

# Urban Construction Patterns in the City of Cluj, 1952-1965

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**Abstract:** *In the present study we intend to present the way in which communist authorities tried to solve the problems of the Romanian urban areas after the Second World War through recourse to urban planning. Between 1952 and 1965, there were two main construction patterns subsequently promoted in all communist countries from Central and Eastern Europe. The first one was that of the housing district in the style of Socialist-Realism architecture (accompanied by the construction of a limited number of monumental public buildings) while the second one was that of the micro-district (or microraiion) in the style of modernist architecture. What we found out is the fact that at a local level, in the city of Cluj, these models were not always implemented in accordance with the discourse of the time and that the central authorities, through institutional and economical reform, tried to set the Romanian architecture on a course of ideological orthodoxy.*

**Keywords:** *architecture, urban planning, Housing District, Socialist Realism, micro-district, modernism.*

Following World War II, the Soviet Union imposed the so-called "popular democracy" regimes in the countries under its influence, which included Romania. Gail Kligman and Katherine Verdery used the concept of technological transfer in order to explain the process through which communist authorities had taken over the institutional organization of the state, the political practices, the strategies of governing society based on the Stalinist model. After the revolution, the Bolshevik regime needed to take control of different territories, to create a new form of political organization (of the party-state), to train party activists, to gather economic resources for industrialization, in other words to create a series of strategies (or 'technologies') in order to achieve its goals.<sup>1</sup> The local implementation of the soviet model in Central and Eastern European countries had led to what Ken Jowitt named 'replica regimes'. Subsequently, during the first years of the communist rule in Romania, the communist party was consolidated, the

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<sup>1</sup> Gail Kligman, Katherine Verdery, *The Collectivization of Romanian Agriculture, 1949-1962* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), passim.

economy was nationalized, the forced industrialization process was initiated in parallel with the collectivization of agriculture and the oppressive institutions of the state had gained an ever-growing influence within society.

The fast-paced industrial development of the 50s and 60s had had major consequences both at economic and social levels due to the massive migration of the rural population to industrial cities.<sup>2</sup> The statistics are highly revealing. In 1930, out of 14,280,729 Romanians, 11,229,476 lived in rural communities, and only 3,051,253 resided in cities. After WWII, the urban population increased significantly<sup>3</sup>, it had reached 5,474,264 by 1956 and 7,305,714 by 1966<sup>4</sup>. A similar trend was seen in the city of Cluj-Napoca, with the population increasing from 117,915 inhabitants in 1948 to 185,663 inhabitants in 1966<sup>5</sup>. The main cause of the increase of population was the migration from rural areas in the context of the city's first industrialization stage after 1948.

These tendencies had led to a major challenge - local authorities from Romania had to manage urban spaces in poorly developed cities. The problems of the urban world during the first decades of communist administration were numerous: from the chronic lack of dwellings to a poor urban infrastructure, to the problems issued from the inability of rural communities to adapt to the rigors of urban lifestyle. Subsequently, following the pattern of the Soviet Union, Romanian authorities had implemented a series of urban development policies. Among them, one should note the attempt to systemize territories and cities following a 'rationally' planned out pattern. Urban systematization had to ensure an economically balanced and efficient development of the building infrastructure of cities, based on long-term development predictions. In order to achieve this, the regime implemented several urban construction patterns<sup>6</sup> which have evolved in compliance with dominant

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<sup>2</sup> The collectivization of Agriculture played a major role in this phenomenon.

<sup>3</sup> The rural population between 1948 and 1965 was preserved at the level of 12 million.

<sup>4</sup> Vasile Cucu, *Orașele României*, (Bucharest: Științifică, 1970), p. 54.

<sup>5</sup> By 1992, the city population had reached 328,602 inhabitants as shown in, Bolovan Ioan, Sorina Paula Bolovan, *Populația Orașului Cluj în secolul al XX-lea*, în Sorina Paula Bolovan, Ioan Bolovan, Corneliu Pădurean, *Transilvania în secolele XIX-XX. Studii de demografie istorică* (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2005).

<sup>6</sup> Mara Mărginean, *Procesul de urbanizare în centrele industriale Hunedoara și Călan, 1945-1968*, doctoral dissertation at the George Barițiu Institute of History of the Romanian Academy in Cluj Napoca, 2013, p.5.

architectural styles. Between 1948 and 1965, we can speak of two main models promoted in all communist countries from Central and Eastern Europe. The first one is the housing district in the style of Socialist-Realism architecture (accompanied by the construction of a limited number of monumental public buildings) and the second one is the organization of urban development based on the modernist principles of the micro-district (microraión).

According to the official discourse, urban systematization would lead to the accomplishment of the 'Socialist city', which was considered to be radically different from the 'Capitalist city' of the exploiting interwar period social classes. This would become a haven for equality and social equity, a quintessence of egalitarianism, just like the political regime itself. Similarly, all citizens would have equal access to services: education, healthcare, recreation, city transport, regardless of their status, in the center or on the outskirts of cities. As some studies have already pointed out, the egalitarian principles of organizing cities have not been put into practice in the Soviet Union or elsewhere in Central and Eastern European countries<sup>7</sup>. In fact, the cities of the communist world were places of profound inequalities between inhabitants, generated by aspects such as geographic position within the city, the redistribution system of the state in what regarded consumer goods, dwellings etc<sup>8</sup>.

This article aims to make a comparative analysis of urban construction patterns promoted in the official Romanian discourse, and of the implementation thereof in the city of Cluj. Chronologically, the analysis aims the period between the implementation in 1952 of socialist realism in Romanian architecture under pressure exerted by the Soviet Union following adoption of Central Committee Decision of the Romanian Labour Party (PMR) and of the Council of Ministers regarding "The Construction and Reconstruction of Cities and the Organization of Planning and Architecture Activities" and the year 1965 which marked the end of the first year of the six year national economic

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<sup>7</sup> Ivan Szelenyi, *Urban Inequalities under State Socialism* (London: Oxford University Press, 1983), *passim*.

<sup>8</sup> In this paper we do not intend to provide a detailed analysis of the daily life in communist urban environments. Though, it is important to note that this topic is well researched. See for instance the work of Stephen Kotkin, Lewis Siegelbaum, Susan E. Reid or Juliane Fürst, to name only a few well known researchers.

development plan and the installation of Nicolae Ceaușescu at the head of the communist party.

We intend to answer four main research questions. First, which were the architectural styles and urban construction patterns promoted by the authorities between 1952 and 1965? Second, which were the measures taken by central authorities, at an institutional level, for their actual implementation? Third, how were these central directives implemented at a local level? Fourth, what can answering all of the above questions tell us about the communist regime itself?

