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Rural planning in Romania

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Abstract

The presentation structured in two parts aims to reveal a short diagnosis of the Romanian rural planning system.

The first part is centred upon general aspects regarding features of the rural settlements system, according with national and regional peculiarities. A short view is given to a present rural typology as meaning of comprehend the mechanism of local planning.

The second part presents a short review of planning history (stages, factors, effects) relieve the European and Romanian national framing and contextualization (normative, institutional and actionably) of the Romanian rural settlement planning system. From the technical point of view, the core instrument of planning is the master plan / general urban plan – in structure presented on briefly.

Key words: rural settlement, planning, territory, Romania

1. Introduction

Rural planning analyzed through its meanings and current European content is a „complex” of recent date, representing the way by which different activities, uses and structures of rural space are positioned with respect to each other in terms of distance, relational intensity and proximity of spatial economic, social, political, environmental influences, etc.

Frequently assimilated to diagnosis and prognosis of land use, physical rural planning (territorial planning) highly interferes, but without mixing, with land use planning. The last one represents the way to provide the best land use by considering the effects it can have upon the local sub-systems. The relations with the local development, land management and space management are compulsory in the chain of conditioning of a synergic functionality.

Like many other phrases with European genealogy, rural planning entered the political and technical Romanian language after the 90s and more vigorously in the first decade of the third millennium, in a political-economic conjuncture represented by the application and adhesion of Romania to the EU.

We won't resume the detailed arguments for which rural as a field of action is associated quite late to the European planning fashion. We will rather take a structuralist look that allows us to understand the configuration and the perspectives of the planned rural space! Among the almost axiomatic assumptions, and thereby compulsory for the thorough examination of rural planning we must mention at least two: *the dual nature of planning* (science and practice, theory and material action) and *the immaturity of the Romanian structure of rural planning*.

The present paper tries to render in a synthetical way the position of rural planning in the whole system of planning, compared with its most sophisticated level which is spatial planning.

2. The Romanian rural space – visiting card

The village is the dominant human community in the Romanian landscape, being a very old form of organization and housing in the Carpath-Danubian-Pontic Space

In time, the evolution of rural settlements was not uniform throughout the country, due to the characteristics of the natural landscape, as well as to socio-economic aspects of different historical periods, resulting in regional differences in terms of both population or social-economic equipments and morph-structural patterns of settlements.

Physical-geographic factors are unchangeable assets whose determinism is found in any age, but on the other hand, historical and political factors have inconstantly influenced the evolution of the Romanian village, often in a complex and sometimes contradictory way. In order to understand this situation, from the beginning, we must mention a major characteristic of the Romanian territorial-administrative organization, that the *village is a geographic territorial division without authorities and legal recognition*. Depending on the numeric size, scope and local or regional economic force, one or more villages form a "commune", which represents the basic minimal level (equivalent to NUTS 4) of the rural territorial-administrative configuration. Thus, the commune is situated on the same level with the city, in terms of organizational relevance. The commune is the administrative framework of decision-making and reporting to which are circumscribed *the planning of the constituent reference territorial unit* i.e. village / villages.

Size and implications of the planning process are, in this case, directly proportional to the extent of the rural phenomenon, whose definition requires some quantitative benchmarks.

Now, Romania counts 2854 communes which, in their turn gather 12,751 villages. In terms of surface, they cover 87% of the country, which definitely draws Romania near to the EU average, where the rural area represents 91%. The second quantitative feature that defines the Romanian rural space is population. From this point of view, Romania shouldn't be considered a rural country, taking into account that less than a half of the 21 millions of inhabitants (45%) live in the rural space.

Obviously, for the most accurate characterization of the rural space some other relevant issues should be considered such as infrastructure indicators, socio-economic situation, standard of living, etc., which would in any case overstep the purpose and the size of the present paper.

The rural morph-structural design – a synthesis of the substance diversity

One of the first challenges of rural planning, in the physical sense, is integration, the analysis and the adaptation of the structural and textural diversity of settlements. Three major categories of villages are dominant in the Romanian landscape, according to the three major relief levels.

Dispersed (spread) villages have very scattered households or group of households that make up the hearth (core) of the village. The distance between them is from 100 to 200 m and they are mainly situated in mountainous areas.

