
**ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND LEGAL ARGUMENTS FOR THE FOUNDATION
OF THE BUCHAREST METROPOLITAN AREA**

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ABSTRACT

In the present globalized world, the existence of a metropolis implies the presence of international activities within that area. Bucharest has significantly evolved from the small village founded by a shepherd many years ago to the metropolitan area it is today. Is Bucharest ready to assume its role as a metropolis? Are there any differences between Bucharest, the Romanian metropolis, and famous metropolitan areas around the world? What are the economic and social developmental aspects of this area? Will Bucharest be able to develop as a metropolis in a sustainable way? Does Romania have a coherent policy for sustainable development of metropolitan areas? These are the questions addressed in our study based on our own research – library and field work – and inspired by the novelty and importance of this matter in Romania.

Bucharest experienced a true urban expansion in the 20th century, especially during the communist regime when, concomitant with accelerated industrialization, it recorded a spectacular increase in population: from 65,000 inhabitants in 1831, 770,000 in 1930, 1,120,000 in 1948, and reaching 2,000,000 in 1989 (and currently). This represents the first step of the urbanization process, when the rural population tends to migrate toward the urban center, creating a process of growth and urban concentration.

After 1990, Bucharest's urbanization process entered its second phase – that of suburbanization, a process which essentially reflects the “ex-urbanization” trend or the inhabitants' residential mobility from the center toward the periphery or outside vicinity.

We are currently witnessing a spontaneous development of metropolitan areas. This type of growth needs a very well designed intervention to correct the potential negative effects and to optimize the process, aiming at a better quality of life for inhabitants.

Key words: metropolitan area, periurban, territory arrangement, urban policy, urbanism, Bucharest sustainable development

JEL Classification: R, Conference field: 9 – Regional, Urban and transportation policy

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1. Introductory work case about the metropolitan areas

Most metropolitan areas are defined in social and urban studies as locations situated within or outside a city with economic, social, urban and administrative functions, such that area development had optimum conditions, as with the regions of Paris, Rome, Porto, Madrid, Budapest, etc. Hall and Hay (1980) revealed the changes that occurred in the Western and Central European urban systems and drew a parallel between Eastern Europe and Japan.

Within the European Union, there is growing concern regarding the development of the European community in terms of metropolitan areas or functional urban regions.

Since 1999, EU states have approved a “Schedule of Development of the European Community” (SDEC) that refers to an integrated development strategy of the metropolitan areas of “Greater Europe.” A first document regarding such an approach is “The Metropolitan Magna Carta: Statement from Porto on Strategy for Planning and Regional and Metropolitan Area Development in Europe”.

In Europe, there are 120 regions or large metropolitan areas and many of these are already members of the European Network of Regions and Metropolitan Areas (METREX), established at the Metropolitan Regions Conference, Glasgow, 1996. These regions have a population of over 500,000 sharing many common challenges and opportunities. This common agenda represents the basis of collaboration and information exchange within METREX, and the value given by participation in this association.

Therefore, building a metropolitan area around Bucharest is an interesting issue not only for the Romanian, but also the European, community. Academic and practical concerns about metropolitan areas refer to many issues all over the world. The first issue is the extension of urban areas, which is seen as a result of the action of three powerful forces: increase in population, increase in income and decrease in transportation costs (Brueckner, 2000). Urban extension and creation of metropolitan areas generate a great concern: sustainable development of this space. The first requirement is that of planning and managing the newly built areas in order to develop strategic management. Environmental issues refer to the usage of water, energy, solid waste, land and conservation, according to Rojas-Caldelas, Venegas-Cardoso, Ranfla-Gonzalez, and Pena-Salmon (2007), Parés-Franzi, Saurí-Pujol and Domene (2006) and Bautista and Pereira (2006). The creation of metropolitan areas also implies making decisions about the population and managing the space created as new patterns of production and residency appear, according to Arias and Borja (2007). Gao and

Asami (2007) identify another consequence of the development of metropolitan areas: the need to evaluate the urban space and reveal the economic value of the facilities in this space. Data regarding the cities of Tokyo and Kitakyushu suggest that, in both cases, the compatibility of buildings and the greenery of neighborhoods were distinctively perceived; these factors significantly influenced land prices, and the marginal effects were similar for both cities. The same idea also appears in Prato's (2001) publication.

