

UMCS

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*Cluj-Napoca in communist Romania: anatomy of urban  
changes and memory*

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Cluj-Napoca w komunistycznej Rumunii: analiza zmian urbanistycznych – wspomnienie

INTRODUCTION

Modern Cluj-Napoca in Romania is a controversial and ambiguous city. It still preserves memories of Austro-Hungarian past as well as of the not so long past communist period. One cannot imagine the city nowadays without its old buildings remnant from Austrian times, or without the new neighbourhoods and parks that appeared in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The city is situated on a cultural borderline: it was influenced by the Romanian, German and Hungarian cultures during history, and there lived a strong Jewish community up until the Second World War. Cluj-Napoca, as a multicultural city, comprised of a diversity and variety of minorities and ethnicities, is representative for Central-Eastern Europe.

The second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is a complex period in Cluj-Napoca's urban space development. The two most important events which influenced the city's landscape development were World War II and the Romanian Revolution of 1989. After World War II, Cluj found itself within the borders of the communist Romanian state. In accordance with the ideological conception of the Romanian authorities during the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the changes in the city landscape served to add both Romanian and communist character to the city. After the 1989 revolution Cluj-Napoca found itself within the borders of a state which was on a road of profound institutional and political changes. During this period the next

changes in the city space took place and the city landscape was adjusted to match the new ideological and political reality.

The article that follows presents a brief sketch of the historical background of Cluj-Napoca development, then addresses the processes of the city space's re-shaping in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and finally focuses on the analysis of old Cluj-Napoca inhabitants' memories about the first decades after the Second World War. The first part of the article, presenting the main facts and tendencies of the city development, is based on the Author's Master's degree research completed at the Lancaster University in 2012. The data for the second part of this article, which is devoted to the individual narratives about after War Cluj, was collected in July – October 2012 during fieldwork in Cluj-Napoca within the frames of the research project "Cluj-Napoca between 1939–1960: Diversity of Remembrances". The project envisaged a 3 months' field research in Cluj-Napoca and conducted 21 in-depth interviews. The interviews were conducted with the classic method of oral history. Each participant was firstly asked to tell his or her life story. Then, during the second round of the interview, questions about the city in different periods of participants' life were asked. The third round of interview involved several subsidiary, specifying questions about certain events and aspects of the city life. The second and third rounds of interview contained generally similar circle of questions to each participant. The respondents were representatives of different ethnic groups who lived in Cluj during the first post-war decade – Romanians, Hungarians, Germans, Jews, Roma. In search for impressions from different perspectives, our team conducted the interviews with people from different social backgrounds (teachers, workers, peasants, etc.) and also from ethnically mixed families. The project and its results don't claim to demonstrate the full image of the period. Due to its limited budget and timeframe, the project's aim was to show only the illustration of the way in which the after war life of Cluj is imprinted in the memories of different groups of city's inhabitants. This project's realization was possible thanks to the support of the Geschichtswerkstatt Europa program and of the Foundation "Remembrance, Responsibility and Future". Among the theoretical inspirations for the second part of this article the memory theories of Niklas Luhman and Maurice Halbwachs should be named.

#### THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The city of Cluj-Napoca developed throughout its history on the borderline of different cultures and civilizations and this fact is reflected in its name even until present day. The first written mention of this town – as a medieval settlement – was in 1213 under the Latin name *Castrum Clus*. *Kolozsvár*, *Cluj*, *Klausenburg* – all these are the city's name from medieval period until the 1970s in the three languages which were spoken in the city during its history (Hungarian, Romanian,

and German). The adding “Napoca” refers to two epochs of the city’s history: the Roman era and the Ceausescu’s period, each of which left its print on the city’s landscape.

As it was rightly observed by Rogers Brubaker, nowadays Cluj-Napoca is “Romania’s fifth-largest city and Transylvania’s unofficial capital”<sup>1</sup>. This city is a meaningful place for the historical memory of Romanians and Hungarians – the two nations which were dominant in those lands in different periods of history. An important role in the city was played by Jews, Roma and Germans but they were never the main actors in the “battle of memory” which took place in the city public space in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

With its origins in Antiquity, the city was claimed by various nations as their own. The first settlements on this territory are dated to the Paleolithic and the Neolithic ages, and the first urban settlement on this place goes back to the Roman period. It was founded at the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century and was called “Napoca” (or “Napuca”). In the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD Napoca was raised to the rank of municipium within the Roman Empire and became the capital of Dacia Porolisenensis. By the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century the Roman administration left these lands and the urban settlement there has temporarily disappeared. According to the archeological data, however, a part of the inhabitants continued to live on this territory. In the 10<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> centuries this territory was conquered by the Hungarians. In the Middle Ages chronicles a settlement called Castrum Clus which belonged to the Hungarian kingdom was mentioned in place of Napoca. After the Tatar invasion of 1241 the Saxons were settled in the town by the Arpad house kings, and the town was favored with certain economic privileges. This influenced the fact that the town was soon rebuilt and started to develop quite quickly. In the middle of the 15<sup>th</sup> century the St. Michael’s church was built and became an important dominant in the town’s landscape. According to Rogers Brubaker, at the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century Saxons constituted the majority in the city but already by the middle of the 15<sup>th</sup> century around half of its population had Hungarian names and surnames<sup>2</sup>. Nevertheless, clear borders between German-speaking and Hungarian-speaking population in the city had never existed. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century the gradual magyarisation of the city began. The period of the Reformation is usually described in literature as a time of religious tolerance in the town which had a complex religious landscape, but we shouldn’t forget about the fact that the Christian Orthodox population was still not allowed to settle in the town. Starting with Transylvania’s incorporation into the Habsburg Empire, the town’s flourishing period finished, and the economy and the population’s growth slowed down. In the period of 1791–1848 the town was the capital of Transylvania and at the same time it became an impor-

<sup>1</sup> R. Brubaker, *Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town*. Princeton 2006, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 90.

tant center of the Romanian national awakening as well as of Hungarian culture prospering. The first Greek-Catholic church was built inside the town's walls and an Orthodox church was constructed nearby the town. The city legend says that in spite of the fact that Greek-Catholics, as well as Christian Orthodox, were not allowed to settle in the city and to have religious symbols here, the construction of the Greek-Catholic church succeeded because of their bishop's cunningness. In the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century a Hungarian forum was opened in town, the Hungarian theater was established and several Hungarian-language periodicals were founded<sup>3</sup>. The Central Park established in 1830s – 1860s became a favorite place of spending free time for the town inhabitants. Alongside with this, in 19<sup>th</sup> century the town's public sphere was dominated by Austrian rhetoric. The Carolina obelisk was erected on the square near the St. Michael's church in order to commemorate the Emperor's family visit to Cluj in 1817. The obelisk became the first secular monument in the town and changed the meaning of the main city square which from a market place was transformed into a place for promenade.

