

## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND URBAN REGENERATION IN ROMANIA: THE EXAMPLE OF TIMIȘOARA CITY**

**Nicolae POPA\*, Vincent VESCHAMBRE\*\***

**Abstract:** Among the outstanding Romanian cities, Timișoara and its privileged situation and history are potentially attractive to foreign investors. In this context, the question is raised to know if this city is undergoing a fast regeneration process and if the urban planning and achievements are in accordance with the part Timișoara is called to play in this part of Europe. In this paper, we provide a few answers with the analyses of the initiatives of private actors in areas of activities and the role of public actors in the development of public spaces and urban heritage. We also consider from all angles the urban regeneration processes undertaken in this large and changing Eastern European regional centre.

**Keywords:** local development, urban regeneration, heritage, Timișoara, Romania

### **INTRODUCTION**

In a logic of competition, the economy inherited from the communist period has demonstrated weak capacity to be adapted to market mechanisms. In consequence, most of the industrial establishments reduced their production or have been closed. The agriculture was oriented to the autosubsistence practices while services have been unequally developed, focusing especially on large cities. These are dramatic developments in rural areas, usually they being characteristics for the urban space and their national importance significantly diminishing. Not many towns have attracted significant investments in the industrial sector and the services of high added value. Timișoara city is part of this category.

How the local urban community can benefit from this economic attractiveness? We consider these benefits from the point of view of urban, industrial and tertiary transformations, in terms of infrastructure, habitat and valorisation of the urban wealth...What we consider in generic term, urban renewal with this topic that are specific for the ex "socialist" Europe. In these towns, all equipments, infrastructures, residential parks (districts) have been exceeded in the moment of the changing process of the political regime and also of the economical system: maintenance problems, low quality of the constructions...It's about the urban pattern in generally, which have been affected by this kind of urban renewal in spite of the numerous inertias.

The amplexness of the investments from Timișoara is inducing a higher urban renewal rhythm in Romanian context in connection with its ambitions as regional metropolis, or more of that cross-border one? Contrary, the investments in the buildings field, on the public spaces, urban landscape, all these can constitute an additional attraction factor for the investors?

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\* West University of Timișoara, Department of Geography, Bd. Vasile Pârvan, nr. 4 ; RO – 300223 Timișoara, Romania; e-mail: npopa1961@yahoo.com

\*\* Blaise Pascal (Clermont II) University, Department of Geography, 29, Bd. Gergovia, F – 63037 Clermont-Ferrand; e-mail: vincent.veschambre@univ-bpclermont.fr

## **I. TIMIȘOARA: AN ATTRACTIVE CITY FOR INVESTORS IN THE ROMANIAN CONTEXT**

Timișoara occupies the second position, after Bucharest, viewing the foreign investments importance, with approximately 6500 foreign enterprises (units), which represents a quarter of employment recorded in the city. Among the strong points that are explaining such an attraction, firstly we have to mention the privileged status of the city. Located at 570 km from Bucharest, Timișoara city is the biggest urban centre from the West part of Romania (312 000 inhabitants), on which exercises a significant influence, having the most important directly influence (5000 km<sup>2</sup>) after Bucharest. Through its complex functions, the city polarize an extended space being the biggest economic, cultural and scientific centre from West Development Region of Romania.

Admitted from the second part of the XVIII century for the commercial spirit of its inhabitants, Timișoara has benefit during the latest decades of the communist regime, the status of the main contact point with the « free world », fact that conferred it cosmopolitan values, a greater opening to the rest of the world. This cultural context, more favourable for the individual initiative than in the rest of the country, constituted an opportunity after the fall of the regime of Ceaușescu<sup>1</sup>.

Located inside a strong polarized urban system, Timișoara enjoys today a favorable position, even if the neighborhood with Serbia remains now a handicap. The city is situated between two major urban poles from Central and South-East Europe, Bucharest and Vienna-Budapest couple. The city constitutes a supporting point that connects the north-central part of the Mediterranean Sea with the ponto-Baltic isthmus. This function has allowed to the international airport from Timișoara to become the second Romanian airport (0,94 million passengers), after Bucharest: it is served by many airlines which connects it to other 35 major European cities, especially Italian and German cities. This history and central-European geographical position, have allowed to Timișoara city to become an innovative centre, opened to Western Europe.

Therefore, having the status of major regional development pole, Timișoara city is a priority for the international investments in the fields of infrastructure, sites of production and services. It is a large academic centre (53 thousand students), where technical specializations are traditional and remain dominants, creating a very good relation between superior training, research, environmental and economic business.

The attractiveness of the city is equally based on the low costs of the land, the buildings and hand work. On the other hand, there is also a hand work deficit, caused by the abroad departure of the young peoples and specialists, trying to have high-salaries (unemployment rate has decreased at least 1% in 2007 and 2008). In the last two years, this has as result an important increase of the salaries, it means that the hand work become more expensive.