These much dispersed households create confusion between the whole village limits with its own hearth. Besides the extensive feature of the agricultural commune there is an extremely various characteristic of the mountain, with uneven relief, that hardly can be used by the isolated households that usually rise on slopes with southern exposures.

The connection between the households of the same village or with neighboring villages is provided by pathways of short unorganized narrow ways (the road network is not continuous or outlined).

Rural settlements with dispersed structure found in the high Carpathian areas have a small number of inhabitants (sometimes less than 100) and there is difficult to organize and arrange them in terms of infrastructure. The touristic and somehow the urban-architectural potential lies especially in the maintenance of some patterns of traditional spatial organization that are still preserved in some areas of the Apuseni Mountains and Southern and Eastern Carpathians.

Scattered villages have better outlined boundaries and are situated in large geographical areas, at altitudes ranging between 400-800m mostly in sub-Carpathian and piedmont hills areas. The economy of these villages is more varied, focused on fruit-growing and wine culture. The relief, less uneven than the mountainous one, allowed a more dense arrangement of households in the built perimeter and a specific interior order of the road network). The hearth/precincts of the village alternates with surfaces of cultivated land and the development of these types of villages is peripheric, on radial, tentacular axis. Within the frame of this structural pattern we have small villages as well as big villages (over 1000 inhabitants), situated mainly in depressions and in valley corridors.

Compact villages have well defined hearts, with clear difference between the built surface and the landed property. This type is specific to lowlands and intra-mountain low depressions. The development of the field to produce bread grains and the concentration of population within clearly individualized boundaries represent a synthesis for the territorial evolution and organization generated by the natural conditions as well as by the official restructuring and merging through systematization¹, correlated with the land property system. The road network is frequently ordered, orthogonal, although disordered networks are also present in the lowlands in the south of the country. Generally these are large villages, often with more than 2,000 inhabitants, forming a single commune.

3. Some theoretical aspects about Romanian vision on planning

Planning is a cultural product influenced by the political systems within it develops. Legally, stages of economic and social processes interfere with the evolution of regional and spatial planning systems. The gap between the forms of European and Romanian planning and much more between their subcategories can be explained, beyond the differences of the economic and political context, by the lack of predisposition to planning, as a cultural particularity.

If in the European planning system, the rural planning starts being identified as an independent direction after the neo-liberal change of the 80s, Romania displays its own timetable of major planning stages. The rural aspect especially, although well represented by surface and population is not fully outlined in the contemporary planning system

¹Romanian systematization represents an exercise of centralized planning of the communist period, after which villages and urban buildings have been partially or totally demolished, with the argumentation of a judicious land development. The systematization process has been contested less in the theoretical and ideological aspect and more in the practical and formal aspect that defined its implementation with rigidity. The Law of systematization was repealed with the fall of communism and gradually replaced with a set of regulatory laws for urban planning and spatial planning.

Table.1. Main stages of European planning

Period	Conception about planning	The practitioner specialist	Required and used skills
End of 19th century – beginning of the 20th century	planning as a visionary activity	non-planners	<i>Vision and imagination</i>
Interwar period	planning dominated and based upon design activity based on social sciences	architects/ planning – engineers	<i>Technical drawing</i>
Post Schuster (after 1950)	(subject to the theory of systems)	geographers-planners	<i>Computer modeling</i>
The neo-liberal change of the '80s.	regulatory and legislative activity	The planner - technician and clerk (bureaucrat)	<i>Mastery of formal political procedures</i>
The new millennium	innovative solving-problems activity	Space planners	<i>mediation and negotiation capacity</i>

*) after Davoudi, Simin, *Educating the Next Generation of Planners International Seminar Planning Education, Practice and Institutions facing Innovation Genoa, 2004* with additions.

Table 2. Main stages of Romanian Planning

Period / Form of state, governance and regime	Spatial organization	Rural physical planning (stages) reveals	National spatial planning oriented and dominated by...
< 1866 / <i>Reign</i>	Organic	Self-organization at the community level	-
1866-1947 / <i>constitutional monarchy</i>	Crystallization, internal adjustment,	Self-organization at the community level	Creating the basis of infrastructure – European adaptation
1947 – 1989/ <i>Republic totalitarian regime</i>	Rigid, quasi-ordinate centralized	Centralized planning generating spatial compression	(Social false) economy
1990-up to now/ <i>Semi-presidential republic democratic regime</i>	Re-scheduled in the European context	Institutionalization	Politics (but undefined) – re-adaptation to European system