Numerous works touched upon the subject of Romanian architecture and urban planning, both before and after the revolution of 1989. For example, worthy of mention are two histories of Romanian Architecture written by Grigore Ionescu, *Arhitectura din România în perioada anilor 1944-1969* [*Architecture in Romania in the period between 1949 and 1969*, 1969] and Gheorghe Curinschi Vorona, *Istoria Arhitecturii din România* [*The History of Architecture in Romania*, 1981]. Even though these books are written in accordance with the official ideology, and therefore should be critically questioned, they provide useful descriptions of what the communist authorities considered to be the most important architectural projects of the time. After 1989 the number and thematic diversity of the research concerning these topics significantly increased. Besides technical analysis of the communist architectural programs many researchers, architects as well as other social scientist, researched more and more the links between the architectural practice and political power, highlighting the huge influence that the party-state had on this field. Ana Maria Zahariade's book *Arhitectura în Proiectul comunist: România 1944-1989* [*Architecture in the Communist Project. Romania 1944-1989*, 2011] is an illustrative example in this regard. Of great importance for the research was another recent contribution to the field by Mara Mărginean *Procesul de urbanizare în centrele industriale Hunedoara și Călan, 1945-1968* [*The Urbanization Process in the Industrial Cities of Hunedoara and Călan, 1945-1968*]. In this thoroughly researched and well-written doctoral dissertation Mara Mărginean provides the reader with a complete picture of the process of urbanization in one of the most important industrial region of Romania in the first decades of the communist regime, Hunedoara. Unfortunately there are not many scholarly works that focus on the architectural development of the City of Cluj in the communist period. A notable example though is the book authored by Mitrea Vasile, Emanoil Tudose, Buzuloiu, Aurelian and Panescu

Eugeniu, *Cluj-Napoca în proiecte. 50 ani. 1960-2010* [Cluj-Napoca in Projects. 50 years, 1960-2010, 2011].

The main primary sources used for the research are archival document such as the meeting minutes of the Executive Committee of the Cluj People's Council, other documents found in different sections of the above institution (including the Section for Architecture and Systematization) as well as the issues of *Arhitectura*, a journal published between 1950 and 1965. It should be mentioned that we could not consult all archive sources relevant for our research<sup>9</sup>, therefore, the analysis should be completed with new ideas and facts in the future. Nonetheless, we do believe we have managed to amend certain beliefs pertaining to the urban development of the city of Cluj, which have only been briefly discussed so far and that our study may be the starting point for further more applied research. In order to better organize our work, based on our findings, we divided the researched period in two main stages of urban development, the first one between 1952 and 1956 and the second one between 1957 and 1965, which we shall further detail hereinafter.

### **Strategies at the Central Level, from Socialist Realism to Modernist Experiments**

Following the process of sovietization, major changes, including in the Romanian architectural field were bound to occur. The first actions of communist leaders were related to the promotion within Romanian architects' groups of Socialist Realist architecture principles. Thus, in *Arhitectura* (the most important professional journal in the field published after the War) one shall find an aggressive promotion campaign of Socialist Realism, highlighting the architecture programs implemented by Moscow. For instance, between 1950 and 1952 there were no less than 40 articles on this topic<sup>10</sup>. It is interesting that most of the authors were Romanians. There were only five Soviet authors publishing articles within this time frame<sup>11</sup>. Among the most important names, we shall

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<sup>9</sup> We could not gain access to the Archive of the Cluj-Napoca City Hall nor to a very important source for research, the Archive of the Regional Institute of Planning of Cluj, currently undergoing inventorying at the National Archive County Representative, Cluj-Napoca.

<sup>10</sup> Ioana C. Popovici, *Star-topped Spires and Cardboard Heroes. Soviet Socialist Realism in Aritectura RPR (1950-1952)*, în *Studies in History and Theory of Architecture* (București: 2013), passim.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 62.

mention: H. Manciu, N. Bădescu, L. Adler, Z Solomon, H. Marcus, A. Moisescu, with the most published articles, but also G. Gusti, P. Macovei and G. C. Vorona who wrote several articles<sup>12</sup>. Meanwhile, several major architectural projects were initiated in Bucharest, chief of which was *Casa Scânteii* (1951-1954) replicating Lomonosov State University of Moscow.

Nonetheless, despite the fact that following the nationalization of the economy the state had become the main commissioner of real estate and a part of the best known Romanian architects seemed to adhere to the new ideology<sup>13</sup>, the architectural development of Romania between 1948 and 1951 was still influenced by the Interwar patterns. Overall the field was characterized by the lack of a clear and coherent nation-wide strategy. Highly revealing for the matter are the conclusions of the Soviet counselor on architecture issues in Bucharest, I.A. Zvezdin, who, following several visits to the most important construction sites in the country, was worried because Romanian architecture was governed by bourgeois interests and lack of professionalism as well as by cosmopolitanism and formalism as elements specific to the avant-garde<sup>14</sup>. In order to solve this issue, Zvezdin thought it was highly necessary to establish a coordinating and controlling institution, based on the Stalinist model.

The set up of the State Committee for Architecture and Constructions (Comitetul de Stat pentru Arhitectură și Construcții - CSAC) in 1952 was the turning point for the implementation of the Socialist Realist style in Romanian architecture. In this context, it is important to highlight that the institutionalization of Socialist Realism was carried out later than in the case of other Central and Eastern European communist countries. This belated implementation was probably due to the conflicts within the leadership of the Romanian Labour Party, between Ana Pauker, Vasile Luca, Teohari Georgescu on

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> The issue regarding the collaboration between architects and the Communist regime is still very delicate in the Romanian public debate. There have been cases of architects refusing to collaborate, such as G.M Cantacuzino who was subsequently sentenced to 10 years of prison. Other important figures of Interwar architecture such as Duiliu Marcu and Octav Doicescu accepted the influence of the regime and continued to practice their profession. While the personal motivations for individual decisions are difficult to establish, it is clear that Communist authorities needed highly qualified professionals to implement the new vision for Romanian architecture.

<sup>14</sup> Mara Mărginean, *Procesul de urbanizare în centrele industriale Hunedoara și Călan*, p. 108.

the one hand and Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej on the other hand. The former three had a major influence in the structures of the state party until their elimination. The arguments at the head of the party had therefore affected the leadership and administration of the country.

The role of the CSAC was to check "from a quality point of view the construction programs, the organization of construction sites in accordance with the provisions of the State Planning Committee (Comisia de Stat a Planificării), the status of works and the compliance of the architectural style with the clear decisions and doctrines imposed at the central level, the quality of works and of the used materials - of local origin - or the contractor's adherence to the standards and advice of the project author<sup>15</sup>. The CSAC was made up of The General Direction of State Constructions for Architecture and Constructions, the Regional Inspectorates of Control for Architecture and Constructions (functioning within the Executive Committees of Regional People's Councils, under the supervision of the Head Architect of the Region) and the City Inspectorates of Control for Architecture and Constructions (functioning within the Executive Committees of City People's Councils). The General Direction would check major projects, while Regional Inspectorates would check regional and city constructions or local refurbishing"<sup>16</sup>.

