

FROM POLITICAL ACTORS TO URBAN MANAGEMENT ON THE POST-SOCIALIST PERIOD; THE PROFILE OF THE LOCAL POLITICAL PERSONALITIES AND THE URBAN DEVELOPMENT ACTIONS OF THE CITY GOVERNMENT ON THE MUNICIPALITY OF LUGOJ

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Abstract. The political field of the municipality of Lugoj recorded a strong dynamics after the fall of the communist regime. It is represented, both by the particularities of the local government system, as well as by the specific of the applied management on the urban space through the all programs and projects in order to concur on the spatial and functional development of the town. Based on an extensive research focused on the policy framework of Lugoj, this paper tries to illustrates some considerations focused on two main topics: the first one reveals the profile of the local political actors who were responsible or still are involved on the management of the urban development in order to ensuring a suitable evolution to it; secondly, this work presents the main development projects managed and coordinated by the local government which contribute to the urban progress of the town, as well as to the urban renewal and regeneration of it on the conditions of the contemporary market economy.

Key words: politicians, urban renewal, political decisions, urban development, local community, management, sustainability.

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INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGICAL FLOW

The aim of this study is to answer of some questions referring to the political framework from Lugoj, as well as, to the contemporary urban management applied on this town by the local government. *So, who are those who are responsible for the urban development of the municipality of Lugoj in terms of the political decisions or through the lens of the local politics applied? Which is the profile of the local political personalities of this town? Which are the main interventions of them through the development programs and projects focused on the urban renewal and regeneration on the post-socialist period? What feed-back generate these aspects, in terms of the town functionality and also regarding its landscape? What would be done further by the local government in terms of the town sustainability?* All these are questions that we try to answer in the most objective mode through this study. On the research field of the new urban geography, as a methodological framework questions as the previously posted ones represent the main condition in terms of the contemporary scientific approaches focused on the urban dynamics. The mentioned topic is assumed by Hall, (2007, p. 17), the author, in pointing out the production of the urban

landscape set the questions about who is involved on it, where do the agents come from and who is responsible for the all regulations and constraints registered on the main urban development interventions in terms of it's sustainability. In our attempt to find out some expressive and meaningful outcomes this study is based on the various research methods, their apposition aiming to obtain the relevant results, as well as, pertinent answers, replies and conclusions on the set issues. So, the most important demarche was the bibliographical study on the basis of the proposed theme. In this context, we have completed books, articles and papers from the local media (newspapers, guides and monitors). Other available methods were the terrain investigation through the lens of crossing-examining of the main particularities of the local government from Lugoj, as well as the media sources analysis (press for instance). Very useful was the study of the main projects implemented up to now by the local government in terms of the urban sustainability assurance in order to respond to the need of the local urban regeneration requirements.

These methods were completed by discussion with some local political actors, as well as, by the terrain observations focused on the feed back of the implemented development programs. This methodology is strong related by the required one concerning this type of analysis which often demands such an approach. Methods as observation, cross-examining, applied questionnaires, the consultation of the public institutions, the analysis of the date revealed by press are available procedures in the study of some demographical aspects¹ and not only. We applied this approach in our attempt to determine in a real mode the profile of the local political actors of the town and also the main proper characteristics of the local urban management carried out by development projects. In this way the intersection of the quantitative methods with the qualitative ones, wants to lead to the detachment of some realistic conclusions which should represent a starting point, as well as, a source of inspiration in setting out the realistic future interventions by the local government.

THE PROFILE OF THE LOCAL POLITICAL ACTORS FROM LUGOJ ON THE POST-SOCIALIST PERIOD

In making up the profile of the political personalities from Lugoj we were considered the more relevant issues as follows: the area of origin, the structure by sex (a gender approach of them), the structure by age, the level of education completed, the specific of the marital status, whether they were involved, or not, on the politics before 1990 and other aspects focused on their professions, as well as, their visibility on the local political scene of Lugoj.

The origin of the political actors. The study of the origin area of the political staff of the town after 1990 reveals some interesting and particular features. From the analyzed sample, we can remark that the political actors from Lugoj present a wide range of their places of birth. So, of about 246 politicians (Boldureanu et al, 2003), only 38.10 % are born on Lugoj, the rest of them coming from the other parts of the counties of Romania and even from abroad. On the localities of the Timiș County are born 25.81 %, the main localities being as follows: contemporary urban settlements – Timișoara, Buziaș and Nădrag, contemporary urban settlements but villages in the near past – Recaș, Făget and villages of the county as Bara, Coștei, Balinț, Belinț, Cladova, Victor Vlad Delamarina, Lugojel, Căpăt, Honorici, Crivina, Românești, Țipari, Visag, Tapia, Boldur, Bethausen, Ohaba Lungă, Dumbrava, Sacoșu Mare, Remetea, Bașșa, Mănăștur, Sinersig, Ohaba Forgaci, Criciova etc. The situation of all those born in other counties of Romania (about 33,23 %) are illustrated by table 1. There can be observed that, generally, are present over half of the all counties from Romania. In this context, detach counties situated on the neighborhood of Timiș County (for instance, county of Arad, Caraș Severin, Hunedoara), as well as, counties situated on a higher distance than it (Botoșani, Harghita, Tulcea etc). This characteristic is due to the historical factors which dominated the social, demographical and economic evolution of Romania. To these ones join Bucharest, all the local political actors born on the other parts of the country totalizing

¹ For further readings regarding this methodological context see Ilieș Al., Stașac M., (2000), *Studiul geografic al populației*, Editura Universității din Oradea, Oradea

80. Regarding the countries abroad, we can distinguish Moldavia, Ukraine, Poland and Slovakia (2,86 %, about 7 persons of which 4 from Moldavia). The situation of the origin of the local political people is represented by figure 1.²

The structure based on the period of birth reflects on figure 2 the prevalence of the aging trends of the local political staff from the post-socialist period. For instance, the main percentages is assumed by the persons born on the 40s (25.81 %), 50s (36.19 %) and 60s (14.34 %), to those ones joining a share of more than 20 % of the political persons born between 1910 and 1940 (some of them being dead now). In return, the young politicians up a percentage which does not exceed 10 %. In this way, we can remark a less representation on the local political field of the town after 1990. However, this fact could be offset in present and in the future by the youth who activate on the youth groups of the political parties, these last ones could be regarded as proper nurseries to train the future political actors able to manage local community of this town.

