SMART GROWTH: APPLYING THE US EXPERIENCE TO THE ROMANIAN CONTEXT

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The paper concerns itself with the notion of smart growth in the United States, focusing on the states' approaches involving this vision. American communities are facing many negative consequences of the current pattern of growth, namely urban sprawl. Over the last decade, sustainable development has emerged worldwide not only as a viable solution to combat sprawl but also as a new pattern of development.

One can argue that the American experience with regard to combating the negative effects the growth has on cities, communities and environment is relevant for other countries as well. The negative consequences of growth are similar everywhere, therefore an analysis of one nation efforts would provide useful tools for other countries. Romania should understand that growth could have not only positive benefits but also negative effects on environment, economy, community life, and public health.

The main question of the paper refers to the rationales for adopting smart growth principles. After an overview of the concept, several states' efforts regarding smart growth in the U.S. are examined. Based on these findings, and the smart growth literature, a framework of factors, and conditions will be developed in order to help interested nations understand better the smart growth phenomenon in the U.S. Then, the validity of the elements of the framework for the Romanian context will be analyzed in order to explore the likeness of adopting such a smart growth philosophy in Romania.

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1. Introduction

The paper concerns itself with the notion of smart growth in the U.S., focusing on the states' approaches involving this vision. Across the U.S., land is being developed faster than in the last decades, and the demand for more suburban and exurban growth is still increasing. More and more American communities began facing many negative consequences of the current pattern of growth. That is urban sprawl, a form of scattered, low-density development that is argued by many studies to have many negative consequences on environment, local economy, public health and community's life. As more and more people have begun to perceive the negative effects sprawl has on their lives, managing growth has become a significant theme in land use planning across the U.S. A series of solutions were proposed in order to combat sprawl. This planning philosophy has grown broader in scope over the last decade, worldwide countries are currently considering and/or implementing policy tools associated with smart growth such as: United States, United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zeeland. The concept of sustainability is closely intertwined with smart growth/growth management. Numerous European Union programs emphasize sustainability as an important stage in the drafting/implementation of these programs.

One can argue that the American experience with regard to combating the negative effects

growth has on cities, communities, and environment is relevant for other countries as well. The negative consequences of growth are similar everywhere, therefore an analysis of one nation efforts would provide useful tools for other countries. Romania began to experience growth and it has implemented many strategies for attracting growth. In light of this focus on development, Romania has to understand that growth could have not only positive benefits but also negative influences on the environment, economy, community life, and health.

The main question of the paper refers to the rationales and factors that make a governmental entity adopt smart growth principles. The paper will focus on the state's efforts to manage growth due to the importance of having a wider approach to growth-related issues. The paper consists of five sections. After the introduction and the overview of the concept, several states' efforts regarding growth and smart growth in the U.S. are examined. Based on these findings and smart growth literature, several rationales, and conditions for smart growth programs will be analyzed. The last section develops a framework of factors that make a state more likely to adopt smart growth goals. By examining the context and the factors that urge the adoption of smart growth principles in American communities and states, one can understand better the smart growth phenomenon in this nation. Several of the elements of the framework will be analyzed for their applicability to the Romanian context. Because there is a growing worldwide awareness of the necessity of sustainable development, it is important to analyze the likeness of adopting/implementing such a philosophy in Romania.

2. An overview of smart growth in the United States

This section of the paper describes the concept of smart growth and several issues associated with this philosophy. The purpose of this section is to provide the reader with an understanding of the emergence of the smart growth concept, and with a brief overview of the main elements and goals of this new phenomenon.

An overview of the concept of smart growth should start with a brief discussion on the concept of growth. For many decades an underlying philosophy dominated the approaches of American local planners: any development is good and desirable for a community. This belief made planners and citizens have a positive attitude for growth (Cullingworth, 2003). Then, in the 1960s, people begun questioning the benefits of uncontrolled growth, and therefore a new philosophy of growth emerged. While various localities with poor economic performances still seek any kind of economic growth, municipalities under certain growth pressures have rejected the former assumption, and have started arguing that growth affects quality of life. As a result, new approaches (growth management, growth controls and 'no growth' policies) emerged as solutions under this new growth philosophy. This philosophy has evolved today to encompass different nuances of growth that would lead to a rethinking of the growth approaches. One of these approaches is smart growth, whose debate encompasses localities and administrative units facing strong and rapid growth pressures.

