

ISTANBUL TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY ★ GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SCIENCE
ENGINEERING AND TECHNOLOGY

**MEANING OF HOME IN COMMUNIST-ERA FLATS:
A CASE STUDY IN FORMER AGRO-INDUSTRIAL TOWN DARMANESTI,
ROMANIA**

M.Sc. THESIS

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Department of Architecture

Architectural Design Programme

JANUARY 2017

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İSTANBUL TEKNİK ÜNİVERSİTESİ ★ FEN BİLİMLERİ ENSTİTÜSÜ

**KOMUNIST DONEM DAIRELERİNDE EVİN ANLAMI: GEÇMİŞ DONEM
TARIM SANAYİ SEHİRİ DARMANESTİ, ROMANYA YA AİT ÖRNEK BİR
ÇALIŞMA**

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OCAK 2017

To human consciousness,

FOREWORD

I would like to express my profound gratitude to my supervisor Assoc. Prof. Dr. Yuksel Demir for his invaluable advice and intellectual guidance throughout my Master experience.

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November 2016

Cristina OZ
(Architect)

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ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|-------------|---------------------------------------|
| PMR | : Romanian Workers' Party |
| PCR | : Romanian Communist Party |
| USSR | : Union of Soviet Socialist Republics |

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MEANING OF HOME IN COMMUNIST-ERA FLATS: A CASE STUDY IN FORMER AGRO-INDUSTRIAL TOWN DARMANESTI, ROMANIA

SUMMARY

Forced industrialization and urbanization in Romanian rural localities during the communism regime meant to raise country's life standard at the level of other European societies. A significant change occurs in rural environment with the introduction of a new dwelling pattern desired to substitute the rural house. Explained in ideological terms block of flats implementation is conceived as generating more land for agriculture and procure housing for the employees working in industry, while the hidden agenda exposed president's desire for control and surveillance, deterioration of peasants' integrity and values. Moreover, it is expected to create a compact, homogenized and vulnerable society that could be easily handled and disciplined.

Housing privatization that has followed the fall of the communism has left new owners in charged with the maintenance and rehabilitation of a poor quality and inadequate housing stock. Prefabricated and standardized block of flats abound all over the country making them not only a distinctive element of former regime but also an indicator for the actual condition and challenges. By exploring meaning of home in communist-era flats in former agro-industrial town Darmanesti, currently part of Romanian small towns' network, the study aims to depict inhabitants understanding of home in a rural-urban mixed environment. In-depth interviews with thirteen respondents in eleven flats are conducted to grasp owners' approach towards their flats after housing privatization, the nature of the relationship and their idea of home. Additional evidence comes from on-site observations and documents about the town and block of flats.

The case study reveals meanings of home grouped into six categories: family and community; comfort and wellbeing; control and agency over the territory due to home ownership; a place of self-identity, self-expression and personalization; a physical setting; a place of permanence and continuity.

The location is extremely important resulting in unique meanings of home. In this respect, the results show communist-era flats takes on the characteristics of the rural house. Findings are important on rendering the policy for new housing implementation in this environment.

KOMUNIST DÖNEM DAIRELERİNDE EVİN ANLAMI : GEÇMİŞ DÖNEM TARIM SANAYİ ŞEHİRİ DARMANESTI, ROMANIA YA AIT ORNEK BİR CALISMA

ÖZET

Romanya 20. Yüzyıl başından bu yana ike kez köklü siyasi ve sosyo-ekonomik değişikliklere göhüs gerdi. Öncelikle; Kırsal-tarım ülkesi olarak, komünist rejim sırasında hızlı sanayileşme ve şehirleşme yaşadı. Sonrasında 1989'da Devrimi takiben, çok merkezi bir plana dayalı ekonomiden bir pazar sistemine geçiş, ülke ve Romanya Halkı için birçok zorluk getirdi.

Ekonomik politikanın geliştirilmesi, modern bir sosyalist ulusun kristalleşmesinde hareket eden güç olarak sanayi ve tarımı hedef aldı. Bu koşullar altında, Çaba; yeni kentleri düzenlemek, gelişmeyi sürdürecektir yeni yapıları oluşturmaya yöneliktir.

Bunun için, ülke için büyük ölçekli bir planın parçası olarak kapsamlı müdahaleler zaman içinde kırsal alanların tamamen ortadan kalkması anlamına geliyordu. Eski Sovyet Bloku'na ait başka herhangi bir ülkede, kırsal yerleşimler bu şekilde hedeflenmekte ve etkilenmektedir; çünkü Rumen kültürü ve kimliği en çok meydan okunmaktadır.

Komünist rejim sırasında ilan edilen beş kat daha fazla yeni kasaba sayısı, 48'ten önceki dönemi aşar. Bununla birlikte, kaydedilen rakamlar Çavuşescu'nun kendisinin beklediği ve planladığı şeylere bile yakın değildir. Komünizmin ilk yirmi yıldaki başlıca idari alan yeniden yapılanması nedeniyle birkaç gelişme ile yeni bir plan yakın gelecektir. Bu nedenle, '74'te kırsal ve kentsel sistematizasyon programı, kırsal yerleşimlerde zorunlu sanayileşme ve kentleşmeyi içeren tarımın daha büyük bir yönetiminin yanı sıra Marksist-Leninist ideoloji boyunca benimser. Bu işleme tabi tutulmak için, büyüme potansiyelini ortaya çıkaran 550 kırsal bölgeye kadar, zamanla eklenerek 300 seçilir. Her ne kadar çabalarsa da, Devrim öncesi 1989'da 23 promosyonla yalnızca 24 ilerleme kaydedildi.

İdeolojik çizgilere paralel olarak, fiziki çevrenin yeni kentlerin oluşumunda önemli bir rolü vardı, çünkü apartman bloklarının zamanla bu bölgelerdeki tamamen kırsal konut yerine geçmesi arzu edildi. Uygulamaları tarım için daha fazla arazi üretmek açısından açıklansa da, gizli gündem başkanların kontrol ve gözetim isteğini, köylülerin bütünlüğünün ve değerlerinin bozulmasını ortaya koydu. Kolayca ele alınabilecek ve disiplin altına alınabilen, kompakt, homojenize edilmiş ve savunmasız bir toplum sağlaması beklendi.

Yine de, kırsal ve kentsel yerleşim yerlerinde büyük ölçekli programın bir parçası olan daire blokunun planlanması ve uygulanması, yeni toplumsal düzen ve komünist ideolojiyle asimilasyon ve uyum anlamına geliyor. Konut imkânları, prefabrikasyon, malzemelerin, yapı elemanlarının ve üretim yöntemlerinin standartlaştırılması ve aynı zamanda sınırlı sayıda daire düzeni ve tasarımı nedeniyle eski Sovyet Bloku'na ait olan diğer ülkelerde geliştirilen evrensel Rumen yerleşimlerinin tümü, kırsal ve kentsel

görüntü. O zamanlardaki araştırmacılar, bu bağlamda ve şartlarda ev ve bireysel kimliğini sorguluyorlardı.

1990 sonrası konut özelleştirmesi, evlerin - kendi arzularına ve yaşam biçimlerine göre dairelerin ev alanlarını değiştirme ve yeniden şekillendirme hakkı ile hanehalkının angajmanına izin verir. Bitmemiş komünist proje, ülke genelinde uzun bir geçiş sürecinde yaşanan olgunlaşmamış ve parçalanmış bir çevre bırakır.

'Ev' ve 'ev anlamı' üzerine yapılan araştırmaların çoğu batı toplumlarını hedef alırken, eski Sovyet Bloğuna ait doğu Avrupa ülkeleri uluslararası burslarda yetersiz temsil edilmektedir. Komünist dönemin planlarının ve uygulanmasının yanı sıra birçok disiplin ve ülkeden gelen proje entrikası araştırmacılarının ideolojisi olarak komşuluk dönemi bloklarının spesifik koşulları. Bununla birlikte, Romanya için rejim sırasında konut politikası uygulaması, bilimsel çevrenin ne ifade ettiğinde, kendi kişiliğini, toplumu ve toplumu algılamada büyük bir değişiklik getirmek için daha büyük önemi vardır. Yeni bir konut düzeni ve yeni bir yaşam biçimi getirerek önceki insanların köklü değerlerini, sosyal yönlerini ve yaşam biçimini inkar eder. "Ev'in anlamı" çerçevesi, çeşitli seviyelerde çok sayıda yönü şaşırttı. Yakın ilişki düzeni, ev ilişkisi ve deneyimi gibi konularda bir anlayış getirmekte ve bu konudaki 89 sonrası değişiklikleri, çoğunlukla konut stoğunun özelleştirilmesini ve Eski tarımsal sanayi kentlerindeki sanayinin başarısızlığı.

Komünist rejim süresince Rumen kırsal çevresi üzerindeki müdahalelerin seviyesi, benzeri görülmemektedir; başka hiçbir ülke bu kadar genişlemiştir. Bu çalışma, büyük kentlerin aksine, en ülkenin kimliğini yansıtan bu bağlamlarda olduğu gibi, eski tarımsal sanayi kenti Darmanesti'nin kentsel ve kırsal çevresi içinde komünist dönem çatlaklarının 'ev anlamı' üzerine eşsiz bir perspektif önerme amacını taşıyordu.

Bu nedenle, bu tezin amacı, evlerin anlamlarını keşfederek evlerin hâlâ yaşadıkları kompleks ve yaşanmış deneyimleri, eski tarımsal sanayi kenti Darmanesti'de komünist dönemlerdeki evler için kendi ev ortamlarıyla nasıl bağlantı kurduklarını ve ilişkilerini anlamalarıdır. . Birinci bölüm, tezin araştırma problemi, amacı, kapsamı ve metodolojisi hakkında genel bir bakış sunmaktadır. İkinci bölümde, 'ev' ve 'ev anlamı' kavramları, temayla ilgili yeterli bir burs gözden geçirilerek kavramsallaştırılmıştır. Eşsiz araştırma bağlamı için uygun bir teorik çerçeve düzenlemek amacıyla, kavramlar yalnızca batı bakış açısıyla değil, aynı zamanda komünist ve post-komünist toplumlarda mevcut literatürde ele alınmaktadır. Ayrıca, Romanya kırsal evinin belirli bir perspektifi, ilgili bir şekilde, anketi tamamlar

Üçüncü bölüm, ülkenin önemli ekonomik, politik ve sosyo-kültürel değişimlere maruz kaldığı komünist ve 89 yılı sonrasında konut koşullarını ve bağlamını ifade etmeyi amaçlayan iki bölümden oluşuyor. Bu bölüm, araştırmanın yürütülmesinin gerekçelerini tanımlamaya katkıda bulunur. Soruşturma, bölgenin ilk bölümünde, komünist rejim sırasında önemli bir işlevi ve perspektifi olan eski bir tarımsal sanayi kenti olan Darmanesti yerleşimine odaklanmak için bir ülke ölçeğinden sıyrılıyor. Bölgenin ve konut evrimi hakkındaki veriler, bölümün ikinci bölümünde ele alınmaktadır.

Dördüncü bölüm, Darmanesti'deki dört blokta 11 komünist dönemin dairesinde sahipleriyle yapılan üç onüç görüşme sonucunda insan faktörünü öne çıkarıyor. Ev'in anlamını' anlamaya çalışan araştırmacı, hanehalkının anlatılarını ve deneyimlerini değerlendirir. Bunun için, 2. bölümde geliştirilen teorik çerçeve verilerin yorumlanması ve anlaşılması için kullanılır. Konut sakinleri, rejim sırasında ve sonrasında bu tür çevrede yaşanan avantajlar ve zorluklar, dairelerin fiziki ayarı ile

olan bağıllık ve etkileşim seviyeleri ve bu yapıların koruyabileceği toplumsal yaşam hakkında önemli bilgiler sunmaktadır. Bu nedenle, ankete katılanlar yerinde gözlemlerin hesaplarını ve değerlendirmesini evin anlamlı bir araştırması için kanıt olarak görüyorlar.

Bulgular ev sahibi olduğunun konut sakinlerini yalnızca evlerinden değil, aynı zamanda tüm blok ve çevresinden sorumlu hale getirdiğini ortaya koyuyor. Kendi ve paylaşılan alan üzerinde ajans ve kontrol, evin tekrar eden anlamlarından biridir. Daha fazla alan ve konfor arzusu, mekanın tasarımında ve yeniden yapılandırılmasında aktif bir rol oynamak için sahip olma fırsatı değerlendirmeye alır. Duvarlar, kapılar, pencerelerin yenilenmesi ve yıkılması, daha önce hiç olmadığı kadar belirli bir derecede özerklik anlamına geliyor.

Devrimden sonraki konfor ve refah düzeyi her durumda önemli derecede artmış ve bu da onu evlerin en önemli özelliklerinden biri haline getirmiştir. Bunun nedeni, aşırı kalabalıkta azalmanın da bir sonucudur; eskiden olduğu gibi bu da sorun değildir. Dört örnekte, sahipler, komünizm sırasında, aile üyelerinin birbirine yakın olmadıklarında, kendi alanlarına yer olmadığında, odaların çok amaçlı olduğunu ve uyku alanının bir problemi temsil ettiğini anlatıyor.

90'lı yıllarda vatandaşlar ülke genelinde özel mülkiyeti kucaklamaktayken, Darmanesti'deki mevcut durum, hane halkı arasında, komünist rejimin anlamı ve sonrasında yaşanan zorluklar arasındaki çelişkili bir durumu tasvir ediyor. En azından, komünizm sırasında (dokuz tanesi) bölgede yaşayan katılımcıların, özellikle de bloklarda, nostalji, pişmanlık ve kendi kendini güçlendirme arasında sabit ve bilinç salınımı var.

Günümüzdeki ev işleri uygulamaları kimsenin ve kendini ifade etmenin bir yansımasıdır. Dairelerin mobilyaları, sahiplerin kendi alanlarını kişiselleştirmek için mevcut finansal kaynakları ve kendi bakış açısını kullanma becerilerini örneklendirmektedir. Dahası, çoğunlukla aileyi ilgilendiren fotoğraflar, anlamlı nesnelere ve anılar, evin duygusal çağrışımını ortaya çıkarıyor.