Table 1. The origin of the local political actors from Lugoj by the Romanian counties.
(Source: processed data accorded to Boldureanu et al., 2003)

| County | No | County | No | County | No |
|-----------------|----|-----------|----|-----------|----|
| Alba | 3 | Cluj | 4 | Mureş | 2 |
| Argeş | 5 | Covasna | 1 | Olt | 1 |
| Arad | 2 | Dolj | 3 | Satu Mare | 3 |
| Bihor | 2 | Gorj | 5 | Sibiu | 3 |
| Bistriţa Năsăud | 1 | Harghita | 1 | Suceava | 1 |
| Botoşani | 1 | Hunedoara | 7 | Tulcea | 2 |
| Braşov | 1 | Maramureş | 3 | Vâlcea | 3 |
| Caraş Severin | 18 | Mehedinţi | 6 | Vaslui | 2 |

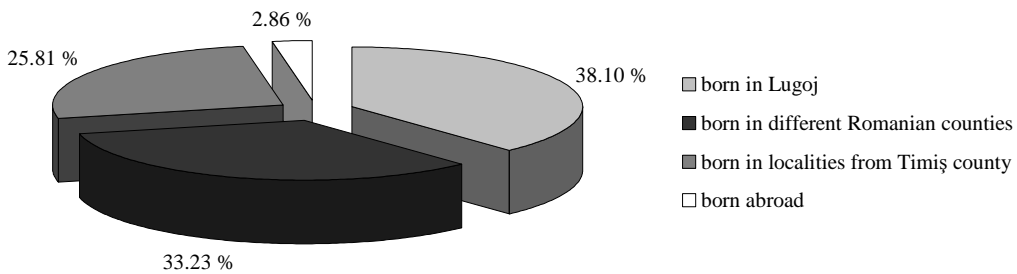


Figure 1. The structure based on the place of origin of the local political actors from Lugoj

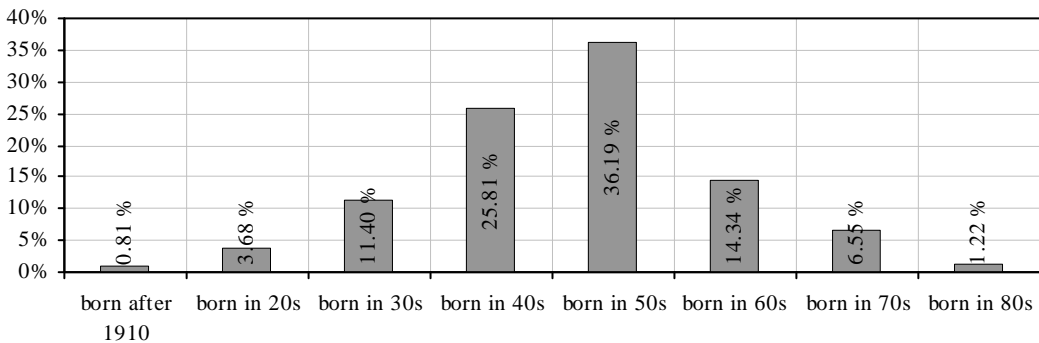


Figure 2. The structure based on the period of birth³

² Processed data according to Boldureanu, T. et al., (2003)

³ Ibidem, Boldureanu, T., et al, (2003).

The structure based on the marital status, and some other family characteristics. Taking into account the marital status of the local political personalities, we can observe that 79.90 % of them are married, while 20.10 % present other situations as unmarried, divorced or widows. On the category of the unmarried persons distinguish the teenager ones which have not yet made a family. In point of the presence of the children in their families we can remark that 29.09 % of them have not children. In return, over 70 % of them have one or more children as follows: 36.88 % one child, 28.72 % two children, 3.68 % three children, this aspect being illustrate by the figure 3. In this context is important to understand that the most of the studied persons divide their duties between everyday work, political practice and family.

