CHANGING THE PARADIGM OF LIVING IN BUCHAREST: THE ECONOMIC SEGREGATION OF THE URBAN PRIVILEGED

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Abstract

An important element of the geographical segregation caused by rich and very rich people consists in the creation of distinct areas having certain spatial features inside the city. This is what we usually call: gated communities or fortified enclaves. So, new forms of urban living are permanently and continuously generated by city nature. Sometimes, some of that forms are characterized like a paradigmatic new ways of living styles. Part of this paradigmatic living style is also the golden ghetto of the elites that get a totally different look. This difference reveals the urban paradox of the globalized world where we live. These areas are positioned according to the plans designed by some urbanists or they are the result of the most irrational fantasies of the owners.

In Bucharest the nineties brought a change of paradigm regarding the idea of living. Leaving the city has been a part of the first stage of the "urban democracy", trying to meet the need of a new living style: choosing big lands in order to be inhabited individually, which has led to a different approach of the area parameters with its public performance. One of the most wanted areas neighboring of Bucharest due to the various natural opportunities it provides is Pipera, and more recently Prelungirea Ghencea

Keywords: habitation, economic segregation, landscape, Bucharest, upper classes.

1. THE URBAN FORTIFICATION OR CHANGING THE PARADIGM OF LIVING

By contrast to the ghetto concept, the fortification concept refers to the voluntary unification of a group of people in order to protect their own interest, which is dominant and which consolidates the group domination within the urban space where it can be found. Unlike the "fortifying" or "fortification" terms in the historical meaning of constructing a group of buildings protected by tall and very resistant walls, the new term, often used regarding the urban geography, refers to that space where gated communities live. Gated communities (Atkinson and Blandy, 2006) represent more and more, in many cities of the world, a spatial and geographical reality; this notion is in fact the one that defines those human groups that are socially gated. The particularity of the fortification is given by the human component, generally represented by the social groups benefiting from very high incomes.

The city nature generates new types of urban living. Animated by the human community, life in the urban environment changes the geographical perception of the space. New forms of spatial density are created while the others either disappear or are enhanced. Actually, the result is a mosaic of social cores inside which the human groups are spatially distributed according to personal preferences, the local administration policy, the repulsion created by the quality of the living spaces or the facilities offered. The analysis of the fortification process has lead to a space known as the new urban fortification or citadel. Very rich people live in the urban fortifications or citadels where access is limited and the safety measures are very often exaggerated. The multitude of studies regarding topics such as: gated communities, discrimination, poverty or segregation, mainly those written by American specialists have created new concepts and terms for an accurate description of the social reality of the big cities. Thus, Michael Dear states that the urban fortress is nothing but a prohibitory space (1999, p. 146) out of which new forms of urban space are developed. The fortified enclaves of the elites get a totally different look. All these spatial forms of human community manifestation change the urban space completely. The way of living of the communities with high incomes is much different from that of the ghettos. This difference reveals the urban paradox of the globalized world where we live. For example, in Latin America the fortified urban spaces include office buildings, malls and other spaces that have been adapted in order to enter the pattern: schools, hospitals, relaxation centers and parks (Caldeira, 2000). Almost all the urban fortifications have basic characteristics in common. The prohibitory spaces mentioned by Michael Dear represented by urban fortifications are in fact private properties for the collective use of their inhabitants; within these spaces the allowed or prohibited activities are very well established, the disruption created by this situation breaking the city unity regarding the public space.

FIGURE 1 - VILLA IN THE PRELUNGIEREA GHENCEA AREA HIDDEN BEHIND GATES THAT ARE OVER 2 METER TALL

2. THE GEOGRAPHICAL DIMENSION OF THE SPACES OCCUPIED BY THE "URBAN PRIVILEGED"

Strictly related to the birth, dynamics and existence of the spaces occupied by the people having high incomes within the cities, more geographical dimensions of the urban areas can be noticed.

Firstly, by analogy and, at the same time, by contrast to the urban areas occupied by the poorest inhabitants of the cities, the residential areas of those with high incomes include different types of houses, starting with that owned by the "middle bourgeois", the most luxurious within the most favored urban areas. Thus, as Beaujeu-Garnier and Chabot state, the spaces inhabited by the rich are not affected by industrial buildings which can be found among the blocks of flats or houses of the urban population living in the suburbs, and the commercial centers, if present, have a " much more ostentatious" look (1971, p. 304). As the two French geographers noticed, the fact that "in certain streets, there was no window that could uglify the ground-floors of the beautiful well-positioned buildings or the ordered layout of the cast iron fences and of the gardens; the traffic, especially that of the pedestrians, is low, so one can find oases of silence among the highways where city life flows full of the continuous anxiety of its people, concerned with meeting their daily needs" is not less true. (Beaujeu-Garnier and Chabot, 1971, p.304)

The second fact is related to their layout within the urban space having two contradictory forms. On one hand, these areas are positioned according to the plans designed by some theorists of the urbanism; on the other hand, they are the result of the most irrational fantasies of the owners.