Territory and layers of planning

Many of contemporary notions of planning come from French inspiration. On this conceptual skeleton, other influences added. Thus, in nowadays, planning (*planification fr.*) is seen as a field of forces, an interface between the visible and invisible, bearing in itself both the concrete aspect designed by landscape design as well as the cultural, ideological, rational,

relational and political aspect. There are many differences in content and conceptual nuances that reflect a stage of societal development. Today, planning is also a profession that seeks to connect the forms of knowledge with the action forms in the public space and planners have got to give up narrow specialization faster than the science of planning did it. Planning becomes specialized (rural, urban, economic, social, etc) and the major categories of sectoral planning, according to their nature (economic planning and social planning) are taking place in a political framework and are materially designed on a physical, territorial support. We've spoken about the physical land planning as a product of the application of the economic or social planning in a territory. The introduction of the dynamic and even unpredictable dimension of all land components (material and relational) at the horizontal level of planning, gradually led to the spatialisation of planning.

Quadri-dimensional spatial planning (time dimension is attached to three dimensionality of space) is accepted as the first comprehensive means and framework for action for the regional policies in the early '90s in Europe.²

The practice of planning reaches its climax of materialization by the physical projection, measured at the level of *one territory*. This one becomes the support and the container of all successive planning actions. Its historic construction begins from its functional activation and usually starts with habitation (and all its immediate derivatives) and continues necessarily with its inclusion in the agricultural field.³ Thus, the first frame of materialization and exercise of rural land planning is represented by the *landed property, the agricultural land* and the equipment needed to use it. The repeated, alternating and experimental actions of transforming a land into an agricultural crop generated, in time, specific agricultural morphologies, specific agricultural patterns, rural landscapes and models of land use refined by the secular practice. Found in theoretical formulations, they are associated with land management and land use management⁴.

With the successive sedimentation of functions of a territory, some other categories of secondary or tertiary economic activities are gradually added.

The completions of infrastructure generated by these functions gradually change territory from a rural space (profound, mixed or rur-urban) into an urbanized space where the degree of land development and planning increases (or at least it should) proportionally with population. We get to speak about the two others levels of planning – urban and social planning.

Social planning is a set of activities aimed at achieving social action or to resolve social tensions, critical situations in the present or future such as reducing delinquency, increasing ethnic integration, organization of public and private services for the elderly, etc.

If, at a first level, planning represents the activity meant to impose a certain economic order with social purposes, at a higher level, social planning is seen as a much more complex activity, a process of negotiation between competitive interests. Currently, social planning takes the form of units isolated at the level of planning, oscillating between the economic reasons and the constraints of the physical urban planning.

² one of the first unifying documents on regional policy and spatial planning is the European Spatial Development Planning (ESDP) from 1999.

³ Territory acquires in this case the meaning of human settlement with all his attributes and components (population, fireplace, land). We don't exclude the historical reality of territories resulting from trade, industry and transport which are urbigenous factors stronger than agriculture. But considering the theme of the article, we give priority to agricultural function, inherently associated with the rural territory.

⁴ We may honestly say that these are far for being wrong or insignificant approaches in relation to actual practice. Furthermore, we encourage terminological differentiation and land-related specialization required by the variety of the rural land. But we want to emphasize that these concepts have often been considered as rural planning, which is incomplete..

Social planning doesn't abandon the support of physical environment but adds its own vision on living conditions, needs and problems of the residents. In Romania, social planning both in urban and rural areas was grotesquely simplified to its demographic and familial form from the period of centralized planning that is why it is difficult to insert this level of planning. Social planning is really the younger sister of planning, although the social aspect associated with the demographic one were present during the stages of crystallization of spatial planning in the postwar Western Europe. The social aspect was used as a purpose, the economic aspect as a way and urban planning as an effect.

Today, in Romania, social planning remains separated from the rest of sections although under the umbrella of social arguments, numerous actions of economic planning are conducted.

Urban planning (urbanism) in its narrow definition is the oldest strand of planning. All the other categories of planning branched out of this, as functioning of the territory came out with new dimensions of work. Urban attribute often creates the exhaustive impression that it would only refer to the city. In reality urban planning is meant for the built-towns be they urban or rural. This fact merely re-confirms that rural planning has a a urban-related technical meaning when it refers to the built space and a integrative and unifying connotation when it refers to the rural space as a whole by means of spatial planning.

