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THE COMPETENCES TO EXPLORE, PRESENT AND REPRESENT THE URBAN SPACE

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Abstract

In Romania, geographic academic education prepares, among others, experts in territorial planning. The graduates of level I prove their degree of proficiency by the Bachelor's thesis. In this study, we analysed some aspects about the bibliographic documentation and field research, as well as the processing and presentation of the results in a study entitled “The evolution of residential areas in the city of Cluj-Napoca, between 2000 and 2017. Case study: Bună Ziua Neighbourhood”, realised by a graduate of Territorial Planning (first author) and presented in 2018 at the Faculty of Geography, Babeş-Bolyai University, from Cluj-Napoca, Romania. We analysed the process of learning carried throughout the development of the research and the study itself. In order to evaluate the study, a creative tool was devised as well as the related 26 criteria of evaluation. We concluded that for the theoretical and methodological substantiation, relevant printed and online sources were used. The field research was systematic, rigorous, made according to a systemic vision or paradigm, paying attention to the overall aspects of the city and of the respective neighbourhood, its components, as well as the relationships between them. After the assessment, the thesis obtained 4.57 points which denoted its author's superior level of competence.

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Keywords: Assessment tool, competence level, territorial planning, urban design.



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1. Introduction

The Romanian academic geographic education has always given a significant importance to the training and development of practical skills, as well as to professional competences (Dulamă & Ilovan, 2015, 2017). The process of competences development and their proving among the students is confirmed by different projects and Bachelor's theses. For writing these theses, students are involved in complex activities of geographic research, which represent in fact learning activities that gather different types of information, as components of a wide range of professional competences (for instance, on cultural landscapes: (Dulamă, Ilovan, & Buş, 2016; Dulamă, Maroşti, & Ilovan, 2016; Ilovan et al., 2016a, 2017) territorial identity and development: (Ilovan et al., 2016b, 2016c; Nicula, Stoica, & Ilovan, 2017) on sustainable development: Ilovan et al., 2018; on the importance of geographical field trips (Dulamă et al., 2017) and of Facebook (Dulamă, Vana, & Ilovan, 2016) for developing professional competences in Geography; on methodological approaches (Ilovan & Doroftei, 2017; Scridon & Ilovan, 2016).

2. Problem Statement

Our research started from noticing that some students from the Faculty of Geography, Babes-Bolyai University had difficulty in perceiving the relevant aspects of urban design during field research. The same problem appears when it comes to emphasize the specific issues in photographs and cartographic materials. These difficulties are based on several causes like some gaps in the initial theoretical training in Geography over pre-university and university education; different levels of professional competences in territorial planning acquired and developed during the three years of study at the Bachelor's level or the heterogeneity of the urban space, the variety of investigation methods and its representation.

3. Research Questions

The questions were: Which is the structure of a Bachelor's thesis at Territorial Planning specialization? What methods of geographic urban space research were used? Which traits of the urban space were tracked during field research? Which specific features of the urban space were described in the text and represented by photographs, maps and charts? In what manner was the urban space analysed in the text?

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to establish the level of competence of a graduate of Territorial Planning specialization in research, presentation and representation of the urban space from a new-built neighbourhood of the city of Cluj-Napoca, based on the study/analysis of the Bachelor's thesis from education sciences point of view.]

5. Research Methods

The research material is represented by the process of analysis and writing of the Bachelor's thesis entitled "The Evolution of Residential Areas in the City of Cluj-Napoca between 2000 and 2017. Case

Study: Bună Ziua Neighbourhood”, realised by a graduate of Territorial Planning specialization (first author) and presented in July, 2018, at The Faculty of Geography, Babeş-Bolyai University. The paper was selected according to the author's specialization and competence and also to the object of geographic research, which is less explored from a geographic perspective.

5.1. Participants

This research involved the author of the Bachelor's thesis, who agreed with the fact that the research process and realization of the paper, as well as the paper itself to represent the object of this study made from education sciences point of view. The author of this paper has attended the initial training program to become geography teacher, within which she was evaluated at many disciplines and she demonstrated/proved high level of competences in Geography and Didactics of Geography. In research was involved a professor/researcher proficient in the Didactics of Geography and another one, specialist in Education Sciences.