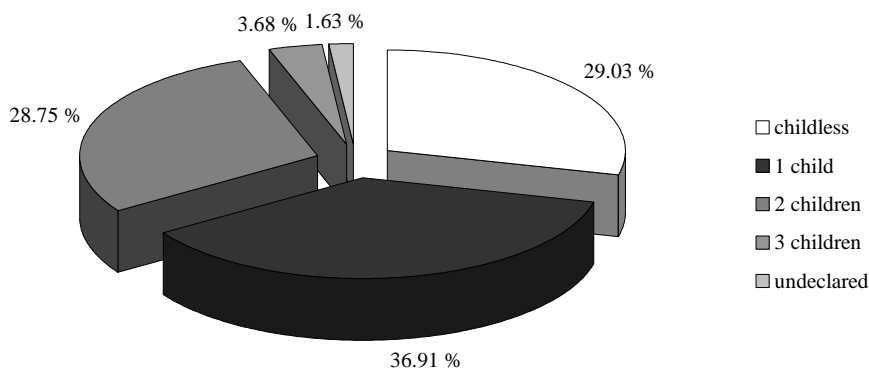


Figure 3. The number of children of families of the political actors from Lugoj⁴

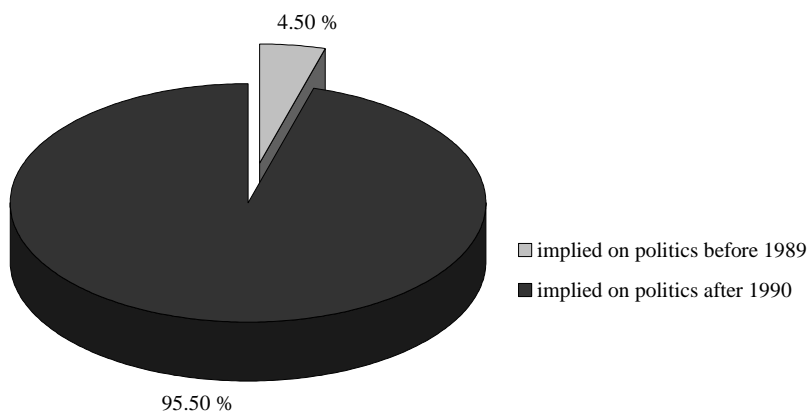


Figure 4. The percentage of the local political actors involved on politics before 1990⁵

The structure by the educational attainment and the main dominant occupation. It, generally, shows that over 75 % from the local political personalities dispose by a high degree of education materialized in a completion of a college (higher education institutions). In return, more than 20 % of them just graduated secondary schools or post-secondary ones. Regarding the main professions we can state that these ones are represented by economists, teachers and professors, doctors, engineers, civil servants and clerks, administrators etc.

Political actors involved on politics before 1990. This particular aspect is often pretty hard to determine because of the lack of information, as well as the specific of the political context of

⁴ Ibidem, Boldureanu, T., et al, (2003).

⁵ Ibidem, Boldureanu, T., et al, (2003).

the old communist regime, strongly criticized, condemned and blamed by the new political successors. However, from the analyzed data made available by the book of Boldureanu, T. et al. (2003), we can distinguished that a small percentage of the political subjects from the post-socialist period assume their involvement on politics before 1990.

Concluding remarks focused on the profile of the political actors. From gender point of view, we can observe that the most of the political actors from Lugoj are male, the women being less represented on the political field; concerning the age it is obvious the ripe old the younger persons being less represented on the field of the political decision in town; generally the analyzed persons have a higher education working on the important fields of the local economy as public administration, education, health, economics etc; the most of them have families sharing, in this way, their own resources of time between family obligations and responsibilities, job and the political activity they profess.

SOME CONSIDERATIONS ON THE CONTEMPORARY LOCAL COUNCIL AS DIRECT AUTHORITY IN THE PROMOTION OF THE SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT ON THE URBAN SPACE

The peculiarities of the contemporary urban management promoted by the local government of Lugoj is in close accordance with the needs of the town, in terms of urban development, with the local economic environment, with the social specific of the city, as well as, the evolution trends of Lugoj in connection with the sustainable development. A special role is assumed not only by the adapting process of the internal structures of town to the current conditions of evolution but also by the interventions in terms of the urban renewal and regeneration. In these conditions, the local council approved a series of measures incorporated in development projects and programs which ensure the sustainability and the efficiency of the town.

Nowadays, the Local Council of Lugoj, as the main important staff, on the decisional context concerning the development of the town has an important role on the identification, selection, proposal and application of the development programs at a local level. Therefore, in connection with the profile of the local political scene of the town is important to know the structure of this local authority, in terms of the political characteristics, as well as the human resources which defines the most relevant local political actors which decide on the contemporary urban development of the municipality of Lugoj.

So, looking back, on the legislature between 2004 and 2008, the mayor of Lugoj was elected by the Democratic Party and the vice-mayor belonged to Democrat Magyar Union from Romania. Regarding the City Council, it was composed by 19 members, divided as follows: 4 of them belonged to Democrat Party, 4 of them to National liberal Party, 7 of them belonged to Social Democrat Party and 2 members which belonged to the Great Romania Party. The contemporary legislature started on 2008 comprises a mayor from the part of the Social Democratic Party and a vice-mayor which belongs to the Liberal National Party. Regarding the City Council, it is composed of 19 members, divided as follows: 7 belonging to the Democratic Party, 6 belongs to Social Democrat Party, 3 from the part of the Liberal National Party, 2 of them belongs to the Great Romania Party and one member from the part of the Democrat Magyar Union from Romania.⁶

On the frame of the local Council work 4 commissions each of these ones being focused on the special topics as follows: agriculture, commerce, tourism and public services: economic, financial and heritage administration activities; the commission concerned on the legal activities, the labor discipline, social protection and defense of the public order, the respect for human rights and the freedoms of citizens; the commission focused on the education, health, family, social and cultural activities, religion, children protection, youth and sport: the commission regarding the

⁶ For further readings about the structure of the local political scene, as well as the dynamics and the evolution of the political organizations and parties on the post socialist period see Boldureanu, T., Buiciuc, C., Laietiu, N., (2002), *Pariu cu istoria. Aproximativ totul despre viața politică lugojeană postdecembristă*, Editura Marineasa, Timișoara.

urbanism, urban planning and the protection of the local environment.⁷ Generally the politics represents a field which often belongs to the men. This reality characterizes not only Romania but also other different societies from the whole world. In an effort to know some aspects concerning these aspects our analysis requires to take a look at the relation between the women and the local politics from the town.

