



Around the block-În jurul blocului

The transformation of value in neighbourhood public space
in a post-socialist city



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DIPLOMARBEIT

AROUND THE BLOCK – ‘ÎN JURUL BLOCULUI’

The transformation of value in neighbourhood public space in a post-socialist city

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Abstract

This thesis explores the public, open space surrounding multi-storey dwellings in Circumvalațiunii, a functionalist neighbourhood of Timișoara built during the 1970s. Half of the city's population lives in multi-storey housing constructed after 1965. Designed according to the theories of the Athens Charter, the 'verdant areas surrounding the dwellings', were, during socialism, put into the care of the local residents. This is the context in which the thesis starts out in order to consider the value of non-central public space in neighbourhoods. The changes of the political, economic and social structures in post-socialism, transformed the open space surrounding the blocks, in both its material and social production.

Two questions are in the centre of the research: What value is produced in the open space around the block today? Is the global model of the 'Non-Place', as coined by Marc Augé (1995) and later Zygmunt Bauman (2000), observable in the open space surrounding the blocks? The first question is focusing on how value is produced in public space, through everyday practices nested in the political, economic and social determinants on the local and global level. The second question looks at the influence of the globally spreading non-place into the space of the local neighbourhood.

In addition to theory, the thesis is built on collected empirical evidence, including narrative interviews with long-term residents, expert interviews, participatory observation and observational walks. Around 10 on-site explorations were conducted in a time-span of five years.

This research has shown that there is much more to consider than the physical appearance of the space surrounding the blocks. The transformative process towards the privatisation of public space in the post-socialist period included the de-legitimation and re-definition of hands-on, self-sustenance practices in public space. In a city that has become part of global networks, where central public space has been commodified, the value of neighbourhood public space as a place for social and political empowerment, is all the more important to consider.

Zusammenfassung

Diese Arbeit untersucht den öffentlichen, offenen Raum rund um mehrgeschossige Wohnhäuser in Circumvalațiunii, einem funktionalistischen Viertel von Timișoara, das in den 1970er Jahren gebaut wurde. Die Hälfte der Stadtbevölkerung lebt hier in mehrgeschossigen Wohnhäusern, die nach 1965 erbaut wurden. Die nach den Theorien der Charta von Athen entworfenen "grünen Bereiche rund um die Wohnungen" wurden während des Sozialismus in die Obhut der Anwohner und Anwohnerinnen gegeben. In diesem Kontext setzt die These an, um den Wert des dezentralen öffentlichen Raums in den Vierteln zu betrachten. Die Veränderungen der politischen, wirtschaftlichen und sozialen Strukturen im Postsozialismus beeinflussten den Freiraum um die Wohnblöcke herum, sowohl in seiner materiellen als auch in seiner sozialen Produktion.

Zwei Fragen stehen im Mittelpunkt der Forschung: Welcher Wert wird heute auf der Freifläche um den Block produziert? Ist das globale Modell des "Nicht-Ortes", wie es von Marc Augé (1995) und später von Zygmunt Bauman (2000) geprägt wurde, im Freiraum um die Blöcke herum beobachtbar? Die erste Frage konzentriert sich darauf, wie Wert im öffentlichen Raum produziert wird, und zwar durch alltägliche Praktiken, die in die politischen, wirtschaftlichen und sozialen Determinanten auf lokaler und globaler Ebene eingebettet sind. Die zweite Frage befasst sich mit dem Einfluss des sich global ausbreitenden Nicht-Ortes in den Raum der lokalen Nachbarschaft.

Neben der Theorie stützt sich die These auf gesammelte empirische Belege, darunter narrative Interviews mit Langzeitbewohner und Bewohnerinnen, Experten und Expertinnen Interviews, partizipative Beobachtung und Beobachtungsspaziergänge. In einem Zeitraum von fünf Jahren wurden etwa 10 Vor-Ort-Explorationen durchgeführt.

Diese Forschung hat gezeigt, dass es viel mehr zu berücksichtigen gibt als die physische Erscheinung des Raumes, der die Blöcke umgibt. Der herbeigeführte Transformationsprozess zur Privatisierung des öffentlichen Raumes in der Zeit nach dem Sozialismus umfasste die Delegitimierung und Neudefinition alltäglicher, sich selbst erhaltender Praktiken im öffentlichen Raum. In einer Stadt, die Teil globaler Netzwerke geworden ist und in der der zentrale öffentliche Raum zur Ware gemacht wurde, ist der Wert des öffentlichen Raumes in der Nachbarschaft als Ort der sozialen und politischen Ermächtigung umso wichtiger zu berücksichtigen.

I am grateful to all the people who shared with me their experience and time, so I can better understand public space and city dwellers. By opening up to me, they pushed me to ask more questions and challenge my previous knowledge.

I would like to thank my supervisor Sabine Knierbein for sharing knowledge, for her support and patience throughout the process. It is appreciated!

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1 Introduction

Respondent P3 (resident of Circumvalațiunii since 1973 – year of birth):

'Back then in front of the apartment building our parents had gardens. They used the vacant lot left in-between the playground and the block of flats to parcel out and cultivate. That's how they watched us and kept 'courtyard life'! My parents came from the village for school when they were 14 and stayed here. They were somewhat unintegrated, coming from [house with] a courtyard, from the countryside to a large human settlement...and most of them [neighbours] were like that. I remember the shouting from the window. My parents lived on the 9th floor. ... My sister still lives there. She tells me that the neighbours, even if they are the same, have changed. Ping-pong tables were removed because the old ladies were disturbed by the noise. In addition, last year [2014], they [neighbours] started a petition to remove the playground, on the grounds that it is a source of noise! I know situations where the benches in front of the block of flats have been removed, because the youngsters are sitting on them and making noise. They seem to have forgotten that they also had children.'

Nicolae Robu, mayor of Timișoara (2012-present):

'The gardens will disappear. Green areas will be designed in a civilised manner.' (Opinia Timișoarei, June 2015)

And again:

'I wish that everything that is considered public space is designed beautifully and according to norms, green spaces should have an appearance [sic], planting should be made with the science of planting, not just a thing for planting. A citizen that lives there has a certain skill, a certain job, but doesn't have the information. What is below-ground, for example, what are future plans for the area? With all the benevolence and desire to do good, he can mess up things if he is allowed to do such interventions which are, I repeat, in the responsibility of the municipality.' (Renașterea, March 2016)

1.1 Problem setting – around the block / ‘în jurul blocului’

The change from a socialist, one-party state to the capitalist economy and representative democracy in Romania brought the transformation and accentuation of the social symbol of private property. As a general observation Cymbrowsky (2017) formulates: When after 1989 the public became much less important in favour of the private – globally – this process was much more palpable in the democratizing post-socialist societies in which it was interpreted as the necessary change [Sztompka, 1993]. According to a study of Eurostat (the statistical office of the European Union) (2016) 96% of the Romanian citizens own a personal property dwelling, compared to 69,3% in the EU-28 (EU-SILC, 2017), despite Romania being today one of the EU's poorest members with 35,7% of the population at risk of poverty or social exclusion (2016-2017) (Eurostat, 2019). Romania is on the direction of developing a more and more polarised class society, with growing differences between the few rich and the many poor. It is also a country severely affected by economic migration of both the middle and working class. An estimated 3,6 million (United Nations: 2017) live and work at least part-time abroad.

In 1990 the Romanian State owned around one third of the housing stock (approximately 2,6 million units according to: Economic analysis, 2018). Today public housing is at 2-3%¹. What defines the privately owned ‘home’ in Romania today? 66,6% of Romania’s multi-story housing was built between the end of the 1950s and the end of the 1980s (BETA, 2018). In the capital Bucharest, for instance, no less than 82% of the population lived in such buildings, a number well exceeding that of any West European capital (Hirt, 2012:35). Designed according to the politico-economical frame of the socialist context (V. Opreșan, personal interview, February 2015; Zahariade, 2011), Romania's modernist housing neighbourhoods were built in a period of rapid industrialisation, urban growth (migration) and planned economy. In an urban ethnographic study on a modernist housing development built in the 1970s in Bucharest the research team concluded: ‘For some, moving here has been a drama, for others the result of years of effort’ (Mihăilescu, 2009:33). After 1989, access to new technologies and knowledge did not bring essential improvements to the existing buildings. Privatisation of the state-housing, change in the official discourse and the global free market promoted fast consumption over sustainable models of use. General improvements of the

¹ In comparison, one out of four residents in Vienna live in publicly owned housing today (Stadt Wien)

buildings made in the past 30 years concern mainly technical issues of the roof and exterior walls. Interior transformations of the apartments have become an ongoing individual process contributing to the noise, dust and conflict between neighbours.

In between 1957/58 and 1974/75, Romania's multi-story housing, was designed according to functionalism and the theories of the Athens Charter (1933). Functionalist urbanism created the spatial model of free-standing collective housing with 'the verdant areas surrounding the dwellings', a new model of urban space in housing neighbourhoods. The Athens Charter (1933) saw the benefits of this space in the social realm, a shared space, an extension of the dwellings, a green, free space in the vicinity of the domestic, with a role of ensuring leisure possibilities as health-care for the many, not just the few. Widely used after World War II in different historical: political, economic and social contexts, the model of free-standing, collective housing was replicated and experienced in similar, but also distinct ways, as public or social housing in countries like France or England or as housing for the majority in the Socialist Republic of Romania. Post-modernist critique of functionalist urbanism emerging in the 1960s-1970s included: the separation of functions, the topic of materiality, prefabrication and aesthetics, as well the method of technocrat, top-down planning and implementation. Views about the city and space as a material product shifted towards the social production of space and citizen self-governance. Exploration of the public space as a social and political space, where differences are addressed not erased, started gaining momentum.

'În jurul blocului' = 'Around the block', is an everyday expression describing open space surrounding multi-storey residential buildings in Romania. The term refers to a material place as well as the socio-cultural universe happening in it and is mostly associated with the socialist-modernist neighbourhoods built between the end of the 50s and the 90s under the communist party ruling. In the beginning of the 90s, when the right to buy started gaining ground over the right to use, the open green space surrounding these dwellings remained in the property of the city. This will not be the case in the housing developments constructed after 1990 (private investments) where the open space is private property, making way for the creation of new social practices defined by private control, of users and access, in the surrounding open space. Romania's one-party governments (1947 – 1989) used main, central public space to display their power by controlling the practice and discourse. The public space of neighbourhoods was put into the care of the dwellers. The functionalist city nested in the context of state socialism, was based on the idea of city-dwellers, meant the workers, taking care of their own neighbourhood. For the migrants from the rural to the urban, this space became part of their first urban experience. Examining the political influence on this space, in Romania today, 30

years into post-socialist free-market economy, I found some cities (Braşov, 2019) encouraging citizen’s interventions, for example by giving out a prize for the most beautiful ‘garden’, while others, including Timișoara’s mayor (2019), supporting a top-down economic model, eliminating self-sustenance processes and self-governance. Timișoara is one of Romania's largest cities and today ‘a temple of consumption’ (Russel, 2009). Its (cultural) history and geographic position played a role in the interest of the local and global capital and influenced in the last 30 years a stable number of residents. Although people are leaving, others are moving in². With a population of over 330.000 (INS, 2016), around 50% live in a block of flats (expression used by Zahariade, 2009) built between 1965-1990 (Simionescu, 2010).

The case study is focusing on ‘Circumvalațiunii’, one of Timișoara’s socialist modernist neighbourhoods built during the 1970s, according to free-plan urbanism. It has a physical, built continuity of 45-50 years, through socialism and post-socialism. The open space surrounding the dwellings was put, by the socialist state, into the care of the neighbours. The political, economic and social transformations of the past 30 years towards free-market economy changed materialities and practices in the neighbourhood’s public space (central and non-central). Five years ago, when I took a walk in Circumvalațiunii, I was fascinated by the variety of wild, over-grown, green to domesticated space, to ground occupied by cars. It signalled the involvement of a variety of actors and the absence of others. Topics raised by residents, during my first on-site visits, turned out to be frequently discussed also in the literature. They concern: the legal and the perceived limits between public and private; the right to use; and questions like: Who is included, who is excluded? Who decides? What are the functions – attributed and appropriated - and what kind of practices, materiality and value get produced in this space, from the side of the structurally constructed and on everyday level?

1.2 Contribution to the field

Measured in time spent, a major part of this research consisted in looking for the question(s) to ask, in regard of the open space surrounding the block of flats in Circumvalațiunii. After exploring the urbanism and architecture of this specific neighbourhood and the materiality of the open space, I started to reflect on

² Of the 33 apartments on the staircase, where I lived with my family, around 10% of the apartments are still used by the families that lived there before 1990.

considering the importance of the surrounding open space of dwellings as an extension of the domestic, the private needs. In the next step, after looking into theories about public space and the value of public space today, in the context of economic globalization, migration and privatisation of cities, my focus shifted towards public space as ‘places of purely political and social kind’ (Lefebvre, 2009b: 288f). In addition, although not the first focus of the theoretical part, my attention for the idea of public green space stayed throughout the whole research.

The literature review confirmed the first on-sight observations: that public space surrounding the block of flats can be looked at from the perspective of housing, the domestic, as well as from the perspective of public as a shared social and political space. In view of the fact that loss of public space, observable in cities today, translates into loss of space for social and political empowerment, the value of the public space of neighbourhoods is all the more important as a place for (collective) public action. A study (248 papers) conducted in 1996-1998, by students from the Architectural University in Bucharest under the guidance of Ana Maria Zahariade (local architectural theoretician), on ‘the space forming the immediate vicinity of the dwellings’ in neighbourhoods built after the last world war in Bucharest, concludes: ‘they (the inhabitants) should be provided with the freedom to bring their own contributions’ (2009:160). This shows that the knowledge is here, on local level, and that the one question to be asked is: Are they – the inhabitants – being provided with the freedom to bring their own contribution, according to their needs?

A look at the general historical overview of public space, showed how it’s function and value have changed throughout time, depending on the economic, political and social context. Although having used the Athens Charter as the model to design housing neighbourhoods, and as consequence producing a similar fragmentation of space and separation of the functions as criticised by Lefebvre, the totalitarian socialist regime, still produced a different space and different practices than, state-capitalism, due to the economic, social and political differences. 30 years into representative-democracy Romania’s main public space is in general overtaken by almost unlimited privatisation (Mihăilescu, 2006), or neglect of public administration. In Circumvalațiunii neighbourhood, the central public space is a space of political, economic and social control. The non-central public space in the vicinity of the dwellings is partly abandoned by the authorities and re-naturalised, partly used as flower gardens, partly taken over by cars.

To connect the empirical research with a wider sphere of knowledge the following theories will serve as guidelines:

- The concept of non-place for recognising and defining the spreading of a global model, a place created with no regards to the context, whose main function is economic.
- The changing value of public space depending on the mode of production. Focusing on Lefebvre’s view about the production of space as first of all a social product and his critique brought to functionalism and technocrat urban planning for its contribution to the commodification of space by the separation of functions that lead to the simplification of social practices.

Step by step theory and field work led to the following research questions:

- **What is the value (in-between use or exchange) of the ‘în jurul blocului’ (around the block) today, viewed from the perspective of everyday practices and the constructed policies and implementation?**
- **Is the global model of the non-place, as coined by Augé, Bauman and others, observable in the open space surrounding the blocks?**

Aware of the impact brought upon society and the individual, by the changing parameters of time, space and identity, in a globalised and technological world, Augé (1992) coined the phrase non-place to refer to places where concerns of relations, history and identity are erased. In 1992, he envisaged the future presence of the non-place in Eastern European countries due to the spreading of the global economy, of technology and of displacement. Since then, it is not just the spreading of the non-place, as coined by Augé, that is visible in Romania, but also the spreading of the ‘non-place’ into the ‘place’. Bauman (2000) identified the non-place in the public space, and included it in the wider group called ‘public but non-civil spaces’, where ‘the other’ or ‘his otherness’ are annihilated, based on difference. With the advancement of technology into our public and private lives, migration and displacement, also the domestic non-place of home has been widely discussed (Tim Gregory, 2009). This work will explore the presence of the non-place in the space surrounding the block of flats, in Timișoara, in the context of a nation, where the transformations of the past 30 years restrained and delegitimised self-sustenance-, domestic practices in the public space of neighbourhoods. I wonder, was it an ideological goal to eliminate the former users and existing networks from the space, in order to create a similar model to a public but non-civil space?

After the first theoretical trip connecting the space around the block to the non-place concept, the second will go towards Lefebvre’s concept about the production of space, his critique of functionalism and technocrat urban planning, as well as theories about the use value of urban space. This will help with analysing the original design, from the perspective of the criticism brought to the initial theory, as

well as reflect on the social production of the around the block in the 1970s-1980s and today. Lefebvre's exploration of the production of space shifts the attention from the material space to the process of production. A relational understanding of space, seen as both a material and a social product, a complex construction (based on values and the production of meaning) which affects spatial practices and perceptions. Lefebvre argued that depending on the mode of production every society produces a specific space: a material and a social space. Critical of the space created by the technocrat method of design, for separating functions and users, according to Lefebvre (1972) improvements can be made only through the complex practices of (re)appropriation and participation.

1.3 Methodology and structure of the work

The research started out with an architect's approach, with questions about materiality, technology and aesthetics, then shifted towards the perspective of space as a social product. Deciding for the method of a one case study was made with the awareness that researching a certain phenomenon should not be detached from its surrounding. The connection to the context: political, economic and social, the position in the local and global context, plus the time factor, are all essential. The case-study combines a theoretical framework with an empirical part. I decided on Timișoara as my single case study, to look into public space of neighbourhoods designed according to functionalist urban planning in the context of a socialist economy and one-party ruling and everyday life spanning from the middle of the 1970s to the present. Due to the limited extent of a Master Thesis and the wish to develop a qualitatively valid output, I chose to only focus on one city rather than a multiple case study. Still, in an un-orthodox way for a research, mentally I compared Circumvalațiunii's public space to the public space of another neighbourhood of Timișoara and to Viennese housing neighbourhoods. Having lived in Timișoara for 30 years, I have experienced living in the space of the 'în jurul blocului' (around the block). I experienced the changes after December 1989, which back then I could only observe not order. Living in Vienna, for the past 10 years, I could contemplate additional approaches to public space.

Methods chosen in this project:

- Literature review (qualitative content analysis): theoretical research in urban studies and planning theories, in capitalist and socialist economies, relevant for getting insights on the local and the global knowledge.
- Qualitative content analysis of the original design plans and technical report (found in the archives of the former Timisoara Design Institute), laws and regulations that influenced planning and building of the neighbourhood.
- Qualitative content analysis of some of the laws, policies and regulations concerning the open space surrounding the blocks, in the context of a capitalist economy and representative-democracy.

Semi-structured, problem centred interviews:

- five narrative interviews with respondents living in Circumvalațiunii since the 70s – 80s, continuously or interrupted (aged 45-85 at time of the interviews)
- three expert interviews with former employees of the Timișoara Design Institute at that time (two architects and one technical drawer)
- one interview with an architect who published on the history, architecture and urbanism of Timisoara.

Participatory observation of everyday practices related to the open space surrounding the block of flats, and short talks in the public space of Circumvalațiunii.

Deepening my English knowledge was maybe less challenging than re-discovering Romanian language. Growing up in Romania starting with the late 70s, I inherited the spoken Romanian language of the socialist and post-socialist period. Research for this work made me aware, about the nuances in using specific terms and the socio-political positioning of the users behind the words. I do consider it important to draw attention upon the existence of different perspectives. Consequently, I looked at the work of mainly four authors (in alphabetical order): Boia L (Romanian historian, criticised by Romanian Theoreticians of the Left), Poernaru F (Romanian anthropologist), Stoica C.A (Romanian sociologist), Zahariade A.M (Romanian architectural theorist).

INTRODUCTION

Several challenges came up during this research. One of them was about changing and completing my architect perspective of looking at space as a material and technical object with the social, anthropologic or philosophical perspective that understands (public) space as a social product. Another, to un-learn and re-learn the way I was thinking about the process of building and its subordination to the political and economic determinants. To acknowledge and differentiate between the different actors, practices and level of influence – in totalitarianism as well as in representative-democracy. The implementation of socialism through totalitarianism makes the topic of agency difficult to approach, especially looking back 30 years. Nevertheless voices, coming mainly from the field of social science, argue that the existence of an everyday life that needs to be explored, in order to have a whole picture of that period: ‘understanding the importance of the past as a lived experience, beyond the realm of restoration itself’ (Temple,1993). Exploring the present without looking into the recent past, as challenging as it is, would have made an incomplete research.

The structure of the thesis is built on six chapters. Introduction – chapter 1, including Problem setting, Contribution to the field and Methodology. The theoretical framework of the research, is discussed in chapter 2. Subchapter 2.1 explores the term non-place, as coined by Augé in 1992, later revisited by other authors (Bauman, 2000; Gregory, 2009) observing the spreading of the non-place, to former places such as the home or the public space, as a result of the extension of globalisation and technology. Subchapter 2.2 explores the production of space as defined by Lefebvre and his critique of functionalism and technocrat urban planning. The value – use or exchange - of public space is brought in discussion, together with observations concerning the changing character of public space, depending on the historical - political and economic determinants.

Information regarding the local Romanian context will be provided in chapter 3. First, in subchapter 3.1, a brief national and regional outlook including a timeframe of the political periods between 1945 and 1990, which decided the policies for the build. The topics of migration and discrimination on ethnical grounds, will be mentioned, for their influence upon the produced urbanity. Subchapter 3.2 concentrates on a more in-depth exploration of Timișoara and Circumvalațiunii neighbourhood, from the perspective of urban planning, housing and the ‘în jurul blocului’ (around the block). The exploration of the housing was helpful, on the one hand, in accessing knowledge on how the construction industry produced neighbourhoods, on the other to look into the social composition of the neighbours.

The empirical part of the research is concentrated in chapter 4. Subchapter 4.1 is looking into some of the laws, regulations and policies defining the ‘în jurul blocului’ (around the block) during the past decades and the near future; the definition of the space surrounding the block. Subchapter 4.2 is looking into some of the existing functions and practices in the space around the block, discovered through the interviews and observational walks. Subchapter 4.3 sets out the interviews in English. The original, Romanian version is under chapter 8.1 Appendix A.

In the End, the Analysis and Conclusions will present an understanding about Circumvalațiunii and the transformation of value in neighbourhood non-central public space in a post-socialist city.

All translations of policies and interviews are my own.

2 Theoretical framework

2.1 The (non-) place, a global model

The first theoretical chapter of this work revolves around the concept of non-place, an anthropological space of transience, where human beings remain anonymous. Shopping malls, airports, high-ways, five-star hotels as well as refugee camps, these are some of the places that Augé identified as non-places in 1992. At first look, they seem to have nothing in common with the public space in a multi-storey housing neighbourhood. Since 1992, when Augé coined the phrase, until the present, other thinkers (Bauman, 2000; Gregory, 2009) extended the observations and knowledge about the phenomenon. They noticed the spreading of the non-place into the domestic realm due to the growing use of technology, and into the public space due to the elimination of difference.

Marc Augé presents his concept of anthropological non-place in 'Non-Lieux: Introduction a une anthropologie de la supermodernite' (1992). The author defines an anthropology of supermodernity for the investigation of the individual experiencing a 'new form of solitude' (Augé, 1995:87) and the absence of identity in non-places of the late-capitalist phenomena and globalisation. Aware of the transformations of time, space and identity that globalisation and technology bring upon society and the individual, Augé coined the term non-place to refer to places where concerns of relations, history and identity are erased: 'If a place can be defined as relational, historical and concerned with identity, then a space which cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity will be a non-place.' (Augé, 2009:77). Augé proposes the anthropology of supermodernity as a method for the investigation of the individuals present in a non-place. In contrast to classical anthropology that was looking at humans in relation to their habitat, history, culture and social life, the anthropology of supermodernity will not find similar affiliations. Supermodernity is the present time³, but it is not postmodernity:

3 Oxford Reference: 'The present times, as Augé sees things, are not so much 'post' modern, in the sense of spelling the end of something, as being in excess of the modern, meaning the present age is not yet different in kind from what we refer to as 'modernity', but in the extremeness of its

'it is the other face of a coin whose obverse represents postmodernity, the positive of a negative' (Augé, 2009: 30). A historical conjuncture defined by overabundance of events, spatial overabundance and the individualization of references (Augé, 2009:109): excess of 'time, space, individuality'. An increased modernity or the end of modernity? The non-place is the product of supermodernity. 'The non-place is the opposite of utopia: it exists, and it does not contain any organic society' (Augé, 2009:111) It can take the form of a physical space but, is first of all, due to the increasing influence of technology on our perception, a state of mind. In both, physical and mental forms, it does not integrate the context: material or immaterial; it refers to places of transition and consumption. Today's look-alike, depersonalised non-place is 'here' but could be anywhere else. Examples of non-place given by Augé include: motorways, airports, shopping malls, five-star hotels as well as refugee camps. 'Clearly the word "non-place" designates two complementary but distinct realities: spaces formed in relation to certain ends (transport, transit, commerce, leisure), and the relations that individuals have with these spaces.' (Augé, 2009:94)

In other words, a place is an anthropological place: 'which reserves a reference, for all those it assigns a position, however humble and modest.' (Augé, 2009:51). The word 'relational' applied to a place refers to 'organically social' (Augé, 2009:94) relations, while used in connection to a non-place it refers to 'a solitary contractuality' with the self (Augé, 2009:94).

Marc Augé's theory on non-place is not concerned with place and the built environment from the perspective of design theories, but from the perspective of the relation to the local context (material and mental) and the two-way influence, of a place on the individual and vice-versa. His explorations have little to do with pure aesthetics, technology and investment, they concentrate on the function of that place, time people spend there and the identity projected upon them.

In *Liquid Modernity*, Zygmunt Bauman (2000) explores non-place as part of a wider group of 'public but non-civil spaces', where 'the other' or 'his otherness' are annihilated, based on difference. Bauman (2000:104) uses Richard Sennett's definition of the term 'civility': 'The main point about civility is (...) the ability to interact with strangers without holding their strangeness against them and without

difference in degree it is rapidly approaching that point. Another way of putting this is to note that the three symptoms of modernity have, for their own different historical reasons, come to define the present in a way that was not previously true. The three excesses he speaks of are: (i) time; (ii) space; (iii) individuality.

pressing them to surrender it or to renounce some or all the traits that have made them strangers in the first place.' Non-place makes the possession of 'civility' unnecessary by eliminating variety and different patterns of behaviour. By removing 'fear' of the stranger, of the unknown, they remove the need to negotiate; by discouraging action they discourage interaction. Non-place reduces complex social interaction to a simplified behaviour, a merely physical presence where cultural differences are made invisible. Making settling-in impossible, only short-term stay is offered in this space: 'Whatever needs to be done and is done in 'non-places', everyone there should *feel* as if *chez soi*, while no one should *behave* as if truly at home.' (Bauman, 2000:102).

Augé and Bauman both point out that in a non-place, where the ideas of the collective and 'civility' are absent, they will not be taught. It is not just about an absence in the present but also in the future. This would be the case in a pure non-place, where the absence of qualitatively good social relations leads to alienation (the opposite of which is meaning). Augé (1995:79) points out that in reality there are no unadulterated places or non-places: 'Place and non-place are rather like opposed polarities: the first is never completely erased, the second never totally completed; they are like palimpsests on which the scrambled game of identity and relations is ceaselessly rewritten.' By creating routine, familiarity and meaning, everyday practices have the potential to restore social relations. Ones born (or emerged), everyday practices create and re-create networks.

Capitalism and socialism (regarded as part of modernity) although different than traditional, pre-modern societies, still created place, by 'the necessary coexistence of ancient religion and new industry' Augé (2009:93). But they also started the functional division and mental alienation which can be seen as one of the main reasons why non-place came into existence (Tonkiss, Knierbein). Non-place is a mono-functional space.

To sum up: from sociological perspective, non-place translates into social alienation, absence of common values and practices. From economic viewpoint it is a world of consumption, to which those who do not have the means will not have access (Augé, 1995); or as Gregory (2009) formulates: 'a world driven by pure economics'. 'Big markets require specific forms of political control; they exist only by virtue of a contract, respect for which is ensured by various religious or political procedures (Augé, 2009:57).

2.1.1 Domestic non-place: evolution of the phenomena

Because of the influence of both the outside and the inside, the public and the domestic, private realm, on the 'în jurul blocului' (the open space surrounding block of flats), I considered it helpful to have a short look at the definition and evolution of the phenomenon: 'domestic non-place'.

In 1992, Augé includes the function of housing, with some exceptions (typologies where people 'do not live together': hotels, refugee camps, some real-estate developments) into the place category. Bauman (2000) agrees with Augé, and sees non-place as uninhabitable (as opposed to home), while Tim Gregory (2009) draws attention to the argument that non-place is observable (at that time) in the domestic by the presence of network technologies (television, phones, computers) and the state of mind of the people working in non-place, who take the non-place to 'home'.

2.1.2 Analytical categories

The theoretical framework of the non-place will be used as a reference for a global model that was observed in cities of the global world and is observable today in Timișoara. It is not the goal of this research to precisely position the 'în jurul blocului' (around the block) in between place or non-place, but to look for specific aspects of the non-place that could influence its social production in the future.

Augé's three-part analytic categories for exploring (non)place include questions about: function, time and identity.

Questions about the *Function* of a place revolve around: Is it mono- or multifunctional? Does it encourage group or individual behaviour? Only bodily presence or social action and interaction? The stimulation of a social or economic model? Are the conditions favourable for: difference, dialogue, inclusion, social and political empowerment, collective identity, meaningful action. And a related question: Who has access?

Secondly, questions regarding *Time* people spend in producing it: long-term or transit (short-term)? The amount of time people spend in a (non)place is influenced by the economic and social system they live in, public discourse, social class, culture and their basic needs.

Thirdly, explorations about the *Identity* projected upon them: collective identities or individual(ised) model of consumption.

This theoretical framework will be connected to the case study by looking into the strategic construction of the 'in jurul blocului', by the state and city administration, along one main analytical category: function. 'Time' and 'identity' will be recognised in support of the 'function'.

2.2 The production and transformation of (public) space

My second trip into the theoretical knowledge revolves around the everyday production of 'use value' (as opposed to 'exchange value') for public space through practices of (re)appropriation and self-governance. This chapter is drawing on Lefebvre's understanding of space as a social product and his critique of urbanism and functionalist urban planning for the contribution to the separation of functions which lead to the separation of people. The second part of this chapter connects the production of space with public space as part of a city's social, political and economic ideology, and the transformation of its production influenced by the change of ideology.

2.2.1 The production of (public) space

Examining agrarian, industrial and urban society, in a sociological and philosophical approach to space, Lefebvre (1972) concludes that while industrialisation had different influences on different societies depending on the stage of production, they found themselves in (pre-modern, highly capitalist or socialist), the problems of the 'urban' are global. In the way the change from agrarian to industrial society was possible due to the transformation of ideas, concepts and practices, the change from industrial to urban also needs to go through processes of transformation, first of all on mental level. Recognising the limitations of a one-sided approach to space, Lefebvre aimed to develop a theory that would grasp the unity between three fields of space: the physical, mental and social (1974). His explorations of the production of space revolve around the relational understanding of space, seen as both a material and a social product; a complex construction (based on values and the production of meaning) which affects spatial practices and perceptions. This dialectic shifts the attention from the material space to the process of production, constituting the very object of his epistemological interest (Roskamm, 2014). According to Lefebvre space is a historical product and the production of space is a historical process (Roskamm, 2014). Lefebvre's approach to each historical mode proposes three lines of exploration: everyday

practices and perceptions (le perçu), representations or theories of space (le conçu) and the spatial imaginary of the time (le vécu).

Inside this framework Lefebvre critically examines capitalist, industrial society that produced and reproduced exchange value, and urbanism as a method which facilitated the attribution of exchange value to space. As opposed to the use value defined by the human needs it fulfils (Marx), the exchange value is an abstract concept, determined by the underlying social relations, political and technical conditions (Rubin, 2008). Instead of (re)creating polyfunctional space for citizens to appropriate according to their needs, Le Corbusier and the Bauhaus (unwittingly) produced the urbanism and architecture that would support the transformation of cities into fragmented space (Lefebvre, 1972). Separation of the functions produced mono-functional, un-used space, separation of people and simplification of social practices. An observer of capitalist processes and materiality, Lefebvre was also critical of soviet constructivists for not having produced the appropriate space for a social change (1991:59). The terms use and exchange value used by Lefebvre, come from Marxian economics questioning the capitalist mode of production and the social relations it produces. While society is developing new knowledge, materiality and everyday practices, existing urban space can be improved by the production of meaning through practices of animation and participation (Lefebvre, 1972).

