

## TÂRGU JIU: THE ANALYSIS OF ENVIRONMENTAL PERCEPTION AND USAGE OF A LIVING ENVIRONMENT

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**Abstract:** The one who aims at investigating the way in which a life environment is perceived and used by the residents – as a basis for the analysis of the way in which that particular space is gradually modified and structured – methodologically, to try replacing or avoiding methods that already made a mark, like mental maps analysis, activity space-syntax analysis, paths and life polygons analysis and so on along other means to reach the individuals' representations, is difficult and forced. What is left to be done when some of these eventually fell into disuse or are covered by controversies? To resume with lucidity the analysis from the point it was left of, to delimit the accurate and methodologically useful components from the error generator ones, and to construct other means, or at least, to obtain new combinations of existing methods, which will offer the possible maximum of accuracy for that moment in time, in order to reach the mental representations of the individual about a certain space. For this study, there was used a combination of method – instruments: mental maps investigation, inquiry with questionnaires and life polygons; we considered necessary a re-evaluation of the mental maps as method (and here we limited to the re-evaluation of that, but it is recommendable that this re-evaluation to be extended to other instruments and methods), through the research in the last decade in the adjacent sciences. For as long it is seconded in application by other instruments (like the questionnaire, space-syntax methods, life polygon, interviews), which may offer information, for each subject, about how selective the graphic representation is and it may complete it, the mental map remains an irreplaceable means to access a certain type of information, especially regarding the ensemble spatial relations. In the theoretical field the conceptual delimitations must be given the adequate attention. Besides the theoretical – methodological explanations that the present article brings, it represents a manner of highlighting the representation and the specific secondary aspects, totally specific to this town but also to other urban centers of Romania of similar demographic size.

**Key words:** environmental perception, spatial knowledge, mental maps, Târgu Jiu

Careful investigations of the actions of the demographic component belonging to a certain space in many situations proved beyond any doubt, in fact, the spatial behaviour of a townsman overwhelmingly depends on the manner in which he perceives and mentally represents the space; for this reason, the most appropriate approach for the study of the way of capitalization and action upon a geographic space is the one starting from the way the analysed urban space is being perceived as life environment.

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The way the environment of any town or the urban space is perceived by its townsmen may have certain transcultural characteristics common to certain groups or demographic segments – classical elements highlighted by specialty studies at the present moment – which derive from age peculiarities, training particularities and professional functional particularities, which dictate a certain pattern of perception and from here of life environment representation. These are characteristics usually linked to complexity, accuracy, subjective functionality, distances perception or spatial relations between elements.

The investigation manner of this study was based on the mental maps analysis, life polygons, completed and verified by the data obtained by questionnaires, the sample being constituted by 480 inhabitants of Târgu Jiu, in forming the sample it was aimed at spatial representativity<sup>2</sup> and certain structural aspects<sup>3</sup>. The present study has provided only some exploratory elements, since we will further analyse in another study the existence of some spatial and residential segregations in Tg-Jiu based on social and economic criteria, which will require a different sampling methodology; the particularities of perception, cognition of urban environment and the neighbourhood behaviour which would reflect the consistency of the value system of the diverse socio – economic groups, were revealed here in an isolated way (for example, the relations with other groups, like the ethnic one with which they live together).

### SOME METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The use of mental maps as investigation method, or as means of accessing space representation by individual leads to a re-evaluation of the method through the research in the last decade in the adjacent domains; as starting point we used the objections synthesized by J. Levy & M. Lussault, 2003<sup>4</sup>. Since the majority of objections are formulated from the perspective of psychology, especially cognitive psychology, the pertinence analysis must also be developed in this domain, respectively the arguments or the possible counterarguments<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Within the limits of the conditioning imposed by the urban Romanian population census scheme (using an approximate estimation of each residential area in all of the population, with no major differences (ecart: 10-17 subjects/area), which is allowed by the essential features of the functional residential localisation relatively undifferentiated of the urban space of Târgu Jiu).

<sup>3</sup> On the sample's overall structure, the age, sex and level of education structure has been kept; however, since such information was missing in the residential area, in certain situations we empirically took into account the large part of the population over 50 years in the residential area with one-family households from the central area, of those with no higher education in the North and North-West worker's districts, of the population under 30 years in the southern residential area of the city, of those with higher education in the central zone, confirmed by the on-site situation.