A GENDER APPROACH ON THE ROLE OF WOMEN ON THE POLITICAL SCENE OF THE MUNICIPALITY OF LUGOJ⁸

Starting for the assessment made by Ilieș (1999), under which the contemporary geopolitics is only a method to identify the logical behavior of human groups, we can consider that this one became a representative one, not only on the political scene of the Romanian communities but also on the functionality of it, as well as on the trends of the urban management developed through the lens of the political decisions. After 1990, in Romania the access of the people on the real political life became free, but making politics was not an easy demarche. The women and men were involved on politics but the predominance of the male gender was pretty obvious. On the gray landscape of the post-communist period the politics has the chance to be an opener as well as a model in the elimination of the patriarchal grains (Tănase, D., Moșneag, A. G., 2006). But this fact is only a strong struggle of women on a land assumed by the men. Nowadays the political field of Romania is dominated by men but the women started to have an important role on it. We can see, for instance, plenty women who manage important key fields, both on the national level or on the regional or local one.

This trend is recent one and it shows the fact that women can be able to accede on the key position of the Romanian society, a tendency generated by the won freedom of thinking and acting once with the Romanian Revolution from December 1989. In this context, Gal, and Kligman, (2003), argue that both for the men and women from the ex socialist countries the occidental freedoms and the consumption goods seemed to be more tangible than it had ever been (Gal, Kligman, 2003). These new possibilities for women access on the contemporary management focused on the Romanian communities reveals the maidenly substantiate of the women position on the Romanian society. In connection with this goal, Voiculescu (2003), conclude that the condition of the women in Romania is influenced by the standard of living, by the legislation, as well as, by mentality. The information and the access to it contribute to the changing of the women condition and position on the Romanian society.

But which is the specific of the women as actors on the local political system, as well as on the urban management applied on the urban community of the municipality of Lugoj?

Analyzing the local political actors in terms of gender, we can observe that the women are characterize by a percentage of over 20 %, while the men assumed a share of almost 80 % (figure 5). It indicates that the local community is paternalist as the same situation which prevails at the national level (reality identified by Harsaniy *et al.*, 1993, cited by Voiculescu, 2003). These percentages are pretty close as values with the national ones regarding the women position on the chief executive, as well as on the high management position (Voiculescu, 2003). Closed percentages are specific for the context of the representativeness of the women on the Local Council staff from Lugoj (figure 6). More balanced are the values regarding the gender structure of the employees on the own specialized board of the mayor from the municipality of Lugoj. This particular aspect is illustrates by figure 7.

⁷ These data are according to the City Hall of the Municipality of Lugoj, 2009, as well as, to the following Internet sites: www.cjt.ro, www.Primăria Municipiului Lugoj.ro, www.lugojul.ro, accessed in December 2009.

⁸ This chapter valorizes and includes some research data and conclusions of the author's work titled *Lugoj, the municipality of 7 women for a man: from myth to post-socialist reality*, presented and displayed on the International Conference organized by International Geographical Union Commission on Gender and Geography, conference under theme *Post-Socialism, Neo-Liberalism, Old and New Gendered Societies and Policies*, 22nd.-24th. May, Szeged (Hungary), Timișoara (România), International Geographical Union.

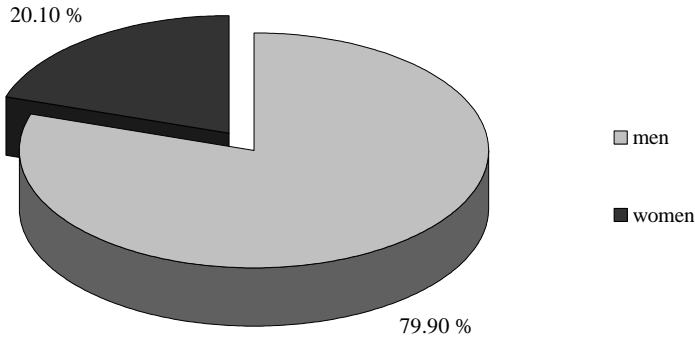


Figure 5. The gender structure of the local political actors from Lugoj⁹

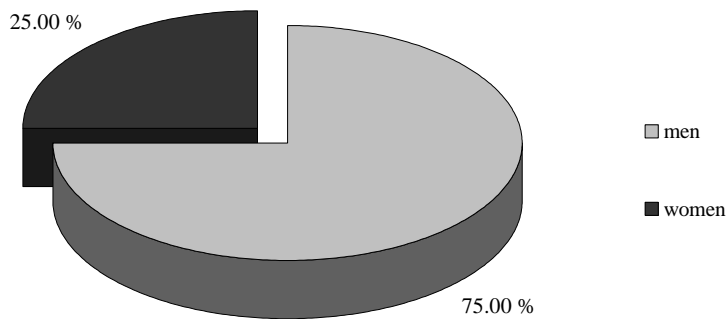


Figure 6. The representativeness of the women on the Local Council staff from Lugoj¹⁰

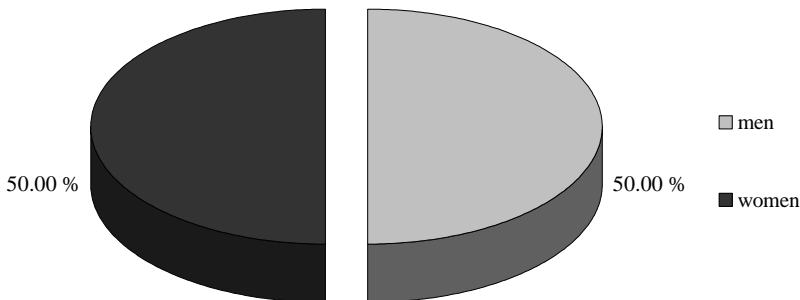


Figure 7. The presence of women on the own specialized board of the mayor¹¹

The age of women in political parties indicates the predominance of the generation of the 1940-1960 which means women aged 69-40, younger persons being strongly under-represented. It is another example of how paternalism works at political and representational level. Considering the professions of women implied in politics, we can observe that often exceed the jobs as teachers, doctors, clerks and economists, followed by occupations as libraries, patrons etc (figure 8). We can state that, generally, prevails women with jobs which do not require considerable

⁹ Processed data accorded to Boldureanu, T., *et al.*, (2003).

