

SELECTIVE ISSUES ON BUZIAȘ TOURISTIC RESORT OF ROMANIA BETWEEN EMBLEMATIC TOURISM ECONOMIES AND POST-COMMUNIST DERELICTION

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Abstract: Since the post-socialism breakdown, the post-90 Romanian capitalist economy fuelled by chaotic interventions in local urban restructuring changed the urban functionality, the local ways of life of the locals and the inner-urban landscapes of the cities and towns regardless of their size, rank or functionality. Against such a background, this article examines the post-communist changes in the town of Buziaș, emphasizing both the consequences of the local transition to a market economy and the implications of the local urban restructuring process. Using quantitative and qualitative research, the article explains the local attributes of Buziaș post-90 redefining and the spatial results of economic restructuring. From emblematic tourism economies under the earlier capitalism, and with important touristic development under the state-socialist governance, since 1990 Buziaș faced with major problems at the local scale, with its local economic culture being altered. These issues are important in designing further proper interventions in local development, pushing out the local development strategies beyond theories, indifference, and the local community neglecting.

Key words: urban restructuring, tourism, economy, dereliction, ruins, Muschong, Buziaș, Romania

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INTRODUCTION

As many scholars argued, during the last decades of Eastern European Countries post-socialism, this part of the world was the scene of multiple transformations in the post-communist urban identity formation (Stenning, 2000; Stanilov, 2007). On the one hand, there have been outstanding assessments on it and on the other, critical reflections on the spatial results of urban changes, referring on the global economic integration, urban and regional resurgence and consolidation of supranational and cross-border institutions and cooperation (Brenner, 2004). Against such a background, as Brenner (2004) points out, it is important to (re)conceptualize the scale as processes of places, where the things that happen are responsible for the local ways of life of the residents. This is in line with Ianoș (2010) arguments regarding the nano-structural analyses and with micro-scale spatial approach, because at this level the local processes are determinant for the local development of communities influencing both the upper spatial

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structures and the urban systems. Consequently, localization, as process, and local approach on post-communist transformation in post-90 urban restructuring contribute to the local policies of urban remaking improvement in line with the global trends of present municipalities' identity formation. Considering multiple changes in all social, cultural, economic and political fields, many studies unveiled the relevance of post-90 transformations in Central and Eastern European Countries (EECs). Embodying changes of urban post-socialist (re)development, many authors highlight the impact of post-90 political order, framing post-communist urbanities and reshaping the post-socialist societies (Ilieş, 2004; Stanilov, 2007; Kideckel, 2008). Consequently, this paper critically examines the post-90 changes, tracing the most important issues in urban spatial redefining. Considering the places' local importance, the study concerns on a specific site, from its emblematic economic status under the earlier capitalism, to the present post-90 capitalism governed by the oriented-market economies umbrella and to the contemporary neoliberal contradictions in local urban planning (Taşan-Kok & Baeten, 2012). Therefore, economic changes due to the political shifts from one type of governance to another continue to shape the inner-patterns of the cities (Paddison & Hutton, 2015; Hutton, 2015). To decipher these issues, Buziaş resort is analyzed. It is a particular Romanian geo-site according to its cultural integration in the Romanian national patrimony (Ilieş & Josan, 2009a). In time, it was one of the most important touristic sites both in the western part of Romania and in the Romanian touristic system. Furthermore, Buziaş embodied relevant cultural issues and a large cultural heritage with merit in the contemporary research on touristic resorts, related to the recent social and cultural transformation (Ilieş et al., 2008; Ilieş & Josan, 2009a, 2009b; Matlovičová et al., 2013; Matlovičová & Pompura, 2013) and to the economic shifts in urban areas. The latter is topically framed in the contemporary urban geographies and cities' regeneration, since economic changes remain the main processes in the present ongoing urban restructuring (Paddison & Hutton, 2015; Hutton, 2015) with multiple and different spatial results, particularly at the local scales. In all, structuring the paper in several sections, the study presents the most important issues of local dereliction from the formerly tourism economies to the present-day economic restructuring. Considering scientific research of different scholars as fertile groundwork for further decisions of the local actors, the following section highlights theoretical insights on the urban post-communist redefining and the purpose of the study to emphasize the present issues of Buziaş municipality.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The point of departure in the study of urban redefining of Buziaş from its emblematic tourism economies to the present dereliction bases on literature review, with relevant sources emphasizing the former onsite cultural values of this place. In addition, repeatedly visits in the town of Buziaş confirm both difficulties of post-communist transition and the new problems in the local community adjustment to the contemporary capitalist economy. Participatory in-field observations were useful in reflecting on the peculiarities of the post-socialist changes in Buziaş. Furthermore, the present status of this site illustrates divergent processes, actions and patterns in urban redefining, as they are common issues for many Romanian post-socialist cities (Chelcea, 2012, Ianoş et al., 2015). There are a plenty of studies conducted on the post-90 identity formation of the cities and towns, topically differentiated according to their specific approaches on the investigated issues (Stenning, 2000; Stanilov, 2007; Chelcea, 2008; Kideckel, 2008; Smith & Timár, 2010). The post-communist urban changes generated multiple shifts in urban spatial and functional (re)formation, much of them with uneven development, with some places developed and other left behind and sometimes ignored (Jucu, 2015).

