

Napjatý vztah

Poznámky k zapojení sociologie do rozvoje bydlení v komunistickém Rumunsku

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Podobně jako v jiných zemích sovětského bloku, urbanizace a industrializace patřily k hlavním cílům rumunského komunistického režimu. Mezi lety 1947 a 1989 došlo k radikálním demografickým změnám – počet obyvatel vzrostl z 15 na 23 milionů, přičemž podíl městské populace se zvedl z 20 % v roce 1939 k téměř 50 % ke konci režimu. Za dvacetleté období svého trvání

vybudoval komunistický režim přes 4 miliony bytů, převážně v bytových domech. Změny v životním stylu, které s tím souvisely, však nebyly systematicky zkoumány. Sociologie byla v roce 1948 zavržena jako „buržoazní věda“ a teprve v roce 1965 byla rehabilitována. Od založení Laboratoře pro regionální a městský výzkum (1969) sociologové spolupracovali s architekty a územními plánovači a tato spolupráce trvala i přes opětovný zákaz sociologie jako takové v roce 1977. Článek zkoumá některé výsledky a dopady tohoto zapojení sociologů

do architektonického a územního plánování, a to především na základě dobových článků publikovaných v oficiálních periodických *Arhitectura* a *Viitorul Social*.

Klíčová slova:

komunistický režim – urbánní sociologie – Výzkumná laboratoř sociálních věd – Ústav plánování a navrhování typizovaných staveb – Institutul de Proiectare pentru Construcții Tipizate – IPCT

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A Strained Relationship. Notes on Sociologists’ Involvement in Housing Developments in Communist Romania

Dragoș Dascălu



Similar to other countries behind the Iron Curtain, urbanization and industrialization were two of the main goals of the communist regime in Romania. From 1947, the year in which the communist regime took total control of the country, to 1989, the year in which the regime ended through the December Revolution, the demographics changed radically – from 15 million citizens to 23 million citizens in total,⁽¹⁾ and from an urban population of 20% (approximately 3.2 million individuals) in 1939 to almost 50% (approximately 12.3 million individuals) towards the end of the regime.⁽²⁾ This change affected both the urban and the rural environments, especially concerning housing provision. More than 5 million housing units were built in the 42 years of the regime, most of them in apartment blocks⁽³⁾ which usually replaced former individual houses or older apartment buildings.

Although this change had a radical impact on people's ways of life, the regime had, for the most part, little interest in studying the social impact of their actions. In 1948, through the new educational reforms of the freshly installed regime, teaching Sociology at Universities was banned as being a “bourgeois science”. Although Sociology was reinstated in 1965, it was once again banned for ideological reasons in 1977. However, starting from 1969, through the new Laboratory of Regional and Urban Research later transformed into the Laboratory for Sociological Studies and Research under the jurisdiction of the Design Institute for Standardized Buildings (Institutul de Proiectare pentru Construcții Tipizate, further IPCT), sociologists started to work alongside architects and urban planners. This essay attempts to look at some of the results

- 1 Constanta MIHĂESCU – Ilie DUMITRESCU – Andreea MIRICĂ, “Capitolul 1: Populația”, in: *Romania, un secol de istorie. Date statistice*, Bucharest: Editura Institutului National de Statistica 2018, p. 58.
- 2 Dorel ABRAHAM, “Urbanizarea in tarile socialiste in dezbaterile sociologice contemporane”, *Viitorul Social*, year 17, 1989, issue 4, p. 366.
- 3 Dorel ABRAHAM, *Introducere in Sociologia urbana*, Bucharest: Editura Stiintifica 1991, p. 235.

of this collaboration through the articles and books published by sociologists, members of the Laboratory for Sociological Studies and Research between 1966 and 1989 in the *Arhitectura* and the *Viitorul Social* [Social Future] magazines, as well as through some of the books published after 1990: What types of studies were carried out, what conclusions were drawn and how did they influence architectural and urban planning production?

*The scale of urban change
between 1948–1989*

“When architects sit at the drawing board they must first and foremost think about man.” (Nicolae Ceaușescu)⁽⁴⁾

The changes which affected Romania after the end of the Second World War were aimed at reinventing all of the state's functions and the entire way of life of its citizens. The new communist regime was dedicated to building a new country for a “new man”. An urban, industrialized country. However, the starting point of building this new industrialized urban landscape was not ideal. In 1946, the year in which the communist regime officially took power, Romania's situation was dire. The destruction and loss of human life in the Second World War was followed by the foundation of the SovRoms, mixed Soviet and Romanian economic entities established with the sole purpose of recovering Romania's debt as an aggressor during the war, thus depleting a fair amount of its resources.

