



ECONOMIC RESTRUCTURING AND CONTRASTING URBAN PATTERNS IN ROMANIAN POST-SOCIALIST MUNICIPALITIES: THE EXPERIENCES OF TIMIȘ COUNTY, ROMANIA

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Abstract: *The purpose of this contribution is to discuss post-socialist spatial shifts in urban areas under the post-1990 economic restructuring umbrella. Taking as a case study the spatial impact of urban restructuring in the municipalities of Timiș County in Romania, this contribution reveals dual positive and negative outcomes of the urban patterns at different scales. The core argument of the paper is that the processes of urban restructuring are accompanied by divergent policy interventions in urban planning, generating spatial contrasts in urban regeneration and negative outcomes for the local communities. Based on a multi-level approach, the findings reveal divergent patterns of interventions of which many altered the spatial patterns of the cities and towns, harming the local sustainability. Against such a background, new policies in urban development, new functional programs in urban regeneration and new justice interventions are required by local urban agendas in the local and regional urban development.*

Key words: *urban restructuring, divergent policy interventions, post-socialism, Timiș County, Romania*

1. INTRODUCTION

The post-socialist urban restructuring in Romania was chaotic rather than coherent, with opposite spatial postures in local urban changes. This is in line with Chelcea's argument that the state was not a coherent performer but an actor with multiple divergent decisions and actions in urban planning and regulations (Chelcea, 2012; see also Tasan-Kok and Baeten, 2012; Harris and Moore, 2015). These were mirrored both in the current urban changes and in the spatial shifts after 25 years of post-socialist urban management in Romanian urban planning. Furthermore, the results of these regulations translated in the appearance of different urban divergent patterns (Jucu, 2011, 2015a, 2016a, 2016b, 2016c; Ianoș, Sîrodoev, Pascariu and Henebry, 2015; Jigoria and Popa,

2016). Following international neoliberal flows of global policies in urban regeneration, national governance and local decision-makers led to opposite and contrasting patterns in urban areas. This is a result of the neoliberal approaches to urban restructuring which often favour the wealthier and more powerful states, with neoliberalism being negligible in less developed regions (Koenig 2011). With Romania, still a developing state governed by political instability and slow social and economic growth, this argument is proven. Inconsistent domestic policies in national urban (re)development and urban space (re)production related to current neoliberalism conceptualized as ‘the regulatory expression of capitalism's unstable, contradictory and crisis-ridden dynamic’ (MacLeavy, 2012: 250), are also mirrored in the current spatial patterns of Romanian cities. In addition, huge ambitions in local urban development designed in theoretical projects, programmes and strategies do not offer much scope for locally tailored urban development.

The paper is based on theories launched by Timár and Váradi (2001), Stanilov (2007) and Smith and Timár (2010) according to which uneven development in Central and Eastern European cities and the spatial shifts occurring due to the relocation of urban activities are common post-socialist practices in generating contrasting and divergent patterns both within cities and between them. In addition, considering the sustainability in urban areas, with sustainable urbanism being a prolific issue in current research (Rapoport, 2014) related to the balanced interventions of public-private partnership and local governments in local urban development (Harvey, 1989, 2005 Ward, 2003), the article examines current urban divergent places in Romanian municipalities. Against such a background, the paper draws on an analysis of the post-socialist urban changes in the municipalities of Timiș County in Romania. Urban restructuring has been a widely studied topic in post-socialist scientific debates, with its issues generating interesting geographies of post-socialism (Stenning, 2005).

Of these, the current study provides critical and reflective applicable reflections on the outcomes of post-socialist urban changes in Romania. Under such circumstances, the processes of urban restructuring fuelled large interest, not only for geographers, with Romania, a fertile scientific laboratory, remaining rather peripheral and calling for sustained research and fruitful dialogues. Several studies widely reveal post-socialist urban changes (Stoica, 2004; Ioan, 2007; Chelcea, 2008, 2012; Kideckel, 2008; Voiculescu, Crețan, Ianăș and Satmari, 2009; Pușcă, 2010; Voiculescu and Jucu, 2016), calling for new approaches in regional and local urban investigation. To assess the relationship between urban restructuring and local sustainable development we paid attention to the opposite and contrasting urban places generated by the post-socialist urban shifts on the scene of the post-1990 policies in Romanian urban identity formation, from the state-socialist regime to the current neoliberal umbrella.

