

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION IN USA AND ROMANIA. COMPARATIVE ANALYSE

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Rezumat. Protecția mediului în SUA și România. Analiză comparativă. Problema protecției mediului natural își are rădăcini adânci, atât în S.U.A. cât și în România. „Vânturile de praf” ce s-au abătut asupra coastei atlantice a S.U.A. în anii deceniului IV al secolului 20, ca urmare a deștelenirilor masive din câmpia centrală au readus în atenție cu prioritate problema reconstrucției ecologice naționale. „Multiplicarea parcurilor naturale și fortificarea lor reprezintă un pas important în vederea păstrării și îmbogățirii patrimoniului natural continental. În România, numărul mare de obiective declarate rezervații și monumente ale naturii poate constitui suportul unui demers al „clădirii” grabnice a planului reconstrucției ecologice la nivel național.

Cuvinte cheie. Protecția mediului, reconstrucție ecologică, rezervații naturale, monumente ale naturii, SUA, România.

The earth is a gift of God for people, says the Christian Doctrine. The American Indians say that the Earth that they are living on isn't theirs, but they belong to it. The history of mankind is a continuous assault against the nature, achieved with more diversified and big forces. By its implications on the life, the problem of environment knew a more active transfer of the spatial-political frame's preoccupations of the national to international organisms of cooperation in this field.

Unlike the political milieus organised as states, the natural environment of the Planet makes an assembly without frontiers.

USA and Romania compared one to another are presented as a whole of features which shows more likely differences rather than similitude.

The first main difference consists of their spatial position and in dimensions. The USA belonging to the “New World” occupies almost 1/3 of the continental space of North America (9.372.613 km²), Romania being in the central part of the South-East of Europe belongs to the middling states of the continent (238.391 km²). So, it is close regarding the area and the number of inhabitants (21,7 millions) to the dimensions of a medium world state.

For one inhabitant of the USA, we have 3,70 ha of environment, 1,64 ha of agricultural field and 1,09 ha of forest field.

For one inhabitant of Romania we have 1,04 ha of environment, 0,65 of agricultural field and 0,27 ha of forest field.

The first ideas, the first actions

At the first stages of the environmental protection problem, there were only a few people who were thinking of it. They were nature's lovers and they also had some knowledge about the environment (vegetation, fauna, etc.). The ecstasy in front of nature's grandness was dominant. By worshipping the nature, they were thinking of preserving some territories, which had as well a biological treasure as an esthetical one.

Their attention was focused mainly upon some territories that were untouched by the economical circuit. It is not about a global vision upon environment, but their ideas are known by some stately organisms that will adopt farther on some law measures of environmental protection.

In the USA is very well known the case of John Muir, the famous naturalist. Scottish by birth he spent many years in West being fascinated by the grandness and beauty of Rocky Mountains.

So, in the year 1872 he was setting up the first national park of the USA-Yellowstone Park, with an area of 3.458 square miles, 1400,49 km² and after that in 1890 it was declared a national park – Yosemite Park from California. When, in the year 1901 Theodore Roosevelt became president, he supported directly the setting up of some parks and national reservations, being a fiery defender of protection's ideas regarding the environment.

Thus, in the year 1916 the American Congress established the National Parks Service, the first state system authorized in the world, with its attributions of preserving and protecting the environment.

In Romania in that period, ideas of environmental protection were supported by features of scientific world. By the same time the nature was extoled by well-known poets such as: Eminescu, Alecsandri, Vlahuță. There were the first scientific observations regarding the Danube Delta from Grigore Antipa as it is recognized the value of this unique kind of space at European level.

In the USA as well as in Romania the first steps of economical evaluation of territory were dominated by the ideas of Paul Vidal de la Blanche (the nature allows, the man decides). The most important American

document in this way is that so called "The Homestead Act" emitted in the year 1862. According to this act each family of colonialists could have 160 acres of field (64,8 ha) in Great Plains from the Federal Government. This field could be theirs for good after five years of working on it (those who want to become owners sooner could buy it for a very low price / 1,25 \$/acre).