2.2.2 On the framing and shaping of public space

Public space as the public component of cities has gone through the change and transformation that society and the city went through. In early capitalist society it was the space of bourgeois influence and ownership, as opposed to the aristocratic and religious dominance of the post-feudal times; in socialist society, the model of public space opposed the existing capitalist one, as an imagined proletarian space constructed around the topic of production (Cymbrowsky, 2017; Hirt, 2012). In real-socialism of Eastern Europe, the imposition of the state on the workers and the totalitarian control created, according to Cymbrowsky (2017) a hybrid public space and a counter public space in the neighbourhoods. Quantitatively measurable differences of the European, post-war capitalist and socialist public space, were explored by Hirt (2012) along three indicators: scale, function, style. Hirt's conclusion is that the public space of socialist cities, at the end of the 1980s, was bigger and greener (per capita), oriented towards the non-commercial, and aesthetically uniform. The post-industrial, technological, service and consumption society is subjected to the accentuation of the commodification of urban space, leading to gentrification, urban sprawl and to the disappearing of public space.

With disappearing I mean the shift or accentuation (depending on the context) of exchange value either in terms regarding ownership of the land or control of the social practices. In post-socialism the withdrawal of the state and planning authorities made possible the occupation of public space with 'do-it yourself architecture' (Hirt, 2012) as well as 'investor urbanism' (Hirt, 2012). In the present, the topics of investment and consumption determine both the materiality and the practice in public space. The reviewing of public space through history shows that the implemented public space is connected to the political, economic and social ideology of the ruler class or state.

At this point, the questions that arise are: What is the value of public space in the contemporary representative-democracy of a capitalist society? Lefebvre relates to the urban as 'a place where conflicts are expressed' (2003:175). He says: 'we are not concerned here with mental or literary places, nor with philosophical topoi (plural for 'topos'), but with places of purely political and social kind.' (2009b: 288f). Drawing upon Lefebvre's theories, Knierbein (2014) formulates: 'public spaces are both the mundane places of the urban everyday (social quality), as well as the revolutionary sites of emerging counter publics (political quality)'. A last definition, that introduces the question of 'ownership of public space': UN-Habitat's Charter of Public Space (2013) defines public space as the following: 'Public spaces are all places publicly owned or of public use (streets, sidewalks, open space, green space, public facilities), accessible and enjoyable by all for free and without a profit motive.' To sum up, the (frequently) touched-on aspects I encountered in contemporary research about public space today are: (i) the social - public space as a place where strangers meet strangers, where conflict is possible, (ii) the political - public space as a place for political emancipation and (iii) the role of the state in providing this space. State and city administration are the main bodies responsible for the defending and maintaining of public space for the benefits of the public, against capital accumulation as the main purpose in public space (Lefebvre, 1972; Mihăilescu, 2006; UN-Habitat, 2013). Citizens - meant as dwellers of cities - should be the main actors producing this space by everyday-, hands-on practices, not just as mere spectators (Mihăilescu, 2006) or consumers. Instead of employing the term participation (used by Lefebvre in the 1970s) that has acquired some negative symbolism since then, due to the controversies surrounding its use by authorities and experts, I prefer self-government in its broader sense, meaning both the informal and the formal self-management of society (Jacobs, 1961:114).

What about the value of public space in neighbourhoods? According to Jacobs (1961) the role of neighbourhoods is to help translate the experiences of real life, in street neighbourhoods, into policies and the purpose of the city as a whole (Jacobs,

1961:122). Additionally, it is to help maintain the area for its own residents and other users from the city as a whole (idem). Governed without the involvement of the neighbours and other city-dwellers public space of neighbourhoods can become, as described in chapter 2, a public but non-civil space, where the other or his otherness are annihilated (Zygmunt Bauman, 2000).

The theoretical framework around the production and transformation of public space will be used to look into the production of the space around the block from the side of the structurally constructed and from the side of everyday life. The search for everyday practices will focus on individual as well as collective self-initiated, self-governed practices.

3 Context

3.1 Timișoara between the nation-state and the imperial past

This first context related subchapter is not intended as a proper historic one. It briefly touches political, economic and social topics considered relevant in understanding the setting that the city of Timișoara is nested in. The goal is to attain a multilevel and context-sensitive exploration, characteristic for critical urban research. The first subchapter will present the political framework which determined and delimited the policies for the construction of the housing neighbourhoods during the rule of the communist party. The policies for the construction of housing will be presented in subchapter two. The third and fourth subchapter will briefly introduce the historical continuity and transformation of the phenomenon of internal and transnational migration, and the local discrimination based on ethnic grounds, starting with around 100 years ago up until today.

3.1.1 Brief introduction of the political framework during the communist period

Each country of the former 'Eastern Bloc' has its own story of transformation during the time of totalitarian regimes of the post-war period, and after the fall (1991) of the Iron Curtain (expression made visible by Churchill in 1946). The Romanian socialist period is divided by scholars into three principle spans (Boia, 2016; Poenaru, 2017) depending on both local and international determinants as well as their own socio-political perspective. Constant for the period were a one party ruling of the communist party, and a centralised, five-year planned economy. In December this year, 30 years will have passed from that historical moment which some consider a 'Revolution' and others a 'coup d'Etat'. Around 1000 people were killed in Romania, including Nicolae and Elena Ceaușescu (the Presidential couple), marking the change as the bloodiest among Eastern European countries (BBC, 1999). So, who won the Revolution? One frequent answer is: the former nomenklatura (Poenaru, 2017). 'They lost the revolution but won the power. The former promoters of communism simply became the promoters of capitalism' (Russal, 2009). Who lost the Revolution? A two-word response is: the working class (Poenaru, 2017; 53).

Official denominations for ‘communist’ Romania were the Romanian People’s Republic (1947-1965) and the Socialist Republic of Romania (1965-1989). During this timeframe the country was ruled by the Romanian Workers, re-named Communist Party after 1965, and the Great National Assembly. With the declared political purpose of achieving an economic, social and cultural revolution, Stalinism in Romania, forcefully imposed change, resulting in a new economic distribution of resources and social arrangement. The class society of the interwar period, ruled by conservatives and fascists, was changed into a proletarian one controlled by the heads of the Workers Party. Trotsky (*International Socialist Review*, 1935) referred to the Stalinist period, not as communist but as ‘degenerated workers-state’. After the death of Stalin (1953) and the official disclosure of his crimes (1953-1956), during the ruling of Gheorghe Gheorghiu Dej and the first years of Nicolae Ceaușescu, from 1956 to 1968, the political ideology was ‘Romanian communist modernism’ defined as: ‘distanced from the USSR, with a national direction but not nationalist’ (Poenaru, 2017:29). After around a decade of liberalisation, towards the end of this period control over the private sphere increased again. The anti-abortion (Decree 770/1966) law was promulgated (abortion was legal since Decree 463/1957). Homosexuality, illegal in Romania since 1937 (totalitarian regime of Carol II), is kept in the Penal Code and punishment enhanced. Additionally, higher taxation of celibates, on couples with no children and divorce being only permitted in exceptional situations were measures taken to increase natality and produce work force. The country’s economy was oriented towards rising neoliberalism on the capitalist market, having as a side-effect the re-emergence of social class and private property (based on economic differences, political and cultural capital) (Poenaru, 2017). After 1971/74, the ideology turned towards nationalism and ultra-centralized, ultra-politicized decisions (Stoica, 2018:94). It was the only party in Europe going towards, what some analysts call: dynastic communism (Boia, 2016: 8) or dynastic socialism (Stoica, 2018:94). The bankruptcy of the economic and social system that defined the 1980s, in Romania, must be looked at from both the internal ideological decisions and the global context of the Oil and energy crisis, the loans taken from the World Bank, the changing global economic system and progress of ‘western’ technologies, and the new alliances on global level.

Until the middle of the 1950s, Romania was a predominantly agrarian country (Agrarian Reforms in 1864, 1921). In 35 years, the urban population went up from 20% to around 50%, (Boia, 2016) as a result of the developmentalist plan: including industrialization and urbanization. Romania was one of the countries in Eastern Europe with an extensive process of collectivisation (Boia, 2016; Guran, 2014; Stoica, 2018). Combined with small wages for the people working in agriculture, compared

to the industry, this process created a poor social group (in comparison to the workers group) and influenced migration towards the city. After the political change of 1989 and the beginning of the 90s, the dismantling of the industry and the working class, were legitimised by arguments related to market efficiency and outdated technology. Some of the workers went back to the rural, or live lives between rural and urban. Others have become transnational work-migrants.

The anti-abortion Law was abolished on 26 December 1989, the anti-homosexuality Law, although partly modified, was completely annulled only in 2001. In 2018 a Referendum, pushed by the Orthodox Church and other Neo-Protestant religious groups, took place aiming to change the definition of the family in the constitution to 'the union between man and woman'. The threshold of 30% of voters required to make the results of the Referendum valid, were not reached.

3.1.2 Policies for the built environment 1945 - 1990

The following subchapter will place the policies that determined the build environment into the above described fragments of political, economic and social context. During the interwar period the architectural and urban evolution in Romania was defined by two tendencies: modernist (Western principles) and neoclassical (national, traditional Orthodox) (Zahariade, 2011:22). What was built after the war continued the directions of the previous period, although with slower steps due to the economic conditions of a country that lost the war and was under foreign army occupation. Interventions in the field of urban planning continued mostly respecting the existing urban tissue or by building housing districts on the model of the garden city. With the monetary reform (1947) and nationalisation of all private property, by the early 1950s, the state becomes the sole owner and investor functioning in accordance to centralising principles of economic Stalinism (Zahariade, 2011:28) based on Five-Year Plans. The first one: 1951-1955.

1952 is the moment (started in 1947-48) of rupture with the interwar period in terms of architectural practice and its future products (Zahariade, 2011:32). Building becomes part of the economic and industrial socialist development. Urbanism and architecture planning part of the governmental sector. The State Committee for Architecture and Construction (CSAC) of the Council of Ministers, will be the central body in charge of organising, directing, endorsing and controlling 'studies and projects for the systematisation, construction and reconstruction of cities and population centres, as well as public building and housing projects', and of stimulating the implementation of 'new materials and the latest building methods' (Zahariade, 2011:46). They also coordinate the regional and municipal

design institutes. The new imposed design language would be socialist realism and the model of inner courtyards for multi-storey housing.

The change from socialist realism to functionalist design in 1957/58 and from functionalist design to the Systematisation Law (58/1974) and Roads Law 13/1975 were imposed by Gheorghe Gheorghiu Dej (in 1957/58) and Ceaușescu (1974/75) with support from the Worker's later called Communist Party, based on arguments of 'economicity' (term used by Zahariade, 2011) and land use efficiency. Starting with the Laws from 1974/75 mentioned above, political approval of projects increases (Zahariade, 2011:40). As mentioned in the previous subchapter, from 1948 to 1985 the urban population went up from 20% to 50%. The number of completed dwellings (measured in conventional two room flats) according to official statistics: around 600.000/ 1951-1970; around 3.000.000/ 1971-1990 (Zahariade, 2011:44), show that the majority of the housing was built in the period of the increased political control of the design. Most of the housing investments were financed from centralised state funds, until 1968, when a new law (9/1968) allowed and encouraged the financing and building of private housing, mainly in cities (for personal use; one apartment was allowed pro couple and their underaged children), through private loans from the state bank. Without the necessary personal down-payment, people continued as tenants of the state-companies.

The transformation during the early 1990s from a centrally planned to a market-oriented economy was marked by the reduction of the role of the state in all branches of economic activity, including housing construction. Public housing went down from 30% to 2-3%. Collective housing built in the past 30 years, are intended for the market economy.

3.1.3 Geographical mobility – socialism and post-socialism/ national and trans-national

On the 1 January 2019, 19,5 million people were residents in Romania. About 3,5 million less than 30 years earlier. From the 19,5 million declared residents, some work temporarily in parts of the European Union, in the formal or informal economy. Exact numbers on migration in today's European and Romanian context are difficult to gather. One source, UN (2017) mentions 3,6 million. Another, a year later, says: one in Four work-aged Romanian is a migrant (Romania Insider, 2018).

Following the two World Wars and the interwar period, and all the violence characteristic for those times, Stalinism produced two major actions of deportation based on political, ethnical and class distinction. In post-Stalinism restricted external

migration (on family or ethnical grounds) and a regulated internal migration based mainly on political, work, sometimes on family issues, was imposed. During the 1970s and the 1980s around 500.000 (World Bank, 2019) mainly German and Jewish ethnics were allowed to leave the country, for the Federal Republic of Germany or The State of Israel.

The 1990s liberalization of migration in Romania shifted decision taking about 'who is allowed to emigrate and where' from the local to the global power levels, to the politics and needs of the 'receiving' country. Romania joined the EU in 2007 with unrestrained access to the European work market since 2014. Combined with the shrinking of the social state, the dismantling of the existing industry (Poenu, 2017), the 2008/ 2009 global financial crises, the ongoing local political instability, determined the numbers of work-migrants we look at today. Public discourse on economic aspects of post-socialist migration revolve around the missing work-force (compared to local needs) and tax paying. Social perspectives look into the phenomenon of children that grow separate from one, or both their parents (BalkanInsight, 2018) and the old people left without caretakers. Looking back on the communist period, many Romanians feel that socialist totalitarianism revolutionized the traditional family structure, by changing it from the historic, extended, multigenerational, to the smaller one with mostly two parents and children. The goals of economic growth, through modernisation and industrialisation, could only be pursued together with a socio-cultural change. Local political ideology contributed by the dispossession of land and geographical control of migration. Part of the alienation that people felt was produced by industrialisation and the lack of choice and meaning. The problematic topic of choice and meaning in real-socialism should be discussed together with the problematic topic of choice in real-capitalism. As an example, during the socialist period, some children were raised, up until school age, by grandparents living in other cities or the country side. Today the distances have multiplied. Due to limited resources and precarious living conditions, parents live 1000s of kilometres away visiting their children once or twice a year. Conscious about this global phenomenon of migration Marc Augé (1995:47) writes: 'For although the ethnologist can hardly help being tempted to identify the people he studies with the landscape in which he finds them, the space they have shaped, he is just as aware as they are of the vicissitudes of their history, their mobility, the multiplicity of spaces to which they refer, the fluctuation of their frontiers.'

3.1.4 Ethnicity and discrimination

Romania, as a state having around the same surface as today, is 100 years old. In 1930, the time of Greater-Romania (1918 – 1940), Romanian ethnics constituted 71% of the entire population (18 million) (Institutul national de statistică, 1930). 58,6% of the city dwellers and less than 50% of the industrial workers. For the Banat Area numbers were: 54,3% Romanian ethnics, 35% in cities and 25% industrial workers. In 1947 (Paris Peace Treaties) after losing some of the territories annexed in 1918, the country reached today's borders. At that point the population was 13,5 million (87,4% Romanians) (source).

Timișoara lies in, what is defined today as the Romanian Banat, in the vicinity of the Hungarian and the Serbian border, in western Romania. The term 'banate' comes from the Middle Ages describing a frontier province led by a military governor (Definition.net). The region has since been a border area. As borders were pushed to the north or south, east or west, so did the administrators change and along with it, the ethnic group in power. For the last 100 years, Timișoara has been part of Romania, changing on the official level to the dominant orthodox religion, the official language to Romanian, and capital to Bucharest. Ethnic groups living in Timișoara in the past hundred years were (in alphabetical order): German, Hungarian, Jewish, Roma, Romanian, Serb and others. In 1920, population around 86.000 (Varga, 2002), the cities' dominant population was German (44,5%), followed by Hungarians (39%). Romanians were the major ethnic group in the Banat Area, but not in the city. Regulations kept them out of the city. In Timișoara they were 9% according to some sources and around 20% according to others (Opriș, 1987:26). This started changing after 1919 (Opriș, 1987: 207). In 1966 Romanian ethnics constituted 62% (Varga, 2002). The change was produced by the rural to urban migration of Romanian ethnics, first from the local area, later from other parts of the country. From the five people I have interviewed, four were newcomers to the city in the 60s – 70s. One came from a Bulgarian, the other three from Romanian families. The fifth interviewee, born in Timișoara, comes from a mixed German – Hungarian one.

In 1990, 82% of the 351.000 inhabitants, were Romanian ethnics. These official figures have not changed much since then. The technical report (2011) for the soon to be approved city urban plan, shows in 2011: 81,35 % Romanian ethnics, followed by 8,23% Hungarian, Germans 2,3%, Serbs 1,51%, Roma 0,67%.

Throughout time Timișoara was under the rule of (in chronological order): Kingdom of Hungary, the Ottoman Empire, the Habsburg Empire and the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Despite romanisation of the city and migration of ethnic

minorities in the last 100 years since the establishment of the nation state, some of the families still have roots in Banat or Transilvania, and are ethnically mixed or feel culturally more connected to the western part of the country, and continue to identify more with the imagined culture of the Austro-Hungarian Empire than the South or East of Romania and the capital Bucharest. Timișoara is situated in the middle, the same distance between Bucharest and Vienna, 550 km (Fig. 1). According to *viamichelin.com* it takes around eight hours to travel by car to Bucharest and around five and a half to Vienna. Discrimination on ethnical grounds was not part of the official discourse during communism, but was – according to Stoica (2018:109), part of the political capital during dynastic socialism, promoting mainly Romanians and Hungarians as party members. After 1990 freedom of expression made visible in public discourse the hidden discrimination during the last decades of the communist party ruling, based on ethnical grounds.

The interviews showed, different positioning of the ‘old’ migrants to the city towards the other migrants that came around the same period from the region or distant once, and those coming in recent years, and a general discrimination against Roma (named by the interviewed as Gypsies):

P1: (...) do you know there was no fence here? I've put it..., when my husband still lived... he died five years ago. I've put the hedge here, 'cause there was a blue tin plate here, so ugly, that you could think that Gypsies are living here.

P2: 'The crazy thing is...my daughter-in-law is also...from Oltenia [as C's husband] and she loves my son above all...as if what? only people from Ardeal or Banat [west-central Romania] are humans? (...) I could have bought [an apartment] in Calea Șagului [another neighbourhood of Timișoara], but it was full of Gypsies...I also come from the country side, but I suffered a lot to see what Timișoara has ended up being compared to fifty years ago. People were much more educated back then... now, I do not know what nations have come here, but it's no longer the Timișoara from another time. It used to be so elegant... well-mannered people, civilised, ... now there's so much dirt in this town.'

3.2 Circumvalațiunii – the neighbourhood

3.2.1 About the function of the Land: From glaxis to military ground to housing neighbourhood

Timișoara developed around the old fortified city and two (three depending on legislation) main, periphery neighbourhoods located on opposite sides of the

Fortress on a North-East South-West axis, determined by the river Bega. After the ending of the Austro-Turkish war (1716–1718) and the Peace Treaty of Passarowitz, in 1718, the Banat of Temesvár (Hungarian name) becomes Habsburg crown land having as capital the Fortress Temesvár (Romanian: Timișoara, German: Temeschwar or Temeschburg). This change of political and economic power triggers the design and building of new, modern fortifications, completed around 1764. Vauban type, with three wall belts, around the core political and administrative part of the city, their geometry marks the urban fabric until today. 585 m bastion fortification plus the 949m esplanade around them, where the building was interdicted, added up to 1700 - 2000 m distance between the city centre and the outside neighbourhoods (Fig. 2) (Oprîș, 1987: 48). In 1868, the depth of the unconstructed area, outside the city walls, was reduced by around 400 m, until 1892, when, with the development of the artillery, the walls lost their military function and were partly torn down between 1899 - 1910 (Oprîș, 1987). The Theresia Bastion, named after the Austrian Empress Maria-Theresa, and a few dispersed remaining parts of the fortress, remind us today of the city's strategic military importance (during the wars between Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire) and walled past. Once the decision was taken, towards the end of the 19th century (Oprîș, 1987), to release this land, several design suggestions for a general urban development plan were created. One very grandiose by Ludwig von Ybl and Aladár Kovács Sebestyén, who proposed a radial-concentric urban development, with wide radial streets and two concentric boulevards similar to the Vienna Ring, one on the interior limit of the fortification, the second on the interior limit of the glacis (Oprîș, 1987), surrounding the Fortress⁴. Although this design was never carried out as such, the idea of the radial-concentric city was kept and partly executed in time.

At the beginning of the 20th century, in exchange for the space that the Army was using within the fortifications, they were distributed some of the free land located in the former Glacis area, North/ North - West from the Fortress, which was used for warehouses and exercise site from around 1900 until the beginning of the 1970s by whichever military force in power at the time, being the Hungarian, German, Romanian or Soviet (alphabetical order) (Fig. 3, 4). The events of the mid 1950's, including: the death of Stalin, Hrushchev's 'de-Stalinisation' politics (1953 – 1964), the retreat of Russian troops from Austria (1955), the changing relations between Yugoslavia and USSR, the Hungarian Uprising (1956) and the pro-soviet support

⁴ Fortress is the name that was kept until today to describe the built area from within the former defence walls.

given by the Romanian Government during the events (Guran, 2015; Verona, 1989), lead to the withdrawal of Russian troops, stationed in the country since 1944, from Romania, including Timișoara (Verona, 1989), in the summer of 1958. Parallel to these events, in the middle of the 1950s, a new national political and economic direction was aimed, through modernization, economic growth and distancing from the Soviet Union. The planning of large-scale industrialisation starts, alongside the development of cities as part of this process. Engaged towards the ambition of creating an urban working class, the goal of covering housing needs for all citizens, becomes part of the political discourse and effort, as well as experts endeavour. Urban development plans for cities are drafted at central level in Bucharest. 1957 Timișoara's Design Institute is founded (Opriș, 1987: 178), as well as a 'systematisation' department in 1961 (Opriș, 1987: 178). From that moment on, centralized planning is combined with local, context-related expertise in Timișoara. But final approval was given in Bucharest by the political decision makers, putting the economic and ideological framework on first place (see sub-chapter 3). 1976 the city's buildable area (3750 ha after the Second World War) is limited at 4495 ha (Opriș, 1986:175)⁵. The model of the radial-concentric city having two concentric boulevards, developed in the beginning of the century, is pursued starting in 1971 (Opriș, 1987:186). Military use of land is being changed for housing and complementary functions.

Circumvalațiunii is part of the former glacis, then former exercise site. In the beginning of the 70s, the ground was transferred from the Army to the State. The neighbourhood was named after one of the already existing, circular (slightly different position, different path than today) boulevards: Circumvalațiunii (Opriș, 1987). The word comes from Romanian: 'circumvalatiune', the latin 'circumvallatus, circumvallare' meaning surrounded by a -, or as if by a rampart or a modern version: 'șosea de centură' (Eng.: ring road) (interview Opriș, 2015; dictionary.com).

P2 (living in the neighbourhood since the end of the 60s): 'We had the possibility to get a superb, big flat, in Calea Șagului [neighborhood of Timișoara] near the bridge, but I preferred the small 'prison-like' boxes of Circumvalațiunii because it is near the city centre.'

Built, starting with the mid 60s until around the end of the 70s, beginning of the 80s, punctually densified in addition to the original urban plan, to some extend on sparsely constructed land (including temporary housing for the military) (Fig. 7), fabricating these new homes, required no private expropriation. Demolition of

⁵ In 2009 the surface of Timișoara is 6870 ha (Study for the General City Plan, 2011)

compact urban tissue, in central areas of cities, was initiated around the middle of the 1970s in the Ceaușescu period (Zahariade, 2011). The replacement of old urban tissue with new, was based on the idea of modernising living standards and the ideological idea of creating a new society. Cities were imagined to become modern, functional and egalitarian. A general urban plan designed according to this strategy was put on paper, also for Timișoara. The political turn of December 1989, kept the design in form of a drawing.

3.2.2 Housing between a right and a commodity

The theories of the CIAM group and functionalism were known to Romanian architects and used by them, determined by the political approval, until 1952 and between 1958 (to the middle of the 1970s). The Athens Charter was translated to Romanian in 1945 (Zahariade, 2011). Starting with the middle of the 1950s, the city stands in the core of the 'socialist project'. Construction as part of the building industry is seen as a major branch of the economic and political. After 1958, under economic considerations of too expensive, Gheorghe Gheorghiu Dej (Prime Minister of Romania) decided the changing from cvartals (the soviet, real-socialist urban design model used between 1952 and the end of the 50s) and the adoption of the more economic, standardised model of functionalism (Zahariade, 2011). One of the influences on this decision was the spreading of prefabrication technology. By changing from cvartals, that kept the traditional pattern with street and continuous fronts, to free plan, the open space changed from being a closed yard to only partly limited (generally on two sides). *Circumvalațiunii* (Fig. 5) is characteristic to the urban planning and architecture specific for the period between 1958/59 and 1975 (Zahariade, 2011), and was built with prefabricated materials, in an open courtyard fashion.

At about 1/3, beginning from the South end of *Circumvalațiunii* Street, Gheorghe Lazăr Street – connecting city centre to the margins of the town and the region, divides the area in two. South from Gheorghe Lazăr, the zone referred to in the design phase as *Circumvalațiunii* I, a former low-density area, was planned and built, within the latter half of the 1960s. Within one area individual houses were built, on the other multi-story apartment buildings. Additional infrastructure such as a school, a commercial centre, and a milk factory (closed around the year 2000) were constructed. The other 2/3 of the area, built in the 70's, is occupied exclusively with five- and eleven-story housing and complementary structures (functions). This zone was divided during the design and building process in 3 parts, called *Circumvalațiunii* II, III and IV (around 6.885 flats in total, resulted from the technical

report). Circumvalațiunii V, the smallest and last part to be built, with 588 flats, was constructed on the other side of Circumvalațiunii boulevard (between the housing area of Circumvalațiunii IV and the railroad going around the city centre) (Fig. 6).

Circumvalațiunii II, III, IV is the area of the case study. I was inclined towards this area based on the obstacle represented by the major traffic roads surrounding it. I will refer to it as Circumvalațiunii.

When looking at the neighbourhood from above you will notice the free-plan, conforming to modernist urbanism, mostly rectangular positioning of the buildings, with green space in-between them. An exception being the block of flats built along Gheorghe Lazăr and Circumvalațiunii Street (with no or very little open space in-between them) and the buildings in the centre, hosting complementary functions such as schools, kindergartens, civic centre with the park, sport centres, district heat substations.-This urban pattern is different to the adjoining ones, that are of mixed used, individual and collective housing, commercial (supermarkets) or un-used industrial area from socialist times. In politico-economical and urban planning terms Circumvalațiunii (II, III, IV) was made out of three 'microraisons' (Fig. 6). Introduced in Romania via the Soviet Union in the end of the 1950; the term microraison or micro-district is the soviet correspondent for Clarence Perry's 'neighbourhood unit' (Zahariade, 2011: 54, Wildeis, 2014:100). It describes an urban territory of 20 - 50 ha, for a population of 5.000 - 15.000, occupied with housing and public service facilities. Major traffic roads would go around it. Together with the adoption of an urban plan design similar to the modernist, international one, it was used as work tool (Zahariade, 2011: 61;) until the mid of the 1970 (see chapter 3.1.2), when the Roads Law (1975) was introduced.

On a surface of 51 ha, around 6.885 apartments, in five - (70%) and eleven-story (30%) buildings, for approximately 19.500 inhabitants (380 inhabitants/ha) (technical writing from the original urban plan, p: 19), were constructed. Apartments having between 1 to 4 rooms, category one (38,25%), two (35,40%) and three (26,35%)⁶, were planned. An average of 12 m²/ person habitable surface was taken into account. The flats were approximately 24% state-, 76% private property (Fig. 8). In 1968 the State issued a law encouraging private ownership of the home, through state credit conditioned by a private down payment. As a direct consequence flats designed for this purpose grew in comfort, while state-rented

⁶ Category one had more comfort than two, two more than category three. 'The differentiation was made according to m², surface and materials' recalls a former architect of the Design Institute.

apartments continued to fit the norm of 8m²/ resident (living space). Examining the legislation (Law 9/1968 replaced by Law 4/1973) confirmed the information that I received through the interviews. The low category apartments were envisaged to be rented out, among others, to the working-poor, retirees, migrant workers who transferred for work purpose (up to five years), newlyweds and people working for the military and Ministry of the Interior. In addition to housing, 3 schools (1-8 grades), 3 kindergartens, a health-care centre, an open-air market, a sports centre, and a cinema were built. Already existing (since 1967) was another sports centre with swimming pool, athletics and tennis courts. Several design propositions were made for the area, prior to the building process. After the change of the political ideology building has stopped, with few exceptions (see interviews). Around 1997, close to the civic centre, taking in possession part of the land used as a park, an orthodox church, was built. Among the blocks private garages were constructed (Fig. 14, 16).

Except for the block of flats, oriented towards the surrounding, major traffic roads and those situated in the civic centre, having commercial functions on the ground floor, the buildings were mono-functional - only housing, with one or two collective connections to the surrounding space. This condition remained until the beginning of the 90s, when, with the economic and political change, allowance of compatible use to living was permitted in the block of flats. Some apartments were turned into service or commercial use, with or without individual entrance. Some of the five story buildings originally had a second exit to the 'back' (fire safety exit), closed – in some cases - during the last 30 years (for security reasons).

P2 – inhabitant of Circumvalațiunii (personal interview, February 2015):

'Before, I used to go out to the back. Initially, the block had a second exit - to the back, which we closed around... eight years ago, after they [sic] came and broke into the storage spaces in the basement and took everything, the stuff for which there was no more space in the apartment. Others [sic] slept down there and they 'did there needs' there... before it used to be clean, nice... then at some point the cats moved in... I think that these days nobody keeps anything down there anymore.'

A short incursion into my research diary (2015), before coming to the conclusions:

When looking at the buildings, I saw mostly grey, concrete facades, some coloured. The colours make visible post-socialist intervention (Decree of 2009) consisting of the thermal-insulation of the buildings, an energy efficiency upgrading of the multi-story housing built between 1950-1990, financed by the homeowner's association, public- and EU funds. When the colours are applied locally on just a part of the façade corresponding to one flat not the whole building, it is a sign for individual

intervention (privately financed). I saw cases where two-three neighbours seem to have collaborated in this thermal upgrade. Other new, mostly individual, some shared interventions, since 1990, are classical roofs (covered with tiles or tin), a few attics, added entryways (a small number that were added to the already existing entrance hall), closed balconies, and the extension of the ground floor apartments. In the time frame between conception and the 90's, the five and eleven storey buildings had a visible concrete, prefabricated facade, flat roof-top (terrace), open balconies (loggias). In the book 'Architecture in the communist project. Romania 1944-1989' Ana Maria Zahariade explains how the use of concrete was imposed by the economic and political context. Steel was needed to build up the industry, while wood could be exported for currency. Changes to the pre-fabricated buildings and thus alterations to the political-economic mode of construction were not allowed before 1989, but started to flourish after.

Putting numbers together, concerning housing built in the time of the socialist economy, on national level around 38% were designed to be sold to the occupants. In Timișoara, an information from the 1970 Urban Design Plan, positions 75% of the new housing in the category designed for sale from the start (Fig. 9). In February 1990 the newly formed Post-Socialist State started privatising its rented apartments, keeping ownership of the open space. The culture of 'the right to buy' for one's own home, started in 1968, reproduced itself until the 1990s parallel to the 'right to housing'. In 30 years, 'the right to buy' monopolised public discourse. According to a study by Eurostat (the statistical office of the European Union) (2016) about Housing Statistics, 96% of Romanian citizens live in a personal property dwelling, as to 52% in Germany, although Romania is today one of the EU's poorest members with 35,7% of the population at risk of poverty or social exclusion compared to Germany 19% (2016-2017).

How does all this information translate into the lived? It shoves how quickly 'state' ideology turned in the beginning of the 90s, with the state retreating from one of its previous endeavours: that of housing everybody. This step, opened the door to housing speculations which left people on the street and has put the financial responsibility for the maintenance of the modestly-constructed buildings on the user. State rented apartments, which qualitatively constituted the lower end of the housing constructed after 1968, were the ones that were sold in the beginning of the 90s. This gives us a general idea of the quality of the owned, and in particular of the quality that was sold to the former tenants. Fragmented ownership of a building lowers the chances for the building to be improved. This materiality is visible today all over the country. The figures also show that home-ownership does not automatically erase risk of poverty. With the state owning only 2-3% of the housing,

the process of renting was moved almost exclusively to the private sector, mainly from private owner to private tenant. Offering little protection for the tenants: short term lease, short term evacuation and tax evasion.

3.2.3 The Athens Charter about the ‘verdant areas around the dwelling’

The urban plan of Circumvalațiunii neighbourhood was designed during the end of the 60s, beginning of the 70s, in the last years of the political timeframe of ‘Romanian communist modernism’ (Poenaru, 2017) and free-plan, modernist urbanism (Zahariade, 2009). Modernist urban planning separated the functions of a city and ‘invented’ the space of the ‘în jurul blocului’ (around the block), as a space for health benefits of the urban working class. Looking into the theoretical origins referring to the function of green space in housing neighbourhoods the Athens Charter (1933) defines:

‘(30) Such areas may be the direct or the indirect extensions of the dwelling: direct if they surround the habitation itself, indirect if they are concentrated in a few large areas a little farther away. In either case, their assigned purpose will be the same, namely, to meet the collective activities of youth and to provide a favourable site for diversions, strolls, and games during leisure hours.’