The third dimension refers to the intra-urban distances. Thus, it has been noticed that the districts inhabited by rich people are placed at a certain distance from the intense urban, industrial or commercial activities. At the same time, they are built in the most favorable natural environment. They are seldom known as entire urban sectors, having very original morphologies. The research done within the last twenty years has shown that the spaces inhabited by the urban classes that are financially superior are characterized by a lot of vegetation, freshness, and very tidy, beautiful houses, contrasting the noise, amalgam and intensity of the urban nucleus. On the outskirts, the space is larger and the architecture of the houses is more original, the gardens and the streets are wider. (Beaujeu-Garnier and Chabot, 1971, p. 305)

3. SUBURBS, WALLS, GATED COMMUNITIES, GOLDEN GHETTO OR THE SPACES OF THE URBAN PRIVILEGED

Kevin Lynch explained how physical conditions are important for the degree of satisfaction of the urban inhabitants. Since the beginning of the twentieth century the practice of territorial planning has enhanced the priority of improving the urban conditions both for the economy and for the inhabitants of the city. Jill Grant (2006, p. 11) notices that, in the post-industrial economy, globalization requires the improvement of the local spaces so that they can be competitive in getting capital and jobs. The process

of urban extension has created new forms characterized by different social attitudes in meeting the needs of living. Based on such principles, urban improvement – mainly at the outskirts – has divided the urban geography.

An important element of the geographical segregation caused by rich and very rich people, element which can be found in the literature of the field, consists of creating distinct areas having certain spatial features inside the city. These spaces are based, on one hand, on the financial position of those involved in the urban segregation process, and on the other hand, on the personal preferences. The importance of these two components increases due to their interdependence. Consequently, as Alan Latham and his team appreciated (2009, p. 138), if someone wants to understand the dynamics of the contemporary urban improvement and rearrangement, he or she needs to understand the strategies used by the elites and the middle class in order to manage their relationship with the less privileged people. Guided by the fear of delinquency, crime and any kind of public disorder and also by their will to protect their valuable properties at any cost, innovation such as homeowners' associations developed with a common interest (where the owners pay together the price of property maintenance), gated communities (where the homeowners are physically separated from the rest of the city), improved business centers, etc., deeply shape the urban space, sometimes in a worrying manner.

We can state that this kind of innovations create an almost unique method of urban division: a city that is not defined by the public spaces meant for social meeting and interaction, but by its walls and enclaves (see: Marcuse, 1997; Davis, 1998; Soja, 2000; Low, 2004). For example, this kind of communities together with the surrounding walls, private highways and beautiful gardens represent an adaption to the present reality. The process, mainly developed and put into practice at the outskirts of the American cities, especially after the nineties, has deeper origins in the way of development and extension of the European cities in the nineteenth century (especially Berlin, Rome and Paris). But nowadays, as Karina Landman and Martin Schönteich notice, the spaces marked with a physical print within the gated communities are a global (2002, p. 72).

For example, gated communities, or golden ghettoes as María José Alvarez refers to them (2007), are divided in several categories, according to certain reasons that determine them. Despite all these, Alan Latham concludes, there are only four elements which require attention by the amazing way of accelerating the urban privatopia (McKenzie, 1996):

- Alarming growth. The urban spaces such as gated communities represent a more and more prominent side of the new residential evolution;

▪ Few connections to the nearby urban spaces. This enclosing and the use of private security agencies show the weak connection between these enclaves and the neighborhood they belong to;

▪ The extent to which these urban areas are included in the future urban geometry in which financial wealth is not allowed to interact with the less prosperous areas. The combination of residential enclaves, offices and business parks developed on the outskirts, suburban commercial spaces (malls) and private automobiles has created an extraordinary social mixture within a hermetic urban environment beyond which the privileged people refuse to take the chance; and

▪ The extent to which the segregation pattern that appears can point out the remarkable congruency between the so-called cities in the Global North and South. For a long time this segregation was associated to cities such as São Paulo and Cape Town, and nowadays to almost all big cities in the North.