One debatable topic is the evolution of smart growth. It seems that there is no agreement on how the concept emerged. Smart growth was defined as a new concept, a new way of thinking, as a new movement, while others scholars argue that the concept evolved mainly from the growth management movement employing tools already used for a number of years (Weitz, 1999). Burchell argues that smart growth is in effect the next step following the efforts to manage growth of the previous decades, as "smart growth "encompasses and extends the growth management efforts of the previous decades"(Burchell at al., 2000). I would argue that it is quite impossible to envision smart growth as a unique phenomenon disconnected by the previous communities' efforts to guide growth. The concept of growth evolves as the economic and environmental context changes. People's perception of their problems, and needs changes and therefore approaches to growth change too. However, smart growth as a term appeared in the mid- to late 1990s. It is the initiative of various organizations: the American Planning Association, Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Henry M.

Jackson Foundation, the Natural Resources Defense Council and the Surface Transportation Policy Project (Burchell at al., 2000).

One significant challenge in approaching smart growth is the difficulty of indicating a single definition or meaning of the concept. Since the term was invented, the concept has received a lot of support from a variety of organizations across the U.S. Numerous public, private and nonprofit organizations had developed their own definitions, hence the big number of definitions. This fact has created the image of a widespread and coherent movement that supports smart growth goals. It has been argued that the image of "a big umbrella" can be "deceiving" (Cullingworth, 2003, Gillham, 2002). Analyzing a sample of definitions of smart growth, Gilham (2002) indicates that there is a great variation in the meaning of the concept, varying from stronger regional government to simply maintaining the status quo, fact that depends on the nature of the institution that has defined smart growth. However, for many people and institutions smart growth means at least some sort of change in the current American pattern of development. Gilham (2002) argues that the appearance of wide institutional support may be partly caused by the nature of the term itself. Several scholars recognize the powerful effect the term "smart" has in attracting supporters, while the meaning of smart growth is still debatable (Downs, 2005). However, there are many barriers to smart growth and the image of a large body of smart growth advocates cannot cover the large opposition smart growth supporters are facing when trying to implement its measures (Downs, 2005)

Urban Land Institute defines smart growth as a means of "ensuring that neighborhoods, towns, and regions accommodate growth in ways that are economically sound, environmentally responsible, and supportive of community livability – growth that enhances the quality of life" (ULI, 2000). As the American Planning Association defines it, smart growth is the planning, design, development and revitalization of communities in order to create and promote social equity, a sense of place and community, sustainable development, and to preserve natural as well as cultural resources (APA, 2002). The Smart Growth Network suggests ten principles of smart growth that can be encountered in various forms in other definitions American scholars are given to smart growth (Smart Growth Network - SNG):

1. Mix land used,
2. Take advantage of compact building design,
3. Create range of housing opportunities and choices,
4. Create walkable neighborhoods,
5. Foster distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place,
6. Preserve open space, farmland, natural beauty and critical environmental areas,
7. Strengthen and direct development toward existing communities,
8. Provide a variety of transportation choices,
9. Make development decisions predictable, fair and cost effective,
10. Encourage community and stakeholder collaboration.

An examination of the literature on smart growth indicates that most of the organizations and scholars focus more on broad definitions incorporating measures, goals or principles of smart growth that would be translated into concrete measures of action rather than on a distinct definition. The underlying principle of smart growth is the promotion of sensible growth, sustainability, and the avoidance of waste and damage on resources. The United Nations and other international organizations are promoting sustainable development worldwide because of the current quality of the living environment. It can be argued that sustainability is the broader goal of smart growth that can be achieved though the implementation of several concurrent principles listed above. Countries such as United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zeeland have implemented measured very similar with the smart growth tools.

Smart growth focuses on accommodating growth and on taking benefit from it. This is the main distinction between smart growth and growth management. It has been suggested that the former succeeds because it rejects the "pro growth versus no growth" debate in favor of a dialogue between citizens and grass roots community groups, private developers, elected officials and policy makers (SGN, 1998).