Against such a background, while some parts of the towns where regenerated other ones failed and turned to ruins. This trend argues uneven development within the cities and towns as a common feature of post-socialist urban restructuring (Stenning, 2000; Hirt & Stanilov, 2009; Ivanov, 2010, Jucu, 2011; 2015). On the scene of these spatial unequal shifts, urban ruins and derelict places are present in all Romanian cities and towns, altering the local culture of places (Chelcea, 2008; 2015; Voiculescu & Jucu, 2014; Jucu, 2015; 2016). The local urban dereliction, urban ruins, redundant and marginalized spaces are important topics in present scholarly debates illustrating the outcomes of capitalist expansion (Edensor, 2005a, 2005b; DeSilvey & Edensor, 2013; Mah, 2010; 2012; Turok, 2015). The problem fits to Romanian post-socialist cities and towns, in their transition to a market economy from the state-socialist rules to a neoliberal regulation in local urban planning. Furthermore, it is applicable to all Romanian urbanities, regardless of their size, rank or functionalities.

Considering that, during post-90 period all economic sectors encountered multiple difficulties with important declines in all fields (Jucu, 2011; 2015; 2016). Accordingly, the paper analyses the spatial and functional transformation in a town based on tourism activities. The post-communist changes altered the local cultural tradition with many important cultural sites left subject to degradation, failure and abandonment. While many Romanian studies critically examined this issue in the context of industrial restructuring and local deindustrialization (Ianoş, 2004; Rey et al., 2006; Chelcea, 2008, 2015; Pavel, 2011; Jucu, 2011; Stupariu, 2014; Voiculescu & Jucu, 2014, etc) the problems of urban ruins production in touristic and local cultural sites remain peripheral in the present scholarly debates (DeSilvey & Edensor, 2013). Thus, on the scene of post-communist spatial changes of Romanian cities and towns, this paper aims to contribute to this field, analyzing the topic of dereliction in a touristic resort, from its emblematic economies under earlier capitalist period of 19th and 20th Centuries, to the post-communist spatial shifts.

STUDY AREA, DATA, MATERIALS AND METHODS

Buziaş resort is located in the western part of Romania positioned in the southeastern part of Timiș County (Mihalache & Nini, 1971; Trâpea, 1975; Crețan, 2006; Crețan & Frățilă, 2007; Bar et al., 2016) of a distance about 35 and 25 kilometers, respectively, away from Timișoara and Lugoj - the most important municipalities of Timiș County. In time, the resort assumed an important position in the national economy with local tourism being one of the key features in local economic development. Based on this economic sector, related activities had sooner developed, with Buziaş resort being up to 1990 an important small municipality and a touristic spa resort in Romania (Ianoş, 1987; Ghinea, 2000; Voiculescu, 2004). Since Romanian state-socialism breakdown, back in 1989, the town encountered important spatial and functional transformation traced by the post-90s transition and by the new capitalist economy. Against such a background, its local urbanity engendered multiple consequences of local post-communist (re)formation that now faces in the local inner urban landscapes and in the local way of life of the residents and tourists. Based on the post-communist changes of Romanian urban settlements, this contribution examines local spatial and functional changes from the formerly emblematic local economy, to the present issues of urban restructuring with multiple consequences at the local scale. The starting point of the research was repeatedly in-field observation during 2014-2015. Empirical data gathered bases on multi-methods approach, crossing quantitative approach and qualitative research. Literature review provided meaningful insights on the spatial and functional evolution of Buziaş, with multiple resources in-depth and critical analyzed, from specialized academic literature, to local media resources (local online newspapers, magazines and journals). Krieger (2011)

suggests the latter method as a research tool in the present studies on urban transformation. To examine the local economic changes, statistical data were used to portray the local economic evolutions, especially in touristic sector. Semi-structured interviews, personal conversations and talks with different individuals were useful in gaining an understanding on the local problems of the investigated site. Oral histories of local residents also provided meaningful insights towards post-communist urban processes of local restructuring and dereliction.

This is in line with historical approach in methodological flow on urban research (Gehl & Svarre, 2015). The self-approach on urban space and first-person reflections of the author through individual perception of investigated places internalization bases on direct own experience through field-trip observation. They were useful to assess the local processes of post-communist transformation and its spatial outcomes and consequences as well. To demonstrate these effects, multiple photographs were repeatedly taken, being useful (Bernstein, 2013) to highlight the real spatial results in local decline from the former emblematic local economies to the current dereliction. Summarily, I followed the methodological flow, mainly based on ethnographic analysis recommended by Edensor (2005a, 2005b), Mah (2010, 2012) and DeSilvey & Edensor (2013). To understand the local spatial and functional evolution of Buziaş as well as their restructuring consequences in tracing local post-socialist processes of urban redefining and local restructuring, the research was structured in few sections. The first illustrates the former emblematic economies of Buziaş since its appearance to the state-socialist intervention. Then, a short overview on the state-socialist dynamics was included for the next section to be concerned on post-90 transformation and their local spatial implications.