Another issue, analyzed by Punter (2005), relates to the *laissez faire* and discretionary traditions adopted for development control (e.g. Central Sydney over the last half century). The constant tensions between state government and city council, and the interventions of state advisory committees and development agencies, tribunals and courts, are explored as the pursuit of design quality moved from being a perceived barrier to economic growth to a pre-requisite for global competitiveness in the pursuit of international investment and tourism.

Problems regarding public transportation in metropolitan areas represent a concern for many areas in the world. Heyns and Schoeman (2006) show that, despite the best efforts of transport planners and economists, the measures have unwanted effects on the urban environment in which we live.

All of the issues described here apply to the creation, organization and management of Bucharest Metropolitan Area.

2. Metropolitan Area of Bucharest

The economic and social aspects of the Bucharest metropolitan area which will be detailed here have been analyzed from the perspective of field research carried out within a research project in the authors participated. This field research was conducted between the 15th and 30th of May 2008 and executed on a representative sample of administrative-territorial units, which had been proposed for inclusion in the MAB (35 from 61). A sample of investigated households (1100) was determined from these selected units. All persons interviewed were over the age of 18. The margin of error was of +/- 3% for a probability of 0.95.

At this stage, in which the Bucharest metropolitan area has not yet been officially established, at least legally, the main interest of the present research was in emphasizing the interactions based on the city's attraction of the surrounding territory. In other words, the purpose was to understand what the city of Bucharest practically means for the population which can be officially included in the MAB.

2.1 Definition of the Metropolitan Area of Bucharest

Short history of Bucharest

Founded in 1459, Bucharest became the capital of Romania in 1649. The development of the city was due to trade, to a geographic position that made the city an important hub not only for the south of Romania but also for the south-east of Europe.

Until the 18th century, Bucharest was quite rural, being a huge village divided by gardens, with serpentine streets and bridges, unaligned houses, and the only notable edifices being religious. After 1810, influences from the West appeared, and those of the East diminished. In the second half of the 19th century, Bucharest resembled a European capital in terms of its architecture, gardens, social and cultural life, inspired by Paris fashion, especially in the quest for novelty. In this period Bucharest was called “Little Paris”.

In 1859 Bucharest became the first fully gas-lit town worldwide (towns in Western Europe introduced public lighting only 2 years later), before Paris and Berlin, according to Ivanici, Bodolea, Toma, Duță (2006).

The most prosperous period of the town lasted until the beginning of the Second World War. 1945 ushered in a period of massive changes, on many levels, under the communist administration. The prosperous age of Bucharest ended; French, which had been heard on the streets and in the salons of Little Paris, was replaced by Russian, and all of Romania was insulated from the Western world.

The communist period had a strong negative impact on the architectural heritage of Bucharest with all new buildings and urban sketches suffering from the Soviet influence. Buildings with a strong Soviet influence were erected: the Spark House and the huge People’s House, symbol of the egomania of the dictator Ceausescu, which triggered many architectural controversies because it was perceived as ugly and useless by the Romanians, but admired and considered postmodern by Westerners. This new administrative centre was built between 1984 and 1989, and in order to make room for it, over 40,000 buildings, houses and administrative edifices, priceless art, and cultural monuments, churches were demolished. Near the People’s House were built large avenues and towering buildings that nowadays accommodate ministries and different institutions.

The overthrow of communism produced a new change in Bucharest’s life, the city trying to bridge the gap with the West, but the urban harmony and the aesthetic quality of many buildings do not match up to the image of a big European city.

As a result of the spontaneous evolution of the city and its metropolitan area arose the issue of scientific determination of this area, making possible the best administration.