¹⁰ Processed data accorded to the fiche of the town Lugoj 2009, as well as, to the data from www.lugojul.ro, www.PrimariaMunicipiuluiLugoj.ro, accessed on December 2009.

¹¹ Processed data offered by the Human Resources Office of the City Hall from Lugoj (March 2009).

resources of time, in this way they having enough time for their responsibilities of their jobs, families and the political activities.

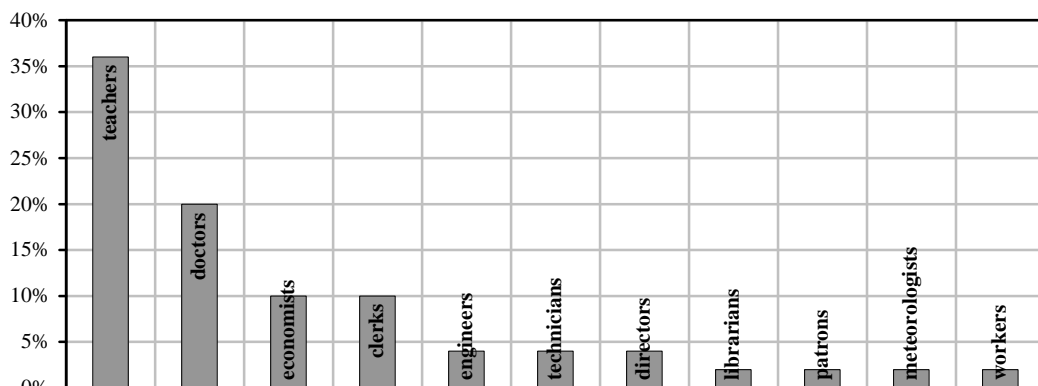


Figure 8. The main professions of women implied on the local political scene¹²

THE URBAN MANAGEMENT OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT TRANSPOSED ON DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS FOR URBAN RENEWAL AND REGENERATION

Regardless of the city that we speak, the study focused on the urban management is a prerequisite not only for understanding the modes of the action in terms of urban regeneration and renewal, but also to know the current trends of development and evolution of the settlement from the urban sustainability perspective. Contemporary urban geography pays a special attention on the urban management, both from theoretical perspective, as well as from the methodological one. The policies of development promoted at national, regional or local, as an outcome of extensive decentralization process - an attribute of contemporary Neoliberal current¹³ - together with the progress of significant projects through funding from the local councils, ministries and European funds are considering applying sets actions and measures to support, not only the increases of the quality of life in cities, but also to refresh the urban regeneration in terms of spatial and functional development.

The management, as economic and social activity, involves the processes of leadership, coordination, decision monitoring and development of the contemporary urban communities not only for themselves, but also for the polarized spaces by them.¹⁴ Decision has an important role on the adoption of the order and measures all the last ones being determined by the local community needs. The application of an objective, efficient and sustainable management, through promoting urban regeneration process, is to improve the impact of the negative effects of urban decline (Hall, 2007).

The management, as a dynamic approach disposes by 5 functions with permanent viability, which can be applied to the administration, as well as the modernization of the urban space. These are the prevision, organization, command, coordination and control. Similarly, the environmental management applied to human settlements is carried out in 4 major phases, including: identifying problems, formulating project planning, implementation and evaluation of results.

¹² Processed data accorded to Boldureanu, T., *et al*, (2003).

¹³ For details concerning the Neoliberalism and its implications on the urban space contemporary development, see Brenner, N., Theodore, N., (2005).

¹⁴ We can state that the urban local development from Lugoj is linked by with the assessment regarded all the Romanian urban settlement system, assumed by Săgeată, (2006), the author considering that it has been in connection with the main economic and politic transformations which affect Romania being in this way created the premises for the process of re-analyze the established relations from the urban system, as a optimization measures for the development of the urban settlements compared with the potential of the spaces under the direct influence of them.

This phase involves the contribution of the geographers by the scientific information available, by its studies and databases achieved on its research processes, by statistical sources, as well as the cartographical ones. Therefore, the local makers should involve the management model adopted and the direct participation of the professionals and geographic information (Mac, 2008). This chapter tried to illustrate the main objective ways to intervention in the development of the urban space by implementing various forms of management. The sources which had led to the preparation of this synthesis are varied and complex, totaling direct observations on the field study of the local government documents, analysis of the media sources, interviews and discussions with the directly actors involved in local and community development.

To reveal the latest trends of intervention in promoting the urban regeneration and local renewal, there were centralized generally the all modes of action and intervention promoted in the past four years, between 2006 and 2009. The role of the local government, as well as, the urban policies regarding the urban renewal, and the projects promoted by local authorities is revealed by Goodall, (1987), Pacione, (2005), Hall, (2007), Voiculescu, (editor), (2009) etc.¹⁵ The intensity of the projects we previously spoke varies from one point to another, depending on the purpose, objectives, trends and priorities for development and growth. Overall were aimed all the economic and social fields, the consequences of the directly interventions being obvious on the urban landscape, some of them could be fair and real perceived by the functional perspective.