In a period of 50 years, the huge space between Mississippi River and Rocky Mountains became the vastest arable field in the world.

In Romania, the peace of Adrianopole from 1829 took to the free trade with grain on the Danube. It was the beginning for the occupied process of the Romanian Plain with population from mountain areas and with it the transformation of steppe into agricultural field. Unlike the USA, this process was taking place more slowly in Romania because was missing a program of capitalization regarding this space and also due to an ancient way of exploitation the field.

At the beginning, the American agriculture was agriculture without peasants and traditions, meanwhile the Romanian agriculture was the base for the economy until communist era.

The massive following was together with deforestations in the USA as well as in Romania. Building railways, the increasing of mining areas, building the flats for people, increasing the need for fire woods were as many factors of pressing against forest fund. Romania remarked itself at the beginning of the century and afterwards between those two world wars, by massive exportation of grain and wood. In the year 1940, the Romanian scientist Emil Pop was paying attention that we had the biggest number of sawmills from Europe comparing with the number of inhabitants.

The first important signs of environment at human actions

In the year 1934, the American population from the eastern coast of the USA was terrified, because red and yellow clouds of dust were covering the sky of the big American cities were the first major signs of nature revenge against the humankind. The west winds swept off the soil of Great Plains, which were exposed due to following.

The massive deforestations from Tennessee Valley and the transformation of this space into agricultural field, took after itself an acceleration of erosion processes and a decreasing of natural fertility of the soil.

In 1933 Tennessee Valley's Land became poor. The names of some places such as> Hungry Creed and Poorland Valley mean exactly the poring process of the region.

In Romania, deforestations from Carpathian area and from Subcarpathian area of Vrancea based upon a lithological substratum (clays, grit stones) and with a very kneaded tectonic took of the releasing of some erosion processes very intense which transformed the region into a bad-land space in a very short period of time.

Repairing measures

As an answer to American tragedy were some adaptable measures of agro technical kind (crop's rotation, putting the perennial plants, the extension of irrigations). At the same time began a large program of information and consciousness at national level.

The USA realized that even it is so big... it's only so small.

Roosevelt President spurred the citizens of America to preserve the lands "for their children and their children's children forever with their majestic beauty all unmarred".

So, the year 1933 he set up an agency of which purpose was helping the millions of poor inhabitants from Tennessee Valley, due to a quick degradation of the environment. This agency stepped into history known as Tennessee Valley Authority (T.V.A.). The main tasks of this agency were:

- stop floods;
- production of electric energy by achieving dams and hydroelectrical power stations;
- making up the fertility of the soil;
- propulsion of the region on the way of development.

T.V.A. is the first democratic action of great proportions for environment's reconstruction and the first model in the World of a complex and complete fitting out project for a territory.

In the USA the great ideas and projects of preservation and protection of environment were coming from the Federal Government and they had 100 % support from the citizens.

At the same time the presidential institution was always closed involved in elaboration and supporting of some projects.

In Romania the repairing measures had mainly a local resonance and as supporting centres the local forest services. Because the lack of total programmers and financial supporting Romania can't show a convincing model of territorial fitting out, which take the territories on progress way. Vrancea County is remaining a critical region where the drain processes are still present.

The agriculture based on animal traction and lack of fertilizers until the collectivization (1962) and also the weak level of industrialization of our country during the two world wars period maintained our national

geographic space among the limits of some parameters of equilibrium between economical exploitation and natural potential.

Ecological reconstruction

Nowadays, in the USA are under National Park Service 80 millions acres of soil (32.400.000 ha) own to the federal domain. In this frame are 367 protection's units, such as:

- 51 national parks;
- 102 memorials monuments;
- 108 national historic sites and historical parks;
- 18 national recreation areas;
- 14 seashores and lakeshores.