<sup>4</sup> In *Dictionnaire de la Geographie*, Edition Belin, Paris, 2003, pp. 132-133.

<sup>5</sup> Taking into consideration the novelty of crossing over to another scientific domain, as a geographer, in order to question (a fervor which is typical of the last decades of social geography, and not only) a study, or a method, we believe it to be necessary to take the same way backwards as well: to verify from the psychological perspective, the relevance of the statements, and the exact delimitation of the geographical interpretations given on the count of psychological concepts, because returning in our own field of research, it is relatively easy to observe how much of a geographical interpretation of a mental map can be scientifically asserted, and what kind of a scientific support it needs.

As far as *the mental maps* are concerned and the controversy regarding the fact that the individual has or does not have a mental representation of the space in the shape of a map or is a collection of “*aptitudes, images ... and disparate knowledge “not at all organised in the shape of a map inside the person’s mind before the person begins to draw”* (J. Levy & M. Lussault, 2003, p. 133) it must be reminded from the beginning the confirmations of its existence at least in the working memory<sup>6</sup> and the co-existence, as modalities, of two or more spatial representations (K. Gramann et al., 2005 and so on) function of the manner in which the information was obtained (Thinus - Blanc & Gaunet, 1997 apud K. Gramann et al. 2005) – through learning a map or actual exploring of a space - the available practical conditions, the task type (if, for example, the spatial relations must be considered object by object) and sometimes the preference for a certain representation. One type of representation is based on external marks, allocentric, and the other is based on internal marks, egocentric, previously learnt through internalizing the trajectories and on which it may rely when the external marks are absent (P. Dudchenko & L. Zinyuk, 2005), situation rarely encountered in reality, or on both types of accessible marks, the performances of the individual for the last case depending on the provided information and the preference for one of the two representations (K. Gramann et al., 2005).

Consequently, the confirmation of the mental map existence in the short term memory (working memory) is strictly sufficient - as far as the scientific accuracy of the conclusions is concerned - from the geographical perspective, this being interested in the existence of the map and its role *in the moment* of making a decision of spatial behaviour or a choice, and *not in the way* the spatial configuration *is stored into the long term memory* of the individual, but in *its generation when* it is called to serve a concrete orientation task, decision making, movement action, (going as far as formulating an opinion or taking up a position regarding an element with spatial manifestation, or any other task that is supposed to activate from the long term memory some information regarding the space of reference. To condition the reliability of mental map usage as investigation method, in geography, depending on demonstrating the existence inside the mind of a space similar to the physical one would be a retrograde position.

The interest for the existence of the mental maps as “... *accurate images of the transcription of the mental representations of the space in question into the mind of the individual*”<sup>7</sup> (J. Levy & M. Lussault, 2003, p. 133) must be separated from their identification with “*cognitive structures of the perception of the space in question*”<sup>8</sup> (J.

<sup>6</sup> (or the short term memory) which is, from a geographical perspective, strictly sufficient.

<sup>7</sup> Mental maps would represent ‘the exact image, the transcription of the mental representation of the given space in the mind of the person who symbolizing it. The mental map would therefore be a *cognitive structure of the perception of a space*’. The accuracy doesn’t have to be conditioned by the equalization of the mental map with a “cognitive structure of the space perception”. On the one hand, the space representations do not work as *operational structures* (a fundamental condition of a cognitive structure conceived as an organization of mental schemes or operations which *are available* at a certain stage of an individual’s development). On the other hand, we can talk about *perception structures* (the organization of elements in the perceptive field), but not about “cognitive” structures of the perception.

<sup>8</sup> Reserves are required for the second part of the statement – identifying the mental maps with the idea of cognitive structures (in the generally accepted sense – see also Doron et Parot, 1999, p.753) and especially “of

Levy & M. Lussault, 2003, p. 133), the individual disposing of representations of space (but the idea of functioning as operational structures would be forced) – the space in relation to which it may have certain cognitive schemes<sup>9</sup> resulted from experience, social learning, expectancies but the analogy must be limited to this much. On the cognitive schemes linked to a space is worth to concentrate our attention in human geography.

Interesting from geographic perspective, are the experiments of S. Kosslyn et al. (1978) related to the fact that, the knowledge about the physical space supervises the inspection of mental maps, the conclusion being that "... *the reaction time of a subject asked to mentally cover the distance between two objectives is a linear function ( $r = .97$ ) of the distance between two locations*" (S. Kosslyn et al., 1978, apud M. Miclea, 1999, pp. 182 – 183)<sup>10</sup>.