Bununla birlikte, tüm örneklerde aile, evin en önemli anlamı olarak tespit edilmiştir. Aile üyeleri ile ilgili sorunlardan kurtulup bakılmadığı, komünist rejimde aşırı kalabalık olup olmadığı ya da sadece çocukluğu hatırlatan bir yer olup olmadığı yer-apartmanların geçmişi ile ilgili veriler, aile varlığın temelini oluşturuyor

Evin vazgeçilmez bir anlamı topluluğun anlamıdır. Romanya'daki kırsal çevrenin spesifik özelliklerini ve kırsal evin toplumu şekillendirmesindeki rolü göz önüne alındığında, hiç şaşırtıcı değil. Sakinler, kendilerini apartmanlarının veya bloklarının niteliklerini vurgulayarak ya da bulunduğu alanın başkalarından ayırırlar.

1. INTRODUCTION

Twice Romania endures drastic political and socioeconomic changes since the beginning of the 20th century. As a rural-agrarian country, it experienced rapid industrialization and urbanization during the communist regime; following the Revolution in 1989, the shift from a highly centralized plan-based economy towards a market system brought many challenges for the country and for the Romanian people.

Development of economic policy targets industry and agriculture as the moving power in the crystallization of a modern socialist nation. Under these circumstances, effort is directed to the formation of new towns, new structures to sustain the advancement.

For this, extensive interventions as part of a large-scale plan envisioned for the country meant, in time, a total disappearance of the rural areas. In no other country, belonging to former Soviet Bloc, rural settlements are targeted and affected in such manner, as the Romanian culture and identity is challenged the most.

Five times the number of new towns declared during communist regime exceeds the period prior to '48. However, the figures registered are not even close to what is expected and planned by Ceausescu himself. With several upgrades in the first two decades of communism, main due to administrative territorial reorganization, a new plan is imminent. Therefore, in '74 the rural and urban systematization program is adopted along Marxist-Leninist ideology, which involves forced industrialization and urbanization in rural settlements, as well a greater management of agriculture. To undergo this process are chosen 300, in time added, until 550 rural localities that expose potential for growth. Regardless the endeavor, only 24 advance in rank, with 23 promotions in the year 1989 right before the Revolution.

Along ideological lines, the physical environment had an important role in the formation of new towns, as is desired for block of flats to substitute, in time, the entirely rural housing in these localities. While their implementation is explained in terms of generating more land for agriculture, the hidden agenda exposed president's desire for control and surveillance, deterioration of peasants' integrity and values. It is

expected to ensure a compact, homogenized and vulnerable society that could be easily handled and disciplined.

Nevertheless, the planning and implementation of block of flats as part of big scale-programme in rural and urban localities alike, stands for the assimilation and adaptation with the new social order and communist ideology. Through prefabrication, typification and standardization of materials, construction elements and methods of production, as well due to limited types of apartment layouts and design, the housing estates resemble to those developed in other countries belonging to former soviet Bloc, as it aims for a universal image of all Romanian settlements, rural and urban alike. It is in this context and conditions researchers at that time were questioning home and individual identity.

Housing privatization after '90 allow for a genuine house - household engagement with the right to alter and reshape flats' domestic space according to users' own views and lifestyle. The unfinished communist project has left an immature and fragmented environment in the mists of a long transition throughout the country.

1.1 Problem Statement

Home represents a central aspect in human life in all cultures throughout the globe. The traditional Romanian house is depicted as a socio-spatial complex, the common place where work, residence and family practices unfold. The ultimate expression of culture resides on the symbiosis ensued by inhabitants and their homes.

A significant change in the manner tenants in the rural settlements experience and identify with their home environment comes with the introduction of block of flats during the communist regime. Unsuitableness of their design cannot meet occupants' physical, social and physiological demands that their former rural home provides. Achieving satisfactory living conditions is challenged by lack of integration and adaptation of people's previous lifestyle, customs and values.

Moreover, new norms, behaviors and way of life is introduced under the communist agenda in rural settings by shifting on living in block of flats. It is due to this change of perspective that the new housing stock has a major role, framed both at the community and on the individual level. It is in the context the individual is portrayed on serving the socialist nation. Simplification and regulation of life towards a routine,

specific to modern societies, conducts to better management and efficiency for the growing economy.

Moreover, the standardization process limited the quality and comfort of the new housing stock by means of defined plan types, materials used, methods of construction and furnishing. This leads undoubtedly to objectification of home and simplification in its meaning.

Ownership after '90 brings other level of difficulty to the existing challenges where the new owners are held responsible for their home maintenance. The ongoing socio-economic problems makes it harder to create desirable living conditions. Shortages and lack of financial resources to intervene when necessary for repairing and renewals turned into a discontent among residents about their actual condition.

In former agro-industrial towns, the situation reveals an uncertain future due to the challenges that comes with the fall of the industry, the engine that propelled the rural locality to the status of town and development. While aiming to be part of a modern European community under a new socioeconomic, cultural and political context, these towns are in the search for an identity, whereas the diffused and indefinite physical setting stands at the core of this challenge.

1.2 Aim and Scope

The aim of this thesis is to understand households' complex and lived experiences of home, how they connect and relate to their home environment for the case of communist-era flats in former agro-industrial town Darmanesti, Romania, by exploring their meanings of home. By interrogating thirteen respondents in eleven flats, this thesis's intend is to understand owners' currently idea of home after housing privatization and the social change that occurred in Romania after 1989.

No longer used as political tools, the new era it opens the possibility for a dialog between inhabitants and their homes, reflecting their views and lifestyle rather than State's supervised program. Therefore, this study hypothesize for a complex notion of home, a proactive assimilation into residents and community's way of life, as well for actions taken to increase comfort and well-being.

Although the rural systematization program affected all Romania, the agro-industrial towns represent the ultimate design challenge that president envisaged for rural settlements. Darmanesti, as a former agro-industrial town, currently part of Romanian

small towns' network, is representative for the scope and purpose of the thesis since it experienced transition from a rural way of life towards an industrialized locality during the regime, which currently is undergoing socio-economic challenges due to the downfall of the industry after '89.

1.3 Research Method

The research method adopted for the study involves two major steps. At first, are examined the concepts of 'home' and 'meaning of home' from a western perspective by reviewing an adequate scholarship in the field. To complete the investigation and to try to address the context under study, the concepts are framed within the Romanian rural house and the 'socialist-era' flat. For proceeding, the framework of 'meanings of home' expanded upon at this level, with special considerations on two recent case studies in Russia and in Romania serve as guidance to examine the case samples. Lack of literature for this specific context and conditions employed for this thesis makes the research to be more explorative.

The second step involves analyzing 'meaning of home' in a case study of thirteen in-depth interviews in eleven 'communist-era' flats in order to establish how inhabitants relate, experience and create a 'sense of home'. Direct observations during the meetings, in town and its surroundings, as well documents and books provided by the city hall, apartment drawings, photographs and sketches complete the data to be investigated.

1.4 Structure of the Thesis

The study is split into five chapters. The first chapter 'Introduction' offers an overview of the research where the problem, aim and scope, methodology and structure of the thesis is explained.

In the second chapter 'Theoretical Framework and Methodology', the concepts of 'home' and 'meaning of home' are conceptualized by reviewing an adequate scholarship on the theme. To organize a relevant theoretical framework for the unique research context, the notions are framed not only from a western perspective but also are addressed within the available literature in communist and post-communist societies. Further, in a relevant manner, the particular perspective on understanding 'home' by taking the Romanian rural house as focus completes the survey. Finally, the chapter closes with the methodology of the thesis.

The third chapter 'The Housing Condition in Romania and in Darmanesti' is placing in the context, the ideologically driven communist-era built apartment blocks. It makes correspondence between those aspects that have influenced the most evolution of housing and the situation where the implementation takes place. It is within this framework the chapter addresses at first the issue on Romania's scale, thereafter, the focus drops on the former agro-industrial town Darmanesti as the place where the cases sample are selected.

It is in the fourth chapter 'Evaluation of Inhabitants' Meaning of Home' the reader is familiarized with the case studies and those aspects that supplement the household experience and stands as proof of residents' engagement with their home-flats. Further, 'meaning of home' is evaluated based on criteria previous established in chapter 2, whereas households' narrations are used as evidence.

In the last chapter "Conclusions and Discussions" considerations and outcomes of the study are drawn.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter is dedicated to build up a theoretical framework for thesis's 'meaning of home' exploration. The concepts of 'home' and 'meaning of home' are primarily reviewed from a western perspective using literature of prominent scholars in the field. Afterwards, to relate to the unique environment of the case study, the subjects are addressed in a more specific manner, namely in the case of Romanian rural house and the socialist-era block of flats in the context of countries belonging to former Soviet Bloc. Lastly, the chapter ends with the methodology of the thesis.

2.1 Conceptualizing 'Home' and 'Meaning of Home'

The 'sense of home' is deep anchored in human consciousness. Home is regarded as a socio-spatial structure where the social dimension, as the household, and the physical entity, as the dwelling, merge (Rapoport, 1969). It is mostly in traditional societies where the house brings meaning on all dimensions of people's life; as the locus for important family rituals, daily-life practices and work routine; as the place where culture is nurtured and carried forward. It is in this rich context where the meanings of home escalated due to residents' complex lived experiences.

However, the effects of globalization¹ with an increase in mobility, new social order and the shift towards different value systems has reframed the stage and gave a new meaning on how inhabitants understand and experience 'home', whether being at home or away (Giddens, 1990, 1991; Cuba & Hummon, 1993; Ahmed, 1999; Clapham, 2002; Forest and Lee, 2003; Gustafson, 2006; McIntyre et al, 2006; Klis and Karsten, 2009).

¹ "Globalization can [...] be defined as the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa." (Giddens, 1990, p. 64).

When considering globalization and identity, Giddens (1990, 1991) attributes to discontinuity brought by modernity the deterioration of the previous structures that used to hold traditional societies. Consequently, individuals' life ceases to belong to one place due to disintegration "of social relations from local contexts of interactions and their restructuring across indefinite spans of time-space" (p. 21). The "lifestyle" becomes a matter of personal choice and selection of one's identity, unlike when kinship and family connections tie the individual to a specific location that eventually shapes his/her entire existence. Moreover, lack of control over external factors that have the power to influence one's life, result on a search for identity accompanied by feelings of estrangement and separation.

"In modern social life, the notion of lifestyles takes on a particular significance. The more tradition loses its hold, and the more daily life is reconstituted in terms of the dialectical interplay of the local and the global, the more individuals are forced to negotiate lifestyle choices among a diversity of options" (Giddens, 1991, p. 5; cited in Clapham, 2002, p. 60)

In the same manner, Sennett (2000) refers to globalization that it "disturbs identities based on place, that sense of home, of belonging somewhere in the world" (cited in Perkins and Thorns, 2003, p. 121).

Moreover, Forest and Lee (2003) address the housing provision challenges under the influence of global economy. Since what happens in one part of the world can affect the events in another, they encompass uncertainty over market volatility, on the risk on buying or renting a house, as well on the insecurity for finding and keeping a job. The real estate's connection to the global "financial flow" has the potential to affect the housing accessibility. "Globalization of policy discourse" as the authors refer to "global policy language and policy response of privatization, deregulation, marketization and contracting" under global organizations' influence has the effect on minimizing the role of governments and agencies, their inability to provide housing for all the population in a country.

Due to various factors and roles involved in housing production, makes it less probably for the urban house planning to address, in a genuine manner, its beneficiaries' lifestyle and needs. Most of the time it is taken for granted, where a certain way of life is imposed. However, various authors like Lawrence (1990), Kent (1990), Perkins and Thorn (2003) suggest that, ultimately, inhabitants determine their residence's use and not necessary what is envisioned through its design. Likewise, studies featuring

socialist-era block of flats in countries belonging to former Soviet Bloc match on the results (see: Crowley and Reid, 2002; Reid, 2006; Attwood, 2012; Soaita, 2015). For instance, Reid's (2006) study in Khrushchev-era apartments built in the '60s shows how residents "negotiated" the place and used their standard flat according to their necessities.

" [...] the diverse ways in which people arranged their interiors, the aesthetic choices they made—or failed to make—can be seen as a form of negotiation along the interface of the dwelling, whereby the state's standard and conditional gift could be singularized, appropriated, and made a reflexive narrative of self, full of private meaning." (Giddens, 1992; cited in Reid, 2006, p. 164)

Since house and home "are not immune to global shifts", it is essential for scholars to engage with the problems that current situation poses. For this, studies on house-home relationship and meaning of home are expected to "ground the analysis" and address individuals' everyday lived experiences as "making of home is an active social process in which people consciously engage. It is not something that happens once but is something that is continually being constructed and negotiated and re-negotiated" (Perkins and Thorns, 2003, p. 122, 124).

Further, Clapham (2002) suggests that a proper framework under which housing research has more relevance is one which "places the subjective nature of the meanings held by households at the centre of the analysis and involves a research method which can identify them" (p. 60). Thus, the relationship the individual has with his/her home is of the nature to enhance self-fulfillment and aid to one's identity. He uses King's (1996) critique on the "predominantly objectivist paradigm" which leads to "dehumanization" of housing policy, who argues:

"...(housing) is concerned with the relative notion of fulfilment, and thus not with generalised standards. What is sufficient in terms of the quality and quantity of a dwelling is for the individual household to decide. This notion, because it is a relative one personalises housing. It is a view that relegates the significance of aggregated physical structures and standards and places over it an analysis which is necessarily subjective. This subjectivity is because the analysis concentrates on the households who inhabit the structures and not on supposedly objective and rational economic players. It is thus a personalised view of housing – on what it does in people's lives." (King, 1996; cited in Clapham, 2002, p. 61)

Therefore, attempts to address housing research has higher significance when it is done from the household's perspective on his/her understanding of home rather than having a government's policy focus (Clapham, 2002).

Defining 'home' it is a difficult task due to the implications it has on the personal level as well when reported to the many different contexts (Despres, 1991; Somerville, 1997). While home is concerned to a large extent with individuals' feelings, emotions, needs and experiences, it is the influence of the socio-cultural, economic and political environment, which also has deep implications on the household-home relationship. It is for these reason Moore (2000) argues that home studies' focus on specific aspects comes in detriment of the "whole" understanding of the concept.