Finally, the urban architecture of the population with high and very high incomes is usually very different from both the way according to which the urban areas have developed so far and from the rest of the city as a whole and as we see it now. Consequently, as we have noticed in the previous sub-chapter and as Beaujeu-Garnier and Chabot revealed, the houses of these communities – no matter whether we refer to gated communities, golden ghettoes or the urban areas within the city – are very large, strong, tidy and far from the urban, industrial or crowded sites. Due to the financial potential, superior forms of social and real-estate protection can be found here. There are few pedestrians and this type of urban areas benefits from all the necessary facilities required for a superior living level, unlike the poor districts.

4. BUCHAREST: THE SOCIO-URBAN DYNAMICS OF THE OUTSKIRTS. EMPIRICAL AND PERCEPTIVE RECORD

4.1 .General considerations on the new areas built at the outskirts

Also in Bucharest the nineties brought a change of paradigm regarding the idea of living, leading to a reevaluation of the inhabited area. For most people, living does not consist of a chain of individual homes vertically organized anymore, but it obviously represents a material and symbolic horizontal representation. The development of the outskirts was very important for the post-socialist development of Bucharest. This was possible by occupying the lands there, but not in favor of a gradual functional

increase pertaining to the centre which is now impossible to rehabilitate. Thus, the city appears to be used rather than inhabited, as it no longer meets its inhabitants' needs. Leaving the city has been a part of the first stage of the "urban democracy", trying to meet the need of a new living style: choosing big lands in order to be inhabited individually, which has led to a different approach of the area parameters with its public performance. Causing troubles to the previous urban geographical theories is not a characteristic of Bucharest only, but of the most cities with a population exceeding the old limits.

Due to reasons which are easy to guess and to the lack of a specific pattern that can be reintegrated, the new urban shape inspires from internationally recognized patterns such as the gated community type. As we have stated in the theoretical part of this study and as the title of this phenomenon suggests, the purpose of these areas is to form protected communities which are isolated economically, physically and socially from other parts of the city. The main focus is to integrate the community relations within the material limits determined by the walls or the fences which define their morphology (Matache according to http://www.icca.ro/).

No more than ten years of democratic city-planning have passed since the spontaneous urban evolution of Bucharest mentioned by Vintilă Mihăilescu. This evolution was intense in the first years of democracy and led to the programmatic generalization of the gated community phenomenon, which was the opposite of the previous one. It is well-known that spontaneous evolution is not specific to our capital, but to all traditional European cities, but this form existed after the revolution, too. The community is the identification "tool" needed by the new urban actors. This community is characterized by ethnic, material criteria and also by the social, cultural or professional status. Thus, segregation in the Romanian cities, especially in the capital city is slower than in the European cities, due to the transition period and to the urban identity search, but we can no longer state that this is a brand-new process. But the fact that the community has not been carefully established is true. It seems that it has been formed by accident, by grouping its inhabitants in similarly built areas.

4.2. The appearance of gated communities: between limitation and community

The Bucharest suburbanization phenomenon is similar to the after-war occidental suburb context, characterized by the proliferation of the market economy and of the private capital forms which seem to assault the neighbor areas of the cities by the urban dispersion process imposed by the real estate policy against other urban policies mediated through unitary prospects for equal evolution of the cities. The desire to create a private managerial system allowed to find an immediate solution of the city problems, but slowed down a durable urban development from the time perspective. Sequential privatization of the large city areas baulks the premises of a controlled dynamics, which is obvious in

Bucharest. The tendency to extend the northern part is not recent; it started some time ago and is justified by the geographical potential: the Colentina lakes and Baneasa, Tunari and Andronache forests. The successful way in which this urban axis has developed lately is due to some speculation made on the real estate market. The price for a piece of land can be doubled or increased up to 100%. The new residential complexes built in these areas are obvious, while the need of isolation is more important than the need of living as a community. (Matache, according to http://www.icca.ro/).

The import and adaption of the gated community pattern constrains the geographical and historical unity of Bucharest, which provides variety for the spatial and social city organization. Due to the mentioned constraint, the following question can be asked: can a community be created only by constraint (a physical one in this case)? Regarding the residential areas in the north of Bucharest, community there coexists only at a formal level. The inhabitants here focus more on the material side (the image and structure attractiveness of the projects) and the social status, accepting the isolation from the other people. According to the research done outdoors we can state that the members of these areas are not able to interact with each other within this limited space; they promote a competitive atmosphere. Living within this limited area makes use of the brand image or the address effect according to the principle "tell me where you live so I can tell you who you are!" the address becoming the performance space for the rich people who try to build an identity image which is not the real reflection of the community image. For example, the old residential areas in Bucharest such as Aviatiei, Primaverii, etc., which are also hunted by the rich, are based on symbolic connotations and on the formation of strong social relations and this no longer happens in the residential areas of the gated community type.