The federal domain occupies almost 1/3 of the USA territory (more than 700 millions acres – 283.500.000 ha); a public trust unmatched in the world (after National Geographic, October, 1994).

In Romania, is more likely an evolution towards a total abolishment of public terrains and the transfer of spatial responsibilities to the owners.

In the USA, although the private property is concerning in a democratic way, the Federal Government coordinates the policy of national space.

The policy of Federal Government regarding the environment can be done by helping of five departments:

- a) Department of Agriculture;
- b) Department of Commerce;
- c) Department of Defense;
- d) Department of Energy;
- e) Department of Interior.

To all these we have "Other Federal Lands" administrated by more than one agency. The national parks, which already exist in the USA, are, nowadays, the main spatial support of a long duration process of ecological reconstruction.

In our point of view, the spatial discontinuity of those parks, especially in the Great Plains can be cancel by forming some "ecological passages" which will link Rocky Mountains of Appalachia Mountains (fig. 1).

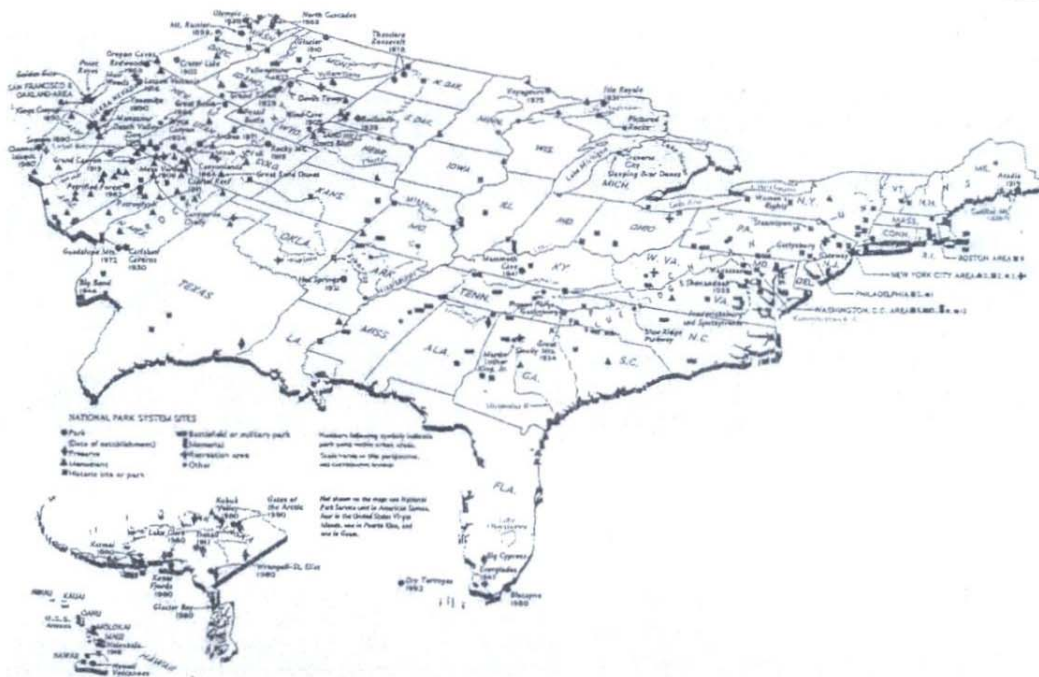


Fig. 1. National Park System Sites in U.S.A. (by National Geographic, 1994, vol. 186, no. 4, October).

Romania's evolution

The Environmental protection in Romania knows five major stages (V. Cristea 1995, p. 7 –28):

- preliminary stage;
- the first legal measures stage;
- the organization and scientifically substantiation stage;

- the straightforwardly stage;
- the transition period stage.

The preliminary stage began at the same time with the process of setting up our people as a nation and as well of our language (the first century after Christ).

In this stage the figure of Dimitrie Cantemir, the greatest scientist of that period, was very obvious, who made some observations about nature and population of Romania in his scientific book "Descriptio Moldaviae" (1715).