Following the experimental results obtained, P. Foo et al. (2005) concluded that spatial knowledge used in the orientation and movement in space by the human individuals cannot be characterized as an Euclidian cognitive map that stores accurate information about distances and angles<sup>11</sup>, these relying rather on a rudimentary form of general knowledge derived from the integration of the learnt trajectories<sup>12</sup> and that, they dispose of at least two distinct "navigation strategies" which they use and between which they adaptively commute. Usually people turn to accurate topological knowledge based on marks but commute on the strategy based on general unrefined knowledge derived from integrating learnt trajectories when there are no available marks or they are perceived as being uncertain; both are simultaneously used, generally, when a new environment is being explored (P. Foo et al., 2005). Previous studies (P. Foo, W. Warren & M. Tarr, 2004) state that people base on visual marks, in a new environment, especially in the complex urban environments, at the first try, unlike other species that turn to this strategy in the expert stage.

If we are interested, in fact, by the *cognitive maps*<sup>13</sup> in the similarity between spatial knowledge of an environment segment and a cartographic representation (J. O'Keefe & L. Nadel, 1978; J. Portugali, 1996; C. Thinus-Blank, 1987, apud Foo et al., 2005) in the area of infrahuman studies and the measure in which inferences upon human may be made new explanations and syntheses are

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the perception" (the organization of the elements within the perception probably being the point of similarity to support this).

<sup>9</sup> General structures of pieces of information which are *simultaneously*, automatically and involuntarily *activated*, but not necessarily objective. See also cognitive schemes and structures at Piaget, and the delimitation of the cognitive schemes in Miclea, 1999, p. 249.

<sup>10</sup> Caution is advised in geographical interpretation of these conclusions from the point of view offered by the way of representing space.

<sup>11</sup> The same conclusions have been reached by: Nennet in 1996, Harrison, Warren & Tarr in 2004, Wehner & Menzel in 1990 apud Foo (Foo, P., Warren, W., Duchon, A., Tarr, M., 2005, p. 211)

<sup>12</sup> Its accuracy or precision being rather generally confined by the resolution where the integration of individuals is achieved, unlike other infrahuman species, where results are more accurate.

<sup>13</sup> On using the term, it is advised to see at least the distinction between the meaning proposed by the psychophysicologists and (the one proposed by) cognitivists (see at least Doron, 1999), but *mental map* covers in a rather large measure the meaning that the geographers are looking for.

brought by P. Dudchenko & L. Zinyuk, 2005, P. Foo et al., 2005; D. Kelly & W. Bischof, 2005.

Another aspect that interests the subjective relations of the individual with the space is constituted by the tendency of systematic underestimation of distances between objectives perceived to be inside the same region and the tendency of overestimation of the extra regional ones also reconfirmed by the experiments performed by J. Curiel & G. Radvansky (1998).

As far as the accuracy or the pertinence of interpretation of the presence/absence of a certain element on the mental maps concerned, to an extent that it is not the result of inaccurate task indications, or of the limits of natural margin of inaccuracy when we deal with human subjects, this being the shortcoming that can be controlled only by crossing the clues offered by the map with other investigation methods. Indeed, exclusive usage in investigation of the mental map and the interpretations it authorizes in this case (J. Levy & M. Lussault, 2003), can be exposed to justified criticism.

Trying to explore to what extent this shortcoming was present in our study, we intended to see to what point the answer to the question regarding the place that makes the object of the subject's going out to interact, to recreate is found on the representation drawn by the subject. In consequence, it was revealed that, not overlooking the not quite relevant situations when the subject answered vaguely, these locations were present on their map representations in the ration of 38%, but in 97% of cases (of the ones that did resolve that task) those spots were marked in the area they did delimitate on a support map of the town, as being their perimeter of life<sup>14</sup>. The mental maps brought relevant information on the projections about the spaces of the town of Târgu Jiu not frequented by some categories of subjects, about the way those spaces relate to the areas named in the questionnaire as areas where the subject feel secure, or with the answer to the item regarding the degree of perceived safety of the residence street (judged by comparing it also with the map of real safety revealed by the statistics on street attacks). All that made possible a certain examination and methodological control of the interpretations and of the conclusions that were drawn.