The following were set up as central planning institutions: "The Institute for City Planning and Public and Housing Constructions [Institutul pentru proiectarea oraşelor și construcțiilor publice și de locuit - ISPROR]", whose duty was to carry out "the entire planning of systematizations, constructions and reconstructions of cities, as well as the elaboration of important projects for public and housing buildings for cities across the country, excluding the capital<sup>17</sup>", the institute for Industrial Facility Planning [Institutul pentru Proiectări de Construcții Industriale - IPCI] and a special institute for the capital-city "Proiect-București". Other institutions established in Bucharest were the Institute of Architecture [Institutul de Arhitectură] based on the Faculty of Architecture of the Institute of Construction of Bucharest [Facultatea de Arhitectură a Institutului de Construcții București] and the Scientific Institute of Architecture [Institutul științific de arhitectură] within the Academy of the People's Republic of Romania<sup>18</sup>". Last, but not least, it

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 109.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 110.

<sup>17</sup> *Architecture and Urbanism*, no. 11, 1952, p. 3.

<sup>18</sup> Mara Mărginean, *Procesul de urbanizare în centrele industriale Hunedoara și Călan*, p. 110.

was decided to set up The Architects' Union of the People's Republic of Romania [Uniunea Arhitecților din Republica Populară Română], which aimed to "help increase the ideological level, artistic capabilities and technical skills [of architects], in order to enable them to have as high a contribution as possible to the accomplishment of Socialism<sup>19</sup>".

At first glance the solution of decision makers was viable, at least from the perspective of the characteristics of the most important architecture and systematization projects of those times. The pre-war avantgardist principles had been abandoned for good in favor of the Soviet Socialist Realist models. The most emblematic examples of Socialist Realism in Romanian architecture were the great public buildings mainly erected in the capital city (Casa Scânteii, The Romanian Opera House or the Summer Theatre in the Nicolae Bălcescu Park, nowadays known as Teatrul Masca). Another good example of the implementation of Socialist Realism principles is the development of city systematization plans, especially for expanding industrial cities such as Hunedoara. Along with Braşov and later with the towns of the Jiu Valley, Hunedoara had a strategic importance for the regime since it was the main siderurgical center of the country - the quintessence of the Stalinist vision on Socialism. As one might expect, authorities aimed for increasing the industrial production and for planning the city within the parameters of the official ideology<sup>20</sup>.

After the first stage of a systematization plan which followed the principles of the "garden city" (1947-1949), the new systematization plan of 1949 already respected the Stalinist principles, with the "housing district" at its core. As an architectural unit, the district designated "the inner space delineated by the intersection of four boulevards or main avenues (...). The area would be enclosed by cornering buildings, such as L-shaped blocks or colonnades as compositional solutions for linking buildings<sup>21</sup>" The average surface of housing districts had to be 5 hectares<sup>22</sup>. It was thus decided to replace individual housing buildings with multi-floor blocks of flats. The housing districts would surround the city center. The entire establishment, thanks to the disposition of parks and social-cultural institutions had to ensure the universal and equal access

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<sup>19</sup> *Architecture and Urbanism, loc.cit.*

<sup>20</sup> Mara Mărginean, *Procesul de urbanizare în centrele industriale Hunedoara și Călan, passim.*

<sup>21</sup> Mara Mărginean, *Ibid.*, p.165.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*



of inhabitants to all modern facilities (schools, libraries, cinemas etc.). Collective dwellings were built according to the same principles, with the housing district at the core, in Bucharest, Petroșani, Vulcan, Brașov etc.

The death of Stalin in 1953 had major consequences on all Communist countries, including in the fields of architecture and constructions. His successor at the head of the Soviet Union, Nikita Khrushchev, publicly denounced the Socialist Realist architecture in 1954, labeling it as a time of excess and extravagance. He proposed instead the implementation of modernist-inspired policies based on standardization and industrialization of constructions with the main aim to solve the stringent housing crisis in the Soviet Union<sup>23</sup>. Only two years after the institutionalization of Socialist Realism, Romanian architecture was again confronted with major changes imposed by Moscow.

The main role in the paradigm shift was played by Nikita Khrushchev's speech at the USSR Architects' Congress of December 1954<sup>24</sup>. Khrushchev highlighted the urgent need for modernization (industrialization, standardization, the use of pre-fabricated assemblies) in the construction field. Promoting the idea that "decorations are a crime" (or in the socialist logic "politically incorrect") he stressed that monumental buildings had to be abandoned and functional buildings had to be constructed instead, with minimalistic decorations<sup>25</sup>. This process would lead to the reduction of construction costs per square meter. The effects of the policy promoted by Moscow were immediately assumed by the Romanian architectural discourse.

Thus, during the plenary session of the Architects' Union of 1954, a series of solutions were identified for the problems in the fields of architecture and constructions. The first solution consisted in the implementation of several nation-wide projects, able to ensure an optimum inhabitable surface regardless of the local conditions, exposure to natural light or cost limitations. The second decision imposed the

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<sup>23</sup> Khrushchev's motives for the implementation of this nationwide housing program were more complex and cannot be fully presented here. For a more detailed analysis see: Donald Filtzer, *Soviet Workers and de-Stalinization. The consolidation of the modern system of Soviet Production Relations 1953-1964* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

<sup>24</sup> Mara Mărginean, *Procesul de urbanizare în centrele industriale Hunedoara și Călan*, p. 111.

<sup>25</sup> Ioan Augustin, *Power, Play and National Identity, Politics of Modernization in Central and East-European Architecture. The Romanian File* (Bucharest: The Romanian Cultural Foundation, 1999), pp. 63-65.

standardization of the size of living quarters to approximately 40 square meters for a two-room flat. The third decision aimed a reassessment of room size, including vestibules, in order to allow appropriate furnishing. Finally, the fourth measure consisted in the temporary reassessment of sanitary norm legislation, by reducing the value to an average of 7 sqm/person<sup>26</sup>.

Despite the efforts of achieving industrialization and cost reduction, the success of this attempt was limited in Romania. After 1954, housing districts and public buildings alike were erected with few decorations but were, at the core, similar to Socialist Realist buildings. Also, the use of pre-fabricated assemblies proved to be a costly solution considering that this branch of industry was still new for Romania.

### **The 1952-1958 phase. The implementation of central strategies at the local level**

The first Mayor of Cluj following the reintegration of North-Western Transylvania into Romania was Tudor Bugnariu, appointed by the Soviet Commanding Authority. His deputy was Ioan Demeter. Both Bugnariu and Demeter had been active members of the Romanian Communist Party during the Interwar period.<sup>27</sup> Initially, the Mayor's House maintained its organizational structure, according to which commune administration and urbanism matters were handled by the Head Engineer of the city<sup>28</sup>. The Mayor's institution was dissolved on 1 April 1949, and was replaced by the "Ad Interim Committee of the Urban Commune of Cluj" (presided by Vasile Deac). The Service for Commune Administration and Local Industry was established within the *ad interim* Committee, under the supervision of engineer Gheorghe Ghișe. The service was divided into three sections: Housing and Goods, Economic, Municipal and Urbanistic Enterprises (under the supervision of Virgil Salvanu senior)<sup>29</sup>.