5.2. Method

In order to collect the data we used the participatory observation method and interview method so as to obtain information about the bibliographic documentation, field research and operation of processing and presenting the results in the text, photographs and maps. For the assessment of the Bachelor's thesis, we used the method of content analysis and visual methods.

The assessment tool. For achieving the research aim, we analysed the Bachelor's thesis using an assessment tool (Table 1), built on the basis of specialized literature (Dulamă & Ilovan, 2016). We evaluated eight aspects: the structure, the research motivation, the theoretical substantiation, the research methodology, the research results, the discussions, the conclusions and the writing of the scientific paper. We assessed them in accordance with 26 criteria to which we associated scores from 1 to 5. For a fair-balanced evaluation, in some cases, the score was given for 2-3 criteria. At C19, the score awarded is very small reported to the real value of the research and the results, but considering the entire paper, we found that the evaluation of the level of competence is not affected significantly. The maximum score is 95 points and the minimum is 19 points. The mean obtained by dividing the total score by the number of criteria shows the level of competence: inferior (m-1-2); medium (m-2.1-4.5); superior (m -4.5-5).]

6. Findings

6.1. On the level of competence

In order to establish the level of competence to present and represent the urban space in a Bachelor's thesis, we used the assessment tool projected for this purpose (Table 1). Based on the analysis of the paper, the most part of the aspects evaluated received the maximum score. There were given smaller scores for the theoretical substantiation, discussions (highlighting strengths and opportunities, dysfunctions/ weaknesses/ threats; presenting measures/solution, proposals), conclusions, the writing of the scientific paper (respecting the structure of a scientific work). The mean obtained (m -4.57) denotes a superior level of competence.

Table 01. The level of competence to present and represent the urban space in a Bachelor's thesis

The analysed aspect	Assessment criteria	Score (1-5)
Structure	C1 Adequacy with the title C2 Coherence of the paper	5
Research motivation	C3 Clarity of presentation of the research problem C4 Argumentation of the research	5
Theoretical substantiation	C5 Relevance of cited sources and information presented C6 Timeliness of the sources C7 Completeness of the sources	4
Research methodology	C8 Presentation of the time, participants, material research C9 Description of the using of methods and tools C10 Presentation of research design	5
Research results	C11 Presentation in the text (essential aspects, details, systematization, coherence)	5
	C12 Representing the results on the map (content, correctness of execution, thematic coverage of the subject, relevance)	5
	C13 Representing the results on charts (content, relevance, correctness of execution)	5
	C14 Presentation of the space in photographs (content, clarity, relevance)	5
Discussions	C15 Situation in space (spatial relationships, city-district relationship, relationship with environmental components, etc.)	5
	C16 Situation in time (evolution of the city and district)	5
	C17 Geographic characterization of the studied area	5
	C18 Urban development of the studied area	5
	C19 Characterization of each element (TRU)	5
	C20 Highlighting strengths and opportunities C21 Highlighting dysfunctions/ weaknesses/ threats	4
	C22 Presenting measures/solution, proposals in order to eliminate the problems/ dysfunctions/ weaknesses/ threats/dangers and to optimize the functionality of the district	4
Conclusions	C23 Synthesis, highlighting features and site specificity	3
Writing the scientific paper	C24 Respecting the structure of a scientific paper (title, introduction, theoretical foundation, method, results, discussions, conclusions, bibliography)	2
	C25 Respecting the requirements of a scientific paper (quoting sources, scientific language, systematization / organization, correctness and relevance of information, depth / coverage of details, composition of the bibliography)	5
	C26 Frame and aesthetics of the paper	5
Total		87
Mean		4.57