It is its complexity and its "many layers of meaning" that provokes scholars from multidisciplinary fields of research as sociology, anthropology, environmental psychology, architecture, philosophy, to dedicate a significant amount of work to the subject. Despite their disagreement concerning the 'meaning of home' they unanimously acknowledge the 'multidimensional' and 'multifaceted' aspects surrounding the concept, as well the fundamental role 'home' has in people's life (Despres, 1991; Somerville, 1997; Moore, 2000 ; Mallett, 2004).

"Precisely because the home touches so centrally on our personal lives, any attempt to develop a dispassionate social scientific analysis inevitably stimulates emotional and deeply fierce argument and disagreement. The home is a major political background – for feminists, who see it in the crucible of gender domination; for liberals, who identify it with personal autonomy and a challenge to state power; for socialists, who approach it as a challenge to collective life and the ideal of a planned and egalitarian social order." (Saunders and Williams, 1988; cited in Mallet, 2004, p. 64)

The broad variety of contexts where 'home' is present makes it one of the most arguable and debatable concepts. Among the first authors who contributed to a critical review of the literature is Despres (1991). She comes up with ten encountered meanings of home from six studies, which the authors have empirically identified by interviewing residents about their home.

Therefore home is seen "as security and control", "as reflection of one's ideas and values", "as acting upon and modifying one's dwelling", "as permanence and continuity", "as relationships with family and friends", "as center of activities", "as

refuge from the outside world”, “as indicator of personal status”, “as material culture”, “as a place to own”².

While previous are mentioned users’ personal meanings of home that express psychological and socio-cultural aspects, in the second part of her critical review Despres (1991) brings into discussion the theoretical interpretations most commonly used. Therefore, the following theoretical approaches, which Somerville (1997) names as non-sociological, are the territorial, psychological, social-psychological, and phenomenological and developmental, where each model highlights specific meanings of home.

“Security and control” are emphasized as main meanings of home within the territorial model by setting boundaries over ones territory and personalization of the dwelling on placing objects in a meaningful way (Despres, 1991). While the psychological and social-psychological perspectives refers to “identity, control, privacy, security and social status” as a “deep-rooted psychological” requirement, for the phenomenological and developmental model are highlighted meanings of “permanence and continuity” (Somerville, 1997).

Later Somerville’s (1997) survey on sociological studies reveal similarities on meanings of home with the ones identified by Despres (1991). Therefore, he makes up the following list: “home as the center of family life”, “the place of retreat, safety and relaxation, freedom and independence”, “self-expression and social status”, “a place of privacy, continuity and permanence”, “a financial asset”, “a support for work and leisure activities” and as “ontological security”.

In a more recent critical review, comparable to those perpetrated by Despres (1991) and Somerville (1997) in the ‘90s, Mallett (2004) analysis recurrent themes on meaning of home in the literature. She comes up with “home and house”, as the “ideal home”, home “between the real and the ideal, the actual and remembered”, “home as haven”, “home and gender”, home seen in the conjunction with “journeying”, “being at home”, “home, self, identity and being”.

Although significant literature expands on ‘home’ and ‘meaning of home’, most of the studies are conducted and convey the view of the West, whereas the former socialist

² See Despres (1991) for each meaning explanation.

countries, which have a unique experience in the way housing is produced and consumed, are inadequately represented in the international scholarship (Moore, 2000; Clapham, 2002; Mallet, 2004; Soaita, 2015).

“Constructing the meaning of ‘home’ is central to the ways in which social relations are constituted via interpersonal and location-specific social processes.” (Perkins and Thorns, 2003, p. 121)

Further, the existing literature on the concept of ‘home’ and ‘meaning of home’ is revised to develop a proper and comprehensive understanding of the notions, as well a guidance for thesis’s research.

2.1.1 Home and dwelling

The work of Heidegger has pioneered the interest on home and dwelling within the philosophical and phenomenological context, as it brings an understanding about our own presence in the world and those aspects to create a meaningful experience.

For traditional civilizations, dwelling and building were almost the same, unlike the present globalized and technological societies where building becomes an insignificant act, alienated from dwelling.

Martin Heidegger’s (1971) “Building Dwelling Thinking” reference work makes the correlation between dwelling and building as he acknowledges that “only if we are capable of dwelling, only then can we build” (p.160). It refers not to an aleatory building, but making the act of building a sacred one.

For Heidegger (1971) Building becomes meaningful only when “belongs to dwelling” and “receives its essence from dwelling”. By defining dwelling as “the basic character of Being”, he considers the built environment as fundamental for any person or group of people on “being-in-the-world”. The current housing system may provide appealing living conditions, but does not offer any assurance that “dwelling occurs in them”.

Another often-quoted phenomenologist is Gaston Bachelard (1964) who’s greatest accomplishment rest on the philosophy of space expressed within the “*home and place*” affair (Moore, 2000). He brings forward the presence of the house at the center of our own existence, as “the greatest powers of integration for the thoughts, memories and dreams of mankind” (Gaston Bachelard, 1964, p. 6):

“Without it, man would be a dispersed being. It maintains him through the storms of the heavens and through those of life. It is body and soul. It is the human being’s first world.”
(Gaston Bachelard, 1964, p. 7)

Both philosophers have contributed to earlier phenomenological ideas as “place” and “rootedness”, which have emphasized the “spiritual and existential” characteristics of home (Moore, 2000, p.209).

For a “grounded architectural meaning” of Heidegger’s notion of ‘dwelling’, Seamon (2000) uses the work of two architects Thomas Thiis-Evensen and Christopher Alexander who “seek concrete means for identifying and describing built qualities that sustain and strengthen the quality of dwelling”. Using “openness” and “closure” made from basic elements such as roof, walls and floor, Thiis-Evensen aims on conceiving “a sense of dwelling” through the experience given by the “insiderness” and “outsiderness” of the building. On the other side, Alexander translates ‘dwelling’ as well-being and enjoyment made possible through architecture’s “sense of place” and “environmental wholeness”.

2.1.2 Home as place, identity and the ‘self’

Throughout the literature, ‘home’ is depicted as “a particularly significant type of place” (Easthope, 2004). The interest on examining the concept of ‘place’ in connection with housing research finds its relevance in the context of globalization as it offers insights on the human-environment relationship. Because the “ideas of *place* are intertwined with ideas of community, collective memory, group (and individual) identity, political organization and capital flows”, it provides a valuable framework for studying ‘home’ as it reaches “the relationship between places and people’s identities and psychological well-being; the dynamics of conflicts surrounding home-places; and the political-economy of home places” (p. 128). The fact that ‘places’ are able to link people’s psychological, social and affective dimension with the political and economic environment it provides a valuable tool for researchers in housing studies (Easthope, 2004).

Cuba and Hummon (1993) criticize the changes brought by the modernity and the effects it has on the identification of people with places, especially with the “locale” place.

“Standardization of built form, the erosion of distinct rural and regional landscapes, and geographic mobility are thought to enervate physically encoded meanings of the landscape, thus weakening personal identification with locale.” (Cuba and Hummon, 1993, p. 113)

Therefore, the authors argue for the planning and construction of a built environment that is able “to enhance the identities of people as well as places”. Moreover, Mallett (2004) suggests that ‘places’ are processes always trying to adapt and rewrite their identity according to changes and conditions of the environment and people, which makes them useful to capture societal and lifestyles’ transformations.

People “actively *make* places” as they experience life, as they are influenced by “physical, economic and social realities” (Massey, 1995, cited in Easthope, 2004, p.128-129). Gustafson (2006, p.17) suggests for a place to exist are necessary three essential ingredients as physicality, geographical location, and significance. Moore (2000) cites Canter (1977) for a definition on place: “the result of relationships between actions, conceptions and physical attributes”.

Drawing on Massey’s understanding of ‘place’ Easthope (2004) suggests that places do not exist in isolation but in relation with other places, as “particular nodal points within a complex web of social interactions which stretch around the world” (Easthope, 2004, p. 129). While places can influence people’s life as much as people can influence places’ existence, places do not pose initially any significance until people attribute them value. Also, people can strongly identify themselves with some places, with their homes, or on the contrary, they can have opposite feelings for other places and the people that belong to them.

Further, Easthope (2004) brings the view of two scholars as she touches on the disagreement over the relationship among ‘place’ and ‘space’. While Sack (2001) defines ‘place’ as “the countless areas of space that we have bounded or controlled” (cited in Easthope, 2004, p. 129), Casey (2001) opposes the idea that ‘place’ descends from ‘space’ by saying:

“...space and place are two different orders of reality between which no simple or direct comparisons are possible“(Casey, 2001; cited in Easthope, 2004, p. 129).

Instead, the author refers to space as “the name for that most encompassing reality that allows for things to be located within it”, while ‘place’ is “the immediate ambiance of my lived body and its history” as includes the social-cultural and personal aspects that defines a person (Casey, 2001; cited in Easthope, 2004).

Therefore, a mutual dependency exists among self and place, as “there is no place without self; and no self without place” (Casey, 2001; cited in Easthope, 2004, p. 130), they are “intimately interlocked in the world of practical work” (p. 137). Thus, personal identity it cannot be considered “a matter of sheer self-consciousness but now involves intrinsically an awareness of one’s place” (p. 130).

Home is often mentioned in literature as “an expression or symbol of the self”. On understanding what makes a neutral space a home, scholars express that each individual has his/her own awareness, feelings and needs, spiritual and sensorial experiences, about the world and own body, which they communicate into the environment. Thus, the self it is retained in house interior design, through furniture organization and choices, meaningful objects and activities in which the individual engage (Cooper, 1974; Despres, 1991; Cooper Marcus, 1995; Mallet, 2004).

One of the earliest authors, which expressed the relationship of the house with one’s self, is Cooper (1974) in ‘The House as the symbol of the self’. ‘Self’ as “the inner heart of our being, our soul, our uniqueness” (p. 131) manifests in the world through one’s home as secondary to the primordial expression through one’s body. On understanding people’s preference about the detached house, the author considers the symbol this type of house portrays as one of the most “fundamental archetypes”. In terms of Jung’s theory, archetypes are “basic and timeless modes of psychic energy” which exist on the level of a “universal and collective unconscious” that generated from our ancestors and manifest at the present moment through people’s self. Therefore, the self becomes a carrier of these archetypes (Cooper, 1974).

Moreover, Easthope (2004) uses Heidegger’s (1973) central idea of ‘dwelling’ to explain the relationship between home-places and individuals’ identity, as well the idea of attachment, whereas attachment to place³ is defined as “an integral part of being in the world” (Harvey, 1996; cited in Easthope, 2004, p. 132). Thus, ‘dwelling’ has “the capacity to achieve a spiritual unity between humans and things” (p. 132).

Two notions “rootedness” and “a sense of place” are considered valuable tools for the investigation of people’s “social, psychological and emotive attachments to place”.

³ “Attachment to place refers to the feeling of possessiveness that an occupant has toward a particular territory because of its associations with self-image or social identity. [...] Attachment to place is associated largely with the symbolic qualities of a site, with relationships between the space and objects in it, and the experiences, aspirations, and conditions of the occupants” (see: Brower (1990, p. 192-193).

Casey (2001) refers to the dwelling as “thick place”, or when someone is “rooted” or being at home “in an unselfconscious way”, while the “thinned-out places” are those places one encounters once he/she leaves home and is necessary to develop awareness for experiences of new places, to develop a “sense of place” (Easthope, 2004).

“While rootedness means at home in an unselfconscious way, sense of place implies a conscious appreciation of place”. (Easthope, 2004, p. 137)

While some individuals live bounded to specific places, on the contrary, others leave the dwelling to experience many places, as it happens in modernity (Easthope, 2004). This has implications on what Mallett (2004) refers as “journeying” when people are away, whether they are in search for home, to reach a destination, or when they have to leave their “homeland”, their “place of origin” which they identifies the “self” with, logging to return.

While “being at home” is experienced very deeply at the point where the subject submerge the “self” into the space, they “leak into each other, inhabit each other”, when “leaving home” “a process of estrangement” and displacement emerge as the “embodied self” is reconfiguring its identity and senses to new realms and experiences. Forming communities to “make a place” from “out of place-ness” gives a senses of home and assist the self in new identity making when one feels displaced from his home origin (Ahmet, 1999, p. 341-345).

Therefore, ‘home’ is not restricted to the physical setting of the house, but borders become permeable through memories, kept feelings and sensations, and story-telling (Ahmet, 1999; Rose, 2003). Being away from home is another way that home reaches to have meaning (Moore, 2000).

2.1.3 Home, territory and privacy

First studied on animals, the concept of ‘territoriality’ is considered to be connected with social interaction and boundaries that humans create to protect and maintain a specific domain, appropriate space and help to satisfy their needs. This delimited area it is where individuals and group identities are formed; it is the place where they build, seek for privacy, display control and personalize. Also, avoiding conflicts or inadequate communications is regulated through people’s social interaction and territorial boundaries that individuals impose or display to mark a place (Brower, 1990; Despres, 1991).

Drawing on Altman's (1975) understanding of "typology of occupancy"⁴ Brower (1990) suggests territory is constituted hierarchically according to the "significance and quality of interaction that takes place" (Brower, 1990p. 185). Therefore, three distinct areas with different amplitude of privacy and control emerge. While, the first category as the "primary territories" are used on a permanent basis by the individuals for their daily activities and for the interaction with people with whom have lasting relationships, the third category is the public realm that is under less supervision and discipline, where encounters with strangers is common.

Despres (1991) suggests that home itself it is constituted from a "succession of territories" which may respond within different limits and spaces in a similar or in different way to family members. Repetition of activities and material culture, use of interior design are mentioned as means through which its occupants delineate the home-territory.

Moreover, Despres (1991) regards territoriality as a mechanism to achieve privacy when she cites Altman (1975).

“(territoriality understood as a) self /other boundary mechanism that involves personalization or marking of a place or object, and communication that it is owned by a person or a group.”
(Altman, 1975; cited in Despres, 1991, p.99)

Privacy is acknowledged as a fundamental human requirement, expressed deliberately or unconsciously on many levels of one's life. Home as an embodiment of privacy consists in people's desire to have their own place without being observed or judged, far from public display. The need for privacy captures all domains of domestic realm reaching psychological, social and material aspects of home (Chermayeff and Alexander, 1963; Altman, 1975).