The first elections for the local and regional people's councils were held at the end of the year 1950. The deputies were elected on

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<sup>26</sup> Mara Mărginean, *Procesul de urbanizare în centrele industriale Hunedoara și Călan*, p.111.

<sup>27</sup> Marian Lazăr, *Primarii Clujului: 1919-2012*, vol.II (Cluj Napoca: 2013), p. 160.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p.160.

regional, department, city constituencies, and on lists for villages<sup>30</sup>. Although in theory local and regional people's councils were coordinated by the Council of Ministers, in reality the activity of the former was controlled by party structures who issued (compulsory) directives for various areas as well as through the selection of deputies and candidates by local party structures. The *ad interim* Committee of the city of Cluj was dissolved following the elections of December 1950, leaving room for the People's Council of the City of Cluj. Initially, matters pertaining to constructions as well as those pertaining to urbanism were coordinated by the section for Commune Administration and Local Industry. The Architecture and Systematization Section, established following adoption of decision "Regarding the Construction and Reconstruction of Cities and the Organization of Planning and Architecture Activities" (1952) whose role was to represent the CSAC authority at the local level, began functioning at the end of 1953<sup>31</sup>. According to the payroll, the section had the following structure: Leadership: Head Engineer and Head Architect, Balint Mircea and Bărăscu Iordache, respectively; the Department of Project Approval and Expertise: architect Valkay Pavel, the Department of Authorizations and Construction Quality Control, architect Salvan Virgil, Administration - Secretary, Bala Cristina<sup>32</sup>.

From the very beginning the activity of the section was confronted with major difficulties. Firstly, the position of head of section/head architect of the city was vacant until the beginning of 1955 (initially, the position was held by Bărăscu Iordache, who was also head architect of the region, but he was removed on 15 February 1954<sup>33</sup>). In 1955, Ștefan Gonosz was appointed as head architect<sup>34</sup>, although his tenure was short-lived, lasting only a year. It was only in 1957 that Ștefan Floriansics<sup>35</sup> began his longer tenure at the head of the section. Secondly, due to the former attributions in this area of the Section for Commune Administration and Local Industry, as it is noted in the meeting minutes

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<sup>30</sup> Mihaela Cristina Verzea, *Partidul Stat structuri politice, 1948-1965* (Târgoviște: Cetatea de Scaun, 2012), pp. 305-306.

<sup>31</sup> Marian Lazăr, *Primarii Clujului: 1919-2012*, p. 206.

<sup>32</sup> Serviciul Județean al Arhivelor Naționale Cluj, (SJAN Cluj), The People's Council of the Cluj Region, Secretariate Section, file no. 22/1954, ff.19-20.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, ff. 23-24.

<sup>34</sup> Lazăr Marian, *Primarii Clujului: 1919-2012*, p. 206.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 206-207.

of the Executive Committee, conflicts had arisen with the Section for Architecture and Systematization regarding the competences of each of these sections<sup>36</sup>. The confusion seemed to be quite substantial within the People's Council considering that by means of Decision 42/1954, the Section for Architecture and Systematization was forced to present to the Executive Committee "the rules of procedure with a clear indication of the duties and obligations of the Section, as well as the competence of other Sections of the Council in the field of constructions<sup>37</sup>", a decision which was issued more than half a year after its establishment. Another issue generated by the conflict with the Section of Commune Administration and Local Industry was the delay in the handing over of the necessary inventory: maps, plans, equipment, and furniture necessary for the systematization activity. The transfer of the inventory was carried out in July 1954 even though, as we have mentioned earlier, the Section was established in 1953<sup>38</sup>. Last but not least, the members of the Section did not have cars, and in order to inspect the status of works, more often than not they had to walk. This led to serious disturbances in the construction quality control procedures.

According to the instructions issued by CSAC the activity of the Section for Architecture and Systematization should have been based on the systematization plan of the city. A characteristic of the first development stage was the very lack of such a document with the approvals of the central authorities. A first systematization plan for Cluj was elaborated between 1949 and 1952 and was approved in June 1952 by the State Committee for Architecture and Constructions within the Council of Ministers. The approval was carried out with several amendments<sup>39</sup>. Construction authorizations had to be issued based on this plan and in compliance with the Regulation for City Planning and Setbacks of the city of Cluj<sup>40</sup>.

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<sup>36</sup> SJAN Cluj, The People's Council of the Cluj Region, Secretariate Section, file no. 22/ 1954, ff. 3-11.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 10.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 24.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, f.20.

<sup>40</sup> We are not sure whether the document makes reference to the regulation of the Interwar period, but even if it had been amended, it most probably had similar provisions: the zoning of the city based on the types of constructions allowed, the rules for street setback etc.

However, following the creation of the CSAC in 1952, it was established after several checks at the center that the aforementioned plan did not correspond to "the current needs" and it should thus only be used "for guidance"<sup>41</sup>. As a temporary solution, it was decided to set up a local committee made up of representatives of the section, of the State Healthcare Inspectorate, of the Fire Prevention brigade and of other involved parties in order to decide over the disposition of buildings. The committee elaborated a draft for a new zoning plan of the city<sup>42</sup>. Nonetheless, they failed to adopt a coherent strategy concerning the disposition of buildings. A revealing example is the adoption of Decision 20/1955 of the Executive Committee of the People's Council of Cluj which provided the implementation of a table for each housing district, which should indicate which streets are suited for 4 story, 3 story, 2 story and single story buildings and which streets are suited for individual ground-floor dwellings 'in order to ensure an order in the construction pattern within the city'<sup>43</sup>.

Due to the urgency of this situation, in 1955, the clerks of the Section and the representatives of the Executive Committee were granted permission to include the systematization task into the planning scheme of the Central Institute of City and Regional Systematization (Institutul Central pentru Sistemizarea Orașelor și Regiunilor - ICSOR) for the year 1955 with the first two stages - documentation and preliminary study. The document was drafted on time and it included a documentation section, with a critical analysis and development perspectives for a 20-30 year time span, as well as a preliminary study<sup>44</sup>. The involvement of the Section in the elaboration of documents was substantial, they helped gather the information required by the ICSOR and they hired many local experts in the field, especially University professors. In order to draw up systematization drafts, geological studies were initiated in 1956 for various city zones and steps were taken to update cadastral maps<sup>45</sup>. The target of the study was to systemize the main avenues of the city, a project which was set to run from the end of 1956 until mid-year 1957. It mainly aimed Horea, Doja and Molotov

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<sup>41</sup> SJAN Cluj, The People's Council of the Cluj Region, Secretariate Section, file no. 22/ 1954, f. 25.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 21.

