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A Methodology for Assessing how Master Plans Contribute Toward Acheiving Sustainable Urban Development

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Abstract

The article addresses the issue of master plans and their role in advancing the goals of sustainable development at the local level. The research objectives are threefold: to examine the role of sustainability planning among other strands of planning and to assess the importance of sustainable local development plans/strategies as an important tool for contemporary planners based on literature produced at the international level; to examine how the evolutions in the field of international planning theory and practice fit with the Romanian context; and to empirically test the perception of local planners with regard to the role sustainability planning and plans play in the future development of their communities. The empirical research is based on two complementary methods: interviews with planners and the assessment of master plans based on a set of pre-determined criteria. The conclusion of the article is that despite the widespread evolution of master plans, they are perceived as a goal in themselves rather than a means. Sustainability considerations are often part of these plans; however, planners themselves seem to have difficulties in labeling a certain policy/program as sustainable or not. In addition, sustainability is defined based on existing definitions rather than being context-driven. The master plans rarely reflect if certain issues are on the public agenda and how the community will address them; thus, in our opinion, the plans by themselves, cannot represent a good

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Based on a work at <http://rtsa.ro/tras/>

ISSN– L 2247 – 8310 | ISSN = 1842 – 2845 | © [AP](#)

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