In 1867 Kolozsvár<sup>4</sup> and entire Transylvania became a part of Hungary and starting with this moment the population together with the significance of the city started to grow. A railway connection with Budapest was built in 1870 and a number of factories were established – the majority of which were however quite small. The second Hungarian university (after Budapest) was established in Cluj in 1872 in order to facilitate Kolozsvár's integration with Hungary. As Marius Lazăr points out, in 1848–1918 Cluj was behind other towns of western Transylvania, such as Arad, Timisoara and Oradea, in terms of economic perspectives<sup>5</sup>. Nevertheless, during this period such significant both for the Hungarian and the Romanian national memory events took place as the establishing of a Hungarian university (an important event for Hungarians) and the Romanian Memorandist movement<sup>6</sup>. Among the significant changes in the urban landscape in this period should be mentioned the building of the Matthias Corvinus monument which replaced the Austrian Carolina obelisk in the public space of the main city square. The Carolina obelisk was moved to a smaller and less important square while the Matthias Corvinus monument was placed in the main square next to St. Michael's church. This monument was built at the dawn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century with the occasion of the millennium anniversary of the Hungarian conquest of this territory.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 91.

<sup>4</sup> The Hungarian name of Cluj-Napoca.

<sup>5</sup> M. Lazăr, CLUJ 2003 – *The Metastasis of Ostentation: Black & White Illustrations of Tricolor Cluj*, "IDEA" 15–16; <http://idea.ro/revista/?q=en/node/41&articol=186>, Cluj 2003.

<sup>6</sup> The movement fought for the rights of Transylvanian Romanians in 1892, it send a Memorandum with the demands for more rights for the Romanians to the Emperor in Vienna which displeased the Hungarian authorities so the main movement members were trialed.

The position of Cluj and its meaning changed after 1918 when Transylvania became part of the Romanian state. At the time Transylvania became a region where the Romanian-Hungarian dispute was brightly visible and highly important. Both Hungarians and Romanians, mostly during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, together created the myth of Cluj and Transylvania as a territory of great importance for their national self-foundation and historical memory. The discourse of the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century which united the political and symbolical role of the city remained the main stream of thinking about the city up until now.

Up until the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the Hungarians constituted the majority in the city (the Romanian population constituted 14% of a total of 62,533 inhabitants at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century). However, the countryside around Kolozsvár was mostly Romanian – according to Brubaker, nearly two-thirds of the rural population around the town was Romanian<sup>7</sup>. In the period between the two world wars, when the city belonged to Romania, the process of the city's Romanization took place. This process affected not only the population but also the symbolic places of the city. The main city square where the medieval St. Michael church and the Matthias Corvinus monument are situated was symbolically rearranged in order to attenuate its Hungarian character. First of all, the Capitoline Wolf statue – an important symbolic figure which underlines the Latin origins of the Romanian nation – was placed right in front of the Matthias Corvinus monument. Secondly, after a series of discussions about the destiny of the monument itself, among which were voices supporting a total destruction of the monument, the “historically correct” plaque was placed on the monument. The plaque underlined the Romanian origins of Matthias Corvinus. Finally, the Orthodox cathedral was built in the city centre. This construction completely changed the old town's composition: the medieval St. Michael's church ceased to be the only dominant of the city center's landscape.

During World War II, when for a short period the city found itself under Hungarian rule again, a process of re-magyarisation took place. Together with the Hungarian army, an influx of Hungarian population from Hungary came to the city. The streets either received the names they had before World War I back, or were given new names which corresponded to the current political situation.

The end of World War II found Cluj once again within the borders of Romania where it remains until today. After the war, a new period in the city's Romanization began and until now the Cluj-Napoca's urban space still preserves some features of a battlefield of memory for the two nations who constituted the majority in the city in different periods of its history.

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<sup>7</sup> R. Brubaker, *op. cit.*

RESHAPING OF CLUJ-NAPOCA IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

The 20<sup>th</sup> century was a period in which the town's official name was changed several times. In 1919, after Transylvania's incorporation to the Romanian state, the name Kolozsvár was changed into Cluj. During World War II, when the city was back under Hungarian rule, the name Kolozsvár returned, and after the war, when the city remained under Romanian rule, the name Cluj officially returned. In 1974 "Napoca" was added to the city's name in order to underline the Romanian character of the city (Romans, together with Dacians are considered to be the direct ancestors of Romanians) and the fact that its beginnings were connected with the Roman tradition. That year the celebration of 1850 years of promoting the Roman settlement of Napoca to the rank of municipium in Cluj-Napoca took place<sup>8</sup>.

The period after World War II significantly influenced the development and the contemporary image of Cluj-Napoca. After changing the country as a result of the War, the city was adjusted by the authorities to the new political realities. One of the most important lines of the authorities' policy towards the city was the population policy.

