

ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION AND LAND SETTLEMENT, A COMMON CAUSE. ROMANIA'S ACCOMPLISHMENTS

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Rezumat: *Protecția mediului de viață al populațiilor vegetale și animale, ca și a comunităților umane, se realizează, în principal, prin majoritatea activităților de amenajare a teritoriului în acest scop. Protecția mediului reprezintă unul din obiectivele fundamentale ale amenajării teritoriului. De aceea se poate susține că amenajarea teritoriului și protecția mediului constituie o cauză comună. Un demers separat în cele două domenii nu este de dorit, mai ales la nivel central, datorită întârzierilor pe care le produce în evoluție, prin birocratizarea colaborării actorilor celor două domenii. Din acest motiv, multe state din Europa vestică au realizat oportunitatea conexiunii și au realizat ministere comune ale mediului și amenajării teritoriului. În acest cadru, conjugarea organică a acțiunilor de protecție a mediului cu cele de amenajare a teritoriului, la nivel central și local, ar fi o măsură benefică către progres.*

Abstract. *Life environment protection for plant and animal populations and for human communities is achieved through territorial activities. One of the land settlement objectives is environmental protection. Therefore one may sustain that land settlement and environmental protection represent a common cause. A different step in these two areas is not to be taken. Therefore, many West European states developed common ministries for environment and land settlement. The conjugation of environmental protection actions with the ones for land settlement, on local and central level, represents a benefit measure towards progress.*

Key words: environment protection, land settlement, the organic conjugation, land settlement objectives, European Charta for Land settlement, common ministries for environment and land settlement

Life environment protection for plant and animal populations and for human communities is achieved through territorial activities. One of the land settlement objectives is environmental protection (4). Therefore one may sustain that land settlement and environmental protection represent a common cause.

The road Romania covered in the last 18 years, during transition and reform time, became longer than we would have wanted, because of the mentality slow evolution.

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It was not enough for the revolution to happen only in the streets but it would have had that the real revolution to happen in each of us self-consciousness. The old mentalities have though deep roots, planted and supported systematically for decades, for which reason they change with great difficulty.

Already in 1983, while in Torremolinos, Spain, land settlement ministers from European countries met, they founded a fundamental document adopted as the European Charta for Regional Planning, or the Charta of Torremolinos. One year later, in 1984, at Strasbourg, the final form of this Charta was recommended to the European states as referential document for their future activity in this field.

Through this document (1) there have been established the fundamental objectives for land settlement which from the beginning make the organic connection with the environmental protection. These basic objectives include:

- *balanced socio-economical regional development*, which maintain under control the growth of the intensive populated urban areas, with a rapid evolution and give a new impetus to the declining areas, by reconnecting the outer peripheral areas,
- *life quality improvement* by enhancement of living conditions, work, relationship, culture, welfare, infrastructural equipments,
- *responsible management of natural resources and **environment protection***, including the natural and the built patrimony,
- *rational utilisation of territory* by insuring an efficient management of land, for most various functions.

As one may see, **environmental protection represents one of the fundamental objectives for land settlement** and of course for human settlements. A different step in these two areas is not to be taken. Therefore, many West European states have developed common *ministries for environment and land settlement*. Thus, Netherlands has a *Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment* which combines organically the three activities correlating them. Denmark offers a similar example, same as other Scandinavian countries. In Central and South Europe we find other similar examples.

Right after 1990, from the former socialist countries, Hungary organized a common ministry for *environment and regional development*, and some years ago, even Republic of Moldova constituted a *Ministry for Ecology, Constructions and Territory Development*. The name of that ministry may be debatable, because Ecology is a science and the ministry must take care of the environment not of the ecology!

But, let's analyse each field separately, so we may determine the optimal structure

configuration on governmental level, in these fields.

Environmental protection represents the activities totality through which preservation and improvement of the existing life environment is insured, which all population, economic agents, local and central administrative institutions should take care of. In this context, the idea of a ministry for *environmental protection* does not seem appropriate.

The central authority for environment should bring under regulations, harmonize and coordinate the preoccupations for environment, establishing the necessary regulations and supervising their implementations. This would be the role of the corresponding ministry. It cannot attend directly the entire environmental protection which is laid upon more actors. Thus, the natural environment preserves its quality through cybernetic mechanisms of self-adjustment without generating pollution (3), but it has to be protected from aggressive human actions and preserved in its original sites, including through ecological reconstruction measures.

But the state and quality of anthropogenic environment are determined by the human development way, by the technologies used by humans. Therefore, the industry and resources ministry, or economy ministry should be preoccupied with the systematic and consistent promotion of clean, ecological, cyclic, non-polluting technologies. Thus the causes of the industrial pollution would be eliminated, based on governmental programs designed for long term.

Also, it must be ensured the responsible management of the natural resources, promoting systematic actions of recycling and recovering of useful substances. Exploitation of primary, virgin resources that cannot be renewed must be reduced to minimum for sustainable development, which necessitates an equitable distribution of resources among generations.

