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ABSTRACT
DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

URBAN PHYSIOGNOMIES AND DEMOGRAPHIC STRUCTURES IN TRANSYLVANIA.
CLUJ 1919-1979

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This dissertation is not intended as a monograph of Cluj, but as a foray into the history of the city, an emblem of contemporary society and an ode dedicated to the intellectuals who have explored this subject and have attempted, throughout time, to bring to the readers' awareness the greatness of an urban settlement that, in the early 20th century, was considered a city worthy of being regarded as a true European capital, which our authorities are also striving to accomplish in the current period.

The "Treasure City" gained shape and color with the modernization of its citizens. Viewed from an urban perspective, the Cluj of the modern and, to a great extent, of the interwar periods can be seen as a city with many shortcomings; however, projected into the future, it represented an architectural project that the world hoped would materialize. Thus, seen in its essence, Cluj has become over the centuries not only a well-known, but also a recognized city, a city that has managed to entrench in the collective mentality the idea of a metropolitan capital, of a traditional community, clad in modern garments, of civilization and inter-ethnicity. The road to fame has been paved with numerous hardships and trials, which have driven society to move forward, to live and to believe that there will come a day when Cluj will become worthy of national and international pride (an idea that gained shape in various historical stages).

The historiography of the problem – a critical analysis

When we talk about analyzing the subject proposed in this thesis, we consider studying the city on two levels: the built city (by the architect) and the admired city (by the public). Many have tried to write about the origin and, implicitly, about the evolution of cities, but their utopian vision has generated disputes that have materialized as stylistic ideals. We must bear in mind that the identity of an urban community represents the central core of the history of any geographical settlement and that in order to define the origin and originality of such a settlement, it is necessary to appeal to a diverse range of sources that can provide an overall picture of a world that is constantly developing and changing.

The historiography of the city of Cluj is quite rich numerically speaking, if we take into account the studies published after the 1990s, but we must say at the outset that the research result has often served as a "guide," which has recounted the city's history to the reader, describing perhaps the most important buildings and monuments built in various architectural styles. However, without a thorough search we cannot say that what happened at the macro level can also be adopted at the micro level. Attempts have therefore been made to relinquish simple presentations and to

publish in-depth studies on different topics, but research on particular cases is encountered less often because in the local historiography of Cluj there is a shortage of works that go beyond simple presentations or descriptions of the locality in question. What is felt is a need to focus on the actual analysis of the society and the space of Cluj, with all that this implies, including as regards the urban and the cultural sector.

The ideological debate between modernization/westernization and traditionalism made itself felt in the period between the two world wars, when the Romanian artistic and architectural culture began to take shape in an altogether obvious way. Modernization is understood today as an intense process of opening to new horizons and global initiatives, which lead to a development of an already existing society. We can speak thus about inter-culturalism, interdependence and interdisciplinary, these relations having also existed in the past, but today they are increasingly perceived as universally valid syntagms that will represent the connecting pillars of this study.

Regarding the issue of urbanism, world historiography is limited to the proposal and explanation of general concepts, which will help us later in our study to identify and adapt the themes to the local level. Lewis Mumford's book entitled *The City in History*, published by Penguin Books (London, 1961), is an interesting work on the evolution of the city and, implicitly, of its culture (here I talk about the culture of the city, formed as a picture of its elements in the collective mentality). That is why the author says that only if we can project its image can we find a new form for the city. Among the topics approach, mention could be made of those related to the expansion of trade, the price of urban sprawl, the suburbs, the cultural functions of the city and its world. Also referring to the city, there is a book authored by Kevin Lynch, *Site Planning* (The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England, 1972), which also addresses the theme of the organization of the city's planimetry, presenting several case studies about the analysis of a locality depending on the main factors that influence the formation and development of any urban settlement.

Romanian historiography has endeavored to catch up with the advance of studies at international level, through the publication of important works (books or articles) regarding the two important issues under discussion here. Present-day works referring to the city of Cluj are either simple writings following the model of a tourist guide or simple approaches to an individual topic or the individual memories of those who lived under communism (for instance, Petru Poantă, *Clujul meu* (My Cluj), vol. 1-2, 2006-2007).