The consequences of this phenomenon in Bucharest are related to many aspects (Matache, according to http://www.icca.ro/):

A. A landscape made of repetitive areas is created, determining homogeneity and a stereotypical behavior at the social level; the inhabitants of these areas have a certain status and financial potential;

B. It moulds a certain self-sufficient suburban land-division within a gated community and it rejects the need of neighboring by a strict space limitation;

C. It generates a new attitude towards the city; the inhabitants of these areas use the city, but they refuse to live in it;

D. It separates a liberalized space; there is no communication between groups within the same area; and

E. It is a space created as a result of a developer's need and not as a result of the natural desire of the community, having a mercantile aspect the same as a marketing product.

The consequences of this desire to customize the private space are the isolation and transformation of the communication relations among people of the same residential area into automatic and formal relations.

4.3. Adjusting the houses to the preference and needs of the urban elite

After liberalizing the real-estate market, the urban dynamics controlled by the house-owners has developed chaotically. The individual houses looked like small fortresses to the viewer, the houses were limited without a context or neighbors, independent and facing their interior. Being built in this way, the houses at the outskirts looked like spread objects that had created their own functional environment in order to become a "separate city".

Thus, a house has accessories which try to imitate, at a smaller scale, the urban functions (Matache, according to http://www.icca.ro/):

- The cinema in the city is replaced with the home cinema system;

- The office with the home office;

- The hospital is replaced with home treatment;

- The restaurant is replaced with pre-cooked food;

- The museum with art books;

- The casino with Internet games;

- The coffee-machine replaces the café;

- People give up going shopping due to e-commerce;

- The workout equipment at home replaces the fitness club;

- The concert hall is replaced with hi-fi audio equipment;

- The car replaces the public means of transport;

- The e-mail replaces the classical mail system;

- Nature is sometimes replaced with plants or gardens; and

▪ The public swimming-pools are adapted to the social status and the financial potential and replaced with private swimming-pools in the house-owners yards, etc.

Lately, the individual accessorizing has been replaced with a second living tendency. By grouping this kind of buildings near the city, the real-estate developers have created a gated-community house system. This dynamics of the evolution promotes a defensive architectural pattern which is often called "guerilla". The living islands support the paradigm of a secured city which increases a certain type of gated environment which is self-segregated or segregated on purpose.

4.3.1. Pipera

One of the most wanted areas neighboring the first district of Bucharest due to the various natural opportunities it provides is Pipera. Built due to the upper-class's need of running away from the big city, from the bustle, the noise and the pollution of the Bucharest environment, Pipera was nothing but an agricultural piece of land twenty years ago. Building the isolated houses at the beginning, then the villa groups created a real "luxurious" district at the suburbs. The land owners in this area managed to earn a lot of money once the rich people started moving toward the north. The spatial segregation of the upper-class is more obvious here than anywhere else inside Bucharest or at its outskirts. This fact is supported by both the price of land and houses and by the number of residential projects (houses, villas, blocks of flats, mixed residential areas, etc.). The price of the land and houses in this area is not even for the few people of the middle-class. For example, as mentioned in an article regarding the influence the current crisis has on the real-estate market in Pipera, a 300 m² villa which cost about 370.000 Euros in 2008 costs about 200.000 Euros today, fact which confirms the hypothesis of denying access to this area for the middle-class people.
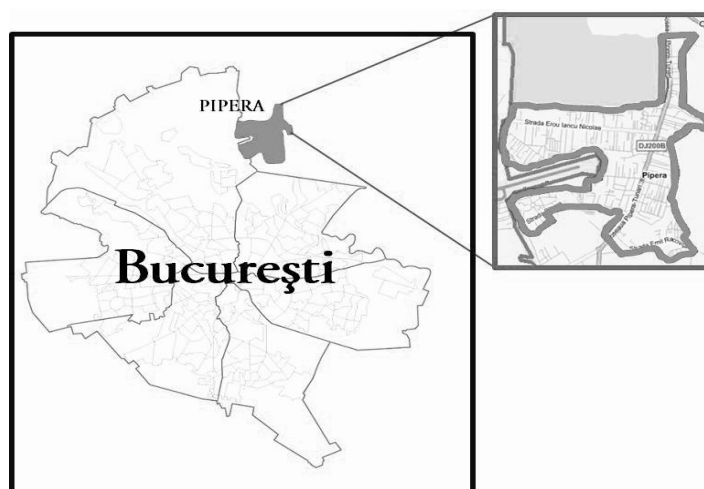

