

# APPROACH LEVELS OF SPATIAL PLANNING IN ROMANIA OR WHAT IS HAPPINESS

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**Abstract.** The studies concerning happiness, well being and satisfaction developed in territorial approach tries to conciliate measurable economic information with subjective and individual aspects, underlying prudence related to the use of the resulted generalizations as basis for decisions. This paper focused on the particular aspect of the relationship of the obtaining of “territorial happiness” with the balances of the actors of the territorial development in Romania.

**Key words:** happiness, spatial and territorial development, actors of the territorial development

## 1. Introduction

The problem of the happiness distribution in the territory is subjects of the researches of sociologists and psychologists and their works can become a basis for more detailed development politics. A series of hypothesis and correlations can be formulated to appreciate the level of happiness and wellbeing related to the peripheral state of regions and commonalties, but the facts are strongly linked to the history, economy and the values of the inhabitants (National Statistics 2012).

Another aspect close to the spatial development is the rapport of the happiness with the economy, exactly with economic development levels, this leading from this point of the view to a plus-relevance for the demographic structures studies. The evident differences concerning the age, linked to happiness studies, as well as the individuality of the situations, define many

of the these systematic researches (Graham and Chattopadhyay, 2012).

These approaches take into consideration the happiness by concerning especially the welfare, having indicator sets directly identifiable. The approaches refers to the level of the life, this implying the comparative elements of different territories and populations, each particular situation being representative for a certain history and life style. The relationship of the happiness with the welfare and satisfaction shows the fact that the happiness, as a part of the welfare, depends on the individual satisfaction degree, but it is not directly linked to the basis economic indicators (GDP for example) (Hyman and Patulny, 2007). Even the detailed study of the indicators of the territorial development (Lonska and Boronenko, 2012) accept the empirical mode to make the correlations with the satisfaction degree and the happiness level. The inherent

degree of the generalization of the conclusions bring ideas more adequate as addressing to lowest territorial levels and more cohesive communities.

If the territorial psychology and sociology together with the “happiness economy” put into the balance the constituent aspects oriented to the scope of sustaining the decisions for the territorial development, the same problem of the happiness on the territory or even in an institutional way, can indicate new approach directions by understanding the relationship of the decisions and different actors taking part to the territorial planning processes. From this perspective the use in this paper of the term “happiness” represents in a great part a polemic approach, inherently having some metaphoric connotations.

## **2. Development and happiness**

The problem of the “happiness” can be seen in the terms of the banal problem of how to adequate the objectives to the resources. We take into account the fact that the inadequacy of these parts usually goes for the relocation (in fact to the reshaping), of the resource pool, or to the recalibration of the objectives, existing a “third way”, namely to reconfigure (many times by catastrophes), the system containing the two development factors. This simplified equation has a strong degree of relativity being reported to the mode of life and to the development models.

These known elements receive new and clear significations as referred to the questions related to the happiness and its relevance for the huge and complex problematic of the territorial development. To link “the happiness” of the territory only to the accomplish of the objectives means to reduce the discussion to the problem of the fight for the access

to the resources. This fight can generate development or dysfunctions, including for other spaces and communities different from the reference.

Besides the psychological, social and moral problem of the individual and group happiness, whose components and dimensions, having an inherent subjectivity can be known in a measure, we bring in the discussion the possible translation of the research of the subjectivity to the field of decisions that try to be “as much as possible objective”. The subjective factor can not be avoided, nor in the social field, nor in the political and decisional domain (De Lauwe, Chombart, 1972), and this aspect generate supplementary pressure over the resources. The approaching in these terms is close to an ecologic approach, but by difference, in this case related to the human ecosystem and social reference models, the effects of the fed back is distorted.

The discrepancy between the objectives and resources (known, unknown and less known or in principle inapplicable), generates extensive approach of the development (the extension of the resources area (UAUIM – Urbanproiect, 2008), the growth of the markets) or intensive ones (the increasing of the territory products value, the changing and the development of the technological, commercial, financial, political, cultural change structures networks).