More importantly, Romania had considerable development gaps and uneven, organic urban growth. The 1948 national census figures are better understood by looking less at general numbers and rather at comparative figures between regions. Urban population accounted for 23.4%

- 4 Quoted by Gheorghe SEBESTYEN, *Eficiența economică și socială a ansamblurilor de locuit*, Bucharest: Editura Tehnica 1975, p.53

of the total,⁽⁵⁾ meaning that from a total of 15,872,624 individuals, about 3,713,139 were living in an urban area. However, this distribution was not even, with some regions having less than 15% of urban population. Furthermore, of the 114 towns and cities, only 19 had more than 30,000 citizens, while only 3 had more than 100,000 citizens. According to the 1977 census, in 30 years the population grew to 21,559,910 individuals, with 43% living in urban areas (more than 9 million people). Between 1959 and 1977, the urban population grew by 86%.⁽⁶⁾ In 1989 the urban population surpassed 50% of the total.⁽⁷⁾ Until 1986, the number of cities grew to 237, with 24 cities having more than 100,000 citizens.⁽⁸⁾

Housing thus became a main focus for the regime. After the 1954–1958 transition period (Stalin's death in 1953, Khrushchev's rise to power, the dissolution of the SovRoms and the foundation of IPCT in 1956), the process of house building accelerated. From a median of 18,050 housing units/year in the period of 1956–1960 to 41,572 units/year in the 1961–1965 period and 146,186 in 1976–1980.⁽⁹⁾ Between 1951 and 1985, 5,252,102 housing units were constructed, of which 3,154,106 were in cities.⁽¹⁰⁾ Up until 1989 about 3.5 million urban housing units were built, with more than 84% funded by the state.⁽¹¹⁾ However, this

5 Anton GOLOPENTIA – Dumitru C. GEORGESCU, *Populația Republicii Populare Romane la 25 ianuarie 1948. Rezultatele provizorii ale recensământului*, Bucharest: Institutul Central de Statistica, 1948.

6 Dorel ABRAHAM, “Variabile metodologice si social-politice ale cercetării procesului de urbanizare”, *Viitorul Social*, year 9, 1980, issue 4, p. 666.

7 In spite of the massive increase of the urban population, Romania's urbanization is still well below other countries behind the Iron Curtain such as the Czechoslovakia (65.3% in 1985), Hungary (56.2% in 1985), Poland (61% in 1985)

8 Dorel ABRAHAM, *Introducere in Sociologia urbana*, Bucharest: Editura Științifică 1991, p. 210.

9 Mircea KIVU, “Locuirea ca relație socială”, *Viitorul Social*, year 17, 1989, issue 1, p. 124.

10 ABRAHAM, *Introducere*, p. 235.

11 Besides the houses built before 1947 that were still in private property, beginning with 1966 through Decree no. 445, the State started to support individuals in building private houses, through beneficial loan systems. The State offered an incentive for use of type-projects (lower initial down-payment). 16% of housing built during the period are privately owned houses, mostly individual housing in both urban and rural areas.

massive increase in housing stock did not lead to an increase in the quality of life. Most apartments built in 1970 (79.2%), for example, provided only one or two rooms.⁽¹²⁾ This predilection for small apartments (with a standard usable space for state-built apartments starting from 26.8 m² in 1951–1955 to 33.6 m² in 1985),⁽¹³⁾ was an economical and a political decision, as was promoted by the regime's *de facto* leader Gheorghe Gheorghiu Dej in his November 1958 speech.⁽¹⁴⁾

The rate of industrialization had a similar steady growth. In 1941, 70% of the population (9.7 million people) were agricultural workers.⁽¹⁵⁾ The relatively small urban population meant a small number of industrial workers. In 1950, industrial and construction works employees made for 14.2% of the population. Due to the rapid development of industrial facilities after 1956, in 1979 as much as 43.8% of the entire active population was employed by industry, while only 31 % were still working in agriculture.⁽¹⁶⁾ In 1989 less than three million people were still working in agriculture (even though almost 50% of the population lived in rural areas), with more than five million working at industrial facilities.

Between 1948 and 1989, the regime tried to build a new communist, urbanized, industrialized Romania almost from scratch. New cities and factories had to be reinvented or created, and people started moving *en masse* to

12 *Ibid.*, p. 125. The number of rooms refers to rooms such as the bedroom or living-room. Therefore, a one-room apartment will generally consist of a bedroom/living room, a kitchen, a toilet, corridor and a storage room.

13 KIVU, “Locuirea”, p. 124.

14 For a thorough analysis of housing in Romania between 1954 and 1966 see Miruna STROE, *Locuirea între proiect și decizie politică. România 1954–1966*, Bucharest: Simetria 2015.

15 Silvia PISICĂ – Bogdan MURGESCU et al., “Capitolul 2: Forța de muncă”, in: *România, un secol de istorie. Date statistice*, Bucharest: Editura Institutului National de Statistica 2018, p. 58.

16 Constanta PARTENIE, “Trăsăturile politicii P.C.R. de creștere a nivelului de trai și de ridicare continuă a calitatii vieții în România în etapa actuală”, in: Ion REBEDEU – Catalin ZAMFIR, *Modul de viață și calitatea vieții*, Bucharest: Editura Politică 1982, p. 228.

cities. More than 73% of the increase in urban population between 1948 and 1976 was caused by migration from rural areas.⁽¹⁷⁾ In a few decades, the social and urban landscape of the country has been radically modified.