"Privacy is most urgently needed and most critical in the place where people live... The dwelling is the little environment into which ail the stresses and strains of the large world are intruding, in one way or another ever more deeper." (Chermayeff and Alexander, 1963 , p. 38)

Rapoport (1969) in his book "House Form and Culture" suggests that the house stands for more than just a "provision of shelter", but for "the creation of an environment best suited to the way of life of a people-in other words, a social unit of space" (p.46).

⁴ "Appropriation of space will be affected by the ability of an individual or group to establish a suitable type of occupancy" Brower (1990, p. 184).

Therefore, the house through spatial organization enables a certain behavior and communication among people; as well, it controls social activities in that place, whereas certain levels of privacy are necessary to regulate this mechanism.

2.1.4 Home and culture

“The centrality of culture in defining humanity” (Rapoport, 1980, p. 9) has been long the focus of anthropologists where socio-cultural factors are fundamental for individuals’ meaning of home.

‘Culture’ is a very broad and diverse subject, and any simplification or generalization of it is questionable.

“It can be suggested that “culture” is both too abstract and too global to be useful. Social expressions of culture, such as groups, family structures, institutions, social networks, status relations, and many others, often have settings associated with them or are reflected in the built environment. While it is virtually impossible to link culture to built form [...] it is feasible to relate built form to family structure, clans or societies, institutions, sex roles, or status hierarchies.” (Rapoport 1969)

Despite the many definitions of culture, Rapoport (1980) considers three definitions that work together to give a comprehensive understanding. Culture is “a way of life typical of a group”, “system of symbols, meanings, and cognitive schemata transmitted through symbolic codes”, “a set of adaptive strategies for survival related to ecology and resources” (p. 9).

Rapoport (1969) considers that the physical setting of home is an expression of culture of the place it belongs:

“The different forms taken by dwellings are a complex phenomenon for which no single explanation will suffice. [...] people with very different attitudes and ideals respond to varied physical environments. These responses vary from place to place because of changes and differences in the interplay of social, cultural, ritual, economic, and physical factors. [...] The house is an institution, not just a structure, created for a complex set of purposes. Because building a house is a cultural phenomenon, its form and organization are greatly influenced by the cultural milieu to which it belongs.” (Rapoport, 1969, p. 46)

Architecture can guide and prescribe new behavior or how people to use the space, but it cannot “determine” or regulate it. Culture favorize a specific type of space, form, boundaries, outside-insid public-private aspects. As Kent (1990) suggests:

“The use of space influences architecture more strongly and consistently than the other way around.[...] Architecture is a reflection of behavior or the use of space which, in turn, is a reflection of culture-in other words, they are not one and the same.” (Kent, 1990, p.2-3)

In his reference work “House form and culture”, Rapoport (1969) refers to vernacular architecture as “the ideal environment”:

“The folk tradition [...] is the direct and unself-conscious translation into physical form of a culture, its needs and values- as well as the desires, dreams, and passions of a people.” (Rapoport,1969, p.2)

Space organization, orientation and main configuration, as well the house design it is a response to cultural environment⁵ which reflects people’s values, needs, choices, environmental conditions and attitudes, beliefs, norms. Where is through the social structure of a community where cultural values, beliefs and norms are transmitted from one generation to another. People feel comfortable in environments they choose, which are in harmony with their belief system. According to Rapoport (1980) environment has a major influence on one’s behavior by what he considers to offer the opportunity to choose where he/she feels most appropriate to live. He states:

“In reality, a major effect of environment on behavior is through habitat selection; given an opportunity, people select the environment that suit them, and that are congruent with psychological and sociocultural aspects of their behavior.” (Rapoport, 1980)

Therefore, establishing in a setting that is not in concordance to ones beliefs system, their cultural values, whether chosen or imposed, may conduct to a conflict of dissatisfaction and stress.

2.1.5 Home as ‘heaven’, the ‘ideal’ and the ‘lived’

Capitalist societies as well individuals’ experiences and needs, memories and social aspects work together on portraying the ‘ideal’ home/house. When it comes to western societies, the literature is not short in capturing these insights. (Chapman and Hockey, 1999; Mallett, 2004).

In their book “Ideal homes? Social change and domestic life”, Chapman and Hockey (1999) critically address the concept of ‘ideal home’ while referring to those forces and actors that influence individuals’ choices in matters of house and furniture design,

⁵ Rapoport (1980) suggests environment “can be seen as a series of relationships between things and things, things and people, and people and people” (p. 11).

as well projecting on them the type of “ideal lives” within the home, as desires, experiences, family relationships. By promoting “a unique model of the home as it has been popularly imagined and idealised in society”, it tends to lose sight of the “the way that it is actually lived” (p.1). Some of the negative aspects involved is not taking into consideration those groups that have preferences for different lifestyles; or the disadvantaged ones as for those with disabilities (Morgan et al, 2016), or the inequality among women and men that meets at home, raising concern about the position of women within the domestic space, their privacy and security, and even the violence towards them (Madigan et al, 1990; Kurst-Swanger and Petcosky, 2003).⁶

The “Ideal Home Exhibition” London event from 1908 is chosen by the authors to portray the situation, as manufactures, advertising and marketing officers try to sell “prescribed images of ideal houses”. By denigrating and calling into question the historical housing design as not being as comfortable, practical, well equipped, as their proposal of modern house, represents designers’ strategy to manipulate the public (Chapman and Hockey, 1999).

Among the first who stated, Goffman (1959) considers that our social behavior, beliefs, needs, desires and choices are shaped to a large extent by the society in which we live, as family, community and friends. We will try to conform and act in the presence of ‘the others’ in different ways which is acceptable than as we would do when we are alone. In the same manner accepting an ideal model of home imposed by the society does not conducts to self-fulfillment in life and, consequently, at home.

Although home represents the most intimate place were an individual can withdraw from the exterior world, the personal choices of their house design meets environment’s expectations. Moreover, actors as architects, engineers, constructors as well as changes that take place in the life of an individual as employment, living location may change in time their vision of their desired house (Gurney, 1997; Chapman and Hockey, 1999 ; Mallett, 2004).

Regarding the relationship between the concepts of ‘real’ and the ‘ideal’ home, Mallett (2004) argues that two predominantly views emerge. One suggests that the notions are seen in opposition due to the fact the individuals are not able to grasp their actual

⁶ See Chapman and Hockey (1999) for a comprehensive understanding on the discrepancy among the ‘ideal’ and ‘the lived’ home.

environment and conditions, being mostly driven by nostalgic feelings of representation of their imagined home. On the other side, they are perceived as “mutually defining concepts and experiences” (p. 69), completing each other in defining the home concept, as people are seeking all their live to bring into existence their imagined house into the actually lived (Mallett, 2004).

Another ongoing debate in the literature regards the idea of home as ‘heaven’ seen as “an expression of an idealized, romanticized even nostalgic notion of home at odds with the reality of peoples’ lived experience of home” (Mallett, 2004, p.72). On this concern, scholars question the core concepts that makes it look like haven as depictions of a “secure, safe, free or regenerative space” (p. 72).

As for the case of “the ideal” home, critics dismiss the generalization of the idea that home represents a place of comfort and safety for everybody while studies show that for an important number of women and children is a place of confinement, segregation and angst (Madigan et al, 1990; Kurst-Swanger and Petcosky, 2003; Mallett, 2004).

Since “home is not some purified space of belonging, with fixed and impermeable boundaries” (Mallett, 2004, p.73) as many scholars suggest, but where inevitable “tensions surrounding the use of domestic spaces” (Sibley, 1995; cited in Mallett, 2004, p.73) prevail, represents another reason for which home cannot be considered ‘heaven’.

Therefore, home cannot be associated only with positive meanings as family, refuge, safety, security, privacy, comfort, freedom, control, wellbeing or seen as opposed and separated the public, unsafe, chaotic, surveyed, outside world. For this, in her critical review of ‘home as heaven’, Mallett (2004) suggests that referring to different groups, historical periods and cultures, leads to contradictory meanings of the notion.

For instance, for the preindustrial western societies or even for the present situation when many people work from home due to technological events, an opposition of meanings does not make sense since home is at the same time the place for family, work and daily practices. Therefore, thresholds become fuzzy when it comes to a clear separation between the outside and inside, private and public, safe and unsafe (Mallett, 2004).

2.1.6 Home, family and gender

Often in the literature it is referred to the connection between ‘home’ and ‘family’ as being “so strong that the terms are almost interchangeable” (Mallett, 2004, p. 73).

“When conceived as inter-related or overlapping terms, home typically symbolizes the birth family dwelling and the birth family or family of origin. [...] Home encompasses the house or dwelling that a person lived in immediately after birth and/or their childhood family house(s). It also symbolizes the family relationships and life courses enacted within those spaces.” (Mallett, 2004, p. 73-74).

Likewise, Gaston Bachelard (1964) puts at the core of human existence the house, as the place that offers protection and safety to the newborn and which the individual experience and explore throughout his/her existence:

“For our house is our corner of the world. As has often been said, it is our first universe, a real cosmos in every sense of the word.” (Gaston Bachelard, 1964, p. 4)

However, this view is highly challenged by scholars who dispute this representation as being “ideologically laden and premised on the white, middle class, heterosexual nuclear family” (Mallett, 2004, p. 74). While the concepts of ‘home’ and ‘family’ known for their correspondence in meanings are mostly detected in the historical and cultural environments where the nuclear family is predominant, their dissociation is mostly obvious in the modern societies where the idea of family has different meaning for different groups (Mallett, 2004).

Another contested subject among the scholars with great implications on building ideas of ‘family’ and ‘home’ is the gender perspective. Despite those who assert for a gender-neutral approach⁷, feminist theorists differentiated from men and women’s meaning of home in matters of housing design and consumption, regarding home as display of status, family, security and privacy, tenure and the implication it has on the labor market (Madigan et al, 1990; Gurney, 1997; Kurst-Swanger and Petcosky, 2003; Mallett, 2004).

Madigan et al. (1990) suggest that an important aspect in the housing production is the housing design, which they consider, is gender biased. For instance, the misconception

⁷ One of the most quoted scholar in literature for a gender-neutral view is Saunders (Madigan et al, 1990; Gurney, 1997).

“stereotype of women in the kitchen” is a result when a specific type of behavior is encouraged through domestic interior’s planning of room organization and usage.

With respect to privacy within the family members, is mostly understood as privacy within adults and children, dismissing the same needs among men and women. In fact is the women that benefits the less. While children enjoy their own rooms, and even the husband has the privacy of a studio, is the woman who, when not working, spends the most of the time at home, who lacks the intimacy of a space of her own (Madigan et al, 1990, p. 632).

“Women have real difficulty in knowing what if any thing is their own exact territory. In one sense a woman controls the whole house: but in another she may feel she owns nothing personally but her side of the wardrobe.” (Whitehorn, 1987, in Madigan et al, 1990, p. 632)

Moreover, Madigan et al. (1990) argue differences exist also in the case of “capital gain” to be able to trade and to use the house as bargain, which comes in the disadvantage of women, which are less likely to own a home than men do.

Whether they are undermined by their partners on the decision making or, in the case of female-headed households, may face inequality on the labor market not being able to access same financial benefits as men do, conduct women to have less authority within the domestic realm of family, to depend more on the security that men’s job provides. As a consequence, it may lead to social segregation and even isolation which may affect women psychological and their social engagement (Madigan et al, 1990, p. 633).

Gurney’s (1997) study best illustrates gender distinctiveness for life events at home, as women tend to have more complex description of them as well “hidden contradictory meanings”. Also, women asses more positive meanings as they show their emotions and feelings in relation with their home, whereas “negative and instrumental meanings” don’t have same priority. They are more preoccupied with the housing design which becomes means to reflect their prestige and status, unlike men concerned more likely with the house as an investment (Madigan et al, 1990).

Moreover, it is expected more from the men to perceive home “in terms of status and achievement”, while the probability is higher for women to see their homes “as emotional refuge or heaven or source of protection” (Somerville, 1997) and “to be

more intimately linked to the dwelling in terms of their self-identity” (Rapoport, 1981, p.23; cited in Somerville, 1997).

2.1.7 ‘Meaning of home’ from the perspective of Romanian rural house

Along the history, people based their survival on their own skills and on the rich conditions of the environment, while the house becomes the center of their universe where almost all activities and social relations unfold.

“The eternity was born in the village”⁸ says a known quote of philosopher Lucian Blaga when referring to the traditional Romanian settlement as it encapsulates all dimensions engaged in building the nation, whereas the cultural, socio-economic and historical factors act as the most fundamental (Vaduva-Poenaru, 1999) .

Vladutiu (1973) and Vaduva-Poenaru (1999) refers to village’s “vatra”⁹ and “gospodaria” (the homestead) as “significant factors in the evolution of Romanian popular culture” (Vladutiu, 1973, p. 121), respectively a place “of steadiness, continuity and permanence in the historical process of society’s development” (Vaduva-Poenaru, 1999, p. 6). The rural house is perceived as a vital symbol of building and maintaining the tradition by placing at its center the Romanian peasant as sole constructor and architect of its home-place (Curinschi Vorona, 1981; Ionescu, 1982).

As met in all cultures, “the act of edification” of the Romanian rural house “it is a ritual gesture link to the founding act of the world” (Biciusca, 2006, p. 61), “a place of existence of human being” (Vaduva-Poenaru, 1999, p. 6). This way of thinking mirrors Heidegger’s (1971) conception about “building” as being a sacred one as it “belongs to dwelling” (p.160). Likewise, Gaston Bachelard (1964) puts at the core of human existence the house, as the most fundamental act:

“For our house is our corner of the world. As has often been said, it is our first universe, a real cosmos in every sense of the word.” (Gaston Bachelard, 1964, p. 4)

⁸ Romanian philosopher Lucian Blaga quoted in Vaduva-Poenaru (1999, p. 6).

⁹ Many meanings are assigned to word “vatra”: it can be a house, a settlement as village, the country itself, native or origin place, or even the traditional oven where food is being prepared. For further information see Vaduva-Poenaru (1999, p. 6). In the text has the meaning of houses that compose the village.

The vocabulary used in the past in the rural environment denotes another way to understand the connection that Romanian villages had with their home. Linguistics says instead of “a trai” (to live) it was used the specific word “a gusta” which means “to resist, to stay in one place”. People continued to stay and give meaning to one place-home despite the challenges they faced in the past in Romania (Moraru, 2011, p.61-62).

