

NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF POLITICAL STUDIES
AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

***The identity (re)construction of Braşov.
Symbolic geography of the city.***

– PhD Thesis summary –

PhD coordinator:

Prof. Univ. Dr. Vintilă MIHĂILESCU

Prof. Univ. Dr. Vladimir PASTI

PhD Candidate:

Lorena (OPRICA) ALDEA

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PhD Thesis summary.

The identity (re)construction of Braşov. Symbolic geography of the city. PhD thesis is an analysis of the main mental representations and elements that define the city of Braşov in the perception of locals, local opinion formers and experts in the tourism industry and how it is reflected in traditional media and online.

I decided to carry out this research in the context in which, in 2015, Braşov had just lost the competition for the organization of the Youth Olympic Games in front of the city of Lausanne. I was struck at the time by the conceptual difference between the presentations made by the delegations of the two cities to the selection committee, the Braşov delegation emphasizing what the city has while the Lausanne delegation focused on what the city represents. In the same year, Braşov also candidate for the title of "Capital of European Culture", which determined me, once again, to find out what Braşov represents in the minds of its "consumers", be they locals or authorities. I structured the thesis as follows:

1. Introduction to the researched topic
 2. Theoretical foundation
 3. Research methods
 4. Analysis of secondary data about Braşov
 5. Sociological survey about the neighborhoods and symbols of Braşov
 6. In-depth interviews about the symbolic capital of the city of Braşov
 7. Summary and conclusions
- * Bibliography
 - * Annexes

After the first year of documentation in order to prepare the doctoral thesis, I realized that studying the symbolic geography of the city of Braşov is the most appropriate technique to achieve my research objective, which is why I decided to adapt the name of my thesis from *The identity (re)construction of Braşov.* to *The identity (re)construction of Braşov. Symbolic geography of the city.*

Introduction of the research topic

In the period 2015-2018, the city of Braşov applied to host three major events (the 2020 Youth Olympic Games, the European Capital of Culture for 2021 and the Romanian Youth Capital 2019-2020). And every time he lost. The title of "Romanian Youth Capital 2019-2020" was lost in favor of Iasi, the "European Capital of Culture for 2021" in favor of Timisoara and the organization of the 2020 Youth Olympic Games was lost in favor of Lausanne from Switzerland. It is particularly

interesting the difference between the presentations of the two candidacies for the organization of the 2020 Youth Olympic Games, lost to Lausanne. The official presentations are available in video form on YouTube for both Braşov¹ and Lausanne².

In addition to the technical manner of the presentation made by the Romanian delegation (quality of English, reading speeches, presentation time or media support), surpassed by the Swiss delegation, the lower level administrative representation of the city of Braşov (Braşov's candidacy was supported by the presence of the Olympic and Sports Committee President while Lausanne's candidacy was supported at ministerial level), the major difference in the presentations made to the two cities is the focus on "we HAVE" (Braşov) versus "WE ARE" (Lausanne). If the city of Braşov presented itself with what it has: slopes, skating rinks, the experience of organizing the Olympic Youth Festival (FOTE) in 2013, etc., Lausanne presented its symbols and focused on the best quality education, on the opportunities offered young people, on the joy of living in this city. I interpret this positioning difference from the perspective of capital theory (economic versus symbolic), as they were defined by Bourdieu (Bourdieu, 1986). Brasov emphasized the economic capital held ("we have"), while Lausanne emphasized the symbolic capital ("we are"). I detailed the difference during the thesis.

Another notable event was the candidacy for the title of "European Capital of Culture for 2021", which led to the emergence of several action groups and several voices that supported the participation of Brasov with various arguments related to the tradition and culture of the city. At the same time, this candidacy brought into public debate a series of six concepts that were intended to be the key element of Braşov's identity. The six proposed concepts could be studied and voted by the citizens of Braşov on the website Braşov2021.ro and were included in the "Strategy for Culture of the Municipality of Braşov 2015-2030. Synthesis ", a strategy that can be consulted on the Braşov City Hall website³.

It is obvious from the proposed names that all the concepts appeal to symbols through which Braşov is defined, bringing into discussion even concepts such as "cultural geography" or urban "regeneration" through culture. I detailed these concepts and the elements they proposed in Chapter 4, dedicated to the analysis of secondary data about Brasov and the symbols with which it is associated.

¹ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b7g5LvVp_-U

² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FlitRLoQqMQ>

³ <http://www.brasovcity.ro/file-zone/proiecte-culturale/2017/Strategie%20pentru%20cultura.pdf>

In the context generated by Braşov's candidacy to become "European Capital of Culture for 2021", the strategia⁴ for "Tourism and Sustainable Development Braşov 2020" proposed to the Agency for Sustainable Tourism Development in Braşov (APDTBv) was also promoted. It, APDTBv, turned to the consulting company TotallyH to carry out a series of researches on the image of Brasov in the perception of tourism professionals (hoteliers, travel agents, public administration staff), following this collaboration resulting in a comparative analysis of the elements defining the cities of Sibiu, Cluj, Bucharest and Braşov. In the perception of these professionals, Braşov is seen as a tourist city, compared to Sibiu which is mainly identified with the idea of "European cultural capital". Cluj is perceived as a university city, and Bucharest is perceived in the first stage as a crowded and dirty city.



Figure 1 Perception on Sibiu



Figure 2 Perception on Cluj



Figure 3 Perception on Braşov



Figure 4 Bucureşti

Because congestion and dirt are inevitable, as a perception, in a big city and to have a clearer picture of the cities with which it is compared, in the second stage of the analysis, the negative perceptions about Bucharest were eliminated. What remains shows a dynamic city, with "life", culture, events, parks, museums, business, etc. Carrying out the same operation for Braşov, but eliminating tourism, in Braşov remain, as a majority perception, "silence", "civilization", "medieval" and "green".



Figura 5 Perception on Bucureşti, without negative elements



Figure 6 Perception on Braşov, without tourism

⁴ Sursa: „Turism & Dezvoltare Durabilă – O strategie pentru Braşov 2020” – document intern al APDTBv. 2013, http://www.brasovtourism.eu/upload/files/turism_si_dezvoltare_durabila-o_strategie_pentru_brasov.pdf

What intrigues me is the word "silence". Not because Brasov would not be a quiet city, but because if you eliminate tourism, it seems that there is nothing left. And as the consulting company demonstrates in their report on the tourism development strategy in Braşov County, investments in tourism represent only 2.67% of the total investments made in Braşov County. "Thus, despite the large accommodation capacity and the relatively large number of tourist arrivals, tourism still has a modest place in the economy of Brasov County." (APDTBv, 2013, p 5)

Apart from silence, the words civilization, green, medieval, fun remain as descriptive elements of Braşov ... are these the ones that define the city? In many situations I heard the definition of the city of Braşov by referring to other cities in the country, especially in Cluj and Sibiu, which reminds me of the classic distinction in anthropology between us and others (Mihăilescu, 2009).

Theoretical foundation

During the preliminary research of the subject of my thesis I have repeatedly identified topics such as identity, quality of living, location branding, place branding, gentrification, urban regeneration, or topics that can fit into the concepts of symbolic capital and symbolic geography. I showed in the introductory chapter that the symbolic geography (mental map) of Braşov represents the most visible element of the city's identity, being at the same time an aspect that can be effectively measured. The chapter "Theoretical foundation" was dedicated to the theoretical framework of research and detailing from a theoretical perspective of scientific knowledge of the concepts mentioned above, noting that the central element of my thesis is that of symbolic geography.