In this context, issues such as the adaptation to the new urban settings and way of life, the problems related to commuting (a relatively extended phenomenon especially for large industrial platforms), as well as the development strategies for rural areas and their impact on the population became the main themes of discussion for the urban development policies of Romania. However, for the most part of this effort of building the communist state sociologists were not needed.

Sociology – a bourgeois science

From the beginning, sociology was labelled by the communist regime, in accordance with Soviet principles, as reactionary and a bourgeois pseudo-science.⁽¹⁸⁾ In 1948 through the educational reform decree, sociology was removed from universities: “Social reality as it is presented no interest, as it was about to be changed by the imposition of the communist model.”⁽¹⁹⁾ Until the sixties, sociologists had to find refuge in other domains such as anthropology, statistics, art history, pedagogy or psychology.

In 1965, at the party’s 9th Congress, Nicolae Ceaușescu criticized its rejection and affirmed the importance of sociological studies.⁽²⁰⁾ In 1966 sociology was reintroduced at universities, sociologists began working at research

17 Dorel ABRAHAM, “Modernizare și urbanizare – direcții majore ale dezvoltării economico-sociale a țării”, *Viitorul Social*, year 12, 1984, issue 6, p. 514.

18 Catalin ZAMFIR – Iancu FILIPESCU (eds.), *Sociologia românească: 1900–2010. O istorie socială*, Cluj-Napoca: Eikon 2015, p. 66.

19 *Ibid.*

20 The speech marked a break with Dej’s policies and offered a perspective of change. A key figure was the sociologist Miron Constantinescu, a member of the Party leadership, marginalized by Dej, but reinstated by Ceaușescu. His death in 1974 may have contributed to the marginalization of sociology after 1977.

institutes, and vast empirical research projects started to be carried out. Between 1966 and 1971 more than 1,730 sociological articles and books were published, more than in the previous thirty years.⁽²¹⁾ However, starting with 1971 and the July thesis,⁽²²⁾ a second fall for sociology began. In 1977 it was again removed from universities’ curricula; not banned all together as before, just strongly marginalised. Even though sociologists continued their work at different research institutes, most funding and especially the funding for empirical, on the ground research was severely cut.

The regime had little need for sociology. But in spite of this generally induced tense atmosphere, there were some remarkable exceptions. One of these was Bucharest’s Laboratory for Urban Sociology (Laboratorul de sociologie urbana al Consiliului popular al municipiului București), founded in 1969. The other was the IPCT, which employed sociologists working in multidisciplinary teams with architects and urban planners.

Urban Sociology and the Sociology of Housing

Bucharest’s Laboratory of Urban Sociology was founded in 1969 and employed the first generation of sociology graduates,⁽²³⁾ as well as economists and psychologists. The Laboratory was an independent research institute working from inside the Project Bucharest Institute (IPB) building, one of the most prestigious urban planning and building design institutes of the era. During its existence, the laboratory worked on several empirical research projects alongside the

21 ZAMFIR – FILIPESCU, *Sociologia românească*, p. 84.

22 Being a turning point in the regime after the apparent liberalization which started in 1966, the July thesis of 1971 imposed a more hands-on approach by the party in cultural and educational issues. The communist ideology was to be promoted more aggressively through all media and in all environments and it effectively meant a turning back to the Stalinist era in terms of culture and education.

23 Dorel Abraham, Ana Balasa, Traila Cernescu, Liviu Damian, Alexandru Florian, Florica Dumitru, Marilena Ganju, Mircea Kivu, Cezarina Nicolau, Dumitru Sandu and others.

urban planning institute on such issues as Bucharest's social dynamic, commuting and the urban renewal of parts of the city:

- Project 7670/1970 – Study regarding the relationship between the built environment and the way of life at the scale of a complex microunit.
- Project 8584/1972 – Characteristics and tendencies of people's way of life in the new urban housing complexes (investigation in the Drumul Taberei complex).
- The Regional function of the city of Bucharest.
- The urban renewal project in the Pantelimon neighbourhood (a collaborative research project at the request of the Ion Mincu Institute of Architecture).⁽²⁴⁾
- Project 9762/1974 – The sociological problems of Bucharest's urban renewal (with applications in the city centre). A Laboratory research project with the collaboration of the Institute of Architecture and architects from the IPCT.
- In parallel, IPCT worked with sociologists and had a keen interest in sociological aspects.
- In 1964, before the official reestablishment of Sociology, architects Gheorghe Sebestyen, Mihai Caffé and Alexandru Florian published the article "Elements of Sociology in the Problem of Housing".⁽²⁵⁾
- Project 4338/1967 – The periodical research of how houses are used using a constant sample of population (multiannual research project).

Architects' interest in sociological input was one of the key factors in the development of such research projects:

- 24 The Ion Mincu Institute of Architecture (today the Ion Mincu University of Architecture and Urban Planning) was the only higher education institution capable of issuing a diploma in architecture for the entire communist period.
- 25 Gheorghe SEBESTYEN – Mihail CAFFE – Alexandru FLORIAN, "Elemente de sociologie în problema locuințelor", *Revista de Filozofie*, vol. 11, 1964, issue 5, pp. 617–629.