Romanian rural house is depicted as a complex structure in the sense it incorporates a pool of meanings: as shelter, a place of cultural identity, customs and traditions, place of origin and birth, the childhood house, family’s social status, reflection of one’s life and talent. It keeps community together offering common language and values, “clear reference points” for habitus and behavior for all its members (Biciusca, 2006, p. 19). Also, Romanians “strong originality and creative spirit” it is reflected in their lifestyle, through their homes. Every house has its own uniqueness, it identifies and it is tailored after the life of one family (Vladutiu, 1973, p. 11).

“House and a person’s way of living is one and the same: there is only one way to live in a house.” (Biciusca, 2006, p. 66)

Unlike the noun ‘casa’ as referred only to the physical dwelling (the house or the apartment), in Romanian language the adverb ‘acasa’ denotes spatiality and one’s emotions engagement. Experiencing and feeling home emerge as one poses the question ‘where’ as “staying, heading or leaving home” and the ‘how’ for “longing for, feeling or being at home” (Soaita, 2015, p. 6).

Moreover, the multidimensional significance of the rural house and its role for the inhabitants in Darmanesti settlement, the place of the case study, it is best described by Professor Vasile Alexa (2008, 2015) in his monographs about his hometown.

Thus, the multilayered dimension of the rural house is best grasped in the daily and seasonal activities, as well in the most important moments of the family as birth, marriage and death. Moreover, the house has the crucial role where the education takes place, where knowledge is transmitted from generation to generation, from parents to children (Alexa et al, 2008, 2015).

The social aspects of home in bringing people together and strengthen community is present on many levels since its making. The traditional house and the idea of family is seen as inseparable since both have common start. The construction of the

homestead complex is an important reason of celebration with neighbors and friends while offering gifts with ‘new home’ occasion to the new family. The protective and the lovely place of the house acts as mediator, a binder between family members, friends and neighbors for all these important moments (Alexa et al, 2008, 2015).

The symbolic and the functional dimension of home come together for an important moment: the ‘birth’ of the house. Whether choosing the proper place for the future complex or the material used for its construction, the process implies a careful followed ritual.

“[...] the place for construction depends by the access to water sources, exit to main road, geographical position, orientation towards the sun and the surrounding houses.” (Alexa et al, 2015, p. 189)

“The tree was cut, was peeled [...] After the tree dried up for 8-12 months was good for use. From this dried wood were built the traditional houses.” (Alexa et al, 2015, p. 189)

Although express common attributes of the whole settlement, the rural house keeps its uniqueness, the identity of each family. Efforts are made for the material aspects as furnishing, as well for the whole complex’s decoration to expresses the social status of its inhabitants (Alexa et al, 2008, 2015).

2.1.8 ‘Meaning of home’ in communist-era flats

When examined the ‘socialist home’ and inhabitants’ meaning of home during Soviet control, a very different view from the western perspective emerge. State’s intrusion in all aspects of people’s life and the efforts taken in redefining the housing environment heavily changed the way dwellers relate and experience their homes.

In this section, emphasis is made on those aspects, which are considered as fundamental in shaping the ‘socialist home’, and have attracted researchers’ enthusiasm the most. However, literature is scarce considering the implications and challenges this type of dwelling presupposes. State’s implementation of a new housing plan, with its production and consumption, as well inhabitants’ opposition towards change, experiences and their attempts to create a meaningful home-place are characteristics identified by authors in all Soviet Bloc’s countries (Sillince, 1990; Crowley and Reid, 2002; Siegelbaum, 2006; Soaita, 2015).

The idea of “ideal home”¹⁰, highly emphasized as a nucleus for the emergence of the new socialist nation, came into conflict with the “real home” as an embodiment of “*uiut*”¹¹, with inhabitants’ actual values, lifestyle and culture. Since “becoming the new Soviet person” (Reid, 2006, p.148) starts within the realm of the apartment block, efforts are carried to develop the proper environment to propagate political identity and “shape popular taste” (Crowley and Reid, 2002, p. 11).

“[...] configuration of housing was a political determinant of consciousness and behavior, including a person’s reliability.” (Kotkin quoted in Crowley and Reid, 2002, p.11)

When trying to define ‘home’ in socialist contexts, some opinions are commonly shared by most of the researchers as ‘home’ being objectified to merely the physical space by the State production system to serve and facilitate the new social order and the new ‘self’.

“New homes [...] were sites for the reproduction of the new socialist citizen. [...] The socialist home was presented as another site of production alongside the factory and the office, where the material environment was disposed and actively designed to assist in the manufacture of a new self”. (Crowley, 2002, p. 190)

‘Privacy’ is a recurrent theme when defining ‘socialist home’ as it expressed on different levels and forms as result of the struggle between State and its citizens. The established “ideological character” of the new socialist home targets a drastic change in all levels of life and housing structure. Withdrawal of private property right, “defining soviet family”, “disciplining the home” by setting the key role of women, all these expose the daily-domestic life to the public gaze, “where private values and practices had to be demonstrated in public” (Crowley, 2002, p.189).

“Domestic, everyday life was not to be closeted away from public life and collective concerns, but part of a continuum: the boundaries were supposed to be transparent and permeable.” (Reid, 2006, 147).

Unlike western’s view where home is a place where privacy should thrive, a place of intimacy for individuals and family relations, in this case, the concept has a different

¹⁰ The media and government officials are portraying the “socialist home” as the “ideal home” (Crowley, 2002, p. 189-192).

¹¹ Reid (2006, p. 149-150) defines ‘uiut’ as being “central to definitions of a *real home*”. The author further quotes Francine du Plessix Gray when referring to Soviet Russian women, for the definition of ‘uiut’ as being “slavic talent for creating a tender environment even in dire poverty and with the most modest means”.

understanding. To keep population obedient and serve the communist goal the domestic environment would become part of the public agenda under constant monitoring. It is desired for:

“[...] total annihilation of private property and privacy in the interests of a Communist way of life, the complete merging of individual and collective interests”. (Siegelbaum, 2006, p. 3)

State’s intrusion is made clear in countless ways. Its intervention within the flats is present since their planning, building, in making their interior furniture, decoration and equipment, and goes farther until constant psychological manipulation in showing how to live and behave within these apartments. In this matter, Reid (2006) quotes Khrushchev’s speech at the Twenty-First Party Congress in January 1959:

“ It is necessary not only to provide people with good housing, but also to teach them to...live correctly, to observe the laws of socialist communality [...] This will not come of its own accord but is to be achieved through protracted, stubborn struggle for the triumph of the new, communist way of life.”¹²

The role of family is emphasized as crucial on perpetuating socialist ideals, as the control over the domestic domain creates “strong, healthy and loyal families”. In fact, this responsibility is left to the “educated, nurturing, and civically conscious housewives” (Neary, 2006, p. 117). For these, government officials and media submit efforts to teach the proper behavior at home, whereas returns to wives to carry most of the burden. Regarding apartments’ interior, women’s magazines guides them in obtaining the ‘ideal interiors’ in matter of the furniture, decoration, and maintenance (Reid, 2006).

It is in this context of mass production of interior design and overcrowding apartments where a sense of the self, personal and family identity and intimacy has much to suffer; “even if people could close the door on the common realm their homes had much in common” (Reid, 2006, p.156). Neary (2006) says individuality, personal space and identity is expected to be part of public concern:

“Personal events were national events- domestic happiness was public happiness.” (Neary, 2006)

¹² Quoted Khrushchev at the Twenty-First Party Congress in January 1959 in Reid (2006, p. 147-148).

Despite the conditions, material culture constitute the main tactic to defeat alienation and standardization, for people to be able to call the small, cramped apartment “the only bit of the world you can have for yourself” (Reid, 2006).

2.1.8.1 Homemaking and identity

In her essay the “The meaning of Home: The only bit of the world you can have to yourself”, Reid (2006) addresses two strategies in the process of homemaking used by the flat-occupants to combat alienation and standardization. Despite the propagandistic efforts towards homogenization given by the “limited number of standard plans, and limited ways in which one could fit one’s life and its accoutrements into that space” (Reid, 2006, p.156), inhabitants long for personal and family identity, to differentiate themselves from neighbors, friends and society. In this respect, they appeal to material culture to appropriate their home-apartment and to create, as the author refers, a “private space”.

Since it is not possible to bring modifications to the physical elements of the apartment, the monotony of the simple, unified, modern style is banished by mixing different styles of furniture and decoration in a “bricolage” manner. Repair and handiwork of diverse decorations and furniture, made according to family budget, constitutes other strategy to personalize and animate the interior for a more comfortable environment.

As these practices unfolds not only on a “functional” dimension, but on a “symbolic” one as well, it makes a clear assertion of citizens’ position about Soviet State’s “mass production and standardization”, and the desire for individualization, continuity of old lifestyle and for privacy (Reid, 2006, p.161-164).

Similar attitudes flat-occupiers developed during the communist regimes in Poland (Crowley, 2002) and in Romania (Biciusca, 2006) in order to cope with lack of privacy and the “ideal lifestyle projected by the housing schemes” (Crowley, 2002, p. 192).

Those who changed their lifestyle from a rural to an urban one during the regimes struggle on fitting their practices and customs in their new apartment according to their own needs, disregarding the purpose giving to each space and the expectations the State has for its use. Inhabitants handle its space how they consider the most useful by adapting it to their rural way of life. Thus, they are able to create a sense of home, a place of memory and personal identity by using in flat’s decoration their accumulated

belongings, “traditional in character and excessive in ornament” (Crowley, 2002, p. 191).

2.1.9 Towards a framework on ‘meaning of home’

During the transition period in former socialist countries, housing privatization is considered one of the major changes that resulted in a different level of understanding and experiencing ‘home’ (Atwood, 2012; Soaita, 2015).

While ownership is seen as critical for “a senses of autonomy, security and satisfaction” (Atwood, 2012, p. 925), its positive aspects are overshadowed by the current challenges of the housing stock. Affording an apartment and support its maintenance, overcrowding living, poor quality, “extensive shortages and limited housing choice” (Soaita, 2015, p. 7), represents setbacks of the joy of owning a home.

In fact, not having to deal with these issues represents an important reason for government’s transfer of property rights over its citizens. It is expected for new owners to develop a “social commitment” and ease government’s responsibility. On this matter, results in a Russian middle class study suggest “a stronger sense of civic responsibility” relating the maintenance of blocks and their surroundings (Atwood, 2012, p. 925).

Two recent studies in Russia and in Romania highlights the most prevailing meanings of home for the specific urban context in these countries. There are especially important as they offer a framework of ‘meanings’ through which to proceed and guide the current research.

Attwood (2012) conducts a study in Moscow, St Petersburg and other three provincial cities where she uses email questionnaires as a method to find out insights whether private ownership had an impact on people’s understanding of ‘home’ for the Russian middle class. Sixty-three female and 14 male, with the majority coming from Moscow, took part on the survey. As guidance in her research, Attwood (2012) considers Fox’s (2007) classification of “people’s feelings about home”.

Thus, “five main clusters” are identified by Fox (2007): ‘home as a financial investment; home as a physical structure; home as a territory, connoting security and control; home as a centre for self identity, a reflection of one’s ideas and values; and

home as a social and cultural unit, the locus for relationships with family and friends' (Fox 2007; cited in Attwood, 2012, p. 915).

Attwood's (2012) findings corroborate Fox's (2007) list. However, "home as a financial investment" has no reference for the respondents. "Home as a centre for self identity" is most obvious for women than it is for men, due to their life experience. With almost all the respondents owning their social-era apartment, the outcomes suggest "a strong commitment to private ownership linking it to the development of a middle class and to the political and economic stability which are thought to stem from that class".

In a more recent study "The meaning of home in Romania: views from urban owner-occupiers" Soaita (2015) empirically depicts 'core meanings' of home in a case study conducted in one of Romania's largest cities (170 000 inhabitants), the city of Pitesti. Questionnaires collected from 150 communist-era flats' tenants and 100 self-builders of suburban housing meant for comparison on meanings of home.

In addition, in-depth interviews were conducted with 28, respectively 32 of them. Findings suggest that self-builders and flat-owners do not considerably differ in their meanings of home but "detached houses rather than flats facilitate more fully their appropriation" (p. 1). Significantly, these results express "the multilayered and multi-scalar" meanings of home for flats' residents who reached to convey the communist housing into an "emotional domain", a "social-cultural territory" for family and friends.

The idea of family is seen as the most important meaning of home. "Comfort and wellbeing", "an emotional territory entailing feelings of self-identity and practices of personalization", "control and agency, which requires actual or formal ownership of space", "an association between the emotional territory of self and a physical locale", "ontological security" concludes the list of meanings (Soaita, 2015 p. 19-20).

While findings confirm those found elsewhere, there are some important differences. As in Attwood's (2012) study home is not seen as a financial investment. Unlike in the western view, "domestic privacy" is not an "explicit" meaning of home, whereas "ontological security" is perceived as "one's bed", "gardens as anchors to the natural world, or the epistemological matrix of the parental home". Moreover, autonomy "seemed an essential quality of dwellings rather than homes".

2.2 Methodology of the Thesis

The case study is conducted by taking the concomitant following steps. Knowledge about small town Darmanesti comes primarily from information provided by the city hall's 'Department of Urban Planning'. It consists in written and visual data, as well under the form of interviews with the employees, including the Chief Architect of the locality. The provided material from the city hall consists in:

- General Urban Planning of Darmanesti town (1997), project made by "General Project S.A. Bacau", having the number 86/12.1997: the document is under the form of an A4 book containing written, visual and tables data about Darmanesti and its component localities. In the 58 pages and annexes, the locality is examined under recurrent criteria, including the existent situation and proposals for future development. Photos of the document are taking by the researcher.
- General Urban Planning of Darmanesti town (2008), prepared by "S.C. Resmin S.R.L.", having the project number 87/109/2008: the document consists in one drawing (under the notation A2.1.) on a 1:5000 scale of Darmanesti town depicting the existent situation. City hall's employee provides the document under pdf format.
- The city hall supplements architectural drawings and quantitative data about blocks proposals in Darmanesti prepared during the communist regime. Despite their desired implementation for the years 1983 and 1985, currently the blocks are not among those standing in the locality. However, the one near the city hall seems an adapted version of these plans. Photos of the documents are taking by the researcher.
- The city hall provides, under an A4 format, a table about the blocks' notation and the number of apartments corresponding to each of them.
- Eleven books about Darmanesti town in the form of monographs written by Professor Vasile Alexa et al. are given from the city hall. Together with the two General Urban Planning from 1997 and 2008, the researcher is able to depict a comprehensive understanding not only about the town and its surroundings but for the case samples as well.