Before World War II Cluj was inhabited by 103,840 people from which about 13,000 were Jews, 2,500 – Germans, about 36,000 – Romanians and about 48,000 – Hungarians<sup>9</sup>. In the first decade after the war we can already observe a visible reduction of the Jewish (only 525 persons remained) and German (near 1,000 of people) populations. Taking into consideration the fact that the total population of the city grew (164,723 in 1956 comparing to about 100,000 before the war), we can speak of a visible reduction of the percentage of Jewish and German populations in post-war Cluj. After the war Cluj was inhabited by nearly 75,000 Hungarians and 75,000 Romanians (which constituted 48% of the total city's population in 1956). We can observe that as time passed the Hungarian population in Cluj remained almost the same (nearly 75,000 provided by the 1992 statistics as well). The Romanian population in Cluj, however, was constantly growing thanks to an influx of newcomers from other regions and the neighboring villages during the country's industrialization. In 1966 the population of Cluj was nearly 185,000 out of which 105,000 were of Romanian nationality, in 1977 the total population was 263,000 out of which 173,000 were Romanians, in 1992 the total population was 330,000 out of which 250,000 were Romanians. According to the statistics of 2002, Romanians constituted 79% in a total of 318,027 inhabitants of Cluj-Napoca<sup>10</sup>. This way, the city's population in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was growing mostly due to the influx of Romanian population, while the percentage of Hungarian population has visibly decreased. This process had a political basis

<sup>8</sup> D. Alicu (Ed.), *Cluj-Napoca: inima Transilvaniei*. Cluj-Napoca: Studia, 1997, p. 148.

<sup>9</sup> M. Lazăr, *op. cit.*

<sup>10</sup> *Ibidem*.

– the assimilation of the city by the new authorities and the State. The changes of the ethnical and cultural composition of Cluj's population were conducted gradually. The city had gradually become dominated by the Romanian population. The Jewish population disappeared from the post-war Cluj almost completely.

After World War II the new political and economic system of communist Romania influenced the ideological basement of this country's urban planning. The main role of Romanian architecture (alongside with the population policy) during the period 1945–1989 was to influence the process of the society's reshaping. The main framework of the constructions was not only to improve and renew the city space, but to influence and accelerate directly the process of modernization, industrialization and urbanization of a mostly rural country. The modernization of urban space in this period had a predominantly social dimension, imposed by the ideology. This tendency has especially strengthened after 1970 when a mass colonization of the newly built blocks of flats by the villagers took place in Cluj. The selection of the new coming population in Cluj had not only a social dimension but also an ethical meaning. Starting with the period between the two world wars, it had to balance and even to inverse the population structure in terms of ethnicity so the Romanians would be the majority of the city's population. This politics was considered both by the communist administration and a large part of Romanian society as a response for the long period of restrictions in terms of the settling of Romanians in the cities of Transylvania from the side of the Austro-Hungarian and Hungarian administration.

Another aim of the socialist architecture was to reverse the traditional order in the urban space<sup>11</sup>. Traditionally, the spatial hierarchy of the city was the mirror of the social one. The city center was inhabited by people with higher economic and prestige positions, and the periphery was the place of peasants and later on – workers. The communist regime architecture was reflecting the main theoretical foundations of communism doctrine itself. The communist aspirations of society's old hierarchy system reversing were reflected in the tendency of changing the relations between the old cities centers and peripheries. The new socialist neighborhoods, parks and factories were the main objects of the propaganda pictures in the communist period journals, books and on postcards. Apart from pictures, reports about happy workers' families moving into apartments in the newly built socialist neighborhoods were published in newspapers and journals. In the focus of that period urban planning was the developing of the socialist style periphery, and the central part of the city was rather neglected. The new urban plans excluded the old constructions which were left to demolition. Spacious apartments in old Austro-Hungarian buildings became communist shared apartments: previous owners usually stayed in their flats, but they were allowed to use only specified amount of

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<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem.*

square meters in the apartment, and all the excess space was given to other people who stayed in the next rooms of the apartment.

As it was rightly observed by Lazăr, the symbolic relations between the center and the periphery were redesigned in Cluj according to the logic of the confrontation between new and old<sup>12</sup>. This tendency was typical of the construction plans of the majority of cities from former communist bloc countries. If the existing building and the planning of the city made it possible, new socialist city centers were created. Depending on the country and on the meaning of the city, the urban space could be changed with the help of such vigorous measures as old buildings' explosion or radical revisions of the existing urban planning (we can name here the examples of post-war Warsaw, Minsk, Moscow, Irkutsk, etc.). In the case of Cluj-Napoca, no vigorous measures of changing the existed city centre were taken, and because of the limited possibilities of the city space and the location of the city itself, the inversion of the special hierarchy has never been fully achieved. The political and administrative center of the city remained the historical centre of the city.

**In the immediate after war period** – the first 15 years after the war, the general politics of Romania was oriented towards the Soviet Union and corresponded to the main ideological lines which were dominant there. The city landscape wasn't changed rapidly and radically immediately after the war, some changes however took place. First of all, the majority of the street names returned to their interwar period state, and some of them were changed so they would correspond to the new political situation. The names of the most important shops were written in two languages and movies shown in the town's cinemas had bilingual subtitles. The situation started to change gradually after the 1956 revolution in Hungary. The event which signaled the crucial turn in the policy towards the ethnical situation in the city was the merge of the Hungarian and Romanian universities in Cluj in 1959.

The main activity that took place in Cluj from an architectural point of view immediately after the war was the rebuilding of that which was destroyed or damaged during the war. For example, the Corvinus Steel Factory, the Machine Factories were bombed in 1944, the towns' brick factory was destroyed by the explosion of the ammunition storehouse, as well as the heating plant<sup>13</sup>. The most damaged places were the railroad workshops which were bombed in summer of 1944 and set to explode later on that year as well as the administrative building and the workers' cultural house.

During this period the population of the city began to grow due to immigration from the countryside. In the same period the sewer system and the tap water

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>13</sup> Ș.Pascu, *Istoria Clujului*, Cluj 1974, *passim*.



system were extended and the majority of the streets were asphalted, and public transport system was extended.

The period of 1945–1948 was one of rethinking and rebuilding the town's industry and of passing from the war production to a civil production. Since June 1948 the factories and banks were nationalized, and then the process of nationalization gradually encompassed most of the enterprises and the majority of housing facilities.

The city was structurally divided into distinct areas: industrial areas, living areas, university areas, professional areas, green areas, etc. Four separate industrial zones took shape, one of them being designed as a storage area<sup>14</sup>. In order to provide the new built factories with qualified work capital, a series of professional and technical schools and high schools began to be built in the city, as well as dormitories for the coming students.