Cross-border cooperation projects. The role of cross-border cooperation on the local and regional development has been identified by many authors devoted to the specialized geographical literature or on the full Romanian Banat Region (see Ilieș, 1999, 2004, Popa, 2006, 2007, Ancuța, 2008). In view of this objective, on Lugoj was unfurled PHARE Cooperation Project between Romania and Serbia with the aim of promoting economic development of the two regions by improving economic competitiveness, by fostering the exchange of experience in economic and business sector, by promoting the business development and links between the economic agents of both regions. The value of this project was about 228,450 € of which 89.5 % are Phare funding while 10.5 % are supported by Local Council. Also, in collaboration with Serbia were conducted programs regarding the development of the tourism sector, as well as, the agriculture. Education is remarkable from the collaborative perspective by the started project between Lugoj and Nisporeni.

Projects for regional cooperation. Regional cooperation has a defining role in ensuring the coherence and the cohesion of the territorial systems and geographical area, its primary objective being diminishing or eliminating the existed disparities. In this context, the accession of Lugoj to the Regional Development Agency aims the access of Lugoj to the funded programs by European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. In this way it sought to obtain funds for new development areas of the city, such as Tapia - Măguri Area (to extend the housing fund) or which belonged to the former military units from the city, also for the development of the residential sector.

Projects on the urban and public management. They were designed to generate statements that sought to solve the functionality of urban space, from the promotion of effective institutional management and to correct the most detailed structures with important dysfunctions.

a. The development strategy for the municipality of Lugoj. Conceived under the slogan *Steps for sustainable development, Elaboration of the development strategy for Lugoj*, this managerial initiative, funded by the European Social Fund (structural funds) on the Operational Program "*Administrative Capacity Development*", has implied the various factors involved on the local decisions, as well as on administrative functionality of the city. In this way, they found directions for the city to guide the local development of it, the central objective being the

¹⁵ For further readings see also: Goodall, B., (1987), *Dcitionary of Human Geography*, Penguin Books; Pacione, M., (2005), *Urban Geography. A global perspective*, 3rd. Edition, Routledge, Francis and Taylor Group, London, New York; Hall, T., (2007), *Urban Geography. 3rd. Edition*, Routledge, London, New York; Voiculescu, Sorina, (ed.), Crețan, R., Ianăș, Ana, Satmari, Alina, (2009), *The Romanian Post-socialist City: Urban Renewal and Gentrification*, West University of Timișoara Publishing House, Timișoara.

sustainable development of Lugoj, by increasing the quality of the local government decisions and by the clear statement of the public policies. There also have been targeted the improvement of strategic planning of public administration and the development of the local community development strategy.

b. Projects on the transport infrastructure and urban driving. The tram street of a town plays an important role not only in ensuring the functionality of it, but also concerning its evolution, development and expansion. Started from this idea, based on the structural heritage there were created improved programs and projects which aim the increase of the quality of this substructure segment. They was concerned about the rehabilitation of a number of streets grouped into 3 main groups, local makers proposing in this way activities in the district Eftimie Murgu, concretely the asphaltting of it. Besides this, in terms of urban renewal and regeneration, there were projected activities designed on the creation of the cliffs along the Timiș River, on the progress of work on the ring road of the city, on the streets paved with asphalt and ballast, on the upgrading of street areas for a better functionality of the current demands of the urban environment, on the upgrading, renovation and redecoration of the Iron Bridge, on the restoration of the central pedestrian sidewalks of the city, on the tackling parking of the town and, not least, on the achievement of bike lanes taking into account that this mode of transport is very important concerning the residents moving. Very representative is the traffic study managed by the Polytechnic University of Bucharest, this one offering the opportunity of a projection to a new functional public transportation system in the city.

c. Projects and programs on housing development. If by 1990 housing seems to not present major disruptions in the sense that all urban residents had a home (regardless of property type) and a job, after this year the right to private property has become a freedom that could not be limited. Beyond winning the rights and freedoms, is leading the development, amplification and maintenance problems, on the space for housing. The increased social status and material discrepancies between population, poverty, unemployment and industrial restructuring have left its marks on the living environment. To these ones are added and grounded the rent or property dynamics by higher prices of land and houses. On such conditions is detaching a part of the urban population unable to even buy a house, or the assertion of options on a higher living environment. These divergent trends with a strong contrast, in terms of social status and financial resources of the people brought to the attention of local authorities in trying to solve these problems and one both sides.

Therefore, on Lugoj began social projects through the National Housing Agency, for construction of houses for young people or people with a socio-economic condition more difficult. In return, the municipality developed some plots programs to facilitate the construction of houses for those who aspired to a more superior lifestyle. Along with developing these new types of housing, the attention of the state and local policy actors is focused on the restoration, renovation, regeneration and refresh the old housing fund inherited from the communist regime. Thus, since 2008 began an extensive program of rehabilitation of the collective residential buildings. Specifically, in terms of fund housing, local government interventions were aimed at: building two blocks with 69 ANL apartments for 2009, the projected construction of another 129 apartments with the same scheme in district weavers, the sector that belonged to the former military base is expected to achieve 100 plots of land for construction of houses (an area of about 27 ha), there was also proceeding with the construction of housing facilities by making buildings that formerly belonged to the army field (in this case the conversion of the urban space is obvious, solving partially the problem of seeking a social house by the poor population and also from the perspective of all those with sufficient financial availability to build a house on land leased or owned); the municipality is currently estimated that through various programs and projects covering residential, to be put into use by 2010, 247 housing units. Regeneration of the habitat in neighborhoods through the rehabilitation of buildings is a primary objective for the attention of political local actors from Lugoj, which materializes through equal funding by the Ministry of Development, by the Public Works Department and by the Local Council.