In Romania, the urbanization process determined the emergence, as in other countries, of poles of urban development. Obviously, the city of Bucharest, being the largest, and functioning as national capital, has had the most diverse experience of all.

Methodology for determining the metropolitan area of Bucharest

Having accepted the idea and reality that metropolitan areas are formed from a pole city (or more, if they are spatially bounded) and strongly connected surrounding locations, the essential issue is determining the borders and the locations that are part of the area. There are many methodologies of determining the position of a metropolitan area. The easiest is that of establishing the maximum distance from the centre of the city; the most complex that in which borders are set up by evaluating the relationship between the central city and its outside area (this area is otherwise called periurban, preurban, extra urban, commuting, pre-metropolitan, etc.).

Among the most used criteria for determining the borders of metropolitan areas, besides the distance to the city (often calculated as the duration of transit using the means of transportation most frequently used by people in the surrounding cities), are: percentage of individuals from localities who daily come to work in the metropolis (in the USA, this percentage is 15%); percentage of people from localities involved in non-agricultural activities related to the city (at least 75% of employed people work in non-agricultural activities); percentage of people employed in agricultural activities for the city; percentage of people with residence in the city, localities' tourist potential, etc. A well-known experience and closer to the Romanian reality is the European Center of Coordination and Research in Social Science of Vienna, which elaborated between 1972 and 1973 the pattern of determining the Functional Urban Region in the form of SMLA (Metropolitan Area of Standard Labor) and MELA (Economic Metropolitan Area of Labor). SMLA includes the territory towards which over 15% of active economic residents go daily to the metropolis, and MELA includes the territory with people that go daily to work in the central town.

According to existing projects, the Metropolitan Area of Bucharest (MAB) will be shaped by the city of Bucharest plus 61 settlements embedded in its area of influence. However, an important factor for including localities in the MAB is the approval of the respective communities of being incorporated in the metropolitan area.

From a functional point of view, the concrete appearance of an "urban agglomeration" around Bucharest has been determined by the existence of the localities near the capital. By placing utilities essential to the capital on this territory, the intense work and service relations and multiple interrelations required for development and reduction in current dysfunctions make plain the necessity of an inter-locality cooperation, as well as that of maintaining the identity of each administrative unit.

Besides, the attitude towards the Bucharest *Agglomeration* is validated by the evolution of the majority of large European cities which, in evolved stages, have arrived at development on institutionalized bases (inter-locality council) with a common managing plan and collective urban regulations. These types of urban agglomerative processes have been identified in Romania as well (București, Iași, Oradea, Constanța, Alba Iulia, Cluj-Napoca, etc.). The large cities “export” urbanization to the surrounding localities and go beyond their own administrative territory by expanding their activities, housing, technical-administrative infrastructure and public transport onto the territory of the neighboring localities. At the same time, the cities determine the adjacent localities’ development through the workplaces and services offered to their inhabitants.

Whatever future structure the metropolitan area might have, it must represent the interests of all associated communities, regardless of size or geographic position. This will happen only if the decision makers at local level (mayors, local commissioners etc.) identify the priorities of their communities and then collaborate in a coherent and organized way with other future partners in order to establish together the best organizational form of metropolitan area.

2.2. Economic aspects of the development of the MAB

The politic, social, and economic life of a city and surrounding region has always been connected. The symbiotic relationship between a compact city and the localities with low demographic density is reflected by how the economic and political future of the suburban areas influences the economic and political success of the city, according to Ledebur and Barnes (1993).

Dominant economic functions such as preferred location for large corporations, research and development centers, harbors, and logistics hubs directly leads to sustainable development strategies.

Moreover, strategic reports have demonstrated that a region’s geographic position on a European level answers to specific development priorities:

- the regions of Central and Eastern Europe have the role of managing the national economic restructuring processes; the regions try to capitalize on sustainable regional development;
- for the regions of Northern and Western Europe a key problem is the management of conflicts generated by the necessity to use the territory;
- the Mediterranean metropolitan regions attempt a better integration in the welfare of European key regions.