The approach to urbanism as a theory or a concept lay at the basis of a rather consistent literature, which made its appearance especially after the 1990s. A very interesting study is that

authored by Cerasella Crăciun, who in the work entitled *Metabolismul urban. O abordare neconvențională a organismului urban* (Urban Metabolism. An Unconventional Approach to the Urban Organism), undertakes an analysis of the urban space in parallel with the human body. Therefore, the structure of the urban space, urbanistic development and the positioning of the buildings are but a few of the directions that are likened to the biological metabolism. “The idea of a city seen through the lens of a biological organism is an idea that has dominated urban theoretical thinking, in that urban manifestations resemble biological manifestations, in terms of both its existence and its composition, reflecting the biological existence of its inhabitants.”¹

Sociology is also a central area when it comes to understanding the concepts of urban or cultural. This is the contention of studies like *Introducere în sociologia urbană* (Introduction to Urban Sociology) by Dorel Abraham and *Societate și arhitectură: o perspectivă sociologică* (Society and Architecture: a Sociological Perspective), written by Trăilă Cernescu. The author of the latter book develops a study on the relationship between society and architecture, on the development of the cultural function of housing, conducting a psycho-sociological approach to urban congestion, the public space and the private space. He states that population growth also had an influence on architecture, “in the sense that it led to an increase in the volume of constructions in general and to a diversified typology of housing constructions in particular.”²

An interesting work on the evolution of the city correlated with population growth is that written by Ioan Ianoș, *Dinamica urbană. Aplicații la orașul și sistemul urban românesc* (Urban Dynamics. Applications on the Romanian City and Urban System, Bucharest: Editura Tehnică, 2004). From among the topics addressed, we can mention: the city and urban dynamics, urban functions (economic, industrial, political and administrative, cultural, commercial) or the intra-urban dynamics. Regarding the concept of the city, the author defines it as “a fascinating object of study, complex and highly dynamic, despite its great stability.”³

Regarding the urbanization of Cluj, studies are particularly focused on the 19th century and the early 20th century. While at the beginning of the 19th century, urban municipal activity was especially partial and applicative, because the aim was to ensure the city’s adaptation to the needs arising at a certain time, in the latter half of the century, due to the growth of the economy and the area of the urban settlement, there occurred an urbanistic improvement that led to surpassing the modern city status. One of the reference works of modern urbanism in Cluj is Mihaela Ioana Maria

¹ Cerasellei Crăciun, *Metabolismul urban. O abordare neconvențională a organismului urban*, Editura Universitară „Ion Mincu”, București, 2008, p. 29.

² Trăilă Cernescu, *Societate și arhitectură, o perspectivă sociologică*, Bucharest: Editura Tritonic, , 2004, p. 13.

³ Ioan Ianoș, *Dinamica urbană. Aplicații la orașul și sistemul urban românesc*, Bucharest: Editura Tehnică, 2004, p. 1.

Agachi's *Clujul modern aspecte urbanistice* (Modern Cluj: Urbanistic Aspects), published by Editura U.T. PRESS, Cluj-Napoca, in 2009. This is a very well structured book, with a well-documented content, accompanied by photos, maps and documents offered by the city officials about the standards of construction. From my point of view, the advantage of this book resides in the comparison that the author makes between Transylvania and Europe. Placing the research on Cluj in the context of a wider area provides a unique informational value. The architecture of modern Cluj is captured by the study *Clujul eclectic. Programe de arhitectură în perioada dualistă (1867-1918)* [Eclectic Cluj. Architectural Programs during the Dualistic Period (1867-1918)], written by Gheorghe Vais and published by Editura U.T.PRESS in 2009. The author has tried to carry out a small study on the urban space in Cluj, by examining the architectural programs of different administrative and cultural institutions that had paramount importance during the period under consideration. An advantage of this writing is that it presents, in the introduction, the economic and cultural situation of Transylvania and, thus, of Cluj in the second half of the 19th century and the early 20th century. The presentation of the main architects who worked on building eclectic Cluj and the realization of case studies on the architectural programs of the University of Cluj, of the Compound of University Clinics, of the Hungarian Theatre or the University Library raises the work's standing amongst the other important works of specialized historiography.

Although at first glance it seems like a small guide about the city, the work entitled *Așezăminte istorice de patrimoniu din Cluj-Napoca* (Historical Heritage Settlements in Cluj-Napoca), published by Napoca Star in 2011, is a great working tool in terms of outlining a picture of Cluj throughout its history. In other words, the editors of this book, Ioan Ciorca, Leonard Horvath and Elena Stanciu have attempted to make a comparison, in the of pages this publication, between modern Cluj and contemporary Cluj, presenting the most important buildings and monuments that define the cultural and artistic identity of the city. Using images, the written text is rendered through numerous period photographs, presented, where possible, in the splendor of their evolution throughout history.