### **SUBJECTIVE ADJUSTMENTS OR ACCURATE REPRESENTATION – THE CASE OF TÂRGU JIU AND ITS REPRESENTATIONAL TYPOLOGY**

Among the aspects that make the object of the interest that social geography bears for the study of spatial behaviour of the townsmen of great interest is who influences the pattern of spatial behaviour algorithm of the townsman and which are the common notes of some social groups; the way the geographic decisions are taken, decisions that dictate the spatial behaviour, that highlight the personalized

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<sup>14</sup> Seen as the perimeter that include all the pathways someone took in a month for example, and all the areas one frequented, as a life polygon

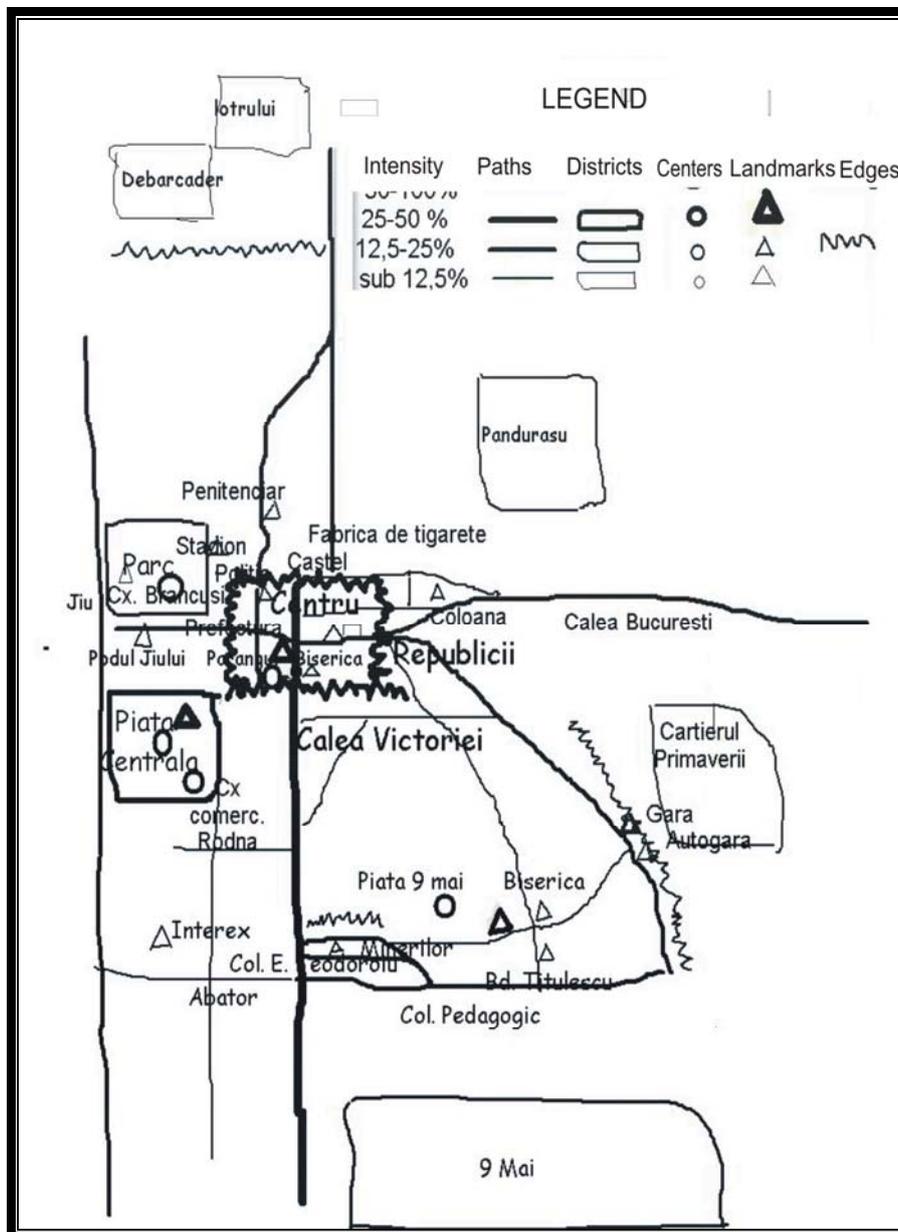
mental representations of our lifeworld (according to which we make the decisions related to moving in space) and in what way and why they differentiate from reality (A. J. Jackle, 1976).