I presented the state of current knowledge on the topics of identity, quality of living, place branding and location branding, creative city, experience economy, symbolic geography, urban regeneration, space, symbol, power, social capital and symbolic capital.

Understanding the symbolic geography present in public space is necessary because mental maps are formed not only through direct experience, but also mediated (Pocock, 1972), which means that the image of Brasov in public space will generate a certain type of symbolic map in the minds of potential consumers.

Carmen Andraş considers that symbolic geography is the generic name that the discipline Social and Cultural Geography received due to the new tendencies of symbolizing space and place. (Andraş, 2008). The subject of social geography, of mental maps, is not new, it being documented from the beginning of the 20th century and consecrated in the second half of it. Pocock, D., 1972, stated in "City of the mind: A review of mental maps of urban areas" that "Environmental perception is the cognitive structuring of physical and social environments in which the real or objective world is replaced by a simpler environment. , perceived subjectively. Mental filtering and coding of sensory

data is necessary because it is impossible for the human brain to understand total reality. In practical terms, it ensures the orientation, comfort and movement of man in his environment. (One of the clearest demonstrations in this regard is the uneasiness felt in navigating an unknown and busy city). Mental coding is done both in terms of non-localized ("whatness") and localized ("Whereeness") aspects of the environment, the information being accumulated through first-hand experience and second-hand knowledge.

Three types of urban perception have been recognized - (1) operational, when the elements are noted for the direct purpose of orientation or movement; receptive, (2) a more passive type, in which the elements are "observed" as they happen around the city; and (3) inferential, where new elements are classified and perhaps even designed, based on previous experience of similar situations. The composite result, the so-called spatial scheme or mental map, is the result of the interaction between the environment and the individual. This is not only a matter of mechanical observation of physical attributes (size, shape, arrangement, color, etc.), but also of motivational, functional or social significance for the observer. "The observer selects, organizes and endows with what he sees." On the human side of the equation, the relative stimulus of an environment is a function of the physiological, sociological and psychological makeup of the individual. Lifestyle, life cycle stage, social classes and value orientations were used as independent compound variables.

Although the mental image of each person is unique, the degrees of conformity allow the recognition of common or group images. This fact, plus the printed behavior of the man who acts as if responding to ordinary images, offers both the validity and usefulness of the analysis of mental maps. The techniques used to create the mental image are mapping exercises, verbal descriptions and evaluation exercises. The resulting studies could be concerned with the structure of an entire city, a district or the structure perceived along a route; can examine particular properties of maps, such as distance, size, or direction; or they may seek to assess certain parts of the city - the perceptual assessment of residential areas or shopping centers, for example." (Pocock pp. 115 - 116) According to Pocock, mind maps have the following characteristics:

1) are partially representative. "The mind map shows only a portion of the real world, as it is impossible for man to have first-hand experience or even second-hand knowledge of all parts." (Pocock p. 116)

2) are represented schematically. "Unable to obtain a synoptic vision, the brain apparently shows a bias towards recording and deducing symmetry, with features such as parallelism, continuity and closure. [...] The tendency towards symmetry can also be seen in the perception of the city as a whole." (Pocock pp. 117 - 120)

3) are designed non-Euclidean. "The mind map is an ego-centered projection, the product of the aforementioned reciprocal process between the observer and the observed. The variable nature of this relationship militates against any uniformity of the scale of the map and reveals the cognitive structuring of space that has no Euclidean character. The size, distance, and orientation of conventional map values are replaced by more complicated measures, contributing to its apparent inaccuracies and inconsistencies when tested in the real world. [...] Inferential structuring adds additional complexity to the scale construct. As a result of his collective experience, an individual tends to extend his mental map beyond his field of motion to unclear or unknown areas. [...] In this regard, an important research question is whether individuals perceive the structure of the city in terms of concentric areas or multiple nuclei, as presented in simple physical models." (Pocock p. 123)

4) have an evolutionary nature.

Pocock's conclusion is that symbolic geography is possible "by the fact that, although each person's image is unique, the degrees of conformity allow the recognition of common or group images." (p. 123)

"Studies on the perception of urban space challenge the validity of objective knowledge to analyze this space and emphasize the importance of considering the sensitive and affective dimensions to understand the psychological, emotional and existential attachments of urban space. Some refer explicitly to derivatives and psycho-geography (Radovic, 2016) or to the working writings of Perce's field (Phillips, 2016). In fact, most of this research has focused on fieldwork methods. With the exception of cartography (O'Rourke, 2013), the articulation of the investigation process and the design of the representation are rarely discussed." (Vivant, 2018, p. 60)

Vivant points out that we are facing a first problem related to the polysemy of "public space".

Quercia, Aiello & Schifanella (2017, online) show in "The map of a good city life" that "a geographical map of a city consists of streets and buildings and reflects an objective representation. Instead, a symbolic map (symbolic geography) is a subjective representation that the inhabitants carry in their heads. Tourists in a strange city start with a few landmarks (for example, hotels, main streets) and then expand the representation in their minds; in short, they are slowly beginning to build an image. To see how these subjective representations matter, he believes that, starting with Kevin Lynch's groundbreaking book, *The Image of the City* (1960), studies have shown that easy and good representation allows city dwellers to feel at home and -and increase the well-being of the community. In general, people feel at home in cities whose neighborhoods are easily recognizable. Comfort resulting from little effort, the argument continues, would have an impact on individual and ultimately collective well-being."

"If we want to analyze the visual aspect of a city, we will find that nowadays many layers of different ages exist together. We explore the city where we live in a very different way from the city where we are just tourists. We will be disoriented when we are displaced from our own cultural field. For example, when the streets are numbered instead of named, when we encounter traffic on the left instead of the right, and so on. This means that in differently planned cities, people must orient themselves differently. It can be assumed that a city has several layers of significance and these are closely linked to common cultural values. [...]"(Jasz p. 289)

Vintilă Mihăilescu (2015) insists on the political significance of symbolic geography: "We are no longer in local spatial practices, but in a symbolic geography produced by a political discourse" (Mihăilescu p. 82) Also as an element of a political nature, which separates two worlds, that of the host and that of the guest, the "symbolic geography of the threshold" is also seen (Mihăilescu p. 54). Referring to the way Hungarians look at Romanians, Mihăilescu also uses "symbolic geography" to explain the fact that they use, in fact, a Western model of representation of the East, the East. (Mihăilescu p. 127).

Here, then, that these elements of mental representation of a physical reality also have the value of political communication, of generating power. Rose-Redwood (2009) also refers to this kind of situation in the work "From number to name: symbolic capital, places of memory and the politics of street renaming in New York City", when she indicates that "Numerous studies have highlighted the importance naming streets as a strategy for building "places of memory." (Rose-Redwood p. 431) Thus, symbolic capital becomes an instrument of urban regeneration, remodeling and redefinition (rebranding).

Rusu Mihai Stelian also debates the symbolic power of street names, for the regeneration of this symbolic geography, in "Political patterning of urban namescapes and post-socialist toponymic change: A quantitative analysis of three Romanian cities" (2020), making a comparative analysis between the renaming of streets in Sibiu, Cluj Napoca and Braşov, "Romanianized" cities that were dramatically resized in their population structure after the First World War, when Transylvania ceased to be part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and was incorporated into the Romanian kingdom "(Rusu p. 2) Rusu shows how all the streets that were symbolically associated with the communist period were renamed by the post-December authorities using strong anti-communist symbols. For example, V.I. Lenin was renamed on November 15, 1987, after the revolt in Brasov (Rusu p. 6). All these renames have the role of changing the geography of the memory of the inhabitants, of "introducing an authorized version of history in the usual settings of daily life" (Rose-Redwood, 2009, apud Maoz Azaryahu (1996: 312)).

