis: Critical Studies of Cities and Regions*, Blackwell, Malden, 2000, 250.
- [12] A. Amin and N. Thrift, *Cities: Re-imagining the urban*, Polity, Cambridge, 2002, 8.
- [13] R. Bruegmann, *Sprawl: A Compact History*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2005, 18.
- [14] A. Berger, *Landscape, Urbanization, and Waste in Drosscape: Wasting Land and Urban America*, Princeton Architectural Press, New York, 2006, 21.
- [15] H. Palang and T. Peil, *Futures*, **42** (2010) 700-710.
- [16] R. Willmer, *Planning Framework: Planning Framework or Managing Sprawl*, in *Urban Sprawl A Comprehensive Reference Guide*, C.D. Soule (ed.), Greenwood Press, Westport, 2006, 62.
- [17] S. Hirt, *Iron Curtains. Gates Suburbs and Privatization of Space in Post - Socialist City*, Wiley Blackwell, Chichester, 2012, 4.
- [18] J. Peck, *Progress in Human Geography*, **19(1)** (1995) 16-46.
- [19] L. Sýkora, *GeoJournal*, **49(1)** (1999) 79-89.
- [20] S. Hirt and S. Kirilov, *Revisiting Urban Planning in the Transitional Countries*, GRHS 2009: Regional Report Transitional Countries, UN-Habitat, Nairobi, 2009, 23.
- [21] S. Lowe and S. Tsenkova (eds.), *Housing Change in East and Central Europe: Integration or Fragmentation?*, Ashgate, Aldershot, 2003.
- [22] I. Grigorescu, B. Mitrică, G. Kucsicsa, E.A. Popovici, M. Dumitrașcu and R. Cuculici, *Human Geographies. Journal of Studies and Research in Human Geography*, **6(1)** (2012) 35-46.
- [23] G. Simion, *Human Geographies. Journal of Studies and Research in Human Geography*, **4(2)** (2010) 115-123.
- [24] C. Sârbu, *Human Geographies. Journal of Studies and Research in Human Geography*, **6(1)** (2012) 53-58.
- [25] R.R. Vidal, *Fragmentation de la ville et nouveaux modes de recomposition urbaine*, L'Harmattan, Paris, 2002, 34.
- [26] V. Nee, *American Sociological Review*, **54** (1989) 663-681.
- [27] C.A. Stoica, *East European Politics and Societies*, **18** (2004) 236-277.
- [28] L. Dumitrache and M. Nae, *The Surveillance System, a Cultural Paradigm within the Gated Communities in Bucharest, Environment and Society Present - Day Diversity and Dynamic*, Editura Universității București, București, 2010, 143-160.
- [29] G. MacCleod, *Privatizing the city? The tentative push towards edge urban developments and gated communities in the United Kingdom*, Final Report for the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, International Centre for Regional Regeneration and Development Studies (ICRRDS), University of Durham, 2004, 5.
- [30] A. Silvestri, *România în anul 2010. O prognoză de piață imobiliară. România de vitrină*, Carpathia Press, București, 2003, 8.
- [31] T. Maiorescu, *Opere*, vol. I, Minerva, București, 1978, 76.

- [32] A.M. Soaita, *Urban Studies*, **50(10)** (2013) 2084-2101.
- [33] B. Suditu, *Human Geographies – Journal of Studies and Research in Human Geography*, **4(2)** (2009) 91.
- [34] B. Flyvbjerg, *The Dark Side of Planning: Rationality and 'Realrationalitat'*, in *Explorations in Planning Theory*, S. Mandelbaum, S. Mazza & R. Burchell (eds.), Center for Urban Policy Research Press, New Brunswick, 1996, 383-394.
- [35] B. Flyvbjerg and T. Richardson, *Planning and Foucault. In Search of the Dark Side of Planning Theory*, in *Planning Futures: New Directions for Planning Theory*, P. Allmendinger & M. Tewdwr-Jones (eds.), Routledge, London, 2002, 44-62.
- [36] O. Yiftachel, *Journal of Planning Literature*, **12(2)** (1998) 395-406.
- [37] L. Sýkora and S. Bouzarovski, *Urban Studies*, **49(1)** (2012) 43–60.
- [38] J. Forester, *Critical Theory, Public Policy and Planning Practice: Toward a Critical Pragmatism*, State University of New York Press, Albany, 1993, 91.