Finally, the presence of many historic neighborhoods and green spaces in the city, is already a considerable visiting card and represents a real potentiel for development.

The organization of the urban space is the result of the full reconstruction realized after the Turks defeat and the Habsburgs reconquest of Banat starting with 1716. The radioconcentric plan of the City (Cetate) has a major nationally, even European importance, because it kept the original structure. The

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<sup>1</sup> It is not a hazard if the beginning of the Revolution from Decembre 1989 took place in this city.

conservation of the reconstruction plan from XVIII century, the overlapping of the architectural periods also (baroc, XIX century, new art...), have created the originality of Timișoara city<sup>2</sup>.

The old centre of the districts is very evident, especially for Fabric, Josefin districts, and less evident for Elisabetin, Mehala and Fratelia districts. This radioconcentric structure has oriented its extensions, especially for the construction of large buildings (blocks), after 1950. A very important element which offers to the city a strong personality, are the parcs and green spaces, located along Bega, an old canalized river. The river cross the city from East to West, in the southern part of the central district (Citadel).

## **II. ACTORS AND SPACES OF URBAN RENEWAL IN TIMIȘOARA**

In the last years, we witnessed an acceleration of the urban renewal process. At the same time, new activity and habitat spaces appeared in the suburbs, which is something new for a Romanian city. In this article, we are analysing only the first phase of these urban transformations, those of the urban renewal. The private investors have an important role in this field, but it is still limited. The influence of the local authorities is crucial to stimulate and guide the urban renewal process.

### **II.1. PRIVATE ACTORS: TARGETED INVESTMENTS AND THEIR (STILL) LIMITED ROLE IN URBAN RENEWAL**

#### **a. Industrial actors: from stages of production to stages of performance**

Enterprises represent major actors in urban renewal and, particularly, in the transformation of the old productions areas which are still very much imprinting the urban landscape.

Globally, the industrial areas of Timișoara (previous and posterior of the Second World War) were not subject to radical restructuring or economic transformation, although they went to a constant evolution. The process of urban renewal of the old industrial areas is specific for the Western part of the country, being very limited in the other parts of the country. The general tendencies were to diminish the economic activity, to reduce the technological equipment, to converse to simple, more fragmented, activities, without national importance and even more so international.

According to their location, old industrial enterprises are more or less interested in investments and also in functional and landscape development.

At the periphery, the *urban industrial areas* preserve their main functional purposes. It is the case of the Calea Buziasului – Pestalozzi street industrial area which is the most extended and homogenous. It used to include many units belonging to mechanical, electronic and chemical industries, to leather processing, textile industry and food processing. Some of these units are still present, having been overtaken by foreign investors such as the detergent factory which was overtaken by the American group Procter and Gamble, the electronic measurement devices unit which forms today the AEM-Luxten unit, or the Timisoreana brewery bought by a South-African industrial group. Other plants were closed down (such as the automobile factory, Optica, the Garofita textile plant) or have diminished very much their activity (Technometal, Guban footwear factory, Electrotimiș...). New units emerged on their place such as the German Lisa Drexlermeier, specialized in the production of automotive sub-products, and new production units belonging to

<sup>2</sup> The collective maintenance in the historic building service, prefecture, 20 May 2004.

Siemens VDO (re-bought by Continental group in 2008), Plastivaloire Romania etc. the units bought or newly built by foreign companies have a modern architecture and modern landscaping, which contrast with the areas which are still occupied by old factories or with the unhealthy and degraded units of some local firms.