FIGURE 2 - THE GEOGRAPHICAL AREA OCCUPIED BY THE PIPERA SUBURBAN DISTRICT

Having no intention to create a homogenous and continuous territory, the houses of the upper-class are an alternative to living in the city. The safety and the quality of living here are according to very high standards. Many residential areas enjoy video supervision, strict limitation and guard. Certain residential areas are protected by barriers and access is not allowed to everybody. The economic capital of the social community here is one of the highest in the city. This capital was obtained due to professional evolution during the communist and/or the present period. The segregated landscape of Pipera is various up to the saturation effect created by the repetitive image of the houses. Apart from the way the houses are grouped, the idea of intentional isolation and of grouping into an area different from the previous models can be stated. The villa ensures personalization of social goals of the owners. Used as a real-estate stimulus that can be sold, the characteristic of "personalization" suggests a transfer of the owners' mental and cultural personality characteristics over the new houses. Building the first gated communities here is the last twenty years' trend of exploiting the urban area by groups of one-family or multi-family houses which is done according to a certain land-division in order to efficiently dispose of the land. The land research showed that there is a certain way of arranging the area which has influence upon the social arrangement and the social arrangement has influence upon the area arrangement.

FIGURE 3 - THE AZUR DISTRICT, A RESIDENTIAL GROUP OF VILLAS IN THE PIPERA AREA

The real estate companies that have developed residential projects here – projects that have been adapted to the upper-class's needs – are not few. We could mention the Citylight Pipera residential group near Andronache forest, the so-called Azur and Domus villa districts (fig. 4) in Emil Racoviță Street, the American Village, and a residential villa group on the Pipera-Tunari highway, Liziera district and many others. The fact that the rich people have gathered here represents an evolution trend which began one hundred years ago. The houses here have a surface of 300 m² – 500 m², but they are quite

close to each other in some cases due to their initially spontaneous building. In addition to the accessories that we have mentioned above and that are meant to replace the urban functions at a small scale, Pipera has drawn a wide variety of services addressed to the rich people. Large commercial groups nearby, private education services (kindergartens, schools – American International School of Bucharest, Mark Twain International School, The International School of Bucharest, Discovery Elementary School with prices from 300 to 430 Euros/month, Little London Kindergarten and Secondary School with prices of 6.200 Euros/year, many after-schools, etc.), body caring and fitness centers, spa clubs, night clubs, catering companies, etc. are just a few of the services which function here as a result of the high business potential. By considering only the fees paid to the private schools here, we can realize how high the living cost of this economically segregated community is.

4.3.2. Prelungirea Ghencea

Unlike the Pipera district, which really represents an alternative to living in the city for the rich people, the Prelungirea Ghencea area, partially integrated within the capital's perimeter from the administrative point of view, can be analyzed as a residential area continuing the existent dormitory suburbs. The characteristic of the newly built area changes the way of living by specific morphologies of house-grouping, where isolated houses are dominant; with few exceptions the houses are organized as residential groups. From this point of view, Prelungirea Ghencea represents a community based on the same specific principles as the Pipera district in the north. The financial potential, the run away from the stressful and crowded city in order to gain back the "countryside" atmosphere, seeking personal safety within a suburban area and a hospitable environment, but, most of all, the search for social peace, are only a few of the principles of the new emerging community.

FIGURE 4 - GROUP OF VILLAS IN THE PRELUNGIREA GHENCEA AREA

Less numerous if compared to the previous example, the gated community- type residential groups of villas follow the urban model from the north: villas which are gathered within a strict limitation, strictly guarded, with access barriers, proper services and prices up to them; isolation from the general urban community and a separation in the urban homogeneity. The urban dynamics of the area is validated, on one hand, by the numerous individual and groups of villas and, on the other hand, by the big number of developing projects. Even if the price of a house here is lower than in Pipera, it is not so affordable for the people, not even for the middle class, maybe. Before the crisis, a villa in this area cost about 320.000 Euros, while now it costs a little more than 200.000 Euros. Thus, we can notice the evolution based on segregation principles according the owned economic capital. The members of the middle-class, who are not numerous, are excluded from this area, as well as from almost all the suburban areas where the real-estate developers implement residential projects on villa groups.
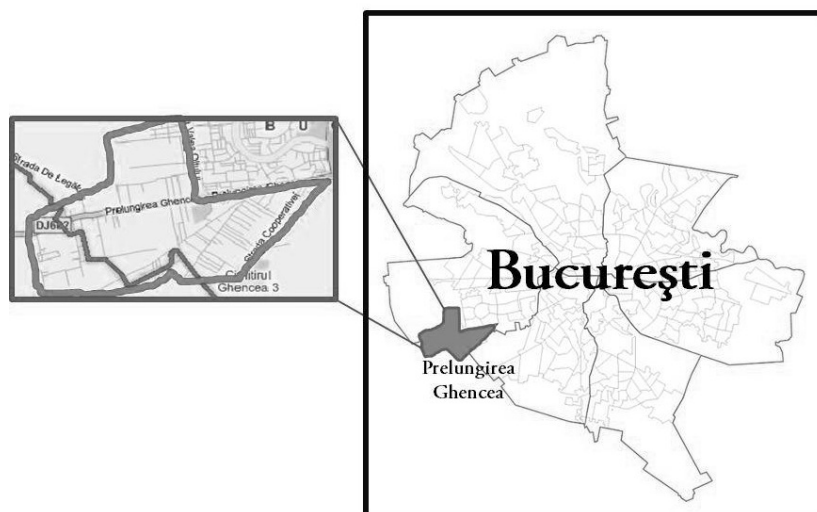