"The request for a collaboration came first and foremost from the building design specialist's part. Research in housing, for example, was curiously enough initiated by specialists in architectural design and planning."⁽²⁶⁾ The architect Mihail Caffé, one of the key figures of the IPCT, argues that on the ground empirical sociological research carried out since the sixties had a direct involvement in the architect's or planner's practice, helping the professionals to determine new norms regarding the apartments' sizes, the scheduling of investments and size of developments, verifying and improving the functional briefs of projects, establishing apartment types on a scientific basis.⁽²⁷⁾

Other urban sociology studies were carried out between 1966 and 1971, such as Miron Constantinescu and Henri H. Stahl's study – *Procesul de urbanizare în R.S. România Zona Slatina-Olt* [The urbanization process in R.S. Romania. Slatina-Olt region] in 1970 or *Procesul de urbanizare în R.S. România Zona Brasov* [The Urbanization Process in R.S. Romania. Brasov region] by Tiberiu Bogdan, Mihail Cernea and Miron Constantinescu. There was also an analysis of new housing complexes in Pitesti, with research led by sociologist Natalia Damian and carried out in two stages, 1968–1969 and 1970–1971.

The marginalization of the domain led to the 1976 dissolution of the Laboratory and the transfer of the personnel to the IPCT, in the newly founded Laboratory for Sociological Research and Studies. On the one hand there was a necessity for further studies in the sociology of housing, considering the large numbers of apartments that were being built and the fact that at a declarative level at least standardized housing had to be adapted to the needs and aspirations of the citizens), on the other hand, the authorities wanted to diminish the prestige and visibility

- 26 Gheorghe SEBESTYEN, *Eficiența economică și socială a ansamblurilor de locuit*, Bucharest: Editura Tehnica 1975.
- 27 Mihail CAFFE, "Principalele aspecte de aplicare concretă a cercetării sociologice", *Arhitectura*, vol. 117, 1969, issue 2, pp. 2–13.

of the Laboratory and its members.⁽²⁸⁾ The newly founded Laboratory was no longer independent and it followed political assignments. Researchers were supposed to set the basis for the rise of the quality of living conditions through standardized projects (which had to be adapted to the needs and aspirations of individual users) in the context of the systematic reduction of building materials and energy consumption. The research was aimed at confirming or at least facilitating this goal.⁽²⁹⁾

However, despite the loss of its independence and the drastic reduction of funding, the Laboratory still carried out some of the few empirical research projects and on the ground data collection between 1976 and 1989.⁽³⁰⁾ Researches had themes such as:

- The professional and socio-cultural integration of the new generations of workers.
- Research regarding the functionality of housing in the case of specific population groups: young people without families and senior citizens (1985–1986).
- Multidisciplinary research considering social, architectural and urban planning aspects regarding housing (1981–1985).⁽³¹⁾
- Research regarding the socio-economic implications of costs resulting from the adaptation of newly built apartments to ways of life (1986).
- The social implications of the design and building methods, and the use of common spaces in housing buildings and their environs (1986).

28 “Scurt istoric”, *Centrul de Sociologie Urbana si Regionala – CURS*, https://curs.ro/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Prezentare_CURS_site.pdf (cit. 13. 05. 2021).

29 *Ibid.*, p. 2.

30 Dorel ABRAHAM, “Perspectiva sociologica de cercetare a problematii locuirii”, in: Mihail CAFFE, *Locuința contemporana. Probleme si puncta de vedere*. Bucharest: Editura Tehnica 1987, p. 97.

31 Dumitru SANDU, “Prognoza locuirii urbane in tara noastră”, *Viitorul Social*, year 13, 1985, issue 5, p. 420.

- Research based on the prognosis for people’s life aspirations and the ways of developing housing in the future.

Unfortunately, for the most part, only some conclusions of these studies were published. This constitutes one of the main limitations of our research but also shows the potential for a more in-depth study of sociological work in the period of 1966–1989. Finding and analysing the project archives (if they still exist), can constitute a base for a future extensive research project on a rather unknown period in the history of Romanian sociology.

*Architectura and Viitorul
Social – the main media for
research dissemination*

The main media for publishing urban sociological and sociology of housing studies were two periodicals, the architecture and urban planning magazine *Arhitectura*, and the sociological magazine *Viitorul Social*. *Arhitectura* was, at the time, the only Romanian architecture and urban planning journal. If, at the beginning, the publishing was strongly controlled by the state through the State Commission for Architecture and Urban Planning, after 1956 the Romanian Union of Architects remained the sole publisher,⁽³²⁾ thus gaining a form of editorial independence.