The architecture of 1950s–1960s was influenced by the Soviet Union style. The new tendencies in urban development presupposed the centralized city planning with significant impact of international theories and practices as well as of political censorship.

The main socialist style neighbourhoods of the city began to be shaped in the 1950s–1960s. The first such neighbourhood in Cluj was the Grigorescu neighborhood. It was constructed in 1952–1964 and was able to host more than 30,000 people<sup>15</sup>. This neighborhood is the oldest one and is situated closer to the city centre than those built later. That's why, after all the neighbourhoods of the city were constructed the Grigorescu neighbourhood remained the one with the less negative image in the eyes of the city center's inhabitants.

The zone around Franciscan Church and monastery (traditionally Hungarian) was rearranged during the first after war decades. The park near the Franciscan monastery received the name of Ion Luca Caragiale (one of the most important Romanian writers, political critic and journalist) and I. L. Caragiale's bust was placed there in 1957. The church was erected in the 13th century and was the first church in medieval Cluj. Many famous Hungarian aristocrats were buried here, and the church itself plays an important role in the life of the Hungarian community of the city until now.

It is clear, that the immediate post-war period did not change much in the city's landscape, but it outlined some changes that occurred there during the next period. The main neighbourhoods which were constructed later started to be shaped in this period. The most important events in the city's reshaping during the first years after the war along with the after war damage's reconstruction was the Grigorescu neighbourhood construction as well as renaming some streets and parks.

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>15</sup> D. Alicu, *op. cit.*, p. 159.

The period from the end of the 1950s until 1989 was a period of Romania's gradual turn to national communism and of Ceausescu's administration in the country. This period of communist rule influenced the city's development significantly and the changes in the city's landscape which occurred in this period are still very visible in the city. On the one hand, in the period after the 1960s the ideological thaw in USSR took place and the control from this side had weakened. On the other hand, the end of the 1970s in Romania, unlike in other countries of the so-called communist bloc, was a time of the second wave of industrialization and re-Stalinization. The first wave of industrialization of the 1950s omitted Cluj, but the second wave touched the city significantly. The new massive neighbourhoods – Mărăști, Mănăștur and Zorilor – were built and inhabited by the new labor force which moved to the city. The total population of these three new neighbourhoods taken together constituted two thirds of the Cluj population, and the majority of them were rural immigrants from different villages of the region.

The majority of the city's neighborhoods existing today as well as new squares and monuments were constructed in this period. The result of the policy towards spatial hierarchy reshaping between the city centre and the periphery was the fact that a number of new objects such as parks and sport centers were built on the periphery and several squares in the city were designed there. The main and most important function of these squares was to decrease the traffic in the city center as well as to decrease the ideological importance of the old city center. The city's architectural development in this period was based on five- year plans, but in spite of this fact, the general plan of the city's development was never elaborated.

The Mănăștur neighborhood started to be constructed in 1971. This neighborhood was created on the territory of a Romanian village which existed here before. This village's inhabitants used to come for work to Cluj and they created the image of this territory as very Romanian and nationalist, especially in the first post-war years. Up until now there is a famous legend in the city about the appearance of the slogan "The democracy ends here, and here begins Mănăștur" ("Până aici democrație, de aici Mănăștur"). This slogan initially reflected not only the confrontation between the center and the periphery which appeared in Cluj after the new neighborhoods were built, but the tension between Hungarians and Romanians. This phrase was said by Romanian workers from the Mănăștur village in 1946 when a group of Hungarians dressed in the Hungarian army uniforms sang some horthyst songs in a bus. When Romanian workers asked the group of Hungarians to stop singing this kind of songs, they answered that Romania is a democratic country and everybody has a right to sing what he or she wants. When the bus stopped at the station at the entrance to the Mănăștur, Romanian workers forced this group of Hungarians out of the bus saying "The democracy ends here, and here begins Mănăștur". This phrase was heard by a lot of people from the bus,

it became popular and later on the wall inscriptions with this quotation appeared at the village entrance<sup>16</sup>. Today's legend says that there used to be a banner at the neighbourhood entrance in the 1960s–1970s with this phrase, but according to the evidence of old city's inhabitants this slogan's history is much older and originates from 1946<sup>17</sup>. The association of Mănăştur with the Romanian nationalism was so strong that the described event gave birth to a legend which is associated with the Mănăştur neighborhood constructed during Ceausescu's systematization era. Up until now, Mănăştur is the only neighbourhood in the city associated with such a legend.

In an attempt to minimize the costs of the city's urbanization, the neighborhoods were planned as dormitories and were functionally based on the urban network which existed before. The infrastructure of the city center was used by the communist bureaucracy and by the officials who were in charge of the state institutions which were located there. Apart from the Hungarians who lived there before the war and stayed in their houses after the war, the city center was used by the socialist intelligentsia who took the "civilized" places of the everyday city life after their Hungarian predecessors. As Norbert Petrovici points out, the Cluj city center was perceived in this period as a place of "intellectuals, students, clinics, perfume, theatre, opera, botanical gardens, manners, dancing, and restaurants"<sup>18</sup>.

Since the majority of administrative buildings remnant from Austro-Hungarian times were situated in the city center (as well as the majority of educational institutions and hospitals) and were taken over by Romanian institutions after the war, the center of the city continued to be an important place in the city's life. This did not correspond with the communist ideology which tried to reduce the importance of the old city center which was associated with the previous regime.

The main ideological function of the new neighborhoods was to represent the spatial expression of the socialist system's strength. The new neighbourhoods not only solved the residential problem but also held the function of a low-cost manifestation of the new authorities' power. The ideological message of architecture, however, was limited to the main streets of the neighborhoods which were dominated by huge grey blocks of flats with aesthetic facades and balconies. The rest of the neighbourhood was usually composed of buildings built without any clear aesthetic order or system. The lack of constant architectural quality of the entire area of neighborhoods, as well as the lack of any functional system of buildings inside the neighbourhoods, became the factor which decided the fact that the socialist architecture in Cluj could not rival the old town's architecture. The city

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<sup>16</sup> C. Mustață, *Amintiri pentru Mileniul III*. Cluj-Napoca 2000, p. 75.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>18</sup> N. Petrovici, *For a relational postsocialist urbanization: bringing back the epistemologically dispossessed*, Under Review "Urban Studies Journal", 2010, p. 7.

center remained the standard of comparison for the new socialist buildings and the socialist bureaucrats' favorite place for living.