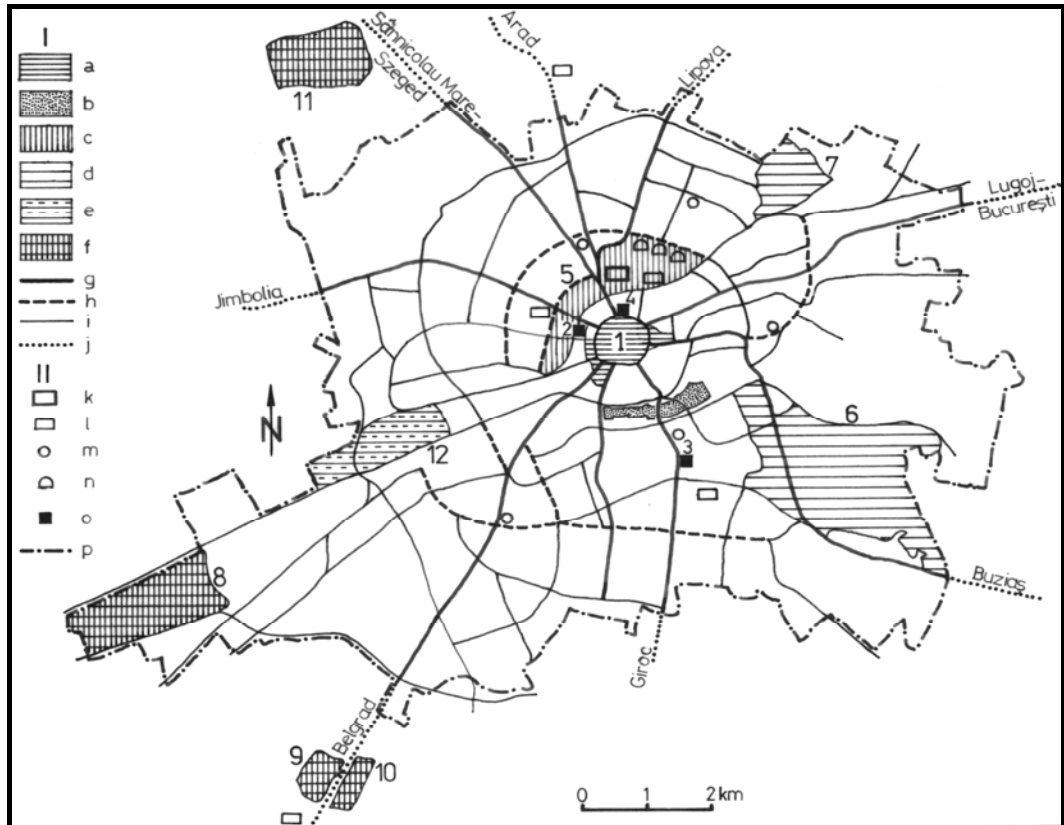


Fig. 1 Economic areas in transformation in Timișoara

- I – *Functional typologies of economic space* : a – central area with mixt urban functions; b – university campus; c – industrial-commercial and warehouse area in transformation; d – industrial areas and platforms in transformation; e – industrial platforms in conservation; f – new industrial and technological parks; g – penetration arteries with commercial functions; h – contact arteries with commercial and transit functions; i – other important urban arteries; j – interurban junction axes polarizing new industrial-commercial activities.
- II – *Major commercial centers*: k – Julius Mall; l – general or specialized supermarket; m – neighborhood market; n – Terra, Kapa and Euro supermarkets; o – IT units in central and pericentral areas ; p – *limit of urban area*. 1 – Cetate quarter; 2 – Alcatel Timișoara; 3 – Siemens VDO; 4 – Italian business center; 5 – industrial-commercial area along railroad; 6 – Calea Buziasului industrial area; 7 – UMT Continental industrial platform; 8 – Freidorf industrial Park; 9 – Monlanys industrial Park; 10 – Incontro industrial Park; 11 – industrial and technologic park; 12 – Solventul industrial platform.

The industrial platforms, characterized by monoactivity, went to uneven transformations. The Site of the Timișoara Mechanic Factory at the north eastern part of the town was bought by the German Continental company for tire production. The unit has demolished almost all the old buildings and has built new production halls and has formed an new industrial complex. The materials used for the construction of buildings, the green areas and access

routes, the choice of quality, the beauty of cleanliness made this unit one of the first models of modern land use planning of an industrial space in Timișoara. This model was adopted by prosperous Romanian units such as Electrica Banat. On the other hand, the activity has stopped on the Solventul platform which is rapidly decaying even if the production unit was effective, even productive.

Even if not all of them are referred to, the industrial units dispersed in the central and peripheral areas have always been the most attractive, evolving towards commercial purposes. The old food processing factories (Begapam, the dairy plant) the building materials factory (concrete prefabrication elements) the old storehouses of the commercial units of the socialist period have been unevenly either demolished and replaced by large mainly commercial modern units, with Romanian or foreign capital, or have been taken over and remodeled by Romanian groups which turned them into supermarkets (Terra, Euro, Kapa etc.).

Important foreign companies specialized in IT, hardware and software located themselves in central position (Alcatel) or pericentral (Siemens VDO), taking over the space of research or production units existing before (Datatim, the Hydrotechnical Research Institute).

The big national companies recently privatized, mainly in the energy resources domain (Petrom, Electrica Banat or the Timiș branch of Distrigaz Nord) have built modern administrative buildings in concrete, steel and glass, situated in the centre or pericentre of the town, symbol of their economic and financial power, thus contributing to the renewal of the urban landscape. The seat of the Petrom company is also situated in the hypercentre of Timișoara in the vicinity of the ancient ruins of the citadel (Bastion area).

#### **b. Service enterprises: a limited (still) impact on urban renewal**

The areas belonging to service enterprises went through continuous and major transformations. Timișoara saw consolidate its role as a regional centre by the multiplication of business centers, expositional centers, hotels, conference rooms. By means of their modern architecture or of restoration of old equipments (Continental Hotel, Central Hotel, Banatul Hotel...) these contribute to the punctual transformation of the urban landscape.

