



Field ARCHITECTURE

**PhD THESIS**  
**- ABSTRACT -**

**URBAN PALIMPSEST**  
**THE EVOLUTION OF THE BUILT SPACE IN THE CITY OF ZALĂU**  
**AND REFERENTIAL ARCHITECTURES**

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## INTRODUCTION

The study of the history and evolution of the built urban space is essential for understanding the current structure of the city and identifying development trends. Analysing these aspects highlights the defining elements that have contributed to the formation of the local identity. Architectural and urban planning interventions that do not take in consideration the historical past of a locality can negatively affect the built environment and urban life, both aesthetically and functionally. Therefore, rigorous research into the city's history is the necessary foundation for formulating future development proposals.

The evolution of built space is a highly relevant and interesting subject in the field of architecture. As Aldo Rossi stated in "The Architecture of the City," urban architecture is not only about the visible image and architectural ensemble but also about the construction of the city over time. Thus, to understand the present and address the future, it is imperative to know our past.

The concept of "palimpsest" (An old, barely readable writing due to erasures and corrections – Romanian Explanatory Dictionary), used in urban history and culture, symbolizes the cultural and historical layering of an area or monument. In architecture and urban planning, this concept helps to understand the evolution of cities and their adaptation to social, economic, and political changes. Knowing the origin of a settlement and the factors that influenced its development is essential in the urban planning process. Cities reflect, through their appearance, the social, economic, and political life of various historical periods, as well as the natural conditions and existing architecture. They express the character of the era in which they were created and developed, being the result of different stages of formation. History and diversity confer specificity and local identity, which are essential elements in urban development.

In the case of Zalău, my hometown and the subject of this doctoral thesis, this deep connection with the past is emphasized. Zalău has witnessed many transformations, especially following the systematization in the second half of the 20th century, which led to both the disappearance of much of its built heritage and the alteration or even erasure of urban fabrics from previous periods. This loss of valuable historical elements further underscores the necessity of understanding our past through a careful analysis of urban planning evolution. By analysing these transformations, we can better understand the processes that have shaped the city and identify future development directions that respect and enhance the often-neglected historical heritage.

Through this study, I aim not only to make a significant academic contribution but also to offer a personal perspective on a city that has been and remains very dear to me. Understanding the urban evolution of Zalău and preserving its architectural memory are essential to ensuring sustainable and harmonious development, combining the past with the future in a coherent and respectful manner towards local identity. This approach is not only an academic necessity but also a duty to the urban community in which I grew up and to which I am deeply attached.

The research specifically targets the development and evolution of the settlement, examining changes in urban form, urban fabric, and the evolution of urban spaces and islands, observing how public and private spaces have evolved to meet contemporary needs. The restructuring and conversion of urban islands, as well as the evolution of the built space, will be analysed in the context of historical urbanization and systematization processes.

By comparing the illustrated data, a more complete and coherent picture of the city's plans and evolution is obtained, providing a better understanding of its urban history and development over time. This detailed analysis allows the identification of factors that have

influenced the urban configuration of Zalău, thus facilitating the formulation of informed proposals for future spatial development interventions. In this way, the studies contribute to valuing the cultural and historical heritage of the city, ensuring sustainable planning and harmonious evolution of the urban space, in accordance with the needs and aspirations of the local community.

## **WORKING HYPOTHESIS**

The detailed study of the history and development of the built urban space of Zalău aims to gain a deep understanding of its temporal evolutions, identifying general development trends and defining elements that have contributed to the formation of local identity. In the context of architectural and urban planning interventions, it is necessary to consider the historical past of the locality to avoid negatively impacting the built environment and urban life, both aesthetically and functionally. A detailed study of the city represents the necessary foundation for formulating future development proposals.