As part of the globalization of economic activities, the further extension of the European Union represents the most powerful external factor to set the pace of changes occurring in

metropolitan areas. Regions of Central and Eastern Europe deal with opportunities and difficulties revealed in the period of transition which started in the 90's¹.

The core cities of the metropolitan areas of the regions of the Central and Eastern European countries became both the central points of social disequilibrium and the favorite target of national and international migrations².

The development of EU structures affected many metropolitan regions all over Europe. New trans-European connections and high-speed railways are now developing, and thus the majority of the metropolitan regions aim to become either part of a track connecting European markets (for regions on the periphery of Europe) or nodal points in the future system of European infrastructure. The metropolitan regions on the border of the old "Iron Curtain" have started to exploit the advantages of their geographical position³.

The importance given to the integration of metropolitan regions into an international transportation network is revealed by the recent development of airports. Almost every representative metropolitan region in Europe invests heavily in airport facilities, considered an indispensable factor for international activity.

Besides the problems brought by the integration of isolated parts of Europe, such as those arising from Central and Eastern Europe, the creation of a European Market as part of the globalization process has had a great impact on the development of metropolitan regions. Regions that formerly had an economy based on manufacturing, like the metropolitan area of Bucharest, must now move towards a knowledge-based economy, with a well-developed service sector.

The problems of regions within the reorganization process could be solved by the reinforcement of the private sector, leading to an easier process of economic adaptation.

Assuming the European model, the MAB should consider sustainable regional development by targeting the following main objectives:

1. balancing the metropolitan spatial structure;

¹ The Moscow region (the most populated metropolitan region of Europe) has a high profile as a favorite location of international companies in the central and east European market, while cities such as Budapest, Prague and Warsaw compete for international activity in selected areas (finance, communication, research, education) and as access portals for investors from other parts of the world.

² Metropolitan areas from Central and Eastern Europe must relieve part of the economic and social pressure on the nucleus city. The economic dynamic and regional relocation also entails risks for the urban and natural environment.

³ Vienna (located at the intersection of three big axes of the Trans-European Network – TEN), Budapest (located at the intersection of five axes), and Berlin/Brandenburg are good examples of a developed system of merchandise distribution.

2. improving the quality of urban life;
3. maintaining a regional identity, by capitalizing on cultural heritage;
4. integrating management through cooperation between regional infrastructure networks;
5. creating new planning and implementation partnerships.

The dynamic of forming and developing the MAB is strongly determined by the city's capacity to combine energies from the public and private sectors, and from civil society, into a strategic project. The consensus of all players and the emergence of a metropolitan power represent the basic conditions for applying a "metropolising" strategy (this is the case with the cities of Manchester, Lisbon, Madrid and many others).

The current economic aspects of MAB are as follows. Regarding the workforce structure divided by economic activity, industry attracts over 23% of the workforce, commerce 19%, transport 9.3%, construction 7.5%, agriculture 1.6%, with the rest engaged in other activities⁴.

The number of employees has had an upward trend, in the last 7 years reaching an average yearly rhythm of 8.6%; the private sector has been very dynamic with an average yearly rhythm of 22% on this indicator. The active population in the area exceeds one million, with approximately 93% in the urban environment, and the residential population comes close to 1 million. Thus, the unemployment rate in the MAB is one of the lowest in the country, 2–3% according to the latest estimates.

The net average salary is the highest in the country at over 1000 lei/month (the equivalent of approximately 400 USD), the highest values being found in finance, transport, telecommunications and commerce.

Although commerce is expanding and has penetrated all the residential areas of the MAB, the commercial attraction of the polarizing city has not significantly decreased. Thus, according to an ad hoc survey of households (conducted by the research team including the authors), only 10% of the investigated population over 18 years old never goes to the city for shopping.

A significant percentage (43%) goes to Bucharest to shop weekly or even more often (even daily) and almost the same percentage of people (45%) goes shopping in Bucharest once a month or several times a year. As a result, there is a significant loading of the city's commercial network, probably because of the expansion of "Mall"-type hypermarkets, and the acquisition of personal vehicles which facilitate the trip.