One important issue with regard to smart growth is the applicability issue. First, there is no "one-size-fits-all" solution. As the literature on smart growth suggests, being such a broad concept, not all smart growth characteristics are applicable to all communities nor there is an order of importance. Moreover, a smart growth program is a function of the context of the community. Another issue refers to the scale of implementation or adequate level of government for smart growth policies. While it can be easily implemented as local level, smart growth movement advocates a regional approach integrating the principle of sustainable development. The underlying principle of sustainability is the recognition that people should plan at a broader level (regional, state) because one local decision can have negative consequences on adjacent jurisdictions.

A logic question can be one regarding the differences between smart growth and growth management. Gillham (2002) argues that sometimes these terms are used interchangeably because many growth management techniques are now tools of the smart growth movement. However, differences can be identified in terms of objectives and underlying assumptions of both movements. While displaying a variety of improved tools to guide growth, it can be argued that smart growth encompasses broader principles than the former movements it has evolved from. One difference between the two movements refers to the two smart growth's underlying assumptions: 'one can have growth in the same time with preserving environment' and 'growth is still desirable if controlled in certain conditions' (Burchell et al.2000). It can be noticed that smart growth advocates have a lot of enthusiasm. I would argue that smart growth pursues a positive approach to growth because its central philosophy is the confidence in the power of smart growth "to help the nation meet the needs of expansion without the kinds of negative impacts that have accompanied widespread suburbanization" (Gilham, 2002). With regards to the applicability of such a philosophy in Romania it can be argued that growth management can be difficult to be implemented because this approach seeks mainly to control growth while Romanian municipalities seeks to attract the much-needed growth in their communities. Therefore, in light of the Romanian growing development, a smart growth will be feasible and valid.

3. The smart growth efforts of the U.S. states

Even though there are many American local governments that have implemented smart growth principles, it has been argued the appropriateness of having higher government level involvement in order to insure its success. Therefore, the paper concerns itself with the state government's efforts regarding the adoption of statewide smart growth strategies. There are several states that have already enacted smart growth programs and others are considering the possibility of adopting its principles.

The main question of the paper is why to adopt a smart growth program. One can argue that the experience of the state of Maryland represents the best example in this regard. Maryland had adopted in 1997 the Smart Growth Areas Act that makes it the first state that used the term of "smart growth" in a statewide policy. It can't be argued that Maryland is the first state that has adopted smart growth principles due to difficulties in distinguishing between smart growth and growth management.

In order to understand how Maryland adopted the Smart Growth Act, the examination of the context (philosophical influences, previous regulation adopted by the state, growth problems) is appropriate. The literature review on growth management indicates that Maryland is one of the earliest adopter of statewide programs targeting urban sprawl. It has been indicated that Maryland is one of the only few states whose legislation provides a statutory-based growth management policy (Wilson, 2002).

Over the 1950s and 1960s Maryland began to face the negative effects of uncontrolled development. One would argue that the philosophy and values created in this interval were central for the state's subsequent growth approaches. One fervent advocate against sprawl was James W. Rouse who in the 1960s attracted political leaders, planners, environmentalists, and citizens in his efforts to implement "better environmental protection and land use planning" (Maryland Department of Planning). Since then, environmental protection has been a central concern for subsequent governors, and local, county, and state political leaders. Each governor expanded the efforts of previous leaders toward a better management of state's natural resources. Along with environmental preservation, governors came to recognize the necessity of growth management to guide growth and development.

Thus, several important programs were created as a response to the growing problems, creating the guidelines for future smart growth approaches. First, in 1967 the Maryland Environmental Trust was established to conserve and improve the natural and scenic aspects of the state environment. Next, the Open Space program was created in 1969 to acquire outdoor recreation and open space for public use. The state engaged in the protection of costal areas and a Shore Erosion Control Program was established. In 1987, Maryland joined other states and agencies by entering into an interstate Chesapeake Bay Agreement to protect the water quality of the Chesapeake Bay. Farmland preservation is another major focus for Maryland and in 1977 the state began to protect farmland through the purchase of conservation easements under the provisions of the Agricultural Land Preservation Program. Thus, over the decades, Maryland has developed growth management practices to address several environmental concerns.