The French sociologist M. Halbwaches (Halbwaches, 1950) has convincingly demonstrated that the main function of collective memory is to maintain the cohesion of society and its reproduction by transmitting common history, rather than preserving its past. This is why collective memory is often embellished, falsified and mystified. M. Halbwaches connected social memory with the mechanisms of social power. Social memory preserves group identities and is understood as a history of "collective mentalities". "Based on the appropriate image of the past, the national or group identity is outlined." (Yanushkevich, 2014, pp. 44 - 45) "Social memory becomes one of the key elements that determine the current state of society and actively shape its future." (Yanushkevich p.49)

Summarizing the definitions and theoretical approaches presented up to this point, it results that symbolic geography is the mental representation of a physical space and the elements that determine it (inhabitants, urbanism, history, etc.), being generated by direct or mediated interaction of the subject with that space and shaped by structural and subjective factors.

Research methods

I have shown during the theoretical foundation that an easy and good mental representation of a space (ie, an easily identifiable symbolic geography) allows the inhabitants to feel conformable and has the ability to increase the well-being of the community. The fact that symbolic geography is the product of a political discourse (Mihăilescu, 2009) has major implications in the branding of a city and in the well-being felt by its consumers, be they locals or tourists. In this case, I think it is necessary to emphasize that by "political discourse" I mean all those messages sent by opinion leaders, whether or not they are politicians.

"What is the symbolic geography of the city of Braşov?" is the main question I set out to answer during this thesis, and to fulfill this goal I performed the following actions:

- * I analyzed a series of secondary data, from various public sources, both official (National Institute of Statistics, European Commission, etc.) and private (media, blogs, online search services, etc.). At this stage I identified the symbolic elements of Braşov (symbolic geography) in the public space. Understanding the symbolic geography present in public space is necessary because mental maps are formed not only through direct experience, but also mediated (Pocock, 1972), which means that the image of Braşov in public space will generate a certain type of symbolic map in the minds of potential consumers. .

- * I surveyed a number of 591 subjects from Braşov, both through face-to-face and computer-mediated interviews (CAWI), in order to identify the perception of the city's citizens on it. In the dor-to-dor interviews we applied the random selection method, with a statistical step of 5 and using as a filter the birthday closest to the first day of the month. The entire database, both the one collected

through face-to-face interviews and the one collected online, was weighted according to the socio-demographic data representative of Braşov at the most recent census organized by INS. At this stage we identified the general perception of the inhabitants about the city.

* I interviewed, using a semi-structured interview guide, until obtaining the saturation criterion, a number of sixteen public figures and opinion leaders from Braşov (politicians, entrepreneurs, journalists, members of non-governmental organizations, specialists, etc.). At this stage we identified the perception of those leaders who, through their discourse, can generate symbolic geography (Mihăilescu, 2009).

* I analyzed all the data obtained both individually, for each method, and comparatively, to identify whether there are significant differences between the results obtained by the different methods applied.

I used a mix of research methods that include both secondary data analysis (analysis of public texts, use of statistical data and research conducted by third parties or analysis of online representations) and the production of new, relevant data. In order to produce data, after documenting the topic and analyzing the existing secondary data, we developed a questionnaire to evaluate the neighborhoods of Brasov and identify the main associations, which we applied in the field and online to a number of 591 of subjects (randomly selected by statistical step, in the field through face-to-face interviews, on 169 subjects and online on 422 subjects). The data obtained were statistically weighted according to the population structure of Braşov, by gender and age, according to the information provided by the National Institute of Statistics.

I used the questionnaire with the aim of providing "respondents with a uniform stimulus so that their answers are comparable." (Martin, 2005, p. 723). Marius Precupeţu considers that "in the formulation of linguistic utterances [...] which act as a kind of" stimuli "that induce the reaction of the investigated subjects or their" answers "[...] an important methodological problem in the construction of utterances refers to their formulation linguistic in relation to cultural models or semantic connotations located in a group or community. " (Precuppet in MCSP Course, p. 56).

The interview tool (questionnaire) was developed so as to measure the perception of the subjects about the neighborhoods of Brasov, on 11 dimensions, to identify the attractive and "scary" areas of the city and to identify the main associations that the subjects make with Brasov. Although more complex tools can be developed on this research topic, I believe that, as Prof. Dr. David Walonick said in *Survival Statistics* (2003), there is adequate coverage of what I set out to study, especially considering of the objective limitations of a quantitative research: "When an instrument is developed, each question is analyzed and modified until the researcher is convinced that it will correctly measure

the desired topic and that there is adequate coverage of each area to be investigated." (Walonick, 2003, p.21).

I built the answer variants so that I could measure the scale and interpret the received answers statistically. "In relation to social stimuli, people have different reactions, and the problem of scaling would be to measure these reactions to obtain statistically workable scores and theoretically interpretable synthetic indices." (Precupeţu, MCSP Course, p. 56).

In the opinion of Florentina Scârneci (2007) the mixed use of quantitative and qualitative research methods would not be possible because "if we talk about the two research logics, they are more than distinct, they are incompatible. Even if the common goal is the production of knowledge, they propose different knowledge, in obtaining them they use different means and meet different evaluation criteria." (2007, p. 24).

I consider that the two methodologies are complementary and that their use in the data production mix generates more comprehensive perspectives on the studied topic. This is also the opinion of Mărginean, who considers that "the different methodological guidelines for conducting research are not incombustible. In a specific research, the subjective approaches can be combined with the objective ones, the quantitative ones with the qualitative ones" (Mărginean, 2000, p. 45). I believe that the possibility of using both research methods adds to the knowledge and that the lack of one or the other makes the research less comprehensive.

By living in Braşov since birth and actively participating in community life, I also met the criterion of identifying major topics for discussion, as requested by Glassner and Loughlin: "The semi-structured interview is used by both quantitatives and qualitatives. Some of the latter even propose that the qualitative interview be preceded by participatory observation, only in this way being able to identify major issues of discussion and their conceptual and linguistic formulation appropriate to the perspective of the subjects." (Glassner and Loughlin, 1987 ap. Iluţ, pp. 77-78)

I conducted seventeen interviews with key people in the community; the interviews were exploratory, semi-structured, thus allowing greater freedom of exploration. I had an anthropological, emic, documentary approach, my goal being to find out what my subjects say and think about the image / symbols of Braşov without making any value judgments about those statements: "The first concern of the anthropologist is not to judge the truth of this statement, but to understand what it means, given the context in which it is formulated." (Ingold, 2000, p. 14 ap. Mihăilescu, 2009, p. 129).

I used theoretical sampling, selecting for the interview both female and male subjects, both from the political environment and from the entrepreneurial, non-governmental or public environment

(journalists). Using the principle of saturation, I decided to interrupt the collection of qualitative data, the answers of the 17 subjects interviewed in this stage of the research being congruent.

From the beginning of the research, I considered it necessary, as Professor Mihailescu told us in class, to "let the field speak". This approach is not contrary to theories of social research, because "the theory does not guide the collection and analysis of data in a concrete way because, otherwise, the inductive assumptions of qualitative research would be violated. The theory is used to concentrate the study and to give it boundaries for comparison, in order to facilitate the development of theoretical and conceptual results. The theory and concept can be considered a conceptual pattern with which the results are compared and not bases for the use of a priori categories in which the analysis is forced". (Scârneci, 2006, pp. 29-30, ap. Morse, 1998, p. 58)

Secondary data analysis about Braşov

Statistical data are reported to the population of Braşov according to the most recent official population census, conducted by INS in 2011. Subsequent estimates of the National Institute of Statistics, Braşov County Directorate are also presented, provided that the data presented are related to documents other than the census population (eg registered address, population record, etc.), these data being a secondary reference. Data presented in this section were provided by INS through the publication "Series of Statistical Data. 2011-2016. The city of Braşov. 2017 edition. " and through the "File of the locality of Braşov municipality at the level of 2017".