6.2. On the research methodology and the learning process

The research methodology (5 p) was presented systematically, by stages, in the first chapter. From the presentation mode, we noticed the multitude of research methods, materials and tools used. In the first stage, the bibliographic documentation was carried out. The sources studied were grouped by domains, specifying the purpose of their reading. In order to know the development of the city in time and space, History and Geography papers were studied and, to know concepts, theories and methodologies related to

urban space planning, urbanism and urban development papers were read. Many situations in the field (the construction of buildings that exceed the height of the area, the demolition of some constructions) were identified by reading articles from online media. Google Earth Pro satellite imagery and some cartographic sources were carefully analysed: 1952 Scale Plans (Scale 1: 25,000), Topographic Maps (Scale 1: 25,000) from 1968-1972, Maps of the Urbanistic General Plan (UGP) Cluj-Napoca, 2014.

The field research had a significant weight, in comparison to the others stages of research, the main method was observation. For data updating, during field research was used the application Carry Map, a helpful tool even for those who are not familiar with geoinformational software (Bilașco, Moldovan, & Roșca, 2017). In the office stage, in order to upload in a format compatible with Android, the UGP maps and the images from Google Earth were converted into a geopackage using the extension Carry Map Builder, which was installed on Arc Map 10.3. In the field, with the maps uploaded on smartphone, the GPS turned on and an external battery, information about the height, type and the function of the buildings were collected. The images from Google Earth 2016 were updated. Beside 990 buildings existing in 2016, there were identified other buildings completed in 2018, abandoned or under construction. Some relevant urban features and malfunctions were captured in photos. So as to represent the height, type and the function of the buildings, the information collected in the field was subsequently introduced in Arc Map 10.3, using the cartographic method. The analysis method was used in bibliographic documentation, in the field and in the presentation of the cartographic and photographic material. By the synthesis method, the overall picture of the territory was outlined. The description of the research methodology denotes a deep knowledge and proves a superior level of competence in collecting data from bibliographic sources and in the field, using the observation method and by using leading-edge technology, as well as in the processing and representation of the data.

6.3 On the thesis

The structure of the Bachelor's thesis (5 p). The Bachelor's thesis has 119 pages and includes: Preface, seven chapters (Ch. 1 The theoretical background; Ch. 2 The geographic features of the city of Cluj-Napoca; Ch. 3 The urban development of Cluj-Napoca; Ch. 4 The geographic characterization of the studied area; Ch. 5 The urban development of Buna Ziua district; Ch. 6 The analysis of the particularities of urban planning in Buna Ziua district; Ch. 7 Proposals for optimization of the functionality of the district), Conclusions, Bibliography and Annexes. We observe that these chapters do not have the typical name of the scientific studies, although they contain the information specific to this type of studies.

The motivation for choosing the theme (5 p). The research question and the motivation for choosing the investigation theme was presented in the Preface. The author emphasized the fact that Buna Ziua Neighbourhood developed in the post-socialist period, alongside with other districts from Cluj-Napoca (Europa, Făget). She noticed the existence of an accelerated urbanization process in which the emphasis was put on the real estate development, on ensuring the "dormitory" function and not on designing functional spaces, according to the needs of the community. This neighbourhood is perceived as a "perpetual construction site", with various malfunctions in urban planning. The choice of the theme is justified by the development trend of this neighbourhood, with a poor observance of regulations and modern urban planning concepts. This is the reason why the district needs proposals for optimization of

the functionality, starting from an urban planning that aims towards the needs and expectations of the human community so as to ensure optimum living conditions and a satisfactory quality of life.

Theoretical substantiation (4 p). The theoretical substantiation was realised in the Introduction included in the first chapter entitled The theoretical background and contains a part of essential theoretical aspects, other being integrated in the rest of the chapters. The research theme was placed in the context of urban development in Romania after 1990, when the built space of the cities had significantly increased. The built space of Cluj-Napoca added between 1990 and 2001 another 2000 ha as opposed to 3.978 ha in 1989 (Mitrea, 2002, p. 301). The process of urban expansion and the extension of the built space towards the outskirts was justified by the lack of space in the central area, the desire to escape from the crowded centres and the requirements of people who had higher incomes (Ianoş, 2004). This study realised by a person with competences in territorial planning was placed in an urban conception- to provide to the community optimum living condition by usual infrastructure (water supply in a centralized system, sewerage, gas distribution network, electricity, transport infrastructure, waste collection services, etc.) and the necessary equipment to ensure the quality of life from a social and economic point of view (daily urban attractors: commercial establishments, educational institutions, medical offices, recreation facilities, etc.). From a specialist' in spatial planning point of view, the urban expansion must be carefully planned so as to fulfil a wide range of needs of the various people, also taking into account aspects of life quality.