In the process of developing localities, understanding the origins of a settlement is essential, both from a practical and theoretical perspective. This endeavour requires an approach that involves an in-depth study of the culture, development capacities, and conditions that have influenced community life in different historical periods. A careful evaluation of social, economic, and natural factors contributing to the viability of a settlement, whether rural or urban, old or new, is necessary. These analyses are fundamental to guiding future development in a sustainable and well-informed manner.

The appearance of a city can be analysed as a mirror of social life from various historical periods, reflecting the economic and political evolutions of the community, as well as the specific conditions and predominant architectural features. It offers clues about the economic and political importance of the city in certain eras, as well as how the natural environment and existing architectural structures have influenced urban development. Therefore, the city can be seen as an expression of the specific character of each historical epoch, in its process of creation and transformation. Analysing the city's appearance provides a complex understanding of past social and economic dynamics, highlighting significant stages of its formation and development.

Henri Lefebvre emphasizes the importance of viewing space as a social reality, composed of a complex set of relationships and forms. The historical analysis of an urban space must consider not only representative spaces but also their representations and the interrelationships between them.

Studying urban life and its interaction with the physical environment can offer valuable insights even from the most mundane street corners, regardless of location. This underscores the necessity of a detailed understanding of urban spaces and how they evolve, to facilitate sustainable and coherent urban development. By combining historical approaches with detailed analysis of architectural and urban elements, a complete and coherent picture of urban development can be obtained, thus supporting the formulation of effective urban development strategies that reflect both cultural heritage and the contemporary needs of the community.

As a research goal, considering the rapid development of the built urban space in Zalău, a comprehensive analysis of its form, structure, and functions is necessary before implementing new urban interventions. This thematic research must identify key elements of urban morphology and the factors that have influenced the evolution of this built space. Such an approach is necessary to propose viable and sustainable development directions for the city of Zalău.

The city's history offers valuable examples of successful solutions that can be adapted and applied in the current context. The past serves as an essential tool for guiding the future, facilitating sustainable urban development. Thus, through a deep understanding of the evolution of built space and by applying lessons learned from history, we can ensure that the development of Zalău occurs in a harmonious and sustainable manner, reflecting both cultural heritage and the modern needs of the community, a community with old traditions reflected in its built heritage.

This integrated approach is necessary to ensure continuity and coherence of the urban character, while preserving cultural and natural heritage. Only through a profound understanding of the evolution of urban space can we propose urban development strategies that respond to both the contemporary needs of the community and the aesthetic and functional requirements of the modern city.

## **RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

### **Historical Analysis of Urban Evolution**

The aim is to conduct a detailed investigation of the urban space evolution of Zalău, from its origins to the present, through the analysis of maps and cartographic documents. This includes documenting essential elements of urban morphology. By examining the morphological elements of the built space in detail, analysing their evolution over time, and identifying the determining factors of changes, the research provides a deeper insight into existing issues, allowing for the identification of viable and sustainable solutions for the coherent and harmonious future development of the city.

The Leipzig Charter stipulates that urban development proposals should enhance streets, squares, and pathways as elements of urban continuity, create symbolic urban atmospheres deriving from the spirit of each place, and preserve cultural and natural heritage. This is only possible by understanding architectural and urban culture as a sum of the cultural, economic, technological, social, and ecological aspects specific to an evolving community over time.

### **Documenting Changes in Urban Fabric Structure**

This objective focuses on documenting and analysing changes in the structure of urban islands, from the original parcels to the current ones. Assessing the impact of these changes on the urban fabric is necessary to understand urban dynamics and to establish sustainable development solutions.

A detailed study of the built space history offers a critical perspective on the current issues and opportunities within the urban fabric. This allows us to identify existing dysfunctions and correct or avoid them in future developments. Through these studies, opportunities can be maximized, and practical, aesthetic, and functional dysfunctions can be minimized.