With the aim to understand flats owners' meaning of home, in-depth interviews are conducted in a case study in Darmanesti town. A city hall's employee provides a basis

of communication between the researcher and dwellers by introduction. Randomly ringing the bells doesn't represent an option since a large phenomenon occurs in Romania, including in Darmnaesti, where thieves pretending to work for diverse companies are stealing from people's homes. At the entrance of one block, it is even placed a not that advises residents not to invite under any circumstances strangers in their homes.

First individuals to which the responsible asked for help are the ones that he is more acquainted with, like block administrators or friends. After, finding new residents is emerging through recommendation within the same block. Two individuals working for the city hall happens to live in blocks and are asked by researcher if they wish to participate and they accept.

The method in contacting the respondents makes for a concentration of interviews to be in same locations. However, the familiarity between towns' inhabitants constituted an advantage and valuable data is offered even on the behalf of their neighbors. In addition, the information is able to be verified from multiple sources.

Thirteen interviews in eleven apartments from four blocks built during the communist regime are conducted for the study. To be mentioned, obtaining data from city hall and dealing for a meeting with those surveyed has no inconvenience. It is for this reason the process lasts relatively a short period, between 18 January 2016 and 07 March 2016.

The researcher is in direct contact with the respondents throughout the study through means of cellphone. If at the moment of the introduction there is no time for an interview a meeting is scheduled for later, telephonically. Interviews are conducted in residents' apartment except in one case (O10) when it is not possible, but in the owner parents' individual house.

The interviews lasts between 25 minutes and 2 hours according to residents' interest and availability to engage. The interviews are recorded with participants' consent.

The interviewees' are numbered as O1, O2 etc. ('O' letter coming from 'owner'), according to the code attributed to each apartment. In two cases both husbands are part of the sample, in which case distinction is made with additional letters x and y as for instance O1-x and O1-y. The apartments taken as the cases studies are coded as followed F1, F2, F3 etc. ('F' letter coming from 'flat'), while the four blocks from

which the apartments belong are taken the notations A, D, J, and N (the letters result from the notation of all blocks in Darmanesti). Table 2.1 shows the distribution of blocks, the flats as case samples and interviewed owners.

Are targeted only the apartments which households' are the owners and not renters. The professions of the interviewees are diverse. Among them it can be mentioned that of doctor, teacher, police officer, accounting. Housewives and retirees are also among the participants. For those working, the interviews are taking in the evening.

The Tables 2.2, 2.3 and 2.4 inform about the case samples. Therefore, majority of the households are employed and are over forty years old. Most of them are females due to availability to engage in conversations and because in four of the flats live women alone. There is among the participants one male in his late 20s living alone, however.

Table.2.1: Distribution of blocks, flats, and interviewed owners.

| BLOK | FLAT | HOUSEHOLD |
|------|----------------|--------------------|
| A | F1, F2, F3 | O1,O2,O3 |
| D | F4, F5, F6, F7 | O4,O5,O6-x,O6-y,O7 |
| J | F8 | O8-x,O8-y |
| N | F9, F10, F11 | O9,O10,O11 |

Table.2.2: Gender distribution of the households.

| | O1 | O2 | O3 | O4 | O5 | O6-x | O6-y | O7 | O8-x | O8-y | O9 | O10 | O11 |
|--------|----|----|----|----|----|------|------|----|------|------|----|-----|-----|
| FEMALE | X | X | | X | X | X | | X | X | | X | X | X |
| MALE | | | X | | | | X | | | X | | | |

Concomitant with the interviews are taken observations, sketches and notes about the flats. In ten out of eleven apartments it is permitted to the researcher to take photographs, at least from the living room. In other case, including the apartment that is not available for visiting only documentation as sketches is available. In the rooms where access is denied, information relies solely on residents' recall.

Table.2.3: Age distribution of the case sample.

| | O1 | O2 | O3 | O4 | O5 | O6-x | O6-y | O7 | O8-x | O8-y | O9 | O10 | O11 |
|-------|----|----|----|----|----|------|------|----|------|------|----|-----|-----|
| 20-30 | | | X | | | | | | | | | | |
| 30-40 | X | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 40-50 | | X | | X | | | | | X | X | | | |
| 50-70 | | | | | X | X | X | X | | | X | X | X |

Table.2.4: Occupation distribution of the case sample.

| | O1 | O2 | O3 | O4 | O5 | O6-x | O6-y | O7 | O8-x | O8-y | O9 | O10 | O11 |
|-----------|----|----|----|----|----|------|------|----|------|------|----|-----|-----|
| EMPLOYED | X | X | X | | X | | | X | X | X | | | X |
| RETIRED | | | | | | | X | | | | X | X | |
| HOUSEWIFE | | | | X | | X | | | | | | | |

Aspects that may limit the research are further outlined:

- The distance of one hour car drive between Darmanesti and the place where researcher has residence during the study constitutes an impediment on investigating deeper and throughout a long period.
- The limited number of the case studies, of eleven apartments and thirteen interviews is due to challenges on finding other cooperable inhabitants and available for a meeting.
- Ringing at the bell and asking for an interview is not a solution since people show mistrust to newcomers. Therefore, reaching out tenants for case samples is made only through intermediaries. This method, however, reduces the number of interviews.
- While engaging in observations in the town and blocks of flats or trying to interact with the locals there is a certain degree of suspicion about the researcher and the reasons of her presence.
- Documenting the interiors through sketching and photographing, while necessary, it is seen by some of the households as an intrusion and an attempt to their privacy. Due to these reasons some don't want to cooperate, or are just revealing partial areas of their apartments.
- Distributing questionnaires would may reach a large number of people, however would have not offer deep insights, as for instance, to grasp people's behavior in their homes environment.

- A disadvantage is not being able to acquire from residents or from city hall apartments' architectural drawings. Out of six types of architectural plans the owners are able to provide only three with all areas and dimensions specified (this is the case for the flat type IV, V and VI). As for the others, the information relies on researcher's sketches and measurements, as well inhabitants' recall.

3. THE HOUSING CONDITION IN ROMANIA AND IN DARMANESTI

This chapter describes the context and the conditions why research is held and it emphasize those circumstances that has influenced the most the actual housing challenges. Assessing the housing situation and housing policy in Romania are regarded as part of an investigation within the key moments and aspects that influenced the most its production and consumption.

In doing so, attention it is given to the communist and the transition period in Romania where changes adopted for country's economic development constitutes a matter of urgency, with implications on housing. Further, the focus falls on the particular context for future agro-industrial towns, their meaning for the evolution of the socialist nation and the role they serve in the planned extinction of Romanian rural environment.

The second part of the chapter is dedicated on framing the housing condition in small town Darmanesti, from where the case samples belongs.

3.1. The Romanian Housing Environment

As Denise Deletant (1995) wrote:

“There is no better example of Ceausescu's autocratic rule than his program of urban and rural systematization [...] a social engineering process”. (Deletant, 1995, p. 294)

The changes undergone during the regime aims to generate “a new man”¹³, where a person's consciousness, his social relations and place within the society is carefully reconfigured to meet a common goal. State involvement in all aspects of people's life is conceived throw means of changing one's values and way of life (Dobricu and Iordachi, 2005).

¹³ Authors refer to the “new man” as for the citizen who is living according to communist principles (see Dobricu and Iordachi (2005 p.21).

A centralized economy and a unique party who looked for total control with the means of terror it is a recognizable feature of the east European countries whose figures in power are guided by Marxist-Leninist ideology (Deletant, 1999).

Removal of the Romanian intellectual class and beginning of political trials, the abolition of Monarchy and prohibition of any other party except P.M.R. (future P.C.R.) are the most significant measures that made possible at 30 December 1947 the declaration of Romania People's Republic.¹⁴ It represents the beginning of a long process on bringing the nation and its people under a desirable lifestyle close of that of Soviet Union (former U.R.S.S.) that would change drastically the Romanian housing environment and conditions (Deletant, 1999).

The current post-communist context reveals an enthusiastic nation anxious to resume foreign relations with the Western Europe, to embrace a lifestyle and a worldwide integration. NATO membership in 2004 and the EU fellowship from 2007 makes Romania's "stability and reliability" a matter of urgency within the international context, whereas a "functioning market economy" is seen as essential for the states partners. The economic sector put in motion by the privatization after 1989 has ambitiously been pushed for farther breakthroughs, while the communist legacy elevates the country's hostile environment and slow progress.¹⁵

3.1.1. Urban change and the emergence of "new towns"

The establishment of the communist system after the II World War and the transition towards a democratic system following the 1989 revolution are considered major shifts in Romania's urbanization¹⁶ process (Ianos, 1987; Pitulac, 2011; Mitrica et al, 2014). Socialist cities' spatial pattern lies as testimony of the State's absolute power exercised as unique landholder and general investor in the housing sector.

"Cities as instrument of totalitarianism" emerge for both the purpose of advancement but also for control (Pitulac, 2011). With an urban population of only 21, 4% in 1930 (142 towns) efforts are made to change country's rural-agrarian profile for reaching a

¹⁴ For detailed steps and means the Communist Party reach to rule in Romania, see Deletant (1999).

¹⁵ See Turnock (2007, p.63-66) and www.europa.eu for further information about post-communist restructuring and Romania's EU membership.

¹⁶ Enyedi (1988) refers to urbanization as two distinct processes: increase in the number of urban localities and/or the absorption of population into the urban.

level of modernization similar with other European states. Considerable increase of urban areas from 23, 4% to 53% during the 1948-1989 period is assured by localities' endowment with production units. The industrialization process played a decisive role in country's urban development, whereas the industrial town becoming the most representative urban settlement.

Authors distinguish the following years as being decisive on the formation of urban entities: 1945-1968, 1968, 1968-1989, 1989, 1990-2002. While given urban status to a rural locality before '48 a constant progress and maturity is expected, during the communist regime, the criteria of selection rests on reasons of administrative revisions and to support the political agenda. Unlike 1945-1968 (with 56 new towns) and 1968 (with 48 new towns) periods where the reasons for promotions are mainly due to new territorial administrative reorganization, 1989 marks the performance on declaring 23 agro-industrial new towns as part of the strategic plan of rural systematization (Zamfir et al, 2009; Sageata, 2010, p. 50-57).

With 'urban and rural localities systematization' program adopted in 1974 all country enters under strict reconfiguration and planned economic restructuring; it is expected an extensive reduction of rural settlements and a considerable promotions of those considered viable. The process of rural systematization plan leads to sustained urbanization desired for chosen rural entities to assume the role of administrative or industry center. Despite the efforts the anticipated promotions are not concluded due to reality conditions, where the decisive role it has the interruption of communism in 1989 (Turnock, 1991).

Dispersion of towns' network throughout the country ensured a gradual disappearance of the differences between village and city, and a more compact and connected network. Moreover, it is expected a reduction in migration towards big cities by offering job opportunities in the new chosen rural centers, as well a better management of human resources in agricultural and industrial field. An immediate benefit is to block migration towards cities of the young peasants looking for working opportunities, a challenge that is still present after '89 in Romanian villages (Turnock, 1966).

Therefore, the newly towns after '74 are this thesis's focus due to ideology it represents, intention and method on obtaining them by dismantling and dismissing a

formation of cultural heritage formed over centuries. If concluded the program, would have meant total change of the rural space.

The towns that make this thesis's focus represents a challenging category due to the little urban experience they poses as their declaration from villages comes in the Revolution year, unlike those agro-industrial towns that have been declared before systematization program's adoption.

3.1.1.1 Reconfiguration of the rural space

Romania's identity suffered the most in almost half century of oppression due to extreme measures taken by the Regime to create a new socialist nation. A nation's "cultural genocide" (Socol, 1995, p.225) is best to describe the extent to which the State eradicated and transformed the rural physical environment, as well altered peasants' values, their social order and relations.

With almost 75% (in 1948)¹⁷ of Romanians living in rural areas, peasantry and their environment is considered crucial among party's debate once installed in the position of power. While the goal is for an improvement in people's life standard, modernization and development, the hidden agenda reveals the desire for power consolidation under a continuum control¹⁸ over citizens. Therefore, the new set of laws and decisions are considered to be fundamental for new regime's advocacy. Two main reforms mark the transition from an agrarian society towards a modern nation, whereas targeted for this transformation is the whole rural space.

The struggle between the Romanian peasantry and the communist state it is documented by Dobricu and Iordachi (2005) in their book "The Peasantry and the Power: The process of agricultural collectivization in Romania 1949-1962". As well as the nationalization of "industrial and financial inputs" (1942-1952), the collectivization of agricultural land means centralization and control over country's resources, an essential achievement "to start the forced industrialization program". Encountered opposition resulted in harsh behavior towards the peasantry that leads to more than 80000 documented arrests until 1952. All these events manifested in

¹⁷ 75% of population represents 12 000 000 citizens (Dobricu and Iordachi , 2005, p. 21).

¹⁸ See Deletant (1995, 1999), Dobricu and Iordachi (2005) for objective accounts of what meant Communist Party for Romania and its citizens.

disruption with the old values, change in “peasants’ self-image”, where the social, economic and political relations in rural areas suffer irreversible mutations.

Depleting peasants from their land has double cover; it means “institutionalization” of state’s “authority” and the formation of a newly working class; on the other hand causes the peasantry to feel vulnerable and more able to accept the following changes. Farming, known as the primary method for their survival and a main aspect of the rural homestead, lost its role in unification and equilibrium for the family and community, as well the place it occupies on understanding “national identity” (Dobricu and Iordachi , 2005, p.21, 28, 29; Deletant, 1999, p. 10).

‘Systematization of Urban and Rural Localities’¹⁹ adopted by the ‘Adunarea Nationala’ (National Gathering) at 29 October 1974 is the second major moment that affects the rural space after the II World War. Thereby, it offers to Ceausescu the legal means for the opportunity much desired to operate country’s resources with no interference. Undoubtedly, the precarious state in which the country found itself at that moment demanded urgently decisions to be taken. However, the extend to which interventions are done is to benefit the State, being directed on building the new socialist system than answering citizens’ needs.