<sup>43</sup> *Loc. cit.*, file no. 24/1954, f. 328.

<sup>44</sup> *Loc. cit.*, file no. 38/1956, f. 434.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

streets, and subsequently: Kosuth, Jokai, 30 decembrie, Moșilor, Armata Roșie, B.N. Antal streets and Mărăști square. According to the meeting minutes of the Executive Committee of the People's Council of the city between 1952 and 1956 the decisions of the local administration concerning the city development were made based on circumstantial concerns rather than on a long-term plan. The lack of a coherent systematization plan had a negative impact on constructions in the city, especially on housing constructions.

The organization and optimization of the construction system at the local level was of utmost importance taking into account the major unresolved housing crisis after more than 4 years of communist administration. The pressure exerted on local authorities was even greater considering that party leaders were highlighting the need for improving the living conditions of workers. For instance, at the plenary session of the Romanian Labour Party of August 1953, Dej announced the directive according to which the state was supposed to build homes for over 50,000 families<sup>46</sup>.

Similarly to other country regions, the central investment funds of the country or of enterprises were mainly used for the construction of collective dwellings, based on the Stalinist model already implemented in the rest of the country. However, due to the issues concerning the selection of appropriate dispositions for a great number of blocks organized in districts, they were built individually or in small groups on the lands held by the People's Council<sup>47</sup>. The information on the structure and disposition of these blocks is scattered and fragmentary in the archive documents we have consulted. Nonetheless, we have identified several buildings dating from the covered area. For instance, three blocks of flats were built for railway workers in Jaures square with a total of 75 flats in 1951, two blocks were built at 9-11 B.N. Antal street in 1952<sup>48</sup>, another

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<sup>46</sup> SJAN Cluj, The People's Council of the Cluj Region, Secretariate Section; SJAN Cluj, The People's Council of the Cluj Region, Section for Architecture and Systematization, file no. 118/1956, f. 325; *Rezoluții și hotărâri ale Comitetului Central al PMR; Rezoluții și hotărâri ale Comitetului Central al PMR* (Bucharest: Editura pentru Literatură Politică), pp. 451-471.

<sup>47</sup> In 1953 a disposition plan was drafted, but because it provided dispossessions it was not approved by the Council of Ministers, SJAN Cluj, The People's Council of the Cluj Region, Secretariate Section, file no. 22/1954, f. 26.

<sup>48</sup> SJAN Cluj, The People's Council of the Cluj Region, Section for Architecture and Systematization, file no. 12/1954, f.33.

block with 24 flats was built at 2 Beloianis street, inaugurated in 1953<sup>49</sup>. Also in 1953, 5 MFA (Minister of the Armed Forces) one storey blocks were erected on B.N. Antal and Pietroasa streets. In 1954, another block with 22 flats was built at 7-8 Pavlov street (10 two-room flats and 12 one-room flats), complying with the indications from CSAC<sup>50</sup>.

It is important to highlight that in Cluj, special attention was given to the construction of individual or collective dwellings financed from state loans. These loans were regulated by Decisions of the Council of Ministers no. 758/1951 and no. 4015/1953. The loans were granted by the state Investment Bank to enterprises who further distributed them to employees. The latter were supposed to cover at least 30% of the costs of dwellings in money or materials/work. The People's Councils had to allocate land for such buildings especially in areas with utilities, whereas enterprises had to provide help by any means possible (from materials to transport) in order to finish up works.

Eight standardized house building projects were elaborated, which through the "rational" design of the living quarters would ensure a high degree of comfort for tenants. These projects mainly aimed the construction of "twin" houses - with two separate entrances and yards, but with a single roof. This large scale project in Cluj meant, along with the extension of the interwar principle of parceling/zoning and of individual dwelling construction, the continuation of the city development based on the avant-garde model of garden city. Without attempting to make a complete inventory of the zones where such houses were built, we shall mention: Grigorescu district (Gelu Street), Vama Someșeni, Calea Turzii, Iris district, La Passionaria (Fabricii Street), Bulgaria district etc.

By 1954, according to a report of the Section for Architecture and Systematization sent to the People's Council of the city of Cluj, 232 authorizations had been issued for "twin" individual dwellings on 190 parcels held by the state and on 42 private lands<sup>51</sup>. Due to the growing number of applications for loans and lands for individual dwellings, in 1956 local authorities initiated a campaign with the aim of convincing citizens to give up the construction of individual houses and opt for

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<sup>49</sup> SJAN Cluj, The People's Council of the Cluj Region, Section for Architecture and Systematization, file no. 118/1956, f. 349.

<sup>50</sup> SJAN Cluj, The People's Council of the Cluj Region, Section for Architecture and Systematization, file no. 118/ 1956, f. 349.

<sup>51</sup> SJAN Cluj, The People's Council of the Cluj Region, Secretariate Section, file no. 24/1955, f.337.

cooperative blocks<sup>52</sup>. The efforts of the People's Council and of the Section for Architecture and Systematization had little success. The citizens were not the only ones refusing to associate, local administration clerks and party members were also reluctant: "[...] it is not easy to convince citizens when certain important people refuse to build in cooperation; we cannot expect workers to build in cooperation when they are used to having their small household"<sup>53</sup>. This is proof that the decisions of Bucharest authorities had been negotiated on a local level according to private interests. The explanation given by the Executive Committee for the great number of individual dwellings built in Cluj was that it was a temporary solution for the housing problem. With the growing development pace of the city, these dwellings would be replaced by blocks of flats<sup>54</sup>.

To conclude, it is important to highlight that despite its competences, the Section for Architecture and Systematization had little control over the constructions in the city. For instance, many citizens, but also enterprises applied for construction authorization only after the works were completed in order to obtain the use titles for the dwellings<sup>55</sup>. This situation was due not only to the lack of personnel and means of transport, but also to the fact that the only legal sanction that could be imposed at the time was the demolition of the buildings, which would have led to the dissatisfaction of the population and to expenditures on behalf of the People's Council. Subsequently, the quality control personnel was forced to issue authorizations even if the buildings in question were non-compliant from the point of view of esthetics or disposition. Also, although during controls non-authorized construction sites were found, the city militia did not take measures to stop constructions<sup>56</sup>. Furthermore, a common practice was for enterprise managers to make use of their influence to obtain construction authorization for dispositions which had been declared as unfit for construction<sup>57</sup>.

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<sup>52</sup> SJAN Cluj, The People's Council of the Cluj Region, Secretariate Section, file no. 38/1956, f. 420.

<sup>53</sup> SJAN Cluj, The People's Council of the Cluj Region, Secretariate Section, file no. 28/1956, f.422.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> Reference is made to the need for stopping this "custom" of citizens, *Loc. cit.*, dosar nr.24/1955, f. 326.

<sup>56</sup> *Loc. cit.*, file no. 24/1955, sheet 326].

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 325.