Undoubtedly, Cluj was and remains one of the most iconic cities of Transylvania. Modern Cluj and, above all, contemporary Cluj has been provided with many urban amenities, and this has fully contributed to the creation and development of recreation areas, areas that comprise "several categories of urban spaces whose common feature is that they are used primarily for the purpose of recreation, relaxation, leisure."⁴ In his work *Reprezentare și reprezentativitate în spațiul urban*

⁴ Adrian Iancu, *Reprezentare și reprezentativitate în spațiul urban comunitar*, Cluj-Napoca: Editura U.T.PRES, 2003, p. 86.

comunitar (Representation and Representativeness in the Urban Communal Space), Adrian Iancu contends that if we were to classify, in general, these types of areas, we ought to consider, first of all, the type of activities that can take place within them. Therefore, there are places for strolling in a green space (e.g, Central Park, the Botanical Garden); place for resting on benches (Liberty Square, Avram Iancu Square, Museum Square, Michael the Brave Square); sporting activities (Hațieganu Park, the Stadium); promenades by a lake or a river (the Lakes in Măraști, by the banks of the Someș), etc. In any case, all these activities are supplemented by so-called artistic, cultural, educational, culinary pursuits, etc.

The concepts of “local history,” of “cultural identity” or “representativeness” represent a newer area of research. Identity, as a key term for defining a local human community, is the focus of our discussion about the characteristics of an exceptional urban space. From the outset, we should bring into discussion the idea of Adriana Matei, who, in her book *Identitate culturală locală* (Local Cultural Identity), shows that identity can only refer to a certain group or a set of characteristic features, “whereby an element appears to be distinct from each and all the other elements.”⁵ The central idea of the aforementioned work revolves around the following sets of terms: culture and civilization; identity and universality and rural character vs. urban character. What caught my attention in this book, besides its examination of elements of local specificity, is the analysis undertaken by Adriana Matei on the city of Cluj. Starting from an overview of the Transylvanian city in terms of its characteristics, the author focuses on the analysis of the patrimony of Cluj, of its geographical, historical and morphological peculiarities, creating the impression of uniqueness and highlighting the symbolism of Cluj’s culture against the background of its environment.

The history of communism is one of the favorite topics of study in contemporary historiography, because there are still unanswered questions which grinds the consciousness of humanity. The spectacular demise of the communist regime did not automatically entail the utter elimination, from everyday life, of the remains of this totalitarian system that lasted in Romania for several decades.

General works occupy an important part of the research and help us to understand the general framework of the theme of our study. François Furet with *Trecutul unei iluzii. Eseu despre ideea comunistă în secolul XX* (The Past of an Illusion. An Essay on the Communist Idea in the 20th Century) and François Furet and Ernst Nolte with the work *Fascism și comunism* (Fascism and Communism) explain one of the basic concepts of the regime, namely “communism”, the trajectory

⁵ Adriana Matei, *Identitate culturală locală*, Cluj-Napoca: Editura U.T.PRESS, 2004, p. 3.

followed by the history of this term. Regarding the history of communism in Romania, we can address a long list of works. Those who have written about the period of Gheorghiu-Dej include authors like Vladimir Tismăneanu (*Arheologia terorii, Fantoma lui Gheorghiu-Dej, Stalinism pentru eternitate, Noaptea totalitară. Crepusculul ideologiilor radicale în Europa de Est*) (The Archaeology of Terror, The Ghost of Gheorghiu-Dej, Stalinism for Eternity, The Totalitarian Night. The Twilight of Radical Ideologies in Eastern Europe), Dan Cătănuș (*A doua destalinizare, Gh. Gheorghiu-Dej la apogeul puterii*) (The Second Stalinization, Gh. Gheorghiu-Dej at the Peak of Power), Elis Neagoe Pleșa, Liviu Pleșa (ed.) (*Dosarul Ana Pauker*) (The Ana Pauker File) or Stelian Tănase [*Elite și societate. Guvernarea Gheorghiu Dej (1948-1965)*], [Elite and Society. The Gheorghiu Dej Government (1948-1965)], whose important subjects focus on the policy adopted by the Secretary-General or the control and the methods of the organization of society during the communist period.