FINDINGS AND RESULTS

A short history of Buziaş resort

The settlement of Buziaş was attested since 1369, but historians appreciate the place existence since ancient times, but with its mineral water resources known during from the Middle Age (Ivănescu et al., 2005; Lovasz, 2006; Creţan, 2006; Creţan & Frăţilă, 2007). The local a-thermal waters dated back to 1805. As many other localities in western part of Romania, during 18th and 19th Centuries, important colonization with German population was made (Creţan, 1999; Voiculescu, 2004; Jucu, 2011), this issue being traced in the local culture and the local economy of this place. Consequently, in 1819, Buziaş turned to a spa resort with 5 mineral water sources and with important treatment facilities. Later on, emblematic pavilions have been built in the water-sources areas, generating local cultural landscapes and highlighting the local tradition in spa tourism and resort facilities. This feature emphasizes the role of the local water resources related to the local culture of water and to the particular landscapes of a place based on water resources (Voiculescu, 2009). Since 1892, E. Schottola from Budapest purchased the resort, for in 1906 to be owned by J. Muschong, an emblematic personality of those times in local economy (Ivănescu et al., 2005). He built important spa facilities and a mineral water factory, whose production intensely increased during 20th Century. The water was distributed all through this part of Europe under the name “Muschong Mineral Water from Buziaş”, further called as “Buziaş Borviz” (Ivănescu et al., 2005). After Muschong death, back in 1923, his daughter and his son-in-law, continued to manage his business, up to the nationalization process, back in 1948 (Ivănescu et al., 2005).

Those times have significantly marked both the local economy and the cultural landscape of Buziaş. The earlier Muschongs' interventions in local economy remained as important features for local culture of this community through the industrial and touristic facilities produced under his ownership. Once that nationalization has been implemented,

the resort was included in the state ownership (Bar, et al., 2016). The Ministry of Health would manage the resort, while the Public Food Ministry coordinated the mineral water manufacture. Between 1950 and 1970, the resort continued to develop under the state-socialist rules. New hotels appeared as for instance Buziaș, Silvana, Silagiu, Timiș Spa Complex and Parc, as well as new local touristic infrastructures. Since 1976, collective state-socialist residences have been built (Ivănescu et al., 2005) for local workers employed both in the field of tourism and in local industry.

It was the time when the state-socialist intervention in local spatial structures overlapped previous cultural patterns. Under the state-socialist rules, the town functioned as a tourist resort intensely visited by tourists that came from all-through Romania. Since 1990, once with transition to a capitalist economy, Buziaș encountered important spatial and functional unfavorable transformation (Lovasz, 2006) with important social and economic consequences at the local scale. Urban dereliction, local poverty, damaged landscapes, and ruined sites are some of the main features altering the local culture enhanced by the earlier capitalist interventions. To understand this topic, the next section, briefly, presents the Muschongs' economic implication in Buziaș resort.

Jacob Muschong and its role in local and regional development

As it was already stated, Jacob Muschong was an emblematic entrepreneur under the earlier capitalism (Toma, 2006), with its economic contribution remaining an important feature in the regional identity formation of the Western part of Romania up to the first post-socialist years. Born in Kikinda of Serbian Banat he was the son of a former well-known manufacture person in the field of bricks industry. Continuing the family tradition, J. Muschong was known both as 'the Brick King' and as a 'real John Ford of Romania'¹ due to its personal contribution in local and regional economic development. In 1888, he built a brick factory in Lugoj (Jucu, 2011) and purchased those manufactures of his rivalries at those times. Furthermore, he built many bricks manufactures in Banat and Budapest, with their quality production distributed all- through Austrian and Hungarian Empire as well as in the Romanian regions. He also was the owner of different other bricks and tills manufactures and factories as for instance, those from Sânnicolau Mare (in Timiș County) and Sântimbru (in Alba County). Important and large forest real estates were also in Muschongs' ownership in Petroșani and Nădrag areas. Of these, significant landmarks still stand as proof of what was at once the Muschongs' economic empire. In 1906, he purchased Buziaș resort, this place remaining under his ownership until Romanian nationalization (Ivănescu et al., 2005; Toma, 2006).