The *Viitorul Social* magazine appeared in 1972 with the sociologist and member of the Central Committee Miron Constantinescu as its editor-in-chief. Its emergence after the July thesis of 1971 is not coincidental. Sociology under the guidance of Marxist-Leninist principles needed a periodical in order to spread ideas and help guide the passing from “socialism to communism according to the plan presented at the Central Committee of the Romanian

32 STROE, *Locuirea*, p. 60.

Communist Party on November 3rd–5th 1971 for the general improvement of the Party’s ideological and political work”.⁽³³⁾ In spite of being a political and ideological tool, the journal had a section dedicated to on the ground research projects. The journal lasted until 1989, with the last number published after the fall of the regime. However, its evolution follows the general evolution of the field. From 1976, the quality of the print dropped, and from a quarterly it was transformed to a bi-monthly, with the total number of pages per year cut to half. After 1977 and the elimination of sociology from universities’ curricula and the drop in funding for on the ground research, many sociologists focused on more theoretical parts of the domain: epistemology, research methodologies, general theory of social systems, etc.⁽³⁴⁾ At the same time, on the ground research presentation articles become less and less frequent, while the number of theoretical and methodological articles increased.⁽³⁵⁾

During the period between 1966 and 1989 we identified 16 articles written by sociologists or with a sociological theme in *Arhitectura*. Most of these articles were published before 1977, and were written only by sociologists working for the IPCT or Bucharest’s Laboratory for Urban Sociology. These articles referred mainly to the issue of housing. In *Viitorul Social* we identified 39 articles on issues of housing and urban planning. Most of them, though not all, were published by sociologists that were part of the Laboratory, before and after their incorporation into the IPCT.

If sociologists found it easier to publish in *Arhitectura*, architects are barely represented in the *Viitorul social*

33 Miron CONSTANTINESCU, “Cuvant inainte”, *Viitorul Social*, year 1, 1972, issue 1, p. 7.

34 ZAMFIR, FILIPESCU (eds.), *Sociologia românească: 1900–2010*. p. 107.

35 Eight articles presenting on the ground research projects between 1972–1977, only four articles between 1978 and 1989.

magazine,⁽³⁶⁾ thus supporting Sebestyen’s claim that it was a design professional who, at first, asked for a sociologists’ expertise to improve their performance. As mass housing was supposed to appeal not to an individual client, with their desires and aspirations, but to a collective client represented by social types that had to be scientifically determined,⁽³⁷⁾ sociologists should have played a critical role. They would have helped at creating better design briefs, recommendations for housing units and urban developments as well as helping to determine whether the proposed designs really achieved their goals – critical feedback for standardized housing in order to improve the building models.

*The voice of the people in
the sociologists’ findings*

On the ground empirical sociological research, which started in the mid-sixties, was triggered not only by the official rehabilitation of the field, but also by several laws and decisions⁽³⁸⁾ which should have led to more diverse housing offers, to the densification of cities, and urban renewal rather than building on greenfield. Theoretically, the change in policy meant that a market for apartments was created, with a public demand and quest for better living conditions. The state, through its design institutes, had to acknowledge

36 Seven sociologists published their work in *Arhitectura* between 1966–1989 (as single authors as well as in collaboration with architects), while four architects published in *Viitorul Social*, altogether in five articles. Three articles were written by Cezar Lazarescu, one by Gheorghe Sebestyen and one by Serban Popescu-Criveanu and Luminita Panciu in collaboration with sociologist Liviu Damian.

37 S. HERSCOVICI – Max LUPAN – Georgeta BUCHERU, “Ancheta privind comportarea in exploatare a unor tipuri de clădiri de locuit”, *Arhitectura RPR*, vol. 92, 1965, issue 1, p. 30.

38 Namely these regulations: decision 26/1966 regarding the support of the state given to citizens for building privately owned housing; decision 1650/1968 regarding the building of housing in urban areas financed by the state; law 9/1968 regarding the development of housing, the selling of houses from the state’s housing stock to the general public and the building of privately owned holiday homes or for touristic purposes.

these demands and find a way to meet them. Hence the importance of marketing studies and sociological studies of previously built apartment blocks.

In the context of the massive rural-urban migration mentioned earlier, one of the questions concerned this new urban population's way of life. Was it different from the existing urban population's way of life or were they assimilated? Dorel Abraham, the director of the Laboratory for Sociological Research and Studies, talks about these new urbanites as not completely assimilated into the urban way of life, thus resulting in a form of "ruralisation of the urban". Some elements, such as making stock provisions for the winter, growing food in gardens or keeping small farm animals, made their way to the city in an adapted form. Thus, both urban and rural ways of life coexisted in the city with everything this implies.⁽³⁹⁾ This idea of difference, and the influence of rural and urban ways of life in the otherwise standardized apartments appears in other research too as an almost underlying theme.

