Declining Urban Structures - the Galati County Case

Violeta PUSCASU

v.puscasu@ugal.ro

Dunarea de Jos University of Galati, Romania

Abstract. Constraint by physical and territorial-administrative limitations, Galați county displays an internally manifested functional enclavization, present at the level of settlements that is the first stage for declining territorial structures. The functional enclaves have a double nature within the cities, their relative isolation correlating with a certain process of social-cultural segregation, as well as an unbalanced economic cover. At the outside, the surpassing of the natural and administrative limitations takes two forms, that of territorial community under the shape of pseudo-suburbs and declining structures or, the second one, the form of complete “de-location”, beyond the administrative boundaries, at different distances, according to the main factor that generated the process.

Keywords: enclavisation, decline, urban structure, territorial

JEL code: R14, R52, R58

1. Introduction

The terms enclave/exclave, having along the years eminently geopolitical significances, have crossed over during the last years. Steck (2000) or Claval (2001), to exemplifies only two mark references, included it to the vocabulary of social geography, of transportation and territory planning, referring, as a matter of fact, to a certain isolation of a phenomenon, human group or territory, in relation to a neighbouring ensemble.

Accompanied by the attribute “functional”, employed to refer to the ensemble communication difficulties, the enclave is the result of poor transportation facilities, of the segregation generated by the quality of the living standard or the result of territorial difference of the socio-cultural structure of the population. These are only few of the most representative examples of the context in which enclavisation as a state of facts can be recognized and defined. More and more frequently, insufficient transportation facilities within urban areas transform the residential clusters into enclaves by placing some neighbourhoods more than 10 minutes away from mass transportation means. At geographic scale, the naturally limited urban sites may escape the tightness of these limits by exclavisation, fact which, at least by semantic opposition, suggests an externalisation of the urban organism outside the administrative frame, preserving though a few major features of the mother-matrix.

Galați in its double administrative significance, due to its partially territorial marginal position, is representative for an analysis of the double phenomenon of urban functional enclavisation/declining.

2. The triad of urban structure analysis – the complex, the neighbourhood and the city

Each city is unique. In terms of logic, the morphestructural, historic and progressive, dimensional or social-economic patterns are fully abided by and verifiable as far as the genus proximus is concerned, but not as far as the specific difference is concerned; yet, this is precisely what gives uniqueness to each city. From a geographic point of view, the correspondent of the specific difference from logic is the site, the unrepeatable geographic place, which can be taken only by a single city or a single urban phenomenon.

Galați, county and town, by their position among waters, the Brateș Lake and the Prut in the east, the Danube and the Siret in the south and in the west, displays all the characteristics of a unique territory in Romania.

From a geomorphologic viewpoint, the most part of the intra-urban territory includes, in the east, a riverine spit on which there lies the industrial zone ‘from the city valley’; between the spit and the Brateș Lake there lies the Danube valley, a floodable zone when the waters are high, even after the construction of the defence dams, on a part of which there lies the old location of Bădălan neighbourhood; from the Cătuşa pond and its valley in the west and south-west till the Brateș Lake in the east-north-east there is a terrace of variable width on which there lies most of the old downtown, the Mazepa, Țiglina (I – IV), Dunărea, Siderurgiștilor and Aeroport neighbourhoods; the superior level of the extra-urban territory
lying on the 35-55 m high terrace, between the Cătușa and Măline valleys, is taken by ISPAT SIDEX steelworks. It is easily noticeable that the expansion of the intra-urban territory has practically reached its maximum limits, beyond which, either we are no longer on the city’s territory, or the physical conditions are no longer favourable for a settlement. The phases of horizontal expansion and solidification of the various parts of the city that have come one after another in the last two centuries alternated more and more with a vertical development and an ever higher density of habitation during the years of socialist systematisation to return, after 1990, to the search for a new horizontal escape. It goes without saying that the corroborated multiple effects of this two-dimensional density growth in the most favourable habitation areas of Galați have been noticed and partially analysed in local studies done by some subject-related institutions or are identifiable in impersonalised general analyses of the sociologic, urban and ecologic phenomena at the national level.

Empirically simplifying the diagnosis of the internal configuration of the city, we could say the phenomenon of functional enclavization of Galați is apparently unidentifiable, the habitation units situated at a distance larger than 10 minutes from the nearest means of transportation being few and naturally distributed in the peripheral neighbourhoods of Dunărea, Micro 13, 38, 39, 40, in the house neighbourhood Lozoveni and some remains of Bădălan neighbourhood. The detailed phenomenon has not yet constituted the subject of any study that might have theoretical or practical relevance for the administration and the companies of public and private transportation.