The continuous mutual recalibration of the objectives to the resources and the creation, together with the discovery, of new resources, all these in a particular social and cultural context, reflects in general terms the search for “the happiness” in the territory.

## **3. The territory and the territorial planning**

The objectives and resources needed to reach the development target depends on

the spatial scale, this suggesting in many cases the fractal dimensions of the reasons, but emphasizes the multi-scalar systemic dimension of the institutional and technical interdependency. This reality should by consequence produce approaches of the Urban and Territorial Planning and Design activities, both parts of the development processes.

The specific planning categories are present in this structure that contain legal, administrative, technical and professional levels having, beside other reasons of the specific functioning modes, the dimension and the nature of the destination field (the customers), the estimated and the real impacts, time factor and the financing possibilities.

Romania is a territory of big disparities and huge spatial diversity, characterized by development resources and restrictions specific to each zone. The national territory has diversity, according with the natural and human structures as well as due to historical evolutions. More, the divers potential of Romania reveals as being spatially differentiated for each spatial and territorial level. The specificity of the situation is strongly amplified at the continental scale by the European historical tradition of the economic fluxes and by our geographical peripheral position related to the western and Center of the continent, despite its potential to articulate with the Orient.

The territorial disparities impose different priorities for the spatial development. The wide territory planning levels (Commission to European Parliament, 2010) represent the expression of the search for adequate solutions for each spatial level, in order to identify the development priorities at an adequate scale and the attenuation of the specific disparities. These are evident

according with present administrative shape of the territory and especially within the limits imposed by the administrative and possibly by political conjuncture interests. The direct beneficiary of the development or of the specific proposals, express through the actions of the elected decision makers, but these impacts, despite to the legal public consultation feed-back, are more often formal. The happiness at this scale become a concept being separate by the daily life, and the large time and space impacts that the programs and projects, based, coordinated and sustained by these documentations, are supported in the future. The effectiveness of communication means education oriented to the territorial aspects, this meaning to be one of the conditions necessary to consciously go to the spatial development at this scale.

Levels of approaching more closed to the urban planning documentations are the planning for urban or rural intercommunity planning. These are less used as strategic approach for a rather little space, as well as a coordinate development process. In this case, the inhabitants are closer to the decision makers and their options, and the appropriate documentations represents a strong instrument for spatial development. And if we take into account the particular case of the happiness, for the less extended territories considered, there are more chance to ensure to the inhabitants satisfactions.

The local levels, general and zonal urban plans, and the detail urban plans, especially oriented for the regulations of the building investments and more of them in reality less conducted to an integrated spatial development, have chances to be directed understood by the users, especially the last two documentation categories, cases when the satisfaction to obtain a legal basis for construction permits become an objective of the "urban happiness".

Territorial reference levels represents in the meantime different levels for the identification of the potential elements and for the specific restrictions, as well as for the respective disparities and dysfunctions. These levels become relative function of social and economic norms, both dependent of the place, time and sectors development politics as well as the ranking of the objectives.

The objective assessment intention for this tip of development is made by indicators having a certain degree of subjectivity, and this subjectivity depends on the "happiness degree" desirable for the people (having the development objective as a starting point).

The gathering and understanding of the results is made in relation of adequate standards, characteristic for a certain life level. A shift of the relatives state and recalibrations occurs together with the standards evolutions and it becomes evident if we will take into consideration the great diffusion of the contemporary values and cultures.

More, the significantly big inertia of the physical urban and territorial systems dictates different development cycles for the social, economic and cultural, all these under the impact of the geopolitical evolutions (the deceasing of the conventional contemporary duration of the generations produces a supplementary pressure for the change). Often, for this reason there are significant differences between the inhabitants expectations for the territorial development objectives and the actual achievements. By the consequence, the "happiness" in this strongly relative and dynamic territorial and supra-territorial context sometime becomes subject for new tensions (motivated, together with others, by the inadequacy objectives-resources).