The national, regional and local actors managed these policies, generating multiple divergent postures in Romanian post-socialist urban development (see also Ianoș, Sîrodoev, Pascariu and Henebry, 2015). Our narrative proceeds as follows: first, we set the theoretical framework and the methods used in the research; second, the next sections deal with the analysis of the case in specific cities, with Timișoara, Lugoj and a set of small-sized municipalities of the county studied in depth. The findings aim to contribute to current scientific debates, calling for further interesting dialogues in the field of post-socialist urban identity formation.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Contextualising post-socialist planning of the former state-socialist countries, Stanilov (2007: 413) states that ‘the massive restructuring of political, economic, and social relations that took place in the Central and Eastern European countries after 1989 placed the urban planners operating in this region in an extremely difficult situation.’ On the one hand, it was because of the regulations and (re)assessment of the urban development of the former inherited patterns in urban areas. On the other, the new decentralised capitalist expressions and neoliberal interventions, in terms of local strategies, rather than restoring and sustaining economic growth, produced continuing regulatory crisis (Peck and Tickell, 1994; see also MacLeavy, 2012).

Under these circumstances, urban restructuring relating to local sustainability was difficult to define without knowledge of the new directions in urban regeneration and in the post-socialist identity formation of the Romanian cities. In spite of this, urban restructuring represents a complex issue with many studies focused both on the post-socialist formation of the cities and on local urban regeneration and sustainability. Since restructuring in urban areas has been conceptualised as a ‘popular label for describing the tumultuous political-economic and spatial transformations’ (Brenner and Theodore 2005, 101), a whole body of studies has been conducted on the restructuring processes of the post-socialist countries (Smith and Stenning, 2006; Kiss, 2007; Ioan, 2007; Pallagst and Mercier, 2007; Stanilov, 2007; Sykora, 2007; 2009; Tsenkova, 2007; Hirt and Stanilov, 2009; Voiculescu, Crețan, Ianăș and Satmari, 2009; Pavlinek et al., 2009; Marcińkzac and Sagan, 2011; Mason and Nigmatullina, 2011; Rachwal, 2011; Jucu, 2011; Chelcea, 2012; Krisjane and Berzins, 2012; Leetmaa et al., 2012; Sliwa and Riach, 2012; Petrovici, 2012; Jucu, 2015a, 2016a: 2016b; Voiculescu and Jucu, 2016). In addition, many studies concerned with post-socialist entrepreneurialism, neoliberal urban planning and uneven development emerged in the last decade (Stoica, 2004; Timár, 2007; Hadjimichalis, 2011; Tazan-Kok and Baeten, 2012).

The process of urban restructuring and its opposite results in the inner-patterns of the cities being examined close to the urban sustainability, based on subjective and professional judgment (Phillips 2015; Ianoș, Sîrodoev, Pascariu and Henebry, 2015) through in-field and ethnographic observation of the sampled municipalities and on qualitative approaches, with personal conversations with key actors in local urban planning. The latter was a fruitful source in the assessment of current urban changes. Under such circumstances, the best practices enshrining the urban pathways (Guy and Marvin, 1999; Bulkeley, 2006; McCann and Ward, 2011; Hodson and Marvin, 2010) could be objectively examined to design further interventions in local urban development. Furthermore, it expands on the models of sustainable transformations of the cities relating to master-planning, building assessment, local urban governance, critical urban enquiry (Harris and Moore 2015) and even population density in urban areas (Phillips, 2015).

Considering these issues, a new realistic politics of sustainable governance in urban planning is required (Raco, 2014) to ensure a sustainable design of current interventions in cities’ (re)development (Faulconbridge, 2015). However, it is argued that cities and towns as sustainable communities are ‘never finished objects’ (Whitehead, 2003: 1187), demanding continuous reflections and practices to ensure local urban development (Whitehead, 2012; Flint and, Raco 2012). Nevertheless, consi-

dering that theoretical background shifted in national, regional and local Romanian policies in urban development, the Romanian settlements comprise important opposite patterns influencing the local communities.

3. METHODS AND EMPIRICAL SOURCES

To examine contrasting urban patterns our methodological flow is based on multi-methods analysis during 2013-2015. To decipher post-socialist urban changes and their consequences both in their spatial arrangements and in the local communities, our contribution uses documentation on a whole set of specialised literature including regional and local development master-plans, strategies and programmes from regional level to local. We examined eight urban communities sampled as micro case studies to set both similarities and differences concerning the urban post-socialist restructuring processes. These sampled sites, analysed through ethnographic observations, were visited multiple times, conducting interviews, personal conversations and informal talks with a range of actors (from key persons in local decision-making to local individuals in different districts of the sampled urban sites) in Timișoara, Lugoj, Recaș and Făget.