The dynamics of territory amelioration is based on a generally shared conviction according to which the opening of a territory through an infrastructure policy, i.e. what we might call desenclavation, is a compulsory development stage. The paradox appears in the case of those sites that in spite of having a good infrastructure are famous for the incapacity of their networks to function properly due to the fact that the traffic volume is superior to the capacities, being thus characterized by a process of functional enclavisation/closing/blocking.

Galați city belongs to that category of cities with problems of functional nature at the infra-urban level due to the absence of fast and modern infrastructure and improper functioning of the inconvenient urban network where traffic is slowed down to situations of temporary total jam. Wherever the traffic infrastructure surrounds or penetrates (or fragments) the urban fabric, discontinuities appear and they lead to new forms of enclavation/enclavization. As a matter of fact, this holds valid not only in the case of great agglomerations, but also in the case of smaller cities that are similarly subjected to the effects of the above-mentioned paradox – only at a different scale. In the Romania of the third millennium, besides Bucharest that displays many of the unfortunate features specific to great urban agglomerations, not even the provincial towns seem to escape this phenomenon any longer.

Of an ever-growing importance is the confirmation of the existence of a functional “enclosure” and of several “enclaved cells”, specifying the nature and characteristics of the spatial-territorial varieties and seeking a better understanding of these last ones. The territorial reflex of social polarization within the city takes incipient shapes of enclavization. Having as their base their remoteness from the centre and, due to this, the isolation by poor servicing (behind which we could guess a slight social segregation as compared to the centre) with transportation routes to and from the neighbourhoods previously mentioned, the functional enclaves of Galați city are at the same time negative social pseudo-enclaves. Some embryos of cultural segregation come to join these pseudo-enclaves without territorially superimposing on them, fact which has been experienced by the port-city before in its history. Today, the Indian community located in Mazeapa neighbourhood joins the ethnic-cultural mosaic that Galați has hosted along the years. It is still to be seen whether, on the landscape of social-functional relationships, it will produce the same effect as that produced by the French or the Greek communities – to mention only the insertions of the last fifty years – which were projected in Galați landscape by the economic policy of the state and which have lead to mini habitation complexes (sub neighbourhoods) named La Francezi and La Grece.

It is worth noticing the fact that in the case of these cultural enclaves we witness a positive perception of the new community which explains why their presence as an enclave has not been followed by a communicational isolation by transportation; on the contrary, they have been offered the best locations as far as the transportation network is concerned.

The superior tier of analysis is that of the site itself which is physically limited and predisposed to enclavation/enclavization.

The more limited the site is, allowing no territorial super-expansion, the more acute the question of urban functional enclavation gets. These circumstances require a superior analysis and understanding of the interface that has to function between the logic of urban development and the logic of mobility.
3. Declining - effect of urban functional enclavisation?

The answer is extremely simple and easy to notice in the material reality: the appearance of exclaves - forms of territorial externalisation of the pressure within the site. This phenomenon has several types of incidences on the regional system in its entirety: spatial-temporal, economic, ecologic and social-behavioural. Since the amplitude of dealing with all these incidences is beyond the limits of this presentation, we shall highlight only the territorial forms of this process of escaping its limits experienced by the city. We have classified them into two categories of exclaves: those formed through "overflowing" and those of the "jumping" type.

"Overflowing" along the roads that exit the city is the first and the oldest form of horizontal expansion and it could be met in all forms of urbanization of the outskirts. As far as Galaţi is concerned, this overflowing takes two forms:

- **continuous**, towards Vânători, along DN 26, resulting in a peripheral residential area of the "banlieu" type (including and appendix in Costi village which, at present - is partially in the area of urban influence); the expansion along the road up to the fusion of the intra-urban territory with the rural one is already an imminent fact, the yet unoccupied interstices being already part of a dominantly residential plan or other complementary functions such as trade facilities, small production units, entertainment, etc. From a positional point of view and from the perspective the safety and quality of the natural environment as well as the degree of access to and from the city, this location could be considered as optimum for the external expansion of the city but it is insufficient to drain the entire anthropic pressure existing at the city level;

- **discontinuous**, towards Şendreni, along DN 25, resulting in a residential subensemble without a continuous connection with the city, functioning somewhere between rural-urban "exclave" of Galaţi and social and especially architectural "exclave" within the administrative territory of Şendreni, the majority of the new constructions owners being second-generation Galaţi inhabitants. In this case the territorial discontinuity is due to the interposing of the smelting platform and the discontinuities caused by Mâlina and Cătuşa valleys. Different from the northern alternative, the expansion along the northwestern line has been better administratively "controlled". That is why the ensemble of newly constructed buildings forms a distinct unit at the northern extremity of the commune taking advantage of the opportunity of easy road access. It is also more active than its Vânători counterpart because the connections with E 85 and the Siret passage go through here.