Territorial characteristics of Braşov municipality

I selected from the multitude of data about the territorial characteristics of the municipality only those elements that I considered relevant to the analyzed topic. I was particularly interested in two aspects, which are directly related to the quality of housing and the attractiveness of the city: (1) the surface of green space and (2) the evolution of the number of dwellings.

(1) The area of green spaces, of 5 sqm / inhabitant, remains unchanged for 8 years and strongly contrasts with European Union regulations⁵, which require Member States to provide 24 sqm of green space per inhabitant or with the recommendations of the World Health Organization which indicate a norm of 50 sqm of green space per inhabitant.

The authorities had attempts to cosmeticize this situation, by including in the calculation of the green space of the municipality and the protected areas of Mount Tâmpa, the spokesman of Braşov City Hall stating⁶ that if the green space would be calculated "in accordance with the provisions of

⁵ <http://www.cdep.ro/presa/DP%20urbanism-spatiu%20verde%20.pdf>

⁶ <https://bzb.ro/stire/brasovul-sta-mai-bine-decat-norma-impusa-de-ue-in-privinta-spatiilor-verzi-a97720>

Law no. 24/2007, with the subsequent modifications, at the level of Braşov municipality the ratio is of 27.94 square meters / inhabitant ”.

However, the law⁷ referred to by the spokesperson of the Braşov City Hall is very clear, at art. 5, specifying the fact that the calculation of the green space area does not include a) the vegetation outside the built-up area included in the forest fund, b) the areas and strips for water protection, respectively rivers and water basins; c) protection curtains located on agricultural lands; d) protected natural areas; e) safety and protection areas of the transport infrastructure; f) green spaces on privately owned land that are not used in the public interest. As Tâmpa is a protected area, its area cannot be taken into account when reporting the area of green space per inhabitant.

The 5 sq m of green space per inhabitant remained almost unchanged in 2020, reaching, according to EU statistics⁸, from 5 sq m per inhabitant to 5.62 sq m per inhabitant.

In an analysis⁹ about the green areas in Braşov, the local politician Ioan Corbu shows that the situation of the green space per inhabitant is even more dramatic if only the areas destined for the park are calculated, this being less than 1 sqm / inhabitant.

(2) The number of new homes increased in Brasov by 4964 between 2011 and 2017, which, equivalent to an average of 50 apartments per block (although not all homes are block type and not all have 50 apartments), means the appearance of almost 100 blocks in the municipality area.

The increase in the number of homes has led to the emergence of new neighborhoods in Brasov (Avantgarden 1, 2 and 3, Urban, Coresi, Maurer Tractoru), entire areas being exposed to transformations and, to some extent, the processes of urban regeneration and gentrification.

In the period 2000-2015, Braşov registered, from an economic point of view, an annual growth rate of 8.16%, one of the highest in the EU (source: the presentation brochure prepared by the Braşov Local Council for the visit of the Japanese Government delegation in 9-13 July 2018). At the end of 2017, according to INS - DJS Braşov, a number of 21,157 enterprises were active in Braşov, generating a turnover of 47,471,445,269 lei (€ 10.2 billion). The total revenues to the local budget in 2017 were 667,437,080 lei.

This economic growth is one of the main reasons for the intense real estate development in the municipality, turning the city into a pole of attractiveness for internal migration. The World Bank includes Braşov on the list of "magnet cities" in the report "Magnet Cities - Migration and commuting in Romania".

⁷ LEGE nr.24 din 15 ianuarie 2007, privind reglementarea și administrarea spațiilor verzi din zonele urbane, http://www.cdep.ro/pls/legis/legis_pck.htp_act_text?id=78095

⁸ <https://urban.jrc.ec.europa.eu/thefutureofcities/space-and-the-city#the-chapter>

⁹ <https://www.facebook.com/notes/usr-bra%C8%99ov/bra%C8%99ovul-verde-o-analiz%C4%83-de-ioan-corbu/2495800130680901/>

„Growth poles (Braşov, Cluj-Napoca, Constanţa, Craiova, Iaşi, Ploieşti and Timişoara) contribute to the regional economic result in a double proportion compared to their share among the population of the region, which proves that they are engines of economic growth for these regions. ” (Cristea et al., 2017, p. 118)

According to estimates by the World Bank report, almost 200,000 people (p.115) could settle in Brasov by 2023, which would mean a huge pressure on both the housing stock and the elements that contribute to quality of life (such as parks / green spaces) or population density.

How is Brasov "seen"? Analysis of secondary data in the online environment

Understanding the symbolic geography present in public space is necessary because mental maps are formed not only through direct experience, but also mediated (Pocock, 1972), which means that the image of Brasov in public space will generate a certain type of symbolic map in the minds of potential consumers.

For a start, I searched on Google engine, as the most popular online search service¹⁰, the question "How is it?", instead of suspension points, the names of the cities of Braşov, Bucharest, Sibiu and Cluj were passed, one by one.

In the analysis of the image of the mentioned cities we took into account the first three pages of results, pages for which we captured the content using the Nvivo software, without opening each result separately. With the help of NVivo, software dedicated to content analysis, we conducted a series of queries which resulted in a text-info-graphic relevant to the image of each of the four cities analyzed. Thus, I found that the image broadcast online for each of the cities corresponds to the one I intuited from informal interviews.

Bucharest is perceived and communicated as a place where business is done, events take place and it is full of life. A special element highlighted in the chart is "therme", referring to the SPA location inaugurated relatively recently outside Bucharest, a location that attracts a large number of visitors, including from outside the capital.

Sibiu is very strongly associated with theater (culture), tourism and Transylvania, being an exponent of Transylvanian cities. And in this case, the results obtained from the analysis of the online image agree with those obtained empirically.

Cluj is the "center", the "capital" of Transylvania, a city full of students and "life", cosmopolitan, European, but also expensive. It is noteworthy that in all three cases presented above (Bucharest, Sibiu, Cluj) there are 4-6 keywords that stand out and characterize the city in a wider spectrum, indicating 2-3 different directions of analysis.

¹⁰ <https://www.smartinsights.com/search-engine-marketing/search-engine-statistics/>

In the case of Braşov, there are only two directions, and even these can be integrated into one: the "beautiful center". Secondly, at a great distance from the "beautiful center" we identify the words corona, Stalin and "life", the first two referring to the old names of the city and "life" to the good quality of life in the city.

The structure of the 30 delivered results is as follows: 9 materials are published by the national or local media (EVZ, Adevărul, fwdBV, etc.), 7 materials are published by online or offline travel agencies (half of which are advertorial), 5 pages belong to the institutions, 4 could not be included in any individual category, 3 blogs and 2 pages of Wikipedia.

I accessed and read the content of the materials in the top 3 pages of results, including those with advertorials. The result is a net positive one for Braşov, the number of positive materials (12) being 6 times higher than the negative ones (2). The content of the 3 blogs was divided as follows: one positive, one negative and one neutral. The materials from the institutional sources and those from wikipedia had a neutral content, and the materials from the national or local media are mostly positive.