FIGURE 5 - THE GEOGRAPHIC AREA OCCUPIED BY THE NEW COMMUNITY IN PRELUNGIREA GHENCEA

Except the abundance of individual villas, there are few villa groups here for the moment. It is a mini-district with thirty-six villas on Alunului, Primăverii and Prelungirea Ghencea Streets and a few blocks of flats with ground floor plus two or four stories. There are other two projects, one regarding fourteen villas with direct access from the Prelungirea Ghencea axis and the other one, the big Ambasador Residance project, made of thirty-six luxurious villas, as the developer's site presents. We must not forget the famous Latin District with houses of the block-type similar to the gated communities as it benefits from secured access and the people who live here have resident IDs.

However, there is a big difference regarding the service focus. In addition to the fact that this community is still developing and it is not so numerous, attracting adequate services (educational: private schools, kindergartens and after-schools; might be also influenced by the fact that there is no such tradition here

as it happens in the north, for example. The area is rather known as a poor one, with many gypsies than a promising area. It's a kind of prejudice which will fade at the same time with the change that seems to be irreversible.

4.4. The perception of the districts/areas inhabited by the rich

The data obtained as a result of the qualitative research of the urban segregation have revealed that the old areas known as being inhabited by rich families, areas like Primăverii, Dorobanți and Băneasa, are on the first place. More than 15% of the interviewees could easily spot these districts and others such as Cotroceni, Floreasca, Herăstrău, Kiseleff or Aviatorilor. Except Cotroceni, all the other mentioned areas are situated in the first district of Bucharest, where most of the wealthy people in Bucharest live. Continuing the first district towards the north, Pipera (built after the revolution in 1989) could be spotted outside the capital. Although it is not part of the city, Pipera is strongly connected to the capital by activities and functions.
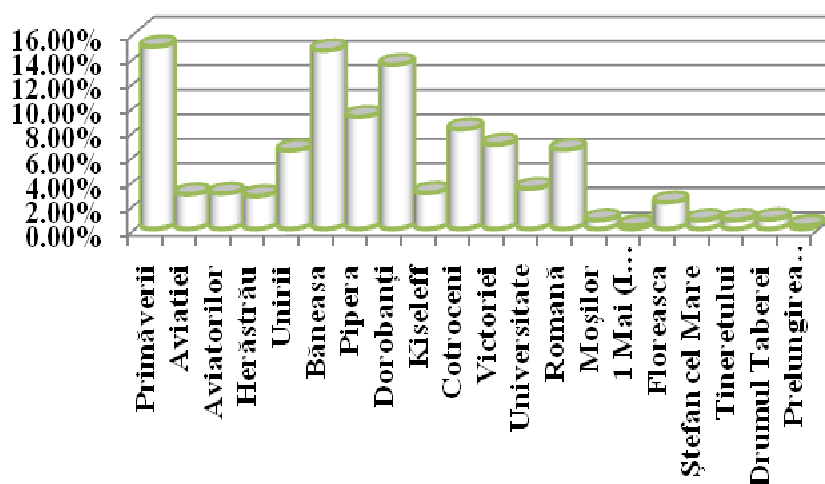