Specific to each individual there are the manner in which one perceives and the manner in which one memorizes the spatial configuration of elements that populate a certain space, their nature (which is strongly influenced by the universe of knowledge, the emotional content and the motivation of the individual) and the scale of details, leaving its mark on the way one mentally represents the life space. This representation is continuously adjusted in case in some situations it is not proved functional or operative and it doesn't bring about the operative and ergonomic solution of certain needs, events and social situations.

The typology of the mental maps obtained by questioning the 480 inhabitants of the town of Târgu Jiu (for instance, the absence of representations of archipelago type frequently encountered in the case of a big, crowded city), indicates a familiarity and a direct and solid affective bond of the inhabitant with his life space, which he interiorized in a way next to concrete, without bearing great subjective „adjustments” in order to feel it familiar.

Synthesizing the mental maps obtained in a composite image according to the method of Department of Urban Planning Los Angeles (1971 apud Fieding, 1974, pp. 301 – 303), pointing out nodes, edges, roads and areas, the town of Targu Jiu gets a representation like the one in figure 1, where the nodes are represented especially by the shopping centres and agro alimentary markets, there are few edges (the majority of the questioned subjects being aware of a limit of the central area, while a percentage inferior to 25 % being aware of a limit between the residential district Primăverii – also well physically delimited – and the adjacent areas, respectively between the area Debarcader – Lotrului and the rest of the town).

The existence of these edges not very numerous, allows the assumption of the existence of a relatively continuous space in the perception of the townsman fact that permits us the inference of the existence of an appropriate spatial behaviour.



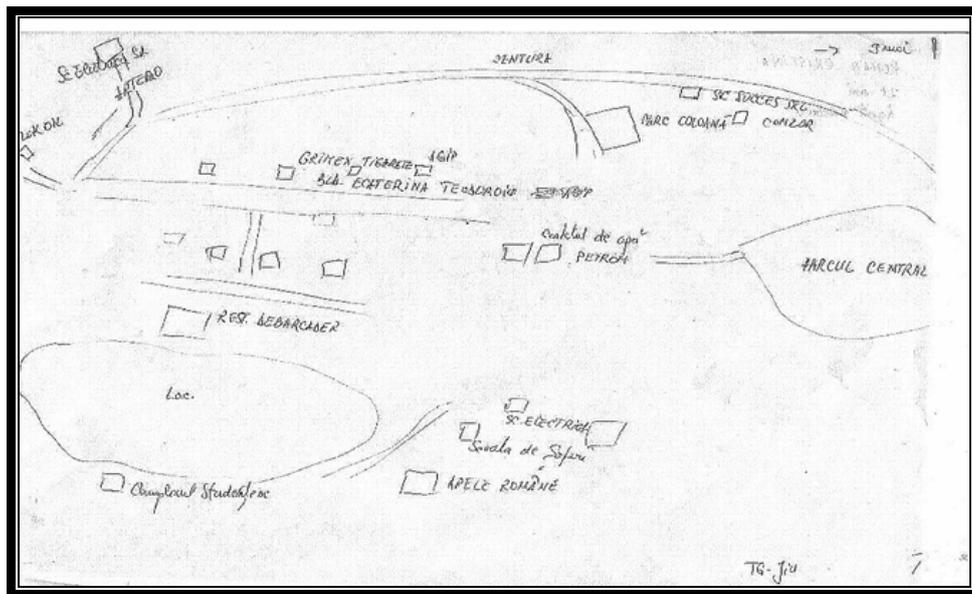
**Fig 1.** Composite image of Târgu Jiu representation (the method of the Department of Urban Planning Los Angeles, 1971 apud G. Fieding, 1974 - where the nodes or the centres are strategic points of urban interest, that facilitate interactions, the landmarks being the municipal and architectural objectives, the edges are the limits between different areas, the zones or districts are areas with a certain acknowledged identity, the paths are axes used by a great number of inhabitants).

In most of the situations the representation of the town was made under the form of *netted sequential maps*, but which denotes a certain complexity in spatially relating diverse defining elements with certain accuracy of distance estimation and especially of direction estimation.

Along with these, frequent were the ones of *sequential fragmented type* (Fig.2), with a high degree of detail representation and with a rich content of landmark objectives, for the area in the next proximity of the residence (to which the ones of modular type are added – focusing exclusively on reproducing this nearby life space, work place or other spheres of interest, but without any concern to spatially relate these elements).