‘(32) Urbanism is called upon to devise the rules required to assure city-dwellers of living conditions that will safeguard not only their physical health but also their moral health and the joy of life that results from these. The working hours, often exhausting for the muscles or the nerves, should be followed every day by an adequate amount of free time. These hours of freedom, which machinism will unflinchingly increase, will be devoted to a refreshing existence amidst natural elements. The maintenance and the establishment of open spaces are, therefore, a necessity, a matter of public welfare. This theme forms an integral part of the fundamentals of urbanism, and the city administrators should be compelled to give it their fullest attention. A just proportion of constructed volumes to open spaces – that is the only formula which resolves the problem of habitation.’

‘(33) Thus stated, the problems imply the creation of verdant reserves: 1) around the dwelling; 2) within the region; 3) throughout the country.’

‘(35) Contrary to what takes place in the “garden cities,” the verdant areas will not be divided into small unit lots for private use but, instead, dedicated to the launching of the various communal activities that form the extensions of the dwelling. Kitchen gardening, the usefulness of which is actually the principal

argument in favour of the garden cities, might very well be considered here: a percentage of the available ground will be allocated to it and divided into multiple individual plots, but certain collective gardening arrangements, such as tilling, irrigating, and watering, can lighten the labour and increase the yield.'

The Athens Charter envisaged open space of modernist housing neighbourhoods, as spaces to be used individually as well as collectively, for 'kitchen gardening' and other free time activities. This was seen as a major public health function, together with the function of assuring light, air and ventilation. It was considered as part of the role of the state and city administration to assure and maintain the existence of these spaces for the benefits of the working class. The open spaces were proposed free of significant physical separators. Collective work was given a practical role and the state had the task to insure the conditions for the production of the space and practice. Looking back on the implementation of the model during the past around 75 years, from Post-War, to Cold-War and the 90s, to the influence of the advancement of prefabrication, the different political and economic systems, it seems that the success or failure in everyday life is more related to the social aspects and political support for this model than to aesthetic, even technical arguments related to the built environment.

3.2.4 Around the block – 'În jurul blocului'

This sub-chapter will start with an Excursus, an extract from my research diary, before continuing the descriptive analytical narrative.

'When I took my first observational walk, around the Circumvalațiunii neighbourhood, five years ago in August, the impression I was left with, was not about the large number of cars parked everywhere, but the amount of green, surrounding the block of flats: trees, bushes, grass growing abundantly even out of every crack of the pavement. I saw some gardens, benches and improvised 'sitting' corners, a few playgrounds, but most of the time just wilderness surrounding the apartment buildings. Back then I perceived this as just a lack of interest shown by the dwellers for this space, that I saw as theirs to use. Meanwhile, after the reading, the listening and reflecting on the topic it is clear that the neighbours are only one group of actors who influence this space. City administration and citizens who do not live in the neighbourhood, being the other involved actors. Another impression that was constantly present in my mind was the feeling of being an intruder in the courtyard of strangers although I was in public space with no significant artificial barriers on the way. Reconsidering my reflections after a while I thought: 'actually a nice meditative space...cats seem to like it here'. At some point within the eight years I've been living in Vienna, I got used to the idea of tidiness, regulated models and have perceived everything else as not good

enough or not the goal of a 'civilised' city. Then I read Jane Jacobs (1961) who sees 'cleanness' and 'order' as the opposite of 'liveliness' and 'diversity'. This made me aware that I should not look for 'the perfect result' (because there is no such thing) but explore the practices of everyday life and the context that created them.

Switching back to the descriptive analysis: Circumvalațiunii's unbuilt space was considered by the socialist state, like all the land in cities as a state-owned space. Going through the technical writing (1970) of the original urban plan, searching for entries regarding the proposed function, use and value of the surrounding open space of the block of flats, I found attention for the aspect of sunlight and ventilation, 'uniform distribution of the green space and the playgrounds'. The urban plan defined the open space in between the blocks as 'inner courtyards' and proposed the repartition of green areas and children's playgrounds in a 'well thought' way (words extracted from the technical writing) (Fig. 10). After the first inhabitants moved in, city administration equipped the neighbourhood with two major playgrounds (around 0,2 ha each) and a park with fountain (around 0,6 ha). The remaining open areas between the buildings, the so called 'în jurul blocului' (around the block) were furnished by the authorities, sometimes by the local residents.

Kovacs Anton (former inhabitant of Circumvalațiunii) recollecting the beginning of the 70s:

'It wasn't more than a month after we moved in, and a truck from the town hall overturned in front of the block a pile of twigs, in fact the hedgerow that the tenants of the block planted at the indications of a man, I did not know who he was, maybe someone from horticulture (department), maybe a neighbour who wanted to play the boss. Some trees were also brought, the tenants also planted them.' (INFO TIMIȘOARA, July 2019)

From the interviews and personal observation, I conclude that in front of every entrance there use to be at least a bench, often a table, sometimes a pergola. Back in the 1970s, there was a wide spread habit among the inhabitants of a block of flats to practice gardening or even raise small animals in the area around their buildings. I remember this practice from my childhood, found recollections by the respondents and other people living in different Romanian cities. For some of them, this was a socio-cultural habit they continued after moving from a rural to urban area (see Interview P3 and P4), others were triggered by the mental benefits and the need to extend the space of a small apartment (see Interview P1). Two of the respondents mentioned that looking after the open space surrounding the dwellings, before 1989, was demanded by local and government administration. Included were long-term practices: like gardening, and short-term: like shovelling snow or digging ditches for the burial of gas pipes. As the interviews showed, this imposition did not

stop some of the neighbours to withdraw from participating nor others to find meaning in it.

P1 – inhabitant of Circumvalațiunii (personal interview, October 2018):

'I don't like to argue. My husband used to be a drunk... still, when he got sick, I cared for him, we spend 60 years of our lives together... I was not indifferent to see him lie in bed for four years... I suffered a lot during my life. My great joy was going out in the garden, it calmed me!'

Neighbour of P1 – inhabitant of Circumvalațiunii (personal interview, October 2018):

'Before it was beautiful because everybody was participating, you were required to. It was very beautiful. When they put the gas [the pipes underground], they obliged us to dig the moat. Each the same number of metres. Everybody participated. My husband received money from a neighbour to do his part to.'

In the perception of different users, the spatial limits of the 'în jurul blocului' (around the block) are various and elastic. Starting by the building, they can go as far as the closest sidewalk, road, next building or even to the margins of the neighbourhood. In Circumvalațiunii the so-called space 'în jurul blocului' (around the block) is delimited on one or two sides by five storey apartment buildings, on the other sides by a sidewalk and, or hedge. Sometimes square, often rectangular shaped, approximately 22 m wide, as long as the adjoining buildings (Fig. 10, 11). There are also exceptions, such as in one case where the buildings form an enclosed rectangular space, opened on three corners, having the district heating substation (around 7 m high) in the middle. Or when the open space is delimited on one side by dwellings and the 2 m high concrete wall of the school on the other side. In two cases the 'în jurul blocului' (around the block) was delimited by the block, on the one side, and a line of individual garages (approximately 2 m high) on the other. During my walks, I discovered 'cared-for' green-space, 'un-cared' or 'occupied' by cars, experienced various roles from observer to trespasser, feelings of positive to negative surprise. Materiality and vegetation made me connect the presence of humans to that space, even though I rarely saw them hands-on. I was probably never there at the 'right time', although I was there more than ten times. In some cases, I was wondering if part of what I saw were maybe remains of actions-past (confirmed by respondent P1. See subchapter 4.3.1). At moments during the day, some of these spaces become genuine oasis of bodily absence and silence. The degree of this depends on delimitations, distance to pedestrian and car traffic connections, presence of a 'butic' (small, food & household product store, functioning on the ground floor or a garage of a block of flats), the shape and volume of the vegetation. Some of the functions/usage I observed and discovered,

through the empirical research, in the 'în jurul blocului' (around the block) of Circumvalațiunii are: green space, gardens, space for sitting, for playing, in a few cases maybe economic activities (growing flowers for sale?), place to be for homeless people, place to hang out cloth to dry, route for dog-walkers, home for stray cats, host for the utility networks underground, parking lot for cars which do not find free space on the paved surface. Access is, according to the law, as for any public space, open to everyone. In practice, I have seen two types of fences: hedgerow around one meter high – which usually separate the green area from sidewalk, and small, knee height fences around gardens. The second category, has more the role of creating awareness about the existence of planted crops than stopping passage. Visible and invisible eyes and ears are oriented on these spaces producing a feeling of protection or control (Fig. 15).

3.2.5 Inhabitants of Circumvalațiunii

The Romanian National Institute for Statistics informs me, that it has no information regarding: age, gender, education and employment, of the inhabitants of Circumvalațiunii. This work will rely on the personal interviews and participatory observation, a data collection on 150 people in three public, private, and semi-private places of the neighbourhood, general literature and sociological data on the whole city of Timișoara (2011). Useful in understanding the social composition of the original residents of Circumvalațiunii, were the exploration of the housing and the interviews.

The interviewees from Circumvalațiunii fit the general pattern for Timișoara's inhabitants who became parents in the 70s – 80s having an average of 2 children pro couple (Sociological study for Timișoara's new Urban City Plan, 2011). Their children have one or no children. Two out of five interviewees have a grandchild living abroad. According to the soon to be approved General City Plan, Timișoara has an ageing population compared to 30 years ago. Children 0-14 years old, constituted 21% of the population (334.115) (Idem) in 1992; 12% in 2010 (333.278) (Idem). The presence of three schools and three kindergartens in Circumvalațiunii (II, III, IV), raises the percentage of children living, or at least spending time, in this neighbourhood. In two of the five interviews, the grandchildren of the interviewees were attending school in Circumvalațiunii, without living here. At least during the day, this neighbourhood benefits from the visible presence of a population aged 2 – 3 years up to 14, especially in the areas of the education institutions, the park and the playgrounds.

Interviews and literature show that a big part of the inhabitants, who moved here in the 70s, came from the region or neighbouring regions or already lived in the city, as first-generation citizens. They came to the city for work or education. People with higher education or a specific skill came from all over the country (through a job repartition) (like the husband of P2, officer in the Military, who came from the south of Romania). From the five people interviewed, one person (84 years old) went to school for five years, the other four graduated high-school and had post-high school qualification in the work field. In one case, where the interviewed was a child in the 70s-80s, both her parents had secondary degree education. The interviewed have different cultural background with one person coming from a Hungarian-German worker family, another from a Bulgarian catholic minority, that used to own a slaughter house, another from a working class family from Moldova (East Romania), another from a Romanian wealthy peasant family, that was dispossessed of their estate, whose father was a political prisoner as the result of participation in an uprising. Two of the three respondents who were adults in the 1970s told me that they had the possibility to choose between living in this or another neighbourhood (Calea Șagului) on the other part of the city. They chose Circumvalațiunii for geographical reasons connecting them to other family members, work-place or the city centre. When looking at the fact that Circumvalațiunii was envisaged 76% for private owning, in comparison to Calea Șagului 42% (Urban city plan, 1971), made me ask myself if Circumvalațiunii was designed from the start for the middle class specific for that period. In the case of Circumvalațiunii the residents came, according to the respondents) mainly from the Banat area or western Romania.

The first neighbours would mostly be either work colleagues or families in their working age with a similar income, probably having children, but not necessarily. I found three models of apartment buildings for different categories: block of flats with mostly smaller, rented apartments, for the employees of the same company (for example: the national railway company, the military), block of flats with apartments for sale built for the employees of one company (for example: ELBA – factory producing luminaires, UMT – Mechanical Factory Timișoara) and apartment blocks built for individual sale. This third category of homes was the least subsidized. Buying such a flat was possible through state loan, conditioned by an initial (private) deposit. Some of these apartment types offered most comfort compared to the building standards of the time and place.

As mentioned, in the beginning of the 1990s the Decree-Law 61 (of the Petre Roman Government): regarding the selling of the flats built with funds from the state to the population, was issued. In the period of 1990 – 1993 the State sold off, country wide,

over two⁷ and a half million apartments for a price below their production costs (BBC, 2014). Some say the State wanted to escape the responsibility of further administrating and maintaining these buildings, others that it was a political populist campaign tool. Related to the case study where, according to my findings, the 24% percent state owned flats, were those with the smallest surface, we can resume that this measure brought change for those with low income or temporary living situation. The interviews showed, without me specifically asking, the importance of 'owner' status and the importance of having bought the apartment at full costs and 'fair' price (until 1990). Those who bought the flat with down payment and credit mentioned this as opposed to those having rented before 1989 and having bought the apartment in the beginning of the 1990. Different than the 24% residents who were renting through the work place from state companies, today's tenants rent from private individuals in a system that offers little stability to them.

P2: We lived on Timiș Street for two years, then we moved here [around 1978]. Here it was for money [she means that the flat was for sale on credit. On Timiș Street, they were renting from the State].

P3: 'They did not buy it for a low rent after '90.'

P4: '... this building was built in association with all the tenants, all from the same enterprise. So, it was bought through the management of the company...of course all private property.'

Today's neighbours are partly those who moved in in the 70s – 80s (or their children), some who bought the flats from the beginning, others that bought them for a low price in the 1990s – 1993s. Then there are those who bought the apartments after the 90s, from the inhabitants moving away or the successors, some with higher income, some of them – young couples, beneficiaries of 'prima casa' [literally: first home, real estate credit stateily run] and the category who rent – from low income to higher. In conclusion a mixed variety of different income groups, excluding the very rich and the very poor (with some exceptions). The interview with participant P5, who spend his childhood and youth in Circumvalațiunii, then moved away from the city and moved back after ten years, who works as a real-estate agent, led me to the acknowledgement that the small type apartments of this neighbourhood are among the cheapest so close to the city centre. The mix of different categories of

⁷ In three years, the cost of the same – two-room apartment, went down from thirty average month salaries to one: <https://www.digi24.ro/special/campanii-digi24/1990-anul-0/1990-anul-0-blocurile-comuniste-vandute-iefin-imediat-441188>

apartments, and the geographical position in the city, provide for a mix of social class and cultural capital. The migration of the past 30 years, has contributed to a mix of the residents with local identity with residents moving here from other parts of the country.

Extracts from the interviews:

P3 (born in 1973): 'My sister still lives there. She tells me that the neighbours, even if they are the same, have changed. (...) Lack of tolerance, lack of culture...people coming from the countryside to the city because of the political [context], somehow forced, went to school, but they do not have the culture of living in common where some rules must be respected. Initially, when they arrived, they were intruders and had to conform during the years of Communism. After 1989, with the freedom of speech, one could observe their true education.'

I: 'Was there a connection with the neighbours, with the community? Was there the desire to do something together? Back then or now?'

P4: In the beginning, in the first 20 years, it was a lot more. In the meantime, it's gotten less... there were also old co-workers, we got along well. By now the people changed, new ones came who do not have... other age groups, younger... different... it's no longer as it used to be before...'

Neighbour of P1: 'I don't know... before, this is where people beat the rug, it was beautiful. Here were plots with tomatoes, carrots... long time ago, before the 90s. Then, when people moved out, it was left to P1... I can't [garden], although I am younger than her.'

I: Why?'

Neighbour of P1: 'Because I don't like it... did you see how people make fun of her? It used to be nice, an alee, one could go around this fence all the way to the school entrance. After the 'Revolution' nobody took concern in anything anymore. Many moved to a house. I haven't been here, in the back, for a long time. I have a problem with my leg... stayed inside for six months.'

The empirical research led me to the conclusion, that Circumvalațiunii has today a population made out of:

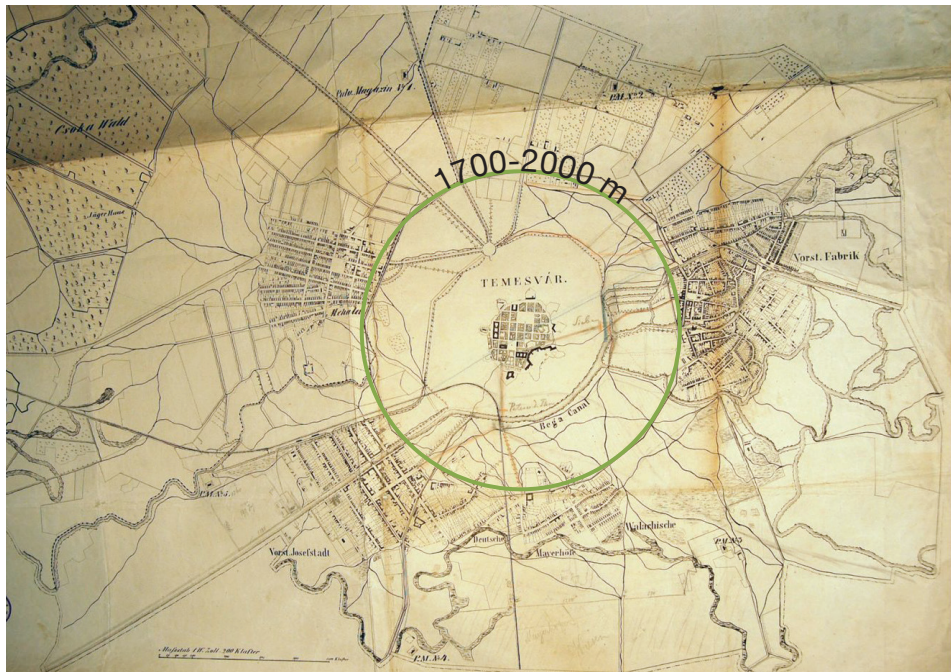
- owners with a continuity of 30 to 40 years in this neighbourhood, most of them in their 70s, 80s, who came mainly from the western part of Romania; or their children
- owners that moved here, in the past 30 years, with higher income (who buy the first category, 3 – 4 room apartments)
- owners with lower income, young couples (who buy the second and third category 2 room apartments)

- inhabitants as renters, renting on the private market different category apartments, from one to four rooms

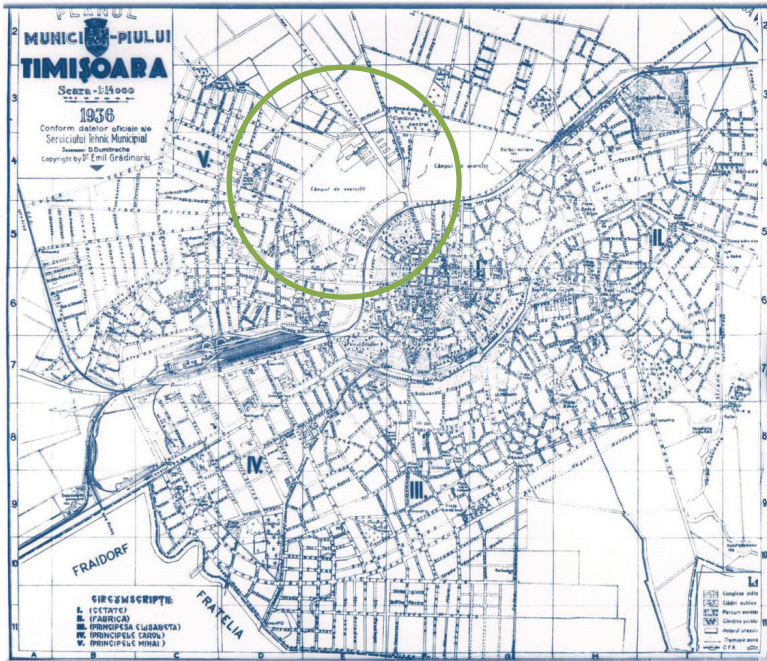
Common identities of the local-residents in the 70s-80s revolved around: being the first to move in, into a new neighbourhood, around common work place, or the fact that they could afford buying an apartment, as well as their western/central Romanian identities. Today the identities have multiplied: new or old owners, old residents – new residents, residents – ‘business men’, western Romanians – other Romanians.



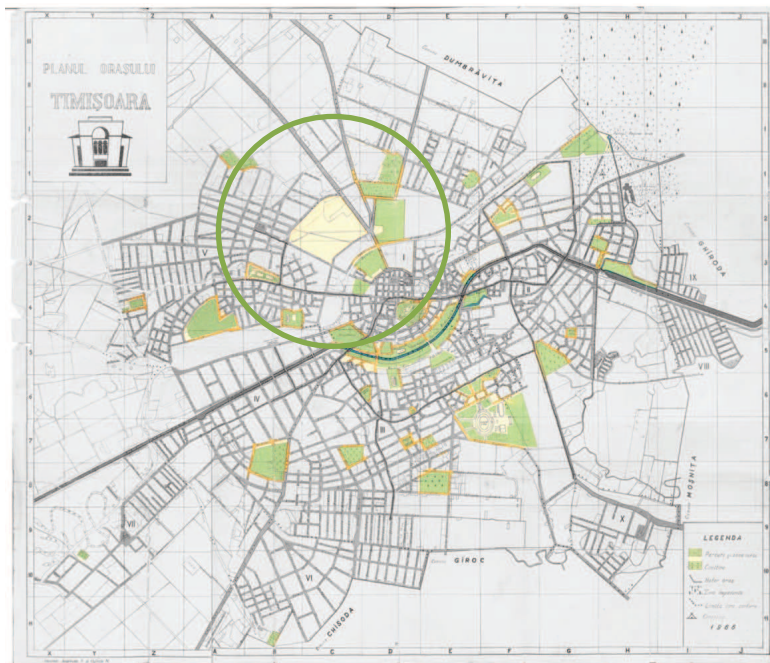
1. Timișoara, between Bucharest and Vienna (Source: OpenStreetMap)



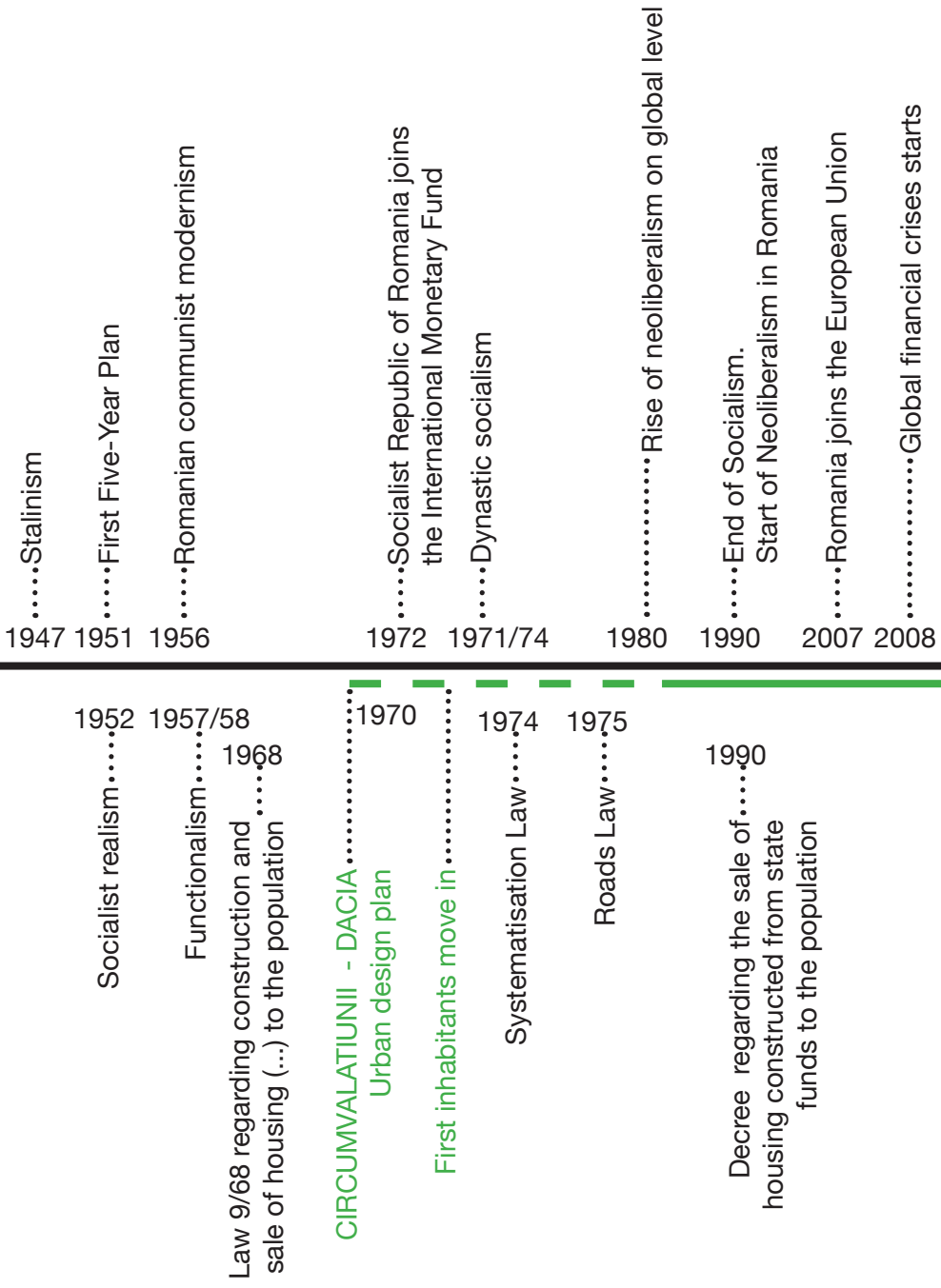
2. The Glacis and the Fortress, protecting the Centre, 1858 (Source: Primăria Municipiului Timișoara)



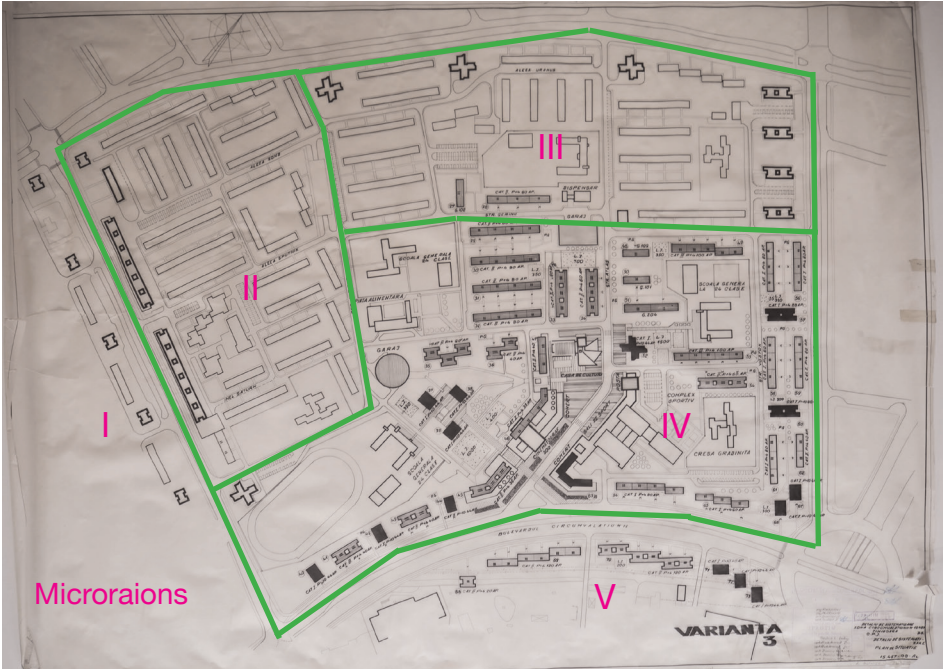
3. When Circumvalațiunii was an army training site,1936
(Source: Primăria Municipiului Timișoara)



4. When Circumvalațiunii was still an army training site,1966
(Source: Primăria Municipiului Timișoara)



5. Historical timeline



6. One version (out of several) of the Urban City Plan for Circumvalațiunii II, III, IV (Source: Archives of the old Design Institute of Timișoara)



7. Housing proposal drawn over the existing military base, 1970 (Source: Archives of the old Design Institute of Timișoara)

8. Data from the Urban City Plan for Circumvalațiunii II, III, IV

CIRCUMVALAȚIUNII II, III, IV

Five Year Plan
1971-1975

51 ha

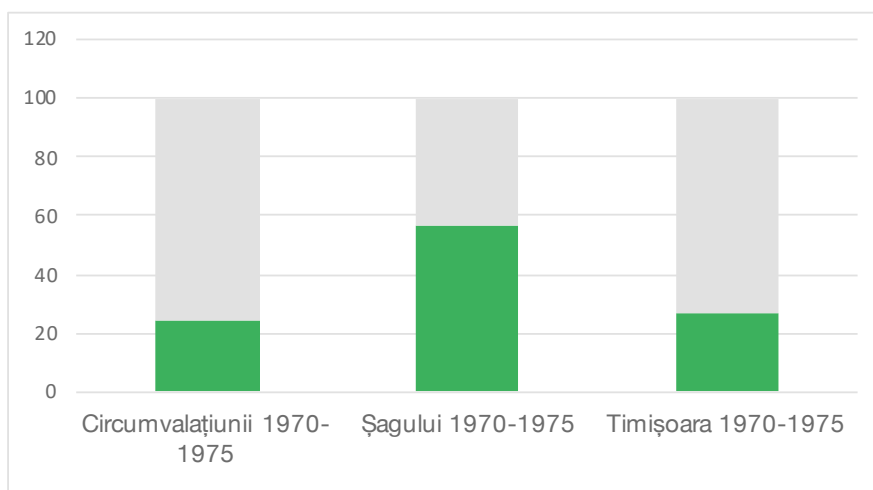
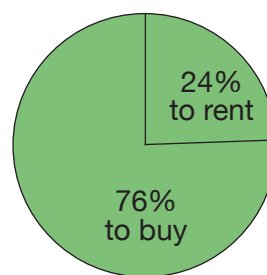
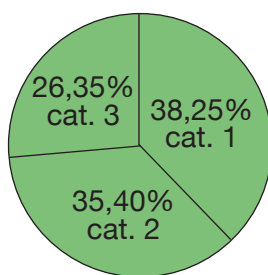
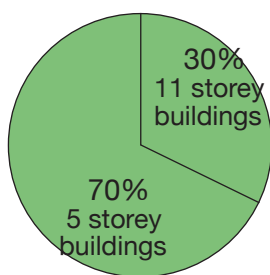
3 Microraiions

Housing:

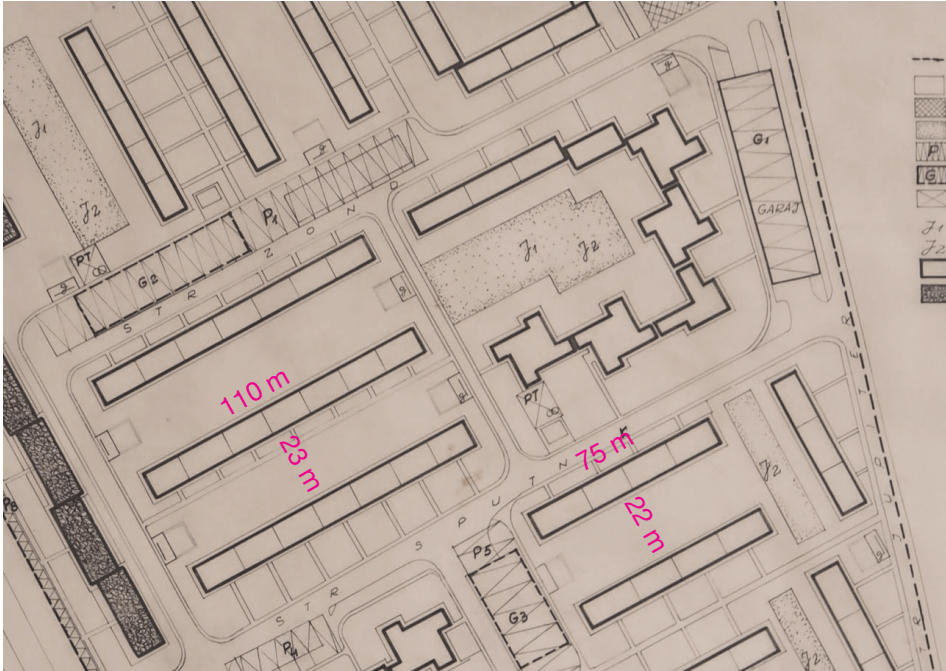
around 6.885 apartments

around 19.500 people

380 inhabitants/ hectare



9. Data comparing the planned quality of the built, for two neighbourhoods of Timișoara and the whole city



10. Extract from the Detail Systematisation Plan 1970 (Source: Archives of the old Design Institute of Timișoara)



11. Detail view - Circumvalațiunii today (Map data @ 2020 Google)

- around the block of flat - 'în jurul blocului' – in everyday Romanian
- ‚land around the block of flats’ - local council decision 125/1998
- a space ‘adjacent to collective housing’ - national law 24/2007 defining and regulating green space in urban area
- ‘condominium garden – garden like development, located in residential areas, adjoining collective housing units;’ (L582/2018)
- ‘green and free space’ - the new general urban plan of Timișoara (Planning started 2010. Not approved yet)

12. Around the block - everyday language and legal definitions

FUNCTION:

Inner courtyard, green area, playground, ... (urban plan, 1971)

... the virgin land in the buildable perimeters of cities, which will be made available annually to collective consumption units - canteens, restaurants, boarding schools and other establishments - or to the citizens, in order to cultivate this land with vegetables, potatoes and other food crops.