### **Reconstruction and Documentation of Demolished Historic Building Facades**

The facades of demolished buildings do not have surveys within archival plans, therefore, one of the essential objectives of this thesis is the documentation and graphical representation of these facades. The goal is to preserve the memory of the city's old image and ensure its graphic and digital conservation for future generations. This endeavour is based on the idea that, although many of these buildings no longer exist physically, they continue to live through old photographs and private collections. Reconstructing the facades will allow not only the graphic preservation of the disappeared architectural heritage but also facilitate

research and education, promote local identity, and improve urban planning. In this way, documenting the facades will significantly contribute to understanding the urban and architectural evolution of Zalău, providing a necessary framework for the study and preservation of urban heritage.

By reconstructing the facades of demolished buildings and creating street elevations, the research aims to preserve the visual memory of these historic structures - a rereading of the erasures and corrections made over time in the built space.

### **Understanding Urban and Architectural Dynamics and Evaluating the Impact of Urban Interventions**

Studying how architectural and urban interventions from different historical periods have influenced the structure and functionality of urban space, as well as evaluating the effects of these interventions on the aesthetic and functional coherence of the city, contributes to understanding urban transformation processes.

Local identity and specificity are profoundly influenced by a community's history and evolution. Over the centuries, cities have evolved by adapting to the needs of society, benefiting from accumulated experience and a specific human intuition. In the context of industrialization and modernization, this cultural heritage has often been neglected. The emergence of large-scale urbanism, with an accelerated development pace, has led to the creation of dysfunctional urban environments that often ignored the human dimension.

### **Integrating Historical Research with Urban Planning**

Using the researched historical and cultural knowledge supports the urban planning process, ensuring the integration of historical information into the future development of the city, reflecting its values and identity.

The New Charter of Athens introduced the term "coherent city," consisting of elements of visual and physical coherence of constructions, as well as coherence between urban functions, infrastructure networks, and new communication and information technologies. The lack of coherence in the continuity of developments over time, caused by rapid development, affects the continuity of the character of built spaces, their identity, and value.

In-depth analysis of urban aesthetic issues allows us to better understand the evolution of cities and identify the balance between old and new elements, as well as between components in continuous transformation and those stable in the long term.

It is important to adopt new concepts with caution, ensuring they integrate harmoniously into the existing architectural context. The transition from one concept to another must be smooth, using transitional forms to prevent aesthetic discontinuities.

By achieving these objectives, the research aims to provide a solid knowledge base to support the formulation of sustainable and coherent urban development strategies for the municipality of Zalău. These strategies must respect the city's cultural heritage and respond to the contemporary needs of its community. Additionally, the research aims to contribute to the creation of a centralized database of the city's memory, efficiently documenting and preserving its history and evolution for future generations.

## GENERAL METHODOLOGY

The study of urban space can be approached by analysing three essential dimensions: form, structure, and function. Each of these dimensions provides a distinct framework for understanding the complexity of the built environment. The analysis of form focuses on specific aspects of the city's street layout. The analysis of structure examines the organization and interconnection of spatial elements within the city's components, while the analysis of function focuses on the use and purpose of spaces in response to the community's needs.

The research methodology integrates these dimensions to provide a coherent picture of urban evolution in Zalău, using a multidisciplinary approach and combining historical, architectural, and urban planning perspectives. This includes methods such as historical document analysis, archival studies, statistical interpretations, and the examination of maps and plans.

The research aims to document and understand the main elements of urban morphology and the factors that have influenced the evolution of the built environment. Integrating historical knowledge into urban planning is necessary to ensure sustainable and coherent development, adapted to the contemporary needs of the community.

### The Need for an Integrated Approach

Existing research on the evolution of Zalău focuses mainly on historical and narrative aspects, highlighting the events and social context that influenced its development. Although these studies provide a solid knowledge base, they are incomplete without a visual basis. The lack of these visual elements constitutes a significant gap in fully understanding urban transformations, hindering the realization of a comprehensive picture of Zalău's urban and architectural evolution.