In an attempt to change the situation remnant from the previous epoch which presupposed that the historical city centre was the main focus of the city's life, new squares and entertainment areas were created on the city's peripheries. First of all, the Mihai Viteazu square was rearranged and the monument of Mihai Viteazu was built on the place of the former vegetable market in an attempt to balance the old city center and the Matthias Corvinus monument. The railway station area which was damaged during the War was also reconstructed during this period.

The period of the national turn of Romanian communism and of Ceausescu's rule changed the face of Cluj-Napoca a lot. The city's name changed in 1974. The new huge neighborhoods were constructed which changed the character of the city from university and cultural to a more industrial one. The reconstructed Mihai Viteazu square and the new Horea, Cloșca și Crișan Square changed the image of the city centre. Apart from that, the new green zones, sport complexes, student dormitories and research institutions were built, and the Hungarian theater was rearranged in 1960.

#### THE PERIOD OF 1939–1960 IN REMEMBRANCES

Memory, as it was rightly observed by Siegfried J. Schmidt, does not represent the reality, but rather constructs it<sup>19</sup>. The criteria, according to which this process of reality construction is built, can be both innate and shaped in early childhood, and influenced by a person's later life experiences. The strategies of remembering (which is the process of memory functions' activating) could be this way influenced by different factors<sup>20</sup>. The participants of the oral history interviews conducted in Cluj-Napoca in July – October 2012 were recalling certain elements of the city life and the city landscape in the period of 1939–1960 within the context of their own life stories. Their narratives, this way, are first of all focused around the specific places in the city they were used to live in those years or which played a significant role in their life. Apart from the place of residence, another important factor which influenced the participants' narratives was their cultural and linguistic milieu. It is clear, however, that not all the elements of the narratives differ significantly, and certain aspects of the city life were recalled similarly by several interviewees with different backgrounds, or even by all of them.

<sup>19</sup> S. J. Schmidt (2008). *Memory and Remembrance: A Constructivist Approach*, [in] Nunning, Ansgar and Erll, Astrid (ed.), "A Companion to Cultural Memory Studies", Berlin, New York 2008, p. 192.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibidem*.

**The image of the city.** Speaking about their first impressions and memories about the city, the majority of the respondents mentioned the fact that just after the Second World War Hungarian was commonly spoken on the city streets. Another fact mentioned by the majority of the participants was that the main public transport in the city was carriage. Those first phrases, which usually opened the interviewees' narratives about the city of their youth or childhood, indicate their observations of what has changed in the city the most up until today – these are the linguistic landscape and the transport system. The third element is the size of the city and its borders which had significantly changed during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century due to the influx of Romanian population and to the construction of new neighbourhoods. Different sides and elements of this process were described in every interview, and some of the speakers were actually participants of this population movement.

The notion of the city centre for the majority of the respondents includes contemporary Union Square (*Piata Unirii*), however they refer to it as to Matthias Corvinus Square (*Piata Matei Corvin*). The official name of this square in the after war years – Liberty Square – is known to all the respondents, but all of them admit that people didn't usually refer to this place with the official name. The Orthodox cathedral and the Corso street (nowadays' Heroes street) which leads from the square around the cathedral to the square around Matthias Corvinus statue were also named as the elements of the city centre (alongside with nowadays' Union Square) by two Romanians. In spite of the fact that two Soviet style monuments were built in the square around the Orthodox cathedral after the Second World War, this square constituted an important place of spending free time and of meetings for the Romanian part of the city population who attended Sunday services. Speaking about the space around the Orthodox cathedral, the majority of the interviewees recall the Soviet style monuments which were placed on the both sides of the cathedral. Corso as a traditional walking area in post-war period was named by almost all interview participants. This street was also mentioned as one of the main meeting points in the city.

The majority of respondents are nostalgic about the green areas which disappeared today from the city centre. One of the main objects of such nostalgia is Corso (former Petru Groza Street). "We would walk along Petru Groza "treet, it was beautiful with trees, and I can still remember the smell of linden...there were other streets, but the best was Corso" – says Petru K. Similarly, Sorana Popa describes: "People used to walk on both sides and in the middle there were some linden trees that were so beautiful that when they cut them they destroyed maybe the most beautiful green area of the city. It will never smell like blooming lime trees in the city centre anymore".

The borders of the city in the period 1939–1960 for the majority of interviewees did not embrace the territories where the new Soviet style neighbour-

hoods were built. “For me, Cluj was as far as Mărăști Market, the Agronomy, and southwards until Zorilor and northwards until the train station”—recalls Petru G. (German-Hungarian). This way, only the central territories of contemporary Cluj-Napoca were understood by the speakers as the city in the first after war years. Nevertheless, some territories which used to be villages around Cluj and became communist style neighbourhoods only in the 1960s–1970s, were mentioned by the respondents in connection with different sides of the city life. For example, the area of Mănăștur was mentioned in connection with the events of the Second World War and with the issue of nationalism of this village’s Romanian population.

Teodosie Perju (Romanian) states that the case of Mănăștur was different from the whole city with mixed population: it “was a rather isolated neighbourhood, and there was like a line showing this is Mănăștur, a very Romanian population and perhaps this is why Hungarians sometimes misunderstood them”. He recalls: “...talking about Mănăștur, when we came here there was this signboard saying “Democracy ends here, and here starts Mănăștur... I saw this thing once: after drinking a lot, they placed this signboard there at the entrance to Mănăștur, because they were Romanians there and wanted to have a tougher democracy”. Taking into consideration the fact that the legend about the slogan and the signboard with the inscription “Democracy ends here, and here starts Mănăștur” were quite widespread in Cluj in the 1950s–1970s, this Teodosiu Perju’s reminiscence could be seen as socially constructed. Victor Cioboată (Romanian) recalls: “There were no Hungarians in Feleac or Mănăștur. Only when they started building blocks, did the Hungarians moved in”.