(L13/180) (Abolished in May 1990)

‘Cultivating vegetables in public space - is regarded as a contravention and will be sanctioned.’ Same rules apply for planting fruit trees or shrubs (HCL 371/2007 and HCL 43/2009).

The state recognizes the right of every individual to a healthy environment and free access to recreation in public green spaces, ~~the right to contribute to public green space.~~ (L584/2018 changes the Law 24/2007)

WHO'S RESPONSIBILITY?

The residents (L37/1975)

2018: public institutions, actors who rent or concession the space, homeowners association (L584/2018 changes the Law 24/2007)

PUBLIC GREEN SPACE AND IDENTITY:

‘Until 2007, the green space located on the Cetății Boulevard, framed by Bărăgan and Crișan Streets, was treated as a typical street front, specific to the Banat rural area: planting fruit trees. However, this does not fit with the green space of a city that wants to be European, both aesthetically and ecologically.’

(HCL 43/2009)

DIMENSIONS:

Local council decision 125/1998 (still in use) established: ‘At the request of the Homeowners Association, land delimited up to 5 m around the block of flats, is assigned for free use, for a term of 1 Year, in view of arranging green space.’

Article 3: ‘(...) in case the Homeowner Association does not organize/plant the green space in within the first three month, they can be sanctioned according to Law (..)’

On the street side, the proportion should be 60% in favour of the green space. The space in-between buildings (min 40% green space) will be used for green space, playgrounds, sports facilities, and so on. Possible garages will be arranged (underground, semi buried) so that their roof is integrated at ground level on at least two sides and is intended for the aforementioned uses.

(New General Urban City plan)

13. Around the block - legal characteristics

4 Empirical exploration

4.1 Strategic construction of the ‘around the block’

4.1.1 Regulations and policies

As mentioned in chapter 2.2, the value of public space in a democratic city dwells not in the exchange value, but in the value answering utility and needs (basic, social and political) of the city dwellers. As owner and administrator of the public space, including the open space of neighbourhoods, the state and local administration play a major role in shaping the socio-economic and political practices in that space, and the production of social production. This sub-chapter will continue, by looking into the regulations and policies supporting self-governance of not just consumer or mere ‘spectator’ role, in Timișoara, Romania.

Translations of the regulations and policies from Romanian are my own.

Examples of the political power encouraging or forbidding⁸ hands on, non-commercial practices in public space, for economic or social reasons, can be found throughout time during periods of war, economic and social crises (Krasny, 2012). During the ‘communist’ period in Romania unpaid work outside the domestic space, for collective benefits was first referred to as ‘volunteer’ later ‘patriotic work’. It was imposed from the top-down, especially in fields like agriculture and construction, or in the public space of cities, on children starting with (around) 10-11 years old, and adults regardless of education or occupation, during free time: after work, week-ends and holidays. The care-taking and improving of the space surrounding the blocks: inner courtyards, green areas and household units was considered an obligation of each tenant, according to the Law 37/1975. The 1980s in Romania were a time of economic crises resulted from the local and the global context (Poenu, 2017; Verdery, 1996), with the state prioritising the country’s income over the populations basic needs (food and energy). Anthropologist

⁸ During Fascism in Germany and Austria, gardening was allowed only for Aryans not for Jews (Krasny, 2012)

Katharine Verdery (living and working in Romania at that time), recalls the mid 80s:

‘That winter was an unusually cold one, with energy shortages in Western Europe that gave the Ceaușescu regime a new idea for securing hard currency with which to pay off their debts: heat was cut back in all apartment buildings, electricity was likewise curtailed, and no one was allowed to drive private automobiles, all the energy savings from these measures being exported to Italy and West Germany for hard currency. Added to the already reduced availability of food (much of it was being exported...), these policies made life in Romania fairly nasty.’

In this context a law was issued, ‘encouraging’ citizens to cultivate the land surrounding the block of flats:

Law 13 – 1980, art.10: Also, the popular county councils will take measures to identify and assign the virgin land in the buildable perimeters of cities, which will be made available annually to collective consumption units - canteens, restaurants, boarding schools and other establishments - or to the citizens, in order to cultivate this land with vegetables, potatoes and other food crops. (Abolished in May 1990)

The resulted materialities were (vegetable) gardens and self-produced or procured objects. According to Verdery (1996) and Antonovici (2015), the strategic thoughts behind the ‘patriotic work’ were both economic and ideologic. It was about social control and, what Norman Manea calls, ‘the etatization of peoples time’ (the process of statising people’s time) (Verdery, 1996:49). In the context of the 1980s encouraging urban gardening was a political reaction to the economic crisis. ‘Patriotic work’ has been abolished after the political change of 1989. Unpaid work in public space for the benefits of the public is marked with negative symbolism and the idea of exploitation. Reference to similar practice is seen as a reference to the past. ‘(...) communist ideology discredited the idea of “commonweal”’ writes Zahariade (2011). At this point I feel it important to ask ourselves how the local and global, political and economic systems of the past 30 years, contributed to this perspective in and about public space.

After 1989, the change from a one-party ruling to representative democracy, transformations of the political, economic and social level determined transformations in public and private ownership. The importance of owner value and rights over use value and user rights, individual benefits over collective benefits, meritocracy over solidarity, became part of the political, economic and social discourse. As mentioned in the Introduction, the open space surrounding the block of flats remained property of the state. But was it still the ‘same’ state or the ‘same’ citizens? Actors, agencies and processes in public space started to be

redefined in the law and the public discourse. With the abolishing of 'patriotic work' who will take care now of the public space of neighbourhoods? Was there a change in tasks? What were the new rights and responsibilities? Where are the new limits between the block's collective space and public space? Let us note, that 30 years after the political change (some)people are still confused and quarrel about the limits between public and private, distribution of responsibilities and rights. Timișoara's recent last two long-standing mayors occupied the position for 8 (Nicolae Robu 2012 – present) and 16 (Gheorghe Ciuhandu 1996 – 2012) years. Both former teaching staff at the Technical University in Timișoara and members in liberal-conservative parties. Romania became part of the European Union 2007. Next, I will pass in review a few of the laws and local regulations that were given after 1990.

Local council decision 125/1998 (still in use) established: 'At the request of the Homeowners Association, land delimited up to 5 m around the block, is assigned for free use, for a term of 1 Year, in view of arranging green space.' Article 3: '(...) in case the Homeowner Association does not organize/plant the green space in within the first three month, they can be sanctioned according to Law (..)'

Local council regulation (HCL 371/2007): 'Cultivating vegetables in public space - is regarded as a contravention and will be sanctioned.' Same rules apply for planting fruit trees or shrubs (HCL 371/2007 and HCL 43/2009).

The existing fruit trees in the public space of marginal neighbourhoods of the city (Timișoara) started being replaced by species considered valuable from dendrological, ecological and aesthetic point of view (HCL 43/2009). Part of the argumentation is: 'Until 2007, the green space located on the Cetații Boulevard, framed by Bărăgan and Crișan Streets, was treated as a typical street front, specific to the Banat rural area: planting fruit trees. However, this does not fit with the green space of a city that wants to be European, both aesthetically and ecologically.'

A study made by the city's local council in 2010 revels that for some reason (not shown in the document) the authorities stopped taking care of trees in the 'în jurul blocului' (around the block) although they are aware of the consequences produced (including Circumvalațiunii area): 'they have become very crowded in some places due to the appearance of trees from seed. These places became, at the same time, dangerous, the trees grew very high towards the light, they did not develop a balanced crown, the stem being too thin compared to the height, at a stronger wind gust there is the danger of breaking'.

Some of the major laws and local regulations concerning (also) the 'în jurul blocului' (around the block) in Timișoara are in the process to be changed. Without having particular expertise on legislation, and without the next paragraphs being a

thorough and complete critique of the supposed changes I will explore a few, and reflect on how they could transform what Lefebvre referred to as the use value of public space. The following paragraphs will concentrate on: a law (national level), the Local Register for Green Spaces (local facts and information required by the national law as work tools) and the General Urban City Plan of Timișoara.

Amendments (L582/2018) to Law number 24/2007 (completed in 2009) ‘On the regulation and management of green space in urban areas’ are in progress. The law regulates the notion of green space in cities, belonging to the public and private domain of the state, and their administration.

Green space (referring to naturally grown vegetation or planted by humans) is acknowledged roles like: ‘a social, cultural and environment protective role’, ‘the purpose of insuring (...) the health of the population’, ‘minimizing the impact of climate change on the population living in Romania’, ‘helps to ensure, increase or improve the quality of the human living environment by aesthetic, ecological and/or recreational opportunity’.

Changes in Article 2: The state recognizes the right of every individual to a healthy environment and free access to recreation in public green spaces, in compliance with the legal provisions in force. The right to contribute to the green space – outside designated areas, the planting of trees and shrubs alignments in public space will be eliminated from the existing law.

In Article 3, typologies of green space formally defined according to function are changed to typologies determined by cadastral boundaries, property (state owned public or state owned private) and access.

Definitions applying to the ‘în jurul blocului’(around the block):

Existing law: ‘green spaces adjacent to collective housing are green spaces formed of a vegetal setting, adjacent to condominium-type⁹ housing blocks, with an aesthetic and protective role, also climate and air quality improvement;’ (2007) is to be changed to ‘condominium garden – garden like development, located in residential areas, adjoining collective housing units;’ (2018).

⁹ Condominium is defined (Law 310/2009) as ‘The immobile consisting of land with one or more constructions, of which some properties are common, and the rest are individual properties, for which a collective land book is drawn up and an individual land book for each individual unit that is in exclusive property, which can be represented by housing and spaces with another destination, as the case may be.’

Article 7: The public green space, can be given in administration to other public institutions; can be leased, only by keeping the use of 'green space' defined by this law. The 'green space' can also be given for free use, to legal entities, with no economic purpose carrying out charity or non-profit work (Homeowners Associations are non-profit).

The Local Register of Green Spaces is a working tool that includes the technical data concerning the green space in cities, according to quality and quantity indices. As stated by the law 24/2007 each city should have and constantly update this evidence. Timișoara does not. The city council issued a local regulation in 2017, reducing the targeted surface by the law to only 15% of Timișoara's green public space (mainly parcs), and not even that is updated (according to the Landscape Association of Romania, 2019). Timișoara (2010) had a surface of around 519 ha, green public space of which around 270 ha in the multi-storey housing neighbourhoods (according to the new General City Plan). At a registered population of around 310.000, this resulted in 16mp/inhabitant, which was below the targeted 20mp/inhabitant required by the law until 2010, and 26mp/inhabitant targeted until 2013 (Government Emergency Ordinance 114/2007). On the website of Timișoara's city hall, I found undated maps of the city's green space. Comparing them to the everyday use in Circumvalațiunii area, I noticed that: all the space which is not paved is marked as green space on the maps, although in reality some is used as car parking. A building that burned down in 1997 is still on the map. That area has an asphalt flooring now and is used as parking space. Due to a recently won lawsuit (November 2019) by the Landscape Association of Romania against the city council, Timișoara's city administration is requested to update the Local Register for Green Space for the whole city.

Timișoara – General Urban City Plan. The contract for the elaboration of a new general city plan for Timișoara, was signed in October 2010. At the time of, September 2019 the General Plan is still waiting for some approvals. When approved some of the original information the urban plan relies on, will already be 10 years old. In the present, Timișoara's urban development is being regulated by the old one, approved in 2002 for a 10 Year period, and prolonged several times. This makes me think of an example from Hirt's book: Sofia (Bulgaria's capital) managed to postpone adopting its first post-socialist plan until 2007. The delays were typically blamed on organizational and procedural difficulties and lack of funding but, as Stanilov (2007) observed, the lack of urban policy has been 'the policy itself' (Hirt, 2012:76).

According to the new General Plan, *Circumvalațiunii* is included in the category: *Collective housing in assemblies - 'Area of the large monofunctional residential complexes built during the communist period.'*

This category is divided into several sub-areas, one of which named 'Free space and green subarea'. 'Green Subarea' includes: square (small park), garden, park with unlimited public access. Article 60: On the whole of a parcel or an un-parcelled residential area, the green spaces organized on the natural soil will occupy a minimum of 40% of the total area occupied on the ground, and will comprise exclusively vegetation (low, medium and high). Surfaces having a coating of any type are included in the category of free space. On the street side, the proportion should be 60% in favour of the green space. The space in-between buildings will be used for green space, playgrounds, sports facilities, and so on. Possible garages will be arranged (underground, semi buried) so that their roof is integrated at ground level on at least two sides and is intended for the aforementioned uses.

Before coming to the preliminary conclusions for this chapter, a few reflections about cars, which I see at the moment as the major private consumer of the open space in the neighbourhood(s) and one of the major contestants for what should be shared, public space. According to the 1970s urban city plan for *Circumvalațiunii*, the 'Norm P35 from 1967' required one parking spot for six apartments' (Technical report 15.012/1971:37). Parking space was envisaged to be grouped. Two, four-storey high garages (each for around 250 cars) were planned, but did not get built (probably for economic reasons). Today the requirements are six times higher: one parking spot for one flat. The growing number of cars and the absence of parking buildings and a social strategy translated, in 30 years of political, economic and social encouragement of car - owning and using, and discouraging of the use of public transport, into what we see today in Timișoara, as well as in all major Romanian cities: cars parked everywhere, using up what should be shared space and creating disconnections.

To close, two extracts from the local press that illustrate the mayor's position:

'The gardens will disappear. Green areas will be designed in a civilised manner' states Nicolae Robu, mayor of Timișoara (since 2012) about the green, public space surrounding block of flats, in an article from June 2015. (Opinia Timișoarei, June 2015)

Again, in March 2016:

'I wish that everything that is considered public space is designed beautifully and according to norms, green spaces should have an appearance [sic], planting should be made with the science of planting, not just a thing for planting. A citizen that lives there has a certain skill,

a certain job, but doesn't have the information. What is below-ground, for example, what are future plans for the area? With all the benevolence and desire to do good, he can mess up things if he is allowed to do such interventions which are, I repeat, in the responsibility of the municipality.' (Renașterea Bănățeană, March 2016)

4.1.2 Ideas on which to build a conclusion

Looking into the transforming definitions establishing legal characteristics: materiality and practices for the 'în jurul blocului' (around the block), the open space surrounding multi-storey housing I found: a Local Council Decision (1998) (still in use) referring to it as 'land surrounding the blocks', while the new (not yet approved) General City Plan (work on it started 2012) defines it as 'free space and green subarea' (Fig. 12, 13). If approved, this policy will regulate the proportion between free space and green subareas (60% in front of the buildings, 40% in the back). I wonder, since the block of flats are private property, will the 40% or 60% be calculated from public property so the existing unbuilt? Could this reduce the existing green areas? A relevant question for the neighbours as well as for all city dwellers, since as mentioned earlier in this chapter, Timișoara has, even in the current state less green space pro capita then required by the Government Emergency Ordinance 114/2007. The free space can be used for playgrounds, sport facilities, recreation but also semi-buried garages. Can they also be built in the re-naturalized green space? Who will decide?

The green public space is acknowledged qualities such as: a social, cultural and environment protective role, the purpose of insuring (...) the health of the population, minimizing the impact of climate change, helps to ensure, increase or improve the quality of the human living environment by aesthetic, ecological and/or recreational opportunity. The state recognizes the right of every individual to the aspects mentioned above, but takes out from the law approved in 2007 (article 2) - the right to contribute to public green space in general, restraining it to designated areas. Classification according to function will be changed to classification according to property, boundaries and access. The attribute 'aesthetic' seems misplaced among the properties officially acknowledged for green public space. It can be and is, as seen in the Local Council Decision (HCL 43/2009), used to discriminate a public need like – self-provision of vegetables and fruits, to create more dependency on super-market chains. Reflections on this will follow within chapter 5.

In the timeframe between the beginning of the 1990s and today (2019), the gardening surface was reduced (according to a local regulation) to a five-metre

distance surrounding the buildings. Gardening outside established areas is punishable by law. On local level, the approval to use the land surrounding the blocks has to be renewed every year by the homeowner's association. Homeowner's association who do not respect the contract, for a period of three month, will be sanctioned. Cultivating vegetables and planting trees outside the designated areas will be sanctioned. City administration stopped taking care of the less public parts of the 'în jurul blocului' in Circumvalațiunii, even though they are aware of the physical risks for the users. Nobody sanctions them. The 'aesthetic' value of green space, is brought into question on local level as well. Used as a discriminating factor between old, local models and 'new', European ones. On these grounds, fruit trees are being eliminated from public space.

Inconsistencies between the everyday use and the official cartographic material on which current policies and regulations are built, show a conscious decision of city administration to ignore the realities of everyday life in Circumvalațiunii neighbourhood, as well as to ignore at the moment the national legislation requesting the taking into evidence of the green public space in the whole city.

Connecting these results to the theoretical chapter about the (non-)place, these measures seem to target the creation of a new socio-cultural model for citizens behaviour in the public space of neighbourhoods, dependence towards supermarket chains, and the elimination of difference and conflict from public space.

4.2 Everyday production of the 'around the block'

In a capitalist society, the model for public space in neighbourhoods as a place of self-governance along with state support (described in the theoretical chapter), a social and political space, can be found somewhere in-between a place entirely managed and controlled by public administration, where the user is put into an observer position, and a place where public administration is absent and the user left to manage individually or in groups based on private interests. In which direction – on this axis - has the space of the 'în jurul blocului' (around the block) of Circumvalațiunii been moving for the past 30 years? Local anthropologist Mihăilescu (2006) talks about a complete etatization¹⁰ of public space during

¹⁰ Etatization: the process of being statized (Verdery, 1996:40)

communism and a complete privatisation in the past 30 years. This is true in general regarding the central, visible public space of Romanian cities, but can be – as found in the theoretical exploration - different in the public space of neighbourhoods.

After having looked, in the previous chapter, into some of the transformations on policy level, the next step will be about exploring the everyday production of the public space in *Circumvalațiunii*, by looking into function, materiality and social practice. The focus will be on practices that create social connections, on practices of (re)appropriation and self-governance. This chapter revolves around the five semi-structured qualitative interviews with inhabitants, participatory observation in the public space of *Circumvalațiunii*, photographic material, newspaper articles and spontaneous talks on the street. The interviews with participants two, three, four and five took place in February 2015, without yet having a detailed target about what I was looking for - in and about this space. The general thoughts were:

find respondents with continuity (over 30 years) in Circumvalațiunii; look for stories and descriptions of the everyday, mainly collective, self-governing, non-economic practices in the proximity of the block in the present as well as the beginnings in the 1970s – 1980s; look for continuity and change of the practices and the resulted materiality; what triggered and motivated the users – internal or/and external influence; look for meaning of the practice.

Four of the interviews showed that none of the respondents are spending time in the ‘în jurul blocului’ (around the block) in the present. This determined, in autumn 2018, the making of a fifth interview, aiming for the caretaker of one of the gardens in the vicinity of a block. As it turned out she also had lived in this neighbourhood since 1978. Interpretation of the interviews will be made with the awareness that going back 30-40 years in time comes with re-interpretation, re-evaluation of the memories. In addition, that expression through language has its limits, and that people have the ability to contradict themselves, even during the same sentence. Nonetheless since lived space is about meaning and perceptions, and contradictions are part of perceptions, they will be used in this exploration. Regarding photographic material, I could not find any representation of the space from the 1970s or 80s. With no ethnographic, anthropological or sociological research on the topic, done in the 70s, 80s, or 90s in Romania, or at least none that I could find, it is not possible for me to compare or to wage data.

The ‘în jurul blocului’ (around the block) offered and offers space for different practices. The following typologies were constructed, to help with the analytical description. In parallel, the selection of the photographic material made me aware that these categories are sometimes physically separated and sometime interwoven.

Space for social connection (Fig. 17, 18, 19, 20):

- space for play
- space for freedom of movement
- space for gardening
- space for self-production of objects

as opposed to space for social-disconnection (Fig. 21):

- space for cars
- space for discouraging self-governance

4.2.1 Space for social connection: space for play, space for movement, space for gardening, space for self-production of objects

Children and the space for play. As seen in the interviews, the neighbourhood and surroundings were places to be explored by children of all ages, curiosity and boldness. The smallest ones played around the block where adults were gardening or in the company of older siblings and neighbours, older ones preferred the neighbourhood playground, park or would jump the fence of the courtyards ascribed to the six educational facilities in the area. For those in search of adventure, in the beginning (the 1970s, first years of the 1980s), there were trenches and ruins, remains of the former army exercise use. On Sundays, neighbours – young and old - gathered on the football field, at least in the 70s, as respondent P5 recalls. Today, the schoolyards are available for the students going to that school. Cameras are used for regulation and control inside and around the schoolyards. In addition, unbuild space has been taken over by cars. One major opponent for the presence of unsupervised children in public space are cars. The interviews corroborate this idea. Before 1989, as a result of the economic and political context, car ownership and use were comparatively less. Children occupied the street for games and hanging around. The socio-cultural, economic and political changes of the past 30 years led to the decreasing number of this age group, residing in Circumvaiaunii. Coupled with the global discourse about children and safety in cities, on the local level with the increasing number of cars and 'strangers', it leads to more control, restrictions and less independence for children in the city. For the practices in public space, this translates into few children (below teenage age) spending time unsupervised in this neighbourhood. Although many of the children travel longer distances in the city, today than 30-40 years ago, the distances they walk in the neighbourhood have decreased, in parallel to their freedom of individual mobility. Aware of this

phenomenon, my goal was to see how it is reflected in the everyday life of *Circumvalațiunii* today. During the walks in the neighbourhood I encountered children mostly in the spaces defined for them: the park, the two playgrounds, the courtyard of schools and kindergartens during teaching hours. Sometimes on the asphalt of side streets in front of the block, or the green space. I have not encountered them behind the block, in the green area.

*P3: Us kids were playing on the playground [near the block] or we would jump the fence of the kindergarten and nursery [vis-a-vis], which had two playgrounds, or played in the abandoned barracks [beyond Torontalului Street]. It had partially demolished walls, but a complete cellar. That's where we used to hang out. Dacia civic centre was built in '77-'78, so we sometimes played on the building site over there...and at the end of Torontalului [Street] was an old fortress, behind the 'Gypsy' house [...] that's where we also used to play. There was a fortress built on a mound. It [the fortress] still had some of the walls, plus the basement. After I went [she means enrolled] to 'Arte' [the Fine Arts Middle and Secondary School], I started to play with children from Tipografilor [neighbourhood of Timisoara], because that's where most of my friends were. Around 16 [age][1989-90], I rediscovered *Circumvalațiunii* and my old friends.*

In the area, where respondent P3 grew up (Fig. 14, 23), a petition was initiated by neighbours, after the 1990s, to close the public playground near their block. The attempt of neighbours to close the playground where their own children used to play makes me think that, on the one hand they learned to use the power of a democratic tool such as a petition, but on the other hand have not been thought to think about the needs and benefits of more vulnerable groups: in this case children.

P3: 'My sister still lives there. She tells me that the neighbours, even if they are the same, have changed. Ping-pong tables were removed because the old ladies were disturbed by the noise. Dogs are no longer allowed on the playground because they enter the sand. In addition, last year, they [neighbours] started a petition to remove the playground, on the grounds that it is a source of noise! (...) I know situations where the benches in front of the block of flats have been removed, because the youngsters are sitting on them and making noise. They seem to have forgotten that they also had children. Look at my dad! He had two daughters, and I really did get into a lot of trouble... he signed the petition!'

I: Would you let children play unattended nowadays?

P3: No!

P5: 'The football field was our playground, where the sports hall is now, that's where we played. (...) everybody in the neighbourhood gathered... even older and we, the kids... on Saturday, Sunday, championships took place... everybody showed up there.'

P5: I was already old enough [18] not to play anymore... where others use to play was in the park near Dacia [in the centre of the neighbourhood]. In those days, it was too small for how many kids we were [he seems to jump back in time], we would jump in that fountain there, would dabble in the water. During that time, it was interesting to explore the construction sites... playgrounds as such weren't any at that time (...)

Recently, city administration 'modernised' the two public playgrounds in Circumvalațiunii, by covering the entire existing walkable surface, made out of sand and gravel, with a synthetic material.

Dog-walkers and space to walk the dog. I became aware of the existence and presence of the dog-walkers due to the observational walks and a short talk I had with Ana - a neighbour of respondent P2. Ana who takes care of a dog, told me, that many of the dog-care-takers are pensioners. I speculate that they prefer the daylight for walking the dog. People active in the work field have regular walking hours, probably mornings and evenings, or depending on the time they are not working. The around 53-hectare research area, used to have one dog park (around 400 m²) in the centre, the zone of the park, children's playground and church. Nowadays there is none. People walk the dog around the neighbourhood, including in the not-so-used space in between the block of flats.

Gardeners and gardens. Back in the 70s – 80s neighbours were gardening near the block. It was a practice of self-provision, combined with watching the children and socialising – with neighbours or work colleagues - outside the home. Questions about the meaning of the practice, during the totalitarian period, will be discussed in chapter 5. Since the beginning of the 1990s people, moved, aged, died, became owners, others moved in as owners or tenants, jobs were cancelled, new/different ones were required by the market economy, family composition changed. Migration intensified. Romanian citizens are leaving the country, other citizens are moving into Romania. Nowadays, there seem to be less gardeners and less gardens. Flowers are cultivated, vegetables are not. Public administration takes care (interview with P1 and P2) of the trees, or cuts the grass only on the streets with car traffic, what can be described as the more 'public' face of the neighbourhood, where most of the movement and encounters happen. The green space in-between the buildings, connected by alleys or not connected at all, are ignored by the official realm. Most of the gardens I have seen are exactly in these spaces, in the more un-walked, quieter, more 'slow' areas, away from the four surrounding boulevards and the neighbourhood streets with car traffic. Some of them look re-naturalised.

P3: No! Back then, our parents had gardens in front of the apartment building. They used the vacant lot, left empty in-between the playground and the block of flats, to parcel out and

cultivate. That's how they watched us and maintained 'courtyard life'. My parents came[sic] from the village [to the city] when they were 14, for school, and stayed here. They were somewhat unintegrated, coming from [a house with] a courtyard, from the countryside to a large settlement...and most of them [neighbours] were like that. I remember the shouting from the window. My parents lived on the 9th floor.

I: Did you start gardening as soon as you moved here? [1978]

P1: Not immediately, 'cause there were others...

I: Are [in the present] others gardening? How many families?

P1: The S family, the two brothers on the second floor (they moved now), there's the family on the upper floor. (...) Long ago some would plant tomatoes, potatoes... in the garden. (...) this is where the two neighbours from the second floor used to sunbathe, in vest and brassier... she was already old.

I: So, some tried gardening a bit?

P4: Even my wife...here in the back...a little in the very beginning...a few rows...spring onions.

I: So, there was a bit of gardening?

P4's wife: Yeah, many people had them in the beginning, 4 to 5, maybe even 10 years, until the '80s.

I: Why did they stop afterwards?

P4: People saw there was no point in it [did not clarify why]. City council [sic] intervened for parking lots, the parking behind the building was extended...there, where the electrical substation is.

I: The occupation with parking started before '89 or after?

P4: After, cars are multiplying.

The makers and self-produced objects: benches, tables, pergolas, ping-pong tables, fences. In front of every stairwell there used to be at least one bench, sometimes two, in some cases combined with a table. Urban furniture such as: benches, recreational equipment for children, carpet cleaner, where part of the original investment. Numbers were calculated according to norms. If left out during the execution process by the state-construction company, they were provided by the inhabitants. In one case even after the 1990. When part of the main park was used to build a church, the neighbours in a block took an old bench and put it in front of the block, to be used in common. One Interviewee recalls how neighbours sat together, shared

food or had coffee. In the past years, some benches have been removed, by the same neighbours who used to sit on them, socialize around them, for the reason of becoming meeting points for: ‘alcoholics’, ‘drug-users’, ‘youngsters’. As I observed during the walks, today the still existing bench area in front of the entrance, is frequently used for sitting and children playing around them.

P1: I dismantled the bench beneath the window, because of the homeless [in popular Romanian they are referred to as people living in the bush or, people of the street’.] and drug users. (...)

Neighbour: Here [where a table and benches used to be] we used to grill and have coffee... but then the drug users started sitting here, so we dismantled everything... we originally brought the benches from the Dacia Park, when the church was built [1997]... nowadays the neighbour says: ‘I put money down but I don’t want to get my hands dirty’. Back in the days people used to be more united...

P2: ‘The benches were made by the inhabitants...’

P4: ‘In front of the block there used to be benches on the alley going onto the street. People didn’t like ‘those’ sitting on them and being loud at night, disturbing them.’ (the benches were taken apart)

The practice of the original inhabitants of the neighbourhood to dismantle some of the urban-furniture they produced themselves, makes me ask myself if they consider these objects as a group property, not as neighbourhood- or public good? What does this say about the use value? Has the need for socialising in front of the block been overruled by the need to feel safe? Nowadays everyday life partly, still revolves around the original objects in the vicinity of the blocks, mainly in the entrance area. The space in-front of the block has also been transforming into space connected to commercially oriented functions (hairdresser, health-care, grocery store) on the ground floor. In the central zone of the neighbourhood and the additional playground, the urban furniture is new: standardised, prefabricated, commissioned and payed with public funds. City administration has been investing in urban furniture for the central area and but has stopped taking care of the trees behind the blocks.

4.2.2 Space for social disconnection: space for cars, space for discouraging self-governance

Car drivers and cars as private occupants of public space. Cars are perceived by the respondents as a source of conflict and noise and the objects that took over the space

formally used for play or gardening. Remember that the respondents have a continuity of over 40 years in this neighbourhood, three of the four are retirees. Until 1989 cars were few and involved self-repairing processes in the public space of the neighbourhood. Political and economic restrictions kept the numbers low and seldom used. It was not an individual choice. People used public transport, biked or walked when possible. Timișoara's mayor is making place for car use rather than public transport, biking and walking. In Circumvalațiunii cars are parked formally and informally, on asphalt as well as on earth. A piece of land which resulted after the burning down of a sports centre (1997) has been turned into an asphalted surface for parking. Officially one car is registered for every 2 residents in this city (Timiș Online, 2017). As respondent P3 recalls, the lack of parking creates tensions among neighbours. Some try to impose longevity as their right to use the same parking space in public space. Those who don't find a parking spot on a dedicated place, park either on the sidewalk or on green space transforming it to muddy earth, and leading to the restriction of moving for all pedestrians, but especially: children, adults with strollers, people in wheelchairs, and old people.

Space for discouraging self-governance. According to the respondents, city administration is providing a basic maintenance of trees and grass in the more public, walked areas of the neighbourhood. They are indifferent towards the previous and current involvements and needs of the neighbours, cutting the trees planted by them without previous dialog. At the same time, they expect the dwellers to sweep the alee area and keep the neighbourhood clean. The companies responsible for technical works in public space, disregard the opinions and previous hands-on practices of the neighbours, dig in the 'gardens' without previous notifications or consultation, and leave unfinished work and leftovers.

I: Does city council maintain the space around the block?

P1: They sometimes come to cut trees, but [do] nothing in the back, nothing. The grass was this high. I have a sickle, that's how I cut the grass. (...) If they would only sweep in the back... but the [street] sweepers don't go there...

(P1 tells me how the company in charge of changing the electric cables around the block, left the old ones on the ground.)

P1: ... they also destroyed part of the garden. I came, moved the cables... and leveled the earth...

Neighbour: ... before, this is where people beat the rug, it was beautiful. Here were plots with tomatoes, carrots... long time ago, before the 90s. Then, when people moved out, it was left to P1... I can't [do gardening], although I am younger than her.

I: *Why?*

Neighbour: 'Because I don't like it... did you see how people make fun of her? It used to be nice, an ale, one could go around this fence all the way to the school entrance. After the 'Revolution' nobody took concern in anything anymore. Many moved to a house. I haven't been here, in the back, for a long time. I have a problem with my leg... stayed inside for six months.'

P2: ... We had some superb linden trees, they [public space administration] butchered them. They said it's a problem for the electric wires, they didn't even ask us! They came and butchered them. Same with the magnolia. Ms Ț planted that tree. Same with the walnut tree...Nobody asked us anything. Before, the entire house smelled like linden. Those linden trees grew their branches up to my balcony.

4.2.3 A transformation from a domestic and recreational space to an economic and recreational one

It has been thirty years since the change from totalitarianism to representative-democracy, from planned to free-market economy. A few years less since the privatization of the 24% state-rented apartments in Circumvalațiunii. Some people are still confused about the limits between public space and what they consider space of the residents. And about the distribution of responsibilities and liberties between public administration and them. On the one hand local authorities charge the users with the maintenance of hygiene in front of the block (Local Regulation), but disregard their previous, hands-on implication when trimming trees (see Interviews). The presence of underground networks running parallel to the buildings, under the roads or in the green open space in-between the blocks, is used, as seen in one of the interviews and the local press, by local administration and companies employed by them, to exercise control and power, and discourage self-governance.