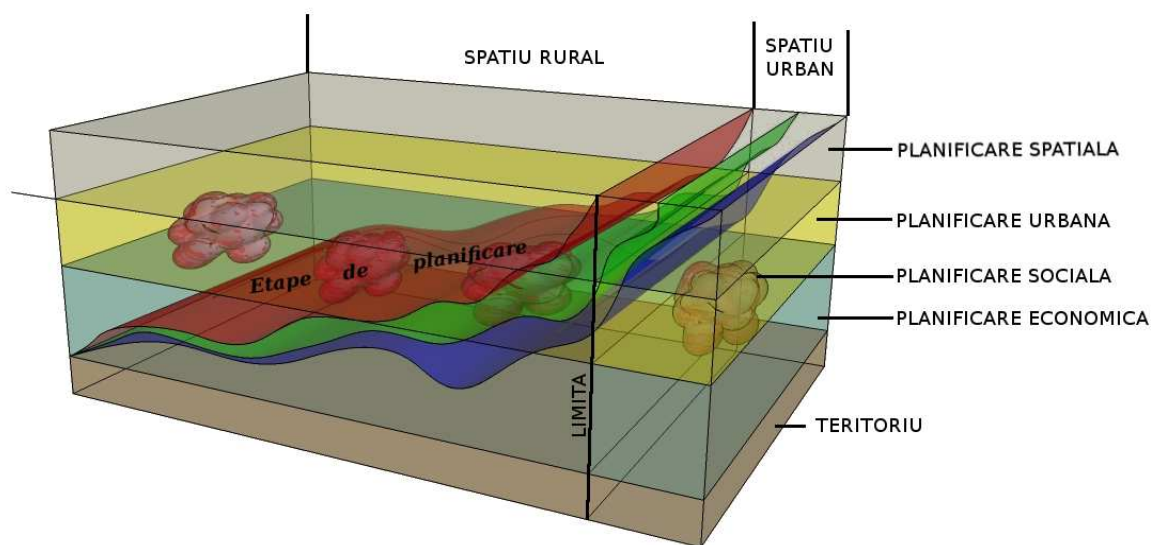


Figure 1. The space "separation" under the action of different planning types and stages planning action⁵

What makes the difference between the two areas of planning? One of the answers is, undoubtedly, the amount of planning and its nature. The shift between the two areas is made gradually, although, conventionally, there may be definite political and administrative limits.

⁵ Conception of the block diagram: Violeta Pușcașu, graphic design: arh. PhD. Liliana Buhociu

The differences are attenuated or emphasized not only by these limits as especially by the range (distance) where the transition occurs. Meanwhile, the successive accumulation of effects of sectoral staged planning „draws” the separation line between the two levels and sectors towards the higher level of planning.

The movement is uneven, represented in the diagram under the shape of a double curved plane suggesting local flexibility during planning.

Referring strictly to the separation between land (territorial) planning and social and economic planning, which occurred only in the middle of last century, we will say that this moment corresponds to the involvement of the geographers’ competence in the area and to explicit orientation towards planning of some geography departments in Western schools in parallel with the architects and planners.

The rural space becomes subject of planning as a result of dimensions and importance it has in all European countries. In Romania, rural areas cover 87% of the territory and gathers more than 50% of the population. Spatial planning in Romania is therefore an unbalanced structure which has two levels of planning, the rural one being itself a framework for the uneven stratifications.

One of the easily identifiable causes belongs to current instruments for town and land planning in the form of inadequate action and covering of General Urban Planning as a regulatory document.

Waiting for the third generation of GUP, rural planning mainly works with Regional Urban Planning and Detailed Urban Planning, planning of reduced territorial conjuncture. Other cause acting negatively is the selection of planning specialists for the field of rural planning. Although the supplementation of Law 350/2001 by amendment is the proof of awareness of this dysfunction, the structure of urban planning specialists accredited by the Romanian Register of Urban Planners (RUP) is still poor even in areas of economic and social planning⁶.

4. Instruments for territorial planning

Rural planning is subordinated and implicitly integrated in the process of national spatial planning. The general planning instruments are pieces of an ample and coherent system whose links are presented in *Fig. 2*.

The political instruments take the shape of documents with national and European recognition, among which the National Territorial Development Strategy of Romania until 2030 is the regulatory document of long-term strategic development worked out according to the principles formulated in 1999 in the European Spatial Development Perspective.