The area of Bulgarilor neighbourhood is often recalled in connection to the vegetable market which used to be on the place of contemporary Mihai Viteazu Square in the first post-war decade. Reka K. (Hungarian) recalls: “Then we went to Mihai Viteazu Square and there were some farmers there, living in what was called Bulgarilor neighbourhood, Hoștejenii, they were living in the countryside, and everyone had their house and they grew vegetables and sold them in the market. They learned how to grow vegetables according to the Bulgarian model, that’s why it was called Bulgaria”. Other respondents mentioned this area as well, usually indicating the importance of this area for producing and delivering vegetables to the city market.

Among the areas which were rebuilt during the first post-war year, the interview participants name first of all the area around the railway station. Many of the respondents recall the fact that this area was damaged by bombings during the war. However, no one of the speakers saw the bombings by himself or herself, and the majority of them didn’t even see the ruins. This way, we can speak about constructed nature of those remembrances. For example, Reka K. (Hungarian)

recalls: "Horea Street was rebuilt after the bombing, there were many bombed houses there and around the train station...I saw it in newspapers and I think that on June 2nd there was the biggest bombing with thousands of deaths and the newspapers write about it and show pictures from the time". Reka K. admits the fact that she obtained the information from the newspaper.

The process of the Mihai Viteazu Square rearrangement (during which the vegetable market was transformed into a monumental composition with Romanian nationalist rhetoric) left its trace in the memory of those interviews participants who used to live nearby this place. Those interviewees who lived in other parts of the city either remember the existence of a vegetable market on this place, or just state that "there was nothing, not even the statue" (comparing this place's appearance in the 1950s–1960s to the contemporary situation). The market which existed on the place of the contemporary Mihai Viteazu Square is recalled by the majority of the speakers with positive emotions. For example, Erzi (Hungarian, worker) recalls that there was "a big, beautiful market, it's not like that nowadays". Sorana Popa (Romanian, teacher) notices: "Everything that was there where Republica is now, was demolished, they were very beautiful buildings and I remember there was a grocery store on the other side with slightly baroque windows". On the other hand, Veronica Lazar (Jewish) holds the view that "On the one hand it was good that they reorganized the Mihai Viteazu market square, some more organized and more civilized shops appeared".

**Living conditions, free time activities.** It is clear, that the living conditions in Cluj during immediate after war period were not simple. All interviews participants recall difficulties in getting the wood for the heating, and many restrictions which existed during that period both connected to certain goods and to different spheres of social life. Such restrictions as limited time when it was allowed to be outside or listening of "Free Europe" radio were mentioned. Octavia Roman (Romanian) recalls: "Back then, you needed the parents' approval to go out after 8".

The respondents described their life in shared apartments and their positive surprise with the living conditions in new built communist style blocks of flats. Veronica Lazar (Jewish) recalls: "At the time everybody thought having to move to a block of flats was catastrophe. It was thought that in a block of flats there was central heating so it had to be cold, there was no hot water and the heaters were cold while where we used to live we had terracotta stoves and you could just turn on the gas".

Spending free time and the main free time activities could be seen as a part of everyday life which was different for social and national groups which lived in the city. Speaking about free time activities, the interviewees recall first of all dances. Nevertheless, place and time of dances for different social and national groups varied. Ioan Cozac (Romanian) recalls the dances at Cetatuie which were attended

mostly by servants and housemaids. “The Hungarians had their dances separately, on Thursdays and Sundays” – he says. The other popular activity was going to the theatre. Almost all the interview participants used to have seasonal tickets to the theatre when they were schoolchildren. As viewed by Mioara Butan (Romanian), cultural activities among schoolchildren were promoted by the previous regime: “The majority of us became avid spectators because it was compulsory in school to go to the theatre, philharmonic and opera. Also it was fashionable for kids to do ballet, or play the piano, or a musical instrument, there was this Children’s Palace, and opportunities”. Different sport activities were popular among male population.

**Relations among the nationalities, life of different communities.** The interview participants of all nationalities admit the fact that the city public space was bilingual in immediate after war decade. During the first post-war years, according to the witnesses, Hungarian language dominated in the public sphere, even if all main inscriptions were bilingual. The majority of Romanians who used to live in the city before the Second World War and who stayed there after the war was fluent in Hungarian. With the influx of the Romanian population from other parts of the country, the city was gradually romanized. As the respondents from Hungarian-speaking families recall, their parents understood the political situation and encouraged them to spend more time with Romanian neighbours and to learn Romanian this way. As Veronica Lazar (Jewish) recalls, “my parents wouldn’t allow me to read in Hungarian so that I would learn Romanian”.

The interviewees rarely recall tensions between nationalities in post-war Cluj, however small incidents were described, such as snowball fights between pupils of Hungarian and Romanian schools. The only exception in the perception of the “other” nationality is the events connected with the War. Victoria Aruncutean (Romanian) recalls her impressions about how the Hungarian army entered the city during the Second World War: “...the Hungarian gendarmes were scary, they wore those hats with cock feathers on them and they used to blow in the wind and they had their faces so frowned and they treated Romanians very badly, many were persecuted... not so much in Cluj, but they entered the cathedral by horse... when the Hungarians came no Romanian had the courage to go out on the street, we just looked at them through the fences, we were afraid, they were very cruel...”. I would like to contrast Victoria Aruncutean’s narrative with the quotation of Vasile Szekely (Jewish) who says: “About 40–44, I can’t tell you much because I was still a child. What’s sure is that until 1940 it was Romania and then the Hungarians came and Cluj was Hungarian. But I didn’t feel the change of regime and country”. It is worth mentioning that Victoria Aruncutean and Vasile Szekely were of the same age, but they had different backgrounds (Victoria was raised in Mănăştur in Romanian milieu, and Vasile was Jewish who used to live in Cetatuie area which was ethnically mixed). The remembrances of Victoria are to



a large extent constructed by her background and by stories which she had heard afterwards. Her narrative is rather based on post-memory, since she had seen neither how the Hungarians entered the cathedral by horse, nor the persecutions of Romanians (she states that Romanians were persecuted “not so much in Cluj”, but in other places).