To overcome these limitations, I have integrated historical and geographical analysis with detailed graphical representations. This includes the development of urban plans, representations of building facades, and other visual elements to illustrate the city's evolution over time.

An integrated approach offers a complete picture of Zalău, highlighting not only historical and cultural aspects but also how these influence the city's contemporary and future development. By combining historical research data with urban and architectural graphical representations, detailed visual documentation of urban evolution will complement existing information.

The use of „palimpsest” as a concept in this context helps to identify and preserve significant historical elements, harmoniously integrating them into the current urban landscape. This method highlights the possibility of reconstructing changes in the built environment, adapted according to the urban society's specific needs.

Analysis Methodology Scheme – Data Processing Table by the Author

Process	Finding sources	Information Collection	Processing
No.	Sources	Information	Processing
1.	Archives of Zalău City Hall  Archives of Sălaj County Council	- P.U.G. Zalău 2023, 2010, 1990; - Protected areas - Historic monument buildings - Local development plans - Historical studies - City systematization plans – 1970s and 1980s - Property files – prepared for demolition	Analysis, filtering, and centralization. Creation of local evolution plans – mapping city plans at key historical periods. Graphical representation of the city's parceling in various periods. Reconstruction of demolished building facades – graphical rendering. Identification of the impact of new urban and architectural insertions.

2.	Romanian Archives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Plans</li> <li>- Archival images</li> <li>- Urban documentation</li> </ul>	Analysis, filtering, and centralization – recording the way of life of city inhabitants in various periods.
3.	Library - Specialty Books and Magazines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Architecture</li> <li>- Urbanism</li> <li>- History</li> <li>- Geography</li> </ul>	Theoretical basis – analysis, filtering, and centralization.
4.	Private Collections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Photographs</li> <li>- Postcards</li> </ul>	Analysis, filtering, and centralization – recording the way of life of city inhabitants in various periods. Reconstruction of demolished building facades.
5.	Press of the Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Archival articles</li> <li>- Contemporary period articles</li> </ul>	Analysis, filtering, and centralization – recording the way of life of inhabitants in various periods.
6.	Websites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Digital archives – maps and plans</li> <li>- Digital archives – images</li> <li>- Scientific articles</li> <li>- Press articles</li> </ul>	Analysis, filtering, and centralization. Mapping city plans at key historical periods – graphical representation of the city's spatial and construction evolution.
7.	Interviews and Discussions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Local Administration</li> <li>- Historians and geographers</li> <li>- City residents</li> </ul>	Collecting testimonies regarding the urban, architectural, and social peculiarities of Zalău over time and translating them into written or drawn format. Recording the way of life of inhabitants in various periods.

### **The Concept of Palimpsest**

To clearly convey the urban and architectural evolution of Zalău, I applied the analytical approach of "palimpsest," which allowed for the observation of temporal and spatial overlaps in urban development. Applied in the fields of architecture and urbanism, this concept symbolizes the cultural and historical layering of the city.

The overlaying of historical and contemporary plans, as well as the comparison of past and existing street fronts, highlights how the city has adapted to social, economic, and political changes over time, providing relevant information about the cultural, urban, and architectural development of the locality.

Using the concept of palimpsest in this context helps to identify and preserve significant historical elements, harmoniously integrating them into the current urban landscape. This method not only respects local identity and cultural heritage but also contributes to sustainable urban planning, enriching the urban experience and promoting a continuous dialogue between the past and present.

## **STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS**

This section provides a detailed description of the structure of the thesis, explaining the approaches and methods used in each chapter to achieve the research objectives and address the formulated working hypotheses.

**Chapter 1 – "Introduction"** - provides an overview of the research topic, explaining the context, relevance, and purpose of the study. The glossary of terms serves to clarify the meanings of specific expressions used in the study, and the annotated bibliography reflects the specialized literature consulted.

