

Historical Analysis of Two Types of Urbanization Changing Both the Aspect and Identity of a Town in Transylvania, Romania

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Abstract : Miercurea Ciuc is a town in the historical region of Szeklerland in Transylvania, Romania, with a predominantly Hungarian population (its name in Hungarian being Csíkszereda) having an urban landscape and environment that has been shaped dramatically by different perceptions of urbanization during the history. The town has been part of Hungary and the Austro-Hungarian Empire before the First World War. It even got an important role, becoming in 1876 the seat and administrative center of the historical Csík county. This marks the beginning of the first urbanization process: new administrative buildings, railways, a railway station, a hospital, a Redoute and new schools have been built, new streets have been opened. However, not only the public facilities have changed: the center of the town with its private houses has also transformed, new, modern decorative and lifestyle elements have appeared. One of the streets from the town center, Kossuth street, has been featured on many postcards of the time; even a novel has mentioned it as a symbol of modern urbanization. Right after the First World War, the town became part of Romania and aside from a short interruption (between 1940 and 1944), it is still part of it. The beginning of the second major urbanization process - exactly one hundred years later - is marked by the visit of the communist leader Nicolae Ceaușescu in Miercurea Ciuc on the 6th of October 1976. In the upcoming years, he decided and started to demolish the old Kossuth street and to construct a new avenue with tall blocks of flats according to the principles of socialist urbanization. No other Transylvanian settlement has gone through such systematic abolition of its historical center and urban history during the Communist era. Not only the urban landscape has been affected. The collective memory and contemporary identity of the locals are also violated by this recent transformation of the town: important spaces, buildings, venues of activities and events simply cannot be localized, thus understood - by the younger generations.

Keywords : communist era, historical urban landscape, urban identity, urbanization

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