The issue of anti-Semitism in the city was raised only by the Jewish interview participants. Vasile Nussbaum (Jewish) recalls: “Back then, you didn’t have a school uniform, but you had a compulsory cap and on it the name of your high school. And for us it was the Jewish high school. And a group of children came and they saw us and said «Ha! Let’s see these Jews!» and they beat me... I had to stay home for a week. But I want to emphasise this: they didn’t beat me... they beat a Jew there... if I met him today, I would tell him like Christ I forgive you because you don’t know what you were doing. Maybe if I were him, I would have done the same. In school, he heard about «Jews», there was anti-Semitism, on the radio the same, in his family the same, so he didn’t know better than «let’s beat him»”. Similarly, Vasile Szekely (Jewish) says about the period of World War II: “But there were some anti-Semites, and they taught their children like that. What happened to me is that I was forced to wear that cap saying Jewish school and each day on my way to school I met one who would bring two friends from his school and would kick me. I was alone, they were three. So there was some anti-Semitism”.

Speaking about the religious life of the city, all the participants mention the lack of religious celebrations in the public space of the city in the immediate after war period. Nevertheless, religion remained to be an important part of the life of almost all nationalities living in Cluj, except of the Jewish community where the issue of religiosity was complicated in the post-war period. Evangelist church was an important place for the German community of the city, the Orthodox cathedral – for the Romanian one, and the Saint Michael church for the Hungarian community.

The Jewish narratives about the life of their community after World War II in Cluj are the most dramatic and different from the all other stories. Vasile Nussbaum (Jewish): “And now my opinion about the ghetto, why I never said this is because it is shocking, but that was the most beautiful period of my life, in the ghetto: all kids from school were there, and girls. There I kissed a girl I liked for the first time. We could be together all day. I don’t remember being thirsty, or hungry, I don’t know if my parents were hungry, I never thought about our future or what was happening with us in that awful ghetto, do you understand? My parents might have told you differently. This is shocking because me, at my age, I felt good”. Veronica Lazar, Robert Lazar, Sonja Szimon, Anna Klein and others touched the issue of their parents’ rupture with the religion and of the difficulties of their identity construction in the post-war period. Simultaneously with their

distancing from the religion, they were worried about the future of the Jewish community in Cluj and, as recalls Veronica Lazar from her parents' narratives, those who came back to Cluj after the war tried to do their best in order to create new Jewish families.

The process of reshaping of the city population composition which took place after the Second World War is reflected in the interviews participants' remembrances of the changes in the linguistic landscape of the city. The influx of Romanian population to Cluj was connected with spreading Romanian language, and the process of the city Romanization touched the issue of language in public space first of all. Veronica Lazar (Jewish) recalls: "People from the countryside were brought to the new neighbourhoods and they were slightly despised by the city centre inhabitants who considered themselves city dwellers and saw the others like peasants. Then they mixed and those differences began to subdue". This statement reflects both the personal Veronica's experience from her childhood and the layer of her further education. She certainly observed the process of new Romanian population coming to Cluj from the perspective of her childhood and her courtyard and street, however the statement quoted above contains a generalization made on the basis of Veronica's life and educational experience.

The process of the symbolical relations between the centre and periphery redesigning was not fully evident in the first after war years and the most important places for all the speakers were connected with the city centre. Nevertheless, interviews mirrored certain processes in this direction, such as Cetatuie area and Mihai Viteazu Square rearrangement. The new neighbourhoods' construction was perceived ambiguously by the city centre residents. As it can be seen from the interviews, the initial image of those new parts of the city was not pleasant, first of all because they were situated on a distance from the city centre. The living conditions in those new built blocks of flats, however, appeared to satisfy those who moved there from old shared apartments from the city centre. An interesting case is the Manastur neighbourhood which didn't exist in post-war Cluj as a part of the city. It was a village with mostly Romanian population, and Romanian workers used to commute to Cluj on a daily basis. Some interviewees, however, recall the legend connected with Mănăştur and the Romanian nationalism in this area.

#### CONCLUSION

The period of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century became a very important time for Cluj-Napoca urban space development. The communist regime of 1945–1989, and first of all the period of national communism started with the 1960s and finished in 1989 reshaped the city as a whole. The city's population balance has been reversed so the Romanians became the majority in the city with the help of Roma-

nian population influx. If in the first years after the war the Romanization of the city was based, among others, on settling there retired Romanian officers (some of the interviewees of Romanian nationality came to Cluj as children exactly during this process), the policy of the 1960s–1970s was to attract to the city the newcomers from the villages. The new work places in the factories, the places for study in the universities as well as the new neighbourhoods ensuring the accommodation for newcomers were created. New parks, sport complexes and student complexes were created in the period of 1945–1989, and the image of Cluj-Napoca as a student city was created in this time. On the other hand, the new built neighbourhoods and the influx of the rural Romanian population to the city created certain opposition between the old city centre and the periphery. This opposition existed on two lines: the cultural one and the national one<sup>21</sup>. The opposition between the newcomers from villages and the old town's population as a whole was a cultural one. The national opposition was between the old Hungarian population and the Romanian villagers: since the newcomers were mostly of Romanian nationality, they were perceived by the old Hungarian population as an influx of Romanian villagers to their town. The city legend about Mănăştur neighbourhood and the slogan about the end of democracy in this part of the city reflect to a certain degree both those oppositions. One of the main purposes of communist city construction was to reverse the balance between the city centre and periphery and to reduce the importance of the center for the city's life. On this purpose new squares and green areas were constructed. However, only the ideology was not enough to maintain the importance of those new constructed places for the ordinary people. As David Laitin pointed out, the culture has an instrumental side alongside with the value one. People are choosing the places where they feel comfortable to spend their free time. Among all places constructed or reconstructed in the communist period on the periphery I can name only the Cetatuie area as a place which is still visited until now. Other areas and places remained from the communist period are either forgotten or being rethought and rearranged. A kind of exception is the sport area and the student complex which are still functioning and being renovated. The trace of the communist period, however, is very much visible in the city landscape as well as in its name (the part "Napoca" was added in 1974).