Primary sources were used to confirm our hypothesis concerning uneven spatial development in local urban communities, while the final findings illuminate the opposite urban patterns and the issues of urban restructuring harming local sustainability in urban communities (Kirby and Lora-Wainwright, 2015). Since important official statistical data are unavailable or are not assessed in urban communities, we use media channels for critical reflections. This methodological flow relates to a range of public and private critical observation. Using Google-maps programmes in urban sustainability assessment (see Bearman and Appleton, 2012) we figure out emerging and regressing areas as well as the main issues of opposite inner-patterns of the cities. This approach helped us to explain the consequences of the spatial contradictions in local urban sustainability of the analysed communities.

4. CONTRASTING URBAN PATTERNS IN TIMIS COUNTY'S MUNICIPALITIES OF ROMANIA

4.1. The County's capital Timișoara: emerging areas, local dereliction and slum districts

From raising CBC of Timișoara to ruined sites in the downtown. One of the key arguments of the Development Strategy of Timișoara in terms of urban sustainable development is the increasing quality of urban life and urban regeneration.¹ As expected, most interventions made during under post-socialist urban planning were made in the city centre. In fact, the post-socialist projects in the (re)making of downtown generated multiple opposite sites in terms of their landscape and functionality. In this respect, two important part-regenerations are notable: that of the former state-socialist structures and that of historical sites with important cultural value. Once an important industrial city, Timișoara, under the former state-socialist urban regulation, included in its central area important industrial areas and related facilities

closely connected to the railway infrastructure linked to the rail highway crossing the city centre. In the post-socialist period, these industrial areas turned to ruins and derelict places. Many of those left abandoned turned into ghost zones (Stanilov, 2007; Edensor, 2005; DeSilvey and Edensor, 2013; Voiculescu and Jucu 2016). As Stanilov argues,

‘in the wake of the crashing socialist economy, numerous small-scale private shops and start-up businesses sprung up throughout the urban fabric, infusing the once dormitory residential districts with newly found entrepreneurial energy. City centers, previously dominated by the administrative functions of the socialist bureaucracy, started to fill up with commercial uses, which gradually pushed away most of the other functions from the city cores.’ (2007: 415)

However, in line with this assessment, contradictory interventions in the city centre restoration of Timișoara occurred, with opposite interventions remaining the main trend in local urban development. On the one hand, we discuss developed places and on the other hand we ignore derelict areas that encountered significant retardation in their urban post-socialist formation. Within downtown, important opposite urban sites appeared. Beyond new buildings, hosting services and business activities, large areas of ruins remained because of the post-socialist local governance on the urban spatial planning. To illustrate these opposite interventions we sampled a particular site within Timișoara centre.

It concerns the urban shift of a former industrial place and a flea market turned into a new business district. Growing up on the former socialist Modatim (Bega) Manufacture – an important textile factory privatised during the post-1990 period and further relocated in Giroc² a village near Timișoara), the raising of the Central Business Centre (CBC) of Timișoara illustrates proper actions in local urban development. The development of this project started in 2006 under Modatim management. It was a private investment that related to the real estate developers’ generation of the new business district of Timișoara. In 2012, this initial investment of 50 million Euros was purchased by NEPI (New Europe Property Investment), through a transaction of 90 million Euros, revealing the urban spatial shifts with private investment, local government implication and European funding, in all a public-private intervention. (Stanilov, 2007; Tazan-Kok and Baeten, 2012). The total investment was more than 90 million Euros.³ The core argument of this urban investment is assumed by the fact that Timișoara needs these business areas. It is the main reason for this spatial transformation, in line with the all Central and Eastern European medium-sized municipalities (see Marcinczak and Sagan, 2011; Stanilov, 2007; Timár and Varadi 2001). Now these led-services areas included five buildings with a labour force capacity of 3000 employees, hosting some of the most famous brands and worldwide international companies. Furthermore, these important investments crossing domestic and foreign investments favour the small and medium enterprises. (Oncioiu, 2012) In line with the current planning in urban spaces, this intervention is, nevertheless, a neoliberal product in the current urban regeneration (Tașan-Kok and Baeten, 2012)

This post-socialist project in urban (re)development illustrates good management in post-socialist urban regulation reshaping the inner-core landscape of the city. On the other hand, many important industrial sites in the central part of the town remain derelict, harming the local community. Opposite to Timișoara’s CBC a long belt

of ruined sites arose. This former state-socialist fabric remained derelict and claimed further regeneration because it harmed the city's landscape and functionality. Furthermore, they alter the local way of life of the residents living in neighbouring districts designed under the Ceaușescu dictatorship only for working-class reproduction (Petrovici, 2012). As Figure 1 shows, there is a belt of urban derelict places in the inner core of the city. From the Solventul Petrochemical Plant (see Voiculescu and Jucu, 2016; Jigoria and Popa, 2016) to the city's eastern outskirts there are many important former state-socialist sites calling for restoration (Electromotor, the vegetable factory, the former printing house and the gas tank factories are a few instances revealing post-socialist urban dereliction related to local ignorance in urban regeneration). To conclude this narrative of Timișoara's inner core, important opposite urban sites appeared. Beyond new buildings, hosting services and business activities, large areas of ruins were left behind because of post-socialist local governance and poor management of urban spatial planning.