In 1907, he started the construction of the mineral water manufacture „Phoenix”, some spa resorts (including Phoenix Spa) and hotels. Grand and Phoenix hotels are just two examples. All these spa and tourist resorts and Apemin (the manufacture producing mineral water) belonged to Muschong and to his family. Since 1914, the tourism started to develop in Buziaș with important outstanding tourists coming here from Wien region. Considering the issues of transportation needs of raw materials, Buziaș was the sole resort with rail access. The rail route opened back in 1914 and linked the railway station of Buziaș with the spa resort. It had an important cultural value in the local economy. During Romanian nationalization, it was under the state ownership. This local rail route had important cultural and touristic meanings both for the local community and for the national Romanian culture. 'The little train', originally known as 'Die Kleine Bahn' started operating since 1914, with its steam engines Etelka and George being legendary at those times. They were made by German manufacturers and circulated up to 50s (Ivănescu et al., 2005). The rail and touristic facilities were in the Muschongs' ownership. Nowadays,

¹According to: <http://www.banat.ro/academica/book.htm>; and http://redesteparea.ro/jakob-muschong-stapanul-oraelor_185291.html 2 Ian 2012, online accessed March 2015

of these local facilities remained only ruins, derelict sites and abandoned places. Since 1918, Muschong was inquired by the authorities, accused by opposition to the economic development and an important press campaign on his denigration started.

Further, he died back in 1923. Under the state-socialism, J. Muschong was completely denied and blamed for its related origins to the bourgeois system. The state-socialist regime of those times disliked investors with other origins than Romanian. Although Muschong's properties were estimated about one-billion dollars, his daughters also died poor in misery conditions.² During post-90 period in the national contexts of real estates restitution, the properties owned by Muschong started being claimed, but the legal procedures of restitution are slippery and complicated with the main part of the former owned properties being vacant, ruined and abandoned. This issue raise on the scene of multiple national problems on real estate restitution and on serious difficulties on real estate private ownership since it was of no interest for the formerly state-socialist regime. Accordingly, Romania still face now important problems considering the real estate ownership from local to regional and national levels.³ Against such a background, under post-socialism, Buziaș resort encompassed multiple difficulties and faced major problems that ended with failure, dereliction and abandonment.

Emblematic economies, local cultural identity and post-socialist dereliction

As an old attested human settlement on the western part of Romanian space (Crețan & Frățilă, 2007), Buziaș turned to an important tourism resort under the earlier capitalism. Since mineral water and their related curative properties has been discovered, back in 1809 (Mihalache & Nini, 1971; Trâpcea, 1975), this place turned to a significant resort in the formerly Austro-Hungarian Empire. An outstanding issue of Buziaș resort is assumed by J. Muschong's ownership on it. As it was stated, descending from a manufactures family, Muschong built an important economic empire⁴ purchasing Buziaș resort. Symbolic and cultural value rose from the former mineral water manufacture. As it was previous mentioned, considered an opponent of the Romanian capitalist development, Muschong was unjustified accused in 1918 by many wrongs interventions in economic development and suddenly died in 1923.⁵ Against such a background, a large part of the old resort overlaps its capitalist interventions, with Buziaș turning both to an important touristic spa resort and to an outstanding producer of mineral water. Furthermore, at those times Buziaș was the sole touristic spa with own railroad. Since 1914, the medical tourism engendered a continuous development, with important rich tourist from entire Austrian-Hungarian coming in Buziaș, as it was the case of the formerly royal family from Wien. In this respect, an important local building (Figure 1) reminds of those past realities often ignored in the present local community.

The historic tradition altered by present post-socialist interventions in local urban restructuring negatively damaged these cultural sites. From emblematic places, the ruined buildings left behind remind the formerly cultures only by ruins and marks on the ruined and abandoned buildings. Figure 1 reveals the existent image of the formerly royal villa (upper-left), now abandoned, with uncertain ownership. A detailed glance on the building highlights this derelict villa with real marks of degradation of its architecture (upper-right). A plate situated above the front entrance of the building reminds that members of the former royal family of Austro-Hungarian Empire accommodated here (lower-left). As it

² According to <http://www.banat.ro/academica/book.html><http://www.romanalibera.ro/actualitate/transilvania/hranit-cu-10-milioane-de-euro-buziasul-renaste-in-criza-197386.html> http://enciclopediaromaniei.ro/Jacob_Muschong, online accessed March 2015.

³ According to public statements of a employee in a cadastral agency of Timisoara, online accessed March, 2015.

⁴ According to <http://www.banat.ro/academica/book.html><http://www.romanalibera.ro/actualitate/transilvania/hranit-cu-10-milioane-de-euro-buziasul-renaste-in-criza-197386.html> http://enciclopediaromaniei.ro/Jacob_Muschong, online accessed March, 2015.

⁵ According to: <http://redesteptarea.ro/jakob-muschong-stapanul-oraselor-185291.html>, 2.01, 2012; see also Toma, 2006, online accessed March, 2015.

stands now the royal villa is closed being sealed with a padlock. A phone number noted in a piece of paper posted on the door window is the sole contact between potential visitors and the current potential owners. However, this fact argues the local indifference of the stakeholders in this area. It is only a simple evidence of the ruined and derelict sites that at once had large importance in the local and regional touristic field. The same abandonment and vandalized features fits to other emblematic buildings in Buziaș resort. Presently, many of touristic facilities of the former spa resort are ruined. Figure 2 shows another traditional construction left in ruin and marginalized. It belonged to the former local touristic structure, as is the case of the building illustrated in figure 3.



