

# URBAN RENEWAL IN ROMANIA

*Violeta PUSCASU*

Key words: renewal, change, typological reorganization

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The urban renewal is a concept which entered the specialized literature after 1990, at the same time with other new concepts, with or without a previous correspondent in Romania.

In one way or another, every stage, temporally and phenomenologically delimited, is a period of renewal as compared to the previous background, not necessarily correlated to the positive.

## 2. RENEWAL VERSUS CHANGE

The urban renewal as a trend in planning and organizing the urban territory has a few defining constant elements and, obviously, at least a paradigm and at the same time a reference point which set it on a certain ideologic-pragmatical level and which differentiate it as for the aspect of aims.

From our horizon of information, a conceptual discussion on the theme renewal versus change takes place only in the ivory tower of the consecrated capacities while those who dispose of the power of acting upon the material context appeal to conjunctural solutions, avoiding the profound thoroughgoing study of those uncomfortable themes pertaining to the present.

We personally believe that in Romania took place and continue to occur at the same time renewal and change, the specific differences referring to the morphostructural physical environment of cities, the legislative background, the informational and registration system, the property, the financing etc.

It is well known that the group of the European countries in transition, although still facing common characteristics and recommendations, react with different speed, dispoibility and comprehension to the urban change/renewal.

Further on we shall take a closer look at Romania's specific elements in the process of urban renewal for a more proper integration into the European urban landscape.

## 3. EVOLUTIVE CONDITIONS

The 20th century brings into the Romanian urbanism three major moments:

- the urbanism of the first half of the 20th century, where one can notice the coexistence, at the level of the forms, of an *influenced urbanism* – Bucharest seen as "the little Paris" and a *local urbanism*, with mixt urban plans and forms.
- the urbanism of the Communist period, manifested at least under three forms, judging by its effects:
  - juxtaposition
  - infiltration
  - replacement / implant.

This state of facts constitutes at the present the context of relation of the urban renewal which is a process previous to the political changes.

- the "post- Decembrist urbanism", of the last ten years, which is totally and wrongly assimilated to a new era of renewal. The truth is that the insufficient lapse of time does not allow us to raise some aspects not fully clarified to the rank of tendency.

In the same note of distinction between renewal and major change one can identify a sum of successive waves of renewal, produced in the context of major stages of change (Figure 1).

In the juxtaposed urbanism, realized through the joining of the new structures to the traditional ones, two centres have often resulted, almost two different towns within the same built perimeter. We refer to what is commonly known as "downtown" / the new centre, respectively "midtown" / the old centre. This is the best situation, in which the salvation of valuable architectural sites – mostly mediaeval – was possible, as it happened in some cities from the centre and the West of Romania – Sibiu, Sighisoara, Brasov. The phenomenon is similar to those from the Czech Republic, Poland, Germany etc.

The infiltrated urban may be considered, as opposed to the previous category, the most disastrous form of "urban renewal".

Under the motto of "blending the new with the old" and of the "radical urban renewal", but also under the sign of an acute scarcity of construction materials – not to mention the scarcity of inspiration, too! – balanced urban compositions were destroyed, through demolition or isolation.

Most cities and towns have lost their identity and local colour after the process of "territory and locality systematization", a process with major deficiencies in relation to the preliminary evaluation which resulted in pshycological and social lacks of poise in addition to the rest of the shortcomings of this action (Abraham 1991).

One of the identifying elements of the urbanism of the Communist period, shaped by a malignant infiltration, is the "tower-type block of flats", which used to hide slums, old buildings and surviving churches. The second defining element is the faulty functional zoning presenting industrial zones in the centre and reduced recreational sectors or green lungs.

The third manifestation of the urbanism of the Communist period consists of the urban implant. In spaces without urban vocation towns or urban structures were founded, which later on proved their frailty. But this aspect is connected especially to the

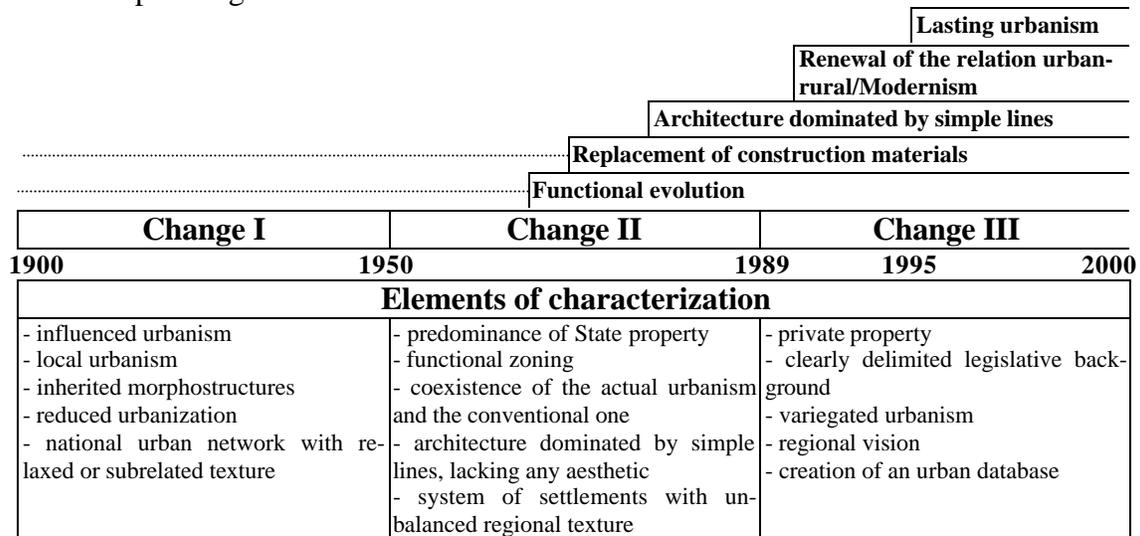
macroterritorial urban analysis and to the systems of settlements that make the object of distinct studies (Ianos, 1987).