The research results (m-5) and discussions (m-4.7) are presented in seven chapters. In chapter 2, the relevant Geographic features of the city of Cluj-Napoca are briefly described. Chapter 3 reproduces in a concise way. The urban development of Cluj-Napoca over two millennia. Being a geographic study of territorial planning, the attention was drawn to the present situation. The bibliographic references capture several relevant issues: the majority of the built-up fund of Cluj-Napoca was made between 1930 and 1960, a large number of them being individual ones; the number of blocks increased after 1970; the prevalence of blocks (80% of the total number) came as a result of policies and urban and architectural development during the socialist period (Primăria şi Consiliul Local Cluj-Napoca, 2014a, p. 35). Between 1990 and 2001 the residential areas spread uncontrollably, the built space added a third compared to its surface in 1989, over 20 ha of green spaces were cut out, the space lost for good its natural feature and thus appeared the “industrial slops” (Mitrea, 2002, p. 301).

The student underlined the negative impact of the Urbanistic General Plan (UGP) from 1999 which introduced in the built-up area “extensive surfaces”, many of them being still unused. She emphasized that in the Urbanistic General Plan from 2014 (Primăria şi Consiliul Local Cluj-Napoca, 2014a, p. 43), the built areas are viewed as an aggression on the landscape, “an urban and architectural failure”, having accessibility and network connection issues, with insufficient facilities, no sidewalks and public spaces. She remarked that this failure was caused by the absence of technical foundation, some spatial structuring elements and road projects or urban networks in UGP 1999. A considerable aspect is the fact that the housing stock of 116,931 dwellings was built in 2004, mostly from private housing (114,839 dwellings from private funds, 2,092 are dwellings owned by the public authorities) (Primăria şi Consiliul Local Cluj-Napoca, 2014a, p. 35), explaining a trend at local and national level. The study showed that the UGP from 2014, in effect, provided measures to improve the urban quality: the development and expansion of neighbourhood centres, public and green spaces; the expansion of the

public facilities network in residential areas (pre-university education, public parking spaces, sports facilities); the design of the urban infrastructure in the areas where it was lacking (Primăria și Consiliul Local Cluj-Napoca, 2014a, p. 91).

Chapter 4 describes The geographic characterization of Buna Ziua Neighbourhood. This is located on the northern slope of The Feleac Hill, on a terrace of Someșul Mic (Mitrea, 2002, p. 297). Extended on a surface about 218 ha, the neighbourhood includes mostly individual buildings, but also residential complexes. The description focuses on significant aspects for space planning which offer a deep understanding of reality, these being represented in relevant maps (The location of Buna Ziua Neighbourhood Map, Soil Texture Map, Slopes Map, and Slope Orientation Map), and photos.

Chapter 5 particularize The urban development of Buna Ziua Neighbourhood, which is the most substantial and original part of the paper. The study focused on land use for two years: 2000 and 2012. In 2000, the cartographic materials and the graphic representations showed the prevalence of agricultural land, the urban space was situated only in the north of the district, in the area of influence of Andrei Mureșanu Neighbourhood and near Turda Road, where the development of the real estate was favoured by the existence of the road. Clusters of trees of various species exist both in the district and at its eastern extreme, but their presence is not exploited for recreational / relaxation and educational purposes, as it is recommended in the specialty literature (Dulamă, Illovan, & Magdaș, 2017; Illovan et al., 2018) because of the lack of landscape design.