From the perspective of tourist potential, the localities examined represent an oasis of green space for Bucharest, which has a deficit in this regard. The average total land area occupied by forest and water is about 14%, and among the 61 localities there are five which stand out with over 40% area

⁴ Idem, at <http://www.insse.ro/cms/files/pdf/ro/cap3.pdf>, p.69

occupied by forest and water. To all these should be added monuments and tourist facilities. Consequently, we can state that the situation in these localities could have an extremely beneficial effect on the polarizing city from the point of view of extending the space and tourist development.

The strong relationship between these localities is based also on the existence of accessible means of transportation towards the city and, as shown in the survey data, it is estimated that half of the inhabitants of the 61 selected localities generally use minibuses to get to Bucharest, 30% use buses and the others use their own vehicles.

The time required to reach Bucharest represents another factor in favor of constituting the Metropolitan Area. Therefore, with the current infrastructure and traffic conditions, it is estimated that from any locality potentially within the MAB, the Bucharest boundary can be reached within 25-35 minutes.

In these localities, the technological infrastructure is in a relatively favorable situation. There are an average 142 landline telephones per 1000 inhabitants, but the localities in the immediate surroundings of Bucharest, especially, have a higher average (between 152 and 806 telephones per 1000 inhabitants).

From the perspective of the mobile communications system, the households from these localities are in an even better situation. Considering the total number of households in the investigated area, there are an average 1.54 mobile phones per household; there are few households without a mobile phone, and in over 40% of cases there is more than one mobile phone in the household.

Moreover, the estimated average number of computers is 124 per 1000 inhabitants, and, generally, the localities surrounding the central city surpass this average (31 localities have between 100 and 635 computers per 1000 inhabitants). The average number of internet users is 87 users per 1000 inhabitants, and 17 localities have between 106 and 574 internet users per 1000 inhabitants.

All these assessments prove the strong relations between the city of Bucharest and the localities in its sphere of influence, which could form the future metropolitan area. Furthermore, the social and economical trends show the benefits which the development of the MAB could bring to these districts. On the one hand, development of the general infrastructure, especially of transportation, could further encourage interrelations between the polarizing city and satellite-localities. On the other hand, the political, administrative, economic and social efforts towards development of the MAB should solve some of the localities' problems: workforce employment, public utilities, health protection, social security, cultural activity, environmental protection and tourism.

2.3. Social aspects of the MAB development

The main challenges raised by development of metropolitan areas are the demographic problems. External and internal migratory features of the metropolitan areas represent a significant factor to be taken into consideration, especially migration from the nucleus city towards suburbs and surroundings.

Moreover, population aging means a decrease in the birth rate, longevity, and the improvement of life quality, all of these acting to increase pressure on social services (education, medical services, and habitation).

For Bucharest, the main source of development was the rural–urban immigration, mainly of the population from the rural areas to the industrial town that was in the process of creating jobs, starting with the second half of the 19th century.

This was the context in which the city of Bucharest developed from 65,000 inhabitants in 1831 to 770,000 in 1930 and 1,120,000 in 1948, to over 2,000,000 in 1989 (currently 1,921,751; out of this number, 891,000 represent the population in employment, with an unemployment rate of 2.6%). This is the first stage of the urbanization process, when the rural population migrates towards the urban centre, determining in this way the process of urban growth and concentration (see also Table 1).