Making a comparison with the evolution within the field of architecture and constructions at the national level we may note that although from an institutional point of view, the situation of Cluj was in compliance with the decisions issued at the center, by setting up the Section for Architecture and Systematization of the city, from an architectural point of view, the directives promoted in Bucharest were only carried out to a small extent. The construction of collective dwellings was relatively limited and did not comply with the principle of the housing district. Furthermore, due to the construction of many individual dwellings, the tradition based on the principle of "garden city" was carried on.

### **Central policies and the institutionalization of modernist architecture.**

The events from Poland and Hungary in 1956 were perceived as a significant danger by the communist leaders from Eastern Europe. Therefore more funds were allocated for housing and general goods production, decisions which were aimed at increasing the standard of living and so lowering the popular unrest that was looming over the communist regimes in Europe. In Romania the policy adopted by the central authorities was different than that promoted by the Soviet Union. Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej decided to re-launch the mass industrialization program<sup>58</sup> and the collectivization of agriculture. At the same time more resources were allocated to the housing industry. These decisions were taken in the context of the retreat of the red army troops from the country and the worsening of the soviet - Romanian diplomatic relations. Dej, remaining faithful to the Stalinist ideology considered the industrialization proses as the key to maintaining Romanian's independence from the Soviet Union. But industrialization required not only the allocation of resources to certain segments of the economy like the heavy industry, but also the consent of the working force to joining this collective effort. The first steps to improving the standard of living in Romania (even though the most significant achievements actually materialized during the 60's and 70's) were taken, at least in regards to the housing program, as early as 1957. Some historians talk about this as

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<sup>58</sup> Mara Mărginean, *Procesul de urbanizare în centrele industriale Hunedoara și Călan*, p. 121.

a social pact<sup>59</sup> in which workers subscribed to the effort of mass industrialization in exchange for a higher standard of living<sup>60</sup>.

Up until 1957 the poor results of the socialist city planning program in Cluj can be considered as a generalized situation in most of the Romanian cities, especially so since authorities were complaining about the small number and poor quality of the new constructions that had been built in areas essential to the Romanian economy like Hunedoara<sup>61</sup>. The leadership of the communist party addressed this problem by implementing a decentralization plan of the architectural and construction fields in 1957. This step was taken because almost all of the architects and engineers (96% of them) worked in the state institutes located in the capital city of Bucharest. Because of this they had little knowledge of the regional realities and so the building plans they created were usually hard to implement<sup>62</sup>. Regional Institutes of Design and Architecture [Institutele Regionale de Proiectare] were created in major regional cities. The institutes were subordinated to the Executive Committees of the People's Councils and had to create building projects for collective dwellings, public buildings, natural gas and electricity's distribution systems, sewage, public transport networks etc<sup>63</sup>.

Two years later, in 1959, the Regional Institutes of Design and Architecture [Institutele Regionale de Proiectare] were transformed to Sections for Systematization, Architecture and Building Design (Direcții de Sistemizare, Arhitectură, și Proiectarea de Construcții-DSAPC)<sup>64</sup>. These changes emphasized the growing concern for urban planning. Beside the process of institutional reform the communist leadership clearly stated that the Stalinist architecture must be abandoned in favor of the modernist architectural principles implemented in both the Soviet Union and in Western Europe. Of these the most important one was the

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<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> Numbers are highly revealing in this regard. According to Ana Maria Zahariade between 1951-1960 66.000 conventional dwelling units were built, 538.500 between 1960-1970, 1.320.000 between 1971-1980 and proximately 1.700.000 for the period between 1981-1990, Ana Maria Zahariade, *Arhitectura în proiectul comunist. România 1944-1989*, (Bucharest: Simetria, 2011), p.44.

<sup>61</sup> Mara Mărginean. *Procesul de urbanizare în centrele industriale Hunedoara și Călan*, p.249.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 236.

<sup>63</sup> SJAN Cluj, The People's Council of Cluj Region, Section for Architecture and Systematization, file no. 28/1957, f.36.

<sup>64</sup> Mara Mărginean, *Procesul de urbanizare în centrele industriale Hunedoara și Călan*, p, 253.

concept of “form follows function” according to which a building had to be first and foremost functional, meaning that its shape must be based on its intended function or purpose.

The problems which existed in the field of urban planning and constructions were also addressed by Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej at the General meeting of the Romanian Labour Party in November 1958. In many ways G.G. Dej’s speech resembled that of Khrushchev’s from 1954 as it marked the institutionalization of the modernist architecture in Romania.<sup>65</sup> During his speech, Dej highlighted the fact that “even though in recent years the number of new houses increased steadily and that new materials, equipment and technologies were used the production cost of houses remained unacceptably high<sup>66</sup>”. He stated that “if in the last 7 to 8 years the production cost of new houses was not artificially increased, from state funds, there could have been built as much as 640.000 extra square feet of inhabitable space which represented around 21.000 new dwelling units<sup>67</sup>.” In his opinion this was a clear proof of the inefficiency of the system since between 1956 and 1968 the total number of apartments built with central funding was of about 40.000 units<sup>68</sup>.

In the last part of his speech, Dej formulated a series of solutions to these problems. The most important directive was the imposition of maximum price to the construction of one dwelling unit (30.000 to 40.000 lei for a two room apartment) with the possibility of increasing it up to 50.000 for the blocks of flats built on the main avenues of the capital city of Bucharest. Under the slogan “Let’s build cheap and good quality housing<sup>69</sup>” a new program was started in 1959, when the resources allocated to building new collective dwellings increased by 25% as compared to 1958.

The directives given by Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej in the 1958 speech were implemented by local authorities mainly in three ways. The first was the building of blocks of flats on vacant areas in the city centers and/or on the main traffic arteries. Such buildings were constructed on Calea Victoria and Calea Grivița in Bucharest, Calea Mărășești in Bacău, Calea Bucureștilor in Brașov or on Horea Street in Cluj. In the second category one can include the re-systematization of important streets and

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<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p.251.

<sup>66</sup> Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, *Expunere făcută la ședința plenară a CC al PMR din 26-28 noiembrie 1958* (București: Politică, 1958), p.44.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p.14.

central city squares. Illustrative examples in this regard are some of the previously mentioned streets (including Horea Street in Cluj<sup>70</sup>) that underwent a major refurbishing and many of the most important city squares in towns like: Ploiești (Centru Civic al orașului), Iași (Piața Unirii), Bucharest (Piața 30 decembrie, Piața Gării de Nord, Piața Sălii Palatului Republicii), Cluj (Piața Mihai Viteazu și Piața păcii)<sup>71</sup> etc.

Last but not least was the building of blocks of flats in accordance to the concept of micro-districts (or microraiioane)<sup>72</sup>. For the first six year national economic development plan between 1960 and 1965 authorities set a target of 300.000 new apartments constructed in this way. After 1960 such micro-districts were built in almost every Romanian town until the revolution of December 1989<sup>73</sup>. The micro-district, as it was defined in the professional discourse of the time, represented a residential complex perceived as an “organic ensemble” in which its inhabitants enjoyed similar living conditions<sup>74</sup> and had equal and direct access to public service facilities such as: kindergartens, schools, playgrounds, commercial centers etc<sup>75</sup>.