The banking sector should obviously be the main benefactor of the economic development and, consequently, of urban renewal. Even if it is very well represented by 40 local branches of the most important Romanian banks, the banking sector is still very little involved and insufficiently organized to sustain local development. The seats of these banks (Romanian Development Bank – Groupe Société Générale, Romanian Commercial Bank etc.), restored or built on purpose contribute to the revaluation of urban landscape. In the mean time, the city suffers by the lack of local or regional banking institutions capable to promote and sustain the interest of small and middle class investors, capable of getting over their own success, favor local investments and sustain the general process of urban renewal.

Commerce remains one of the main economic activities generating urbanity. A very important commercial development is taking place in Timișoara linked directly to the increase of income of its inhabitants and to the reinforcement of its regional polarization function.

The generalization of the automobile enabled the multiplication of the big magazines, situated at the periphery or at urban crossroads. We noticed the implantation of Terra, Euro and Kappa magazines which were the first true

commercial blocks outside the centre of the town. At the end of 2005, the Iulius Mall Timișoara complex, of Romanian capital, was built at the north eastern part of Cetate quarter, on a 12 ha terrain which belonged to the Interior Ministry and occupied by communication antennas. In 2008, this commercial building is in extension, to achieve a total surface of 190 thousand square meters of commercial surfaces in 2009.

The multiplication of these big magazines has direct effects on the small businesses of the historic neighborhoods. One of the constant preoccupations of the local public authorities is to maintain and modernize the commercial presence in the quarters of Timișoara, considered to be vital for urban renewal. These historic quarters represent major players for image and economic development.

## **II.2. THE ROLE OF LOCAL PUBLIC AUTHORITIES: TO MODERNIZE THE TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURES AND TO REVITALIZE THE CITY CENTER**

*« In order to contribute to the city development and to improve its image, (...) it has been decided to give life again to the freedom feeling of its inhabitants by "reconstructing" the historical or newly built city center, with commercial pedestrian areas, supermarkets, parks...<sup>3</sup>».*

This idea of « reconstruction » proves that the historical center is a first priority objective for the local authorities in terms of urban renewal. Starting from the principle that such inherited center represents an important trump in a moment where the patrimony constitutes a major visiting card in the competition among cities, the local authority tried to make use of the several levers that it disposes of. The modernization of the tramway network constitutes one of the urban renewal vectors used by the public authorities.

### **a. Relying on the tramway**

The investment efforts of the City Hall and of the Local Council of Timișoara have first been oriented towards the improvement of traffic infrastructures and to the arrangement of the public domain, especially of green areas. Thus, it has been decided to rehabilitate the tramway lines. The city display (on a surface of 130 square km), the need to link residential quarters disposed under the shape of an archipelago, the amplitude of daily flows, and also the will to re-valuate the three historical quarters justified this option, taken in the early 1990's. The decision was influenced by the experience of big western cities which re-introduced the tramway in the 1980's, in order to limit urban extension and pollution. The existence of the tramway is also an image vector: it has become for the cities which have it a symbol of dynamism and modernity. At Timișoara, this symbolical question plays a very particular role, the local authorities having desired to re-valuate and update a means of transport for which the city has played a pioneer role: it is actually here that the first electric tramway ran, put into operation in 1899, after the incorporation, since 1867, of the first society for animal traction tramways.

Taking into consideration the advanced wear level of the inherited network, the local representatives have decided to entirely reconstruct the tramway lines considered economically viable. The works started at the same time on several routes<sup>4</sup> and it advanced in slow rhythm, which generated traffic saturation, in a

<sup>3</sup> Junie Aurelia, 2002, *Municipiul Timisoara*, p. 30 (translation from Romanian).

<sup>4</sup> The tramway lines in process of modernization after 1999 have a total length of 40.1 km, on 14 routes. Two thirds of these lines have already been put into operation (early 2008).

period of rapid increase of the car park. The financial resources mobilized by such works are impressive for a Romanian city. They are based upon a credit of 40 millions euros obtained from the BERD and upon the local budget. Consequently, the funds which are still available for the execution of other infrastructure works are modest, meaning the degradation of the road network and the aspect insufficiently attended of the green areas, especially in the big block complexes. As the works are extending, the city is having an increasingly dusty appearance, dirty and congested, issue which meets the improvement objectives for the urban landscape and the city image. But we progressively witness the improvement of life area in the run through quarters, as the works are being completed (acc. to *Map no.2*). Even from this phase, the tramway passage represents the occasion to redraw the big borrowed ways. Thus, the boulevard axis of the Josefin quarter was resumed, implementing new urban furniture.