One of the crucial issues was apartment typology. In a study carried out in Pitesti between 1970 and 1972 Natalia Damian asked if these new standardized housing units were adequate for a population with a diverse housing culture (urban and rural), if they facilitate the adaptation to a new, urban way of life, if the apartments are adequate to their function.⁽⁴⁰⁾ The study showed that individuals appreciated the new apartments (87%), some of them (34%) experiencing a considerable improvement from their former houses; reportedly, these new houses stimulated starting a family and improved job stability and interest. However, most of the interviewed individuals considered their new apartment as a temporary solution, as three out of four individuals planned to move to a larger house in the future. Two-room

39 ABRAHAM, *Introducere*, p. 240.

40 Natalia DAMIAN, "Efecte sociale ale locuirii in noile blocuri", *Viitorul social*, year 2, 1973, issue 2, p. 403.

apartments were often overcrowded by the children, meaning that the relatively higher proportion of this type of apartment was unjustified (68% more than necessary).⁽⁴¹⁾ The recommendations were that more three-room apartments were required, that the spatial distribution should favour three equal rooms (to be used as bedrooms) rather than two rooms one of which was considerably larger (usually used as a mixed living room – bedroom).⁽⁴²⁾ The IPCT study of 1965 also showed that people appreciated apartments with all rooms having direct access from corridors – without the need for passing through other rooms.⁽⁴³⁾

The study had apparently little impact on concerns over the proportion of two-room and three-or-more-room apartments. The vast majority (68%) of apartments built during the seventies were single-or-double-room apartments, thus creating overcrowded living conditions.⁽⁴⁴⁾ In a study on the future redevelopment of Bucharest's Pantelimon area, sociologists recommended that 67.6 % of apartments should have three or four rooms in order to correspond to the existing demographic structure of the area.⁽⁴⁵⁾ Needless to say, this recommendation did not influence the end product. To this day, the median number of rooms per apartment in urban areas is less than three with a total space of 47.4 m², meaning that overcrowded housing is still an issue.⁽⁴⁶⁾

The idea of diversifying the apartment typologies did not mean that all buildings would be unique, but that there would be more models developed. A series of studies followed that tried to observe if certain groups required

41 *Ibid.*, p. 407–408.

42 *Ibid.*, p. 409.

43 Max LUPAN, "O Ancheta privind condițiile de folosire a locuinței urbane", *Arhitectura*, vol. 106, 1967, issue 3, p. 28.

44 Dumitru SANDU, "Dinamica sociala a locuirii urbane", *Viitorul social*, year 17, 1989, issue 4, p. 429.

45 Gheorghe CHEPES et al., "Elemente sociale privind proiectul de restaurare urbana a zonei Pantelimon", *Viitorul Social*, year 2, 1973, issue 3, p. 620.

46 *National Strategy for Housing*, Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration, 2017, p. 17.

a certain type of apartment. The IPCT studied specific ways of life of miners in the Jiu Valley and of chemical industry workers in the city of Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej. It showed that for miners the need for apartments in which all rooms are accessed directly is more acute, as bedrooms have to be better insulated for a better quality of sleep. Bathrooms needed a larger space in order to accommodate the arduous cleaning work of miners clothing.⁽⁴⁷⁾ As for chemical industry workers, they required a room for study, larger balconies for relaxation, the possibility to create gardens at ground-floor level apartments, the need for the vestibule to become a filter, with an adjacent bathroom and specific storage space for work clothes in order to limit as much as possible any potential work related contamination, as well as storage for the family's different hobbies.⁽⁴⁸⁾

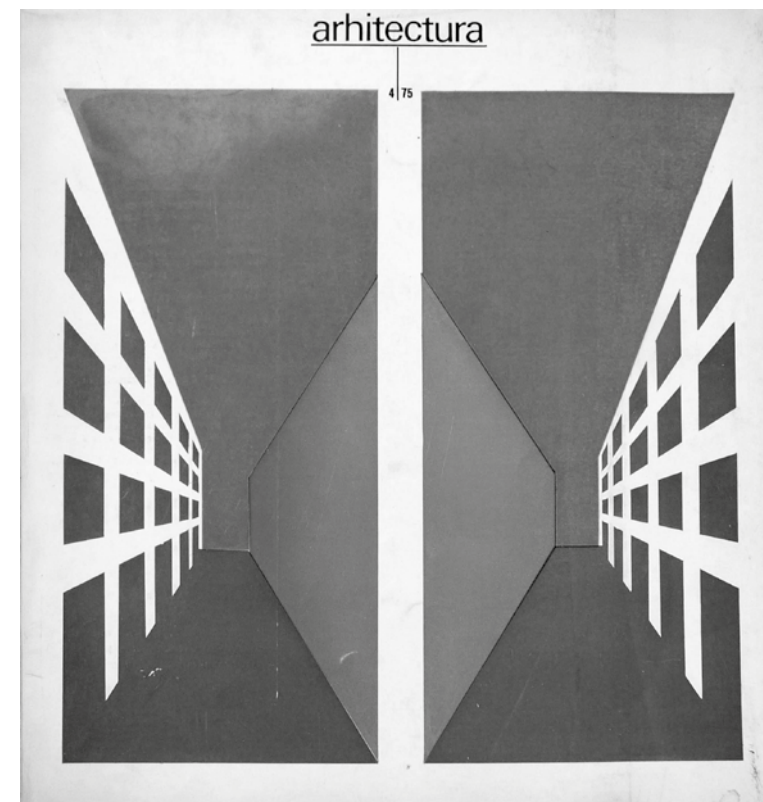
Diversification of apartment types was studied for other groups of individuals, such as young people without families and senior citizens. In a 1985 study, research found that senior citizens were mostly critical of the construction details of the apartments such as insulation, natural light, ventilation, flooring, as well as needing more flexible and easily adjustable furniture. The residents considered that they needed easier access to repair workshops (or the possibility to create their own workshops as a past-time activity), medical facilities, as well as the provision of more common spaces (a club, a small library).⁽⁴⁹⁾ Young people demanded a more flexible interior, so that all rooms can be modified if needed and have a double function (study and sleep, work and study, etc.).⁽⁵⁰⁾

47 Max LUPAN, "Modul de viață – un factor principal de conturare a specificului local", *Arhitectura*, vol. 114, 1968, issue 5, pp. 14–18.