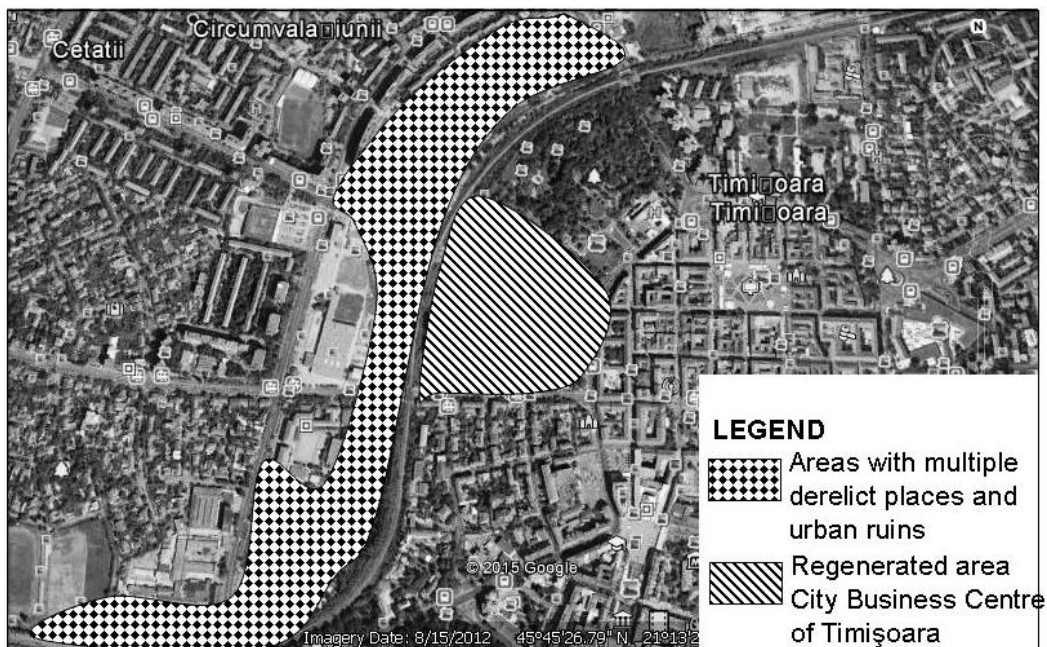


Figure 1. The belt of urban derelict places in the inner core of Timișoara in 2015

In addition, another topic in urban regeneration arises; public space regeneration. This concerns the central squares of Timișoara that are now in huge processes of restoration. Places such as Unirii Square and Libertății Square are only two examples in this regard, the main reasons for their regeneration being the preservation of local cultural values related to the development of tertiary activities. Because the central part of the city did not offer too much room for new post-socialist interventions in urban development through service, housing, retail, logistics and other activities, these expanded on the cities' outskirts (see Stanilov, 2007). This trend also reveals opposite postures in the development of local peripheries. Of these, some are now emerging areas while others remain peripheral within the local urban development agenda and

with their communities encountering important shortcomings. The next section unveils these opposite postures of the urban outskirts in Timișoara.

Rethinking peripheries: from developed outskirts to ignored suburbs. As Stanilov (2007: 415) states on the post-socialist urban identity formation ‘a powerful process of suburban expansion spread increasing portions of the new residential, retail, office, and industrial development to the urban periphery.’ This is applicable for the city of Timișoara. Considering that the centre of the city can no longer offer much room for further investments, the new interventions in social and economic development of the city differentiate spread to the city’s outskirts. This process came together with the local authority’s decision to rethink and expand the city’s master-plan. Whereas some peripheries portray important development, others encountered significant decline revealing the uneven spatial development of the city (see also Kiss, 2002). In terms of economic changes, some outskirts remain emblematic for the post-socialist changes of the city. The first field-observed area is the easternmost one, located on the Lugoj Highway. Its eastern spatial spread is due to the proximity of the airport and the connection with the highway to Hungary. Timisoara’s international airport is a very important development area in the western region of Romania (Crețan, Turnock and Wassing, 2009). This area (Figure 2) supported such widespread development that it joined the city to its nearby village Ghiroda. The area was designed especially for services, retail, logistics and tourist facilities. Showrooms belonging to important international producers such as Ford, Mercedes, Skoda, Fiat etc, are located in this area.