Figure 1. The former Royal Villa in Buziaș resort now derelict and locked



Figure 2. A derelict spa building belonged to the former Buziaș spa resort



Figure 3. Ruined and abandoned building in the resort of Buziaș with high potential of risk for local community. A glance on the lower-right image meets the message: “Caution, danger of crash”

These estates are located in the central touristic park of the resort. Another sampled site detected during the in-field investigation is placed in the central area of the park. Close aboard to its derelict status with ruins standing to crash, these constructions are subject to danger and risk for local community and for visitors as well. The emblematic building showed in figure 3, reveals these aspects with a caution marked by

some of the local residents. While the outward parts of these ruined places remains as waste redundant depository with weeds embracing the buildings, unveiling the local ignorance to the local urban environment, the inside sector of the buildings show the same issues of indifference: waste, destruction, abandonment and the absence of locals' civic spiritedness, environmental education gaps, insensibility and the respect absence for local cultural values. Nevertheless, these places' landscapes, whether they are inner or outer, are repulsive and obsolete, harming both the local community and the local culture.



Figure 4. Inner landscapes of abandoned touristic buildings with waste and destruction

In other words, these places with important cultural buildings are now sites of devastation, vandalism and local indifference with neglect and crash risk being their main attributes. These disagreeable sites unveil what was once the local traditional culture in tourism and economic customs and practices are now places that host waste and rubbish with local disregard being the main reason for their present status in local urban environment (figure 4). In spite of their derelict status of the local ruined sites, the access on their inner-sites is completely restricted. As a partly conclusion, the failure of the former local earlier capitalist economy managed by Muschong turned to ruins during post-90 period, with obsolete, marginalized and vandalized sites framing repulsive landscapes. This post-socialist trend translates to other places, as is the case of the central part of the historic park from Buziaş with multiple cultural features destroyed. Furthermore, beside the park area and the all-traditional buildings, another peculiar cultural feature of the local resort passed away. It is the case of the local railroad built and owned by Muschong. Of these old investments, up to now nothing remains. Only old documents and personal memories in old local residents' own perception still stand as proofs of what was once the local flourishing economy of Buziaş touristic resort. It is argued by the feelings of regrets and nostalgia for everything that was once in Buziaş (Ivănescu et al., 2005).

The state-socialist intervention

The post-1948 period set the scene for other interventions in local spatial and functional evolution of Buziaş. The state-socialist regime started to design a strong flow of urban development based on the centrally planned economy. Consequently, touristic activities remained important in local development. Simultaneously, industrial activities appeared. However, Buziaş resort preserved its service-led economy based on touristic activities, with more than 50 percent of local employees hired in local services and, especially, in tourism. As it was stated, during state-socialist domination in Buziaş appeared important new hotels as for instance Buziaş, Silvana, Silagiu, Parc and Timiş, in order to accommodate potential tourists and visitors (Bar et al., 2016). The accommodation capacities of the resort continuously increased for in 1990 in Buziaş to exist 24 accommodation units. Of these, five were hotels and 19 touristic villas. In all, they

included 1762 accommodation places (NIS, 2015). In line with the increasing number of touristic buildings and with those related facilities, the state-socialist intervention redesigned the local urban landscape and touristic flows. It is important to note that under the state-socialism the mass tourism was a common practice for Romanian workers but not limited only to the workers groups in state-socialist industry. Children and elderly-retired persons also benefited by different facilities in order to maintain their health or ensuring leisure and recreation. Consequently, tourists came from all-through Romania, all year long in continuous shifts.

Their stays varied from one to three weeks. It was the time when touristic activities in Buziaş peak the top. Against such a background, the service profile of the town based on tourism grounded in the local, regional and national economy, with Buziaş resort being an important town in the local system of urban settlements and an outstanding tourism resort in Romania. Furthermore, the local agriculture and industrial sector tends to frame new economic activities to supply the tourism field and related services for both the locals and tourists. The economic background of Buziaş resort based primarily on services continues up to 1990, when a new period opened in the face of the local social and economic activities. The transition from the state-socialist economy to a new capitalist order generated important shifts in the local urban and economic dynamics often with negative consequences for the town, for the local economy and for the local way of life of the residents. They are discussed below, in the next section.

Post-socialist transformation of local urban restructuring

Started with 1990, a complicated process of urban restructuring opened. It was the time of multiple spatial and functional transformations both in the local economy and in the inner-landscape shifts of the town. Whether, the first part of transition maintains inherited economies, with services field prevailing, the second part of the '90s encountered multiple negative consequences in local community altering both the local way of life and the local urban landscape. The major impact of transition to a new market economy and to a private capital rule turned to failure different economic activities. The latter, further encompassed urban dereliction. Significant declines encountered both the tourism field and local industrial sectors of the town.