#### 4. WAVES OF RENEWAL

In keeping with the proportion and the results obtained, one can distinguish a number of stages of renewal, categorically superposed or diluted into the local trends and false renewals.

#### 5. RENEWAL AND CHANGE AFTER 1990

The transformation of the town as a whole and of its internal structures after 1990 is the effect of a deeply changed juridical system. Most of the norms and institutions which mark out, directly or indirectly, the activity and the processes of urbanism and territorial planning are new.



**Fig.1**

Because their classification according to the object of settlement is difficult to make for the simple fact that some of them have only a reduced influence, we sometimes did not even directly made our option for a chronological display of the most representative ones:

- ? Law 50/1991 regarding the authorization for executing the construction and some measures concerning the making of dwellings.
- ? the Government's Decision regarding the organization and the functioning of the Ministry of Public Workings and Territorial Planning.
- ? Law of the Survey and of Real Estate Advertising (7/1996)
- ? Law of the Dwelling (114/1996)
- ? the Methodology of noticing the urbanism documentations and the touristic resorts
- ? the General Urbanism Regulations (552/1996)

On a different area of interests, the privatization and the retrocession of some real estate and land properties, have determined an increase of normative documents which

have changed the citizen's quality and attitude towards property and have stimulated at the same time his/her initiative.

Most notable are the Law of Land Funds (18/1991) and the Law of Free Initiative which had an immediate impact, direct and frequently negative on the urban landscape. In this case, what should have been a renewal was in fact a transformation of the already plain and harsh physiognomy of the urban landscape into a mixture of shapes and styles, of volumes and heights.

The temporal disparity between the adopting of the laws have allowed in numerous cases an accentuated deterioration of some spaces, ranging from the proliferation of the inaesthetic provisory constructions such as booths and stalls to the degradation of lands and forests.

However, what really represents a change and a renewal at the same time is the paradigm which governs the urban policy and acts.

Although Romania finds herself in full process of searching her own ways of materializing the urban renewal, the acquired paradigm is the European one – the lasting urbanism.

The future of urban renewal in Romania appears more in terms of desiderata and imperatives politically conditioned and less as a mechanism actioned by the community's decision.

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

- Gusti G., 1974, **Forme noi de asezare**, 210p., Bucharest, Technical Publishing House.  
Ianos I., 1992, **Stabilitate si instabilitate în sistemele geografice**, 80p., Terra, 1-2.  
Ianos I., Talânga Cr., 1993, **Impactul prabusirii regimului totalitar comunist asupra sistemului urban românesc**, 313p., The Annals of the University, Bucharest, XLII.  
Commission of the European Communities, 1990, **Green Paper on the Urban Environment**, Brussels, Commission of the European Communities.

### **Biographical notes:**

Violeta Puscasu is Doctor in Geography since 1998, Lecturer at University "Dunarea de Jos" from Galatzi, author of three books and more papers and articles presented in national and international congresses.

Member of A.E.S.O.P., N.I.S.P.A. cee, Romanian Society of Geography.

## ABSTRACT

Key words: renewal, change, typological reorganization

The urban renewal drives teoretically a preliminary conceptual clarification: renewal versus change.

Temporally and phenomenologically the renewal is marked by paradigms and political influences.

The article Urban Renewal in Romania propose not only a radiography of the renewal stages superposed to the major moments of urban change in Romania, with a closer look to the post-Comunist period, but also a drawing of urban system perspectives in the new context of sustenable development.

The division into periods of the evolution of the Romanian urban phenomenon is based on a sum of elements - phisical, morphostructural, legislative and informational environment - wich contribute to the shaping of a certain level of renewal, subsequently marked by a typological reorganization. The complexity of the urban growth makes, however, this tipology, in the shape of socio-demo-urbanistic classifications, captures correctly the morphostructural classification of Romania towns.

The suporting landmarks of any renewal are elements wich are immediately visible or with ulterior effects on the strategy of spatial reorganization of a region, but not only necessarily positive.

The way of new urban renewal paradigm applied in Romania are functionality and sustainability to small urban area and reconstruction and reintegration to the big urban area.

A focus on the relationship between general and particular aspects of great urban axes in the future beeing in subject for the decisions makers are sintetically presented.

Contact:

Violeta Puscasu

University "Dunarea de Jos"

47, Domneasca Street, Galati 6200, Romania

tel. ++40.36.46.04.67

fax. ++40.36.46.13.53

e-mail: vpuscasu@fsea.ugal.ro

v\_puscasu@hotmail.com