Examining Maryland actions, it can be argued that Maryland has a gradualist approach of growth management. Even though there have been successes, several regions of Maryland are still facing threatening urban development projects. However, Maryland continued its efforts to pursue a growth management vision. This efforts and pressures culminated with the adoption of growth management legislation in 1992, namely the Maryland Economic Growth, Resource Protection and Planning Act. The act amended Maryland's planning and zoning enabling legislation with the requirement that local comprehensive plans must be consistent with, and implement the state visions by January 1997. The 1992 Act list seven goals that would guide state's future (promotion of economic growth, Chesapeake Bay protection, concentrated development in suitable areas, directing growth to existing population centers, protect rural land resources, and sensitive areas). The local plans must establish sensitive-area elements, and streamline development regulations in areas suitable for growth. Also, in the same year, consistency between state policies and local comprehensive plans has been addressed. The new act addresses consistency issues by providing incentives for local governments to implement it: the state may not fund a public works, transportation, or major capital improvements projects if it is not consistent with the state policy (Noonan et al. 1996).

The next act targeting sprawl and growth is the 1997 Smart Growth Act. The Maryland Governor, Paris N. Glendening has been influential in the creation of this regulation (APA, 1999, b2002). The governor's role has been highlighted in the literature; and his interest in smart growth is evident also by the fact that he made smart growth his top priority as chairman of the National Governors Association (SGN). Thus, in 1996 the Maryland governor announced his priority commitment to enact legislation to strengthen the state's ability to direct growth and to preserve Maryland's quality of life for future generation. Several of his strategies to gain broader population support were citizens' consultation, public meetings, forums, and surveys.

This act is considered smart growth act not just because of the title, but also because it adopts several smart growth principles. One of its central features is the incorporation of many incentives to encourage voluntary implementation of smart growth practices by local governments. The 1997 Smart Growth Areas Act aims at directing growth to "Priority Funding Areas" by limiting state's agencies to

direct funds to support projects in locally designated growth areas. In this way, Maryland's agencies are prohibited from funding "growth related projects" outside these areas, therefore protecting rural areas (APA, 1999). Also, state funding for projects in rural areas are allowed if they maintain the character of the community, but do not increase the area's growth capacity. Then, a 1998 executive order (enacted to implement the Smart Growth Areas Act) provides other smart growth principles; state's agencies are directed to give priority to central business districts, downtown core areas, to promote mass transit, and existing communities.

There are several U.S. states that have already adopted smart growth goals. A brief examination of their experiences will provide more information about the necessary conditions to adopt smart growth. Several relatively significant examples are Pennsylvania, Illinois, and Colorado.

In Pennsylvania, the governor Tom Ridge has been the leading actor of the smart growth actions. He launched two initiatives "Growing Greener" in 1999 and "Growing smarter" in 2000, and financed a land preservation program. Several nonprofit environmental organizations were also very active in promoting land preservation and smart growth programs within the state. This fact created the opportunity for numerous land use reforms and smart growth regulations. Several planning bills enacted in 2000 encourage the use of transferable development rights as a tool available for counties and municipalities to preserve farmland and open space, urban infill, and downtown revitalization (APA, b2002).

An analysis of Illinois' efforts to adopt smart growth goals indicates an active executive activity for promoting smart growth principles coupled with little support by the legislative body. Hence, many smart growth legislative proposals failed to be enacted. In Colorado managing growth has generated a lot of debates but little legislation, too. There is a strong citizens support for managing growth, and there are many organizations promoting smart growth. However, many of the smart growth proposals initiated by Gov. Owen failed also to be adopted (APA, b2002).

4. An analysis of the rationales of smart growth in the U.S.

This section addresses the complex web of factors and conditions that make a governmental unit adopt smart growth principles. Basically, based on the case study of Maryland and other states and on the literature on smart growth/growth management, the sections attempts to develop a framework for understanding why one needs to adopt smart growth principles and who are the main actors involved in this process.