This section establishes the theoretical and methodological framework of the thesis, the working hypothesis, and clearly defines the research objectives. The methodology is detailed through the techniques used in the research process to collect and analyse data on the urban and architectural evolution of Zalău.

This initial structure lays the foundation for the detailed discussions that follow in the chapters of the thesis, addressing the complexity of urban and architectural analysis of Zalău.

**Chapter 2 – "Specific Geographic, Historical, Economic Aspects"** - addresses specific geographic, historical, and economic aspects, bringing to the forefront the necessary context for understanding the formation and function of the settlement over time.

The geographic context that facilitated the formation and development of the settlement is described and illustrated with relevant plans, emphasizing the role of geographical position and territorial peculiarities in shaping the urban form. Local toponymy is explored, reflecting the connections between the settlement's name and its geographical space, the resources it offers, and its role in the territory.

The chapter analyses the historical evolution and territorial functions of the city, describing and illustrating the historical context using relevant historical maps. Despite being raided several times, due to its strategic position and the occupations of its inhabitants, the city managed to continue its evolution.

Regarding economic aspects, the chapter addresses the traditional occupations of the inhabitants and how these supported the initial development of the city as a market town. Subsequently, the significant economic transition from a commercial centre to an industrial city is analysed, marking a decisive stage in modernization and urban expansion. This multidimensional perspective on geographic, historical, and economic aspects emphasizes their role in shaping Zalău's current urban identity and structure.

**Chapter 3 – "Evolution of Urban Form"** - reconstructs the evolution of Zalău's urban form over the centuries, from the 18th century to the present. Major transformations and influences on the urban structure are presented, analysing each historical period separately.

Old plans and topographic surveys are analysed and processed to illustrate relevant aspects of evolution in plan. These documents have been graphically transposed by the author by creating plans for each period, highlighting the built perimeter, streets, valleys, islands, parcels, land use, constructions, and relevant urban objectives for each period.

The centralization, processing, and graphical transposition of these plans by the author is a new endeavour that facilitates the understanding and analysis of the urban form evolution.

The conclusions highlight continuity and changes in urban development by presenting comparative images of the evolution of Zalău's urban form over time, as well as a plan illustrating the evolution of the street layout, all created by the author.

**In Chapters 4 and 5**, the evolution of the urban fabrics of the central area and those adjacent to the main streets, as well as the evolution of their fronts, are presented.

The evolution of urban fabrics is illustrated by detailing parcelling plans graphically transposed by the author based on archival documents. Plans from the early or mid-20th century are compared with current ones, illustrating changes in the urban fabric, demolished buildings, preserved buildings, and new insertions.

The facades of demolished buildings are graphically transposed by the author by reconstructing them from old photographs and property files prepared for demolitions during the 1970s-1990s, found in the city hall archives.

The facades of historic monument buildings, belonging to the fronts of the discussed squares and streets, are graphically rendered by the author based on the current situation.

The street elevations of the fronts of the discussed squares and streets are graphically illustrated by the author, presenting a comparative view of the early or mid-20th century situation with the current situation.

**Chapter 4** – *"Central Area – Urban Fabrics and Referential Architectures – Past and Present"* - focuses on a detailed analysis of the central area, exploring the evolution of urban fabrics and referential architectures.

The first subchapter illustrates the central area with two comparative plans – from the early 20th century and the present, to contextualize the changes in the two public spaces and the streets that border or converge into them. These plans are relevant to illustrate the disappearance of Unirii Square and the appearance of 1 December 1918 Square in the immediate vicinity, as well as the slight change in the route of the former 30 December Street and its transformation into the new boulevard.

Iuliu Maniu Square is illustrated with comparative plans of its evolution in plan and its fronts' evolution, with the graphical transposition of the facades of buildings that belonged to the old fronts, whether existing or demolished.

The transformation of the former 30 December Street into the current Mihai Viteazul Boulevard is described and illustrated with comparative plans. The evolution of the western front is illustrated by reconstructing demolished facades and new fronts.