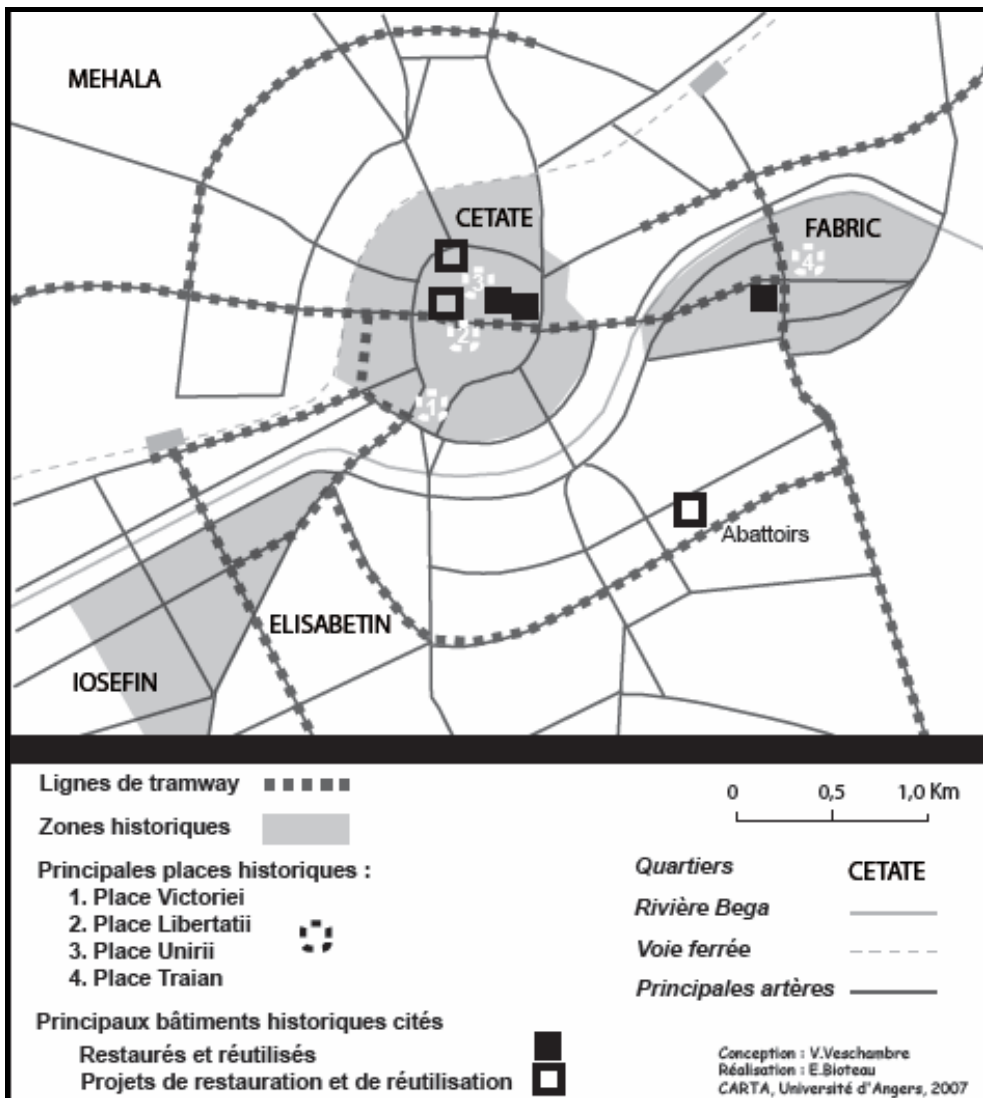


Fig. 2 Areas in the patrimony and urban renewal in Timișoara

The consequences of the tramway modernization on the land market are being felt. Since 2004, the message launched by the public authority in this quarter has been heard by the investors: the number of houses, created in big buildings in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, has increased with 30%, at the same time with the increase of the real estate price, which further continued. But the local representatives seem disappointed on two plans: the trade did not improve in terms of quality<sup>5</sup> and there were especially the interiors of the buildings, and not the front walls, which were restored. As for the impact on the other historical quarter from the outskirts, Fabric quarter, it remains out of hope.

### **b. Renewing the historical quarters: commercial environment and public spaces valuation**

If we speak in Timișoara of « reconstruction »/renewal of the historical center (Cetate, Josefin and Fabric) from the point of view of the local authorities everything had to be redone in terms of urban landscape, environment, in one word, in terms of urbanism. In other terms, in a logic of adaptation to the contemporary capitalist economy, it is about « valuating » such spaces and encouraging their « consumption ». The priority was to promote a modern commercial presence which is favorable to the development of recreational spaces, in a valuating historical environment. Even if we saw that such commercial presence had been submitted to a great competition of the big pericentral surfaces, the results obtained these last years are undeniable. Starting from 2000, the owners have been interested to rent their basements in order to implement bars, clubs, which in fact had multiplied since then, especially in Cetate (the Fortress Quarter)<sup>6</sup>. At the same time, the arrival of a new generation of traders led to the progressive modernization of the strong points of the city center. Also, the city hall encouraged the coffee-shop owners to invest in the public space by implementing terraces. Between 2003 and 2006, we ascertained the increase of the number of terraces and their extension, on the main squares of the city center. In order to value the central areas and to contribute to their marketability, the city hall also organizes festivities, to draw in particular the attention of a young population through free concerts<sup>7</sup>.