In 2009, we can remark the increase of the density of residential buildings in the central area of the neighbourhood and the appearance of some commercial buildings (showroom) on Calea Turzii. Few residential buildings were made until 2011, but the construction of a hotel and a supermarket was completed. In 2012, the northern area of the district was included in the category of urban spaces and the arable land was located at the south of Bună Ziua Street. In 2012, individual buildings in the central area were completed, in 2013 the eastern area was completed and, in 2014, the buildings spread in the south-eastern part, the prevalent dwellings were the individual ones, with related facilities (annexes, garages) or vegetable gardens. The year 2016 was the highest in the development of the neighbourhood, when the central area was completed. Compared to the previous years, in 2016, were finished most of the residential buildings, blocks with great heights and similar architecture. The built surfaces recorded a 3.5-fold increase from approximately 7 ha in 2003 to 24 ha in 2016. As far as the number of the buildings is concerned, there is a continuous increase from 371 buildings in 2003, to 806 buildings in 2009, to 990 at present. Between 2003 and 2016, the accelerated development of the housing stock is noticed, with no significant impact of the economic crisis from 2008.

Based on the field research from November 2017 and March 2018, she represented the plots which had been built. Most of these buildings were concentrated in the free spaces in the centre of the neighbourhood, contributing to increasing urban density. In the thesis, were represented maps, charts and text information about the type of living, the function of buildings and the height, obtained after processing the field data in ArcMap 10.3. The prevalent type of living is the individual one (55%), being followed by the collective one (39%), then the semi collective one (6%). As distribution in the territory, the individual houses are located in the east, the residential complexes in centre and the semi collective buildings are interwoven among them. The most important function of the buildings is residential (88%),

but it mixes harmoniously with other (commercial, service or mixed). When it comes to the height of the buildings, most of them (65%) have low regime (P+1+M), others (30%) have medium regime (P+2/3+M) and a few ones (5%) have more than four floors. As location, the individual buildings with low height are situated in the eastern and southern area, the medium ones are evenly distributed across the territory and those with a high height regime are located in the central area, in the north of the Bună Ziua Street. Some buildings exceed the maximum admissible height regime, the land occupancy percentages and the land use coefficient.

Chapter 6 contains The analysis of the particularities of urban planning in Bună Ziua Neighbourhood. To make preliminary comments on the functionality of the neighbourhood, the student vectorised the territorial reference units (TRU) based on the maps from UGP (2014a) and she consulted the provisions of the Local Urban Regulation (Primăria și Consiliul Local Cluj-Napoca, 2014b). For each TRU, she presented the UGP 2014 provisions, a map with the distribution in the territory and observations in the field, followed by photos. Chapter 7 includes Proposals for optimization of the functionality of the Neighbourhood. The proposals expressed aimed at optimizing the functionality of the neighbourhood and several aspects: transport infrastructure (solving land ownership problems, asphalting / street stones, setting up stations, building refugees, and placing ticket machines), arranging bicycle tracks, playgrounds and public parks, and public lighting. Conclusions show Bună Ziua Neighbourhood is in constant development and territorial expansion, more or less directed by specialists in urbanism. The reduction of arable land in favour of the built space produces a significant anthropogenic impact on the natural landscape, objectified in reducing green areas, the degradation of the ecosystem, changes in biocenosis, pollution, all of these lower the quality of human life.

7. Conclusion

According to the analysis of the Bachelor's thesis and the learning process unfolded in order to realise it, we reached a few conclusions from the Education Sciences perspective. For the theoretical and methodological substantiation, relevant sources, printed and online were used. The field research was systematic, rigorous, made according to a systemic vision / paradigm, paying attention to the overall aspects of the city and neighbourhood, its components, as well as the relationships between them. The features/ the specificity of the urban space were/was represented in photographs, maps and good quality charts and were carefully presented in the text, giving it the value of a source / document for solving the dysfunctions and improving the quality of life in the neighbourhood. The mean 4.57 obtained after the assessment of the thesis using an original tool designed to this purpose shows a superior competence level of a graduate of Territorial Planning in research, presentation and representation of the urban space.

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