Restructuring of the rural areas is not a new concept for Romania, yet the ideological considerations that stands for these innervations negates the roots and principle under which the nation has been built :

“[...] the priority for socialist agriculture, progressively marginalizing the private sector by reducing the land available to it and by constraining the operation of free market; and the insistence on a built environment comprising apartment blocks which would achieve both uniformity across the country and a system of surveillance to minimize individualism with potential for passive resistance to the regime.” (Turnock, 1991, p.253)

Investment in key settlements for further rank promotion, while letting the majority villages to “experience gradual self-extinction” assist the revolutionary goals “to enhance the power of the State and erode the traditional individualism of the peasantry” (Turnock, 1999). It is expected a reduction of 5000-6000 villages from approximatively 13000 until the year 2000 and the number of communes from 2705

¹⁹ See Cucu (1977), Defour and Baucher (1977) and Turnock (1991) for a comprehensive understanding of the systematization process in Romania.

to 2000, while on a short run it is planned for the localities to subscribe under certain restrictive conditions for release of agricultural land.

3.1.1.2 Development of “new towns’

Since most of the villages are small in size under hardships far from urban network and not able to sustain future developments, returns to communes to take over economic functions and to become centers for agricultural organization and industrial development. A number of 2705 communes are identified to meet the condition, from which 300-400 centers²⁰ are considered to have potential to rise to town status after further investments. It is desired for an increase of at least 129 by 1980 that would mean an increase for the urban network from 236 to 550. Despite no promotion made, in 1988 plans are release for some 400-550 new towns until year 2000 (Turnock, 1991).

The “function and profile of each locality” is decided for a greater use and strategic correlation with the rest of the territory. Likewise, clear directions are drawn on restructuring ‘vatra satului’ (village’s hearth) according to a rational zoning of the social, economic and cultural functions for an advantageous placing of fabrication units, services and housing environment. Moreover, the physical environment is carefully planned in the future agro-industrial towns as well in communes’ centers and in the economically developed villages. It is essential “a greater concentration of buildings” to liberate land for agricultural function and effectiveness of the services (Cucu, 1977, p. 192-193; Turnock, 1991, p.252).

A concentration of buildings within “perimetrului construibil” (buildable area) is considered to offer a more advantageous usage of services and industry, as well more land for agriculture (Defour and Baucher, 1977, p.64).

Following dictatorship lines “coercive measures” are taking in respect to the rural house that until this moment knows a gradual and natural evolution for centuries. The already existing homestead together with the traditional house requires withdrawing under certain limits, whereas the new housing stock is expected to have at last two

²⁰ Turnock (1991, p.252, p. 256), Cucu (1977) and Defour and Baucher (1977) mentions the same 300-400 of “centre orasenesti” (urban centers).

floors. Alike big cities, the future 'new towns' is desired to have a civic center with facilities and apartment blocks (Turnock, 1991).

Block of flats is anticipated to transform peasantry "way of thinking, their behavior, their customs, their practices and even their little habits" to favor the new socialist lifestyle. The small, cramped and poor quality flats, most of the time, with no equipment is inadequate for farmers and their animals (Turnock, 1991, p.256).

3.1.1.3 Urban restructuring in post-socialism

The downfall of a centralized plan based system, the beginning of democracy and free markets have changed the socio-cultural, political and economic development within former socialist cities. The fascination with the socialist regimes in carefully coordinating, planning and building these entities it brings the interest of various authors to study their spatial organization, function, physical environment and the meaning behind it (Benedek, 2006; Tsenkova, 2008; Kliems and Dmitrieva, 2010; Popescu, 2014).

While reclaiming the socialist cities to their rightful users it is embraced with excitement and confidence, the ongoing management of the urban restructuring process is viewed with mistrust. On one hand, there is the limitation of authority of the local government on decisions over already narrow resources, which interplay with various entrepreneurial actors and foreign investors, on the other. Urban policy and reforms "have taken a back seat" which permits a more flexible and questionable access to land and its usage. Therefore, it results in "urban conflicts", unbalanced investments among city's areas, deficiency in the transportation supply and infrastructure, "rapid suburbanization and illegal housing" (Tsenkova, 2008).

The renewal administrative process stands for new strategic directions on economic progress and private sector. Under the umbrella of globalization and advancement it is encouraged the production and consumption of goods which inevitable leads to growth in all sectors. However, an explosion of services of any kind and new industrial activities are challenged by a slower adjustment and unprepared infrastructure.

Tsenkova (2008) identifies the downside of this revolution as unemployment and poverty, especially for those over-industrialized and over-urbanized areas during the communism that now face a breakdown. Less vulnerable are those more dependent on agriculture and less on industry (Popescu, 2014).

For the Romanian case, 1.3 million jobs were lost due to deindustrialization, which together with frequent recessions triggers in 1977 impressive migration from urban to rural, “never encountered in modern history before” (Popescu, 2014, p.190; Benedek, 2006).

Overall, this “mosaic of diverse urban experiences” between development and transformation exposes “income inequality, social distress and growing insecurity”, “degradation on living standards”, “rising homelessness”, with most of the citizens missing the purchasing power on managing for day to day life (Tsenkova, 2008, p. 297).

3.1.1.4 “New towns” during transition

“Political coordinated” urbanization in the conditions of “forced industrialization” results in a considerable number of new towns, “urban category with the most rural characteristics” and inconsistencies at the level of the infrastructure and built environment (Sageata, 2010, p. 50).

The socio-economic and political changes brought about after 1989 has a deep impact on most of the aspects that define the newly named agro-industrial towns. Currently part of Romanian’s small towns²¹, according to the dimensional criterion with a population less than 20000, these entities compose more than half of country’s urban localities (Zamfir et al, 2009).

Zamfir et al. (2009) defines them as the “the basic unit of national settlements”, a link between the urban and rural, “fundamentally different and [...] the same time, similar”, vague in their identity due to “rural and urban mixed characteristics” consisting in “demographic behavior, economic functions, settlement patterns, life standard”.

Since the agro-industrial towns have occupied a precise place within the communist system that assured not only their survival but also a future and continuous development, the shock for its inhabitants on losing their secured job and their accustomed lifestyle after ’89 opens the possibility for a gradual mobilization for each individual to take actions, which him/she considers properly.

²¹ There are 161 small towns in Romania (Zamfir et al. (2009).

3.1.2 Housing policy in Romania

Alike in other countries belonging to former Soviet Bloc, Romania's housing sector has undergone profound changes in two key moments: when switching to a centralized planned based economic system during the communist regime and with its dissolution that made the transition to a democratic nation.

Various authors record these moments and the stemming implications due to the challenges the communist dilemma opposes now, especially in the housing area; only in Romania 75%²² of the dwellings are completed under the years of egalitarian oppression. This astonishing outcome is made possible due to "strictest economy in building" (Turnock, 1990, p.136) and by limiting the private sector as taking control over country's resources (Ronnas, 1982; Turnock, 1990; Sillince, 1990; Kornai, 1992; Turner et al, 1992; Clapham;1995; Tsenkova, 2009).

The large scale "renewal process" of the stock is considered one of the major changes brought about by the Ceausescu regime. Since the house is considered "the mirror of the living standard of a society" the new type is expected to reflect the socialist ideology and new social order (Defour and Baucher, 1977, p. 75, 113).

Higher living standards and necessity of housing after the II World War is obvious, yet it grows exponentially due to increase in the number of population²³ from 15.87 million to 22.72 million in 1985. Also, the sustained migration from rural towards urban with the industrialization programme running all over the country, asks for allocation of the new working class.

Apartment blocks is believed to offer a faster and practical solution for this immediate growth, as well to serve party's agenda "through easier supervision of people" and, particularly in the countryside, "minimizing the private sector in agriculture" (Turnock, 1991, p. 252).

New policies and urban planning standards reflect large number of housing estates in all Romanian's cities and towns, while for private houses a share is not being provided.

²² Seventy-five percentage from the total present housing means 2.7 million flats majority in urban areas and 2.4 million private houses, majority in rural areas. Currently just 14% of the housing belongs to the period before the regime and only 11 % is built after 1989 (Soaita 2015, p. 7).

²³ In fact, the communist regime leads a policy and campaign to encourage the birth rate (see Turnock, 1990, p.136).

A major disparity is between the first two decades of communist rule where housing provision was made to a large extent by self-builders, mostly in rural areas (9.29 houses per thousands of the population in countryside during 1956-1960) compared with the 80's where state's housing, mainly flats, dominated (10.65 rate in the urban and 0.47 in the rural areas). However, private building continued in rural areas during 1981-1985 but with a very low rate of just 0.73 since almost all land is under state property.²⁴

A constant and almost an equivalent increase both in urban and rural areas of the "suprafata locuabila" (area of living space) is deduced from annual statistics for the state produced housing. Therefore, the average size allocated for a family in countryside changes from 23.7 square meter at the beginning of the '50s reaching 33.0 in the '80s. The raise is not comparable for the case of the self-builders with an increase of 100%. Moreover, the housing with one room and with more than two rooms knows an increase from 33 to 42.3, while for those with two rooms a constant decrease.²⁵

Efforts are made to accommodate inhabitants within the small and uncooperative space of these minimal homes. Like in many other countries belonging to former Soviet Bloc, studies on furnishing aim for the interior space to be designed according to rational criteria and utility.²⁶ At the end of communism it reaches for over 95% of the housing stock to be built by the state where prefabricated standardized blocks predominate.

The poor quality of the housing stock is shocking taking in consideration that through the housing programme exactly the life standard is expected to rise. Therefore, flats with water supply systems are present in only 12.3% of the housing, where 92% in the newly built, whereas indoor toilet in less than one third. Overcrowding is overwhelming where for 81.5% and 27.8% of the dwellings the density per room exceeds one person, respectively 2 persons (Turnock, 1990).

3.1.2.1 Tenure format

The tenure format differs in the east European countries according to production, financing, availability, state's involvement and level of control over the stock. While

²⁴ See Turnock (1990, p.138-143) for a comprehensive and detailed understanding of the distribution and provision of housing by the private sector and the state during the 1951-1985 period.

²⁵ Information from the annual statistics during the regime (see Turnock, 1990, p.137-140).

²⁶ Schaffer (1956) performs a study where he proposes different types of furnishing for the communist apartment blocks in Romania.

private renting is absent, public rental it is necessary (in 1989 is 33%, mostly flats) to keep development in the country ongoing, since most of the people cannot afford to own a home. However, for those who have the financial means it is expected not to own more than one for each family, while their rights are rather limited regarding their property.

Homeownership in Romania it is somehow encouraged (67% owned stock in 1989), especially in the late '70s and early '80s, with restrictions though. It is not accepted for the owners to use the house for personal gain as from the selling or renting it; it is possible only under the amount price regulated by the state. Instead, the family has assured lifetime residence of the place and the right to inherit or pass it as possession to someone else.

3.1.2.2 Housing accessibility

The housing situation in Romania does not differ from other eastern European countries where socialist values are desired to be fully implemented while prohibiting any capitalist conjunction. It is referred to central planned housing as owned by the state and distributed according to needs and availability, regardless the income. Despite the efforts to offer housing for all its citizens, the funds are redirected for more urgent projects like industrial developments, while lack of housing, in time, conducted to shortages in supply and overcrowding (Tsenkova, 2009).

There is the possibility, according to each family and individual's income, to benefit on renting an apartment from state's fund, especially for the working citizens, which their income is not able to support to buy one. However, to access a credit for building or buying a house it favors those who works as qualified or professionals, young married couples.

Despite housing shortage, it is accessible for Romanians to own or rent a home. This is due to state's efforts to keep costs low, offering good deals for those who are considering buying one. Loans extends over 15 years with a 5% interest rate, where the price of the house without mortgage payment do not exceed 4.5% of the household's income. In the case on renting from the public stock, a 3.7% of the household income goes on rent and utilities (Tsenkova, 2009). Other major benefit is the responsibility that state's takes over management and maintenance over the stock, issue that becomes truly problematic after 1989.

3.1.2.3 Housing construction

With the implementation of new programmes to assure economic growth, the new regime gradually takes responsibility in housing construction. For the first time the housing issue is coordinated by the state where newly formed organizational structures are closely supervised and guided by the ‘Comitetul pentru Problemele Consiliilor Populare’ (Committee on Issues of People's Councils) which centralize and administrates the all counties.

“The (housing) planning problem becomes, for the first time, a State’s problem. Private planning, scattered, anarchic and hard to organize, cannot cope with required rhythm of the execution on large scale. On the other hand, directing a model to fulfill a design unity, a creative desire, to satisfy an ideological content of architecture, which to reflect the innovative rise of the working people, the constructor of a new society, it cannot be done than within a State’s agency.” (Locar, 1952, p.5)

The legislative framework for design and execution is revised and adapted to serve efficiently and on a long run. The experimental projects that started in the ‘50s, offer a base and knowledge for the future mass planning. As a first, the state is willingly to support financially the building of private dwellings, whereas lately through the systematization plan (1974) it puts the bases of the construction activity that meant change completely the Romanian physical environment.

The strategically thought project is split into ‘planuri cincinale’ (five-year plans) developed by ‘Comitetul de Stat al Planificarii’ (State Planning Committee) which stipulates for counties and cities the investment share, the stages and the streamline of resources. Therefore, the allocation of state’s funds increase over the years as the demand finds it necessary from 150 million in 1950-1955 to 2.922 million in 1965-1970 with over 3.700 million 1975-1980. The number of apartments increase during this period, having its peak in the ‘80s. Therefore, between 1951-1960 a number of 66.000 apartments are built, continuing with 528 500 between 1960-1970, whereas during the periods 1971-1980 and 1981-1990 the amount reaches 1.320.000, respectively 1.700 000 (Zahariade, 2011, p.44).

3.1.2.4 Prefabrication and standardization in housing

Large-scale development of housing construction is made possible by adopting “the most rational method” which consists in “prefabrication of concrete and reinforced concrete elements” (Solomon, 1955, p.2).