This young population, mostly students, represents for the urbanism service officers a particularly strategic type of customers which would revive the historical center of Timișoara. After 1989, the most dynamic urban life – especially the nightlife, with its typically urban atmosphere – little by little concentrated in the university campus (*Complexul studentesc*), which thus became a real amusement quarter, cosmopolite and noisy, which is not its function *a priori*. Therefore, the objective is to re-orientate this animation in the historical quarters. For this, the local authorities rely on the capacity of universities to play a major role in the urban renewal. In fact, the extraordinary increase of the number of students after 1989 determined the universities from Timișoara, especially the Western University, to make real estate acquisitions in order to extend the spaces meant for learning and research activities. Thus, certain buildings which used to belong in the previous decades to the

<sup>5</sup> The creation of the mall has certainly captured the most valuable companies.

<sup>6</sup> Cetate (the Fortress Quarter ) corresponds to the old reinforced fortress of the city and this is why it kept the name of «Cetate».

<sup>7</sup> We mention the festival « Mica Vienă/The Small Wien » in the month of May, which significantly refers to the Austrian past of the city, and the beer holiday in the month of June.



universities have been retrieved, while other buildings have been bought a second time and reused<sup>8</sup>. Among such transformations, we must mention especially that of the former city hall situated right in the center of the city, partially occupied by the music faculty and that of a former barracks<sup>9</sup> situated in the close northern neighborhood of Cetate Quarter, which became the faculty of art. Several university areas were incorporated: the initial nucleus, which remains the largest, situated on the south of Cetate Quarter, then the small central nucleus from the Liberty Square, and finally the one situated on the north-eastern limit of Cetate Quarter, in continuous development. During its re-conversion and its restyling, this old military complex has the vocation to become the second university campus of the city. In the spirit of the local representatives, the flow of young people circulating among the different campuses, through the city center, should contribute to its revival. An equivalent reflection is conducted regarding the Fabric Quarter, where the old breweries Timișoreana (which became a restoration place) represent a point of attraction.

In order to promote such commercial, festive activities, the authorities intend to act upon the re-valuation of public spaces, particularly the squares, which represent the privileged environment for such animations. These squares constitute emblematic elements of the city, they highly contribute to the positive image that it benefits of and represent a great symbolic value for the inhabitants. From the historical and patrimonial point of view, the Union Square (*Piața Unirii*) constitutes the oldest and the most important heritage of the city. Under the shape of a square, Union Square is surrounded by one of the most prestigious architectural complex from Romania, and represents an example of a baroque square at a Central-European scale. The square, left for a long time in the outskirts of the city center, for several years now has been the object of a special attention from the authorities. The restoration of the most significant surrounding buildings (cathedrals, Museum of Art...), the increase of the number for cultural events which take place in its perimeter and especially, the increase of commercial standing areas and terraces have succeeded to make from the Union Square an attractive place.

But it is with the Victory Square (*Piața Victoriei*) that the symbolic charge is the most powerful for the population of Timișoara. Large rectangle mainly dominated by buildings from the 1900's, the square is oriented towards the two main symbols of Timișoara: the Romanian Orthodox Cathedral and the building of the National Opera and the National Theater of Timișoara. From an urban point of view, the Victory Square had been finished in the end of the 1980's, little before the fall of the communist regime. The tramway lines had therefore been deviated and the square had been entirely granted to the pedestrian traffic and to green areas. A little after, this square became the symbol of the anti-communist resistance and of the fight for freedom: it is here that tens of thousands of men and women from Timișoara united, starting from December 16<sup>th</sup>, 1989, in order to protest against dictatorship. From the balcony of the Opera, Timișoara was proclaimed « city free of communism », for the first time in Romania. Its corridor position among big boulevards and intensely circulated

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<sup>8</sup> On the campus itself there is a rehabilitation program going on for university cities which are marked by deterioration.

<sup>9</sup> This recycling issue of the former military buildings from Romanian cities is particularly interesting.

pedestrian streets, the proximity to the main socio-cultural and commercial infrastructures, the neighborhood of the most beautiful parks of the city, emphasize the polarizing function of the square.

If they witnessed a commercial revival, the two main squares of the city have not been the object of large restorations and they finally preserved the aspect inherited from the communist period<sup>10</sup>. In exchange, the squares from the pericentral historical quarters have been the object of urban interventions, in order to improve their activity. It is the case of the Trajan Square from the Fabric Quarter, important urban transport node, which witnessed entirely structure and surface reconstruction.