Figure 2. Timișoara’s widespread development area towards the village Ghiroda and the airport

The second investigated area is the northern zone on the Arad, Lipova and Torontalului Highways. In this area, some spatial developments are relevant: retail services and high-standard suburban housing on the Arad Highway, due to the proximity of the freeway to Arad and then to Hungary. As in the previous case, this area spread far, linking the city to the neighbouring village of Dumbrăvița. Similarly, the other two mentioned areas reveal some patterns designated for collective housing with

new blocks of flats and for industrial facilities, especially greenfield. To the south, our on-site observation related to the city plan analysis revealed two developed areas with a residential function. These are the Girocului and Buziașului areas, the spread of these zones connecting the city of Timișoara with other neighbouring villages of Giroc and Moșnița Nouă. A great opportunity in this external urban sprawl to the rural areas is the attraction in the spatial development processes of the rural localities that allow the possibility of becoming future districts of Timișoara. Paradoxically to these developed areas located in the peripheries (previously used under state-socialism in agriculture) are less-developed peripheral districts with significant problems in local communities. This issue is in line with the argument launched by Stanilov (2007, 415), who considered that ‘dispersal of functions throughout the expanding post-socialist metropolitan areas started a process of socio-spatial stratification, which created pockets of unprecedented wealth while other neighbourhoods seemed destined to turn into slums’ with rural patterns. This is the case for some districts in Timișoara, for instance Ronaț, Mehala, Freidorf (Figure 3), Ciarda Roșie and Plopi.



Figure 3. Examples of Timișoara’s slums and peripheral marginalized urban areas (Source: Jucu, 2015)

These communities faced with important social and economic costs of post-socialist development of the city portray contrasting inner-patterns and landscapes and social problems. With no sustained interventions in these declined areas, the uneven spatial development of the city will be further worsened, harming local urban

sustainability. Against such a background, the local authorities' attention has to be oriented to these districts in order to eliminate the spatial disruptions of the city and to regulate the uneven spatial development of the city. This major trend translates to lower scales in the county's urban system. The next section examines the post-socialist changes of urban restructuring in a medium-sized municipality, the town of Lugoj.

4.2. Medium-sized municipalities: the town of Lugoj between rising and falling urban places

As an important industrial town under Romanian state-socialism (Jucu 2011), the municipality of Lugoj followed the same main trends as Timișoara. The post-socialist processes of deindustrialisation, reindustrialisation and tertiarization altered the former patterns with important social costs. While the local authorities also paid attention to town centre regeneration, the outskirts of the town encountered important declines with no interventions in their regeneration. The failure of the peripheries' decline in Lugoj relates to the post-1990 process of deindustrialisation. In field and ethnographic observations, the analysis of the local master-plan and development strategy associated with personal talks with different actors in urban development and local individuals frame both the theoretical approaches and empirical results in the local post-socialist formation of the town.⁴ In spite of different ambitious projects in local urban regeneration, the local urban regulation and planning interventions are rather theoretical and incoherent.

Twenty-five years after the failure of state-socialism, the industrial decline of the former state-socialist plants is obvious in the inner structure of the town. This is the scene on which we built our critical discourse on the urban restructuring processes and their associated consequences. The main issue in generating opposite urban patterns under post-socialist restructuring is based on the particular processes of deindustrialisation and reindustrialisation. The first determined the raising of important derelict areas with industrial ruins harming the local community welfare in particular districts of the town. This is the case of the failure of the former bricks factory, which encountered an important decline after its post-socialist privatisation. (Jucu 2011) In this letdown process it drew in the neighbouring district of Mondialul Bocșei. Many of the families living here in this urban slum colony (Figure 4, upper-left) are assisted by the local Social Assistance Directorate of the Town Hall from Lugoj.

The population living here are faced with many current problems, such as low incomes, absence of financial resources, poverty, and bad living conditions in improper houses with basic facilities, and an increased number of children. Many of these families ensure their subsistence often from the child allowance ensured by the state.⁵ Twenty-five years after the state-socialism collapse this district remains peripheral both in urban development as well as on the local strategies in post-socialist urban formation. That local government intervention ignores this residential area, a real slum than rather an urban district, is obvious (Jucu, 2011; 2015a). With all urban development projects designed in current and further urban regeneration, this district does not have much room on the local urban strategies and its future is pessimistic. The same story fits the former ITL District, known by the locals as 'Cambodia'. Its decline relates to the failure

of the former ITL Factory, one of the most important in town during the Communist Party rule (Jucu, 2015a). With all post-1990 private investments made by I. C. Drăgan, a huge local and international personality, associated with minimalist interventions implemented by the local-state, this district remains underdeveloped. This case however shows that public-private intervention in local development does not work. Overlooked by industrial ruins, these districts reveal the decline in the local welfare of the community associated with the closure of some important state-socialist factories. . The landscape of such derelict areas usually includes human garbage or waste landscape which attracts packs of stray dogs (see Crețan 2015) and human or non-human marginal groups (Chelcea, 2015).