Respondents recollect a more intense use of the space around the block during the time of the totalitarian socialist regime. One can argue that some practices were imposed, so it had no meaning. For some it may have been just a geographical encounter. Others, as seen in the interviews, did not participate at all. Three of the five respondents found meaning by using this space as the extension of the domestic. During the 1970s-1980s, the regulations and actions of the authorities placed residents in the 'în jurul blocului'. By allowing gardening for self-sustenance and other domestic practices under the label of patriotic and collective work, time was officially distributed.

The interviews completed observations visible when walking around the neighbourhood. That the geographies, practices and time spent by the neighbours in the public space of Circumvalațiunii today, are consistent with the attention Timișoara's city administration is investing in the public space of the neighbourhood. The 'behind the block' at the periphery of structurally constructed action, the centre of the neighbourhood as the economic, social and political heart (Fig. 24). Material practices may include or exclude not only by building bridges or walls but by making strategic investments in the built environment that render particular areas in the city central while excluding others (Knierbein, 2015). Something similar can be said about public space. Additionally, investment is not only about investing in materiality but about investing in the way it is produced.

Presently, the street is no more a play-space. It is a space of danger and fear. Children in Circumvalațiunii spend time, mostly in organised, dedicated and supervised areas such as: the parks, school- and kindergarten yards, sometimes in front of the buildings. Not in the back area, the one defined in the original urban plan as inner courtyards. The elimination of ping-pong tables, the attempt to dismantle a playground, do not eliminate 'only' noise, but they eliminate the user. Children are pushed - during their leisure time - towards the private: either the profit-making private or the private of the domestic space. How does this contribute to the reproduction of the social behaviour of children who are neighbours today? How does this create bonds between children and their neighbourhood? Regarding the original urban furniture, I ask myself: Do the old inhabitants feel that they have the right to own the objects they used first or procured, over the right to use of other neighbours and citizens? Former appropriation practices turned into de-appropriation? Removing furniture from public space also removes the users. When the neighbours removed benches, they eliminate the others but also themselves. Traffic and the parked cars along every road – on one or two sides – create disconnections. The car-free spaces can be put into two categories. The front area of the building having a sidewalk connecting the main road to the entrance of the multi-storey housing. The back area with no entrance and no sidewalk. This space that has the benefits of being car free, asphalt free and green, is less used. I have seen and have been told, that it is still used for gardens, although less than 10 or more years ago. Vegetable-gardens are flower-gardens today. As places for recreation, they compete with the extension of consume and technologies and other alternatives for spending free time. The space in the back of the buildings is also used by other city-dwellers (then the neighbours) as space to retreat. By dog-walkers who – let us remember have no other green space to walk the dog in the neighbourhood, and animal-feeders (of cats, dogs, birds). Are these practices of

appropriation of space? Can we talk about self-governance in the case of individual practices?

In absence of public education and state support for a new social and economic model of public space, as in the public of a capitalist-democracy, many residents use the space officially dedicated to them, where social practices are simplified, while others retreat to the space neglected by the authorities, where they can satisfy their needs.

4.3 Everyday life - Interview Transcripts

Translation of the interviews are my own. Interviews in Romanian are in chapter 8 - Appendix

4.3.1 Interview Participant 1

(October 2018)

84 years old (at time of interview) (born 1934). P1 lives on Stelelor Street (since 1978). She has lived alone since her husband died, five years ago. P1 was born in Timișoara and comes from a mixed heritage: mother Hungarian ethnic, father German ethnic. After her father went missing in Crimea during World War Two, she and her sister were put into an orphanage near Timișoara, close to the Serbian border. P1 went to school for five years, then worked for 42 years in the textile industry from the age of 13/14. She also cared for an old woman, in exchange of her house.

P1 has a son. Her grand-daughter and two years old great-grand child live abroad.

A neighbour/ friend took part in the interview. She also used to work in a textile factory.

Neighbour passing: Morning, nice [weather] to site outside.

P1: Everybody tells me: 'It's as if you were born with the broom and the hoe in your hands'. I can't... do you know there was no fence here? I've put it..., when my husband still lived... he died five years ago. I've put the hedge here, 'cause there was a blue tin plate here, so ugly, that you could think that Gypsies [Roma] are living here. And not even a flower, please believe me, untidy vegetation, full of filth.

I don't wish to argue with anybody... it's with this lady [the neighbour sitting with us] that we go along since I have moved here...

I: When did you move here?

P1: In 1978. This block was finished in 1975. I have exchanged with somebody¹¹. I sold a house¹² and moved here.

I: Why did you move from a house to a block of flats?

P1: I have a son, 62 years old, worked in television, at RDS [name of a company] on Bogdăneștiilor [Street] as a technical dispatcher. And I have a granddaughter of... 31 – 32 years old... she has a small child of two and a half years. She lives in England, went to university here. Honestly, I only went five years to school, but I wouldn't trade myself for someone who went for 20 years. I used to work at the textile factory, at Badea Cârțan [market. Name also refers to the surrounding area.], for 42 years, in three shifts, at the scale, at machines, at sweeping, where ever you wished. Do you know what the foreman told me? God rest his soul: 'You are like a jolly-joker. Where I put you, that's where you work'... of course, I got use to in 42 years. My mother was team-leader at this factory, she worked there for seventeen years. But died at 45. I was pregnant with my son then, in the third month. I have a sister who is paralysed.

I: Did you used to live in Timișoara before?

P1: This is where I am born. Do you know where? At Crișan, Ghiroda Nouă [neighbourhood]. I married my husband on Inocențiu Klein Street¹³, then we moved to Cezar Boleac [Street] number five [perpendicular Street to Inocențiu Klein] and then here [Circumvalațiunii].

I: Why did you move to a block of flats?

P1: I maintained [she means took care of] an old woman on Cezar Boleac, but my son wanted to live in a block, so we moved to a block. Now he lives in the city centre, (...) on the second floor. My granddaughter used to go here to ,18' [School],... she had such a good teacher. This is what I can tell you about my life. But let me tell you

¹¹ I think these were rented apartments, not allowed to be sold. If somebody moved out, the State would assign it to another family or person according to priorities established by the State. People informally exchanged.

¹² on Cezar Boleac Street, in Fabric neighbourhood, on the Bega shore

¹³ Fabric neighbourhood is an adjacent area of Crișan, on the opposite side of the Bega river

honestly, I grew up in an orphanage. I had a stepfather. My natural father left for Crimea and went missing on the front line [Second World War]. My mother gave us away to Comloș [orphanage] so that we didn't waste away. We used to have neighbours, even young women who smoked and send us [she and her sister] on the street to gather cigarette butts... my mother just couldn't deal with us any more so she sent us to the orphanage. I have a sister, that lives on Porumbescu [Street]. Between my son and his cousin there is exactly 17 days. Mine [son] is born on the second of May, hers on the 19th. In between us sisters, is one year and two months.

I: Did you used to do gardening before moving here?

P1: No, but I knew how to dig. They taught us at Comloș, they took us to the fields... to harvest potatoes.

I: So, you didn't do gardening when you were living in Fabric [neighbourhood]?

P1: Of course, I did! I also had land there, but not like here... [unclear]. When we moved here the grass was knee-high, I couldn't go in because of the weed.

I: Did you start gardening as soon as you moved here?

P1: Not immediately, 'cause there were others...

Neighbour: Everybody was using...

P1: My sister taught me how to plant roses. I used to love lilies. Then my daughter-in-law brought me lilac.

I: Did you, from the start, plant flowers or did you mix, change?

P1: I never planted anything else, only flowers and let me tell you something: I stole! When the park was dismantled [only partly, the area for the Orthodox Church built in 1997] I brought from there two bushes of white roses... when it blooms it's like a bride... now I have over sixty roses... also here, in front [of the apartment building]. On Torontalului [Street] where the benches are, there used to be very beautiful roses, big, yellow. I took some also from there. But you only take in August! (we talk about roses) ... honestly, I cannot just be, in the summer when the earth is battered... I take the hoe I take the 'gherebla' [Hungarian word for rake] and...

I: Do you speak Hungarian?

(We switch to Hungarian) (We talk about Romanianisation through language. With her son P1 speaks Romanian, with her grand-daughter Hungarian.)

P1: My parents were not married. My father went to war and never came back. I was around 13 – 14 when I started working... (jumps to another idea) I dismantled

the bench beneath the window, because of the homeless [in popular Romanian they are referred to as people living in the bush or 'people of the street'] and drug users. (...) Let me tell you what happened to me last year... I let a couple inside the flat, who told me they are from an exterminator [pest control] company¹⁴... I hope God helps me die in my own house, without being a burden for my son. He is only 62 years old. (...) One day... on Monday, I go to the pharmacy and I see a woman that I know from around. She asked me to give her 50 Lei [Romanian currency. A bread cost two to three Lei]. That's a lot for me, I don't have that kind of money. I offered her 25. (...) My daughter-in-law is not quite as it should, but eh... I am not her mother and she also grow up in an orphanage... as long as they are happy... I always tell my granddaughter: 'Don't go to bed upset with each other, because you never know what the next day brings... Whatever happens, cook and clean for him. (...) I don't like to argue. My husband used to be a drunk... still, when he got sick, I cared for him, we spend 60 years of our lives together... I was not indifferent to see him lie in bed for four years... I suffered a lot during my life. My great joy was going out in the garden, it calmed me!

I: Are others gardening? How many families?

P1: The S family, the two brothers on the second floor (they moved now), there's the family on the upper floor. (Jumps to another idea) in front of the block there used to be a table with benches. They were dismantled because of the drunks.

I: Back in time, did the neighbours get more involved?

P1: From time to time I took care of the neighbours' plots... you should have seen what was here a week ago... Those from the city council came with a scythe [sic] cut the grass but didn't clear it... My husband, the drunk that he was, but when I told him that I wished for a gardening tool, he would give me the money when I didn't have it... Long ago some would plant tomatoes, potatoes... in the garden.

(...)

P1: Do you have any idea how much I cleaned after the homeless, dirty mattresses, shit, bedbugs. City hall is not taking care of this... They [strangers] came under my balcony when it was still open space. Before it was not closed. Doesn't the police see them? Our building manager told me that the cleaning lady is not obliged to sweep the sidewalk? Then who should do it? Me?

¹⁴ P1 tells me the story of how these two people attacked her. They were looking for money

I: Do the neighbours pay for the maintenance of the hedge [in front of the block]?

Neighbour (moved here, as one of the first, in 1975): Before we used to pay... but since it was still P1 cutting the hedge... Now the hairdresser salon [functioning in a flat on the ground floor] is in charge of one part...

P1: About figs... they [hairdresser salon] count them to make sure I don't take any... but I don't want any, neither figs nor bananas.

I: How did you end up living in Circumvalațiunii?

P1: I traded [homes] with one [named] Moise. I used to have in my care an old woman, there on Boleac [Street], at the house... I was looking for a flat on the ground-floor. It just happened that mister A came to us... he probably heard the news around the neighbourhood... I told you my son didn't want to live in a house, he wanted to live in a block.

I: Do you like the neighbourhood?

P1: Yes. We have stores, market... and I told my son... they bought [their flat] with the Decree 112 [112/1995] or whatever number that was... after I bought this. First, we gave the house, got some money and moved here. Then we bought. They did the same... The aunt of my daughter-in-law died. They took care of her, buried her and so own... My son says: 'Mom, I am not selling. Maybe we rent the apartment in the city centre and move here.' (...) I don't eat grapes they are bad for me. So, anybody can have them... as long as they don't step on the flowers. That's also the reason why I put the glass bottles, so there's no mud.

I: Does city council maintain the space around the block?

P1: They sometimes come to cut trees, but [do] nothing in the back, nothing. The grass was this high. I have a sickle, that's how I cut the grass. Do you know what was there? Dead cats, dead pigeons, scraps of food... about a month ago. Let me tell you: nobody shows interest in this. Gypsies come in the spring to take flowers... this spring it was so beautiful... I also cleaned the neighbour's part while he was away.

I: Shall we go to the back?

P1: If they would only sweep in the back... but the [street] sweepers don't go there...

I (to the neighbour): Do you understand Hungarian?

Neighbour: Yes. My father was Hungarian, my mother German. But I only speak Hungarian with P1 these days. Before it used to be very beautiful...

I: Before? When? Did city council take more care? The tenants?

Neighbour: Around ten years ago. The tenants took more care, had gardens.

I: What makes you think that people spend less time on this?

Neighbour: Well it's dirtier. Before it was not this dirty... so many pigeons...

I: Did people move out?

Neighbour: I don't know... before, this is where people beat the rug, it was beautiful. Here were plots with tomatoes, carrots... long time ago, before the 90s. Then, when people moved out, it was left to P1... I can't [garden], although I am younger than her.

I: Why?

Neighbour: Because I don't like it... did you see how people make fun of her? It used to be nice, an alee, one could go around this fence all the way to the school entrance. After the 'Revolution' nobody took concern in anything anymore. Many moved to a house. I haven't been here, in the back, for a long time. I have a problem with my leg... stayed inside for six months.

P1: This is where the Arab with [who owns] the bodega lives... this is where the two neighbours from the second floor used to sunbathe, in vest and brassier... she was already old. I have carried water with the stroller, from the fountain, for the roses...

I asking the neighbour: When did you move here?

Neighbour: City council moved us here. We used to live across from Bega [universal store built in 1973 in the Fortress]. We only had one room there and moved here to three rooms. When I moved here [1975] the school wasn't built.

P1: Neither when I moved here [1978] [Interview with P3 shows that she went to school here in 1979].

Neighbour: This land was free... the barracks were still here... these blocks were not built yet... I had a flat on Teiului [Street], bought (unclear: 50-51)... those of us who used to live in the 'courtyard' [meaning the building with an inner courtyard across from the Bega Universal Store, in the Fortress], most of us moved here [probably renting from the State]. At the other stairwell there were only soldiers lodging... this part was built by convicts... Here most of us came from the building in the Fortress. Now many don't live here anymore. They moved away, died... (jumps to another idea) before we were obliged... City council... they made us plant roses, trees, shovel snow... in the beginning forty years ago. You were not even

allowed to close your balcony (after 1989 this was permitted) (...) Ceaușescu wouldn't allow us... you were not even permitted to hang the clothes to dry... then they came [to tell us] that we are not allowed to plant vegetables anymore.

I: Doesn't it make sense for people to take care of the space around their block of flats?

P1: Yes. Before we used to do 'patriotic work' (explanation in chapter 4.1.1). I am angered, nobody sweeps, nobody doesn't... they just stay at their window and... 'Look at the fool'.

Neighbour: Before it was beautiful because everybody was participating, you were required to. It was very beautiful. When they put the gas [the pipes underground], they obliged us to dig the moat. Each the same number of metres. Everybody participated. My husband received money from a neighbour to do his part to.

(P1 tells me how the company in charge of changing the electric cables around the block, left the old ones on the ground.)

P1: ... they also destroyed part of the garden. I came, moved the cables... and levelled the earth... (jumps to another idea) my granddaughter used to go to school to 18 [name of the school]. Then the aunt died so they moved to the city centre and she went to Loga [one of the best schools in the city].

I: Did you live together with your son, daughter in law and granddaughter?

P1: No. I only lived with the 'old man' [husband].

Neighbour: They had [a flat] in Lipovei [neighbourhood in the vicinity] ... they worked for Comtim¹⁵

P1: I used to take her [the grand-daughter] to school and home. Here are some people renting, they don't show interest [in gardening].

Neighbour: Here [where a table and benches used to be] we used to grill and have coffee... but then the drug users started sitting here, so we dismantled everything... we originally brought the benches from the Dacia Park, when the church was built [1997]... nowadays the neighbour says: 'I put money down but I don't want to get my hands dirty'. Back in the days people used to be more united...

¹⁵ Comtim was the largest industrial producer of pork in Romania: 1967 – 1999, when it went into bankruptcy

4.3.2 Interview Participant 2

(February 2015)

72 years old (at time of interview) (born 1943). Lives on Brândușei Street, with her husband (year of birth 1938). Born in a village in Arad county (Western Romania). Occupation: pensioner. After finishing high school, she was employed as a substitute teacher in the village school. Since the age of 23, she worked as an air-traffic controller (for 32 years) in Timișoara. Her husband comes from a city in Southern Romania. Was a military officer. After a job transfer to Arad county, he met his future wife.

P2 has a daughter, a son and two granddaughters (one from each child). The oldest grand-daughter lives and works in abroad.

P2: I have a granddaughter, who studied in Romania and lives in Central Europe now. Her father is a businessman (...) she makes money, she's just like her father... we are wimps. My daughter is also a wimp. I keep having discussions with my son-in-law, him saying that we are not... resourceful. My son-in-law has graduated from two universities, he was a poor child, worked hard to get where he is. My son, although we kept him through university for four years, he stopped going when he was in the fifth year and didn't graduate... I pampered them [her children] too much... the neighbours are sour and gossipy... not all, some.

I: I would like to research about the quality...or lack of quality of the space in between the block of flats, from the perspective of the inhabitants. How was it when you moved in and how is it today? When did you move to the area?

P2: We lived on the other side of Gheorghe Lazăr Street (Circumvalațiunii I zone) from 1968 until 1976. When I lived there, a military unit of tanks used to be based here [refers to the zone Circumvalațiunii II, III, IV where she lives today]. Afterwards we lived on Timiș Street [also in Circumvalațiunii III], in a two-room apartment. The space in-between the blocks was big enough, with benches...space to plant flowers...enough open space, every block of flats had a bench...I didn't have time to sit because I have a house in the countryside. We lived on Timiș Street for two years, then we moved here [around 1978]. Here it was for money [she means that the flat was for sale on credit. On Timiș Street, they were renting from the State].

We absolutely wanted three rooms, because we already had two children, my son was also born, unplanned...it was the time of "*decreștii*"¹⁶. He's still "pointing his finger at me: "I know you didn't want me". It was difficult to manage; I didn't even have milk to give them. Lucky that we had a very good doctor and she used to bring me all sorts of products from abroad. As soon as they built the blocks, they opened the dispensary.

I: How did you chose to live in this neighbourhood?

P2: Because it's close to the city, for the easy access to the city centre. Back then it was beautiful in Timișoara, it was so clean...Now other people have come, they spit seeds on the ground...it's dirty, unspeakably dirty.

I: How did you get access to the flat?

P2: My husband, officer in the Army, leased the flats from the Ministry of Defence... My husband used to leave home for six months every year, for courses in Ploiești, Brașov, București [Eng: Bucharest]. I was left alone [with the kids]. Luckily with my mother-in-law. [jumps to another idea] We had the possibility to get [not clear if she means rent or buy] a superb, big flat, in Calea Șagului [neighbourhood of Timișoara] near the bridge, but I preferred the small 'prison-like' boxes of Circumvalațiunii, because it is near the city centre.

I: The benches and children's playgrounds, appeared from the beginning?

P2: The benches were made by the inhabitants, because there was enough space in-between... and in front of the block. I didn't have time to sit because we bought a house in the countryside because I couldn't tolerate the city air, I would faint.

I: Your husband came from Timișoara?

P2: From a city in Southern Romania ... my father didn't want him...but he [her husband] brought me here. My father was like an Englishman, conservative...he also used to be very rich, but they took him to the Canal and broke him (...) when he came back from police custody, he [her father] was all swollen... they took everything from my grandfather's yard, so they [the family] rebelled...

(The interviewee switches back to discussing her current living situation)

P2: There was enough space in-between the block of flats. Here, it's a little bit more cramped, but people sit on the bench... Ms T use to go outside, but now that Mr T

¹⁶ 'the children of the Decree' this is how the children were called if they came to the world due to the anti-abortion decree 770 from 1966

has died the children took her to another neighbourhood of Timișoara, to their house... Ms Ț was taken by her niece or granddaughter to Cluj [Romanian city 300 km distance to Timișoara]... there are two other elderly single women who sometimes sit on the bench.

I: Are there any children in the block?

P2: They recently appeared... a family, of the doctor, with a five-year-old girl and I just noticed that another is on the way... There are not many children...

I: Do children today still play on the street?

P2: Not much...but when we moved here yes. There were a lot of children of my daughter's age...she was ten back then, my son was small, but they took him with them...they played in-between the blocks, there was a cheerful spirit until around 10 o'clock in the evening!... the neighbours had their hands full with them. Some of the neighbours feel bothered by the children and teenagers... there have been huge discussions because of the children, as far as calling the police! ... I didn't have any problems with the neighbours, except the water leaks are a big problem! The upstairs neighbour had a big leak... the carpets were ruined, I had to throw them out.

I: When your granddaughter was younger, did you let her play on the street [unsupervised]? How did things change since the '90s?

P2: I didn't let my granddaughter alone on the street, only if I accompanied her...it's kind of risky, because of the cars, the street being narrow and the drivers quarrelling. I do not know why the people [drivers] choose this street. I used to let my son [outside unsupervised], because he was with my daughter and he also had other older friends, who would look after him. In our entryway, there were two boys and at the other entryway there were two brothers...they live in Germany now, they used to love the small one...even so, one day he ended up in the middle of the street in front of a car. Luckily the car stopped. [jumps from the past to present] Now, the drivers are arguing every day; they do not yield to each other and they are cursing here, on the street.

(The interviewee jumps to another recollection)

P2: Behind the block is a parking lot now, before it was empty lot.

I: Does the block have a "back" exit?

P2: Before I used to go out to the back. Initially, the block had a second exit - to the back, which we closed around...eight years ago, after they [burglars] came and broke into the storage spaces in the basement and took everything, the stuff for

which there was no more space in the apartment. Others [homeless] slept down there and they 'did there needs' there... before it used to be clean, nice... then at some point the cats moved in... I think that these days nobody keeps anything down there anymore.

(The interviewee leaves the room for a few minutes)

P2: My mother-in-law was an extraordinary woman, she read all the books in our library. She threw out of the window, the belongings of my husbands' father and told him: "leave!". She was 27 and stayed single for the rest of her life. She had a strong sense of justice... never remarried.

(We talk about people from Ardeal and Oltenia. Inhabitants of Romania's South-West region - Oltenia are disdained by many Romanians from Ardeal - also known as Transylvania)

P2: The crazy thing is... my daughter-in-law is also...from Oltenia [as is C's husband] and she loves my son above all... as if what? only people from Ardeal or Banat [west-central Romania] are humans?

I: How is your relationship to the neighbours?

P2: Very good.

I: Any common activities? Back then? Now?

P2: Not really, because I was away most of the times, but the other women, like for example N1 and N2, they do almost everything together. They are both widows. Sometimes I have coffee with them, but my husband doesn't like it if I leave the house, so I rarely go. We also do not organise anything together. Back then [before 1989?] we organised children's parties, sometimes for adults. Nowadays less, because we are older... but also because I am away six months in a year. I'm here in the winter, sometimes I join them [N1 and N2] for a little while... but my husband is of a more 'closed' nature, he doesn't like it. I am more sociable. He doesn't really have friends to meet. It's difficult for me to organise events in this apartment. There's not enough space. We go to my daughter for holiday celebrations, they have a living room as big as this entire apartment.

I: Does this block of flats have any rooms to be used in common, besides the staircase?

P2: The... room to dry clothes upstairs [last floor]. I use it. You need a key for it. The cellar, but we do not use it anymore... it smells bad.

P2: We retired at 55, due to the jobs we had [she and her husband], due to the working conditions... I do not hear well. My pension is 1500 lei (...). The sister of my daughter-in-law, who is a doctor earns 800 lei [probably works in a public hospital].

I: Let's say if you wouldn't have the house in the countryside, what would you like to have around this block of flats?

P2: A big space, a lot of flowers and trees. It's not that we do not have any, but there should be even more green... We had some superb linden trees, they [public space administration] butchered them. They said it's a problem for the electric wires, they didn't even ask us! They came and butchered them. Same with the magnolia. Ms T planted that tree. Same with the walnut tree... Nobody asked us anything. Before, the entire house smelled like linden. Those linden trees grew their branches up to my balcony.

I: What is the average age in the block?

P2: It's mostly old geezers...one family in their 40s; a dental laboratory on the ground floor; over there, two young people moved in; there is an accounting firm - Ms I...

I: Regarding the space near the block of flats, how did you find the public space on Timiș Street [same neighbourhood, another street]?

P2: On Timiș Street it was even better than here. There was more green space around the block, more trees. It's just that we were renting a two-room apartment, so we moved to three rooms. I didn't want to leave this area. I could have bought in Calea Șagului [another neighbourhood of Timișoara], but it was full of 'gypsies'... I also come from the country side, but I suffered a lot to see what Timișoara has ended up being compared to fifty years ago. People were much more educated back then... Now, I do not know what nations have come here, but it's no longer the Timișoara from another time. It used to be so elegant, well-mannered people, civilised... now there's so much dirt in this town.

I: Where did the neighbours come from?

P2: Most of them were not from Timișoara... [She jumps from 40 years ago to 10 years. It's not quite clear what she means] this was an apartment block for the military. N1 comes from Arad county [neighbouring county to the north], she came here when my children were small... The kids [she means young people] living near me are renting... Mr S spends a lot of time in a small city close to the Serbian border. He used to be a Major for the border patrol.

P2: This apartment is Category 2, with loggia, the kitchen is tiny, we used to eat in the living room when we lived with the kids. Now that it's just the two of us, it's good... It was my fault, because I didn't want to leave the area.

A [neighbour who introduced me to P2]: The lady who has the accounting firm on the ground floor sometimes takes care of the garden, she planted flowers.

4.3.3 Interview Participant 3

(February 2015)

42 years old (at time of interview) (born 1973). Born in Timișoara, lived in Circumvalațiunii for almost 40 years. Comes from a Catholic Bulgarian minority living in the Banat region since the XVII century. Her parents moved to Timișoara, when they were 14 years old, for education and work.

Occupation: nurse.

I: How was it being a child in this area? Friends? Did you play with others around the building?

P3: In the first childhood, until I got into 'Arte' [the Fine Arts Middle and Secondary School], that is up to 10-11 years old [ca 1983-84], I was playing around the block, on the playground between the blocks.

I: That one [the playground] existed before '89 as well?

P3: Yes. When I was a kid, there were the four towers [eleven-story apartment buildings] ... beyond Torontalului, there was a Peco [petrol station] and Dacia¹⁷ Service [car repair shop] and in the middle an old garrison. Us kids were playing on the playground [near the block] or we would jump the fence of the kindergarten and nursery [vis-a-vis], which had two playgrounds, or played in the abandoned barracks [beyond Torontalului Street]. It had partially demolished walls, but a complete cellar. That's where we used to hang out. Dacia civic centre was built in '77-'78, so we sometimes played on the building site over there... and at the end of Torontalului [Street] was an old fortress, behind the "Gypsy" house [...] that's where we also used to play. There was a fortress built on a mound. It [the fortress] still had some of the walls, plus the basement. After I went [she means enrolled] to 'Arte'

¹⁷ Dacia the name of the neighbourhood's civic centre is also the name of a Romanian car producer

[the Fine Arts Middle and Secondary School], I started to play with children from Tipografilor [neighbourhood of Timisoara], because that's where most of my friends were. Around 16 [age][1989-90], I rediscovered Circumvalațiunii and my old friends.

I: What did you find more interesting, spending time at the playground or at the fortress or the barracks?

P3: Not the playground... the old barracks, the military unit... there were some 'trenches', holes, bunkers made of brick, which we entered. As Dacia civic centre was being built at that time, we took 'bergman' plastic tubes from the construction site and played with them among the ruins. We were fastening them together either with bandages or insulating tape.

I: Would you let children play unattended nowadays?

P3: No!

(...)

P3: Back then, our parents had gardens in front of the apartment building. They used the vacant lot, left empty in-between the playground and the block of flats, to parcel out and cultivate. That's how they watched us and maintained 'courtyard life'. My parents came[sic] from the village [to the city] when they were 14, for school, and stayed here. They were somewhat unintegrated, coming from [house with] a courtyard, from the countryside to a large human settlement...and most of them [neighbours] were like that. I remember the shouting from the window. My parents lived on the 9th floor. ... My sister still lives there. She tells me that the neighbours, even if they are the same, have changed. Ping-pong tables were removed because the old ladies were disturbed by the noise. Dogs are no longer allowed on the playground because they enter the sand. In addition, last year [2014], they [neighbours] started a petition to remove the playground, on the grounds that it is a source of noise! I know situations where the benches in front of the block of flats have been removed, because the youngsters are sitting on them and making noise. They seem to have forgotten that they also had children. Look at my dad! He had two daughters, and I really did get into a lot of trouble... he signed the petition!

(...)

P3: Lack of tolerance, lack of culture...people coming from the countryside to the city because of the political [context], somehow forced, went to school, but

they do not have the culture of living in common where some rules must be respected. Initially, when they arrived, they were intruders and had to conform during the years of Communism. After 1989, with the freedom of speech, one could observe their true education.

(...)

P3: I parked my car where I found an empty space. I was young, I was 25 years old. Some guy came to tell me that he had lived here for 20 years 'here I park my car for 20 years; you can't park here'... the parking place is public space! This are exactly those [neighbour] who now want the playground removed...I do not know why.

I: When you moved back to Circumvalațiunii [1996] why did you choose this block?

P3: When I returned to the area, I was looking to live again in a tower block [eleven-stories], because the water pressure is higher, it's quieter on the upper floors,... and then there are things I liked more in this block [then the one she grew up in] and stuff that I do not. Here I miss the green, there's more concrete, and it's louder, but I like that I can take care of the shopping and the payments [electricity, phone, etc] more quickly.

(We are talking about the Catholic Bulgarian minority living in Banat, mainly grouped in Dudeștii Vechi, Vinga and Breștea)

P3: (we discovered a common acquaintance) Both his parents come from Dudeștii Vechi. His grandmother lives opposite of us in a five-story block. She was sometimes selling in the market and telling me about the family. With the parents, the relationship is more distant. The old woman moved to town in old age and... I still have a grandmother at Dudești... so we talk, she asks me about news from the village.

I: Do you remember how your parents chose to move to that building?

P3: I know from my parents that the first ones to be built in '72 -'74 were these towers [where they lived] and those on Cetății [Street] next to the tram stations, then the five-story ones in between. As far as I remember, it [access to buying the apartment] was through repartition, but they were also pressured by my coming to the world and they chose this area also because of the direct access from Torontalului [Street] to Sânnicolaul Mare [city, 60 km from Timișoara] where my grandparents lived. I was raised by my grandparents for three years. They [the parents] came every weekend to see me. They [the parents] bought the apartment. Signed the contract in '72 -'73 [paid in instalments] and moved in in the winter of '73 -'74 when it was not even finished. It was still being worked on, on the outside. They did not buy it

for a low rent after '90!¹⁸ (...). My parents lived in a kitchen, in an old, old house without heating, until they moved to this apartment.

(The interviewee jumps to another thought)

P3: I still remember...the playground, the kindergarten... there was a grocery shop where the print shop is now, at the end of the grocery store was a heating substation. Between the heating substation and the five-story block from Cetății, there was a small playground... where the parking lot and the green field is now... the grocery store was a small one, a small neighbourhood shop. When I was a child, I did not come to the store in Dacia [in the middle of Circumvalațiunii neighbourhood], it did not even exist when I was very young.

I: Did you use to go to the indoor swimming pool?

P3: Yes. And next to that was the sports hall [burned down around 1997] where the parking lot is now. There was an enclosed area... the pool, the gym and the sports hall. In between the buildings, it was all fenced and there were tennis and athletics courts.

(...)

P3: I'm bothered by the church [Orthodox] in the park [Dacia], the fact that they ring the bells all day for Easter and that they took over a part of the park [to build the church in the '90s]. The park used to stretch all the way to the school's fence. They've asphalted the front part and drive their [priests'] cars in the alley now. I do not know if this [feeling] comes from the fact that I am Catholic or from the fact that they have taken from the park, but what's sure is that it disturbs me. I also had an argument with a priest there (...). I actually have a problem with too much concrete. If I could find a traditional village, the way it's imagined in my mind, I would certainly move there.

P3: The school I worked in, Generală 18 [number], a sports school in the beginning... the one next to the church...Generală 19 on Cetății Street [Circumvalațiunii 1; opened in 1972] and 24 on Brândușei [Street] already existed [sic] [24 was opened in 1976, after 18]...they were built in this order 19, 18, 24, 26...but put a question mark there. At 26 [number of the school], I was among the first generations [1979]. The other schools were already [built]. The schools were made because the construction of Aradului [adjoining neighbourhood] had started and there were more children

¹⁸ After 1990 the State privatised most of its housing fund. In the beginning of the '90s, one could buy a one-room flat for the price of a car or less

to come. The whole area of Aradului has no school, and Lipovei [close neighbourhood] has one - Generală 7 [Generală stands for primary and middle school]. (...)

P3: When I was a kid, from this window I saw a neighbourhood of houses, only houses... and then construction on the right side of Torontalului [Street] started, then on the left side and in the area with houses.

(...)