There is an extensive literature on growth management and a growing literature on smart growth too. As we mentioned above, smart growth is considered to be the most recent wave in the evolution of growth management, therefore an analysis of previous state growth management programs would provide relevant information about the triggers of the adoption of a growth-related statewide policy. As Weitz (1999) argues, smart growth evolved from state growth management programs, suggesting that previous legislative efforts with regard to addressing growth might evolve into a smart growth policy. The cases study described above suggest that there is a complex web of intermingled factors that account for the creation of smart growth programs. Rather than resulting from one single event, the majority of growth management programs indicate several decades of cumulative efforts in land use planning. It can be noticed that most smart growth programs build upon earlier growth management planning initiatives. Sometimes, these new programs reinforce the growth controls of the earlier growth management legislation or address the limitations created by earlier growth management efforts (APA, b2002).

The section two of the paper suggests that there is a strong correlation between the changing attitudes toward growth and the legislation adopted by local or state governments with regard to managing growth. Along the decades, the understanding of the nature and effects of growth have become more

complex by including the negative effects of uncontrolled growth on environment, on the social ties within a community, on the residents health and on the municipal finance (Cullingworth, 2003). It has been argued that growth management programs have been developed typically in areas that have experienced rapid growth and its associated problems (Weitz, 1999). An extensive literature demonstrates that in many cases rapid growth was the main driving force to urge the adoption of a local growth management program (Gillham, 2002, Bollens, 1992). The reaction against rapid growth suggests that communities began to perceive growth no longer desirable as residents recognize the adverse impacts of current development patterns. They seek instead to preserve the existing "character" of the community either viewed from a social perspective or from an ecological standpoint. It has been suggested that the interaction of several conditions has created the demand or opportunity for smart growth: strong environmental ethics, increased fiscal concerns and responsibility as cities are seeking new ways to accommodate growth, and more nuanced views of growth due to changing economic and social context (SGN, 1998).

Scholars have analyzed the rationales for addressing growth problems at a higher level (i.e. state level) and suggested that the unwillingness and inability of local governments to deal adequately with issues that transcend local boundaries represent significant factors. While local government is responsible for land use planning in the U.S., past experiences in managing growth have suggested that local approaches are not enough and sometimes do not produce the desired results. It has been indicated that there are considerable mismatches between local growth benefits and regional impacts and costs (Bollens, 1992). Therefore, a regional/state approach was strongly required by various growth management advocates. Several states have implemented growth management policies because certain regional growth issues are beyond local jurisdiction (Gillham, 2002; Cullingworth, 2003).

The actors involved in the adoption of a smart growth program and the nature of their relationship are relevant for this analysis. A study about the adoption of smart growth principles by local governments concludes that most of the case studies were the result of collaboration and/or more formal public/private partnerships (ULI, 2000). Political leadership within the executive and legislative branches of government is central for the success of this kind of initiative. It has been suggested in the literature that the chances for adoption of a growth management program depend on some public official support, namely the governor (Wilson, 2002). DeGrove (1996) emphasizes the supportive roles of governors in Hawaii, Vermont, Rhode Island, Florida, Oregon, Georgia, and Maryland. The author concludes that active support from the governor is "absolutely essential" to achieve state land use reform. However, an examination of current planning efforts across the nation suggests that governors are strong advocates of smart growth too and a main topic of their agenda is managing growth in their jurisdiction (APA, 2002). More important, due to the growing citizens' participation in land use planning, strong grassroots support increases the chances of successful adoption of a smart growth program (Wilson, 2002).

The cases described above prove to be extremely useful in understanding the phenomenon. Maryland communities begun to experience rapid growth and its negative effects back in the 1960s and this is the common rationale for adopting this kind of regulation in all these states. At the moment of the adoption of smart growth act, Maryland has already had a long experience in managing growth and has already adopted a series of growth management programs. It can be seen that along with pragmatic motives for adopting smart growth, also philosophical and emotional factors are relevant in this regard. In Maryland there is a strong cultural association with agriculture and open space. Due to the fact that Maryland has had high quality soils and agriculture was once the economic mainstay, farmland is still considered an important element of their communities; therefore supporting agricultural land in the face of mounting urban growth pressure is a common rationale for the program adoption. Ongoing public awareness about farmland accounts for increasing sophistication in the tools used to protect agricultural land.