Table 1: Demographic Indicators of MAB in 2006

Administrative unit	Population (number)	Population		Active population (number)	Occupied population (number)	Total surface (ha)	Density (pers./sq.km)
		urban	rural				
Bucharest city	1,921.751	1.921.751	-	890.962	867.700	23.787	8074,6
Ilfov district	300.109	30.548	269.561	132.857	130.200	158.328	189,6
Giurgiu district	298.022	88.756	209.266	93.398	88.200	352.602	84,5
Total MAB*	2.519.882	2.041.055	478.827	1.117.217	1.086.100	534.717	471,3

Source: Data interpreted by the authors based on official statistics in Romania (Romanian Statistical Yearbook, 2006 and www.insse.ro)

Obviously, in attracting the labor force mostly from rural areas, the urban expansion was associated with both industrial integration processes (the majority of the labor force formed by

* MAB does not exactly match the mentioned administrative units, but, for Romanian territorial statistical reasons and because of lack of statistical data concerning the settlements, we chose only the region which will be included for the most part in MAB.

villagers or young people from rural areas who needed to be integrated into the urban industrial activity) and the process of local infrastructure development. Later, as a rule, the form emerged of districts of houses with relatively standard apartments, the so-called “bedroom districts”, that house a great part of the population, and in Bucharest over 40% of inhabitants were residents or beneficiaries of such a residence.

Concurrently with the urban attraction exerted by the city through immigration from rural areas, the city also attracted a part of the labor force from its surroundings which continued to reside in the rural areas, but commuted daily, forming what sociologists call the category of worker-villagers (or villager-workers). Such a population was not urban or rural, had a dual way of life of workers and villagers, mostly combining the two types of activities. The percentage of this worker-villager category sometimes reached 20% of the city’s employed population. In the former communist countries, this is considered a distinctive phenomenon: a transition from rural to urban. Specifically, a “partial urbanization” occurred when aspects of the rural way of life combined with those of using the work and trade services (although the cultural-sporting aspects were not excluded) of the city. Nowadays, the daily flow of commuters into Bucharest is over 480,000⁵.

Thus, the connections between the city and its preponderant rural hyper-land have become closer. The connections between people from the surrounding localities and Bucharest have become permanent and more diverse.

After 1990, the urbanization process of the city of Bucharest started to move into its second stage, namely the suburbanization process with a tendency towards “ex-urbation” or residential mobility of citizens from the center towards the periphery or exterior area.

A significant proportion of citizens, mainly those who succeeded in earning larger incomes, started to build their own houses in the surrounding areas of the city (holiday houses or permanent residences) generating a development of the existing localities or creating new areas of habitation by overwhelming investment of the private sector.

Urbanization at this level starts to confirm the stages that this process followed in the developed countries, the stage of suburbanization being obviously a tendency not only for the buildings that have begun to populate the surrounding territory, but also for the service buildings: mainly malls or hypermarkets and stores located on the main communication paths.

⁵ ALMA-RO Association (2006b), “The Metropolitan Area of Bucharest – a challenge for the public administration”, final report, Blueprint International, Bucharest, <http://alma-ro.ngo.ro>

Regarding the land area, integrating the 61 localities into the MAB would extend Bucharest by 250,000 ha. The population density of the area is the highest in the country, with more than 1200 inhabitants / square km.

Moreover, it is noticeable that the positive migration balance (migration increment) generates an increasing trend of the population from the area and not the birth rate, which has been lower than the mortality rate.

The average life expectancy in the area is of 72.34 years, slightly higher for women (76.2 years).

Out of the 61 administrative units, 17 localities have a commuting rate between 70 and 98%. In other words, in these localities 70–98% of the total number of employees goes to work in other areas. Moreover, 16 localities have a commuting rate between 40 and 67%.

On the other hand, the data of the 2008 survey shows that the average commuting rate from Bucharest towards these localities (calculated as the ratio of the number of Bucharest inhabitants who go daily to work in the locality and the total number of employees in the locality) is about 16%. In some cases, the number of people from Bucharest exceeds the number of inhabitants. The same fact is proven by the large percentage of localities which have economic units with employees from Bucharest (around 68%).

Despite the fact that a proportion of those attracted to work in Bucharest have moved their domicile to the polarizing city, over 40% of the households proposed to be included in the MAB have at least one member who works in Bucharest. Moreover, if we take into consideration only the households with members of active age, then the percentage of those who go to work in the city reaches approximately 50%.