P3: In Giroc [another neighbourhood of Timișoara], we lived right on a thoroughfare, there was a hell of a traffic. Here [Circumvalațiunii] we have three rooms of 60-70 m²... there [flat in Giroc] also three rooms at 120 m². But I found myself having to pay my phone in Sinaia [another neighbourhood], the electricity at the end [stop] of 15 [trolleybus], that I have to go grocery shopping in 700 [market] or Giroc [neighbourhood]. The apartment was very nice, built by the 'Trustul de Construcții' [construction company owned by the state] for their own employees. My husband was working at the 'Trust'. Building began in the late 1980s and ended in '92 -'93.

(The interviewee jumps to talking about Circumvalațiunii)

P3: The towers [eleven stories] have greater comfort [then the five-story high]. Just see how important surroundings are... it made me leave a very generous 120 m² apartment with the living-room 'as big as a garage'... to move back here... I could not adapt there, though for a while it was practical, being close to the County Hospital where I was doing an internship (...) you get out of the house and end up straight in the street! Throughout my life, I compared the populations of Circumvalațiunii, Giroc and Șagului [different districts of Timișoara]... great difference in hygiene and conduct! Depending on the period, people came from different areas. Here [Circumvalațiunii] there are more people from Timiș, Arad, and neighbouring counties. My parents' neighbours were from Timiș and Arad. While in other neighbourhoods, there are people coming from other areas, further.

P3: The block I am staying in now was commissioned by UMT [Mechanical Factory Timișoara] in '77. I bought the apartment from a former UMT worker who moved to Canada. Most of my neighbours, who are owners from the beginning, are UMT employees... This [shows with the finger on the map] belonged to the MApN [Ministry of National Defence]. I remember passing by it on my way to school and at lunch. It was full of people dressed in uniforms.

My parents building had people from different working backgrounds, different fields. The dwellings had not been distributed by the work place. In our block [where she leaved as a child], there were many parents of the same generation with children of the same age. And here [Dacia], I found that the neighbours had worked in the same place.

P3: I have the feeling that the children in the tower blocks were of a better nature... My parents are simple workers. They do not have higher education, but they come from very good families. My grandfather had land, he had slaughterhouses that were confiscated [by the State]. Then he [her father] came to town, studied, learned a trade. In the family, there was some money left, which they [her parents] could use to buy the flat. The apartments in the towers are pretty much the same, but those on Gheorghe Lazăr are a bit smaller, about 10 square meters.

4.3.4 Interview Participant 4

(February 2015)

68 years old (at time of interview) (born 1947). Since August 1974, lives with his wife, on the corner of Gheorghe Lazăr and Cetății Streets, in an eleven-storey block. Born in Ictar-Budinți (village), Timiș county. Occupation: master craftsman specialised in machine building, lathes, milling machines. Worked at Electrobanat [factory producing lighting objects] until 1982, then at Tehnica de Calcul [software development and data memory production]. His wife was an accountant at ICIL [the former milk factory], later at Tehnica de Calcul. M has two children and one grandson.

P4: In 1973 we should have moved in, but the accident with the crane happened. So, it was postponed... in 1974, in August, we moved in. The place and the area were random, because this building was built in association with all the tenants, all from the same enterprise. So, it was bought through the management of the company... of course all private property.

I: What enterprise?

P4: ELBA [Factory producing lighting objects] [Electrobanat name used between 1948 – 1990 when the factory was state-owned].

I: The area also has a block of flats built by UMT [Uzinele Mecanice Timișoara. Eng: Mechanical Factory Timișoara]. MAPN [Ministerul Apărării Naționale. Eng: Ministry of national defence] had a few.

P4: How do I put this? Everything seemed good to me.

I: All of your neighbours were employed by ELBA [former Electrobanat]?

P4: Yes. All, all... two to three were not I thought it was a good geographic location, close to the [city] centre, with good connections to other neighbourhoods: tram, bus, trolley bus... went directly to the train station [close to his work-place]... and with little pollution, the factories were on the south part of the city... the traffic is quite intense because of the exit towards Jimbolia [city in Timiș county], the border...

I: Even back then?

P4: No, more now, back then there weren't as many cars. Now it's really crowded. (jumps back to talk about the neighbourhood) With modest leisure spaces but enough, I mean even parks or children's playgrounds.

I: For children of what age?

P4: Smaller ones.

I: Almost nothing for teenagers...

P4: No. For them there are bars and clubs [laughing]...Enough shops around...

I: Which block of flats were already in use when you moved in?

P4: The tower [points at the block of flats next door] und the area Circumvalațiunii 1 [across the street], after that the long apartment buildings on Gheorghe Lăzăr [street].

I: In '74 maybe there wasn't yet that much landscaped around the building, but afterwards, in '75-'76, was there anything at the tenants' disposal...did you have gardens?

P4: There were some who got quite excited in the beginning, were growing some things, digging around here. This park in front happened to remain empty, at first there was another block planned here...number 44 is missing...I know this from a foreman who used to work here [the number is indeed missing. None of the design plans included in the original urban city plan corroborate this information].

I: So, some tried gardening a bit?

P4: Even my wife...here in the back...a little in the very beginning...a few rows...spring onions.

I: So, there was a bit of gardening?

P4's wife: Yeah, many people had them in the beginning, 4 to 5, maybe even 10 years, until the '80s.

I: Why did they stop afterwards?

P4: People saw there was no point in it [did not clarify why]. City council [sic] intervened for parking lots, the parking behind the building was extended... there, where the electrical substation is.

I: The occupation with parking started before '89 or after?

P4: After, cars are multiplying.

I: How many apartments are there on each floor?

P4: 4 on each floor, 44 in total. Apartments with 2 and 3 rooms. Of course, there are less storage rooms and garages than apartments.

I: Do you have children?

P4: We have two children and a grandson.

I: Where did they use to play?

P4: In this area, around the block.

I: How old is your grandchild?

P4: Eight years old. He's in first grade, at the school in our area, Generală 18, next to the church in Dacia [centre of Circumvalațiunii II, III, IV].

I: Where does he like to play?

P4: In the park in Dacia, the park next to the church. That's where he likes it the most, otherwise the Children's Park [the biggest children's park of Timișoara] or wherever he gets the chance.

I: Was there a connection with the neighbours, with the community? Was there the desire to do something together? Back then or now?

P4: In the beginning, in the first 20 years, it was a lot more. In the meantime, it's gotten less... there were also old co-workers, we got along well. By now the people changed, new ones came who do not have...other age groups, younger...different...it's no longer as it used to be before...

I: Are there any shared-use spaces?

P4: No. Actually, in the basement there is a so-called drying room, meant for shared use. It's still being used to hang laundry. There's no washing machine. The tower blocks have the drying room next to the elevator's machine room.

I: What public amenities would you like to have around the building?... such as a certain type of urban furniture, benches, pergolas or playgrounds?

P4: I personally would've liked it, maybe others too, others wouldn't [sic]. In front of the block there used to be benches on the alley going onto the street. People didn't like 'those' sitting on them and being loud at night, disturbing them [M lives on the 9th floor]...what else? Now everybody complains about parking spaces.

I: What is your professional background?

P4: I worked as a foreman for ELBA [former Electrobanat]. Vocational school, I attended high school as evening school. I worked at ELBA until '82. I also worked at 'Tehnica de Calcul' [software development and data memory production] in 700, where Alcatel [name giving to the former enterprise after 1989] is now.

I: So, it was close to home... But when you worked at ELBA, you weren't that close?

P4: I was. It took me 20 minutes [on foot]. I'd cross the bridge at the train station. My wife worked for the old milk factory [ICIL] as an accountant, where the Billa shop is now [500 m distance], and after that she moved to Alcatel – also close. I didn't like distances. I could have worked for AEM [Aparate Electrice de Măsurat. Eng: Electrical Measuring Devices], or Electrotimiș, but because of the distance I chose not to [5 km measured in straight line].

I: In which neighbourhood did you live before moving to this flat?

P4: In Timișoara, after we got married, we lived in Calea Șagului [neighbourhood of Timișoara], lodging, for a short while, less than a year. In '73 we got married and in '74 we moved here. This block of flats was supposed to be ready in '73 but due to an accident it was postponed to '74.

I: Are you born in Timișoara?

P4: No. I was born in Budinți [village 40 km from Timișoara]. My wife in Scărișoara, Alba County [Transylvania].

I: Why did you chose to come to the city?

P4: Back then, that was all. Should I have stayed and worked for the C.A.P [Cooperativa Agricolă de Partid. Eng: Agricultural Party Cooperative] or what?

Back then, there were only C.A.P.s [in the rural areas]. Industry was everything, there was plenty of it. Everything was collectivised in '65 [collectivization was finalized in '62 according to several scholarly sources].

I: I do not have any more questions. Would you like to add anything?

P4: I liked this area and I still do. I do not like any other. And this from the very beginning, I didn't like it in Șagului [neighbourhood], where I lived for a year.

I: Where do you go to the market?

P4: In 700¹⁹ or Dacia ... but it's small. Mostly in 700, it's two stops away with the 13 [trolley bus] or 4/6 [tram].

4.3.5 Interview Participant 5

(February 2015)

47 years old (at time of interview). Born 1968 in Timișoara. Use to live in Circumvalațiunii, on Teiului Street, from 1972 to 1990. 1991 - 2000 (with his wife) in a village in Timiș county, close to the Serbian border. Since 2000, back in the city. Lives in Circumvalațiunii 1, on the other side of Gheorghe Lazăr Street. His parents came to Timișoara from Moldova region, after the famine. His father came in 1951/1952, his mother around the same time.

Occupation: real estate agent (since 2000 to present). Supply teacher (discipline: Romanian) in a village of Timiș county (1990 – 2000)

I: How did you find life in the neighbourhood, where did you like to play? Were there playgrounds for kids or places forbidden by the parents?

P5: Forbidden places... there were no such places. When we moved in in '72, the cinema was not build yet, neither Calea Lipovei [Lipova Street], Calea Aradului [Arad Street]... from Piața Dacia [Dacia Square] you could see down to Toronal [Street]... they kept building and building. The industrial revolution began in the '80s in Timișoara [sic] [prefabrication on a big scale already started in 1958-60], they kept building. In this sense [sic], our area is a bit worse off. The football field was our playground, where the sports hall is now, that's where we played. There was this man, very friendly, he was a policeman at that time, he made the goalpost, the

¹⁹ One of the city's main open-air markets; placed between Circumvalațiunii and the city centre

net... everybody in the neighbourhood gathered... even older and we, the kids... on Saturday, Sunday, championships took place... everybody showed up there.

I: Were there places to sit? Any toys?

P5: Each person would bring something from home.

I: Which year did they build the sports hall?

P5: What was the year when the Chernobyl accident happened [1986]? I used to play handball then, at a championship, and we were told to play in the sports hall! So, the sports hall was there already.

I: After they built the sports hall, where did you move your playground?

P5: I was already old enough [18] not to play anymore... where others use to play was in the park near Dacia [in the centre of the neighbourhood]. In those days, it was too small for how many kids we were [he seems to jump back in time], we would jump in that fountain there, would dabble in the water. During that time, it was interesting to explore the construction sites... playgrounds as such weren't any at that time (...) yes, we had the barracks right in front of our building! Close to the Policlinica [medical clinic], there was a military station where soldiers were lodged... all around Generală 18 [school] nothing was built. I went to school in the first grade to Generală 18. Since there were so many kids, they built Generală 24 [same neighbourhood, on Brândusei street] in haste. When the next school year [September] came, they moved us to the 24 school [1975-1976] [jumps to another idea] the barracks were surrounded by a wall. [jumps to another idea] We would go no farther than Dacia Square. That was our sector. This quarter here, was vacant land after they tore down the barracks.

P5: [after 1989] The corner was used by the Joe company, those with the waffles, then Nestle... there, were you see the booths, underneath those booths pass some big pipes. I had a friend who worked in the real estate business. He wanted to do something there. The city hall agreed only on the condition he would move those pipes away and support the costs, so he gave up the plan. The terrace over there has no deep foundation...

I: Were there places to sit or to rest?

P5: No. Except for the park there was nothing.

I: What about the garages?

P5: Some of them were there already. (jumps to another idea) In 1968, Dacia [the car factory] began its activity, you would register at CEC [State Bank, founded 1864],

but the revolution came before you could get one, and the insanity with the lawsuits began. One Dacia car cost 70,000 lei. Back then that was quite a sum, a salary was 3000 lei, that was a good salary. After 1990, money lost its value. There was a sports hall here, where the swimming pool is, around here we used to play. Between the two buildings – swimming and athletics, there were some tennis courts. The fence was very high, but the watchman would let us in... here [he refers to the apartments Circumvalatiunii] the architecture is bad, this is how they designed it back then... if we develop fast, we make fast [sic]... I used to live in a comfort 2 flat, these ones here are comfort 3, Amforei Street – the bathroom 1.2m x 1.2m. After the '80s, they designed it [the architecture] differently. Lipovei, Aradului were designed differently, comfort 1, big kitchen, spacious rooms...

I: And the flats in the towers, are they comfort 1 as well?

P5: Yes, because they have separated rooms, but they are one room next to the other [he refers to the fact that the bedroom and the living room have a common wall]. Here, next to Kaufland [supermarket], the kitchen and the bathroom separate the bedroom from the living room.

I: Why did people move to Circumvalatiunii? What drew people to this neighbourhood?

P5: My parents worked their whole life at CFR [Romanian state railway company]. My father was a welder. We moved here in 1972, we were five [two adults and three children] persons in two rooms. In 1984-85, we got three rooms [they were offered the possibility to move] in calea Aradului [Arad Street], much bigger, but because we liked the neighbourhood here so much, we didn't want to move out. We stayed in this tiny little flat not knowing what would come. After 1990, during the real estate boom, the flats in Aradului [neighbourhood] would sell for up to 80,000 [Euro]. We were in love with this neighbourhood... Now there are a lot of old people in the neighbourhood. Today everybody looks for more space, and here the flats are small. The location is ok, but the structure is not... the flats in the towers are a bit bigger. Basically the flats sell because they are cheaper, [some] have up to 42 square meters, so the younger couples, who take the money from 'prima casa' [literally: first home, real estate credit stately run]... and have no other means move in here. Let me tell you, in the last years we didn't have couples who could get all the 60,000 Euro that state offers them. Because they don't have the salaries. The first thing the CEO's at the multinational corporations did was to cut the salaries. With no money, with only 30-35,000 they buy something cheaper. If we go to Cetății [neighbourhood] or Mircea cel Bătrân [neighbourhood], 2 rooms could cost up to 50,000. Those are buildings made after '85, big-size model.

I: Is there another living area so low-priced and so close to the city centre?

P5: No. Take Ionescu, Medicină is a very expensive area. Medicine students, Indians with state scholarships, they live on Take Ionescu. Recently western Europeans also come to the Medicine University. They have two years to learn Romanian. (We talk about Germany, Norway) ... in their countries there is no dental school for money [sic, he refers to the fee charged in Romanian state universities]. The exam for the first year: 38 state-funded places. The rest up to 120 places: you pay a fee. During my time there was no such thing. There were 50 candidates for one spot. A friend of mine went to Iași [city in eastern Romania] for the law school. In Timișoara, there were 63 candidates for one spot, whereas in Iași 57. [jumps to another idea] I had a client who intended to buy a flat, she had paid 500 Euro up front. Her brother found her a job in England, she gave up everything and went there. I got married in 1990. We then moved out of the city and came back in 2000. Our godparents had left for Germany already in the 1980s. Back then to go to Germany was insanely hard: you would spend days and nights at the consulate, they would ask for a lot of proofs.

I: How did your parents get to live in that apartment building?

P5: That was a CFR [Romanian state railway company] building. A building for the employees. Back then few people had properties. [Subjective: in Circumvalațiunii even before 1989 76% of the buildings were private property]. During the Ceaușescu regime you were not allowed to have two properties, only one. That was rental housing provided by the employee... we lived at ground floor, across from as the accountant... and so on. After 1989, the tenants had the possibility to buy the flats. There were no problems here. We [the country, the citizens] had problems in the historical areas [he refers to the retrocessions of buildings and estates that had been nationalized between 1944-1989]. (...) In Romania when you pay something to the state, you struggle to get the money back... the administration pays you back only when it suits them (...) Yes, everyone with his/her neighbourhood. Back then [during childhood, boyhood] anything beyond the football stadium was unknown to me.

Housing
70% Five storey
30% Eleven storey

K Kindergarten

K Kindergarten

K Kindergarten

PL Playground

Dacia civic centre

Church

Park

PL Playground

Parking

Neighbourhood

commerce

S Generala Nr 26
Primary and
Middle School

S Generala Nr 18
Primary and
Middle School

S Generala Nr 24
Primary and
Middle School

P 1-5 Participant 1 - 5

14. Circumvalațiunii today (Map data @ 2020 Google)





15. Circumvalațiunii's around the block - "în jurul blocului"

16. Circumvalațiunii's centre



The former cinema



17. Participant's 1 around the block

‘My sister taught me how to plant roses. I used to love lilies. Then my daughter-in-law brought me lilac. (...) I don't like to argue. My husband used to be a drunk... I suffered a lot during my life. My great joy was going out in the garden it calmed me! (...) In front of the block there used to be a table with benches. They were dismantled because of the drunks.(...) I dismantled the bench beneath the window, because of the homeless and drug users. (...) Long ago some would plant tomatoes, potatoes... in the garden. (...) Do you have any idea how much I cleaned after the homeless? City hall is not taking care of this (...) this is where the two neighbours from the second floor used to sunbathe, in vest and brassier... she was already old. ‘





2015



2020

18. Space for play

Participant 3: 'Us kids were playing on the playground [near the block] or we would jump the fence of the kindergarten and nursery [vis-a-vis], which had two playgrounds, or played in the abandoned barracks [beyond Torontalului Street]. It had partially demolished walls, but a complete cellar. (...) Dacia civic centre was built in '77-'78, so we sometimes played on the building site over there... and at the end of Torontalului [Street] was an old fortress, (...) It [the fortress] still had some of the walls, plus the basement.'

Participant 5: '... we would jump in that fountain there, would dabble in the water. During that time, it was interesting to explore the construction sites... playgrounds as such weren't any at that time (...)'



2015



2020



19. Space for sitting

20. Space for self-production of objects





21. Space for social disconnection: space for cars

22. Time 2014-2020



Participant 1 - gardening since the 70s-80s
Moved to Circumvalațiunii in 1978. Tenant (together with husband and child) in a 2 room, state-rented apartment until the beginning of the 90s, when she/they bought the apartment, due to a new Decree/Law. 84 years old at time of interview (2018). Female. Worked 42 years in the textile industry. Born in Timișoara.

Participant 2
Tenant 1968-1978 (in Circumvalațiunii I, then III). Since 1978 owner, in a 3 room apartment (with husband and two children). Living with her husband in 2015. 72 years old at time of interview (2015). Female. Initially a substitute teacher, worked 32 years as air-traffic controller. Born in Arad county.

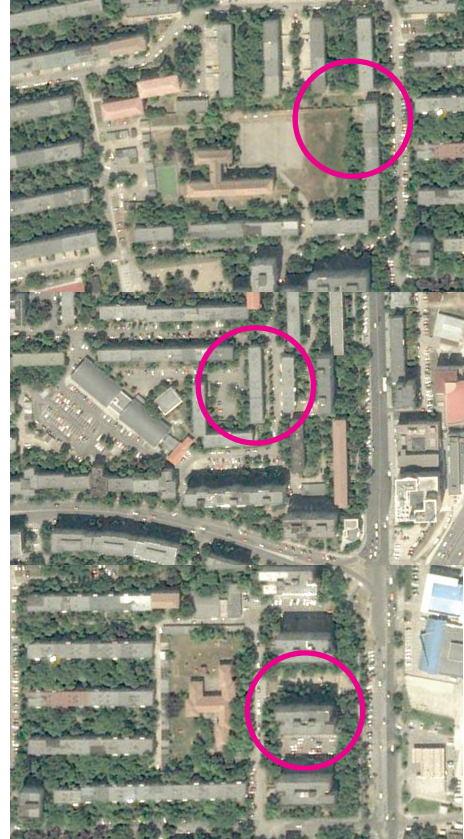
Participant 3 - her parents were gardening
Born 1973 in Circumvalațiunii. 42 years old at time of interview (2015). Female. In 1973/74 her parents moved in a two room apartment as owners. They have migrated to the city, from Timiș county. Have two children.

23. The respondents, their block and around the block (Map data @ 2020 ViaMichelin)

Moved out from her parents apartment, when she was in her early 20s. Moved back to Circumvalațiunii after a few years, with her husband, in a property dwelling in the centre of the neighbourhood. Worked as a medical assistant for 14 years in one of the neighbourhood schools.

Participant 4 - his wife used to garden
Moved to Circumvalațiunii in 1974, with his wife, as owners of a three room apartment. The building was constructed by a state-company for its employees. Two children. Male, 68 years old, at time of interview (2015). Qualified worker.

Participant 5 -
Born 1968 in Timișoara. 47 years old at time of interview (2015). Male. Parents came from Moldova in the 1950s. Moved to a two room, state-rented apartment in the first half of the 1970s, which they shared with their three children. The neighbours were work colleagues at the National Railway Company.



Who spends time behind the block?

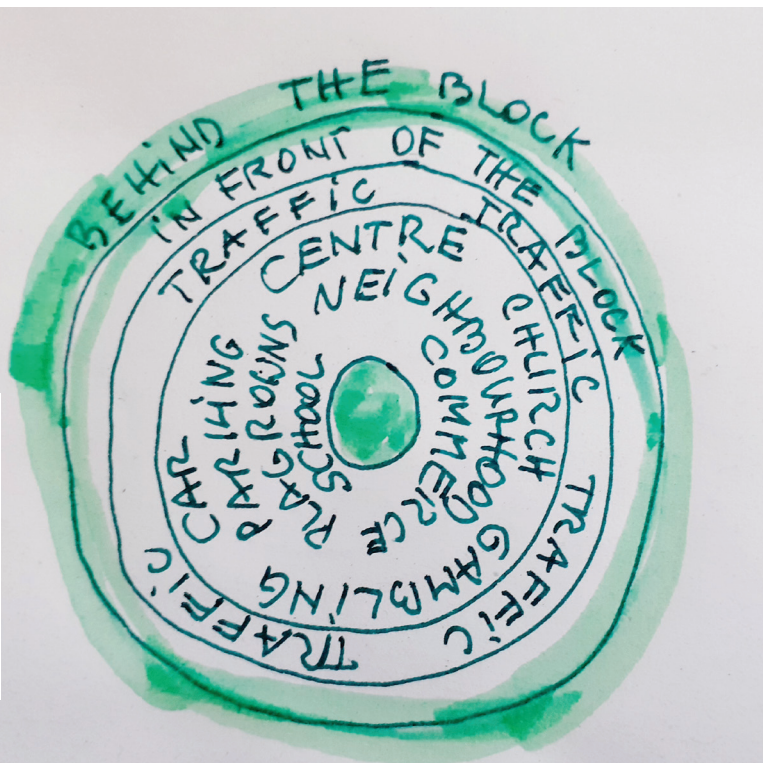
- Caretakers of animals (cats, pigeons, stray dogs)
- Dog-walkers
- Gardeners
- Poor people in search of food
- People with no home
- Others

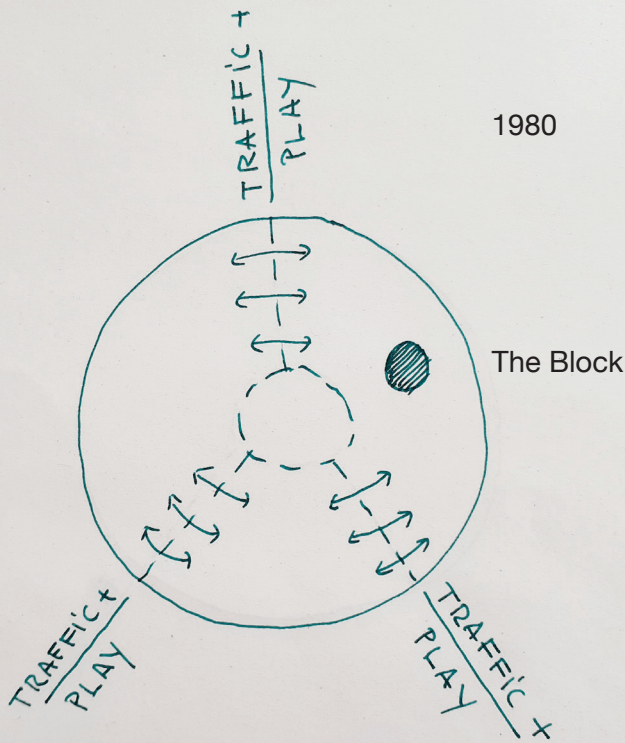
Who spends time in the centre?

- Adults supervising children
- Children
- Christians going to church
- Consumers
- Retirees socialising, playing boardgames
- Others

The 'behind the block' at the periphery of structurally constructed action, the centre of the neighbourhood as the economic, social and political heart

24. Circumvalațiunii, in-between ,use' and ,exchange' value





The Block, designed as monofunctional - housing

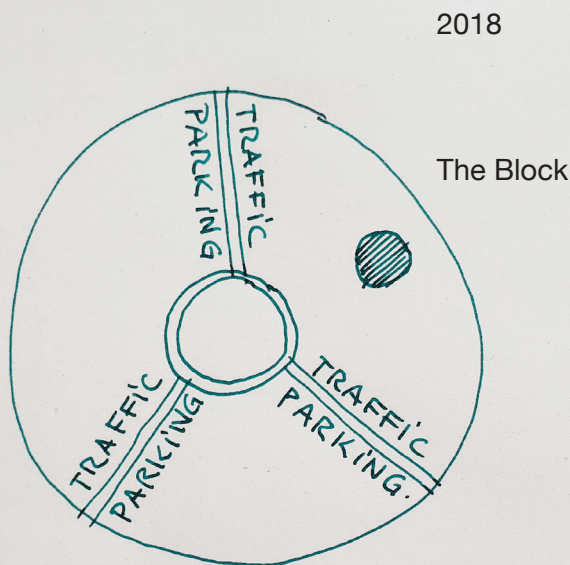
Separate buildings for owners, tenants and 'privileged class'

- Owners 76%
- Tenants in public housing 24%
- Privileged under 1% ?

Activities 'around the block':

- Domestic, self-sustenance
- Recreation

25. The transformation of functions in a neighbourhood's public space, in a post-socialist city



The Block - transformed to multifunctional place:

Housing:

- Privately owned, around 100% (original owners, owners due to the law of the 90s, new owners)
- Tenants on the private market

Commerce, health-care, office, etc:

- Privately owned
- Rented on the private market

Activities 'around the block':

- Economic
- Recreation



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5 Towards a conclusion

Even though in the words of Koch and Latham (2014:145): ‘neither an ideal public realm, nor true public space ever really existed, and those few democratic urban spaces that can be found are under threat’, there is still demand to investigate the changing nature of the public space. Because the public space is the main space where the public is produced. The production of public space depends on the everyday -, as well as the social and political practices of the city-dwellers. It depends on the political, the economic and the socio-cultural, depends on the regulations and policies at national and administrative level, and their implementation. In the public space any kind of exclusion based on economic, social or political reasons is considered un-democratic and discriminatory. The public space as a space for political action is gaining importance in the post-democratic city (Crouch, 2000).

Starting with the 1960s-70s Jacobs (1961), Lefebvre (1974) among other scholars and activists, were raising awareness about the need for (re)appropriation and self-governance in public space, as a practice against commodification of space, against top-down decision making and planning, against gentrification. More recently the discussion revolves also around raising awareness on the economisation of public space in cities. Madanipour (2010:2): ‘Public spaces, in some form or other, have been a primary part of urban structure everywhere and at all times’, but the interest of different actors for different reasons is on the rise (Madanipour, 2010).

Understanding the transformation of the public space of neighbourhoods in the representative democracy of a post-totalitarian context is connected with the exploration of the space during the initial phase of a one-party ruling, from both the sides of the structurally constructed and that of its users. A state-owned space during real-socialism, a state-owned space today, in capitalism, what changed (among other factors) are: the position of the state towards the practices in this space, the definition and meaning of un-paid work in public space, the symbol and power of private property and of state-owned - shared space.

The result of technocrat urban planning under the ideological impositions of the communist party, in the beginning of the 1970s, Circumvalațiunii’s designed functions were clearly separated: housing, (neighbourhood) commerce and traffic. The majority of the buildings were officially mono-functional, free standing. Economic activities that were practiced in the block happened inside the private

space, mostly un-documented. The space surrounding the block was used for activities connected to everyday life: playing, gardening, cleaning, making and repairing of objects. Neighbourhood (state)commerce was concentrated mostly in the centre of Circumvalațiunii, some on the margins, towards the main traffic roads. The three micro-districts that make up Circumvalațiunii II, III, IV, were separated by two-way roads. The relatively low number of cars in the 1970s-1980s transformed the planned mono-function of the road to a mixed use – road and playground - in everyday life. During the past 30 years functions and materialities have diversified. Some of the mono-functional buildings are officially of mixed-use today (housing, private-health-care, offices, commerce, services, etc). This blend is visible also in the space surrounding the dwellings. In addition to flower-gardens, individualised entrance, information panels, different type of decorative vegetation are observable. The practices in the present are partly recreational and, partly economic. Today's traffic in the neighbourhood, and the cars parked on one, sometimes two sides of the roads have completed the separation of the micro districts imagined for a functionalist city by the Athens Charter (Fig. 25). Cars, the symbol for individual freedom, are a material barrier and a source for social conflict and fear.

The exploration of the housing in Circumvalațiunii, led me to the conclusion that this neighbourhood was designed for the 'middle class' of the time, coming largely from the region or neighbouring regions. The residence of the neighbourhood were mainly qualified workers and people with higher studies who could afford the initial down-payment for an apartment or had the support of a private network. In addition to them, around one fourth of Circumvalațiunii's residents were working-poor, newcomers to the city or people working for the military, allowed to live in state-rented apartments. A minority were politically well-connected residents. The three categories lived in different buildings, next to each other. In the period between the years when the first inhabitants moved in (first half of the 1970s) and the 1990s, there were a few visible, categories of people in and around the mono-functional blocks: the neighbours, some who were also work colleagues, family and friends, and some other regular visitors motivated by domestic or private-economic purpose. The change of the political and economic context in the beginning of the 1990s, brought economic and socio-cultural differences among neighbours, despite still being in large the same neighbours. Since then migration influenced the change of the residents. Actors in a block of flat today are: old neighbours and their frequently visiting family members, some of who previously lived here; new neighbours, tenants, people who use a flat for work purpose (some of them also live here, some not), their employees and clients; sales-people and information

spreaders. The 'others', as I was told in the interviews, are: 'homeless', 'drug-users', 'youngsters', 'Gypsies', 'burglars', 'drivers cursing on the street'. The mentioning of 'homeless persons', 'drug users', 'alcoholics' and 'thieves' appears in all the interviews, without me asking, never mentioned in connection to the past only the post 90s time. In the global world of the free-market economy, difference is a *sine qua non* characteristic of cities. The question is: *Is difference addressed or eliminated?* (Augé, 1992; Bauman, 2000; Lefebvre, 1974). Today, the different category dwellings spread through the neighbourhood, the geographical position in the city and the mixed use of recreational functions and neighbourhood shops still contribute, to a diverse social composition: different social class and cultural capital.

The transformation of the social structures after December 1989, happened through transformations of some of the existing cultural models. Were the socio-cultural practices in the space surrounding the block, among them? Was the goal about detaching the former users from the space? Remember that after the Second World War, until the End of the 1980s, the urban population in Romania rose from 20% to 50%. In Timișoara, it grew around three times, during socialism. For many of these urban dwellers the first experience of non-central, neighbourhood public space was the one lived during state-socialism, when the care-taking of the open space was put into the responsibility of the residents. The question of how much agency they had is an open one. Answers to it should not generalise. The interviews with the residents of Circumvalațiunii showed that taking care of the space surrounding the dwellings had different meaning for different users, depending on the socio-cultural background and history of each. One respondent, living in an abusive relationship, was planting flowers for mental health benefits, others were using the space to grow food and watched the children collectively. Not everybody participated. Since the 1990s, change of laws and policies, change of the socio-cultural, loss of meaning, are among the motives that made some of the original neighbours stop using/taking care of the space. In one case it was the occupation of the former gardening place by cars, after the 90s. Who was most affected by the change? Thinking in economic class terms, probably the working poor who used the space to satisfy their basic needs. Who grew food around the bloc, who used the space as the extension of a small home (remember that until 1990 state rented apartments were in general the smallest in the neighbourhood), those who became unemployed in the beginning of the 90s. Thinking in age categories, most affected were some of the residents in their 50s-60s, retired due to the transformation of the economic system, who could have – would have used this space. Also, children, whose space for play has shrunk in the past 30 years from a whole neighbourhood to dedicated, controlled, areas.