The island adjacent to the "Liberty Square" complex, bordered to the east by the former 30 December Street/current boulevard, to the south by Iuliu Maniu Square, and to the west by Unirii Street, is treated as an integral island since it was almost entirely reconfigured by demolishing all the old houses and constructing a complex that includes a commercial building and residential blocks. The evolution of the urban fabric and the facades of demolished buildings compared to the new fronts are described and illustrated.

The evolution of the western front of Unirii Street along with the adjacent fabric is illustrated in three different periods – the early 20th century, the second half of the 20th century, and the present, illustrating the relocation and transformation of the food market within the island defined by Unirii Street and Zalău Valley. The western front of the street is also illustrated by comparing the street elevations from the early 20th century and the current ones.

Unirii Square and 1 December 1918 Square are treated in two distinct subchapters, given their different functions and conformations. The western and northern fronts of the former Unirii Square have been reconstructed, detailing the facades of demolished and remaining buildings, and comparing them with the existing fronts through street elevations. The fronts of the former 30 December Street, which were entirely demolished for the construction of the new square, have also been reconstructed. The plan of 1 December 1918 Square and the insertions from the 1970s are discussed and illustrated separately due to the different nature of the new interventions.

Each subchapter concludes with remarks, given the different configurations and functions of each space, street, or urban island.

**Chapter 5** – *"Main Streets – Urban Fabrics and Referential Architectures – Past and Present"* - addresses the main streets and the urban fabrics adjacent to them, with the reconstruction of demolished building facades.

In this context, Gheorghe Doja Street, Corneliu Coposu Street, and the former 30 December Street/current boulevard, along with their adjacent islands and the evolution of the urban fabric, are addressed.

The facades of buildings located at the extremities of the city centre – areas that retained its scale, at the first house numbers – were graphically transposed.

Each subchapter concludes with remarks, given the different configurations of each street and its adjacent urban islands.

**Chapter 6** – *"Districts within the Old Built Perimeter of the City"* - describes and illustrates in plan the evolution of the urban fabric of six neighbourhoods within the old built perimeter of the city, from the early 20th century compared to the current situation. Thus, the area of 22 December 1989 Street, Olarilor Street, as well as Brădet, Stadion, Simion Bărnuțiu, and Păcii districts are analysed.

**Chapter 7** – *"General Conclusions"* - concludes the thesis by presenting general conclusions, originality, and innovative contributions, results and their dissemination, as well as future research directions. The importance of the research and its impact on the field are highlighted, emphasizing the value and applicability of the obtained results.

## **GENERAL CONCLUSIONS**

In this thesis, I have investigated the urban evolution of the city of Zalău, focusing on the morphological and functional transformations of the built environment. The research employed a rigorous methodology to document and graphically transpose the spatial evolution of the city, thus contributing to a deeper understanding of the interactions between various factors and their impact on the urban form.

The factors that influenced the formation and development of the city of Zalău were analysed in detail, starting with its strategic position which played an essential role in the continuous shaping of the urban landscape. Historical maps and topographic plans were utilized and processed to illustrate the context of the formation and development of the locality, in response to administrative and economic developments, highlighting the transition from a market town to an industrialized urban centre, municipality, and county capital.

A key aspect of the thesis was the preservation of urban and architectural memory through the graphical transposition and centralization of city plans and the graphical reconstruction of demolished building facades. This approach not only allowed for a visual comparison between past and present but also emphasized the importance of preserving urban memory in the face of inevitable changes. The concept of palimpsest, used as a method of transposition and analysis, highlighted how layers of history overlap and interact, providing a unique window into urban complexity and dynamics.

The research results provided a detailed and clear picture of the spatial and structural evolution of Zalău, illustrating major changes in urban configuration and the significance of space. By confirming the hypotheses and achieving the objectives, the study demonstrated its relevance in the broader context of urban planning and architectural studies.