In addition, the survey data shows the strong attraction of the workforce from these localities towards Bucharest. In more than 30 localities of the 61 included in the survey, the commuting rate into Bucharest (calculated as the ratio of the number of inhabitants who go daily to work in Bucharest and the total number of employees in the locality) is over 50%.

Almost half of the households which may be included in the MAB, exactly 47% of the total, have at least one member of the family (child/parents, husband/wife, grandparents) who lives (having temporary or stable domicile) in Bucharest. Consequently, the strongest community relationship, the family, is often divided between the capital and the other localities.

From the perspective of living conditions, the data shows a fairly good situation in these localities, the average number of houses being 383 houses per 1000 inhabitants. The localities with a residential status above average are mainly those in which the contribution of people from Bucharest to the administrative renewal of the locality is above average. According to the research data, in the

last five years, the building renewal rate was over 16% in 21 localities, and 24 localities recorded a rate between 6 and 15%. The contribution of people from Bucharest to this rate was more than 52%.

Furthermore, from the point of view of education, the 61 localities are quite well situated, one instructor teaching approximately 18 students. What is also noticeable is the high percentage of university graduates, 30%, which emphasizes the high degree of education of the population in this area (to which can be added the 42% who are high school and college graduates⁶).

From the health point of view, the situation is not very good, since 1000 inhabitants are served by an estimated eight doctors (just one, if we eliminate the city!). Another indicator that the situation in these areas needs enhancement, is the ratio of polyclinics to 1000 inhabitants, which, in more or less 40 localities, is zero (and not even the average over the entire MAB reaches 1 polyclinic to 1000 inhabitants!) In addition, the total number of hospitals is 58 (four hospitals to 100,000 inhabitants), with 23,095 beds (16.5 beds per 1000 inhabitants⁷).

These all reveal that the development of the city of Bucharest and its surroundings has certainly tended to be an organic spontaneous development of a metropolitan area. Such an evolution needs appropriate arrangement, legislative, scientific and management intervention, to correct the possible negative effects and optimize the process, and thus lead to the improvement of the quality of life for inhabitants.

2.4. Legal aspects of the MAB development

In Romania, problems following the decentralization process of the administrative structure under a centralized government, such as increasing differences between urban and rural areas, and the new ambitions of big cities trigger difficulties that exceed the management capacity of the currently fragmented administration. Therefore, they have attempted to create new management forms, which include territories that are under the jurisdiction of different local councils, with different interests and development priorities.

This is why in Law No. 351/2001, regarding the approval of the National Territory Arrangement Plan, the 4th section, The Localities Network, opens up public-private partnership on strategic programs of urban and/or rural territory development through the metropolitan areas definition:

*“Area formed by association, on **voluntary partnership** bases, between the big urban centers (the capital of Romania and the first grade towns) and urban and rural localities in the closed area, at*

⁷ Idem, at <http://www.insse.ro/cms/files/pdf/ro/cap7.pdf>, pp. 14-18

distances up to 30 km, that developed between them cooperation relations on multiple levels” (annex 1, pct. 11).

It specifies how the metropolitan areas function: “The *metropolitan area (...)* works as *independent entities without legal personality*” (art. 7, par. 2).

However, the law does not prescribe forms of management of the metropolitan plan, or forms of monitoring and controlling the area of metropolitan development. Local councils separately could accomplish a plan of metropolitan territory arrangement, but they then have to deal afterwards with problems which arise in the implementation stage of the plan. These problems are related to territorial, economic and environmental coordination generated by the interaction of economic flows both inside the metropolitan area and between it and the national and international economies. Legislation focuses on more legal aspects of collaboration and less on political and economical aspects.

Meanwhile, the Territory Arrangement and Urbanism Law No.350/2001 declares that the metropolitan territory is “*the surface situated around big urban congestions, established through speciality studies, within there are created mutual relationships of influence in the communication paths, economic, social, cultural and town infrastructure domains*” (Annex 2).