The local authorities intend to encourage at a larger level a rehabilitation process of the urban patrimony in its ensemble.

### III. PATRIMONY AND URBAN RENEWAL IN TIMIȘOARA

It is well understood the fact that the city center revival issue is closely linked to that of the patrimony valuation. For several decades, the patrimony has obtained an increasing importance in urban landscape, especially in Europe. And this patrimony issue necessarily interferes with that of the urban renewal, which must take into consideration the prestigious inheritance of the historic quarters. As the city of Timișoara had not been touched by the urban planning process of the years 1970-80<sup>11</sup>, it benefits from an important trump in the field within the Romanian context (Popa, 2000) : there are 91 elements (70 punctual elements and 21 complexes or urban sites) which are thus protected with the title of historical monuments. And 14000 buildings which are considered «historical». But according to a research performed in 2005 for the city hall, only 11% of such buildings were partially or totally restored, only half of such restorations having preserved the old building style.

The local authorities are conscious of the fact that leaving this patrimony in the state of deterioration in which it actually is, could eventually become, on the contrary, unattractive for the investors. The three main historical quarters (Cetate, Josefin, and Fabric), protected since then through a zone structuring process<sup>12</sup>, make the object of the highest interest.

#### a. A recognized patrimony still insufficiently valued

Even if it has been recognized and officially protected<sup>13</sup>, the architectural patrimony of the city has not been systematically preserved during the communist period. As it had generally been the case of the cities from formerly communist countries, the investments privileged the collective buildings from the outskirts. On the other hand, the division of apartments within a context of serious building crisis increased degradation phenomena.

A law from 1991 compelled the public authority to sell the buildings to the former occupants. The sale took place outside the market price, to rather poor

<sup>10</sup> If we except, of course, the building of a monument of the Revolution in front of the Romanian Orthodox Cathedral, in the Victory Square.

<sup>11</sup> In his work *The razing of Romania's past*, Dinu Giurescu reviews 29 cities over 85% erased and 37 cities where demolitions had been significant (Giurescu, 1990).

<sup>12</sup> The protection zone structuring processes have been implemented from 1992.

<sup>13</sup> The historical monument list published in 1992 very largely resumes the one from 1960 (law from 1955), which proves a certain continuity. But it was only in the early 1980's that the interest for historical monuments really started to manifest (acc. to the arrangements from the Union Square).

and old inhabitants, and the public authority lost the essential of its intervention facilities. If certain persons resold in a speculative thinking, and if we witness a gentrification beginning (Cetate, Josefin), the average life level remains weak and the division of buildings very pronounced. The common parts of such buildings, among which the front walls, are not preserved as the part-owners do not have the means to do it. More serious, the structure of many buildings is menaced by the dampness of the basement and the lack of the framing maintenance.

Even if there still are 6000 buildings dispersed in the city, it cannot intervene under any circumstances. The law regarding historical monuments imposes the preservation of the protected buildings or of those placed in the historical areas (*zone istorice urbane*), but the financial law forbids the use of public means in order to preserve a private property. Therefore, if the city hall owns one or several apartments in a historical building, it cannot intervene at the level of the entire building. It can act in the rare situations where it is the unique owner. This is what happened to a building from Trajan Square in the Fabric Quarter: the foundations had been reinforced and the building carefully rehabilitated. This type of restoration still is too punctual to have an impact on the urban evolution. But it has the value of an example: in this way several residential buildings have been restored by private persons or are in repair works within the area of the Union Square.

Taking into consideration the weak action means, either from a juridical or from a financial point of view, the city hall turns to foreign partners. Thus it has drawn the services of the German institution GTZ, financed by the Federal Ministry for Cooperation and Development<sup>14</sup>. Within the program « preserving rehabilitation and economical revival of historical quarters » (2006-2008), this institution proposes free solutions, instructions and advice (restoration financing) to the involved owners and artisans. It also contributes to the public sensitizing.

On the other hand, German or European financing has been obtained by the city hall (baroque statuary, Bastion) or is in negotiation (Union and Victory Squares) for certain prestigious restorations.

### **b. Patrimony and recycling: the urban renewal stakes**

Like in any other urban renewal process, the temptation to demolish exists, taking into consideration the pressure exercised by the real estate market on the land price in the central quarters. Many are the potential purchasers of old buildings who are not interested in the buildings themselves but in the surface they occupy, with a view to replace them with new buildings much more economical, some of them waiting for their building to fall down<sup>15</sup>. The local authorities must solve the potential contradiction between the desire to preserve the built inheritance and the desire to draw investors in the old quarters.