Decline of local tourism

A massive decline in local tourism activities occurred since the beginning of post-socialist times. It was due to the national economic background decline generated by the transition to a market economy. An uncertain and weak law background, doubtful interventions and a complicated framework in real estate restitution related to difficulties in all processes of privatization and miss-management in local development (Kideckel, 2008) are key factors in the failure of the spa resort of Buziaş as it was for all Romanian cities and towns due to economic changes. The main decline occurred also in the tourism sector (Bar et al., 2016). The decreasing number of touristic accommodation structures argues this trend. Thus, from 24 accommodation units existing in 1990, in 2014 only 7 remained (Figure 5). During privatization struggle, statistically, the hotels preserved their data in local statistics. The major decline encountered was in the cultural and historic touristic villas, of which from 19 units in 1990, in 2014, the official statistics reveal that they are no more operating. An appropriate trend fits to the total accommodation places, illustrated in figure 6. It reveals the continuous decreasing tendency considering both the hotels and touristic villas of Buziaş. According to local official statistics, in all, the accommodation capacity halved, with 924 accommodation places remaining. On the other side, counter partly, a slow-go pace in private entrepreneurship initiative in local tourism development started. Private investors with real trust in local potential touristic resources assume their interventions in local urban development. New private individual

tourist houses appeared in Buzias after 2000, when Romanian economic background became more stable (see Soaita, 2013). According to official statistics, these new entrepreneurial initiatives are bashful and hesitating with one new touristic house appeared up to 2010, for in 2014 to be registered only two touristic houses.

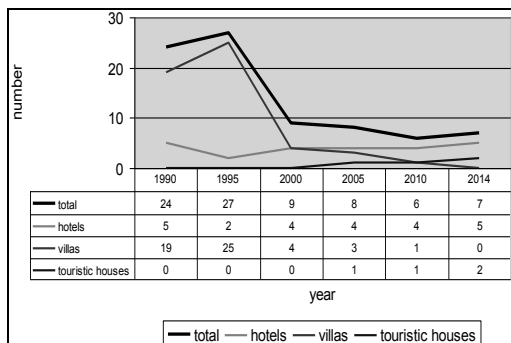


Figure 5. Post-socialist decreasing trend of accommodation units in Buzias resort
(Source: data gathered by NIS, 2015, tempo online data basis, accessed April, 2015)

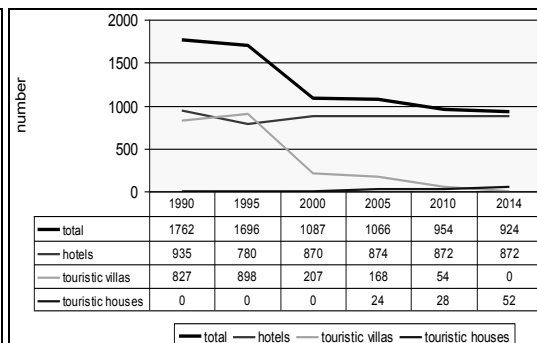


Figure 6. Post-socialist decreasing trend of accommodation places in Buzias resort
(Source: data gathered by NIS, 2015, tempo online data basis, accessed April, 2015)

They cumulate only 52 accommodation places (Figure 6). In spite of these private interventions related to the local economic restructuring of local activities, important places with emblematic marks in local culture remain sites for poor tenants or worse derelict, abandoned and ruined as the third section of our findings revealed. As it was stated, some of the real estates included in the formerly tourism activities lost their previous functionality and presently are subject to degradation, abandonment and ruination with other being used in the local community for poor families as tenants until the restitution of these buildings by the real heirs and right-owners will be claimed.

Social and economic consequences in local community

The post-socialist consequences of local economic changes are serious and multiple, from the local standard of the way of life to the residents behavioral issues. The first approached topic is about the local tenants. The in field observations and personal conversations conducted to different local residents unveiled interesting aspects concerning the former spa and touristic estates. Nevertheless, many of these buildings are abandoned and ruined, while others accommodate poor people. Walking on the local historic park, a peripheral site captured my attention. It included some historical spa buildings with important cultural relevance, presently in advanced degree of degradation. As I brought near this site (Figure 7 and Figure 8) I saw a family around. Approaching a man sitting down on the chair outside, he told me that he and his family presently live in these buildings as tenants, paying a rent-tax to local authorities that own these places. He told me about the local degradation of the former touristic facilities. Managing further my conversation, he stated that these once emblematic buildings are either ruined sites or damaged buildings hosting local poor tenants. It is just a single evidence of many of its kind mentioned in this analysis. On the other hand, he stated that his family indwelling in this place would be ensured until the restitution claim of the right heirs to the local authorities. Although, the building was not in his family ownership, he restored a part of it in order to maintain a proper residence, while the local authorities do nothing with these historic buildings. This personal intervention in building restoration generated tensions between his family and the other tenants in the building that preferred to live in bad conditions. In some extent, this personal conversation led us to conclude that the local authorities' involvement in the

restoring process of these real estates is in a limited extent, with this emblematic sites remaining subject to indifference and ignorance. Furthermore, ignorance is all around. Beyond local government indifference to these historic sites, this issue fits with both local residents and visitors. This is argued by damaged status of the historic touristic park (Figure 9) and by throwing randomized trash on it. In this regard, the inner alleys of the park nearby historic and cultural buildings are sites with piles of garbage (Figure 10).