It is clear that the urban landscape of Cluj-Napoca – first of all of the old city center, but not only – is a kind of chronotope full of symbolical layers important for different ethnic groups of the city's inhabitants and created with different ideological implications. The first secular monument in the public space of the city was the Austrian Carolina obelisk commemorating the Emperors' family visit to Cluj. In the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the Hungarian authorities succeeded in changing the meaning of the main city square when the Carolina obelisk was moved

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<sup>21</sup> R. Petrovici, *op. cit.*, *passim*.

to the small Museum Square and the Matthias Corvinus monument was erected. After this, none of the following regimes succeeded neither in the changing of the contemporary Union Square's meaning nor in the city center relocating. The contemporary Avram Iancu Square with the Romanian theatre and the Orthodox cathedral is an important place in the city's landscape but it still is seen as being situated a little bit aside from the very centre. The importance of the symbolical figure of Matthias Corvinus in the city is connected, however, in my opinion with the politics of memory applied to it in the interwar period when the "historically correct" plaque was first placed on his monument. Even if the monument is built in a style which shows the king Matthias as a conqueror and a Moldavian officer is portrayed among the king's vassals, the figure of Matthias Corvinus is usually perceived by Romanians as Romanian, by Hungarians as a Hungarian, and for all the nationalities which live in Cluj-Napoca he is first of all a Transylvanian. The city landscape's reconstruction, erection of new monuments and giving the new names to the streets and squares – all this works with the semiotic layer of culture, aims to create certain values and myths in the city space "from above". It doesn't take into consideration, however, the instrumental face of culture and the fact that the values and semiotic meanings of the landscape imposed "from above" will not necessarily work out. The example of Cluj-Napoca provides a perfect illustration of the fact that the layer of people's mass consciousness is to a certain extent resistant to the politics of the authorities and that the city's landscape reconstruction can't always change the meaning of certain places within its boundaries.

In the roots of the research project "Cluj-Napoca 1939–1960. Diversity of remembrances was the assumption that people of different nationalities have different remembrances of the after war Cluj. The difficult history of this city and the politics of different authorities (Romanian, Hungarian, and Communist) towards the city space in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, according to this assumption, should have left some traces on people's memories. The immediate post-war period was a time when the city was adjusted to the ideological and political realities of the communist Romanian state, and we presumed that the changes that occurred in the city space could be remembered differently by people of different nationalities who lived in post-war Cluj. Nevertheless, the results of the field research in Cluj-Napoca show that, first of all, people generally do not pay too much attention to the city space reshaping. The majority of such changes in the city's urban space as statues' replacing or memory plaques changing went unnoticed. The majority of the urban space' reshaping activities of communist time are seen as progressive. The new communist neighbourhoods' construction was perceived ambiguously – as we can see from the interviews, some of the Old Town's inhabitants saw those neighbourhoods as very distant parts of the city which for quite a long time didn't even exist for them, but on the other side, those who were forced to change their apartment and to move from their old house from the city centre into newly built

blocks of flats were amazed by the level of comfort which existed in those new buildings.

The centre of the city for all the interviewees included the contemporary Union Square and Heroes Street. Contemporary Avram Iancu Square and the Orthodox cathedral were mentioned by Sorana Popa who came to Cluj as a child from another region of Romania – the Orthodox cathedral to which she used to come each Sunday with her parents, and the Romanian National Theatre became important points in her own topography of the city.

The main free time activities of people who lived in Cluj in the first after war years depended on the social status of their families and their financial condition. The majority of the respondents used to go to the theatre, to cinemas and to go for a walk on Heroes Street or in the Central Park. Among the important places in the city are named St. Michael Church, Matthias Corvinus monument, the contemporary Union Square, the Heroes Street, the Romanian National Theatre, the Central Park. The linguistic landscape of the city during the first post-war years is remembered as bilingual, but the process of gradual Romanization was reflected by the interviews as well.

The research provided the evidence that what Rogers Brubaker observed in Cluj-Napoca of the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century was characteristic of the city already after the Second World War. If the city landscape became a kind of “battle-field of memory” (first of all for the two titular nations of the city – Romanian and Hungarian), this conflict was mostly created from above by the authorities, and ordinary city dwellers didn’t take part in it and often didn’t even pay attention to some “ideological” changes in the city landscape. The conflict which was present in the streets of the city in such way as streets and squares renaming, statues and memory plaques changing, institutions removal – was only a façade of the city’s life, the official one. David Laitin has noticed that the culture is Janus-faced. The first face of culture concerns values, and the second one is instrumental<sup>22</sup>. The authorities, during the ideological layer of the city landscape reshaping after the Second World War, worked with the first face of culture, while people who lived in this city space treated the city landscape instrumentally. We can see in this situation how such important cultural opposition as public/collective versus individual levels works. The ideologically inspired changes of the city landscape by the authorities applied only to the public sphere, but the individual level of people’s perception remained to a certain extent untouched by the politics of culture. It is worth mentioning that the majority of changes in the symbolical architecture of the city (like monument moving or building) weren’t given importance by almost all the interviewees or were seen as progress regardless of their nationality.

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<sup>22</sup> D. Laitin, “*Political Culture and Political Preferences*” and Aaron Wildavsky’s “*Reply*.” “*American Political Science Review*” 82 (2) June 1988, pp. 589–597.

Almost all remembrances about after war Cluj gathered during the interviews are people's remembrances about their childhood and youth. The remembrances about years of childhood and youth are always colourful and happy. That's why, the image of after war Cluj which could be constructed on the basis of those memories is rather peaceful and beautiful. It is clear that this picture is far from objective also because of the fact that people's remembrances about their childhood from the perspective of an old person are always influenced by their further life and experience, books which they've read and movies they've watched, and – first of all – stories they've heard from their parents or other elder people. The concept of post memories elaborated by Marianne Hirsch is very helpful in this kind of memories' analysis.

The separate group of people whose remembrances of post-war Cluj and their life there is different indeed is Jews and Gypsies. Those people's lives were affected by the trauma of Holocaust and the war influenced not only their way of life but also their upbringing and their way of thinking.

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