It is the patrimony issue, in its relation with urban renewal, that is in discussion. This patrimony notion is related to the obsolescence of one heritage and to the recognition of a new value, which is no longer that of the use value. But in order for the patrimony to be preserved and re-valued, it is supposed that it should be «inhabited» (Gravari-Barbas, dir., 2005), that is re-used, generally with

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<sup>14</sup> German company for technical cooperation. This institution proved its capacity at Sibiu, cultural European capital 2007.

<sup>15</sup> In this way two buildings fell down during the last years in Cetate Quarter.

a different function than its original function. Compared to the 1950-60's, when the intervention on the inherited urban tissue frequently passed through total demolition, in the 1990-2000's, what we call *urban renewal* highly frequently relies on the insertion into the patrimony of elements deemed significant and valuable, which are thus reinvested and integrated in urban projects.

The insertion into the patrimony leads to a dialectics between preservation and recycling which is not without raising concrete problems. This issue came into discussion regarding the slaughter-houses from Timișoara. Built in 1904-1905 (Munteanu, 1995), classified as historical monument, this architectural complex is located in the middle 4 hectares land, in the close neighborhood of the university campus. Abandoned after their opening, the slaughter-houses had been re-purchased in order to be transformed in a commercial center, taking into consideration their remarkable position. The project did not receive the favorable certificates from the national commission for historical monuments, which considered that the arrangement of the commercial center, which would only preserve the front walls, would lead to a too big distortion. According to the city hall, the commission for historical monuments failed a project of economical development, while according to the commission, the city hall was ready to sacrifice a historical monument in order to obtain this investment. However, a second commercial center project, more respectable, seems to be at the present moment in a good course.

A similar situation was noticed regarding the U Barrack from Mărășești Square, a particularly large complex situated right in the center of the city : the valuation project as multimedia center (by the company Media Pro) did not come to an end and the building is in a continuous degradation. The city hall succeeded in selling it to a Lithuanian company, in the beginning of 2008, which will open new perspectives. Through their proportion and least prestige, these elements of industrial or military patrimony<sup>16</sup> are certainly the most difficult to agree upon in terms of preservation and recycling.

However, there are a certain number of successful experiences and projects in development, in which cases it has been successfully agreed upon preservation and re-use of the emblematic edifices. In this category are not actually included the restorations engaged by the institutions which only updated and embellished their premises : the National Theatre of Timișoara<sup>17</sup>, the Museum of Art (the baroque palace from the Union Square), the Post Office, the National Romanian Bank, the town hospital or the Ministry of Justice (the Dicasterial Palace).

More original is the valuation of fragments of the guard wall destroyed in the early 20th century. The main preserved area, the Bastion, lodges an ethnographic museum, an exhibition center and several leisure commercial spaces, located within its walls. A restoration even more ambitious must soon allow a further improvement of the attraction of this area of Cetate Quarter. The recent restoration of the palace called the *former Bazaar* also deserves to be mentioned as the first big rehabilitation performed by a private person. Having claimed it in justice and obtained, its new owner restored it and rented it to

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<sup>16</sup> Timișoara has 6 elements of protected industrial patrimony, among which only one, the Timișoreana breweries, made the object of a real valuation process.

<sup>17</sup> Prestigious restoration which contributes to the reinforcement of the commercial function of the pedestrian street Alba Iulia.

different interested enterprises and institutions, among which the Agency for Regional Development West, which also has a central and valuable office.

The most ambitious restoration - re-use project concerns the synagogue from Cetate Quarter, a beautiful edifice in neo-Arabian style. Because of the high maintenance costs of the three synagogues of the city, the Jewish community agreed with the local authorities to grant this edifice to the city, which has the intention to make it a cultural space.

### CONCLUSION

The remarkable economical progress, especially owed to foreign investments, that Timișoara witnesses does not involve an urban renewal as important as it would have been expected. Several hypothesis can be uttered to explain such discrepancy. The implemented enterprises certainly do not generate sufficiently important revenues, neither for individuals, nor for the collectivity. Then, the distribution of public resources (fees and taxes), too centralized, does not leave enough means on site, in order to cover the modernization needs of the city. Moreover, the use of the city budgetary funds is still oriented towards heavy and little visible sectors. To these economical reasons is added the legal context: opposed to what happened to the Hungarian neighbors, the public authority did not use intervention levers alienating the essential of its public park. Too deprived or with little sensitiveness towards the patrimony when they have the means, there are still few owners to engage in the valuation process of their old patrimony.

When we compare the urban landscape of Timișoara to that of neighboring cities of Szeged (Hungary) and also Novi Sad (Serbia), we cannot avoid admitting a certain delay in terms of urban environment valuation, while its economy is the most dynamic of the three cities. The city of Timișoara remains a pole for investment in order to benefit from the (still) weak work force cost, the value added tax still not locally accumulating as a re-valuated real estate patrimony.

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