Therefore, it can be argued that previous efforts to manage and guide growth in one state are a factor for smart growth initiatives. Maryland attempted to combat sprawl for more than four decades, and its continuous efforts in this regard had culminated with a smart growth initiative. As many scholars suggested, the role of a public figure, the governor in Maryland case, is vital in the adoption of a smart growth policy. Several governors were instrumental in the adoption of various growth management programs (i.e. Gov. Glendening) because they were able to gain the support of different stakeholders.

The other three states suggest several similar findings. Rapid growth and its negative effects urged communities and executive leaders to promote smart growth. In each state the governors were the main political actors that have supported/initiated smart growth actions. Also, multiple organizations supported land preservation policies and advocated strongly for smart growth. However, not very apparent in the case of Maryland is the need for political collaboration and cooperation between all stakeholders. Illinois and Colorado cases indicates that even though the governor is active in promoting smart growth the legislative body might be against it.

5. Conclusions

This section provides a framework consisting of the factors that make a US state more likely to adopt a smart growth initiative. Then, the paper seeks to examine whether the elements can be identified in Romania. Therefore, this document addresses whether Romanian national and local governments are likely to adopt such a philosophy.

When examining the factors that make a state adopt smart growth goals, difficulties may appear with regard to the reference point. There are two reasons that make this attempt challenging, one refers to the number of the smart growth definitions and the second refers to the elements of smart growth. It has been mentioned in section two of the paper that smart growth is a big umbrella term incorporating several definitions developed by different organizations. However, the paper shows that there are several elements shared by all definitions. Then, how many principles a state should adopt in order to be considered a smart growth state? Based on states experiences I would argue that no state has adopted only one because all smart growth goals are interrelated and have many positive benefits.

Therefore, based on the analysis of the case studies and the literature on smart growth, a framework can be developed with regard to the conditions that make a state to adopt a smart growth program. The model has several elements, but it is difficult to classify them in terms of significance because some may be more relevant in a community than in another one. Also, one can argue that these factors are intermingled and interrelated to each other, making difficult to assess the impact of one trigger alone without considering other factors involved in. Thus, these are the elements of the framework:

- Rapid growth and pressures of growth are the main driving force for any state's efforts to guide growth. Location is central to any discussion on growth because the proximity to any metropolitan areas would lead to growth in the adjacent areas too. Conversely, areas experiencing little growth pressures are unlikely to implement smart growth.
- It can be argued that the states that have already undertaken growth management programs are more likely to adopt smart growth initiatives under their ongoing efforts to combat sprawl. Therefore, previous state growth management programs or special programs in different areas are a key element of this framework and a trigger for further reforms for managing growth.
- Underlying state's values explain the nature and content of their growth–related policies. Maryland's residents take great pride in their farmland economy, and agriculture is considered an important activity in the state's economy and community's life. One may consider Maryland as a progressive state due to their ecological approach and orientation to agricultural land. This factor is important

because when community believes that growth has more negative effects than benefits, it would be more likely that it would try to address its consequences. Also, this element provides researchers with an understanding of possible obstacles to smart growth.

– As many studies indicate, leadership is central to any smart growth efforts. The scholars have highlighted the governor role both for the adoption of growth management and smart growth programs. While it is not very obvious, their success is caused by a general agreement among executive and legislative branches, interest groups and citizens on the necessity of adopting growth-related policies. Therefore, I would argue that it is not enough to have a strong governor, because collaboration should be central to any smart growth efforts. Partnerships between governor and state legislature, between public officials and community or environmental organizations should be the central element of any model that explains state efforts for smart growth. Also local governments should be attracted in any decision making process with regard to smart growth because they are the main entities that are to implement smart growth programs along with the state agencies. This is also an important barrier when it is not achieved. Illinois case is the best example of this issue because even though the governor had multiple smart growth initiatives they all failed to be enacted by the state legislature. With regard to the citizens' support, the case of Colorado suggests that even though there was strong community support they failed to influence legislators to adopt many smart growth initiatives. This fact supports the idea presented above, for a statewide cooperation should be in place in order to adopt smart growth.
– Smart growth is a new movement that advocates for a new definition of growth. This new definition seems appealing to many legislators because it incorporates current needs for both economic growth and environment protection.
– It can be argued that there is a strong correlation between the adoption of smart growth and land use and planning reforms undertaken by the states. Sometimes smart growth is an element of a broad land use reform, or land use and planning reforms were necessary in order to effectively implement smart growth programs.