The first legal measures stage began with the XVIII century, when the anthropic pressure upon the environment were bigger due to the beginnings of industrialization. The prince Ion Ghica had a major contribution in that stage, because he presented a law project for planting woods in Brăila and Ilfov. That project was presented in front of the Parliament on the fifth of June 1860, date that becomes the International Day of Environment.

The idea of protection the nature became more and more acute among intellectual classes.

The greatest poets such as: M. Eminescu, V. Alecsandri, writers – Calistrat Hogaș and painters – N. Grigorescu wrote or painted about this subject.

The organisation and scientific substantiation stage began with the year 1901, when the deputy Novac asked the Parliament of Vienna to promulgate a law regarding the nature's protection. This stage is marked with the figures of two Romanian scientists: the naturalists Alexandru Borza and Emil Racoviță.

Alexandru Borza published in the newspapers of that time a series of articles regarding the importance of mankind in preserving the nature. His effort had as a result the setting-up of the Botanical gardens from Cluj. In the year 1926, he took part at the International Congress of Botanic from Ithaca (USA) and with that occasion he paid a visit to some national American parks and the scientific reservations must be preserved for eternity".

Emil Racoviță set up the first Institute of Biospeaeology in Cluj (the first in the world) and took part as a Romanian delegate to the Belgium expedition from the South Pole.

Due to the efforts of those two scientists and due to the help coming from the government at fourth of July 1930, the Royal Decree nr. 2478 was promulgated, regarding the first law for the protection of natural monuments. From Al. Borza's studies will become obvious the necessity of setting up, in the future, of some biosphera's rezervations.

The straightforwardly stage took place between 1945/1989. On that stage were some restrictions and an ideological indoctrination due to the political system and as well as because of the so called „power of the people” policy in spite of all these were obtained well/known results regarding the environmental protection, being created – at national level / the Committee of Nature's Monuments.

The members of this committee made many efforts to increase the number of natural rezervations together with their areas.

The transition period stage began in the year 1990 and it was characterized by big mutations of structural kind as well as some efforts which could lead to the Romanian integration to the world aspiration of environmental protection.

It was setting up the Ministry of Water, Forestry and Environmental Protection and also were ratified a series of laws regarding the Romanian's adhesion to some international conventions such as: the Convention of Vienna (1986) regarding a quick ratification in case of nuclear accident and the Convention of Rio de Janiero (1992) about biological diversity. The Law nr. 82/1993 completed by the governmental decision nr. 248/1994 which consented to the creation of a biosphera rezervation: the Danube Delta.

Nowadays, in romania are 585 natural rezervations grouped in three big categories: natural parks, rezervations and nature's monuments. All these are grouped in rezervations and monuments of different kind such as: botanical, forest, geological, landscape, mixed, paleontological, spaeological and geological (fig. 2).



Fig. 2. the Natural Reservations in Romania (by Geography of Romania, 1994). Legend: 1, National Retezat Park; 2, Floristical Reservations; 3, Faunistical Reservations; 4, Floristical and Faunistical Reservations; 5, Landscape Reservations; 6, Forestry Reservations; 7, Caves; 8, Geological and Paleontological Reservations; 9, Dendrological Parks.

Among all these, the most well-known are:

- the Danube Delta, which has been considered natural rezervation since 1938 and since 1994 it has become a biosphera rezervation;
- the National Park Retezat which is situated in the mountains called the same. This park was setting up in the year 1935 and it is well-known because of it's preservation regarding the flora, fauna and mountaineering landscape (the maximum altitude 2509 m in Peleaga's Peak).
- The fitting out of the National Park of Apuseni (Western Mounts) is in discussions for a very long time now.

Just like in the USA, the splitting of natural rezervations, the decreasing of the areas surrounding them, the growing up of the neighbouring spaces don't represent a good image regarding the important role of those rezervations as pillars of an ecological reconstruction for long term in Romania.

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