Figure 7. A derelict building, once included in the spa resort



Figure 8. A former building belonged to the spa resort, presently hosting local tenants



Figure 9. Damaged section of Buziaș touristic park



Figure 10. Trash left in the inner alleys of the park



Figure 11. Collapsed roof above a park alley

The responsibility for this issue exceeds this time the authorities' responsibility failing on the local behavior of the locals whether they are local residents or tourists. Consequently, the local community assumes the local degradation of these formerly cultural sites. It is however, unfortunate to face with these local landscapes of misery and ignorance related to their relevance for the Romanian national culture.

On the other hand, as it was already mentioned, many of these cultural and historic sites, whether they are buildings or related touristic facilities have an important potential of risk for local community and for those that cross the park alleys. The wood roofs of the park alleys are ready to crash being a real risk source (Figure 11) for local residents, tourists and visitors. From place to place, there are some plates cautioning this local risk potential but this issue claim for immediate regeneration. An overview on the local residents' ways of life illustrates the local decline in both the local economy and in the urban post-socialist evolution. In this regard, conversation and personal talks with individuals in Buziaș emphasizes and sustains this argument. Thus, an interviewee stated: "During the post-90 period, the town encountered a massive decline. The inherited

touristic field and local industry failed. I think that the most responsibility fails on the political frame of the earlier post-socialist decisions. Sometimes I think that under Ceausescu's regime was better. You cannot imagine how this resort was at those times. The resort was full of tourists and visitors. Although the communist times were hard to support, the former state-socialist regime cared about the workers providing facilities for them with touristic programs, sometimes with three weeks long. Under post-socialism, the tourists' number decreased and the local spa and touristic facilities failed to a large extent with much of them turning to dereliction. Rarely I saw and met foreign tourists in Buziaş. Then, the local teenagers often leave this town due to the few investments and to local limited opportunities for their further welfare." (Interviewee /I.P./ 59 / female).

These reflections argued the post-socialist decline in Buziaş and the low standard of the resident's way of life. Another resident living all his life in Buziaş expresses a comparative statement. He stated: „Whether in other formerly state-socialist countries it was something that could be done to adjust their transition to a new market economy in Romania nothing survived. Industry, tourism, local commerce, education and health, all failed down. This fits to Buziaş. The local mineral water that was intensely used for different curative properties remains presently as a symbol of nostalgia... ." (Interviewee /C.P./ 71/male). This personal talk highlights the local cultural heritage of this resort that remains subject to indifference. Furthermore, the issue of total decline in all social and economic fields of post-socialist Romania is interesting. Paradoxically, the local tourism potential could represent a key field in the local urban and economic restructuring and (re)development, but this trend is not unique in this resort. It is a common issue for many Romanian resorts in their post-socialist redefining.

Whether elderly people put some blame on the post-socialist times, revealing regrets and nostalgia, the local teenagers are unfamiliar with these topics. Accordingly, a young woman told: "I did not know what was here, but I remember that we played in all those ruined places when we were kids. I did not know that these places are full of symbols and special cultural value. For us, the kids, these sites were simple playgrounds." (Personal conversation with A.M./20/male).

This affirmation raised a new important issue with merit in this analysis. The loss of the local cultural tradition of the formerly spa facilities is proved. In such circumstances it is important to note that further regeneration urban programs focusing on the revival of local cultural heritage is mandatory. Considering a comparative manner, tourists argue the loss of the local cultural value of these sites. In this regard, an old tourist that came to Buziaş since the 80s said: "I used to come in Buziaş for spa treatments since 1984. I come to these resort yearly and I witnessed during all this time the local failure and the touristic facilities degradation.

It is tragic what happened here but there is nothing to do. For my wife and me the mineral water of Buziaş is propitious for our cardiovascular disease. We came from Ineu, and we will continue to come in Buziaş. Perhaps in the next future this resort could reborn both its touristic sector as well as its local culture." The statements above set the scene of the local urban decline and the failure of the former emblematic economies that was here at once. They are only few samples of personal conversations and talks conducted with different local residents and tourists. They raised important reflections that cumulated into a voice claiming for further urban regeneration. The next section, briefly unveil the issue of this assertion calling for further fruitful research.

The local culture framed by present and further urban development programs

A review on the local development programs and strategies launched by the local government illustrate concerns on the urban investments in urban infrastructure and on the

historical park of Buziaş. Regarding the first preoccupation, there can be mentioned the local road improvement, the water supply substructures, the restoration of some parts of the local building stock, the cultural house rehabilitation and sewerage system. Furthermore, the project focused on the water supplying system was recently completed. Considering the second issue, the regeneration of touristic park is still an ongoing process (Figure 12). There are parts of restoration in progress (Figure 13) with peripheral parts of it awaiting for further regeneration interventions. On the other hand, there are still multiple derelict sites belonged to the former historic spa resort.