The strategy directs the National Spatial Plan that includes all sectoral plans (with different sections (fig.3, 4) and territorial plans, up to the level of basic units – the towns and the commune which have their own master-plans updated every 10 years.

⁶ According to art III from Law 289/2006 on the modification și supplementation of Law 350/2001 concerning land planning and town planning the Higher Council of Romanian Register of Urban Planners has decided the categories of qualified professionals holding a diploma in urban planning. Thus, besides qualified urban planners, there are professionals qualified in urban and spatial planning who acquire the right to sign and seal in fields connected to urban planning such as – geography, economics, sociology and engineering.

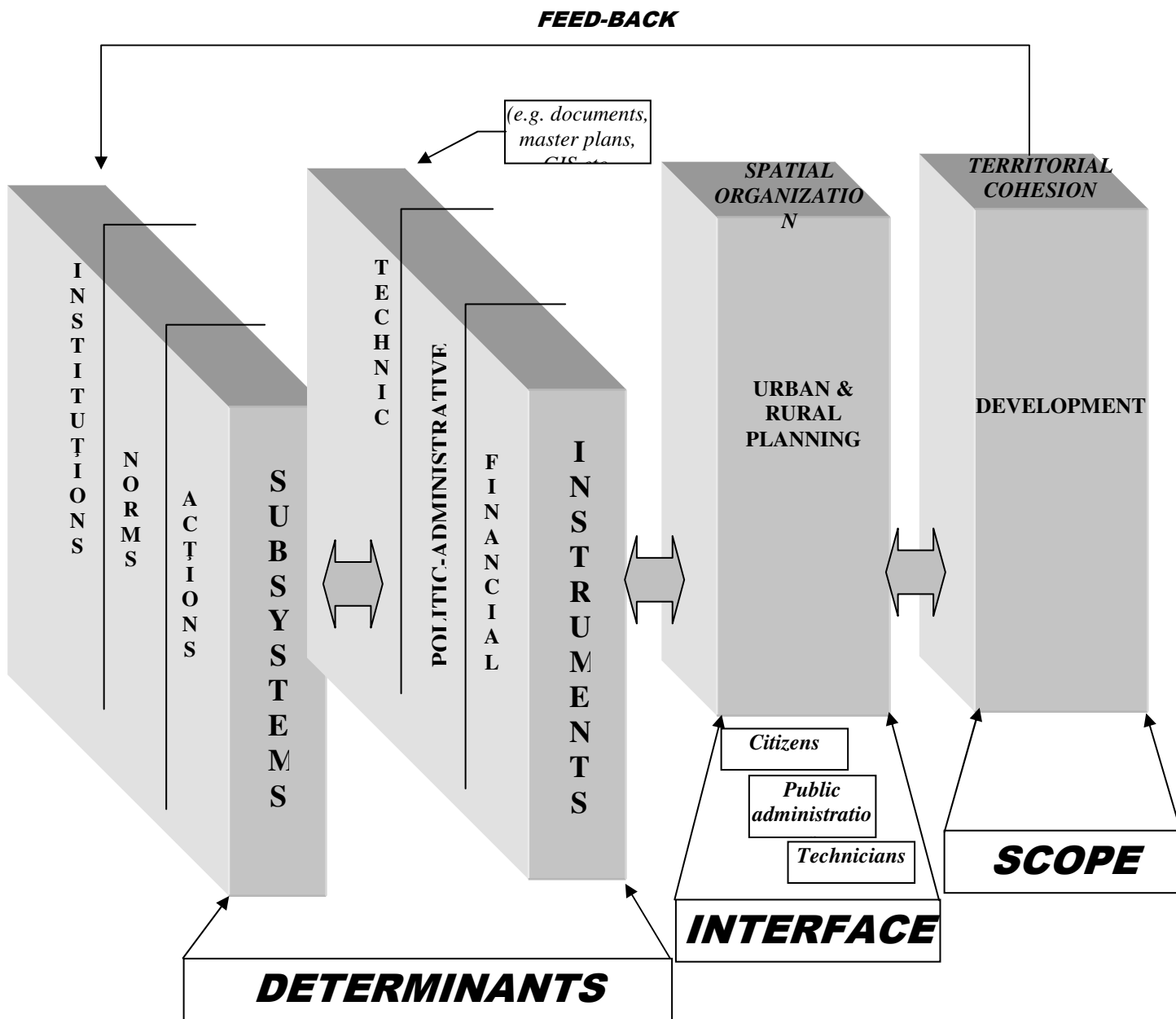


Figure 2. From determinants to scope – components of spatial planning system

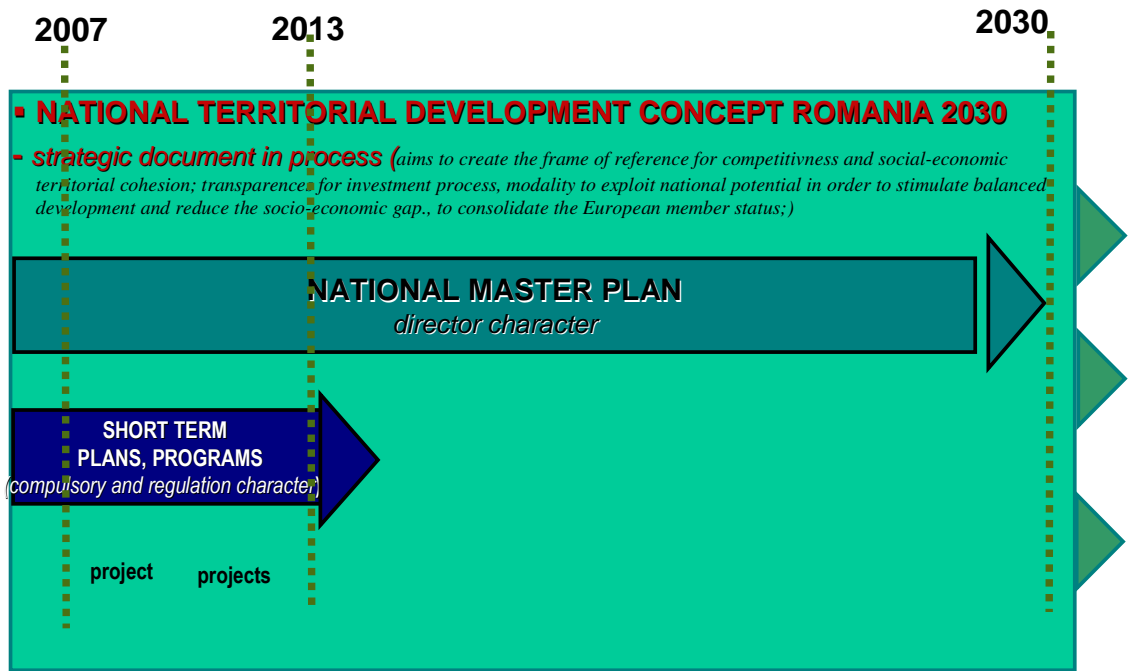


Fig. 3 The national levels of Romanian spatial planning (Borbely, L. 2006)