In 2010, Braşov was declared "The city where it is best to live" following a campaign conducted by EVZ among readers of the publication. In the same note is the article from Adevărul, "Brasov, the city with the most advantageous cost of living in Romania." Another more recent article in Forbes presents an analysis of a real estate ad platform in collaboration with a market research agency.

The same big-data study, conducted by D&D Research for stori.ro (a site specializing in real estate), showed that two neighborhoods in Braşov, Răcădău and Noua, are perceived as having the best air quality. The information is taken over by Adevărul, which briefly presents the Răcădău neighborhood.

Bloggers are more subjective and, due to the lack of restrictions specific to the classic media, more authentic. Dorin Alexandrescu, a professional strategist and marketer, originally from Ploieşti, describes very tasty what he learned in 10 years in Braşov. The article generated over 9300 likes, almost 10 thousand distributions and 169 comments (only on the home page), most confirming the author's summaries. With his consent, I continue to reproduce most of the text "What I learned in 10 years of Brasov" because it describes very punctually, in 22 steps, defining elements of the city. Even if it is a bit older (the last upgrade was made in 2014), the material is still current and captures in a very picturesque way both the negative elements and the positive elements. A specific statement caught my attention because it can be a possible explanation for the fact that Brasov is a pleasant city for most people who visit it. At point 10, Dorin states that: "In Braşov you can't get lost. With a big mountain in the middle, which you know is in the historic center, you don't need GPS. Maybe that's why I know Braşov much better than my hometown." This means that Brasov is a simple city, which is not scary. And if something (a city) doesn't scare you, the chances of liking it are much higher than

if it would initially cause you fear. In the last point, which is the conclusion, Dorin Alexandrescu highlights even better this quality, not to scare, but blaming it on the "beauty" of the city (a kind of quasi-universal conclusion of all those I interacted with): "I learned over the years that Brasov is such a beautiful city that it's worth the effort to settle down and raise your child here. It is a good place for the maladapted of any kind: freelancers, hipsters, eternal students, rockers, anarchists... Beyond clichés like clean air or green spaces, in Brasov you can feel the 1000-year history of a city that has always been cosmopolitan but and a future that promises a beneficial modernism. That with fewer sacrifices than in Bucharest. So it is the place where I can raise my child with as few compromises as possible and without the frustration of having made the wrong choice."

So, Braşov is "a good place for the maladapted of any kind", from which I conclude that it is a city where you adapt easily, and it is a city "so beautiful" where it is worth [...] raise the child ". I have found, repeatedly, the highlight of the qualities of Brasov in contrast to Bucharest, which makes me believe that, however, the city of Bucharest is a landmark. Dorin Alexandrescu has, in essence, the same quasi-universal conclusion as all those with whom I interacted: "Brasov is such a beautiful city", complemented by the hope of a modern future in a cosmopolitan city: "in Brasov you feel shoulders the 1000-year history of a city that has always been cosmopolitan but also of a future that promises a beneficial modernism." This oppressive 1000-year history often produces "emblems of the city's identity (Chang & Teo, 2009), [and] is inclined to produce signs that are reinforced in spatially identified social practices and socio-economic activities, which in its terms Lefebvre (1974/1996) become representative spaces with symbolic values. " (Michelson & Paadam, 2016, pp. 143)

Zoso¹¹, by his real name Vali Petcu, another blogger widely read and distributed online, concludes a material about Braşov in almost the same way: "*Braşov is a cool, quiet and beautiful city to live in, provided you have a place for work.*" This condition, "*to have a job*", is in fact a criticism of Braşov because, Zoso points out: "*Here [in terms of jobs - nm] it is terribly painful, because Braşov has two types of jobs of work: highly skilled professionals and salahori (low paid workers). We are looking for programmers, engineers, automatists, technicians and so on, plus people to do physical work (of any kind, from driver to concrete mixer to waiter). The jobs between, marketing, barista, copywriter, HR, anything else, are very few, because the companies are based in Bucharest (or abroad) and here they only have the execution. And not only few, but also medium paid, compared to Bucharest or Cluj. The city is ok because life is cheap if you have a house and a car.*"

Zoso also makes some portraits of the people who live in Braşov and emphasizes the "civilizing" role of the city: "*There are three big groups of people here: Transylvanians, Moldovans and lazy people. The ethnic groups present in the city (Romanians, Hungarians, Germans, Gypsies) mix in all*

¹¹ <https://zoso.ro/brasov-2018/>

these three groups, which are rather a label applied to a type of behavior. In general, the Transylvanians are more settled, calmer, more orderly. [...] A relatively new category in the city are students whose parents did not send them to Bucharest. They appear in autumn, are easily recognizable by cars with PH, AG, BC, BZ, BR or GL numbers and tend to be civilized by spring. Not everyone, of course."

Zoso's observation about the places where a large number of students from the University of Transylvania come from is correct, the information according to which "most [students] come from the Moldovan area from Bacău, Neamţ or Vaslui, but also from Buzău, Vrancea, Dîmboviţa, Argeş and Prahova." being documented by official statistics and published in the media¹². This aspect is also confirmed by the World Bank report (Cristea et al., 2017), which analyzes the area of student recruitment by the Transilvania University of Braşov.

The travel blog vacantevacante.com, owned by a couple of traveling journalists, is not the only one that publishes from the title¹³ the conclusion that Brasov is "probably the most beautiful city in Romania"; and the journalist Cristina Bazavan (awarded with CSR Romanian Awards 2013 and Best Woman Blogger - Digital Divas 2013, former editor-in-chief of TABU and radio man in Europa FM, Radio Guerrilla or Radio 21) declares, from the title, on the personal blog bazavan.ro¹⁴ that "Brasov [is] probably the most beautiful city in Romania."

Where does this recurring title come from, though? If anyone notices the striking resemblance to the slogan of Carlsberg beer, "PROBABLY the best beer in the world", he is right!

This is due to the fact that in December 2008, Braşov City Hall concluded a loan agreement¹⁵ with Carlsrom Beverage CO SRL, the importer of the Carlsberg brand, which makes available to economic agents in the city center "for use, free of charge, the umbrellas of terrace in the number necessary for the use of the terraces located by the economic agents in the Historical Center of the Municipality of Braşov ", the umbrellas on which the slogan " Brasov, probably the best city in the world "is easily distinguished. These umbrellas, made available to traders since the summer of 2009, have been used for many years, some of which can still be found outside the historic center. After this partnership, the local public administration seems to have made another one, this time with the brewer Ursus, because almost all the shadows in the historic center have been replaced with some with the message "Braşov, the king of Romanian cities".

From the online analysis of the archives of the local press and of the content published on various

¹² http://adevarul.ro/locale/brasov/Invatamantul-universitar-75de-ani-traditie-brasov-universitate-transilvania-18-facultatisi-20000-studenti-1_54ffe3e2448e03c0fd71f071/index.html

¹³ <http://vacantevacante.com/am-fost-acolo/sa-le-aratam-romania/brasov-probabil-cel-mai-frumos-oras-din-romania/>

¹⁴ <http://bazavan.ro/2014/09/fifi-the-city-brasovul-probabil-cel-mai-frumos-oras-din-romania/>

¹⁵ <http://ziarero.antena3.ro/articol.php?id=1250540938>

occasions, it resulted to me that these are the only two moments in which the administration supported and communicated, voluntarily and organized, a message regarding the city of Braşov. No other action of the local administration or other local institutions (such as the University of Transylvania, for example) seems to have been meant to communicate a certain message about the city, about what it offers and about the opportunities to live in it.