These are the elements of a framework that seeks to explain why a state is more likely to adopt smart growth than others. This model is not comprehensive because it is possible that other factors may influence the adoption of a smart growth initiative. However, this framework is extremely relevant for states that consider the adoption of a smart growth initiative. It outlines the elements that support this kind of approach but more important it suggests possible barriers to the adoption of this kind of program. Further research on the applicability of this model should be developed and the experience of other states can be extremely valuable for improving the model.

The factors of this framework can be examined for their applicability to a different context, namely the Romanian context. While the two countries display many differences, it can be argued that the American approaches for addressing the negative consequences of growth can provide useful lessons to Romanian municipalities.

Over the past 5 years Romania has been experiencing growth especially in the big cities and in the adjacent communities. While many small and medium-sized municipalities are still struggling with stagnant economic development and high unemployment rates, there are large cities that are facing tremendous pressures for growth in terms of new commercial and residential development. Cities such as Bucharest, Timişoara, Cluj-Napoca, and Constanţa display rapid growth of their core and of their adjacent communities. Several negative effects of growth are already visible in these cities: the rapid diminishing of open space, traffic congestion, air pollution, and aesthetics. Therefore, these municipalities must adopt smart growth principles in order to prevent the further generation of negative consequences of growth that the U.S. has been experiencing under the urban sprawl designation.

International organizations (i.e. European Union and the United Nations) have begun promoting sustainability as an overarching goal of the growth of developing countries. Experiencing just recently development, Romania has the opportunity to growth in a more sustainable manner than to address later the negative consequences of unplanned growth as the U.S. is currently doing.

Romania has been a predominantly rural nation until the 1980s. The development of the country after 1989 features a growing split of the community from the land and nature. While Maryland's smart growth programs were drawn on the residents' values of environment protection, Romania lacks the awareness of the central role nature and environment plays in the present and future life of the Romanian communities. In light of this widespread phenomenon, nongovernmental organizations, and the academia should educate the public about the importance of sustainable development, and the negative effects of an unplanned development.

As the case studies clearly indicate, the role of leaders and officials is central to the adoption of smart growth/sustainability principles. In light of the political leaders' focus on attracting more and more growth, it is unlikely that these local government officials would promote sustainable development, the protection of the environment, or smart growth. Instead, it is the role of the academia to advocate for a more rational and "smart" growth of the Romanian communities. Researchers and professors must educate both the public, and the local and national legislators with regard to the necessity of such an approach, and the adequate tools for achieving smart growth goals. Moreover, the completion of the reform of the Romanian public administration will include educated civil servants, and new techniques and tools that would help public employees to plan better the growth of the communities.

These are some of the lessons Romania may learn from the U.S. experience. While this is not a comprehensive analysis on the likeliness of adopting a smart growth program in Romanian municipalities, it can be argued that under the current circumstances it is difficult to implement most of the principles. However, several large cities show small steps in this regard taken as a reaction to the experienced negative effects of growth. Therefore, on the short term, it is necessary to educate more the public and the civil servants. The public employees must use the legal instruments already in place to plan better communities. Some of the smart growth principles do not assume a different approach (the development of mass-transit, mix uses, or walkable communities) that is already in place in Romania. It is, however, necessary to make sure that these characteristics of Romanian cities remain unaltered. On medium term, strategies based on the smart growth principles and sustainable development should be developed and implemented by every municipality. Municipalities must ensure that the new developments follow the same principles displayed above. Local official must promote the creation of a range of housing opportunities, and of a sense of place of the new developments. On the long term, a growing awareness of the residents and of national legislators would result in the development of regional/national programs that would promote sustainability, environment protection, and the "smart" growth of Romania communities.

The paper indicates the extent of the efforts for combating sprawl and the negative effects of uncontrolled growth on American communities, providing useful information and tools that can be used by other countries as well in their approaches regarding growth-related issues. It suggests that smart growth is an ongoing process of redefining priorities and tools, with numerous supporters for and against growth, and increasing concerns for the quality of life and environment.

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