In the same vein is another similar area close to the inner core of the town. The districts neighbouring the local railway station and failed factories such as the lasts, textiles and milk factories reveal important laggings in post-socialist urban regeneration. In all, the municipality of Lugoj includes three important declined urban districts harming local welfare and sustainability. Their post-socialist sunset is determined by the post-1990 deindustrialisation in local urban economy (Jucu, 2011; 2015a). Against the local negative dynamics of these urban patterns, new emergent areas appeared. This is the case of the northern industrial area, where important domestic and foreign investors reshaped this urban pattern. While in previous cases deindustrialisation was the sole process harming the local communities, in the northern area it was accompanied by reindustrialisation and tertiarization. Another reason for urban development in this area was the proximity of the national highway, ensuring proper conditions for further development. However, this area also reveals opposite postures in local regeneration with plants completely regenerated and spaces with industrial ruins.

Considered by the local government the local industrial park, this area enjoins important opportunities for further local development (Jucu, 2011). Witnessing both the total decline of some urban neighbourhoods and partly regenerated zones, the process of post-socialist urban reindustrialisation engendered new emergent industrial places. This is the case of the eastern industrial area of the town when important transnational companies located their activities. This rising area favoured the appearance of a new housing district for local elites and high-income families. A new housing area also fill the western empty urban area, formerly used in agriculture and neighbored on one hand by a derelict industrial area, and on the other hand by declined residential. As much, these new residential areas with new individual villas neighbour new structures with industrial and tertiary functions. (Jucu, 2016c). These patterns argue the post-socialist formation of urban divergent patterns in local urban post-1990 dynamics. The development of these areas (residential, industrial and residential) is sustained by the local infrastructure in terms of the presence of the national ring road connected to the national highway connecting Romania with western European countries.

These sampled sites for investigation unveil uneven development in urban areas and opposite urban sites connected to contradictory and unsustainable interventions of the local government in local urban regulations. However, these patterns illustrate the results of deindustrialisation in a former industrial town with local relevance in the regional economy. On the same post-socialist scene, the next section discusses the same issues and outcomes in small-sized municipalities, with two towns as cases in point.

4.3. Small-sized municipalities and their post-socialist urban stories

Considering the small-sized municipalities of Timiș County, two towns are relevant in our analysis: Sânnicolaul Mare, a former industrial state-socialist small-sized town restructured through important FDIs; and Buziaș, a touristic municipality that encountered an important decline in the field after 1990 (Jucu, 2016b). Sânnicolaul Mare, known as the sole post-socialist town with no unemployment,⁶ exposes a particular trend. Favoured by border proximity the local economic and urban restructuring was supported by FDIs. Consequently, two important international companies developed important factories: *Delphi Packard Electric*, an Austrian producer of electrical systems for automotive industries; and *Zoppas Industries*, an Italian company also producing electrical systems. In all, the companies hired more than 6500 employees attracting labour from the neighbouring villages. Notwithstanding this, the offered incomes are low; 200 Euros approximately;⁷ this alternative to the former textiles industry decline maintains the medium development of this town. Furthermore, due to the low incomes of the locals the community faces important issues in local urban development, local urban progress calling for further interventions to ensure local sustainability and the community's welfare.

Under post-socialism, deindustrialisation was not the only main process harming the local communities. The national, regional and local economic restructuring alter the urban communities. Considering the next sampled small-sized town, Buziaș, we unveil the local decline of the town under the failure of touristic activities and spa facilities. In addition, the former state-socialist industrial decline also generated important social and spatial inequalities as well as uneven spatial development, a common practice in East European Countries. In spite of the ambitious theoretical projects of local government according to which the local economy has to be revived and redeveloped in all its fields (industry, commerce, agriculture and tourism) the local community faced important social and economic problems (Jucu, 2016b). These could be reduced through a proper local management of urban post-socialist regeneration through public-private investments, European funds and FDIs.⁸ The latter have been an important post-socialist goal for cities and towns in Romania, especially in less - favoured areas but few investors were interested to develop affairs in such areas (Cretan, Nica-Guran, Platon and Turnock 2005). As it stands now the inner patterns of the town reveal important opposite places: ruined sites, shabby houses, damaged post-socialist blocks of flats and huge houses owned by Roma population. In terms of new investments, the north-western part of the town includes a new industrial area. However, in-field and ethnographic observations associated with personal talks with local residents suggest the rural way of life of inhabitants and their dependence in social and economic needs on Timișoara and Lugoj, the two urban centres located at approximately equal distances from Buziaș.