The *spatial maps of linked type* and *patterned type* characterize young population and middle aged population, with more diversified concerns, including wider spatial areas and who declare that they generally walk, thus explaining the good space knowledge.

The simplest representations, not very numerous, were *sequential chain maps* and *branch and loops type*.



**Fig. 2. A mental map of Târgu-Jiu, 21 year old, selling agent**

In several situations beyond the next spatial horizon, well known and generously dimensional represented, the landmark elements are artificially drawn nearer and the concerns for the representation become relevant for those of space knowledge.

The *sequential fragmented maps* appear also in the case of some adults, but regularly in the case of children whose cognitive particularities related to space experimenting explains the preoccupation for representing the elements that are fundamental coordinates of their existence (school, home, park, library, lake, theatre, and so on, or landmarks that mark spatial decisions of direction, situated in reality in intersections (for example the church), on the representations being totally ignored other streets, respectively directions that cross in the same intersection, besides that to be followed from school to the house for instance) and the absence of the way they are spatially interconnected.

At older children appears the concern for keeping the position relations and in an incipient stage, respecting the directions making the transition to *spatial scattered maps*, allowing to be slightly seen the tendency of bringing to forefront the spatial relation proportions and not the connections, respectively the access ways between and towards these.

The adults whose representations match the previous description (spatial scattered or spatial of cluster type denotes an obvious lack of concern for the exact spatial proportions, because, given a real situation, when they are forced to leave the bipolar perimeter work – house, they use common transportation, or the existing landmarks all along the itinerary).

In addition to these, there is the fact that given the not so large and lenticular spatial extension of the town, there appears a certain interior comfort related to the idea that a directional wrong decision in the case of adults, results at most in a disturbing loss of time justifying the absence of a serious preoccupation related to a good knowledge and interiorizing of the space that in the case of some persons (non – working persons, retired people, immigrants, feminine population with elementary studies working in industry and so on) in many cases the process of “ space assimilation” being a concern of the first stages of life and stagnating at the level of information offered by this period.

The spatial organization and the complexity of the elements are related somehow, as it was expected, to the profession or occupation, taxi drivers or public guardians proving a vivid concern for reproducing the road network as well as possible and with a great number of landmarks of public or functional interest.

Such maps of *circulatory* type (Fig.3) also resulted from other people’s representations, most of them adults, who generally travel by car in the town, the recalled spatial experience, leaving its mark on the manner of representation and reproducing the life space.

In the *impresionist type* maps, yet not so numerous ones, the escape from reality not being a very necessary and looked for equilibrium, the city breathing the brâncushian spirituality appears to be normal, where the human being feels to be an integrant part.





Frequently, this area benefited from a mental representation of a longitudinal boulevard that marks the access way to the north of the town.

The other two blank spaces are represented by the residential area Pandurașu and Primăverii residential district, two of the recently created residential areas where a population with higher incomes settled. These “blank spots” are little known including the residents<sup>16</sup>, beyond the shortest way of access that connects the functional area of the town to the house, any other information is missing.

The two more accessible explanations are represented by the decantation of a direction of the vectors of interest of the resident population (which explains the spatial behaviour) towards the central, functional, tertiary area of the town (banks, office buildings, public institutions) representing the work space and respectively the social detachment from the other sides of the area situated in the opposite side of the city (Fig.5).

The individualism of the social behaviour is also maintained by the absence of some recreation spaces, playgrounds, pedestrian zones (ultimately commercial and service spaces - the last ones being completely outside of manifestation of the NIMBY<sup>17</sup> effect – see Primăverii), which may favour interpersonal contacts at different age intervals that usually work together to build the feeling and the concept of community.

These demands for space arrangement were not taken into consideration when the urban planning for the residential areas was developed, which should be retrieved. The three situations are also confirmed by the life area representations of both resident and exterior population, these areas representing, at best, peaks (generated by dwelling position) of polygons well developed towards the exterior or completely remaining outside the life spaces of the last category.

