

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND THE NEED FOR PLANNING

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Abstract:

Sustainable and balanced development requires positive and constant evolution of a community, in a given area, towards superior parameters in line with the interests and expectations of its members.

To this end, the community needs sufficient resources and, equally, precise targets to which to direct all activities that generates a complex development.

Since - especially in a period of acute economic crisis - a finding of chronic precarity of these resources, it is essential that they are used with maximum efficiency, towards achieving the priorities for the future of the community.

Hence the need of strategic planning of the future, based on broad consultation with community members and to assume, together, the successes and failures of this approach.

This paper aims to analyze the characteristics and limitations of this process, especially in terms of local government involvement.

Key words: *community, development, planning, resources, administration*

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Although it may seem a relatively simple process, more technical, sustainable development planning approach has some particularities (Crisan 1, 2007), derived from the specific situation of our country:

- Development, especially the sustainable one, it should involve a profound transformation, on all sections and in all areas to be accomplished in a short period of time and with a greater intensity
- Although the development is considered - including among the political class and the policy makers - as a prime necessity, it is not recognized, assumed and, especially, properly treated in the second line of various government structures
- In this context, it is reported the existence of a problem of mentality, even a fear of change, particularly with the civil servants who worked in government before 1989
- Even if sustainable development is seen as a priority, the government did not have a political will, strong enough to make the necessary legislative changes of a scale and depth, or to mobilize all resources necessary for this purpose
- Since these changes must be made at all levels simultaneously and in complete linkage, the problem that is there is in the mobilization and efficient allocation of resources, adequate and appropriate to the time and place
- Paradoxically, but also as a legacy of the past, there is a phenomena of rejection of the idea of programming, which overlaps with the lack of familiarity of the plan, and also the non-assimilation of the science to foresee the future in terms of strategic thinking, especially at young people
- Finally, we note that there are not enough well-trained specialists able to implement new tools for planning / programming.

Such a situation can be explained by some state of facts faced by the government of Romania:

- Rich expertise provided by foreign experts was directed primarily towards the general problems, while the need for specialization and interest in strategic planning - and a definition of major projects in development - have emerged and was manifested especially in recent years

- Content transfer of know-how was not adapted in particular, to the practical conditions and, especially, to the government needs to fund in Romania

- Training and professional development has been excessively centralized and concentrated beneficiaries public sphere focused on national organizations

- On some training activities on priority areas has been established a monopoly by some trainers (and training institutions)

- University education programs were poorly adapted to the experience, knowledge and practice, gained internationally in planning / programming

- Professional development and training activities (regarding those in the governmental area) have been poorly funded (also at decisional level)

- The financial resources available (poor) - from the local budgets of public organizations - have been poorly used.

In addition, public management of development faces a great challenge, which is derived from the evident internationally trends –the need to think development and future evolution in terms of the projects and competition.

Situation not easy, especially for an administration accustomed to allocating resources, possibly on the basis of more or less objective criteria.

The more so as, in our view, we appreciate that - in the sphere of sustainable development - will have to discuss, increasingly, on business, especially of business plans of public affairs and not just projects (Crişan, Crişan 2; 2009).

Therefore, we believe that - in thinking activities at the community level – it must be printed (and even required) the principle of the 3 E, sustaining the interest on general public needs under the sign of economy, efficiency and effectiveness (Crisan 2, 2007).

In this regard, to ensure community development, public managers (implicitly local elected) will have - and because of the emergence of competition in access to resources - to redefine the status and take on new responsibilities.

Thus, local government leaders must confront the need to assume the risk, at least viewed from 3 perspectives:

- supporting projects on which there is no total control and whose success is uncertain

- to define specific priorities of the community, which deserves to be transformed, with a great deal of resources consumption, in public business plans

- to find resources for the community, that will be pooled with the sponsor.

Face to face with these new approaches to financing local development, public authorities show a series of reserves, which impede the absorption capacity of funds, particularly the international ones (Crişan, Crişan 1; 2005)

They have their reasons, among others, to:

- lack of a body of well-trained specialists

- insufficient information to local communities on national and international funding opportunities

- lack of organizational capacity (including civil society perimeter) of coagulation in community efforts and resources required

- relatively low potential (coupled with some reservations and wrong mentality of some players in the administration) to ensure co-financing of the projects

- fear of government authorities to engage loans (where the opportunities for co-financing of local budgets are exceeded)

- lack (or wrong) existence of ranking and prioritization of development goals of local communities (preferring to allocate resources on projects of lower value, which can be made quickly and with immediate effect)
- a very interesting “no” to accept funding programs with strict monitoring and sequentially allocation of accessed funds
- fear for reimbursement mechanism of structural instruments for the expenditures already made by the administration.

Secondly, there is - and is manifested strongly - the need to project the future and to find ways and resources for its sustainability.

A difficult endeavour, especially because of significant factors:

- uncertainties in the development of Romanian community in EU space
- increased influence of international environment, much more complex and turbulent, with very pronounced dynamics
- restrictions on Romania in operating the European Administrative Space
- reduction – on number of areas of activity – of the financial support of the international community
- pronounced shift of Romania to a real market economy in parallel with increased competition in various fields
- increasingly complex political influences, including Romania’s hypostasis of member of United Europe.