If in certain articles published over time, Braşov is positioned as the city with the most advantageous cost of living¹⁶ in Romania, information validated by the largest database and comparative analysis about the cost of living (numbeo.com¹⁷), in other articles Brasov is described as "provincial" or even "ugly".

Ovidiu Eftimie, a journalist from Braşov and editor of Times New Roman, states from the title of the material published on his blog¹⁸ that "Braşov is a billion years old before it becomes a tourist city", evoking in the text the lack of professionalism and education of the inhabitants working in services and the disinterest of the authorities in developing tools to help increase the quality of services and experiences in Brasov. The description of the people of Brasov is purely caricatured, with thick touches. Foolishness, arrogance and theft - these are the characteristics that Eftimie attributes to the people of Brasov, considering that here were mixed the worst qualities of those who settled in the city, all these contributing, in the author's opinion, to a dysfunctional city and which is developing well below its potential.

The local journalist Cornelius Popa, editor-in-chief of Gazeta Braşov, also analyzes in the article entitled "Braşov, probably ..." the theme of incoherent development, without head and tail, as if without any kind of vision of the city of Braşov¹⁹. The title is a clear reference to the message present for a while in the whole city center, "Braşov, probably the best city in the world", but the material that follows it unravels, demystifies point by point this slogan. The author accuses the authorities that they do not have on the agenda the maintenance and protection of nature, on the contrary, through their actions they destroy the main element generating the perception of "the most beautiful city". The medieval architecture that Braşov is proud of and which could be a strong point of attraction for tourists is not in the best shape, being a victim of both the passage of time and the disinterest of the administration or bureaucracy.

Cornelius Popa compares the situation of Braşov with that of Sibiu, where there is a constant interest in highlighting the history of the city, a comparison that I have encountered on other occasions. In

¹⁶ <http://www.businessmagazin.ro/actualitate/orasul-din-romania-unde-se-traieste-cel-mai-bine-bucuresti-doar-pe-locul-9-in-clasament-16176345>

¹⁷ <https://www.numbeo.com/cost-of-living/in/Brasov>

¹⁸ <https://eftimie.net/brasovul-miliard-pana-ajunga-oras-turistic/>

¹⁹ <https://gazetabrasovului.ro/2018/05/03/brasovul-probabil>

fact, the main competitor of Braşov seems to be Sibiu, 2 of the 30 articles²⁰ resulting in the first 3 pages of the online search being dedicated to the comparison between Sibiu and Braşov, the result of the debate being undecided; one for the comparison with the city of Cluj and 2 articles for the comparison with the city of Bucharest, against which it wins detachedly (in the opinion of the authors).

The central area of the city is considered "brand of Braşov", a fact highlighted by the study conducted by fwdBv magazine, "The most admired brands - Braşov 2016"²¹, in which the Black Church (located next to the Modarom - Republicii - Piata Sfatului axis) is placed on the third place in the top. In the same top, on the 10th place, is the brand "Tractorul Braşov", although the factory has not existed in the city for almost a decade. In the same top, on the 13th place was "Red Flag" and on the 15th place "Bearing" - all these "local brands" being, in fact, long gone as a commercial activity or as a physical existence (of a factory). The explanation of the existence of these names, which represents a stage of strong industrialization of Braşov during the communist period, is given by Popescu (2017, p.117) who says that cities "*owe their identity largely to one or more local companies. When a major employer moves its headquarters from the city, citizens often feel that a certain part of the city's soul is disappearing.*"

Kourtit et al., (2020, pp. 2-3, apud Hue ff er, 1905) states that "*the soul of the city represents the invisible“ superstructure ”of a human settlement, in terms of products of the human spirit, such as the satisfaction or happiness of the residents, sense of community ("sense of belonging"), cultural characteristics, social capital (or negative, social conflict), political climate, local democracy, ethnic tension or segregation, feelings of security, common feelings of history or identity, etc.*"

In other words, the inhabitants kept in their memory these names, former important factories in Braşov, as symbolic elements of their identity, which give "*the sense of community ("sense of belonging ")*" (Kourtit et al., 2020, p. 3).

Sociological survey about the neighborhoods and symbols of Brasov

As I pointed out in the chapter on theoretical references, previous studies on neighborhoods have shown that this (neighborhood) serves as a link between the "home" and "city" levels in people's perceptions and actions regarding the residential environment (Bonaiuto, Fornara and Bonnes, 2003 in Bonaiuto and Bonnes, 1996). Vâlceanu and Zulaica (2012), according to García-Mira (2005) "suggest that the definition of housing quality can be assessed by examining user satisfaction with

²⁰ <http://mogazice.ro/sibiu-brasov-cineva-care-locuit-ambele-orase>, <https://cemerita.ro/brasov-nu-e-cel-mai-frumos-oras-din-romania/>, <http://www.cluj.travel/vezi-romania-este-brasovul-cel-mai-frumos-oras-din-tara/>

²¹ <http://fwdbv.ro/topul-complet-al-celor-mai-admirate-branduri-si-personalitati-ale-brasovului/>

the residential environment. The main components used in the study of user satisfaction take into account the physical characteristics of the living spaces, such as the location within the city, the size of the house, the number of rooms, etc. and subjective assessments of home users and those made on the environment. Positioning within the city is one of the most important characteristics that determine the quality of housing."

It is therefore essential to understand the perception of neighborhoods in order to assess the overall level of satisfaction with the city. The study conducted by D&D Research for the real estate platform storia.ro, on a number of almost 260,000 subjects, included by me in the analysis of secondary data, evaluated ten criteria: safety, general cost of living, medical facilities, air quality, cleanliness, recreation, access to shops and restaurants, transport services and the level of tranquility.

Starting from the theories of Pocock (1972) and Garcia-Mira (2005, quoted by Vâlceanu and Zulaica in 2012), following the analysis of secondary data about Braşov, I defined my own set of dimensions of city evaluation, which I included in the questionnaire for the sociological survey. Following the quantitative research conducted on a number of 591 subjects in Braşov, using mixed collection methods, both through face-to-face interviews (169 subjects) and online (422 subjects) I assessed the perception of Braşov neighborhoods using a number of nine dimensions (location, safety, access to basic facilities, green spaces, playgrounds, cleanliness, parking, noise and neighbors), the attractiveness of neighborhoods, overall satisfaction with living in Brasov, the perception of competitiveness of Brasov compared to other cities in Romania and I identified elements of symbolic geography (the main 3 representative places for Braşov, top 3 restaurants / terraces, top 3 things (facts / elements) representative about Braşov), along with socio-demographic data. The data obtained I weighted statistically according to the population structure of Braşov, by gender and age, according to the INS information regarding the 2011 population census (this being the most recent census).

In this chapter I presented the results of the statistical analysis, as follows:

5.1. Socio-demographic analysis and simple, explained frequencies

5.2. Comparative analysis by age, bivariate correlations and explanatory boxplots

5.3. Linear regressions for the "green space" dimension, general satisfaction with housing and perception of the city's competitiveness.

From the point of view of the location, the best perceived neighborhood is the Griviţei neighborhood (with the Griviţei, Victoriei, Gării area). It is easy to explain, because this area is located next to the central station of Braşov, which is also an important intra-municipal transport hub, which facilitates the access of residents to all points of interest in the city. At the same time, the largest open market in Braşov (Dacia Square), the Unirea shopping center and the Belaqva sports and

wellness center are also located in that area, and through the underground passage of the station you can reach directly the Sports Park (former Tractorul Park).

On the second place in the evaluations of the people of Braşov is the Răcădău neighborhood (or Valea Cetăţii), which appeared several times in the local and national press as the neighborhood with the cleanest air in Romania (we detailed in the analysis of secondary data).