The contribution of this study to the research field extends beyond merely expanding the existing knowledge base by completing the city's graphic archive. It also lays the foundation for formulating urban development policies and heritage conservation strategies.

## RESULTS

### Originality and innovative contributions of the thesis:

- The work aims to create a model for deepening the constructed memory of a city, using the example of Zalău.
- Extrapolating the concept of palimpsest to analyse the overlap of Zalău's built structures and their evolution. By applying the idea of palimpsest as a methodology, I illustrated how urban form is the result of successive layers of evolution, reflecting the city's architectural and urban history, as each historical period has left its mark on the urban structure. The analysis focused on elements of the urban structure that have been preserved and aspects of the urban fabric that have changed or disappeared over time.
- The adopted methodology combines archival studies with personal processing of historical information on the city's plan, with historical document analysis being an essential starting point for understanding a locality's evolution. By consulting relevant bibliographies in geography and history, as well as databases containing historical maps, the context and mode of the locality's formation are illustrated through relevant descriptions and plans processed by the author.
- The graphical transposition of Zalău's urban form evolution over the centuries, from the 18th century to the present, was based on old plans and topographic surveys. By transposing this information into plans, the relevant aspects of planar evolution were illustrated, creating a planimetric synthesis that supports the idea of palimpsest.
- The transposition of urban fabric evolution through the author's editing of parcelling plans, based on archival plans. Plans from the early or mid-20th century and current plans are compared, illustrating changes in the urban fabric, demolished buildings, preserved buildings, and new insertions. These plans were developed by studying the archives of Zalău City Hall and the Sălaj County Council, with relevant documents regarding the locality's development in the previous century, including old General Urban Plans, sketches, and systematization documents, and property files prepared for demolition.
- This method involved transposing historical information onto updated maps, thereby creating a planimetric synthesis. The concept of urban palimpsest is used to highlight the historical stratification of public space and how it has developed, retaining traces of previous development phases and interventions made over time.
- The reconstruction of demolished building facades is an essential part of the research. The surveys of these facades are not found in archival plans; therefore, they were graphically represented by the author through the study of old photographs found in the archives of local public institutions or private collections, as well as property files prepared for demolitions during the 1970s-1990s, found in city hall archives.
- Creating street front elevations from the early/mid-20th century and the present - necessary for comparative illustration of the evolution of market fronts and street fronts. This endeavor involved the graphic representation of demolished facades, preserved ones, and new insertions, based on old photographs, architectural plans, and historical descriptions.

**The author graphically drafted the main facades of 97 buildings, 71 of which represent reconstructions of buildings demolished in the second half of the 20th century.** Based on plans, sketches, and old photographs, I documented changes in the

urban structure through visual materials, using the concept of urban palimpsest. These reconstructions allow for the preservation of visual memory, and comparative exposure helps to understand the impact of changes on urban aesthetics and the urban fabric.

- Preserving the cultural memory of the city of Zalău by collecting the necessary information and transposing it into the city's evolution plans. The research involved studying chronicles, monographs, and other written sources, as well as conducting interviews with representatives of local public authorities, geographers, historians, archaeologists, and locals. These provided valuable perspectives on the evolution of urban space and the impact of urban changes on daily life. These conversations helped to understand social life - a way of life specific to Zalău, in the context of how public spaces and buildings from the past century, which no longer exist or function differently today, were used and perceived by residents.
- Aspects mentioned by travellers passing through Zalău, as well as those mentioned by locals from the mid-20th century to the present, were both mentioned and graphically transposed.
- The centralization, processing, and graphic drafting by the author of evolution plans, urban fabric, and demolished building facades is a new endeavour that facilitates understanding and analysis of urban form evolution.
- By using these methods, the research aims to provide a detailed and comprehensive analysis of the evolution of Zalău's urban space, identifying both the determining factors and their impact on current and future development. This multidisciplinary approach ensures a deep understanding of urban dynamics, thereby laying the groundwork for proposals for sustainable and coherent city development.
- The graphic archive of the city was completed by centralizing and graphically transposing, in a unified format, both the information found in the archives regarding the city's structure and completing it with graphic representations of the facades of demolished buildings, whose surveys are not found in the archives.
- The quality and validity of the obtained results are supported by the rigorous methodologies used in the research. The combined use of historical and archival sources allowed for a detailed and accurate reconstruction of Zalău's urban evolution. These methods ensured data accuracy and analysis complexity, contributing to a profound understanding of urban dynamics and transformations over time.