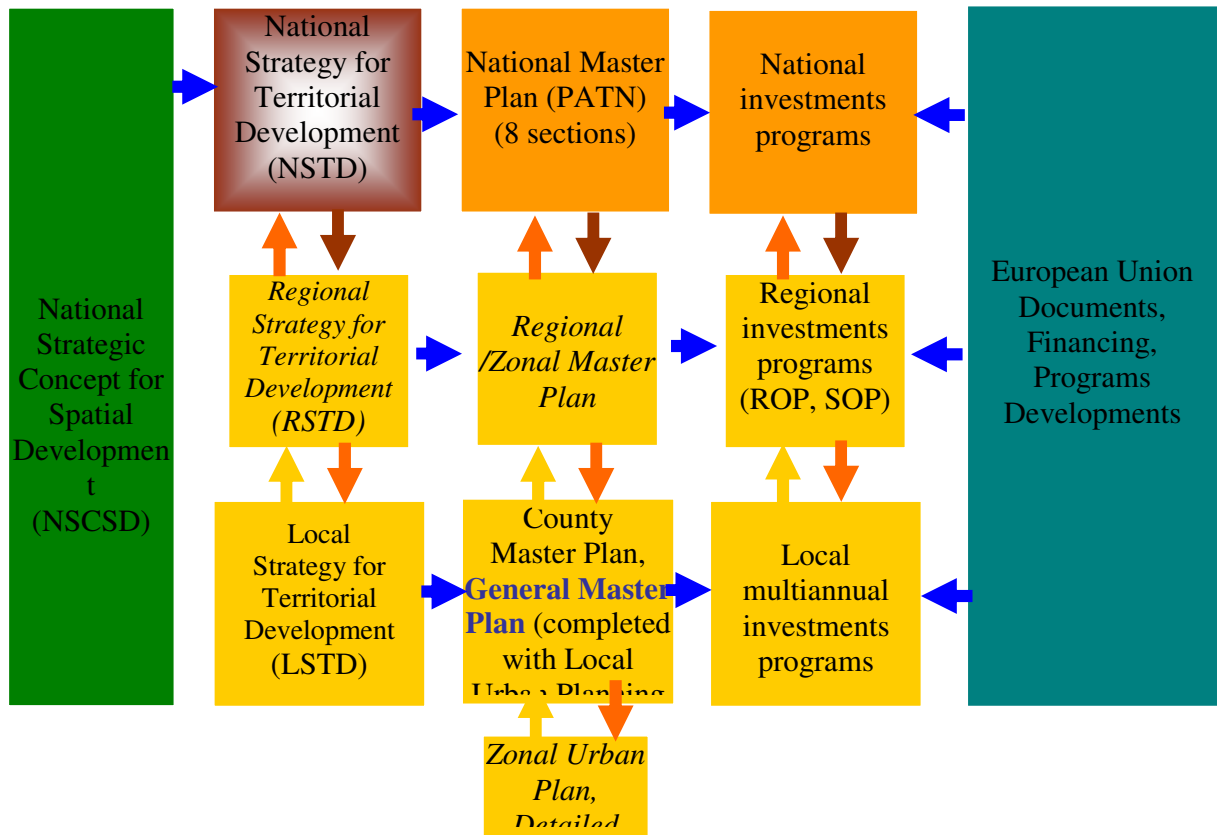


Fig.4. Levels and categories of Romanian spatial planning system

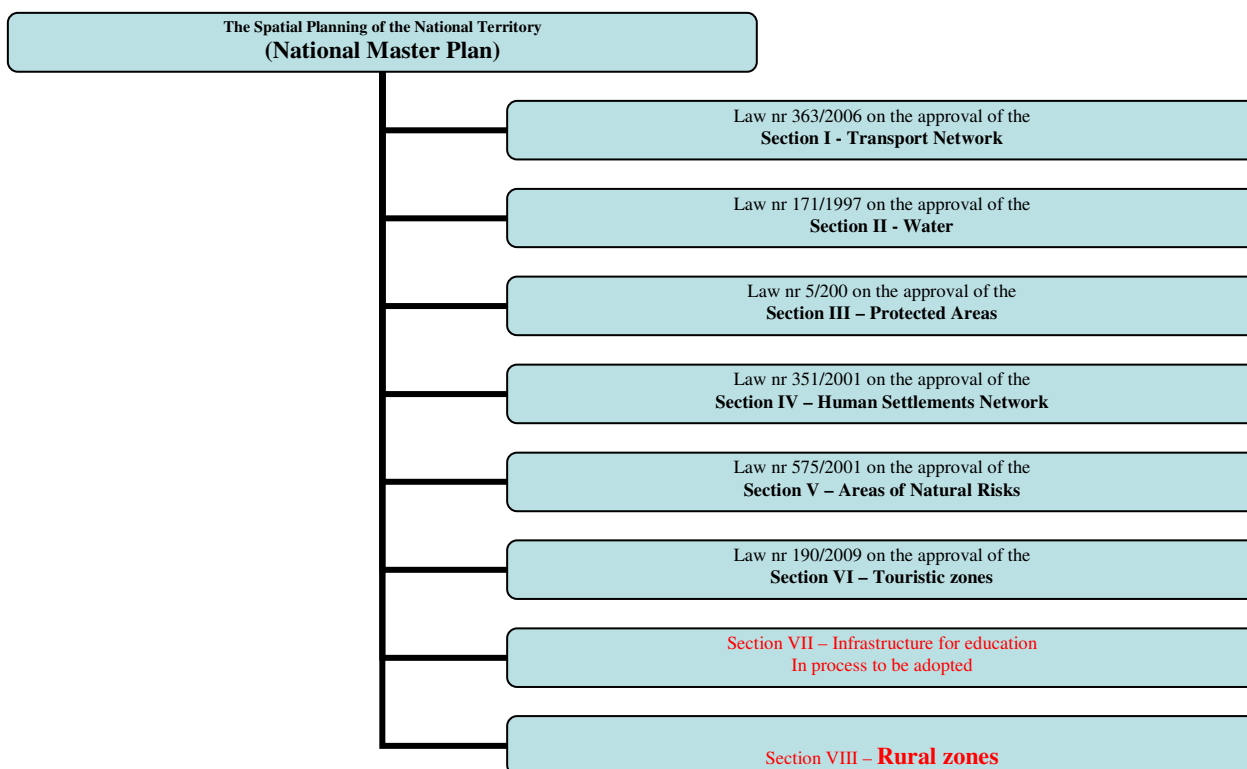


Figure 5. The components of the National Master Plan

4.1. General Urban Plan – a regulatory document for local spatial planning

According to the Romanian Law on spatial planning, the General Urban Plan (the Master plan) is the documentation setting out the objectives, the actions and the measures for local development in a given period, based on the current situation. It will be made for the whole town territory and for each territorial unit directly relevant to development.

The General Urban Plan includes a directory component and a regulatory component. The directory component includes provisions referring to:

- the main directions of town development in the territory;
- the sketch of the major circulation system of the town;
- the sketch of the major technical and town system;
- the zones that need the creation of a zonal urban plans;
- Establish areas where major urban operations are intended to take place.

The regulatory component includes provisions referring to:

- delimitation of the areas within the town limits;
- delimitation of the central area of the city;
- delimitation of functional areas;
- determination and delimitation of built-up areas;
- the determination and delimitation of areas with temporary or permanent construction ban;
- the determination of the regime of building including: alignment, height regime, control indices (land occupancy percentage ⁷ and land use coefficient ⁸);

⁷ Land occupancy percentage (L.O.P.) express the ratio between built ground area and the surface of considered land: $LOP = Ba/LS$

- the delimitations of areas where works of public utility are expected or where the right of preemption of local authorities on real estate is established;
- the determination of traffic routes and of the characteristics of traffic routes to be kept, modified or created;
- the determination of the development of town technical networks system which provide good service to people and traders with services of water supply and sewerage, thermal energy production and distribution of electricity, providing telephones, roads and streets and urban transportation.
- The delimitation of protected areas;
- The delimitation of all areas where urban operations are supposed to take place;

Documentation underlying the general urban plan gathers written documents and drawings.

Drawings include topographical plans, cartograms sketches created during two stages of analysis:

- The current situation and the observed dysfunctions with the determination of the resulting priorities;
- Regulations concerning the choice of public services;

Written documents are the synthesis statement and the general statement.

The synthesis statement comprises the analysis of the main issues arising from the general statement, based on the village development and current situation, identifying failures, options and appropriate measures.

The general statement comprises the detailed analysis of each chapter of the two components of the General Urban Plan, mentioned above, taking into account:

- The current situation with the evolution of dysfunctional within town;
- The possible evolution and the chosen priorities;
- The measures proposed with the explanation of regulations concerning the destination of all local buildings and the building regime on these lands;
- Public utility buildings.

Depending on village size, complexity and specificity of different functions, the analysis will be more or less detailed, relying when necessary on the results of specialized studies and research.

The general urban plan is approved by the concerned local councils except the plan for spas and seaside resorts which are approved by the county councils.

From the perspective of rural planning, at this time, the implementation of master plans reveals an amount of features which we associate to a SWOT analysis.

4. Conclusions

Rural planning as a piece of spatial planning is actually a new theory inadequately superposed on an old practice. It includes all the components of spatial planning and it isn't just the sum but the synthesis of these components that can be put in practice. It is generally agreed today that rural planning includes the management of changes referring to land use, the regulations and the management of rural assets, the programs and the projects of rural reconversion, the implementation of concepts and methods of applied spatial planning, etc. The lack of correlation of approaches is a reality that risks destroying the productive side of

⁸ land use coefficient (L.U.C.) express the ratio between the sum of the spread area of all buildings and the surface of the considered land $L.U.C. = S.A./L.S.$.

the Romanian practice. The rampant ambiguity is maintained by external numerous factors mainly political ones, but that is why, the unification of languages and the identification of skills is a step in the construction of rural planning which is still in the accumulation phase.

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