A differentiation must be made between the two residential areas of superior category and the roma one, the last one having the life polygons with a natural configuration, centred on the community area. The extension of the life polygon (a synthesis of the daily travelled routes - reveals a perception of the town as an environment, as well as the nature of the elements that it contains) depends on the elements characteristic to the age, interests and professional training. The life area starts by being one directly proportional with the limits of the known and frequently attended areas (already interiorized) in case of children, it continues to expand<sup>18</sup>, possibly reaching its acme at the second part of the teenage life, explained by the movement autonomy, the spare time and the nature of the interests centred on

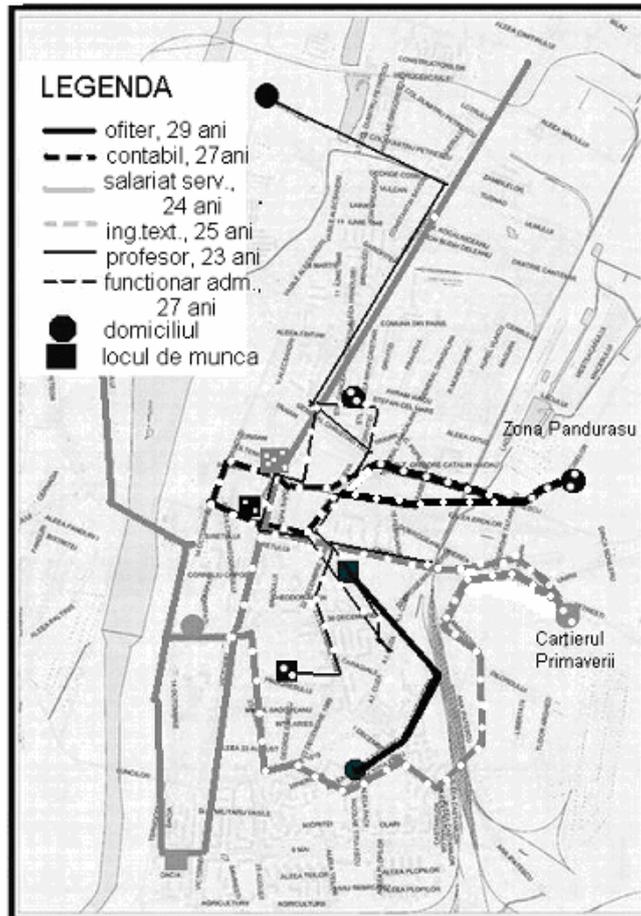
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<sup>16</sup> Although it shows a rectangular texture and rather easy to conceptualize.

<sup>17</sup> NIMBY - « Not In My Backyard » emphasized especially in connection to the urban North- American relationships. As long as these type of objectives are being perceived not as facilities, but – on the contrary – as responsible for noise, throng, intrusion in a community (ready to become self-sufficient), the people responsible with the planification of localizing these objectives, being also residents, are using the decisional power to keep these objectives and issues far away from their residential districts.

<sup>18</sup> The stage of maximum concern for exploring the space and rapprochement (with the view to obtaining an utmost of diversity in utility).

exploring recreational elements, and it widely reduces, especially for the population segment with higher education with ages ranging from 20 to 30.



**Fig. 5.** Life polygon of the upper education persons from 20 to 30 years old, in Târgu Jiu.

The life polygon with small dimensions – sometimes, in extremis, to a bipolar nature (the work place – possibly represented by more elements – office, 2-3 desk, partner firms and place of residence), as an outcome of focusing all concerns on the career, professional excellence and neglecting recreation. An aspect totally different from the bipolar nature or the reduced life area is characteristic for the persons with ages ranging from 40 to 60 years old without higher education, whose interests in satisfying cultural, recreational or professional needs are minimal.

For the population segment with ages over 40 years old with higher education the life polygon extends again as a result of the reappearance of the

interests in leisure, recreation, well ordered life, assuring a healthy life environment that allows a balanced development of the children's personality.

Between the *perceived safety* by the population as it was highlighted by the two items in the questionnaire, items referring to the town areas where they feel secure, added to the inferred aspects on the basis of the mental maps on the one hand and the map of real life safety created using the data regarding the frequency of the assaults (S. Mălăescu, 2007) on the other hand there are some discrepancies.

In contradiction with the real situation, some central areas of the town are perceived as offering a high degree of safety (Victoriei, Centru, Geneva, Unirii and so on) as far as the personal security is concerned, there are some problem areas: Eroilor Street, the proximity of Miami Hotel, of the Sfinții Apostoli Church, because of their richness in green areas - possibly perceived as "*secondary territories*" (J. Gold, 1981, p. 157), not being under private or public property - and the Laguna Club area, which has the highest crime rate.