48 Max LUPAN, "Alte contribuții la determinarea unui specific de locuire: mediul muncitorilor chimiști", *Arhitectura*, vol. 115, 1968, issue 6, pp. 14–18.

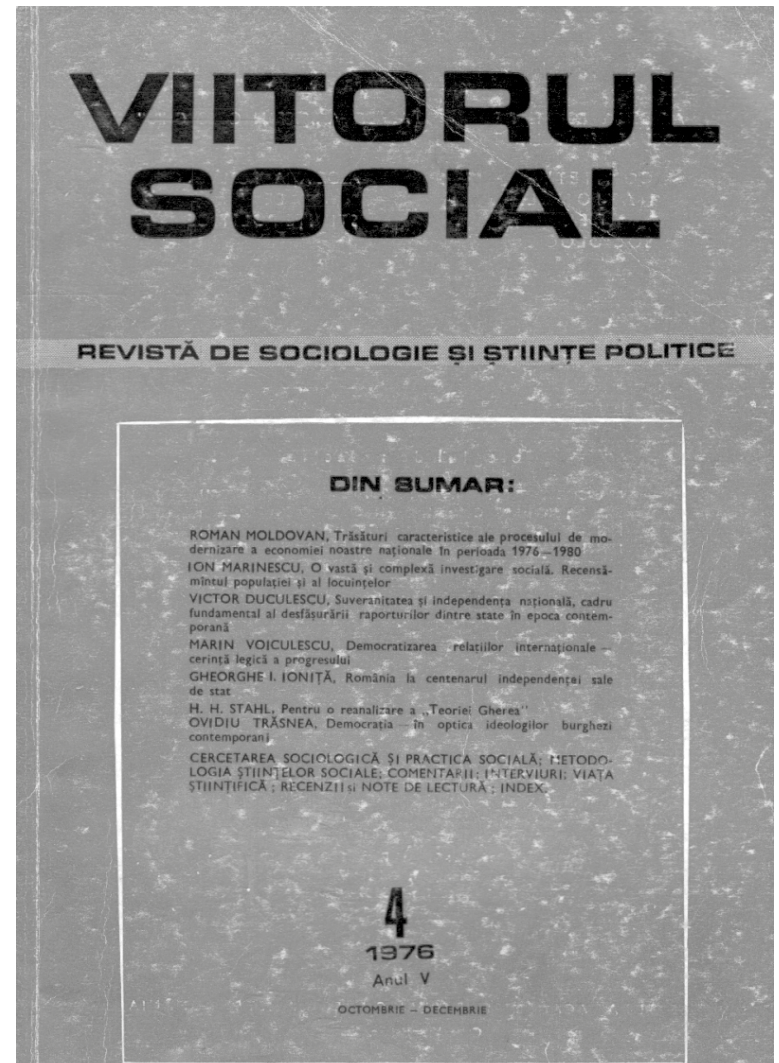
49 Traila CERNESCU – Marilena GANJU, "Aspecte sociologice ale vârstei a treia", *Viitorul Social*, year 15, 1987, issue.1, pp. 20–26.

50 Traila CERNESCU – Cezarina NICOLAU, "Aspirații ale tineretului cu privire la locuința și mobilarea acesteia", in: Traila CERNESCU, *Societate și Arhitectura. O perspectivă sociologică*, Bucharest: Editura Tritonic 2004, pp. 140–143.



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A Strained Relationship



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VIITORUL SOCIAL

REVISTĂ DE SOCIOLOGIE ŞI ŞTIINŢE POLITICE

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The idea of diversification as understood by the state however did not mean different types of the same quality apartments in accordance with specific needs. It meant different quality of living apartments for a different price. It was an economic question rather than a sociological question; the goal was to provide as many housing units for as low a cost as possible, which resulted in apartments with different levels of spatial comfort (reduced comfort meaning smaller bedrooms, living rooms and/or kitchens and a lack of storage facilities), a problem which persisted throughout the regime.⁽⁵¹⁾ There were no different types of apartments for miners, intellectuals or other categories. In a 1984 article, sociologist Traian Stanculescu criticized the idea of the continuous use of standardized housing units:

Specialists limit themselves at standardizing spaces. Surfaces and volumes, starting from the imaginary needs of an abstract man, a standard man. Because such a man does not exist, we risk an unjust levelling of human aspirations (...) Although the Law of Urban Planning stipulates that for such projects there is the obligation for a public consultation, this never happens.⁽⁵²⁾