4.4. New post-socialist towns: political ambitions of urbanisation versus rural patterns and pastoral ways of life

If the former state-socialist political framework promoted artificial urbanisation at the national scale, during the post-1990 period this trend continued, under the new post-socialist urban identity (re)formation umbrella; Romanian urbanisation followed a

false pattern, a theoretical rather than a coherent process in territorial development.⁹ Based on national and regional political frameworks in Romanian urban development and on local referendums, part of the former state-socialist villages turned to urban settlements. They became new small towns. The most important decision in this issue was based only on the local population number often incorporating the total inhabitants in the rural areas located in the spheres of influences of the rural communes. In addition, minimum facilities in local settlements were considered.¹⁰ In Timiș County is the case of four new small-sized towns, formerly rural settlements: Făget, Recaș, Ciacova and Gătaia that turned to urban status but maintaining their rural ways of life (see also Jucu, 2014). The first of these became an urban place under Iliescu's regime, in 1994. The former Făget commune, including ten villages became a small town. The distance between Făget and its associated villages reaches a maximum of more than 10 km (the case of Jupânești), with other included villages being situated at a distance of between 2 and 5 kilometres. Field and participatory on-site observations related to personal talks with local residents reveal the rural way of life in spite of the minor investments made in Făget. The patterns, landscapes and local way of life of the population remain exclusively rural.¹¹ with mono-industrialism as a typical Romanian political economy burden for small towns and rural industrial areas since communist period (see Vesalon and Crețan, 2013). These contrast to the Romanian urban settlements, resembling the urban patterns of the old Romanian towns only by the rural landscapes and local ways of life of the residents living in the formerly agricultural state-socialist towns. On the other hand, Făget reveals contrasting patterns between renewed places and derelict agricultural facilities. (Figure 4, lower-left). This trend figured out micro-scale similarities with opposite patterns and landscapes in the largest cities and towns of the county. In 2014, only 7640 inhabitants lived in Făget, with the demographic trend still decreasing. The same tales are relevant for the other three former rural localities turned to urban status in the post-socialist period. The small-sized towns of Ciacova, Gătaia and Recaș officially became urban localities in 2004, following local referendums. The local residents would expect a strong spatial and socio-economic development of their localities,¹² but after 10 years of post-socialist urban formation of the formerly rural sites, these 'new' small towns illustrate a countryside way of life and landscapes. (Figure 4, upper-right and lower-right).



Figure 4. Countryside landscape in the selected towns (Source: Jucu, 2015)

With a population between 5000 and 9000 inhabitants, on a decreasing trend of demographic flow and minor investments, it is difficult to design further development in these new towns. The community's voice blames now the assumed decision in turning to urban, advocating for the implementation of European funds and projects in rural development.¹³ It seems that using European rural development programmes these communities took more advantages in local development. These echoes argue bad decisions in post-socialist urban development in Romania. Certainly, the new small post-socialist towns remain peripheral in local and regional urban development with their inner patterns contrasting both between one another and with those in the former state-socialist towns. This post-1990 issue in national urbanisation managed by neoliberal policies makes a claim for further corrections and adjustments in the national, regional and local agendas both in post-socialist Romanian urban identity formation and in the national sustainability of Romanian urban systems.

5. CONCLUSIONS

This contribution examined relations between post-socialist processes of urban restructuring and the formation of significant contrasting patterns in the Romanian urban municipalities of Timiș County. In accordance with the post-1990 theories on post-socialist urban identity formation launched by Stanilov (2007), the narrative draws on the results of divergent interventions in Romanian urban regeneration. Regardless of their ranks and scales, contrasting patterns appear in all urban municipalities of this Romanian county with real impact on local communities, their functionalities, their inner-patterns and their landscapes. The most important contrasting spaces occur in the largest towns of the country, with Timișoara – the capital city of Timiș County, and one of the most important cities in Romania – being a good example in this regard. Considering this sampled case in point, particular spatial results reveal multiple divergent interventions in local urban regeneration. Contrasting patterns rise within downtown, with places hosting new business districts opposing derelict spaces with industrial ruins. This case reveals the resistance of deindustrialisation in the face of the post-socialist global trend of tertiarization and a service-led economy in large urban areas. Likewise, important contrasting spaces sat between the inner core of the city as well as even between the peripheries themselves. Some of them portray positive interventions with services, housing and new emerging industrial areas being the main producers of these new spaces, with positive results in the local urban space reproduction and a process of suburbanisation. These shifts in post-socialist spatial urban development reveal the relocation of both the urban activities.