The continuous iteration of these factors, pressing on the decisions and actions level can lead to a fragile dynamic equilibrium (Homeostasis) that we can define as being a continuous adequacy of the objectives to the resources. It can be added that the mode to identify and use the resources is part of the specific instruments to reach the development targets.

We also can point out that the Sustainable Development proposes itself adequate solutions, starting from the limited character of the natural resources and the necessary time to rebuilt some of them. In the research of the happiness by the territory planning there are unavoidable the processes of building of new knowledge, technologies and life cultures able to generate new consuming models.

In a more consistent context, the formulation of the objectives must be according to the spatial and territorial level addressed by the planning processes, as well as to the exogenous resources (including financing and political issues).

The dynamic of the nature can be explained by the feed-back rules, whose effects are clearly seen in the catastrophic moments of the major disruptions, but they are inexorable evolving in the evolution of the homeostasis process, the equilibrium around the medium point whose the dynamic state system tries to oscillate as much as possible. The changing of the resources basin (dimensions and qualities), leads to pass out from the momentary equilibrium range. The territorial dynamics also include the human subsystem dynamics, not only as a structural element but also as an essential part of the processes, both producing and meanwhile supporting the impacts.

“Territorial happiness” in this perspective is close to the nature laws that impose directly or indirectly their inexorable effects over the human systems.

#### **4. Territorial planning professionals**

The territorial complexity is reflected in the complexity of the models that we rise, reflecting the natural and human dynamics, especially the knowledge state. The necessary approaches go over, by their amplitude and mainly by the diversity of the individual capacities, the individual capacities and as a consequence the involved professionals abandon the multidisciplinary, monographic approaches of the planning objectives and build interdisciplinary teams, many times applying, according to the situations, trans-disciplinary solutions and ways of works.

Each of the complex planning team member try, by intellectual, technical and scientific tools (in the present legal, technical and administrative context), the formulation of the necessary and possible considered solutions for the specific spatial development objectives achievement, part of the general territorial development. This type of sub-ordination of the specific necessary considered actions to the principles, objectives and possibilities going far more than the individual range, produces conflicts added to the existing ones at the same level, belonging to the different scopes of different specialties. The solving of a wide fields of contradictions starting from the particular objectives and rules, the difficulty of the formulation, ranking and time programming of the proposed solutions and actions, show at their turn the apparently contradictory elements of the spatial and territorial dynamic. By the difference with the nature, it is specific human the necessity to solve the discrepancy of what we want versus what is

possible and to obtain more than the known resources can give, or very generally speaking, to find the “happiness”.

This reality generates contradictory effects over the territorial development politics convergence and are identifiable to all the spatial and objectives levels that must endorse the coherent and sustainable development as well as the competitiveness, all these simultaneously with the quality of the governance.

In this approach, the search for the equilibrate planning solutions, in other words to a certain degree of adequacy solutions of the territorial planning oriented to a complete development, have the inherent impediment of every model conceiving the distortions imposed by the decision makers for the objectives. This new relativity is added to the factor time needed to implement the solutions also for the obstacles in the way to adequate the ranking of the necessities to the identified resources. If the descriptive models of the territory try in the principle to promote the self sufficiency of the proposed systems (at least concerning their major structural aspects), in general terms characteristic for the models having input data, being by definition in a continuous state of changing, the system is an open one and the proposed solutions are partial and temporary by their nature.

#### **5. Decision makers happiness**

The situation can be defined on other level if analyzing the process of the elaboration of the territorial planning, we introduce the decision makers presence.