FIGURE 6 - THE PERCEPTION OF THE DISTRICTS INHABITED BY THE WEALTHY PEOPLE IN BUCHAREST

The central areas Unirii, Universitate, Romană and Victoriei have been mentioned by 3-7% of the interviewees; Ştefan cel Mare, Tineretului şi Drumul Taberei have been less mentioned, the last of them being quite far from the center, recently built and with no tradition of wealthy inhabitants. There are different opinions regarding the Drumul Taberei district as it is also present on the map regarding the poor people density, which suggests the idea that it is a homogenous district rather than a segregated one from the socio-economic point of view. On the other hand, the other two areas, Ştefan cel Mare and Tineretului, do not seem to be segregated either, the perception of the interviewees being much influenced by their placement close to the center and not by the real density of rich inhabitants. For

example, we believe that the presence of the Prelungirea Ghencea area within this hierarchy is related to the new spatial dimension of the area, situated on the border between Bucharest and its loop more than the older previous structures which seem to situate in the opposite direction. Those who have mentioned this suburban district have certainly considered the new villa structure and the projects of the real-estate developers addressed to the people with high incomes (over the average), a district which is developing at the moment.
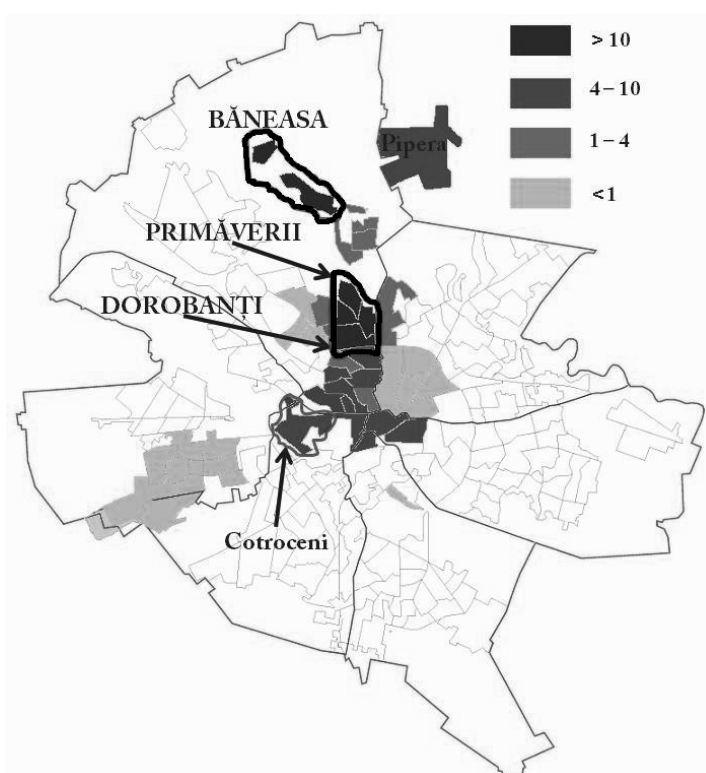

FIGURE 7 - THE PERCEPTION OF THE SPATIAL DENSITY OF THE WEALTHY POPULATION (%)

The map showing the spatial density of the wealthy people is extremely suggestive. Comparing it to that of the spatial density of poor people, we can notice that the two areas do not overlap in a huge proportion. The geographical separation between the rich and the poor (according to the perception) is strict. Moreover, the central-northern corridor on the map is inhabited by the most highly-educated people according to the 2002 census and, at the same time, it is the area the least affected by illiteracy, unemployment, housewives, laborers or gypsies. The areas in the "corridor of the wealth" permanently inhabited by families are almost exclusively occupied by mansions and villas. The same happens in Pipera and Prelungirea Ghencea, suburban districts, where villas and gated community groups can be found. Consequently, the data obtained by applying the survey have confirmed the empirical research done in the previous section.

The high density of luxury cars present in the districts identified in the perception study represent an indicator of the residents' wealth. Range Rover, Porsche Cayenne, BMW X6 or X5, Mercedes, Volvo XC70 or XC90 are only a few of the car brands that can be seen in the street as well as in the big yards of the owners in the area. The families frequently have a car for each member, except for the persons who are not the proper age for a driver's license. The urban landscape accessorized with luxury cars may seem ordinary for the residents, but not for the common passers-by. We can ask ourselves what kind of relation there is between a car and suburban segregation. The relation is tight and extremely suggestive, if we want to provide an objective answer. For example, a car is more than a means of transport. It represents the expression of its owner's personality, a symbol of his social and economic status, a source of the pleasure provided by speed and also a source of various sensorial stimuli – tactile, olfactory, and visual, etc. Thus, as we have previously shown, the existence of a big number of luxury cars in a certain part of the city reveals positive economic and social situations. The abundance of luxury cars means spatial density of high incomes and it also means economic segregation due to the high incomes.