This relative uniformity of apartments and the actual lack of diversity put pressure on the interior as the only means of personalizing the home. One way was to change the apartment layout, but that was not always possible, as many apartment buildings from the seventies and eighties were made of large precast concrete panels. "Housing built out of large precast panels are more rigid and from our point of view unapproachable (...) the rigid design cramps people

51 Mircea KIVU, *Locuirea*, p. 125.

52 Traian Dinorel STANCIULESCU, "Arhitectura si comanda sociala", *Arhitectura*, vol. 206, 1984, issue 1, p. 62.

in fixed types of family life, types that feel as uneasy as badly tailored suits.”⁽⁵³⁾ Another way was to furnish the apartment in a personalized manner. Changes in the layout were quite widespread at different scales and were mostly aimed at providing a larger kitchen (by removing the storage space) or a larger vestibule,⁽⁵⁴⁾ closing the balcony and making it an extra room (mostly for storage space).⁽⁵⁵⁾ Furnishing the interior was remarked upon as being one of the very few means of personalizing the home.⁽⁵⁶⁾

The idea of flexibility and diversification was based on the study of the current functionality of the interior. The Pitesti study mentioned earlier found that the living room is considered to be too large and is mostly used as a representative space rather than a living space (a mark of a rather rural way of life).⁽⁵⁷⁾ The main criteria for choosing furniture in the living room are value and endurance, thus creating the sense of randomness and lack of unity. Furthermore, the furniture is more often not used as intended, making the room more of a crowded warehouse of valuable objects rather than a room for living.⁽⁵⁸⁾ Larger kitchens (in order to incorporate the dining table) are required as well. This was also found by Lupan’s research – the kitchen had to take over the function of dining in order to keep the living room tidy and a representative space.⁽⁵⁹⁾

Other conclusions iterate the lack of common spaces or public spaces, gardens and specific functional spaces such as cultural or sports facilities, thus putting even more pressure on private space to satisfy these requirement (larger

53 Georgeta BUCHERU – Ofelia STRATULAT, “Cerințe ale habitatului in locuințele realizate pe cale industrială”, *Arhitectura*, vol. 153, 1975, issue 2, pp. 37.

54 Dorel ABRAHAM, “Perspectiva”, pp. 75–97.

55 Dumitru SANDU, “Dinamica socială”, p. 430.

56 Dorel ABRAHAM, “Prognoza socială a aspirațiilor de locuire”, *Viitorul Social*, year 12, 1984, issue 3, pp. 227.

57 DAMIAN, “Efecte sociale”, p. 403.

58 Cezarina NICOLAU, “Camera de zi in folosirea curentă (observații pe baza unei anchete)”, *Arhitectura*, vol. 144, 1973, issue 5, p. 6.

59 LUPAN, “Ancheta”, pp. 23

bookcases, more space for TVs and other electronic gadgets, etc.).⁽⁶⁰⁾ Relations with other neighbours are weak and superficial with the exception of possible family relations or work relations in the vicinity. Thirdly, there is a lack in childcare services in the vicinity leading to women’s withdrawal from active life in order to tend to their children (in the case of families with two or more children, Natalia Damian’s 1974 study showed that 62.9% of women were stay at home moms).⁽⁶¹⁾

Conclusions – a strained relationship

Considering the persistence of the same critiques and the same issues throughout the observed articles and books, we can assume that the sociological research influence on architectural and planning production was limited, being mostly restricted to some of the architects that were part of the IPCT. Issues such as apartment typology, the spatial distribution of apartments, their size, and the need for a greater flexibility of the interior appear repeatedly in many studies from the sixties up to 1989. Furthermore, since the late seventies the issues of material quality, insulation and other technical issues spring up and become just as prevalent in the research, adding to the array of problems. Even though it was architects and planners who asked for the sociologists’ help, generally speaking and at a national level other criteria took precedence in the design of housing (such as cost, technical aspects, etc.).

60 Dumitru SANDU “Dinamica socială”, p. 430.

61 Natalia DAMIAN, “Probleme sociologice ale locuirii in marile ansambluri urbane”, *Viitorul social*, year 3, 1974, issue 3, p. 611. This was not a solitary case. During the Jiu Valley coal miner’s revolt of 1977, one of the demands was that jobs were to be provided to women in the region.

The relationship between sociologists and architects or planners has never been an easy one.⁽⁶²⁾ However, in the specific case of Romania during the communist regime, this relationship was made even more difficult by the actions of the state authorities. The regime banned the study of sociology (1948), reinstated it for a brief period (1966–1977), only to marginalize and defund almost all empirical, on the ground research (1977–1989). The state lost interest in learning from sociologists about how people actually lived; instead, especially after the July thesis of 1971, invested in telling people how to live correctly – the communist way. And if the state did not listen to sociologists why would architects and planners? An already difficult relationship was strained even further.

62 Robert GUTMAN, “The Questions Architects Ask”, in: *Architecture From the Outside In. Selected Essays by Robert Gutman*, New York: Princeton Architectural Press 2010, pp. 152–185. The article is cited and analysed extensively by Abraham in ABRAHAM, “Perspectiva”.