## **DISSEMINATION**

The dissemination of the research results has been carried out through specific academic channels: publication of articles in specialized journals and conference volumes, presentations at national and international conferences. These dissemination activities not only increased the visibility of the study but also facilitated academic dialogue, stimulating the exchange of ideas and perspectives among researchers. Participation in these academic forums has allowed for the consolidation of professional networks and the integration of research results into the broader scientific discourse, thereby contributing to the evolution of knowledge in the field of urban and architectural studies. Through these efforts, the research has attracted the attention of the academic and professional community, opening up new possibilities for collaboration and interdisciplinary projects.

The adopted methodology in this study has been applied as a model for deepening urban reality through:

- **My activity as a teaching staff member** over the past seven academic years at the Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism of the Technical University of Cluj Napoca, within the Specialized Urban Design Workshops 1 and 2 (third and fourth years), which involves guiding a group of students in the realization of an urbanization or urban restructuring project.
- **Coordinating the university internship program in public administration** organized by the Directorate of Urbanism and Spatial Planning within the Cluj County Council for students of the Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism of the Technical University of Cluj Napoca.

This highlights both the immediate impact of the research and its long-term contribution to the development and understanding of urban and architectural complexities.

### **Implications for Urban Development**

The establishment of the graphic archive created in this research is significant and extends its influence beyond the academic context to the practical sphere of urban planning and heritage conservation. The study provides valuable data and perspectives that can guide urban planning policies and heritage conservation strategies for the city of Zalău, with the potential to be adapted and applied to the analysis and development of other cities with similar historical characteristics.

By disseminating the reconstructed images, I emphasize the importance of preserving architectural and cultural memory, and the research makes a considerable contribution to promoting a more responsible and conscious approach to urban planning. This not only encourages a development policy that balances modern demands with respect for historical and cultural context but also stimulates the integration of these principles into the formulation of public policies aimed at sustainability and long-term urban integrity. The research results offer a reference framework for decision-makers and urban planners to better understand how interventions in the urban structure can influence community cohesion and place identity.

The methodological model developed can serve as an example of best practices for other urban studies, encouraging the use of an integrated and multidisciplinary approach in the analysis and management of urban spaces. Thus, the research contributes to a better understanding of urban dynamics and provides tools for conserving and valuing architectural heritage in a way that respects and celebrates the history and local identity of cities.

### **FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS**

Future research offers opportunities to deepen and expand the analysis methodology. Exploring these aspects could include comparative studies between Zalău and other cities in the region, highlighting the particularities and similarities in urban evolution. Such investigations will contribute to a deeper and more nuanced understanding of urban dynamics and facilitate the development of informed solutions for sustainable city development.

Additionally, the author's research in urban development will not stop at the current results but will continue as new documents are discovered that allow for the reconstruction of other areas of the old city. This process will be supported by the completion of the graphic archive as new images are identified.

There is an intention to create a dedicated website and publish the graphical representations made, transforming this project into an accessible and continuously updated resource for researchers, urban planners, and the general public interested in the history and urban evolution of Zalău. These efforts will not only increase the accessibility and visibility of the research but will also facilitate interdisciplinary and transnational collaborations, expanding the study's impact on the scientific and practical community.

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