Moreover, the Zonal Territory Arrangement Plan, defined in this law, can easily be adapted to the harmonization of spatial strategies for the metropolitan areas. These could define the influence areas – territories and localities – that surround an urban centre and are directly influenced by the city’s evolution and by the inter-conditional and cooperation relationships that develop through economic activities, food supply, and access to social and commercial infrastructure, and leisure infrastructure.

The influence area’s dimensions directly relate to the size and functions of the pole urban centre. This law also proposes an instrument for the protection of the environment that overlaps the metropolitan territories – *the green bypass* – “defined area around the capital of Romania and the first grade towns, in order to protect the environmental elements, to prevent uncontrolled extension of these towns and to ensure additional spaces for pleasure and repose”. Also at the level of metropolitan areas it is proposed the identification of some polycentric development systems called *urban systems* – “system[s] of neighbored localities that establish relationships of economic, social and cultural cooperation, of territory arrangement and environment protection, technical town equipping, each of them maintaining its administrative autonomy.”

The Law of local public administration No.215/2001, as well as the Law of decentralization No. 195/2006, covers the possibility of association among local authorities, without detailing the terms of such an association.

Beyond these few legal considerations, concerns regarding the Metropolitan Area of Bucharest have an important political connotation. Romania was integrated into the European Union

in 2007, but the capital's problems are still the same as before integration. The notion of metropolitan areas has been around for over four years but it became strongly politicized and started a veritable competition to initiate different laws regarding the Metropolitan Area of Bucharest, without a real public debate and without tracking to obtain the best "grade" for project viability, for how much it represents the interests of the majority of citizens and proposes a balanced development of the capital and surrounding area. Meanwhile, a number of projects (legislative or otherwise) appeared that propose a certain structure for the Metropolitan Area of Bucharest, a geographical development and an administrative model.

3. Conclusions

The advantages and disadvantages that the organization of the MAB implies can be, at this level, inferred. An inquiry made in 2005 by the ALMA-RO Association underlined the interest developed by local institutional actors regarding the creation of the MAB, considering the process itself as a condition for "development"; they also associated this process with "infrastructure", this being one of the weak points of the area around Bucharest. However, there are also negative assessments, as seen in Table 2.

Table 2. Associations with the term of the MAB on behalf of local institutional actors (ALMA-RO Association, 2006a)

Positive associations	Negative associations
– access to information	– deficiencies and difficulties of administration
– regional development	– assigning areas from other counties to Bucharest
– consistency in development	– "swallowing" other localities by Bucharest (losing local autonomy)
– city decongestion	– funds centralized and preferentially allocated by political criteria
– investments in infrastructure	– increased taxes
– development of surrounding localities	
– extending the utilities networks	
– proper usage of land	
– development of services	
– possibilities of spending spare time	
– extensive financial resources	

Among the institutional actors in Bucharest, the main advantages of the MAB are expected to be decongestion of the city, the urban agglomeration, on the one hand, and economic advantages deriving from the development of the area's attractiveness for investors, on the other.

The communities around Bucharest, especially the rural ones, expect that the MAB will benefit them due to: (1) it leading to the improvement of the town's technical and transportation infrastructure; (2) jobs will be created by bringing in investors, and (3) the population's standard of living would increase.

There are also a number of disadvantages anticipated by the institutional actors, both from Bucharest, and from surrounding areas. For Bucharest, the main disadvantage is the expected appearance of speculative tendencies in the real estate market that will lead to a surge in land prices. Other disadvantages perceived by institutional actors from Bucharest are the lack of public services (health services, for example), taking into consideration that the need for such services will grow as a result of the increase in inhabitants from around Bucharest. At the level of rural communities, the negative effects of the MAB are environmental degradation due to the development of residences and to the loss of local autonomy.

A sustainable approach to improving the quality of life in the metropolitan area will need integrated action at social, economic, environmental, and spatial levels in order to entail an improvement of welfare in the metropolitan areas as a whole. These inter-related aspects can be approached by creating an Integrated Regional Strategy for Sustainable Development, designed and accepted by different interested parties from public, private and associative sectors and accomplished by the active participation of the public.

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