Under the pressure (and in front) of these multiple influences and interference, any projection of the future must support the new-type EU citizen.

Hence the need for civil society (also adapted to the Continental model) to become an essential partner in the extensive programming and planning exercises to European Romania's transformation and modernization.

This is important for designing the future large operation to be performed bottom up, from basic levels to the national (or supra-state) so as to achieve as a good reflection of the aspirations and needs of the society.

Also, regardless of how they develop such programs and strategies, it is imperative that the basic structures of government (particularly the local communities) to manage - through experts - such documents.

However, from experience, but also as an effect of the insufficient resources it is necessary for specific legislation to allow (and to stipulate more clearly) the association between two or more public authorities, and business environment.

We consider in this connection that durable development is the issue of the entire community, both local and regional / micro-regional.

Therefore we advocate to promote the new concept called “inter-communality”, which has - and therefore as objective - increasing the capacity (administrative) of action at the level of local communities.

He creates, meanwhile, the possibility of sharing resources and a prerequisite for enhancing the access to international financing.

From the perspective of ensuring of a sustainable development to a wide area, it should not be neglected the new public management called territorial management (Profiroiu, 1999).

These are elements that we have to consider when trying to define instruments for sustainable development at local and micro-regional level, and especially to enforce sustainable development (including its elements of strategic planning) as a priority task and government legislation.

For the success so far - of the various public authorities – obtained in accessing of specific international funds or in strategic planning is not apparently sufficient to cause the major political player to make decisions.

That is because, on the line open in the current legislation to new concepts (association of community development, community development fund, the public administrator, etc.), it should be covered and other development goals:

- define business development as a public service (with a requirement to ensure the provision of well trained specialists in the field)
- the existence of a county community development fund, designed to provide exclusive support in a competition regime, to the development projects at county and local community level, but also to ensure, within certain limits, of the winning projects financed through international financing
- establish a new mechanism for the effective distribution of the established fund in order to balance local budgets by allocating a higher percentage of its value for the operation of the County Community Development Fund
- formalized and financial support of new tools for local development - development agencies, local development agents, local developers, community facilitators, authorized individuals in local development, etc. - which allows, with professionalism, this new public service to exist
- streamlining government structure after the criteria of efficiency and professionalism.

Sustainable development - and hence its planning - needs, however, consistent and stable resources.

Yet the existence of a county community development fund - linked with national and EU funds for regional development programs - can provide complementary resources and not their duplication (waste).

Simple idea - generous, in fact - does not solve the financial decentralization (but on the contrary, it complicates) the issue of financing sustainable micro-regional development.

Especially that the clear "centralization" of the selection of projects financed through structural instruments impede coordination and direct EU support for development, making an increasingly stronger need for linking the various financial resources.

Otherwise, without relatively stable financial resources and insured development process will not be able to define and achieve goals pursued.

Following the same design and principle of the county fund, we think that it should be supported, where necessary the conditions and resources may exist – also the operation of local community development funds.

They could support funding lines derived from various public policy projects, developed with support (direct involvement) of associative structures from the community perimeter.

Of course, it seems difficult thinking and chaining so many legislative and administrative measures and actions...

But - as stated earlier - planning and implementing local sustainable development needs resources and right decisions at the right time and with suited people!

Disparate measures, unrelated - without projecting their harmonious functioning on all those issues (and at all levels) may be more detrimental than their absence and void.

Instruments and measures in finance modernization and operation of local development should encourage the planned development to generate new initiatives to facilitate the assertion of managerial thinking, not to perpetuate sleep - and hence poverty - in which indulge, under the excuse of the lack of resources, many public authorities and local communities.

Unfortunately, however, legislative concerns are channelled to more general problems of society and government as a whole, and not to pay attention to local communities, which developed significant matters in the balance development and hence the real European integration.

Between full local autonomy (especially, a real decentralization) and the inclusion of these communities on the essential details of the sustainable development of Romanian society in the European context, "planner" needs clearer which parts to include future development and management and recovery resources towards meeting the most important interests and expectations of citizens.

Which means that any future design year is accompanied - especially when accessing structural instruments – also by budgetary planning, which contain multi-annual programs.

Planning Act is, ultimately, an act of collective will and a democratic exercise work to together to serve the public interest by designing by the communities, in different periods, realistic and rooted in everyday life, on the ways they want to follow.

In context it is interesting to consider the future and how the mechanism will work thought to structural funds - especially for rural areas - and how it will solve some problems of strategic planning:

- structured definition of areas with distinct characteristics that may be suitable space for the planning, financing and sustainable development (especially development of micro-regions)
- sub-regional partnerships to achieve broad public-private ones, involving the main actors of development in that area, which may unite all available resources to achieve goals
- develop in a coherent and comprehensive planning exercise, the zonal development strategies and providing the expertise to implement programs of action arising from their implementation
- establishing a self-selection mechanism in the definition of projects submitted to international funding to achieve, in a process whereby the responsible use of community resources available and those attracted
- risk-taking skills (in parallel with finding means to limit or decrease it) in public affairs (with accountability as the main forces involved in the development) and improving budget management in order to achieve economy, in higher efficiency and effectiveness
- upward addressing of the local development issues also by sub actors, by participation at all levels and assimilation, inverted, of the interests and priorities of the community concerned.

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