This discrepancies can be explained only by reality filtration through the highly valorised concept of centre in many of the European places, and surely between the Romanian borders, virtual extrapolation of the „respectability” of the institutions and the town elements located here (banks, university, schools, court of justice), active during the day on adjacent spaces.

Overall an urban environment being a spatial resultant of a vector field of elements of physical, social-economical, and even historical nature of local or regional dimensions, unrepeatable “decanted” in a demographic component with certain particularities of space cognition (moved more towards the functional, for example, or towards the possibilities to escape from the daily routine, to limit ourselves to the usual classic bipolarity), “benefits” from an appropriate mental representation. The lower the demographic pressure is, pressure related to its heterogeneity level (standardization by contamination, compliancy, and the intensity of interactions in reduced areas) for a settlement or a space, the more reduced the multi-profile of representation is and the more evident the local finger-tip is.

The mental maps and life polygons revealed that depending on aspirations, necessities and needs of its habitants, some town areas are common spaces, or even spaces of social interaction (on mental maps some spaces are being well highlighted more accurately, by many habitants and used as such), other ones (fewer, dimmed areas of the town subjectively “discoloured” by the lack of importance given to them by the individual) are less known and used (by most of the categories, even by residents) on different considerations, the social interaction being directly proportional. "The Centre” and the central-western side of the Constantin Brâncuși Park are being “adjudicated“ by all age segments and population categories, without district segregation<sup>19</sup>. While the central areas

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<sup>19</sup> As for the central pedestrian area, on a detailed analysis, a student prevalent feature can appear in the day-time in the perimeter in front of the Faculty of Economic Studies and an adolescent rebel one (prevalent feature) in the evening, in the area edging the eastern side of the Eroilor/Victoriei intersection, and in the rest of the park, prevalent features can be observed, in certain areas, concerning the peoples who frequent it and the areas where

“belong to everyone”, no matter the residential area, some other areas (beyond the next to the transit perimeter) belong mostly to the residents (most of the time as a result of isolated position, other time – Minerilor, for example – as a result of perception and representation of that space).

Regarding this last aspect, there are also cases in which this space represents the object of representations pertaining to several visions, which live and share the same space in the most natural way. The residential area situated Westwardly from the A.I. Cuza Street, taking into consideration a more general reference point – the estate market quotation, is an average area, a quiet one, with specially arranged playingyards, (a representation shared by adult residents), contrasting with the image a younger segment of the population would like to make up<sup>20</sup> (and which they represent) (Fig.6).



Fig. 6. Grafitti on a secondary access alley in the residential area situated Western from A.I. Cuza Street, Târgu Jiu. In the box below (down), an enhanced detail of the arrow indicating direction towards this area and the „stop” indicator

## CONCLUSIONS

The space representation under the shape of map is generated inside the short term memory. To condition the reliability of using mental maps as investigation method, in geography, depending on the necessity to prove the existence inside the mind of a space similar to the physical one would not be a constructive position.

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the interaction is obvious: married, with children - in the southern part, and the chess club area are only two examples.

<sup>20</sup> Admissible „compromises” „have been made on both sides”(the quality of the materials used for graffiti, the lexical corectness, determined its longevity o none of the most discrete access alleys).

The mental representation of the space does not represent and function as a cognitive structure, conditioning the reliability of mental maps as method of accessing the representation of individuals about a certain space depending on bringing together its specific properties is also lacking object and theoretical reason, taking into consideration the operational meaning of the concept of cognitive structure. Still, usually the individuals present cognitive schemes relating to a certain space. These represent a field that is worth investigating by geography.

The mental maps have an increased methodological value and justify certain interpretations when they are simultaneously used together with other investigation instruments. They remain, in spite of the shortcomings they present, the most complex manner of accessing the representation of a space that an individual has in his possession remains an irreplaceable means to access a certain type of information, especially regarding the ensemble spatial relations.

The typology of mental representations obtained for the town of Târgu Jiu denotes a familiar space well known without areas poorly valued, without subjective „adjustments” in order to confer to it the necessary familiarity that comes to help the functional expectations of the townsman proving a direct connection between the inhabitant and his life environment. It is perceived as a relatively continuous space, without many discontinuities proved by the presence of a few edges: the central area, Primăverii and Debarcader – Lotrului areas. The “blank spots” are represented by the residential area of the population predominantly roma from the north - eastern part and the residential areas Pandurașu and Primăverii.

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