d. Projects aimed the regeneration of the public space. Public space is one that belongs to the whole community and it can be operated equally by all residents of a city. Therefore exposure to physical and moral wear is obvious, that require specific continuous interventions, conservation, and planning as an objective respond to the community requests. From this perspective, in Lugoj took place some development and renewal projects on the area of the House of Culture (including the Museum of History and Ethnography), the area called Plopi, for recreation, entertainment and leisure, the arrangement of Timiș River and the redecoration of its neighborhoods (eg. planning playgrounds for children, the old steel structures built by the communist regime - much less obvious – to the attractive ones from today; the relevance of the study of these spaces for children which create different particular landscapes, known as the „*landscapes of childhood*” is illustrated by Duncan, Johnson, Schein, (eds.), 2008, in their book named *A Companion to Cultural Geography*. The central area of the city was the focus of the local government pilot projects aiming to rehabilitate historic buildings in collaboration with some Italian partners (leaders on the field of the monuments restoration at European level). Other projects are focused on the market planning and on agri-food bazaar of the city, the regeneration of the horse racetrack (access routes to it, equine base, the manege and the hotel, the creation of the sport terrains etc. Urban lighting was the basis of another project aimed at rehabilitating public lighting system, developed by the Polytechnic Faculty of Electrical of Timișoara. Thus, the new actions are looking forward to new high efficiency lighting and to minimum consumption and costs. Through this project is desired the decrease of the urban electricity consumption allocated for this service, but also the purchase of the decorative lighting of the buildings with special architecture and historic value.

e. Projects concerned on water supply infrastructure, sewage and water treatment plant of the city. Seen together, these projects aim the improving of the housing funds, as well as, the ones focused on natural environment of the city. The investment projects and programs have developed in specific steps the execution of the sewerage works, water supply, replacement and maintenance of the network. An extensive program was started in the restoration of the water treatment plant from Lugoj. It was re-equipped through funding by the Environmental Fund Administration and by the Local Government. Through the lens of the mentioned projects, the local administration wants to increase the quality of life in the city and to reduce the water losses resulting from installations with a high degree of wear. Also, we noted the targets to raise the standards of environmental protection and pollution reduction from Timiș River.

f. Projects on public administration. The development of the local government received a draft European funded grant proposed by the municipality. It was named *Integrated Information Systems for e-government in Lugoj*. The financing process occurs by structural funds within the Operational Program *Enhance of the Economy Competitiveness from the 3rd Priority Axis III - I. C. T. for Public and Private Sectors*. The central objective of the project concerned was to facilitate electronic access of citizens, institutions and companies on the public administrative services through the development and implementation of an integrated information system on the City Hall from Lugoj. It also seeks the provision and development of online services.

g. Educational projects. Local education system has received numerous development projects viewing the rehabilitation and modernization of schools, but also extending through the emergence of new schools or profiles oriented to the social services (nurseries). To these ones are joined some collaborative projects with the national and international institutions. Thus, three nurseries have been established recently under the direction of the Directorate of Social Welfare and Community. On the Eftimie Murgu District appeared a new kindergarten, while the kindergarten no. 7, with normal program was converted into kindergarten with longer working hours. The emergence and thereafter changes on the pre-primary education cycle drew specialized labor available in this area. An important project in terms of national and international collaboration is EUROITA with the objective to exchange experiences among schools in undergraduate education system in Lugoj, Timișoara and cities from Italy. Another interesting project in terms of promoting traditional cultural values is to establish a nursery in partnership with

the Archbishopric of Timișoara and Lugoj Orthodox Archpriest. The institution is made for children with physical and social problems, which could be supported by church.

h. Public health projects. One of the projects in health is the changing status of local municipal hospital in emergency municipal hospital. Funding is requested by the state budget, the project objective is generated by the fact that this health unit serves an area of 6,000 km² and a population of over 100 000 inhabitants; by the same token, many localities are closer to the city of Lugoj some of them being situated at a distance of 150 km from Timișoara Municipal Hospital. Another project aimed the rehabilitating of the hospitals refers to the installation of gas replacement, to the redecoration of the inside green spaces, to the endowment hospital with quality medical equipment and to the improved of the quality of medical services offered to the residents of the town and from its surrounding area. A major problem that must be firstly solved is the payment of the debt facility for services provided by different institutions. Another project on the local public health is falling on the 3rd Priority Axis III concerning some interventions in social structures, respectively, the modernization of 14 outpatients in the hospital. The project can be implemented by European funds, some of which may be incurred by the state budget of the local government.

i. Projects on local media. Local media has increased its services by the appearance of new publication aimed the information of the residents by the appearance of *Lugoj Gazette*, newspaper which is edited and managed by City Hall from Lugoj under the administration of the Local Council. Its circulation is about 10,000 copies, constituting an objective source of information about the administrative decisions of the local actors responsible for monitoring and development of urban space.

j. Projects focused on rural land administrate by the local government. The municipality of Lugoj administrates and manages, with the urban area itself, two small rural settlements in which there are many social and economic problems to be solved. Therefore, for Tapia has been made projects which solve the water supply and the sanitation of the village. The feasibility study is coordinated by the Polytechnic Institute of Timișoara, the estimated amount of it being about four millions lei.

k. Projects on urban security and environmental conditions. They are focused on establishing environmental police in the city with fair role in urban environmental approaches, monitoring the land degradation and those ones left untidy by the owners. Also, this service overlooks and monitors the cleanliness of the city etc. All these ones have a critical role in the context of the environmental protection of the urban image.