All of these illustrate the slow-go pace of local urban regeneration programs. It is important to note that while some spatial touristic structures from Buziaş have been restored, other ones are left behind with many derelict places. According to the Memorandum, launched by the S.C. Tratament Balnear Buziaş SA, it seemed that the period between 1990 and 2003 was so complicated due to the post-socialist transition when the local development processes stagnated with many of the local buildings being subject to degradation. Since, 2000 a complex investment program through private capital started concerned on the hotels regeneration.

The Phoenix Hotel (Figure 14) is relevant evidence in this regard as an outcome of the development strategy of the above-mentioned society. On the other hand, some interventions in the park restoration started. These actions portray the positive feedbacks of the public-private interventions in local urban redevelopment but at the same time, the slow evolution of these projects. Notwithstanding, important sites in Buziaş resort remained derelict, claiming for further regeneration programs. In this regard, further research on this site is welcomed, like the intersection of the public-private capitals in local development as well. Furthermore, cooperation between local actors in urban development, different stakeholders, investors, researchers and the local community envois could be a successful forward step in order to redesign the local urban development agenda.

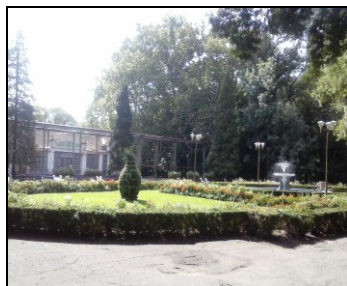


Figure 12. The central regenerated section of the park from Buziaş resort



Figure 13: Restoration in progress in the central part of the Park



Figure 14: Hotel Phoenix in Buziaş

Furthermore, beyond the local urban regeneration processes of touristic resort of Buziaş, a key action that has to be concerned is the revival of the local cultural heritage left behind in the wake of transition from the state-socialist economy to a new capitalist system. Against such a background, further research on these issues represents properly actions to contribute to local urban development, to cultural heritage preservation and to reconstruction of the cultural identity of Buziaş touristic spa resort.

CONCLUSIONS AND OUTLOOK

This article dealt with the local urban post-socialist spatial transformation in Buziaş resort, an important settlement in the western part of Romania. The paper

unveiled the major transformation of this site from emblematic economies raised under earlier capitalist period to the state-socialist stage and mostly approached the post-socialist changes that altered the local community. Of these, one of the key problems emphasized in the article is the post-communist evolution of Buziaş that faced with multiple difficulties once that transition to a market economy started.

Furthermore, the issue of the ruined places in Buziaş and their related processes has been highlighted, illustrating both the local community indifference and the authorities go-slow pace interventions in the local urban regeneration. Not to blame anyone, the research set the altering scene of the local cultural heritage appeared since the earlier capitalism, back in 19th Century. Against such a background, the interventions of J. Muschong, a prominent entrepreneur of those times economy, has been portrayed to understand both the local traditions in touristic activities and the cultural valuable sites of Buziaş spa resort. As one of the most important touristic resorts in Romania, Buziaş continuously developed under the state-socialist domination, when tourism was the main activity in local economy. The former communist interventions in local development were framed by the previous facilities in local touristic infrastructure and in the local urban pattern. These facilities framed the new development actions being the basis for tourism development under communism.

During post-socialism, once that transition to a capitalist economy started, Buziaş resort faced with multiple difficulties in its post-communist identity formation. These translate to the local welfare of the community and in the appearance of different places of abandonment and dereliction. They totally overlap the old cultural buildings of the former touristic infrastructures as well as to the touristic park of Buziaş. Beyond their inner-urban repulsive landscapes and urban ecologies raises other important issues: defacement, degradation, failure and communities neglecting. Furthermore, these ruined sites are with high-risk potential for both the local residents and for tourists. The local interventions in local urban regeneration have to be further approached for local resort improvement (Bar, et al., 2016). In such circumstances, there are evident efforts, actions and interventions on the local regeneration made by the local authorities.

However, important areas remain derelict and abandoned places illustrating the complexity of the local problems in the face of the post-90 transition to a capitalist economy, to the return to the private capital and to the market economy background. The post-90 spatial dynamics show a real decline of the settlement but the possibilities of further restoring actions are sustained by the local spatial and economic strengths. Thus, rethinking local development programs related to the new approaches in urban regeneration items of the local government agendas could revive this place. The public and private capitals, actions in solving the problems of the real-estate ownerships, more involvement of different stakeholders and the tensions' reduction between national, regional and local policies and between centralized management and self-government approach, are timely possibilities to frame new pathways for further development. In addition, further research on local urban development issues is important to design new intervention in local cultural identity (re)formation of Buziaş touristic resort.

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