Next we will address the way in which these strategies were implemented locally in Cluj between the years 1958-1965 (what we called to be the second phase of the city’s urban development after the establishment of the communist regime in Romania).

### **The 1957-1965 phase. The implementation of central strategies at the local level**

As we have seen in the first phase of urban development in Cluj there was a limited congruity between the strategies elaborated by architects and party leaders at the central level and local realities. Starting with the year 1957 the evolution of the urban planning of Cluj followed the

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<sup>70</sup> Grigore Ionescu, *Arhitectura în România în perioada 1944-1969*, (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Republicii Socialiste România, 1969), pp. 71-72.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.72-74.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p.66.

<sup>73</sup> The design of the Romanian micro-districts was significantly altered in the 70’s under the influence of the new leader of the Communist Party, Nicolae Ceaușescu.

<sup>74</sup> Effort was made to increase the degree of comfort for tenants by, for example, by increasing the inhabitable surface of the apartments or by improving the quality of the materials used. It is important to mention that, because of the strict budgetary constraints, the actual implementation of this objective had mixed results, Ana Maria Zahariade, *Arhitectura în proiectul comunist. România 1944-1989*, p. 49.

<sup>75</sup> Grigore Ionescu, *Arhitectura în România în perioada 1944-1969*, p. 74.

general principles of modernist architecture which were generally applied in most of the other Romanian towns. This was made possible by a significant increase of central funding and also the starting up of a nationwide planning program in 1959.

One of the main concerns of the local authorities in Cluj was the increase of the population density of the city since its value in 1956 was of only 50 inhabitants/ha compared to the desired national average of 70-100 inhabitants/ha<sup>76</sup>. The main way of dealing with this situation was the building of multi-story apartment buildings in the central areas of the town where the needed infrastructure such as natural gas and electricity distribution systems, sewage, running water etc. could be found. According to the national building regulations the placement of the new buildings had to be established based on the systematization plan of the city but the project started in 1956 by ICSOR was never finished. Yet again the city of Cluj remained without a general systematization plan<sup>77</sup>. Therefore the construction authorizations were issued based on the 1956 unfinished plan (used "for guidance only") and in compliance with a new Regulation for City Planning and Setbacks of the city of Cluj approved in 1957, along with several CSAC directives<sup>78</sup>.

The problems of urban planning in Cluj Napoca were solved only in 1959 when a nationwide systematization program was implemented. In the same year CSAC was replaced by the State Committee for Architecture, Constructions and Planning [Comitetul de Stat pentru Arhitectură, Construcții și Sistemizare - CSACS] and the Regional Institute for Design and Architecture (created in 1957) was replaced by the Section for Systematization, Architecture and Construction Planning of the Cluj region (Direcția de Sistemizare, Arhitectură, și Proiectarea de Construcții Cluj - DSPAC-Cluj). The systematization plan of Cluj was conceived by the State Institute for Construction, Architecture and Systematization [Institutul de stat pentru Construcții, Arhitectură și Sistemizare] between 1959 and 1961<sup>79</sup>. The final product was approved by CSACS in 1961<sup>80</sup>, and the Regional

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<sup>76</sup> SJAN Cluj, The People's Council of Cluj Region, Section for Architecture and Systematization, file no. 36/1956, f. 436.

<sup>77</sup> SJAN Cluj, The People's Council of Cluj Region, Section for Architecture and Systematization, file no. 27/1957, f. 110.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 119.

<sup>79</sup> Vasile Mitrea, Tudose Emanoil, Aurelian Buzuloiu, Eugeniu Penescu, *Cluj- Napoca în proiecte. 50 ani. 1960-2010*, (Cluj-Napoca: Editura Imprimeria Ardealului, 2011), p. 58.

<sup>80</sup> *Loc. cit.*, file no. 22/1961, f. 525.

Committee of the People's Council of Cluj in 1963<sup>81</sup>. According to the systematization plan, the regional function of the city was that of an economic<sup>82</sup>, cultural and administrative center<sup>83</sup>. According to predictions, it was estimated that the town's population would increase by 50.000 inhabitants over the following 15 years from 181.000 in 1960 to 230.000 in 1977<sup>84</sup>. Also, in order to accommodate the new residents and increase the average inhabitable surface to 8sqm/ person, it was estimated that another 32.500 new dwelling units needed to be built by 1975<sup>85</sup>. Last but not least it was stated that the city's infrastructure needed to be brought up to date with the ever-growing expectations of the inhabitants<sup>86</sup>. After subsequent changes to the plan the industrial function was considered to be preeminent along with the role of the city as a university center<sup>87</sup>. A new systematization plan was elaborated in 1965 by DSPAC Cluj and was approved in 1969.

Just like in other cities throughout Romania in 1957 some of the town's most important avenues underwent significant changes. The first of such avenues was Horea Street. The street was first to be taken into consideration by the authorities because it functioned as the main link between the railway station and the city's center<sup>88</sup>. It should be noted that the street and subsequent buildings need major repairs because of the damages done by the bombings during the Second World War. This provided the local communist leaders with a perfect place to build modernist multi-story apartment building on a historical relevant street and with an important function in the city. This was not only a part of

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<sup>81</sup> Vasile Mitrea, Tudose Emanoil, Aurelian Buzuloiu, Eugeniu Penescu, *Cluj- Napoca în proiecte. 50 ani. 1960-2010*, p.58.

<sup>82</sup> Without any preference for any one segment of the economy.

<sup>83</sup> Vasile Mitrea, Tudose Emanoil, Aurelian Buzuloiu, Eugeniu Penescu, *Cluj- Napoca în proiecte. 50 ani. 1960-2010*, p.58.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>85</sup> According to the 1951 legislation, 8sqm/ inhabitant was considered to be the absolute minimum surface necessary for one person to live in a healthy environment. Despite this in 1959 the average inhabitable surface in Cluj was of around 5.9 sqm/ inhabitant, SJAN Cluj, The People's Council of Cluj Region, Section for Commune Administration, file no. 28/1959, f. 183.

<sup>86</sup> Vasile Mitrea, Tudose Emanoil, Aurelian Buzuloiu, Eugeniu Penescu, *Cluj- Napoca în proiecte. 50 ani. 1960-2010*, p.58.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 70.