By contrast, some urban outskirts turned to slum, unveiling divergent postures with post-socialist emerging peripheries. The same urban shaping processes translate to the lower scales of medium and small-sized towns. In the municipality of Lugoj, urban processes of urban restructuring generated important shifts in local spatial patterns due to the local de/reindustrialisation and tertiarization, improperly managed by local government. While some emerging industrial areas appeared in the towns' outskirts fixing new residential districts in their neighbourhoods, other peripheries turned into ruined zones and slummed districts. These oppositions reveal uneven development in local urban areas with multiple social and economic consequences at the local scale. In

addition, incoherent interventions in local urban regulation portray poor management in local urban post-socialist formation. Similarly, these divergent urban areas are applicable to other small-sized municipalities in Timiș County. On the other hand, the findings of this contribution show theoretical and apparent urban development in new post-socialist towns turning from rural to urban according to post-socialist policies in urban development at local, regional and national scale. These rural towns show the artificial trend in micro-scale urbanisation with these settlements remaining mainly rural both with low facilities and with real rural ways of life of local residents. Furthermore, their functionality depends on the larger cities and towns (Timișoara, Lugoj and Sânnicolaul Mare) of the county; the last of these polarising them, for specialised social and economic services (see also Jucu, 2015b). Considering the post-socialist formation of these new rural towns, their patterns strongly contrast with the former state-socialist towns. Against such a background, divergences between post-socialist spatial formation and reproduction appear both between the inner patterns of the cities and towns as well as between the towns themselves. All of these are consequences and spatial costs in urban spatial development under the post-socialist policies in urban (re)development, regardless of their spatial scale or rank.

Consequently, they appeal for further realistic and objective interventions in local urban planning that have to redesign the local government agendas in Romanian post-socialist formation. A quarter of a century since the Romanian state-socialism collapse, accompanied with divergent policies and decisions in post-socialist Romanian urban formation, this is a time for good and realistic reflections on what was done and on further adequate programmes and strategies in urban development. After 25 years of hesitation in Romanian urban planning policies, it is time to (re)design new urban theories, practices and procedures to advocate for coherent and sustainable development of Romanian urban spaces and to remove all unsuitable interventions in regional and local urban planning.

Notes

1. According to the City Development Master-plan (online accessed at www.cjt.ro at 12 of November 2014
2. For this urban project development under post-socialist period see: <http://forum.peundemerg.ro/index.php?topic=272.0>; <http://www.zf.ro/companii/cum-a-transformat-ovidiu-sandor-in-cinci-ani-o-fabrica-de-textile-din-timisoara-intr-un-proiect-de-birouri-vandut-cu-circa-90-mil-euro-galerie-foto9200609>; <http://www.business-centre.ro>; http://adevarul.ro/locale/timisoara/city-business-centre-timisoara-vandut-aproape-50-milioane-euro-1_50adfe2f7c42d5a66399baf5/index.html; online accessed 14 of november, 2014.
3. According to Both, S., 2012, City Business Centre din Timișoara, vândut cu aproape 50 de milioane de euro, online source available at adevarul.ro/locale/timisoara/city-business-centre-timisoara-vandut-aproape-50-milioane-euro-1_50adfe2f7c42d5a66399baf5/index.html <http://adevarul.ro/locale/timisoara/city-business-centre-timisoara-vandut-aproape-50-milioane-euro>.
4. See the Local development strategy of the municipality of Lugoj.
5. According to personal conversations with inhabitants living in the district and with employees in the Social Assistance Service.
6. According to <http://stirileprotv.ro/stiri/social/incredibil-dar-adevarat-in-sannicolau-mare-somajul-e-zero.html>

7. According to personal conversation with four workers in the local factories.
8. According to interview with a councillor in Local Council of the town, May, 2013.
9. According to <http://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-esential-17738993-romania-primitiva-din-rapoarte-europene-nationale-cei-mai-multi-cetateni-fundul-curtii-lipsa-autostrazilor-izoleaza-europa-jumatate-dintre-familii-nu-nici-salariat.htm>
10. According to the Law 351/06.07.2001 on the Romanian national urban planning: the national network of urban settlements.
11. According to personal conversations with local residents (May – September 2014).
12. According to personal conversations with local residents in Buziaș, Făget and Recaș (May – September 2014).
13. According to in field observation and personal conversations conducted with local residents in Buziaș, Făget and Recaș (May – September 2014).

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