As it is known, to adequate the objectives to the resources represent one of the important principles of the professionals involved in preparation of the territorial planning documentations [we prefer this

term in order to underline the institutional and administrative character of the current activity for the Territorial Planning Documentations]. The decision makers, having the obligation to seek for the “happiness” of the territory they usually administrate, have a certain degree of freedom related to the solutions proposed by the professionals. The identification, the formulation and the activities to have appropriate dimensions of the development objectives are usually made according with “previously accepted and known” necessities by the collectivity and the exterior development models considered as adequate for the territory but often subjective inspiration, and all these can be validated by the local councils. It must be said the fact that *the political objectives of the decision makers that sometime can be separate from the necessities of the territory and by consequence also the corresponded imposed solutions*, are able to produce a break with technical based objectives raised by the territorial planning documentations. But from another point of the view we can accept the fact that one of the decision makers duties is to formulate development visions that can go over of some future perspective raised by the professionals. On these conditions there is more difficult to obtain adequacy and to increase chances to reach the development objective.

#### **6. Territorial planning – some obstacles to obtain the “full happiness”**

Spatial planning at the great scale is a process organized on levels following the administrative shapes of the territory, but the structure of the development regions (NUTS II), is a unite not institutionalized in Romania and often their function is more oriented to the financial management.

At the national territory scale, the proposed priorities of the development (especially physical ones) concerning the assurance of the minimum conditions to obtain the territorial cohesion, is looking for *“the linking with European and intercontinental network of the development poles and spatial development corridors, the structuring of the urban fixture by an equilibrate developing of the urban settlement network, the rising of a rural-urban solidarity according with the various territories categories, the strengthening of trans-Carpathian links as a support for a balances regional development and the protection and using of the natural and cultural patrimony”* (UAUIM and Urbanproiect, 2008).

These spatial development directions of the Romania territory, having different impacts, perceptions and costs, have each of them specific problems and priorities, all these being conditions to accomplish the “happiness” of the inhabitants.

One of the European accepted principles, generating priorities for the financing of the development programs and projects, is the concentration of the resources for as big as possible local communities (number of addressed inhabitants), this imposing inter-communality development as coordination development politics principle and having as results the increasing of the investment efficiency. The on going elaboration of the instruments have as consequence an approach in order to increase the role of the communities and the territorial-administrative associations. This approach bring in front the interest for another equilibrium of the ranking of the objectives of the investments applicable to the actual territorial level, more related with the identification of the inhabitants necessities and wishes. This could become a balance development, or, in other terms, having the

conditions for as much as possible people to be “happy”.

Despite these, the cohesion politics of the European Commission, creating general territorial development principles are not yet able to establish “*how can be guaranteed the fact that the architecture of the cohesion policy [must] have in mind each fund specificity and ... the necessity ... to orient this fund to accomplish the objectives of 2020 European Strategy?*” (European Commission, 2010, page. 13). These incertitude bring new parameters in reaching the approved targets using territorial planning projects, indifferent the scales.

### Conclusions and answers

*In the triangle inhabitants, professionals of territorial planning and decision makers, each actor has sometime different perceptions and information about the territorial development objectives and resources. More, beside the normal diversity of the territory, there are contextual and supra-contextual conditions for each space (administrative, institutional, technical, political but also the specific knowledge basis), but mainly a high subjectivity degree of the political elected decision makers, prevalently based on decisional benchmarks oriented to their main objective to obtain and use the power and determined by the temporary limits of the election cycles. And for all these people involved we can add the international investors and paymasters, whose criteria and objectives can usually convergent to the spatial development objectives only in case there are potentials for material and financial profit.*

Territorial planning and the timing to finance the development projects are not sufficiently correlated in Romania, being seen as relatively independent processes. Considering the implied actors, we can think if, beyond the different mentalities,

there is an institutional inconsistency needing an adjustment. If the answer is affirmative, the interest overdrawing the limited technical and professional level can be oriented to a debate about the opportunity of an institutional restructuring of Romania looking for another territorial and administrative rank and reshaping, in order to conciliate and integer the spatial planning activities and financial planning. This intention can be oriented to ensure a coherent basis for the inhabitant “happiness”?

As the development objectives are strongly linked to the place, its dimensions, its inhabitants and their life values, there are not happiness formulas but only specific ways to research it, *there is not only one happiness, although territorial.*

Following all these, the urban and territorial planners teams must face the situation to a continuous moral and professional self reflexive process in the research of the “territorial happiness”.

### NOTE

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