But *the environment* itself represents a global concept, which includes all that is to be found in a given system, content (matter and energy) and the binding (information and inter-relationships). Of course, the definition may be phrased in different ways, but the main purpose is to understand that the environment represents the whole, everything.

The biologists and the ecologists define the environment as being the hierarchy of ecological systems, the geographers explain it with land systems. The urban designers refer to territorial, spatial systems of urban and rural localities.

For these reasons, such phrasings as *the rivers, the forests and the environment*, or others similar to these are not correct. You cannot enumerate parts along with the whole and with commas in between!

Also, the authority for the environment cannot act with long term results, unless it

insures also the coordination of territory and localities physical plan, which includes the measures for environmental protection and of the natural and built patrimony.

Without an integration of the preoccupations in which the environment connects with the development, and the protection, the preservation and the improving of the environment are insured through land settlement and localities measures, one cannot speak about efficient management on central and local level regarding the environmental problems.

In 1992, in Ankara, the *World Conference on Regional and Urban Research* took place. On this occasion the debating result came to the conclusion that, in the future, the way for research and planning in the urbanism and land settlement field will be the fundamental ecological approach. It is a powerful argument of the field professionals which shows the natural similitude and organic fusion of environmental problems with the land settlement problems.

The purpose for land settlement is the protection and improvement of the human population life environment. Besides, even since 1991 it has been introduced in Romania the compulsory approach of the environmental problems within the plans for land settlement and urbanism.

It is about including a special chapter regarding preservation, protection and improvement of the environment. It includes the current situation analysis, determining malfunctions and proposing the measures for environmental rehabilitation, highlighting the priorities of this purpose.

Thus it has been eliminated the prior confusion, that was sustaining the need for impact study for these plans though the included measures were referring also at the solving of environmental problems as fundamental objective of the given plans, specified in the *European Land settlement Charta*. This misunderstanding has generated for years useless confusions and blockages, the blockage of these plans approval, huge delays and useless spending of some additional funds.

The impact study may be applied to a concrete investment, not to an urban plan for sustainable development on long term, which has from the beginning the environment protection as one of its objectives. These plans have a regulatory aspect, representing thus a concrete working instrument, of acting for an environment as much adequate for life.

Rewriting environmental protection law has clarified these problems, setting off the plans and the specific investment programs as besides it was asked in adopting EU acquis requirements. Of course this misunderstanding was also caused by the lack of collaboration and the artificially imposed distance by the top institutional organization of the environmental authorities, separately from those of land settlement. Any social or economic reform should start with the re-evaluation and

the reform of the management structures, which in their old, inherited form cannot respond to the new requirements as they cannot understand them.

The transition of the Romanian society towards a competitive market economy and towards a participative democracy must have as target the *sustainable development*, which, unfortunately, was not assumed yet officially on top level but declarative. The fact that the Environment Ministry has recently become the Sustainable Development Ministry too does not solve automatically the problem, but only arise it. We still have two separate ministries, in charge with development, one for *Environment and sustainable development* and the other for *Development, public works and households*. We hope this to be the last step for a benefit reunion of the two ministries in one.

The problem of the organic coordination of the environmental protection actions with the ones for land settlement can still achieve significant progresses, if the global and operational vision will be assumed. Also, getting towards the sustainable development should gain an operational frame, getting from words to actions.

Sustainable development must become the main objective, the target for Romania and it must be mentioned starting with the Constitution such as other countries have done it.

Any future law and governmental action must be adopted only if it respects the constitutional obligation to follow the sustainable development way.

A first phase would be checking that those acts of the central and also local power don't interfere with the sustainable development. There is need also for pilot programs, designed for long term.

Such a pilot program of sustainable development was proposed through the Final Resolution adopted by the National Mountain Forum, Romania 2002, held in Bucharest, on the 10th of September 2002, on the occasion of launching the International Mountain Year celebration. We cannot start with the sustainable development simultaneously and everywhere, but a national experiment for a priority development area, such as the mountains area, would be imperative and useful.

It would subscribe to the recommendations of the *International Mountain Agriculture and Sustainable Development Conference - SARD*, held from the 16th to the 20th of June 2002, at Adelboden, Switzerland, which recommended *government determination to adopt mountain politics at national level*, recommendation re-staged by the European Community in which we are integrated.

Such proposals, as the ones from the present material, could be efficient management actions at national level, which can hurry up the adaptation of

Romania to the European integration requirements, but also its economical and social progress on long term (2).

Conclusions

Unfortunately in Romania the two ministries are organised by caste principles. At the Ministry of Environment work hydrologists, biologists and ecologists and in the Ministry of Land Settlements predominate architects and construction engineers.

The ideas presented in the above paper represent the synthesis of the author research interests, regarding the management of the two sectors. The goals are the optimization of leading structures at local, regional and national level and the development of an integrated vision upon those sectors.

In this frame of reference, the organic conjugation of environmental protection actions with the ones for land settlement, on local and central level, would be a beneficial measure towards progress.

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