l. Projects on the social field and social protection. On the social field have been started several projects that sought the social groups financial disadvantaged from the social and economical perspectives. In this regard, the *Directorate of Social Welfare, Community and Child Protection* has developed programs and projects for social protection of this category of population. A significant project was the one called *A Chance for Roma Children* with the objective of reducing the marginalization of the Roma population and their integration into the local community. In this context has been established a community center support to prevent early school abandonment in the area of Măguri and Lugoj. Another relevant project is the Elder House, financed by PHARE Program unfurled between 2004 and 2006 named *Economic and social cohesion, social services*.

m. Projects on industry and on the promotion of Small and Medium Sized Enterprises. The development, as well as the positive evolution of the industrial sector of the town was always on the attention of the local authorities. In connection with the new trends of development in industry, typical for the post-socialist period on the town was projected the appearance of the first industrial park in Lugoj, including some development areas on Timișoara Street no.2, as a current extension of the preexisted industrial sites inherited from the old regime but restructured and functional through the lens of the contemporary market economy conditions. The park includes 32 parcels for industrial units, the opportunities being generated by its favorable location, by the

presence of road and railway etc. Consignments can be granted and naturally arranged according to the specific of the functional production units. The functions that this park may have is determined by the following types of economic activity: machinery industry, metal industry, electronic and electrical industry, textiles, clothing and leather industry, food industry, construction materials industry, businesses in the agriculture, units for storage, maintenance and repair, workshops etc.. On its proximity is provided a leisure area. The project is funded by ADETIM. In small and medium sized enterprises the projects provides the attracting funds for investment in this area, funding for increasing the competitiveness for the production of new units, for expansion and development of the existing ones and, not least, to change the production process and the refurbishment. Contemporary development projects are in the shape of new industrial areas and on the road Tapia Road, Oloşagului Road, Buziaşului Road and Făget Road. Therefore in Lugoj exist many opportunities for the development in the field of secondary and tertiary activities.

n. Projects oriented on urban districts. Residential districts of the town still require many interventions in terms of raising the standards of living and quality of life. Some of them have already started, one of the districts known as Micro IV which supports an extensive area of urban space conversion. Food Market (inefficient) was substituted by parking space for neighborhood residents, instead of the business the municipality suggested to create a park for resting and recreation; the project of the conversion was also aims to update the trade sector by enhancing the heating central which ensure the thermal agent before 1990; in time it became inoperative, the towns centralized heating being suspended on the 90's. On the other hand on Mondialul Bocşei District is intended to create a residential district (we can objectively emphasize that this district is facing out with many social problems generated by poverty, unemployment, low education level of residents, substructure problems etc.

o. Projects focused on the recovery of the employment in the urban space. In this context a project proposal would form the basis for a new strategy on attracting jobs in the metropolitan Lugoj, as well as the retraining and workforce training aiming in this way the renewal of the local human capital of the city to ensure the sustainability of labor resources both in the city and on the neighboring villages located in its proximity.

For future is important for local government to focus attention and also to conduct projects which have as subject the line crisis management in the urban space because it is always the place for a wide variety of risks, both natural and anthropogenic. This is identified by the recent researches of Ianoş and Cepoiu, the authors considering that „*the structure of a city, especially the large ones, should consider avoiding the appearance of emergency situations and crisis that could cause serious damage and human casualties, but also the early intervention in the case of their occurrence*” (Ianoş, Cepoiu, 2009, p. 5). So, the action of taking into account this aspects concerned by the emergency situations management¹⁶ could represent a new demarche for the local government in the future in ensuring the urban security of the local community.

As we could already seen the local administration from Lugoj has ran many projects regarding the urban development of this town. As an outcome of this complex activities the Department for Management and European Project of the City Hall from Lugoj, subordinated to the Local Council has awarded the Excellence Trophy for local government and administration on Lugoj. For instance, between 2004 and 2009 the run projects have totalize an amount of 1,3 million Euro and 10 millions lei. This distinction has been granted by Iosif Constantin Drăgan European Foundation, International Butan Gas Society, Redeşteptarea Press and The City Hall from Lugoj under the aegis of the *Lugoj Awarded Gala - Iosif Constantin Drăgan Awards* (Mărgineanţu, 2010). At the same time, this board of the City Hall has many other projects for the future in terms of the urban, local and community development.

¹⁶ For more details see Ianoş, I., Cepoiu, Andreea-Loreta, (2009), *The importance of intraurban structures of the Romanian cities for crisis and emergency situations management*, in *Romanian Review on Political Geography*, no. 2, year 11, 2009, University from Oradea, Oradea, Romania, pp. 5-15.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The quality of the urban development of a town is in a closer link with the quality of the local actors who manage the town, by its resources - whatever they are, as well as with the main decisions, actions and interventions made on it. The profile of the local political persons from Lugoj on the post-socialist period reveals some important goals in terms of their experience on political field, educational level, occupations in key fields of the town, as well as, their maturity. In return, there can be observed some threats regarding the less representativeness of women, as well as, the involvement of the younger political actors on the main decisional demarches.

The unfurled and managed projects by the local government cover all the fields, sectors and problems of the city. This aspect is more than salutary because the main decisions and interventions of the local staff is objectively focused on the reality of the city trying to solve the requests of the local community, as well as the needs of the urban environment and landscape in terms of the rational development. However, the progress and completion, and also the start of the relevant and substantial urban development projects and programs granted by European Union and by Romanian central institutions illustrate the trends of the application of the quality strategies, in terms of the urban development in the conditions of the requests of the sustainable development at European level.

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