Peripheral neighborhoods, such as Bartolomeu, Dârste-Noua or Triaj, are seen as the least safe neighborhoods in Braşov, suffering from the highly negative image of the 1990s. The Noua neighborhood is notorious in Braşov for street fighting and terrorized the area.

During analysis We can quickly notice that there is a very attractive neighborhood, Răcădău, which obtains 40% of the votes of the subjects, followed at a considerable distance by the Old Center, with 27.6% of the votes and by Şchei, with 21.5% of the votes. The train station area - Victoriei - Griviţei is only on the fourth place in the preferences expressed by the respondents. We easily notice that the least attractive neighborhood is Bartolomeu, with over 56% of the respondents' selections, followed by Craiter-Triaj, with almost 43% of the selections and, perhaps surprisingly, Dârste-Noua, with 25% of the selections. Analyzing carefully we notice that there are at least four neighborhoods that accumulate a significant number of selections both in the category of attractive neighborhood and in the category of unattractive neighborhood, which makes me say that these areas have a controversial image among Braşov residents. These are the neighborhoods of Dârste-Noua, Tractorul, Avantgarden (1, 2 and 3), Şchei and Astra.

Regarding the degree of satisfaction with the fact that they live in Braşov, most of the respondents said they were satisfied or very satisfied, giving grades of 8 (14.8%), 9 (23.6%) and 10 (45.8%). The average degree of satisfaction with living in Braşov is 8.72. However, almost 11% of respondents were dissatisfied with grades between 5 and 7, and almost 5% were dissatisfied with grades below 5. O An important observation, which should be emphasized, is that the average level of satisfaction for each neighborhood, on each dimension analyzed, reaches a maximum score of 7.77, which indicates rather a general dissatisfaction with the city. In the additional analyzes performed, gender correlations or regressions according to a much larger number of parameters, we identified that the profiles of the respondents are rather similar and there are no strong differences in the perception of the topics studied.

When asked to place the city of Braşov in an imaginary top of the most competitive cities in Romania in terms of economic development and quality of life (services provided to citizens, leisure opportunities, etc.), below a quarter of respondents (21.3%) stated that Braşov is the most competitive city, a similar percentage (21.3%) stated that it is in the top 3, but not on the 1st place, just over 15% considered that it is on the 4th or 5th place and almost 41% considered that they are in the second

part of the ranking, on the 6th-10th places. Below a percentage, they considered that Braşov is outside the top 10.

The cities with which Braşov is in competition, at the level of Brasov's perception, for supremacy in the top of the most competitive cities in Romania are Cluj Napoca (with 48% of mentions), Bucharest (with 15.9% of mentions) and Sibiu (with 10% between mentions). Oradea, Timişoara, Constanţa and Iaşi are also among the top cities perceived as direct competition from Braşov, but with a significantly lower number of mentions, between 7.3% and 2.4%.

In order to identify whether there are distinct patterns between respondents regarding the answers provided, determined by their socio-demographic characteristics, I analyzed the results presented previously as simple frequencies and by a cross-analysis (crosstab / comparative analysis) with age groups, continued with bivariate correlations and explanatory boxplots. Finally, I performed a series of regressions. I excluded from the additional analysis, for administrative reasons, the open-ended questions I asked the respondents.

The results obtained from the analysis of the answers received to the open-ended questions are conclusive for the studied topic and converge with the secondary data already analyzed.

I consider it relevant that the answers overlap almost perfectly with the data obtained in the in-depth interviews and show that Brasov is a city that developed using natural resources (mountains) and cultural products produced almost exclusively in the medieval period (300 - 1600/1700) or pre-medieval (eg the Jun tradition, which is considered to be a pre-Christian practice).

As one can easily see, the results are almost identical to those obtained by TotallyH in the research conducted on experts in the hospitality industry and with those obtained by me in the analysis of results delivered by Google to search for the phrase "How is Brasov?". The city of "beautiful" ("beautiful center"), "clean", "historic" and "quiet" (Braşov) contrasts quite strongly with the city of "university", "cosmopolitan", full of "events" (Cluj), with the "Cultural", "European" (Sibiu) or with the "full of life", "business", "events" and "fun" (Bucharest).

All the attributes that describe in the analyzed word-clouds the cities Sibiu, Cluj or Bucharest refer to recent cultural constructions, which indicate the involvement of the administration and the present community, while the descriptions of Braşov are determined rather by elements external to the current community. It is a conclusion also expressed by some of the subjects of the in-depth interviews. Among the elements considered as defining for Braşov is the Golden Stag festival, on the seventh position, although at the time of data collection this festival was no longer organized. The most attractive HoReCa location is Sergiana, followed by Casa Tudor, and Ceasul Rău; all these locations belong to the Sergiana group of companies, which shows that Sergiana has become a strong brand associated with the city of Braşov.

5.2. Comparative analysis by age groups (crosstab), bivariate correlations and explanatory boxplots

The crosstab (comparative) analysis by age groups was performed to identify whether there are distinct patterns in how to respond, determined by age characteristic. I argued each case by executing bivariate correlations and explanatory boxplots.

I have identified that, although there are associations supported by a value of the Pearson coefficient that indicates strong significance, they are nonlinear. The most eloquent association identified is between the perceived competitiveness of the city of Braşov and the age of the respondents, also in this case there being the strongest linearity.

With the exception of respondents under the age of 25, as the age of respondents increases, an increase in the position of the city of Braşov in a national top of the most competitive cities can be observed. However, because we did not obtain a perfect linearity and because we could not estimate only based on these correlations if the results are not a structural effect, we performed a series of regression analyzes to identify the determinants.

5.3. Linear regressions..

For the regression analysis I decided to use, out of the nine dimensions evaluated for each neighborhood, only the “green space” dimension. The motivation of this decision is given by the fact that the topic of green space per inhabitant is very intensely debated at local level, Braşov being far behind the EU norm. Also through regression analysis we tested the dependence of the variables satisfaction with living in Braşov and the competitiveness of the city. The independent variables according to which we tested the dependence were the age groups of the respondents, occupation, education, sex, home district and county of birth (born in Braşov or born in another county).

The regression by which we analyzed the variable “green spaces” in the Astra neighborhood generated an adjusted R² value equal to .373, which indicates a degree of prediction of the studied variable of 37.3% by using predictors. The data indicate that, in general, the perception of the inhabitants of the other neighborhoods, with the exception of Zizin, about the surface of green space in Astra is more negative than that of the inhabitants of Astra. Other predictions are inconclusive.

The age group 55-64 and over strongly correlates with a level of perception of Braşov on a higher position in the top of competitiveness (B is negative because the grade given means a better position in the top the lower the number). Along with education, occupation and location, this predictor explains 23% of the variation in the perception of Braşov's "competitiveness".

Looking closely at the resulting data, including confidence intervals, we can say that, practically, there are no significant differences between Brasov residents regarding the perception of different areas of the city.

I can draw two intermediate conclusions, which I will detail in the chapter on research findings:

- * the subjects are satisfied with their neighborhood and, as a whole, with their city
- * do not know the neighborhoods (other than the one where they live) - everyone appreciates their neighborhood and considers that the others underperform (B negative on the size of housing in the case of significant values below .05)

In-depth interviews about the symbolic capital of the city of Braşov

Following the analysis of secondary data, several data resulted that outlined the collective image about Braşov and that I wanted to validate qualitatively, through interviews with a series of people very involved in the life of the city. I developed a semi-structured interview guide to allow the subjects to open new fields of discussion but at the same time to keep a research guideline.