The amount of time, people spend nowadays in the space surrounding the block depends on: owner or tenant status, working status, working hours, motivation to do gardening in a society where gardening as self-sustenance has suffered the loss of symbolic value and has been re-symbolised with recreational value. Concerning the value of hands-on activities in the area surrounding the block of flats, respondent P1 tells me what a neighbour told her: 'I rather put money down than get my hands dirty'. Social value turned into exchange value.

The definitions I have looked into, come from everyday use, from local regulations, from the General Urban Plan of Timișoara and a national law. I did not compare them but draw attention to the changes, because they will contribute to the transformations of the practices and materialities in the space. Everyday language and legal definitions concerning the space around the block (Fig. 12):

- around the block - 'în jurul blocului' –in everyday Romanian
- 'land around the block' - local council decision 125/1998
- a space 'adjacent to collective housing' - the national law 24/2007 defining and regulating green space in urban area
- 'condominium garden – garden like development, located in residential areas, adjoining collective housing units;' (L582/2018)
- 'green and free space' - the new general urban of Timișoara (Planning started 2010. Not approved yet).

On national policy level public green space, which used to be defined by function during socialism, is today defined by property and boundary, characteristics of a capitalist economy and what Lefebvre referred to as a step towards the commodification of space. Changes in the legislation show the tendency of forbidding the use of public space to satisfy basic, practical needs and a symbolic devaluation of hands-on action in a space that is no one's-own. The national law concerning public green space and local regulations make discrimination of the user, based on an aesthetical evaluation of the plants, possible. The new general urban city plan defines the space 'around the block' as either a green or free space and establishes a minimum surface for the green space. A minimum of 40% in the case of the space 'behind' the block. Detailed attribution of the space as 'green' or 'free' space, will officially be established in further in-detail urban studies. Considering that in *Circumvalațiunii* the behind the block is in general, in the present almost 100% green or natural, any other percentage means less green space. In view of the fact that Timișoara has even as it is less public – green space per capita than required by the law, should part of this space be defined as 'free-space'? To obtain a use value for space, a multifunctional space, playgrounds and recreational

functions should be envisaged, as Lefebvre (1972) proposes, as part of the green, not as separate 'free space'?

What is the value (use or exchange) of the 'around the block', today?

In Circumvalațiunii some of the spaces in-between the blocks – with no main entrance and no artificial alley, the one that look re-naturalised come the closest to a use value, as described by Lefebvre. A mix of non-commercially oriented practices (gardening, walking the dog, feeding cats and pigeons, retreating in a quiet place) without a direct imposition of the state are being practiced here. The absence of city administration, negative if regarded by the fact that it does not assume the role of a democratic city administration, that it stopped taking-care of the trees, has also positive sides, in the sense that the top-down model already spreading in other neighbourhoods of the city (cutting trees to create parking lots) was not imposed in the space behind the blocks in Circumvalațiunii. In this context, I consider the practices happening in the space around the block, especially 'behind the block' as self-initiated and self-organised. In this neighbourhood, public money and attention, are put into the central public area and the streets where traffic and commercial exchange happen (Fig. 23). As Knierbein (2015) says: 'Material practices may include or exclude not only by building bridges or walls but by making strategic investments in the built environment that render particular areas in the city central while excluding others.' So, what comes next? If this future space will not be produced with support for the involvement of the neighbours, regardless of the aesthetic and technical quality of an imposed design, it will remain in the corner of technocrat planning, criticised by Lefebvre, and contribute to the simplification of the social practices.

Is the non-place visible in the space around the block in Circumvalațiunii today?

Capitalism and socialism (regarded as part of modernity) although different than traditional, pre-modern societies, still created place, by 'the necessary coexistence of ancient religion and new industry' Augé (2009:93). On political level, non-places are the result of policies that promote the economic over the social aspects, in a world defined by migration, consume and technology. This is true for Romania, where after December 1989 the state retreated from one of its major duties, that of ensuring housing, and never took on (in general) the duty of supporting public space as a place for social and political empowerment. If in a place social value is produced through complex social practices, in a non-place with no-, or simplified social

practices there will be no social value. For the residents which connect the space around the block with everyday social practices, this space will be more of a place. For those who are disconnected from this space, who just look at it or just pass through, it will be more of a non-place. In a non-place there is no long-term stay, only short term. As introduced in chapter 4.1.1 real-socialism etatized²⁰ people's time. By assigning the use and care of the 'în jurul blocului' (around the block) to the neighbours, as a public task although most of the practices were domestic, it also distributed the time for the practice (taking it from the time spent in the private sphere). Today, when the practice is not supported by the state, the user needs to find time and motivation on its own. As Ioan (2007) says: 'it needs time for the relationship between public space and private space to happen.'

²⁰ Etatization: the process of being statized (Verdery, 1996:40)

6 Conclusion and Future Work

In the context of a post-socialist nation, representative democracy was introduced in parallel to global capitalism. Part of this process was the re-defining of the function and value of public space as an economic space and the elimination of the existing socio-cultural practices. Among them, un-paid work in the public space of neighbourhoods. In Romania, private property is seen today as the only one worth investing in, economically, socially or affectively. Promoting a use value for the non-central public places of neighbourhoods is essential for re-defining collective-practices and collectively produced materiality, in the context of a capitalist society.

The thesis started out with looking at the 'în jurul blocului' – around the block, as a material place. It is simply not enough to see its physicality, as it is not enough to reflect upon its value from the perspective of the original concept envisaged by the Athens Charter in the 1930s, or by the local political, social and economic framework at the time it was implemented in the specific context. A state-owned space in Romanian real-socialism, a state-owned space today in a representative, post-socialist democracy, so what changed? The communist party put the care of the space into the task of the residents and defined it as a public duty. In everyday life the practices were mainly domestic. Regulations and policies show the transformation of the legal framework during the past 30 years. In addition to the economisation of part of the space, a tendency for sub-categorisation, a re-defining of the imposed and accepted practices (favouring recreation over self-sustenance) and a restraining of hands on practices to designated areas, define recent laws and regulations.

In a capitalist society, city administration can use public space of neighbourhoods to connect or disconnect city-dwellers and neighbours from the level of decision taking and from each other. To connect, by offering support and encouragement for the neighbours to self-organise. To disconnect by delegating the care-taking of this space to third party, economic actors, transforming the neighbours into mere observers, keeping interactions on basic level.

In Timișoara where the main public space is often used for commercial purposes, where elimination of the poor and discrimination of ethnical minorities is part of the city administration's agenda, non-central public space of neighbourhoods seems to be the only public space where social, non-commercial practices can

happen. Any future interventions, from the part of the authorities, that will not come in support of self-governance in the public space of neighbourhoods, regardless of the quality of the design, will just continue the technocrat, top-down method criticised by Lefebvre, having the effect the separation of function and simplification of social practices.

Writing the conclusion during the imposed quarantine in Europe, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, in spring 2020, I was reflecting on how this experience might change economic and social structures and everyday practice. Current physical distancing will transform people's behaviour in public space, impose less bodily presence in the central, main public space of a city, which was overcrowded by consumers. As observed during this past 3-4 weeks since the quarantine was imposed, people still need to go out to the public. So, they look for alternative spaces, less controlled by the eye of the authorities and less busy. The space surrounding the blocks is such a place. Today's crisis offers the social and economic conditions for the rethinking of public space in general, neighbourhood public space in particular and the social practice in the space around the block from both the side of the neighbours, the city-dwellers and the authorities.

If this research should be extended, these two steps would be considered to follow: a vaster exploration of the methodology applied in local self-governed projects, discovered only recently due to growing visibility of research on the internet, and offering support for a self-governed group in the space of the around the block in Circumvalațiunii.

7 Reference

7.1 List of figures

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Fig. 2 The Glacis and the Fortress protecting the Centre, 1858. Source: Primăria Municipiului Timișoara, homepage: https://www.primariatm.ro/uploads/files/studiu_fundamentare/plansa%2019.JPG

Fig. 3 When Circumvalațiunii was an army training sit, 1936. Source: Primăria Municipiului Timișoara, homepage: https://www.primariatm.ro/uploads/files/studiu_fundamentare/plansa%2028.JPG

Fig. 4 When Circumvalațiunii was still an army training sit, 1966. Source: Primăria Municipiului Timișoara, homepage: https://www.primariatm.ro/uploads/files/studiu_fundamentare/plansa%2033.jpg

Fig. 5 Historical timeline

Fig. 6 One version (1972) (out of several) of the Urban City Plan for Circumvalațiunii II, III, IV. Source: Archives of the old Design Institut of Timișoara (IPROTIM)

Fig. 7 Housing proposal drawn over the existing military base. Source: Archives of the old Design Institut of Timișoara (IPROTIM)

Fig. 8 Data from the Urban City Plan of Circumvalațiunii II, III, IV, 1970. Source: Archives of the old Design Institut of Timișoara (IPROTIM)

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Fig. 11 Detail view – Circumvalațiunii today (Map data @ 2020 Google)

Fig. 12 Around the block - everyday language and legal definitions

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Fig. 14 Circumvalațiunii today (Map data @ 2020 Google)

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7.2 Empirical research

A total of eleven visits, having a length between a few hours and a work-day, were conducted between August 2014 and December 2019. Their goal was: participatory observation, observational walk and/or making of interviews. Every visit was documented photographically or recorded. Here is a list of all the dates:

- 10 August 2014
- 10 February 2015
- 17 February 2015
- 19 February 2015
- 08 May 2015
- 10 August 2015
- 04 April 2018
- 22 October 2018
- 15 June 2019

27 December 2019

In addition to the dates listed above, photographic documentation was made by Ana Maria Ionescu on the 12 September 2015, and by Daniel Tellman on the 1 March 2020.

All interviews were conducted personally in January/ February 2015 and 22nd October 2018. Except for Number 2, all interviews were recorded, transcribed and translated from Romanian to English. Translations of the interviews are my own. For the full transcript please contact the author (ileanaion@gmail.com).

Interview 1: conducted on 6. January 2015, Expert Interview, technical illustrator at the former Timișoara Design Institute

Interview 2: conducted on 10. January 2015, Expert Interview, architect at the former Timișoara Design Institute

Interview 3: conducted on 3. February 2015, Expert Interview, architect, author, worked in the academic sector before 1990s

Interview 4: conducted on 4. February 2015, Expert Interview, architect at the former Timișoara Design Institute, part of the team who designed the Urban City Plan for Circumvalațiunii in the 1970s

Interview 5: conducted on 10. February 2015, Narrative Interview, dweller in Circumvalațiunii

Interview 6: conducted on 10. February 2015, Narrative Interview, dweller in Circumvalațiunii

Interview 7: conducted on 19. February 2015, Narrative Interview, dweller in Circumvalațiunii

Interview 8: conducted on 19. February 2015, Narrative Interview, dweller in Circumvalațiunii

Interview 9: conducted on 22. October 2018, Narrative Interview, dweller in Circumvalațiunii

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8 Appendix

8.1 Interviews in original language - Romanian

8.1.1 Interviu participant/ă 1

(October 2018)

84 de ani (la data interviului) (data nașterii 1934). Mama etnic maghiar n.1910-11, tatăl etnic german.

Locuiește în Circumvalațiunii, pe stradă Stelelor, din 1978 (când avea 44 de ani). A crescut la Orfelinat. Tatăl ei a dispărut în Crimeea, în timpul războiului. Are un băiat născut în 1956.

(Cred că asta era un bloc cu apartamente de închiriat. Primii locuitori ai blocului, fuseseră vecini în casa cu Cofetăria Trandafirul. Au fost mutați aici, iar acolo s-a făcut bazar...în 1975?)

Vecina: Neața! E fain de stat afară.

E: Toată lumea îmi zice: "parcă te-ai născut cu mătura și sapă în mâna". Nu pot... știți că nu a fost gard aicea? Eu l-am pus, când mai trăia soțul meu... de 5 ani a murit. Eu am pus gardul viu, că era un pleu albastru, așa de urât aicea, că credeai că stau tzigani [romi] aicea. Și nici o floare, va rog să mă credeți, ierburi, plin cu mizerie. Eu nu vreau să mă cert cu nimeni, cu nimeni... cu doamna asta mă am, de când m-am mutat aici...

I: De când v-ați mutat aici?

E: Din 1978. Blocul era gata din 1975. Eu am făcut schimb cu cineva. Am vândut o casă [pe strada Cezar Boleac, în Fabric, pe marginea Begăi] și m-am mutat la bloc.

I: De ce v-ați mutat de la casă la bloc?

E: Eu am un băiat de 62 de ani, care a lucrat la televizor, la RDS pe Bogdăneștilor, a fost dispecer. Și am o nepoata de 31-32 de ani. Are un copilăș mic de 2 ani jumate. E în Anglia, a făcut facultatea aici. Eu, vă spun sincer, am numai 5 clase, dar nu mă

dau pe ăla care a făcut 20. Am lucrat de Industria Lânii, la Badea Cârțan, 42 de ani, în trei schimburi, și la cântar și la mașină și la măturat, unde-ai vrut. Știți cum mi-a spus mie maistrul, Dumnezeu să-l odihnească: "tu ești ca un Jolly-joker. Unde te pun acolo lucrezi". Păi m-am obișnuit în 42 de ani. Mama mea a fost șefă de echipă, mama a lucrat acolo 17 ani, dar la 45 de ani a murit. Eram gravidă cu fiul meu, în luna a treia. Am o sora paralizată.

I: Locuiați și înainte în Timișoara?

E: Aici m-am născut. Da știți unde? La Ghiroda Nouă [Crișan]. M-am căsătorit cu soțul meu pe strada Inocențiu Klein, apoi ne-am mutat pe Cezar Boleac la numărul 5 și după aia aici.

I: De ce v-ați mutat la bloc?

E: Am ținut o babă pe Cezar Boleac, dar fiul meu a vrut la bloc, așa că ne-am mutat la bloc. Acum el stă în centru, vis a vis de [restaurantul] Cina, la etajul 2. Nepoțica mea a umblat aici la 18 (Școala Generală), a avut o învățătoare așa de bună. Asta pot să va spun despre viață mea. Dar va spun sincer că am crescut la orfelinat. Am avut tată vitreg. Tatăl natural a plecat în Crimeea și a dispărut pe front. Mama ne-a dat la Comloș [orfelinat] că să nu ne stricăm. Am avut și noi vecini și fete care fumau și ne trimiteau pe stradă că să adunăm cicuri [muc de țigară]... mama n-a mai putut cu noi și ne-a dat la orfelinat. Am o sora care stă pe [strada] Porumbescu. Între fiul meu și verișorul lui este [sic] exact 17 zile. Al meu e născut în 2 mai și al ei în 19 mai. Între noi surori este [sic] un an și 2 luni.

I: V-ați ocupat de grădinărit și înainte să va mutați la bloc?

E: Nu, dar am știut să sap. Ne-a învățat la Comloș, ne-a dus la vie, la scos cartofi.

I: Deci în Fabric nu ați grădinărit?

E: Ba da, cum nu! Și acolo am avut o tara [regionalism], dar nu ca aici. Când ne-am mutat aici era iară până la genunchi, că nu am putut să întru de bălării.

I: V-ați apucat de grădinărit de cum v-ați mutat aici?

E: Nu imediat, că mai erau și alții.

Vecina: Fiecare folosea...

E: Sora-mea m-a învățat cum să pun trandafirii. Crinii mi-au plăcut tare mult. Apoi nora-mea mi-a adus liliac.

I: De la început ați pus doar flori sau ați mai schimbat?

E: Eu n-am pus altceva, doar flori. Și vă spun că am furat! S-a desființat parcul [o parte unde s-a construit biserica] și am adus de acolo 2 tufe de trandafiri albi... Când înflorește e că o mireasă. Acum am peste 60 de trandafiri... și aici în față. Pe calea Torontalului unde sunt băncile, acolo au fost trandafiri foarte frumoși, mari, galbeni, și de acolo am luat. Da se ia numa [sic] în august (povestim despre trandafiri). Vă spun sincer, eu nu pot să stau, vara când e băătorit pământul... iau sapa iau gherebla [greblă în limba maghiară] și...

I: vorbiți și ungurește?

(trecem pe maghiară) min 11:10

Vorbim despre românizare prin limba. Cu băiatul vorbește românește, cu nepoata maghiară.

E: Părinții mei nu au fost căsătoriți. Așa trăiau. Tata a plecat la război și nu s-a mai întors. Aveam 13-14 ani când am început să lucrez... Am desființat banca de sub geam, din cauza boschetarilor și drogaților.

E: Să vedeți ce am pățit anul trecut... am lăsat în casă un cuplu, care a zis că ar fi de la deratizare...(au atacat-o în casă) ...sper să mă ajute D-zeu să mor în casă mea, fără să fiu o greutate pentru fiul meu. El are doar 62 de ani...

E: Într-o zi (...) luni, mă duc la farmacie și văd o femeie pe care o știu din vedere. Mă roagă să-i dau 50 de lei. Nu am de unde. E mult pentru mine, dar îi ofer 25 ...

E: Nora mea nu e chiar cum ar trebuie, dar eh...nu sunt mama ei și, și ea a crescut în casă de copii... Ei să fie fericiți....Și la nepoata-mea îi spun: nu va culcați supărați că nu ști ce aduce ziua de mâine! Orice ar fi să-i gătești și să-i speli hainele... Nu-mi place să mă cert. Soțul meu era foarte bețiv...Totuși când s-a îmbolnăvit m-am ocupat de el, că am trăit 60 de ani împreună. Nu mi-a fost indiferent să-l văd la pat, timp de 4 ani... Am suferit foarte mult în viață. Marea bucurie era să ies în grădina, mă liniștea!

I: Mai grădinăresc și alți? Câte familii ar fi?

E: Familia Surdu, mai sunt 2 frați la etajul 2 (acum s-au mutat), mai e o familie la etaj... Și în fața blocului era o masă și bănci. Au fost desființate din cauza bețivilor.

I: Mai demult se implicau mai mulți?

E: Din când în când mă mai ocupăm și de lotul vecinilor... Să vedeți ce era aici acum o săptămâna. Au venit ce-i de la oraș cu coasa...au tuns iarba dar nu au strâns-o... Soțul meu, cât a fost de bețiv, dar când îi povesteam că-mi doresc o unealtă de

grădină îmi dădea bani, dacă eu nu aveam. Mai demult unii plantau roșii, cartofi în grădina...

E: Știți cât am curățat după boschetari, saltele murdare, rahat, ploșnițe. Primăria nu se ocupă...La mine au intrat sub balcon când nu era închis. Înainte nu era închis. Da nu umblă poliția și nu-i vede? Administratorul nostru ne-a zis că femeia de serviciu nu e obligată să mature trotuarul. Da cine să mature? Eu?

I: Plățiți bani pentru întreținerea gardului viu?

Vecina (s-a mutat în bloc din '75, printre primii): Înainte se plătea...dar cum tot Eva tunde...acum de o parte se ocupă cei de la coafor...

E: Le numără că să nu i-au [smochine]...da mie nu-mi trebuie nici smochine, nici banane.

I: Cum ați ajuns să locuiți în Circumvalațiunii?

E: Am făcut schimb cu unul Moise. Eu am avut în întreținere o baba, acolo pe Boleac, la casă...Eu am căutat să fie la parter și s-a nimerit că a venit la noi dl Alexandru...probabil a auzit prin vecini...v-am spus că băiatul meu nu a vrut la casă, a vrut la bloc.

I: Vă place cartierul?

E: Da. Avem magazin, piață...și i-am spus lui băiatul meu...că iei au cumpărat cu decretul 112 sau care a fost,.. și eu după aia am cumpărat. Prima dată am dat casa, am primit ceva bani și m-am mutat aici, după care am cumpărat. Ei la fel. A murit mătușa lui nora-mea. Au întreținut-o, înmormântat-o și așa...Băiatul meu zice: mama eu nu vând, poate închiriem în centru și ne mutăm aici.

E: Eu nu mănânc struguri și nici nu-mi fac bine, așa că poate să-i mănânce cine vrea... numa [sic] să nu calce pe flori. De aia am pus și sticlele, că să nu se facă noroi.

I: Primăria mai vine să facă ceva?

E: Mai vine să taie pomi, dar în spate nimic, nimic! A fost iarbă până aici. Eu am secera, cu aia am tăiat. Știți ce era acolo? Pisici moarte, porumbei morți, resturi de mâncare...nu vă zic...acum o lună. Vă spun ceva, nu se interesează nimeni. Intră și tzigani [romi], primăvară au rupt florile... astă primăvară era așa frumoasă grădina...am făcut curat și la vecinul cât era plecat.

I: Mergem în spate?

E: Dacă ar matura și în spate....dar măturătorii nu se bagă în spate...

I către vecină: Înțelegeți ungurește?

Vecina: Da. Tata a fost ungar și mama nemțoaică, dar ungurește nu prea mai vorbesc decât cu Eva. Înainte era tare frumos.

I: Înainte când? Se ocupa mai mult primăria? Locatarii?

Vecina: Acum vreo 10 ani. Se ocupau mai mult locatarii, aveau grădini.

I: De ce credeți că acum se ocupă mai puțin lumea?

Vecina: Păi da e mizerie! Înainte nu era mizeria asta...câți porumbei...

I: S-a mai mutat lumea?

Vecina: Nu știu. Înainte aici se băteau covoare, era frumos. aici erau parcele cu roșii, morcovi....de mult, înainte de 90. Pe urmă când lumea s-a mutat, i-a rămas lui Eva...eu nu pot, deși sunt mai tânăra că ea...

I: De ce?

Vecina: Că nu-mi place...ați văzut cum își bate joc lumea de ea? Era frumos, alee, se putea merge pe lângă gard, până la intrarea la școală. După revoluție nimeni nu s-a mai interesat de nimic. Mulți s-au mutat la casă. Eu n-am mai fost aici în spate de mult, sunt și bolnavă cu piciorul...6 luni am stat în casă.

E: Aici stă arabul cu buticul [magazin de cartier]...aici stăteau vecinele de [etajul] 2 la soare, în maieu și sutien...era deja în vârstă. Eu am cărat apă, de la fântână cu căruțul, pentru trandafiri.

I către vecină: Cum v-ați mutat aici?

Vecina: Ne-a mutat primăria. Locuiam vis a vis de Bega. Acolo aveam numai o camera și ne-am mutat aici la 3 camere. Când m-am mutat aici nu era școala (în 78 nu era școală? în 79 era! - interviu Piroșcă). Aici era liber... erau încă cazematele alea...nici blocurile astea [cele înalte din Dacia] nu erau...eu am avut apartament pe [strada] Teiului, cumpărat...[neclar! min 50-51]...noi care am stat în curte, majoritatea ne-am mutat aici [bloc ICRAL]. La scara cealaltă erau doar militari... [blocul] ăsta a fost făcut de pușcăriași!...Aici cam,... aproape toți din curte din centru, ne-am mutat aici. Acum mulți nu mai stau aici, s-au mutat, au murit... Înainte ne obliga...eram obligați. Primăria... ne-a pus să punem trandafiri, pomi, să curățăm zăpadă....asta la început acum 40 de ani, nici balconul nu aveai voie să-l închizi, nu ne lasă Ceaușescu... nici hainele nu aveai voie să le pui afară... apoi au venit că nu mai e voie să plantăm legume.

I: Nu vi se pare firesc să se îngrijească lumea de spațiul din jurul blocului?

E: Ba da. Înainte ieșeam la muncă patriotică. Mi-e ciudă, nimeni nu matură, nimeni nu....stau la geam și..."uite proasta".

Vecina: Înainte era frumos, pentru că toată lumea se ocupa, că erai obligat. Era foarte frumos. Când au pus gazul, ne-au obligat să săpăm. Fiecare avea metru lui. Fiecare a participat. Bărbatul meu a primit bani, că a săpat în locul lui nu-știiu-care.

(E îmi povestește că firma care a venit să schimbe cablurile electrice, le-a lăsat pe cele vechi la față locului.)

E: După ce au distrus și o parte din grădină. Am venit, le-am cărat cu ceva și am îndreptat pământul...nepoata-mea mergea la școală la 18. Apoi a murit mătușa și s-au mutat în centru și au dus-o la Loga [școală] pe a mică.

I: Ați locuit cu fiul, nora și nepoata împreună?

E: Nu, eu am locuit doar cu moșul.

Vecina: Ei au avut în Lipovei...ei au lucrat la Comtim.

E: Și eu am dus-o la școală și acasă. Aici locuiesc unii în chirie și nu-și dau interesul.

Vecina: Noi aicea [se referă la scheletul băncii] făceam mici și beam cafeaua...numa au început să se pună drogații, așa că am demontat tot. Băncile astea le-am adus din parcul Dacia, când s-a desființat pentru construirea bisericii...acum vecinul zice: "dau bani da nu pun mâna pe nimic"...

Vecina: Înainte erau oamenii mai uniți...

(Vecina a lucrat la Artă Textilă)

8.1.2 Interviu participant/ă 2

(2015 Februarie)

71 de ani (la data interviului), născută în 1943. Soțul născut în 1938. Locuiesc pe strada Brândușei.

Născută în județul Arad. A venit la Timișoara la 23 de ani.

Ocupație: operator pentru controlul spațiului aerian (32 de ani cu căștile pe urechi). La data interviului, pensionară.

Soțul din sudul României. Ofițer la Unitatea Militară. A ajuns cu repartiție în județul Arad, unde a cunoscut-o pe viitoarea soție. Pensionați la 50 de ani, datorită meseriei.

Are 2 nepoate: una de la fată și una de la băiat. Una dintre ele, trăiește în Europa Centrală.

C: Am o nepoată de ... ani, a terminat o facultate în România și locuiește în Europa Centrală. Tatăl ei e om de afaceri. Deh ... face bănuți, că e ca tatăsu [tatăl ei], noi suntem niște pământuri ... Fata mea e o bleguță ... Cu ginerele meu tot am discuții, că zice că nu suntem descurcăriți ... ginere-meu are două facultăți. A fost copil sărac și a tras ca să ajungă unde a ajuns ... Băiatul meu, deși l-am ținut 4 ani la facultate, în al 5 lea an nu s-a mai dus și nu a terminat. L-am cocoloșit prea mult ... Vecinele sunt cam acre și bârfitoare...nu toate, unele.

I: Vreau să fac un studiu pe calitatea spațiului ... sau lipsa calității spațiului dintre blocuri percepută de locuitori. Cum era când v-ați mutat și cum vi se pare acum? Când v-ați mutat în zona?

C: Am locuit peste drum de Gheorghe Lazăr [în Circumvalațiunii 1] din 1968 până-n 1976. Când eu am stat acolo, aici era unitate de tancuri. Pe urmă pe strada Timiș, la 2 camere. Spațiul dintre blocuri era destul de mare, cu băncuțe ... spațiu unde să punem flori ... era spațiu suficient, fiecare bloc avea o băncuță. Eu n-am timp să stau că am casă la țară. Pe Timiș [strada] am stat doi ani, apoi ne-am mutat aici [în jur de 1978]. Aici a fost pe bani (Se referă probabil la avans și rate. Iar înainte stăteau în chirie). Am vrut neapărat 3 camere, că aveam deja 2 copii. Venise și băiatul meu, pe neprevăzute,... era perioada de creștere. Nu m-am descurcat nici cum. Și acum îmi scoate ochii că: "știu că nu m-ai vrut". Ne descurcam foarte greu. Nici lapte nu aveam să le dau. Noroc că am avut o doctoriță foarte bună aici și ea mai îmi aducea din străinătate tot feluri de produse. Cum s-au construit blocurile, s-a făcut și dispensarul.

I: Cum ați ales să locuiți în Circumvalațiunii?

C: Pentru că e aproape de oraș. Pentru accesul bun spre centrul orașului ... Era frumos pe vremea aia în Timișoara, era o curățenie... Acum a mai venit altă lume, se scuipă semințe pe jos... mizerie de nedescris.

I: Cum ați avut acces la locuința?

C: Soțul meu [ofițer] a primit în chirie de la MAPN [Ministerul Apărării Naționale], apartamentele. Soțul meu pleca câte 6 luni de acasă, la cursuri la Ploiești, la Brașov, la București. Rămâneam singură [cu copii]. Noroc cu soacra-meă. Am fi avut posibilitatea să primim [în chirie/ cumpărare] un apartament superb, mare în Calea Șagului la pod, dar am preferat cutiuțele - ca la pușcărie - pentru că este aproape de centrul orașului.

I: Băncile și locurile de joacă pentru copii, au apărut de la început?

C: Băncuțele le-au făcut locatarii, pentru că era destul loc între blocuri, ... și în fața blocului. Eu nu am timp pentru că am cumpărat o casa la țară că n-am rezistat în oraș. Mi s-a făcut rău.

I: Soțul era din Timișoara?

C: Din sudul României ... tata nu l-a vrut ... dar el m-a luat și m-a adus aici... Tata era ca un englez, conservator...a și fost foarte bogat, dar l-au dus la Canal și l-au terminat. (...) Când a venit de la Poliție era tot tumefiat ... asta a fost prin 49. La bunicul i-au luat tot din curte, atunci ei s-au revoltat...

C: Spațiile dintre blocuri au fost destule. Aici e puțin mai înghesuit. Dar stă lumea pe bancă. ...mai ieșea doamna T (?), dar acum că a murit domnul T au dus-o copiii în alt cartier la casă. Pe doamna T a dus-o o nepoată la Cluj....C își amintește de două vecine, tot mai în vârstă, singure care mai stau pe bancă.

I: Copii sunt în bloc?

C: Acum au apărut... o familie, a lui doctorul, cu o fetiță de cinci ani și acum am văzut că mai vine unul. Nu prea sunt copii...

I: Se mai joacă azi copii pe stradă?

C: Nu prea ... dar când ne-am mutat aici da. Erau mulți copii de vârsta ei... Fiica mea avea 10 ani, fiu-miu [fiul meu] era mic, da îl luau între ei... se jucau între blocuri. Era o veselie până seara la 22! Aveau de lucru vecinii mei cu ei. Pe vremea aia nu erau parcări, nu era nimic între blocuri. Nici parcul din Dacia nu era amenajat... acum au amenajat parcările. Unii vecini se simțeau deranjați de copii și adolescenți. Au fost discuții foarte mari din cauza copiilor, până la a chema poliția! (...) Nu prea am avut probleme cu vecinii în afară de inundații. Inundațiile sunt o problema foarte mare! S-au distrus covoarele, a trebuit sa le arunc.

I: Când era nepoata mai mică, o lăsați să se joace pe stradă? Cum s-au schimbat lucrurile față de anii '80?

C: Pe nepoata nu o lăsăm singură pe stradă, numai dacă o însoțeam. E cam riscant, din cauza mașinilor. E strada îngustă și șoferii se tot ceartă. Nu știu de ce lumea a preferat strada asta [se refera la un trafic mai intens decât pe alte străzi]. Pe băiatul meu îl lăsăm, că era cu fiică mea și avea și alți prieteni mai mari, care aveau grijă de el. La noi pe scară erau doi băiați, și la scara cealaltă erau doi frați... acum sunt în Germania, dar îl iubeau pe ăsta micu....chiar și așa într-o zi a ajuns în stradă, în fața unei mașini. Noroc că a oprit. Acum zilnic se ceartă șoferii, nu-și dau prioritate și se

în jura aici pe stradă. în spatele blocului e parcare acum, dar înainte era maidan [teren viran].

I: Blocul are ieșire "în spate"?

C: Înainte ieșeam în spate. Inițial blocul a avut un acces secundar - în spate, pe care l-am închis acum...vreo 8 ani, după ce au venit și ne-au spart boxele și au luat tot [lucruri pentru care nu mai era loc în casă]. Alții dormeau jos la boxe, își făceau și nevoile ... înainte a fost curat, frumos ... apoi cândva s-au instalat mâțele ... cred că nimeni nu mai ține nimica. (...) Ei stau la casă [se referă la fiica și familia ei] aici pe Torontalului...

I: Unde v-ați născut?

C: M-am născut în județul Arad, în octombrie 43.

C: Soacra-mea era o femeie extraordinară. A citit toate cărțile din biblioteca noastră. A aruncat lucrurile lui tata lu[sic] șotul meu pe geam și i-a zis: „să pleci!” Și de la 27 de ani a fost singură. Era o fire foarte corectă, și nu s-a mai căsătorit.

(Vorbim despre ardeleni și olteni)

C: Culmea e că și nora-mea e olteancă, și-l iubește pe fiu-miu [fiul meu] de numa numa. Ce, numai ardeleanul și bănățeanul e [sic] om?

I: Relațiile cu vecinii?

C: Foarte bune.

I: Activități comune cu vecinii? Atunci? Acum?