The “economy” was another topic addressed, to some extent, and I refer here to the effects or the elements that influenced, in one way or another, the evolution of the process of urbanization. Whereas in the modern period this concept was associated with the development of trade and manufactures, under the communist regime it resided, first of all, in destroying the market economy, by exerting control over the economic and social structures of the Communist Party, by outlawing private activity, by imposing the plan as the sole framework of coordination, the centralized management of supply and an over-investment in certain sectors only, predominantly those from the heavy and engineering industry.⁶ What is interesting to note is that there is a historiographical orientation (Nodia, Verdery, Sawka, etc.) that regards communism as a “modernizing project,” so that from the 1950s and 1960s on, there was a reconstruction of the economic system, industrialization spurred urbanization and the number of workers increased due to the development of the process of migration from rural to urban areas, etc.⁷ However, according to the author Sawka, when talking about economic communism, we should regard it as a failed or incorrect modernity, defined “by the discouragement of innovation, the emphasis on quantitative growth, the extremely low labor productivity, high waste and the low quality of products, and a reduced coordination of activities despite excessive and ultra-centralized planning.”⁸

In the demographic domain, there are studies like: Cornelia Muresan, “L’*évolution démographique en Roumanie: Tendances passées (1948-1994) et perspectives d’avenir (1995-*

⁶ Stéphane Courtois (coord.), *Dicționarul comunismului*, Iași: Editura Polirom, 2008, pp. 235-236.

⁷ Bogdan Voicu, *Penuria pseudo-modernă a postcomunismului românesc*, vol 1, Editura Expert Projects, 2005, p. 24.

⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 25.

2030)” in *Population* (French Edition) 51e Année, No. 4/5 (Jul. – Oct., 1996), which adopts the idea of demographic research in Romania during the communist period, and especially during Ceausescu’s period, full of structural changes and laws regarding the family; or articles such as Sorina Paula Bolovan, Ioan Bolovan, “Populația orașului Cluj în secolul XX” (“The population of Cluj in the 20th century”) in *Transilvania în secolele XIX-XX. Studii de demografie istorică* (Transylvania during the 19th-20th Centuries. Studies of Historical Demography), edited by Sorina Paula Bolovan, Ioan Bolovan, Corneliu Pădurean, Cluj-Napoca: Editura Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2005 or Liviu-Marius Bejenaru, “Relația dintre creșterea demografică și structura socială în România comunistă. Eșecul modernizării (1948-1989)” [“The Relationship between Demographic Growth and Social Structure in Communist Romania. The Failure of Modernization (1948-1989)”], in *Schimbare și devenire în istoria României* (Change and Becoming in the History of Romania), edited by Ioan Bolovan, Sorina Paula Bolovan, Cluj-Napoca: Editura Academia Română, Transylvanian Studies Center, 2008.

Sources

To identify a broader aspect of the problem under discussion, namely that of rendering the image of interwar and postwar Cluj, in urban and demographic terms, we should consider two types of sources, those unpublished, illustrated by the archival funds, and those that have been published, represented by collections of documents, memoirs, legislation, censuses or other specialized books on the subject. Therefore, our research is broad, as we wish to undertake more than a simple approach to the subject, and engage in a more complex analysis of the above-stated problem.

In order to identify the city’s image, we have used primarily the Fund of the City Hall from the Cluj County Service of the State Archives, which has opened a path in our research for finding the regulations and the provisions governing the urbanistic system of the locality, as well as several cartographic maps or municipal templates, based on which we have become familiar with the idea of extending the built-up area and, hence, changing the socio-economic appearance and the demographic aspect of the city. For the evolution of the population, we have used the registers of births, marriages and deaths, from the Cluj Population Records Department for the period 1914-1920.

The city that was rapidly erected became better organized in time, more elegant and stately, and its image has been preserved as an emblem of the society, as a calling card that can be investigated not only through written, but also through visual documents (postcards, etchings,

photographs or urbanistic maps). Therefore, the visual picture of Cluj will be identified through a study on image and text, elements that are found both in the collections of prints from libraries or archives and in the press, which has tried, throughout time, to convey in writing the events that have gained momentum in terms of the status of the city in the collective mentality of the society from Cluj. Photos, postcards or etchings represent another level that we have considered in our approach, since the description of urban physiognomies had to be accompanied by images, to be better perceived by the reader.