I interviewed 17 subjects, with various functions and activities in Braşov, trying to keep the balance both in terms of gender and in terms of the sphere of interest and action of the respondents. Subjects agreed to use their real name.

Following the sixteen interviews, I reached the theoretical saturation of the studied topic, the answers of the subjects to the questions asked becoming repetitive. I opened all the interviews by explaining their motivation and asking them to tell me the first three words they associate the city with and to motivate the choices.

To open the second question, I presented the four graphs that summarize the image of Brasov in the first three pages of results delivered by the Google search engine after the question "How is?" (instead of the suspension points being passed, one by one, the names of the cities of Braşov, Bucharest, Sibiu and Cluj) and I asked them to say what is the impression that these graphics generate.

Depending on their reactions, I asked them, in an order of context, the questions:

- * is everything that Brasov has to offer just "beautiful center"?
- * what does Brasov mean to you?
- * if a foreigner came to you, what would be the representative things about Brasov that you would tell him?
 - * where would you recommend them to rent?
 - * (if he answers "anywhere") are there neighborhoods in which you would send him specifically?
 - * are there areas where you would advise him not to move? - Why?
 - * what would you recommend them to visit?

- * what are the SYMBOLS of Braşov?
- * what Braşov lacks
- * what is the quality of life in Braşov - why?
- * what needs to be done to increase the quality of life?

Following the analysis of the interviews, conducted with Nvivo software, by open coding the material I generated 21 nodes (topics / categories), respectively: (1) Top three words that describe the city, (2) The reaction to "Google charts", (3) Symbols and objectives of Braşov, (4) Pros of Braşov, (5) Disadvantages of Braşov, (6) Local perspective, (7) Tourist perspective, (8) Economy, (9) Chaos in the development of Braşov, (10) Merit external, (11) Culture / Events, (12) Quality of life in Braşov, (13) Increasing quality of life, (14) Comparisons with other cities, (15) Recommended neighborhoods, (16) Not recommended neighborhoods, (17) Typology of Braşov, (18) University and student life, (19) Evening / entertainment life, (20) Aged population, (21) Braşov, departure gate to another country.

The dissatisfactions manifested have a more than double weight in the subjects' discourse compared to the following described topic (symbols and objectives of Braşov - this being a neutral theme). I also discovered topics that have a much smaller weight, such as the association of Braşov with a "gateway" from Romania, topics that can be developed in further research.

Each identified node is a descriptive of the symbolic geography of Braşov and represents a part of the symbolic capital that the city has. Their identification and analysis is a necessary step in any city management project.

7. Summary and final conclusions

I have included in this chapter a very brief summary of the doctoral thesis, in order to make the connection with the conclusions of the paper. In this extended summary I present only the conclusions.

The purpose of this paper was to document the symbolic geography of Braşov and to highlight the defining elements of the mental map of the city, at this time, the symbolic geography of Braşov being dominated by the image of the "beautiful center". The weight of this element on the symbolic map is explained by objective factors (old, imposing architecture, historical load or the special natural setting in which the city center is located), but also a poor communication of other elements.

Moreover, following this analysis I can say that, in fact, there is no coherent plan to communicate Braşov or defining elements of the city either by the authorities or by any associative structure, be it non-profit or professional. The only messages about Braşov coherently communicated to the public, both internally and to tourists, belong to beer brands ("Braşov, probably the best city in the world" -

Carlsberg and "Braşov, the king of Romanian cities" - Ursus) and , although they were created to serve exclusively a commercial interest, they further enhanced the "beautiful center" element.

Brasov is an aging city, with an aging index of 132.23, an observation made by some of my interlocutors, who explained through this aging population the lack of labor in the region.

The reality, statistically confirmed by the aging index, also explains the cataloging of Braşov by some of the interviewed subjects as "a city of retirees", but also the association identified by me with the characteristic "silent", which refers to the lack of dynamism of the city, lack of nightlife or lack of major cultural events. In the perception of the respondents who indicated the lack of cultural events of the magnitude of those in Bucharest, Cluj or Sibiu, the blame lies with the aging population, using the phrase "city of retirees" to emphasize this feature.

Regarding the cultural life of Braşov, it is perceived by all subjects as being unsatisfactory and below potential, indicating the local authorities as the main culprit for this situation. The fact that the first cultural consumption barometer was conducted in Braşov in 2015, with the preparation of the application file for the title of Capital of European Culture, compared to Sf. Gheorghe, a much smaller city, which achieved the cultural consumption barometer still since 2010, can be used as an argument in this accusation brought against local authorities.

However, Brasov is a city that attracts a lot of people being, as highlighted by the World Bank in the report Cities Magnet (2017), one of the main beneficiaries of internal migration and having the potential to reach half a million in the next 10 years. inhabitants in the metropolitan area. The main basin from which Brasov receives immigrants is to the east and south of the Carpathians, as highlighted by the analyzes of the University of Transylvania.

This topic is interesting to analyze in detail and may be a topic in itself, as there is insufficient data on how people who immigrated to Brasov, either before 1989 or after, integrated into the city and contributed to its complexity. Brasov is perceived as a multiethnic and multicultural city, but the only documented influences are mainly those of Hungarians and Saxons and to a much lesser extent those of Jews or Greeks. I did not find any research, no information about how the Romanians from the historical region of Moldova relocated during the communist industrialization period shaped today's Braşov society. There are, however, anecdotal references that indicate, even today, a cleavage between those who are called "braşovecheni", described as conservative and proud, and domestic immigrants, who become Brasov. Brasov seems to be "missing something" and internal immigration to Brasov can be the solution to fill the gaps.

The reasons why Braşov is a magnet city are many, from economic development and employment opportunities, to leisure opportunities or because it is a quiet and safe city, which offers a quality of life far above most cities in Romania . These characteristics were highlighted especially

by comparison with Bucharest, about which many of the respondents as well as various bloggers and opinion formers from the online environment stated that it is a city where they would not raise their children.

All my interlocutors stated that Brasov offers much more than the "beautiful center", indicating a series of opportunities that can be transformed into symbolic capital and put on the symbolic map of the city, generating, in the end, economic capital. In the private sector we have identified both small action groups, which have initiated projects capable of generating symbolic capital, such as the Guild of Innkeepers, which supports the consumption of local products and highlights on the menus those dishes made from local products and companies with large regeneration projects. such as Ceetrus, which developed the Coresi neighborhood on the platform of the former Tractorul plant, but in the public environment we have not identified any action or project, even in the form of a proposal, of local public authorities to indicate a direction for the development of city.

The only coherent proposal of the political class came from the opposition of the local leadership and was on green spaces inside the city, the chapter where Brasov is deficient, allocating less than a square meter of green space per capita, although it is surrounded by forests.

The fact that it is surrounded by forests makes Brasov be perceived nationally as the greenest city in the country and the city with the cleanest air. Nature and positioning in the center of the country, access to the ski resort Poiana Brasov or mountain trails are, along with urban elements and tourist attractions with historical significance, such as Council Square, Black Church or First Romanian School, the main attractions for tourists visiting Brasov and represents very well defined points of the symbolic geography of Brasov.

Brasov is a very easy to recognize city, with geographical landmarks visible from any part of the city, which is an advantage in terms of the formation of symbolic geography in the mind of any local or tourist. Perhaps this ease has turned it into one of the most attractive cities in Romania, but in the long run, in order to maintain its attractiveness, it needs more elements to be created and added to this map. In other words, it needs a clear vision and development strategy, assumed by all stakeholders in the city.

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