This form of territorial release of the urban organism has been facilitated, on the one hand, by the fact that the host-territories belong to the same administrative county framework and, on the other, by the practice of "centre-periphery" relationships that has actively functioned through commuting creating at the mental level the perception of a faster adaptation of the individual to the "city in the country".

Different from this alternative but generated by the same cause, another part of the city has headed towards the southern vicinities, "jumping" over natural and administrative limitations and generated another category of products.

"Jumping" at various distances, creating **mini Galaţi-like neighbourhoods** in several well-delimited locations constitutes the second category of reaction of the city movement.

- I.C. Brătianu, Garvân, Jiţila, across the Dunăre, in Tulcea County, actually represent locations of secondary residences, the low degree of accessibility limiting both the number, and the permanency of the new habitational locations. It is only in their case that we can talk about a functional enclavation/enclavization proper which limits for the time being the use of the existing utilities. In theory, since the connection between the two riverbanks is secured via the ferry, both in Galaţi, and in Brăila, and the villages have been within the influence and polarisation area of Galaţi and Brăila for a long time, we should witness a much stronger presence of Galaţi origin. The impediment seems to be first of all of economic nature (the high cost of river crossing for automobiles) and then of technical-urbanistic nature (the absence of methane gas and running water facilities), their peripheral position towards the centre of another administrative frame being not very promising as far as future major changes are concerned, with the exception of the change that might be brought along by the construction of the bridge over the Danube in the Smârdan area. This might lead to radical spatial reconfiguration;

- Along Galaţi - Tecuci and Galaţi - Bereşi alignments there are several previously mentioned centrifugal nuclei of urban overflowing, lying along national roads, with a

---

**International Conference “Risk in Contemporary Economy”**

XIIth Edition, 2011, Galati, Romania,

“Dunarea de Jos” University of Galati – Faculty of Economics and Business Administration
more significant concentration in the Iești – Liești grouping, already known for its urban potential;
- Soveja – Lepșa – Greșu, in Vrancea County, or even Slănic Moldova, in Bacău County, are the remotest concentrated presences of Galați urban origin, forms belonging to the category of social exclaves;
- ”D. Cantemir” neighbourhood in Brăila County is a unique phenomenon in Romania by the complexity of the construction process. Designed as a new town neighbouring Galați, whose property it is, but occupying a part of the territory of Vădeni commune in Brăila County, this neighbourhood is the typical example of political intervention in the reshaping of a region and the effects of this intervention on the spatial reconfiguration of a region.

Each of these neo-structures produced by the urban pressure and by the liberalization of numerous aspects of society in its entirety represents distinct and particular situations which presuppose different investigations and effects, some of them having been already analysed by other studies.

4. Conclusions
The end of controlled planning and urban reshaping opened the door for free manifestation of the settling tendencies of the urban organism in the shapes that were offered by its natural frame or towards which it was forced by the economic, social and political superstructures. The terms in which we understand nowadays the administration of urban space are different from those of the years before December 1989 as far as the concept of periphery/hinterland/vicinity is concerned. This explains the diversity of shapes taken by the city once out of the physical and functional enclavation/enclavization.

The planning of urban perspectives is far from operating in a concrete manner. The Cantemir neighbourhood-like initiatives, which is essentially a product of urbanizable urban vicinities planning, has the value of avant-garde but with the limitations and deficiencies that spring from such an endeavour especially due to the fact that the planning of such an ensemble is not exclusively the prerogative of engineering and urbanistic-architectural competencies.

The two tiers of dealing with the problems of functional nature resulting from the internal enclavization of certain neighbourhoods, correlated with the larger one, of the entire city, constitutes directions that have been insufficiently considered by the theoretical and practical studies and which the present investigation has tried to geographically delineate.

Bibliography
1. Steck B., 2000, Contribution à une géographie du développement, Dossier pour l’Habilitation à diriger des Recherches, Université du Havre, tome1, Enclavement Désenclavement une problematique du développement, tome 2