The media also has an important role amongst the sources used for drafting this thesis, because it has given us unprecedented details, ideas and concepts both about the society of Cluj and about aspects of everyday economic, political, cultural or artistic life. Surprisingly or not, the press was and still is an undeniable source for researching various aspects of an urban space, comprising documents which often render the pulse of a civilization.

A brief overview of the thesis structure

The thesis is divided into four chapters that emphasize the evolution of the urban environment and the factors that have contributed to the modernization of this urban space.

The first chapter, *Urban modernization trends at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century*, represents the preamble of our research, because in order to highlight the changes that Cluj underwent after 1918, we ought to know what happened before this historical moment, which changed the entire nation. We started our research with a presentation of the concept of “city” as it appears in Western studies and theories, and then we tried to outline an image of what urbanism has meant in Central-Eastern Europe, with a more detailed study on “The history and regional identity of Cluj,” from its foundation as an urban settlement to its evolution in the 19th century.

The second chapter, entitled *The development of urban space in interwar Cluj*, tried to bring before the public the best examples and arguments in order to uphold the idea of “Cluj, a metropolis of Transylvania”. From the legislative regime of building and systematizing the urban environment, we then focused our attention on the aspects that define the city (*the local specificities, the urban habitat*) and on the signs of modernization: the street network, transport, public lighting, the water supply. From a subjective perspective, the most interesting aspect adopted was that related to *construction*, identified in two complementary areas, public and private. In exploring this problem, we considered several interrogations, such as “What are the similarities and the differences between

them at an architectural level or what is their architectural influence, especially since up until 1918, Transylvania and, implicitly, Cluj were part of the dualist Empire. After we made an impression about the external appearance of the city, we took the opportunity to embark on a study about the “appearance” of interwar housing.

The third chapter presented *The urban physiognomy of Cluj in the period 1948-1979*. During the communist period, Cluj could be characterized as an important industrial, economic and cultural center. This settlement became one of the focal points where the PCR policy left its mark by transforming this cultural hub into a heavily industrialized city, with a national economy based primarily on the socialist policies that targeted the formation of a new social category, the working class.

It should be borne in mind that only from the 1960s on did the construction of massive residential buildings start, with the erection of blocks of flats, the emergence and *expansion of certain neighborhoods*, which countered the precarious conditions of the old houses, because of their small habitable size. If at first these structures observed the principle of free urbanism, in the 1970s the propaganda campaign began, aimed at the creation of a new socialist era and leading to the idea of crammed and chaotic buildings. This process created some deficiencies that are still felt today: the lack of green spaces, parking spaces, the wasted ground, etc. The process of well-nigh destruction of the houses and their replacement with a system of housing materialized as blocks of flats, etc.

The last chapter, *The demographic evolution of the society in Cluj*, tackles, along more general lines, an aspect that influenced and was influenced, in turn, by the process of modernization: the population. We started our study from a succinct presentation of the evolution of the Cluj-based population, and then focused, to a certain extent, on the impact that the two world wars had in the urban environment.

The importance of the theme for historical research.

The theme proposed for this historiographical project enables us to carry out an analysis of an important region in the heart of Transylvania, its specificity being supported not only by the history of the realm, but also by its location in an area of heavy traffic, by the natural riches, and the high degree of economic, social, urban, cultural development. Cluj-Napoca represents an amalgam of specific elements that allow us to investigate this geographical region from several points of view (geographic, demographic, economic, urban, political, social, etc.). Cluj was and will always be a

place of life, a metaphor of Transylvanian mentality integrated into a landscape that is not only picturesque (if we refer to the hills surrounding the city), but an exceptional architectural achievement, given the diversity and exquisiteness of its urban physiognomy, adapted to the needs of its ethno-cultural identity.

The importance of this thesis is grounded in the acute need of the society to have a humanized history, a history that captures the “story” of this “treasure city”, conveyed through the urban and the architectural aspects of the society in Cluj, which, together with the economic, political, demographic and cultural aspects, have outlined a consummate picture of this center of overwhelming historical importance. Therefore, in order to acquire an overall perspective on Cluj, one of the most impressive cities of Transylvania, we have to focus on its history and capture the advantages this urban settlement attained throughout the 20th century, in terms of its urban symbolism in the collective mentality of Cluj and the role of the population in the equation city – urbanism – modernization.

Keywords: planning, systematization, architecture, demography, development, modernization.