<sup>88</sup> SJAN Cluj, The People's Council of Cluj Region, Section for Architecture and Systematization, file no. 27/1957, f. 176.

the communist regime's housing program but also a statement, that communism would triumph and inevitably replace the old. Following the same logic local authorities also decided upon the major refurbishment of two of the city's central squares. This was done between the years 1960 and 1965. The construction of the Republica block of flats<sup>89</sup> (arh. Alexandru Nemeș) and the nearby 1000 seats cinema (arh. Ioana Schipor și arh. Eugeniu Pănescu) completely transformed Mihai Viteazul Square. Similarly in Păcii Square along with two new blocks of flats (Păcii and the corner block of flats at the end of Napoca Street)<sup>90</sup> another highly relevant building from an architectural and ideological point of view was constructed - the Students Cultural House. It was part of a larger project of the central authorities, started in 1959, who provided special funding for constructions needed by the local universities<sup>91</sup>. Beside this another project of the early 60's was the rehabilitation of the city's slums areas, many of which were in the proximity of the city center like Dragalina Street and Cetățuie area, Cipariu Square and Între Ape district.

One of the most important achievements in regard to the city planning of Cluj during the 60's was the building of the micro-districts Grigorescu (1962-1965) and micro-district I Gheorgheni (1965-1967)<sup>92</sup>. This was a common practice of the time in the Soviet Union and can be considered as yet another model exported to socialist countries. But at the same time we can affirm that the implementation of the modernist principles of the notion of micro-district was also a first moment of reorientation of Romanian architectural practice towards western European models because of the dialog between Romanian and western professional in the context of the increasingly good diplomatic relations with the United State and other capitalist countries. Better said the architectural and city planning practice of the time can be viewed as a mix between western and soviet models that produced syncretic results<sup>93</sup>.

The micro-district was a residential area composed of blocks of flats along with public buildings like schools, kindergartens, health-care facilities, grocery shops etc. Its borders where clearly marked by high traffic arteries, water flows or railroads. It was designed in such a way

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<sup>89</sup> Din activitatea Institutelor Regionale de Proiectări, în *Arhitectura RPR*, nr. 3/1959, p.12.

<sup>90</sup> Vasile Mitrea, Tudose Emanoil, Aurelian Buzuloiu, Eugeniu Penescu, *Cluj- Napoca în proiecte. 50 ani. 1960-2010*, p.96.

<sup>91</sup> Lazăr Marian, *Primarii Clujului: 1919-2012*, pp.238-139.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 173.

<sup>93</sup> Mara Mărginean, *Procesul de urbanizare în centrele industriale Hunedoara și Călan*, p. 264.

that every inhabitant enjoyed similar living conditions and had equal access to all of the public facilities. For example, everyone was supposed to live in a 500m radius of any such facility. This made it possible to walk everywhere and so no major motor roads where to cross the micro-district's territory<sup>94</sup>.

It was believed that micro-district would become an actual manifestation of the egalitarian principles professed by the official ideology, a quintessence of the superiority of the communist regimes compared to the bourgeois past. As we shall point out later the two micro-districts built in Cluj between 1960 and 1965/67 followed all of the above principles but other conditions made the goal impossible to achieve.

The placement of the first micro-district built in Cluj, Grigorescu I, in the central part of the future Grigorescu neighborhood had several reasons of which the main two where the relatively low density of the population in this area of the town<sup>95</sup>, which reduced the amount of money needed for the expropriation compensations, as well as the fact that the area had the need infrastructure (though incomplete) which would further lead to a reduction of the construction costs. Grigorescu district was designed to be made up of three micro-districts. As we already mentioned the first one built was the central one, micro-district I, followed by the western micro-district built after 1972<sup>96</sup>. The eastern part of the district with its interwar villas remained relatively unchanged. The district was designed for a population of 25-28.000 inhabitants who would benefit of all the modern amenities. Inside the micro-districts area the inhabitants moved around on foot as no heavy traffic was allowed. For instance, in the area of the present day Alexandru Vlahuță Street in the early 60's was the micro-district's garden. The project though was never completed because several public buildings like the cinema, the hospital, the library and the police station were not built. In the original projects the architects also included the creation of an artificial lake on the nearby Someș River but that was also abandoned<sup>97</sup>. Gheorgheni neighborhood was designed in two stages: first the micro-district one and two in 1963, and then the micro-district three and

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<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 265-266.

<sup>95</sup> Vasile Mitrea, Tudose Emanoil, Aurelian Buzuloiu, Eugeniu Penescu, *Cluj- Napoca în proiecte. 50 ani. 1960-2010*, p.162.

<sup>96</sup> Vasile Mitrea, Danciu I Maxim, Sandu Alexandru M, *op.cit.*, p.15.

<sup>97</sup> Vasile Mitrea, Tudose Emanoil, Aurelian Buzuloiu, Eugeniu Penescu, *Cluj- Napoca în proiecte. 50 ani. 1960-2010*, p.142.



Alverna after 1969<sup>98</sup>. The works at the micro-district 1 Gheorgheni started in 1964-65 and ended in 1967. It was also built according to modernist principles and still to this day remains the only part of the city largely unaffected by further building projects.

Even though the effort of the architects to use modernist principles<sup>99</sup>, similar to those from western Europe, in order to solve the housing crisis in Cluj during the 60's needs to be acknowledged it must also be stated that the architects work was significantly controlled by the decisions makers of the communist party. For example, even though micro-districts were also built in the western world the projects from Cluj were the sole creation of the state. Citizens could in no way control or influence any of its characteristics<sup>100</sup>. This sometimes led to popular unrest as, for example, many of the residents who lived in the area where micro-districts were built did not want to leave their homes<sup>101</sup>. Also, towards the early 70's party officials decided that the density of the population in these areas was too low and so decided the building of new blocks of flats between the existing ones, radically altering in this way the original design. In the end Cluj (Napoca) became one of the most crowded city in Romania.

### Conclusions:

To conclude, after the Second World War the communist authorities implemented several urban construction patterns as a way of managing the urban spaces throughout Romania. Our major finding was that, at least in the case of the city of Cluj, there was little congruity between the architectural model of Socialist Realist housing district promoted by the central decision makers and the local development of the city which followed to a greater extent the avant-garde principle of the garden-city. This is what we call the first stage of the city's architectural evolution, between 1952 and 1956. After 1957, the communist authorities found solutions to these incongruities by allocating more resources as well as

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<sup>98</sup> Vasile Mittrea, Danciu I. Maxim, Sandu Alexandru M., *op.cit.*, p. 15.

<sup>99</sup> Vasile Mitrea, Tudose Emanoil, Aurelian Buzuloiu, Eugeniu Penescu, *Cluj- Napoca în proiecte. 50 ani. 1960-2010*, p. 161.

<sup>100</sup> Juliana Maxim, *Mass Housing and Collective Experience: on the notion of microraiion in the 1950s and 1960s*, in *The Journal of Architecture*, (14, 1, 2009), p.13.

<sup>101</sup> SJAN Cluj, The People's Council of Cluj Region, Section for Commune Administration, file no. 19/1963, f.93.

implementing an institutional reform in the fields of architecture and urban planning. The result was the building, in most Romanian towns (implicitly in Cluj), of residential areas in accordance with the modernist concept of the micro-district.