4.5. The motivation for segregation of the wealthy people

The key-question of this issue is: what motivates the very rich people to choose certain areas in Bucharest to the detriment of living where most of the people live? Well, the variety of answers provided is suggestive and somehow predictable, as most of the interviewees have said that the areas are chosen mainly due to the money, to the high incomes gotten out of business or inherited. The residential preferences for certain urban areas are based on:

- The environment quality and the abundance of vegetation;

- The lack of blocks;

- The residents' desire to lead a civilized life;

- Quiet and intimacy;

- The safety of the area;

- Possible isolation from ordinary people;

- The house quality and equipment;

- Large living space (if there is enough room or not!);

- The area and house comfort;

- The area prestige or fame;

- The distance from the city center or even the presence within the city center;

- A small distance from the commercial or recreation centers;

- The district history and image; some of the districts have been elitist for 100 years;

- The authorities' care for keeping the areas tidy and clean;

- The architecture of the buildings;

- Low criminality; and

- Low population density, etc.

The most respondents have stated that the areas occupied by rich families are characterized by: good living conditions, safety, quiet, cleanness, horizontal urbanization (houses or villas and spacious yards), and much vegetation, lack of blocks and high density as well as lack of gypsies. For example, many respondents have agreed that the inhabitants of these areas are more educated, having a rigorous level of professional training. Referring to the corridor with a high density of rich inhabitants in the central-northern part of the capital, some people have stated that the main motivation is also related to the easy access to the north of the capital which is characterized by economic dynamics and where many companies have located their offices. Thus, the high economic potential in the neighborhood becomes the main reason for location.

Moreover, some respondents have agreed that the social status of the rich people allows them to enter notorious districts, dazzling by some kind of snobbism which separates the rich from the poor. This mobility towards "exclusive" areas is part of the herd mentality trend. However, some of the motivations suggested by the interviewees have been even more trenchant. For example, another point of view claimed that among the reasons of the rich people when choosing their residence would be self-defense from uneducated persons (who would not be chosen as neighbors) or the ability to control the other inhabitants of the city, display of their financial power due to the living area, etc.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The people with high and very high incomes in Bucharest have tried either to occupy the best residential areas, or to settle close to the city where they have created a lot of community clusters depending on the high incomes. The rich people's separation from the rest of the city population or the run towards the outskirts in search of the "countryside" atmosphere has generated an economic residential segregation

within the suburban area on one hand, and on the other hand, a similar situation can be noticed inside the city. Thus, all those who wanted to lead a more quiet life, but inside the city this time, have tried to settle within the house or villa areas that had been already built. These areas are not affected by the urban noise and agitation, being situated in a city environment with a lot of vegetation and quiet, far away from the large, crowded avenues.

Self-segregation is a process that began in Bucharest a long time ago and still continues. One of the indicators showing the present manifestation trend is the price of the houses. Self-segregation has manifested within the limits of the same urban areas (Primăverii, Dorobanți, Cotroceni etc.) for more than one hundred years. The areas are not affected by industrial buildings, the districts being located according to the urbanists' plans. The traffic, especially that of the pedestrians, is quite low, so there are oases of silence between the main highways where citylife develops and the ongoing agitation. The areas mostly include individual houses in the center and north of the capital. For most of the residents in the self-segregated districts, this localization is a final stage of their own residential trajectory, the present residential position being strongly associated to their social position. The district inaccessibility has determined the "blockage" here of the inhabitants with the highest positions in the financial hierarchies. After the end of the comunism, self-segregation has risen close to the mentioned areas on one hand, and on the other hand, new areas have been created.

The nineties brought in Bucharest a change of paradigm regarding the idea of living. After the liberalization of the real estate market, the urban dynamics managed by the owners had a chaotic evolution. The individual houses looked like small fortresses, the houses being enclosed within their own limits, without a context or neighbors, independent and facing their interior. The spread houses on the outskirts, built in this way, represented the unconventional context of some spread objects, with a different symbolic value and created their own functional frame in order to become a "separate city". By grouping this kind of buildings next to the city, the real estate developers created a real gated-community system. This type of innovations create an almost unique way of urban separation: a city defined not by its public meeting places, but by its walls and enclaves. Contrary to the poor districts, this type of urban areas has all the necessary facilities for a superior living standard. The living islands sustain the paradigm of a secured city increasing a certain type of gated community, self-segregated or segregated on purpose.

Living inside these gated communities uses the brand–image or the address effect according to the principle "tell me where you live so I can tell you who you are!"; the domicile becomes the performance space of the rich, a space where they can build a new identity image which does not overlap the real image of that community. The high density of luxury cars indicates the wealth of the residents in these

areas. As we have mentioned, the numerous luxury cars represent a spatial concentration of capital, meaning, in fact, economic segregation, due to the very high incomes.

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