C: Nu prea, că eu eram mai tot timpul plecată. Dar restul vecinelor, de exemplu V1 cu V2, le fac cam toate împreună. Sunt amândouă văduve. Mă mai duc și eu la o cafeluță, dar soțului meu nu-i place să plec de acasă, așa că nu prea mă duc. Nici nu organizăm lucruri împreună. Pe vremuri se organizau petrecerile de copii. Ale adulților din când în când. Acum mai puțin. Că suntem mai bătrâni ... asta și pentru că eu sunt plecata 6 luni, la sat. Iarna sunt aici, mă mai duc din când în când cu ele câte un pic așa... dar soțul meu e o fire mai închisă, nu-i place. Eu sunt mai sociabilă. El nici nu prea are prieteni cu care sa se întâlnească... E cam greu sa organizez ceva în apartamentul asta. Că nu e loc. Mai degrabă mergem la fiica mea de sărbători, că e un living acolo cât e apartamentul meu de mare.

I: în blocul ăsta există spații care să se folosească la comun, în afara de casa scării?

C: Uscătoria de sus [la ultimul etaj]. Se închide cu cheia. Și eu folosesc. Subsolul nu se mai folosește. Miroase urât... Pe noi ne-au și scos la pensie la 50 de ani, din cauza

uzurii. Eu sunt și surdă. Eu am pensia 1500 de lei, iar sora lui nora mea, doctorița 800 de lei.

I: Să zicem că nu ați avea casa de la sat, ce v-ar plăcea să aveți în jurul blocului?

C: Un spațiu mare, multe flori și pomi. Nu că nu avem, dar să fie și mai mult verde. Am avut niște tei superbi, i-au măcelărit! Au zis că sunt o problema pentru curent. Nu ne-au întrebat nimic. Au venit și i-au măcelărit. La fel și cu magnolia, doamna Ț l-a plantat. La fel și nucul ... nimeni nu ne-a întrebat nimic. Înainte mirosea în toată casa de tei. Teii ăia ajungeau cu crengile până la mine la balcon.

I: Care este media de vârstă în bloc?

C: E cam de boșorogi. O familie de 40 de ani, un laborator dentar la parter, dincolo s-au mutat doi tineri, mai este o firmă de contabilitate. Doamna I, a venit și mi-a cerut aprobare. Ea e singura care are centrală termică în bloc.

I: Legat de spațiul de lângă bloc, cum vi se părea spațiul de lângă bloc pe strada Timișului?

C: Pe strada Timișului a fost și mai bine. Era mai mult spațiu verde în jurul blocului. Erau mulți pomi. Da ... stăteam în chirie la 2 camere. Așa că ne-am mutat la 3 camere. Nu am vrut să plec din zonă. Puteam să cumpăr în Calea Șagului, dar era plin de țigani [romi]... Și eu sunt venită de la țară, dar am suferit mult să văd ce a ajuns Timișoara față de acum aproape 50 de ani. Era lumea mult mai educată. Acum nu știu ce nații au mai venit, dar nu mai e Timișoara de altă dată. Așa elegant era, lume bună, civilizată. Acum e atâta mizerie în orașul ăsta.

I: De unde se trăgeau vecinii?

C: Marea majoritate nu erau din Timișoara (nu e clar, P2 sare din trecut în prezent). Țăsta a fost bloc de militari [contract de vânzare/ cumpărare]. V1 e din județul Arad. A venit când erau copiii mei mici. Copiii de lângă mine sunt în chirie. D-ul S stă mult la Dânsul a fost maior de Grăniceri. Asta a fost bloc de militari [nu e clar]. Apartament confort 2, cu logie. Bucătăria era neîncăpătoare. Mâncam în sufragerie. Când locuiam cu copiii eram cam înghesuiți. Acum e bine. Eu am fost de vină, că nu am vrut să plec din zonă [Circumvalațiunii].

I: Mai țineți minte dacă atunci când ați cumpărat apartamentul vi s-a alocat și o bucată de teren?

C: Nu mai țin minte.

O vecină: Doamna de jos care are firma de contabilitate mai îngrijește grădina, are flori.

8.1.3 Interviu participant/ă 3

(Februarie 2015)

42 ani (la data interviului). Născută 1973. Se trage dintr-o comunitate de bulgari pavlicheni - catolici din Banat. Părinții veniți din Dudeștii Vechi.

1973-1993/94 a locuit pe Torontalului într-unul din turnurile de lângă locul de joacă. 1 an a fost plecată în străinătate. 2-3 ani a locuit în Giroc, 3 luni în Șagului, în turnurile vis-a-vis de Cimitir. La data interviului locuia deasupra de Codrina (bloc turn), în Piața Dacia, din 1996.

Asistentă medicală. Studii postliceale la "Ana Aslan" Timișoara.

I: Cum a fost să fii copil în zona asta? Prieteni? Joacă în jurul blocului?

P: În prima copilărie, până am ajuns la Arte [Liceul de Arte Plastice], adică până pe la 10-11 ani [1983-84], mă jucăm în jurul blocului, la terenul de joacă dintre blocuri...

I: Ăla a existat și înainte de '89?

P: Da. Când eu eram copil existau cele 4 turnuri ... dincolo de Torontalului era un Peco [benzinărie] și Dacia Service [atelier de reparații auto], iar în mijloc o veche cazarmă. Noi copii ne jucăm la terenul de joacă [aceeași locație că și cel de acum] ori săream gardul la grădinița cu creșă [vis-a-vis], care avea 2 terenuri de joacă, sau ne jucam în vechea cazarmă dezafectată [dincolo de Torontalului]. Avea zidurile parțial demolate dar beciul integral. Acolo ne făceam noi veacul. Piața Dacia s-a construit în 77-78, așa că ne mai jucam și pe șantierul de acolo ... Iar în capătul Torontalului era o veche cetate, în spatele casei de țigani [Informația nu e clară. Posibil între șantierul noului spital și Aviasan sau chiar mai aproape de intersecția cu Strada Liege] ... Acolo ne mai jucam. Acolo era o cetate construită pe un dâmb de pământ. Mai avea o parte din ziduri, plus subsolul. După ce m-am dus la Arte [Liceul de Arte Plastice], am început să mă joc cu copii din Tipografilor [alt cartier al Timișoarei], fiindcă acolo aveam cei mai mulți prieteni. Pe la 16 ani [1989-90], am redescoperit Circumvalațiunii și vechii prieteni.

I: Ce ți se părea mai interesant, petrecerea timpului la locul de joacă sau la cetate, la unitatea militară?

P: Nu locul de joacă. Vechea cazarmă, unitatea militară ... erau niște "tranșee", găuri, buncăre construite din cărămida, în care intram. Cum în perioada respectivă se construia Piața Dacia, ne luam de pe șantier tuburi "berman" de plastic și ne jucam cu ele printre ruine. Le lipeam ori cu leucoplast ori bandă izolatoare.

I: În ziua de azi, ai lăsa copii să se joace nesupravegheați?

P: Nu!

(...)

P: Ai văzut locul de joacă de la 22? Este împrejmuit. Pe vremea aia nu era împrejmuit, era liber... Pe vremea aia în fața blocului, părinții noștri aveau grădini. S-au folosit de terenul viran, rămas liber între locul de joacă și bloc, pentru a-l parcela și cultiva. În felul ăsta ei ne și supravegheau și se păstra traiul de curte! Părinții mei au venit la 14 ani de la sat, pentru școală și au rămas aici. Ei erau oarecum niște neadaptați, venind de la curte de la sat într-o localitate mare... și majoritatea erau așa. Îmi aduc aminte de strigătul de la geam... părinții mei stăteau la 9.

I: Supravegherea pe care o făcea comunitatea s-a înlocuit cu un gard...

P: Sora mea încă locuiește acolo. Ea îmi povestește că vecinii, chiar dacă sunt aceeași, s-au schimbat. S-au desființat mesele de ping-pong pentru că bătrânele erau deranjate de zgomotul meselor de ping-pong. Câinii nu mai au voie la terenul de joacă pentru că intră la nisip. Inclusiv anul trecut [2014], au lăsat să circule o petiție pentru desființarea locului de joacă, pe motiv că este o sursă de gălăgie!

(P este de părere că mai bine impui reguli pe care lumea le respectă, decât să impui doar interdicții!)

P: Cunosc situații când s-au desființat băncile din fața blocului, pentru că stau tinerii pe ele și fac gălăgie. Parcă au uitat că au avut și ei copii. Uite și la tata, a avut două fete, eu chiar am făcut multe năzbâtii... A semnat petiția.

(...)

P: Lipsă de toleranță, lipsă de cultură... oameni veniți de la țară la oraș, din cauza politicului, oarecum obligați, au făcut o școală, dar ei nu au cultura trăirii la comun unde se respectă niște reguli. Ei inițial când au venit erau niște intruși și au trebuit să se conformeze în anii comunismului. După '89 o dată cu libertatea de expresia s-a putut observa adevărată lor educație, cultură.

(...)

P: Mi-am pus mașina unde am găsit loc gol. Eram tânăra, aveam 25 de ani. Am parcat mașina unde am găsit un loc gol. A venit unul să-mi zică că el locuiește în imobilul asta de 20 de ani: "aici parchez mașina de 20 de ani, nu poți să parchezi aici"... Locul de parcare este spațiu public! Când am văzut că nu se poate au renunțat! (min 20-21). Exact ăștia sunt ăia care acum vor să desființeze terenul de joacă,... nu știu de ce. (dreptul de folosință - cine locuiește aici de mai mult timp >> cei nou veniți)

P: din ciclul "se descurcă"! Eu nu înțeleg ce înseamnă aia. Adică la ce se referă?

I: Când te-ai mutat înapoi în Circumvalațiunii de ce ai ales blocul ăsta?

P: Când am revenit în zona am căutat să locuiesc tot într-un bloc turn, pentru că presiunea la apă e mai mare, e mai multă liniște la etajele superioare... A două oară sunt chestii care mi-au plăcut mai mult în blocul asta, față de blocul în care am copilărit, și chestii care nu. Aici îmi lipsește verdeța, e mai mult beton, și e mai gălăgie, dar îmi place că rezolv mai repede cumpărăturile, plățile.

Povestim despre bulgarii [catolici] din Banat, grupați în principal în Dudeștii Vechi, Vinga și Breștea...

P: Peiov sunt amândoi părinții din Dudeștii Vechi. Bunica lui sta vis-a-vis de noi la 4 etaje. Ea mai vindea în piață și ea mai îmi povestea despre familie. Cu părinții relația este mai distantă. Bătrâna s-a mutat la oraș la bătrânețe, iar eu mai am bunică la Dudești. Așa că mai povestim, mă întrebă ce vești mai am de la sat, ce-i nou, cine a murit...

I: Ști cumva de la părinții tăi, cum au ales părinții tăi să se mute în blocul respectiv?

P: Știu de la părinții mei că primele s-au construit în '72-'74. Turnurile astea și cele de pe Cetății din stațiile de tramvai... Ulterior alea de 4 etaje dintre turnuri... Din câte îmi aduc aminte, a fost repartiție, erau și presați de venirea mea pe lume și au ales zona asta și datorită ieșirii de pe Torontalului spre Sânnicolau Mare unde erau bunicii mei. Eu am fost crescută de bunici 3 ani de zile. Ei [părinții] veneau în fiecare week-end să mă vadă. Ei [părinții] au cumpărat apartamentul. L-au contractat în '72-'73 [l-au plătit în rate] și s-au mutat în iarna lui '73-'74 când încă nu era chiar finalizat, se mai lucra pe exterior. Nu l-au cumpărat la chirie mică după 90! Părinții mei au stat în chirie într-o bucătărie [casă veche, fără încălzire] până să se mute în acest apartament (min 29).

P: îmi mai aduc aminte... terenul de joacă, grădi [grădiniță]... cu gard... Aici era o alimentară unde acum este tipografie, în capătul alimentării era un punct termic și

între punctul termic și blocul cu 4 etaje de pe Cetății mai era un mic loc de joacă... Acolo unde e parcare și terenul verde... Alimentara era o mică alimentară de cartier. Când eram copil nu veneam până la alimentara din Dacia, ea nici nu există când eu eram foarte mică.

I: La bazin mergeai?

P: Da. Și paralel cu bazinul era sala de atletism [a ars în jur de 1997], unde e parcare acum. Acolo era o zonă închisă. Era bazinul, sala de gimnastică și sala de atletism. Între ele era îngrădit și erau terenuri de tenis și atletism.

(...)

P: Pe mine mă deranjează biserica din parc, cu faptul ca bate toacă zi-lumină de Paști și faptul că au ciupit din parc. Parcul se întindea până în gardul școlii. Au betonat în față și intră cu mașinile pe alee. Acum nu știu dacă asta - sentimentul - vine din faptul că eu sunt catolică sau din faptul că au tăiat din parc, dar cert este că mă deranjează. Am avut și o ceartă cu preotul de acolo... [povestea cu cățeaua cu pui care stăteau în curtea bisericii dar în noroi - min 38)]. Eu de fapt am o problemă cu prea mult beton... Eu dacă aș găsi un sat tradițional, așa cum e în mintea mea, sigur m-aș muta.

(...)

P: Școala asta la care am lucrat eu [Generală 18], pe la începuturile ei era școală cu profil sportiv [asta de lângă Biserica]. Existând deja Generala 19 de pe Cetății [Circumvalațiunii 1] și 24 [Generală] de pe Brândușei... Ele s-au construit în ordinea 19, 18, 24, 26... Da, pune un semn de întrebare. La 26 [Generală] eu am fost printre primele generații ['79]. Celelalte școli erau deja. Școlile au fost făcute ptr că începuseră construcțiile de pe Aradului și veneau copii încoace. Toată zona Aradului nu are nici o școală iar Lipovei are una singură - Generală 7. Când eram copil, de aici de pe geam vedeam un cartier de case, numai case... Și a început construcția pe partea dreaptă a Torontalului, apoi pe partea stângă și zona de case...

P: În Giroc, locuiam chiar pe magistrală, era un trafic de numa... aici [Circumvalațiunii-Dacia] avem 3 camere la 60-70 mp [confort 1, decomandat, plan în L], acolo [blocul din Giroc] tot 3 camere la 120 mp. Dar m-am trezit că trebuie să-mi plătesc telefonul în Sinaia, curentul la capătul lui 15 [firobuz], că trebuie să-mi fac piața în 700 sau Giroc. Apartamentul era foarte frumos. Făcut de Trustul de Construcții pentru angajați, cumva în asociație. Soțul meu lucra la Trust. L-au [blocul] început la sfârșitul anilor '80 și terminat prin '92-'93. Eu când m-am mutat acolo, bransamentul electric funcționa încă în regim de șantier de 1 an... (factura mergea pe contabilitatea firmei?)

P: Turnurile au un confort mai mare. Și ca să vezi cât este de important ambientul... m-a determinat să plec dintr-un apartament foarte generos de 120 mp cu camera mare "cât un garaj"... să mă mut aici.... nu m-am putut adapta acolo, deși o vreme a fost la îndemână apropierea de Spitalul Județean unde făceam practică. Ieși din casă și ajungi în stradă! Am făcut diferența dea lungul vieții între populația din Circumvalațiunii, Giroc și Șagului [cartiere diferite ale Timișoarei]... mare diferența de igienă și conduită! În funcție de perioadă au venit oameni din diferite zone. Aici [Circumvalațiunii] stau mai mulți oameni din județul Timiș, Arad, județele limitrofe... vecinii părinților mei erau din Timiș și Arad. Pe când în alte cartiere sunt oameni veniți din alte zone, de mai departe. (min 55-59)

P: Blocul în care stau eu a fost contractat de UMT în '77. Eu am cumpărat apartamentul de la un fost UMT-ist [numele unei fabrici din Timișoara] plecat în Canada. Majoritatea vecinilor mei, care sunt proprietari de la început, sunt UMT-iști. Astea [arată cu degetul pe hartă] erau ale MApN-ului [Ministerul Apărării Naționale]. Îmi aduc aminte că treceam pe lângă el în drumul spre școală, și la prânz era plin de oameni îmbrăcați în uniforme... La părinții mei în bloc era lume de peste tot, din domenii diferite. Locuințele nu fuseseră distribuite prin locul de muncă. La noi în bloc erau foarte mulți părinți de aceeași generație cu copiii de aceeași vârstă. Iar aici [Dacia] am constatat că vecinii lucraseră în același loc.

P: Am impresia că copiii din blocurile turn erau de o factură superioară... (oare se referă la educație? oare erau astea apartamente de cumpărat și mai scumpe. doar cei care veneau din familiile care mai aveau ceva bani sau un salariu mai mare și le permiteau?)

P: Părinții mei sunt muncitori simpli, nu au studii superioare, dar vin din familii foarte bune. Bunicul meu avea terenuri, avea abatoare, care au fost confiscate. Atunci el [tatăl] a venit la oraș, a făcut o școală, o meserie... În familie au mai rămas niște bani, care i-au putut folosi la cumpărarea apartamentului. Turnurile au apartamentele oarecum la fel, dar cele de pe Gh. Lazăr sunt un pic mai mici, cam cu 10 mp.

P: Soțul meu este născut tot ca mine, în Timișoara, la casă, în zona Turnului de Apă din Fabric...

8.1.4 Interviu participant/ă 4

(Februarie 2015)

68 de ani (la data interviului). Locuiește în Circumvalațiunii, pe str. Gh. Lazăr colț cu Cetății, din 1974 august. Născut în 1947, 13 octombrie. Maistru specializat în

construcții de mașini, prelucrări prin așchiere, strunguri, freze. A lucrat la ELBA (fabrică) până în 1982. Apoi la Tehnică de Calcul (acum Alcatel). Soția a fost contabilă.

M.I.: În 1973 trebuia să ne mutăm, dar s-a întâmplat accidentul cu o macara. Și s-a mai amânat...în 1974, în august, ne-am mutat. Locul și zona au fost la întâmplare, pentru că acest bloc s-a construit în asociație cu toți locatarii din aceeași întreprindere. Deci prin intermediul conducerii întreprinderii s-a luat acesta....bineînțele proprietate personală toate.

I: Ce întreprindere?

M.I.: ELBA.

I: În zonă este și un bloc făcut de UMT. MApN-ul avea câteva.

M.I.: Cum să zic? Totul mi s-a părut bine.

I: Toți vecinii d-voastră erau angajați la ELBA?

M.I.: Da. Toți, toți.....2-3 nu erau....Am considerat că este un loc geografic bun, aproape de centru, cu comunicații bune cu restul cartierelor: tramvaie, autobuz, firobuz, ...mergeau direct la gară....și ca poluare puțină (fabricile sunt în sudul orașului – de verificat informația).....trafic destul de intens fiind ieșirea spre Jimbolia, Vama...

I: Chiar și atunci?

M.I.: Nu. Mai mult acum, atunci nu prea erau mașini. Acuma este mai aglomerat....Cu zone de agrement modeste dar suficiente, mă refer și la parcuri sau terenuri de joacă pentru copii.....

I: Pentru copii de vârste?....ce vârste?

M.I.: De vârste mai mici.

I: Pentru adolescenți?

M.I.: Nu. Pentru ei sunt baruri, cluburi (spune râzând, în glumă)...Magazine suficiente în zonă...

I: Când v-ați mutat, care blocuri erau date în funcțiune?

M.I.: Turnul (arată spre blocul de lângă) și zona Circumvalațiunii 1, după aia blocurile lungi de pe Gheorghe Lazăr (strada), A4 după vechea....

I: În 74 poate nu era amenajat în jurul blocului, dar după aia prin 75 – 76 ce era ...pus la dispoziție locatarilor....aveați grădini?

M.I.: La început s-au agitat unii, mai cultivau, săpau prin zonele astea pe aici. Parcul ăsta din față, întâmplător a rămas, că era prevăzut un alt bloc în fațălipsește numărul 44 (într-adevăr lipsește numărul, dar nu am găsit nici un document care să certifice că ar mai fi fost proiectat un bloc)....știam de la un maestru care a lucrat aicea.

I: Unii au încercat un pic cu grădinăritul?

M.I.: Inclusiv soția, aici în spate,....un pic la început de tot...câteva rânduri....ceapă verde....

I: Deci s-a încercat un pic de grădinărit?

Soția lui M.I.: Da, multă lume a avut atunci la început, 4-5 ani poate chiar 10 ani până prin 80.

I: După aia de ce s-a renunțat?

M.I.: Vede lumea că nu mai are rost (neclar). S-a intervenit cu primăria pentru parcări, s-au extins parcările în spatele blocului....acolo unde e stația de transformare.

I: Ocuparea cu parcările a început înainte de 89 sau după?

M.I.: După. ...se înmulțesc mașinile!

I: Câte apartamente sunt pe nivel?

M.I.: 4 pe etaj, 44 în total. Apartamente de la 2 la 3 camere. Bineînțeles că boxe și garaje sunt mai puține decât apartamente.

I: Aveți copii?

M.I.: Avem 2 copii și un nepot.

I: Copii unde se jucau?

M.I.: În zonă, în jurul blocului.

I: Nepoțelul câți ani are?

M.I.: 8 ani, e în clasa a I-a la școala aparținătoare de zona noastră Generală 18, de lângă biserica din Dacia.

I: Unde-i place să se joace?

M.I.: În parcul din Dacia, parcul de lângă biserică. Acolo-i place cel mai mult, în rest Parcul Copiilor sau pe unde se nimerește.

I: Există o legătură cu vecinii, cu comunitatea? Există...a existat atunci dorința de a face ceva împreună? sau acuma?

M.I.: La început, în primii 20 de ani, a fost mult mai... Între timp s-a mai rărit...erau și foști colegi de serviciu, ne-am înțeles foarte bine. Acuma s-a mai schimbat lumea, au venit alții care nu au ... au venit alții de alte vârste, mai tineri,...alte.....nu mai e așa ca înainte...

I: Există cumva în bloc vreun spațiu de folosit în comun?

M.I.: Nu. Ba, în subsol are o așa zisă uscătorie, prevăzută pentru folosință comună. Și acum se mai folosește pentru întins rufe. Nu este mașină de spălat. Blocurile turn au lângă casa liftului uscătoria.

I: Ce funcțiuni v-ar plăcea să fie în jurul blocului?de genul mobilier urban de un anumit tip, bănci, pergole sau locuri de joacă?

M.I.: Mie mi-ar fi plăcut, poate și la alții, la unii nu. În fața blocului au fost bănci pe cărare, la ieșirea spre stradă. Nu le-a mai convenit la oameni că stăteau "ăștia" pe ele și făceau zgomot noaptea, deranjau. (De luat în considerare că M.I. locuiește la etajul 9. Probabil că la etajele de jos vocile ce se auzeau din spre bănci erau mai puternice)...în rest ce să mai fie? Acuma toată lumea se vaită de spații de parcare.)

I: Ce pregătire aveți?

M.I.: Am lucrat ca maistru la ELBA. Școală profesională, școală medie făcută la seral. Am lucrat la ELBA până în '82. Am mai lucrat la Tehnică de Calcul în 700, unde e acum Alcatel.

I: Deci era aproape de casă....Dar când lucrați la ELBA nu erați chiar aproape?

M.I.: Ba da. Făceam 20 de minute. Treceam podul de la Gară. Soția a lucrat la fosta fabrică de lapte (ICIL) (contabilă) – unde e Billa acuma, după care s-a mutat la Alcatel – tot aproape. Nu mi-au plăcut distanțele. Puteam să mă angajez la AEM, la Electrotimiș, dar datorită distanței nu am preferat.

I: Înainte să locuiți în blocul ăsta, în ce zonă ați stat?

M.I.: În Timișoara, după ce m-am căsătorit, am stat în Calea Șagului (în gazdă), dar foarte puțin, nici un an. În '73 ne-am căsătorit și-n '74 ne-am mutat aici. Blocul ăsta trebuia să fie gata în '73, dar datorită unui accident s-a amânat pe '74.

I: Sunteți născut în Timișoara?

M.I.: Nu. Sunt născut în Budinț. Soția în județul Alba, Scărișoara.

I: De ce ați ales să veniți la oraș?

M.I.: Atunci asta era totul. Să rămâi să lucrezi în C.A.P. sau cum? Atunci erau numai C.A.P.-uri.... Industria era tot, era din belșug.

(...)

M.I.: În '65 a fost tot colectivizat (pentru mine: de verificat informația).

I: Nu prea mai am întrebări. Mai vreți să povestiți d-voastră ceva?

M.I.: Mie mi-a plăcut zona și-mi place. Nu-mi place nici care alta. Și asta de la început. În Șagului, unde am stat un an nu mi-a plăcut.

I: Unde mergeți la piață?

M.I.: În 700 sau în Dacia (e piața mică). În 700, două stații cu 13 sau cu 4/6.

8.1.5 Interviu participant/ă 5

(Februarie 2015)

47 de ani (la data interviului). Născut în mai 1968 în Timișoara. Părinții veniți din Moldova, tata în '51-'52 după foamete, mama tot cam pe atunci... Studii: liceu și specializare pe parcurs. Profesor suplinitor între 1990-2000 - limba română, în județul Timiș. Agent imobiliar în Timișoara din 2000 – prezent.

2000 - prezent locuiește în Circumvalațiunii 1. A locuit pe str. Teiului, cu familia, din 1972 până în 1990.

Clasa 1 [1974] la Generala 18. Din clasa 2 (1975) la Generala 24

I: Cum vi s-a părut viața în cartier, unde vă plăcea să vă jucați? Erau locuri amenajate pentru copii sau locuri interzise de părinți?

C.I: Interzise nu prea erau. Când ne-am mutat în '72, nu era cinema-ul, nu exista calea Lipovei [se referă la fondul construit], calea Aradului...din piața Dacia vedeai până pe Torontalului.... A început revoluția industrială în anii 80 [Subiectiv. La nivel național a început de la sfârșitul anilor 1950] în Timișoara, se tot construia...Zona noastră din punctul ăsta de vedere e un pic mai proastă. Terenul de fotbal era locul nostru de joacă, unde e sala de sport, acolo ne jucam. Aveam un domn tare de treabă, era milițian pe vremea aia, ne-a făcut poartă, fileu...se aduna lumea din

cartier...și mai în vârstă și noi copii...sâmbăta, duminica erau campionate....toată lumea venea acolo.

I: Erau locuri de stat? Jucării?

C.I: Fiecare venea cu câte ceva de acasă.

I: În ce an s-a construit sala de sport?

C.I: În ce an a fost accidentul de la Cernobîl [1986]? Eu jucam handbal pe vremea aia, la un campionat și s-a primit ordin să jucăm în sală! Deci exista sală.

I: După ce s-a construit sala, unde v-ați mutat locul de joacă?

C.I: ...eram deja mare, nu mă mai jucam...unde se mai juca lumea, e parcul de lângă Dacia. Pe vremea aia era mult prea mic pentru câți copii eram...ne mai aruncam în fântâna aia, ne mai bălăceam. În perioada noastră, era interesant să te bagi pe unde se construia...locuri de joacă amenajate nu erau pe vremea aia....da' noi aveam cazarma chiar în fața blocului! Aproape de Policlinică. Era o unitate militară, unde erau cazați soldați...în perimetrul până la Generală 18 nu era construit nimic. Eu m-am dus la școală în clasa 1 la Generala 18. Fiind așa mulți copii, s-au pus repede și au construit Generala 24 [strada Brândușei]. Venind septembrie anul următor ne-au mutat la școala 24 [1975-76]...cazarma era înconjurată de gard. Noi cam până la piața Dacia ne duceam. ăsta era sectorul nostru. Sfertul ăsta de aici era teren viran după ce au dărâmat cazarma.

C.I: [după 1989] Colțul a fost folosit de cei de la Joe, cu napolitanele, apoi Nestle,...acolo unde sunt buticurile trec niște țevi majore în subteran. Am avut un amic care se ocupa de imobiliare. A vrut să facă ceva acolo. Condiția din partea primăriei a fost să mute țevile pe bani privați, așa că a renunțat. Terasa care este acolo nu are fundații în adâncime...

I: Locuri de stat, odihnă erau?

C.I: Nu. În afară de parc nu era nimic.

I: Dar garaje?

C.I: O parte din ele erau [?]...în 1968 a apărut Dacia [fabrică de mașini], te înscriai la CEC [Instituție bancară deținută de Stat, înființată în 1864], da până o primeai a venit revoluția, a început nebunia cu procesele. O Dacia costa 70.000 de lei. Pe vremea aia erau ceva bani, un salariu era 3.000 de lei, ăsta era un salariu deja bun. După '90 [1990] banii s-au devalorizat, nu mai știu cât a primit înapoi [un verișor]....aici mai era o sala de sport, unde e bazinul, pe aici ne mai jucam. Între cele două clădiri - înot și atletism, erau terenuri de tenis. Era gard foarte înalt, dar ne mai

lăsa paznicul înăuntru...aici [se referă la locuințele din Circumvalațiunii] arhitectura e foarte proastă, că așa au gândit-o atunci...dacă ne dezvoltăm repede, facem repede. Eu am stat la confort 2, astea de aici sunt confort 3, strada Amforei - baia de 1,2m x 1,2m. După anii 80 au gândit-o [arhitectura] altfel. Lipovei, Aradului au fost gândite altfel confort 1, cu bucătărie mare, camere mai spațioase...

I: Dar cele din turnuri, sunt confort 1?

C.I: Da, pentru că sunt de comandate, dar sunt "cameră lângă cameră" [se referă la faptul că dormitorul și camera de zi au perete comun, nu sunt despărțite de bucătărie]. Aici, vis-a-vis de Kaufland, bucătăria și baia separă dormitorul de camera de zi.

I: De ce se mută lumea în Circumvalațiunii? Ce-i atrage la cartierul ăsta?

C.I: Părinții mei au lucrat la CFR [Căile Ferate Române] toată viața. Tata era sudor. Noi ne-am mutat aici în '72, eram 5 [2 adulți și 3 copii] persoane în două camere. În '84-'85 am primit [oferta] 3 camere în calea Aradului, mult mai mare, dar pentru că ne-a plăcut atât de mult zona de aici, n-am vrut să ne mutăm. Am rămas în chichineața de apartament, neștiind ce va urma. După 90, la boom-ul imobiliar s-au vândut și cu 80 000 [Euro] în calea Aradului. Noi eram îndrăgostiți de zona asta...Acum în zonă sunt foarte mulți bătrâni...În ziua de azi, lumea caută să aibă spațiu, iar aici apartamentele sunt mici. Ca zonă, poziția e ok, dar ca structură nu....apartamentele din turnuri sunt ceva mai mari. În principiu se vând apartamentele că sunt mai ieftine, [unele] au max. 42 mp, așa că cuplurile mai tinere, care iau bani de la 'Prima Casă' (...) și nu au fonduri în plus cumpără aici. Să vă spun, în ultimii ani nu am mai avut cupluri care să acceseze toți cei 60.000 euro pe care îi oferă statul, pentru că nu mai au salarii. Primul lucru care l-au făcut patronii de la multinaționale a fost să taie salarii. Neavând bani, cu 30-35 000 cumpără ceva mai ieftin. Dacă mergem în Cetății sau Mircea cel Bătrân, 2 camere merg spre 50 000. Alea sunt blocuri făcute după 85, modele mari.

I: Ca și distanță față de centru mai e o zonă de locuit cu prețuri așa mici?

C.I: Nu. Take Ionescu, Medicina e zonă foarte scumpă. Vin studenții la medicină, indieni cu bursă de stat, stau toți pe Take Ionescu. Mai nou vin și vest europeni la Facultatea de Medicină. Au doi ani la dispoziție să învețe limba română. Vorbim de Germania, Norvegia...la ei nu există stomatologie pe bani [se referă la locurile cu plată la facultate de stat]. Examen la anul 1, 38 de locuri fără plată, restul până la 120 cu plată. Pe vremea mea așa ceva nu exista. Erau 50 de candidați pe un loc. Un amic de-al meu s-a dus la Iași pentru drept. La Timișoara erau 63/loc, iar la Iași 57. Am avut o clientă care intenționa să cumpere un apartament, dăduse un avans de 500

euro. I-a găsit fratele ei un loc de muncă în Anglia, a renunțat la tot și a plecat. Eu m-am căsătorit în '90. Am plecat atunci din oraș și ne-am întors în 2000 înapoi. Nașii de nuntă erau plecați din anii '80 în Germania. Pe vremea aia, să pleci în Germania era o nebunie...stăteai zile și nopți la Consulat, cereau dovezi peste dovezi.

I: Cum au ajuns părinții d-voastră să locuiască în blocul ăla?

C.I: Era bloc de la CFR [Căile Ferate Române]. Era bloc de servicii. Practic pe vremea aceea erau puțini oameni care aveau proprietăți [Subiectiv. În Circumvalațiunii înainte de 1989, 76% dintre apartamente au fost planificate pentru vânzare]. Pe vremea lui Ceaușescu nu aveai voie să ai 2 proprietăți, doar una. Era locuință de servicii...noi am stat la parter, vis-a-vis de noi stătea contabilul...și așa mai departe. După '89 chiriașii au avut posibilitatea să cumpere apartamentele. Aici nu au fost probleme. Probleme am avut pe zonele istorice [se referă la retrocedări].

(...)

C.I: În România în momentul în care ai dat bani la stat, te chinui să-i primești înapoi...statul ți-i dă când are chef, cum are chef. (...) 2000 prezent în Circumvalațiunii 1...da, fiecare cu cartierul lui. Pe vremea aia, eu mai departe de Stadion nu cunoșteam nimic.