“Architectural quantitative responsibilities in the area of assembles’ production, housing and socio-cultural buildings couldn’t be satisfied with traditional construction means. Typification in design, industrialization in execution seemed mandatory pathways to be followed.” (Curinschi-Vorona, 1981, p. 336, 342)

The number of dwellings using prefabricated methods in the construction rapidly increases from 5% in 1960 to 40.5% in 1975, where the use of large panels implies “maximum degree of prefabrication” (Ricci, 1955, p.30). While during the ‘60s, among the low-rise blocks using masonry brick and monolithic slabs are only in the experimental stage those with prefabricated panels, towards the end of Ceausescu’s rule predominates entirely prefabricated high-rise blocks done mostly using industrial methods. Prefabrication, mechanization and typification reduce considerable time, funds, and increase productivity. However, this conducts to simplicity of the architectural product.

3.1.2.5 New housing pattern

The vernacular rural house²⁷ encodes a wealth of historical, socio-cultural and symbolic aspects, which have participated on bringing into existence Romania’s particular atmosphere of the picturesque. Expressions of such features resides on the construction methods, design concepts and furniture design which gives a sense of unity within the village, but at the same time particularity for each family.

By means of interplaying the daily activities and the most important life-moments as birth, marriage and death, the house achieves meaning and deep connection with its inhabitants. The long association the people has with the nature resides on their daily activities and through creative intervention into housing design.

Gradual economic development and exposure to international trends, materials and construction methods makes the interwar period to be considered the early stages of Romanian modern architecture²⁸. Manifested under different architectural programs, especially in the big cities, the new style is taken with excitement by young architects in their works.

²⁷ See Curinschi-Vorona (1981), Ionescu (1982) and Ionescu (1986) for a comprehensive understanding and evolution of Romania vernacular dwelling.

²⁸ See Curinschi-Vorona (198, p. 297-308) for a description of the first modern projects, most of them taking place in Bucharest.

However, the new socialist model interrupts the evolution of modern architecture after the II World War, which acts as “real mutations in the production of architecture” under “the general climate of repression” (Zahariade et al, 2003, p.19). The newly established government materializes its socialist reality during almost 50 years of Romania history, which reaches a culminate point with Ceausescu’s last years of “delirium” on the rural space and on the Bucharest, the capital²⁹. As the first two centuries of communism the available funds are redirected towards investment in industrial units, the allocation for housing construction comes later.

“Sistemul cvartalelor” (cvartal system) starts to be used at 13 November 1952 for the cities reconstruction, meaning a three to five floors rectangular building broken in four elements, gathered around a green square (Turnock, 1990, p. 150). ‘Cvartal’ model “did not signal a genuine break with the inherited urban fabric” due to its street alignment, low and medium rise collective dwellings, including shared urban amenities; material used are not the cheapest, while some ornamentation applied gives a “picturesque” sensation and integrates the assemble in the city.

However, after the speech of Khrushchev in 1954, as he criticize the socialist realism, the new type of urban intervention continues with ‘microraion’ (Zahariade, 2011, p.54-55). The new Russian urban structural unit represents a complex urban housing, services, leisure places and industry. “Applying the theory of neighborhood units” for the housing in conjunction with the use of prefabricated and typification on extended areas there are created these large units called ‘microraion’, which it connects on a bigger scale with the neighborhood and with cities’ sectors.

Prefarication and typification leads to “excessive lack of diversity and suitability for the site characteristics” (Zahariade, 2003, p.23). The necessity for housing it conducts to the adoption of free urbanism and colective multistory blocks, model took from ‘Athena Charter’, which already proved to be inadequate and to raise problems. According to the functionalist city principles it is foreseen blocks “implanted” in a green area and a total rupture with traditional urban context, where the parcel represents the “compositional unit” (Zahariade, 2003, p.24).

²⁹ Petcu (1999, p. 177-186) offers an analysis of Ceausescu’s interventions on Bucharest. Further, Petrescu (1999, 187-194) refers to the People’s House as “the voluptuous violence of the paradox”.

The high-rise block solution it is chosen for many citizens to have a house. Standardization brings the Romanian architecture to other level of recognition, mostly known as architecture of uniformity. When introduced, it creates no difference from city to city, giving the sensation of feeling lost and alienated. This model which Ceausescu desires to replace the rural house, resulting in the disappearance of diversity. In villages, modern blocks operates very different from the existing housing context on bringing sameness and regularity, while the particularity of the place is being lost.

3.1.2.6 Housing privatization

After the Revolution in 1989, Romania as the other countries belonging to former Soviet Bloc is challenged by “low productivity, inefficient use of resources and outdated capital stock, including housing”. The housing situation after the '90 is critical presenting “shortage with low space standards and large amounts of overcrowding” under poor condition. Due to economic collapse, state funds are inexistent to respond to these challenging issues.

Literature captures the essential aspects that shape the Romanian situations during transition. Private property dominates after 1990 with a considerable increase from 64% to 98% (Soaita, 2015, p.8), while the economic legitimacy of the country does not rest on proper parameters to sustain this surge. Since the state is the administrator of the majority of the housing stock, mainly in the urban areas, after privatization return to the new owners to take responsibility. Therefore, costs related with maintenance, repairs and modernization came as a burden for the inhabitants due to the poor quality of communism's inherited apartments. Moreover, pressure increase on that segment of the population that cannot afford to buy or rent a place.

3.2 The Housing Condition in Small Town Darmanesti. An Introduction

The case study of the thesis is held in Darmanesti, a settlement with an important agro-industrial function during the communist regime. The reason of choosing this locality is based on distinctive characteristics pertaining the actual context on the one hand and the meaning it acquires in building the socialist nation on the other hand .

Along with the changes brought by the communist regime under Ceausescu's rule, the ‘Urban and Rural Localities Systematization Plan’ adopted in 1974 from far exceeds

any other physical, socio-cultural and economic transformations in the country. Concerning nations' future industrial development and modernization, selection of hundreds of rural 'key settlements' with potential for growth and strategic geographical location is believed to increase in time the urban network with almost 550 new towns. Moreover, this shift ensures a more even distribution of the urban network and allocation of work force in the territory, a better management of agricultural land and ultimately serves as migration block towards the cities.

Despite efforts and prospects for hundreds of agro-industrial towns, the limited number chosen of only 23 in 1989 reflects country's setbacks. The industrial development and steps towards urbanization in Darmanesti it decides the town status on 18 April 1989³⁰, as the only viable selection from Moldova region. The progress in Darmanesti during the regime, the role it occupies for population depending on its economic sectors, it serves as determinant on its demographic and functional distinction among other rural localities.

Nevertheless, the unexpected changes after 1990, with the closure of industry, increase rates of unemployment and migration from the town, together with the restructuring of economic sectors throughout the country, brings significant changes in the locality.

The shift is even more devastating and hard to adapt for the newly declared town Darmanesti with little urban experience than it is for others small in size urban localities that had time to reach a certain maturity. Depreciation of its industrial profile, the engine that propelled its nomination, reveal its "ambiguous status" (Zamfir et al, 2009).

Currently part of Romanian's 161 small town network with a population less than 20000 inhabitants, Darmanesti struggles "between diffusion and polarization" whereas its future is difficult to predict. Not rural nor urban, locality's mixed environment reflects the distortions the socialist industrialization and systematization policy were applied based on "arbitrary political decisions", not considering real site conditions and the natural course of locality's evolution (Zamfir et al, 2009). However, the current situation reveals economic diversification, as it resumed after '89, to some extent, a

³⁰ Darmanesti commune is declared by "The Great National Gathering" agro-industrial town of second category with more than 10 000 inhabitants (see Alexa et al, 2015, p. 24).

more balanced evolution, mostly agrarian, similar to the one interrupted by the communist regime.

The economic and industrial importance of the locality during the communist regime is given by the position it occupies within an important industrial chain for the region as well at the country's level. Although enjoying considerable industrial progress before '89, other aspects like infrastructure, the condition of the housing stock and lack of utilities is specific to rural localities. However, this situation has little improvement after '90, with scholars showing their concerns in regards with the insecure future this type of locality might face.

Moreover, the situation during transition follows considerable malfunctions at all levels, with strong consequence on social aspects, the way people perceive themselves and their locality. On searching to create an identity³¹, attempts are made on overcoming the expectation established before '89 and actually relating to the current situation.

Despite the efforts, low values are indicated by the 'development index' (Zamfir et al, 2009, p. 45-46), partially due to inhabitants' rural occupations, poor housing condition and migration of the young population able to work. However, the town serves its function expected by regime as "an interface between rural and urban communities" (Zamfir et al, 2009, p.44).

A testimony of "state's brutal interference", the small town Darmanesti represents the image of a nation, which based its progress on unsustainable and unreliable conditions to assist advancement.

3.2.1 Location and accessibility

Located in the extreme west side of Bacau County in Moldova Region, Romania, (Figure 3.1), small town Darmanesti makes connection with the territory by means of railroad and car roads. The national road DN 12A (connecting Onesti-Ciceu localities) crosses town's administrative territory from south to north, while the county road DJ 123 assures east to west connection, with Harghita County (Url-1).

³¹ Zamfir et al. (2009) on understanding the identity of small towns, including Darmanesti, brings forward three aspects: "attractiveness index", "development index", "degree of rurality".



Figure 3.1: Placing Darmanesti town in context.

3.2.2 Importance in the territory

Darmanesti town is part of “an industrial chain” developed during the communist regime, located along Trotus Valey (north-south direction) that creates a strong interdependence with the other related entities; to south with Onesti and Targu Ocna while in the north with Comanesti, Moinesti localities, depicted in the Figure 3.2 (Url-2). Oil extracted from Moinesti area was processed in Darmanesti Refinery or is taking the road to Onesti. The area disposes by “recreation, leisure and tourism” complexes, whereas the most known are Targu Ocna Saline, and spa and health resort Slanic Moldova. Currently the “industrial bow” is interrupted due to precarious conditions after 1989, although some units function at low levels (General Urban Planning of Darmanesti, 1997, p. 7).

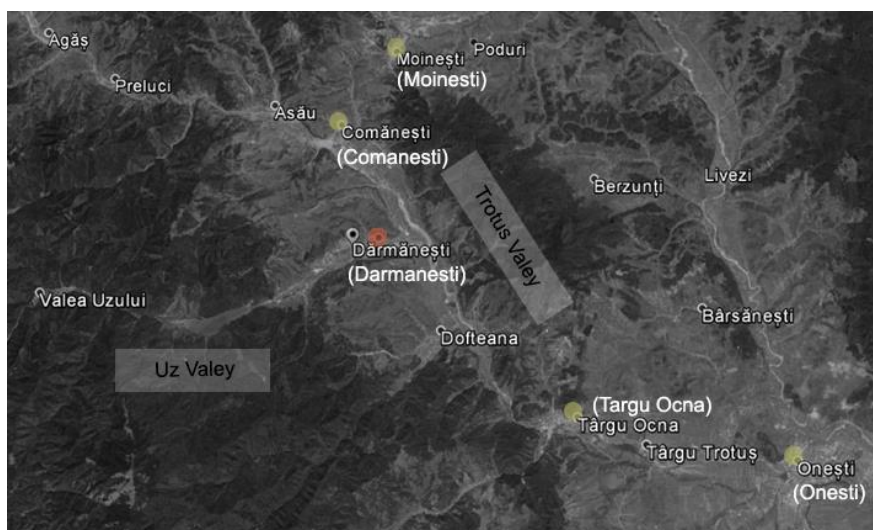


Figure 3.2 : Placing Darmanesti town in context.

3.2.3 Historical background

Protected by the Nemira and Ciucului mountains in the Eastern Carpathians, the Comanesti-Darmanesti Depression offers favorable condition for population's development and evolution from very old times. It is suggested the first communities established in the area belongs to Neolithic cultures of Cris and Cucuteni, which later advanced in Dacian population (Alexa et al, 2015, p. 10-14).

Its strategic position through the Carpathians Mountains' passing, as a border settlement between Moldova and Transylvania, makes the communities vulnerable to the countless fights that take place between the regions. Migratory populations as tatars, 'cumanian' and 'uz' people, as well the two World Wars have an immense impact on evolution and challenges of the area. However, nothing compares with the year 1805 when boyar Ghica transforms the peasants from landowners to "clacasi" through "trick, blackmail and robbery", where they are obliged to work the land for the benefit of the new owner. This marks the beginning of a long struggling period for land and for their rights. The land reforms in 1864, 1921-1922 and 1945 restitutes to peasantry part of the lands and a quarter from forests, although the process is made under difficulties (Alexa et al, 2007, p12). Despite hardships, the population of Darmanesti settlement has increase over time from 104 houses and 520 inhabitants registered in 1774, to 13 968 in 1995. However, Darmanesti community has a very pronounced character in the area with the earliest mention in a document dating back to 1436-1442 and 1546, although its presence is considered older than the time the settlement takes the name of the "legendary Darman" (Alexa et al, 2007, p.10).

Fine artisans and hardworking, the population developed all necessary in their homestead, with men dealing with the construction and fieldwork while women ensures "the comfort in houses, clothing and cooking". After the XIX century, the exploitation of resources and the development of industry brings the recognition as the biggest commune from the depression.

3.2.4 Component areas

Developed at the intersection of the two rivers while stretched for almost 5 km along Uz River, Darmanesti village currently represents Darmanesti neighborhood and seen as the main center for the town. The "tentacular irregular shape" of the settlement due

to “agglutination” of other villages as neighborhoods determines special attention for those aspects that influence future development.

In the year 1892 the following villages Boistea, Bratulesti, Mascas, Pagubeni, Joseni, Salatruc, Lapos, Plopu, Poiana Uzului and Darmanasca become subordinated to commune Darmanesti (Alexa et al, 2015, p22) , whereas in 1997 official documents most of them appear as its neighborhoods; exception are Salatruc, Plopu and Lapos villages, which are considered to be subordinated to Darmanesti (Urban Planning of Darmanesti town, 1997). Also, a special case it represents the demolition of the entire village ‘Poiana Uzului’ village in 1969 on whose place starts the construction of the Uz Valley Barrage, whereas the relocation of people it is done in a newly built neighborhood in Darmanesti, known as ‘Satul Nou’ (Alexa et al (2004, p.116).

Therefore, according to the Figure 3.3 are distinguished ten neighborhoods as follow: five at the north of Uz Valley as Darmanesti (1), Darmanasca (9), Boistea (2), ‘Satul Nou’(3), Refinery Colony (4), two at the south of Uz Valey as Bratulesti (5) and Mascas (6) and another three at the east from DN12A road Triaj (8) and Joseni (7). Pagubeni (10).

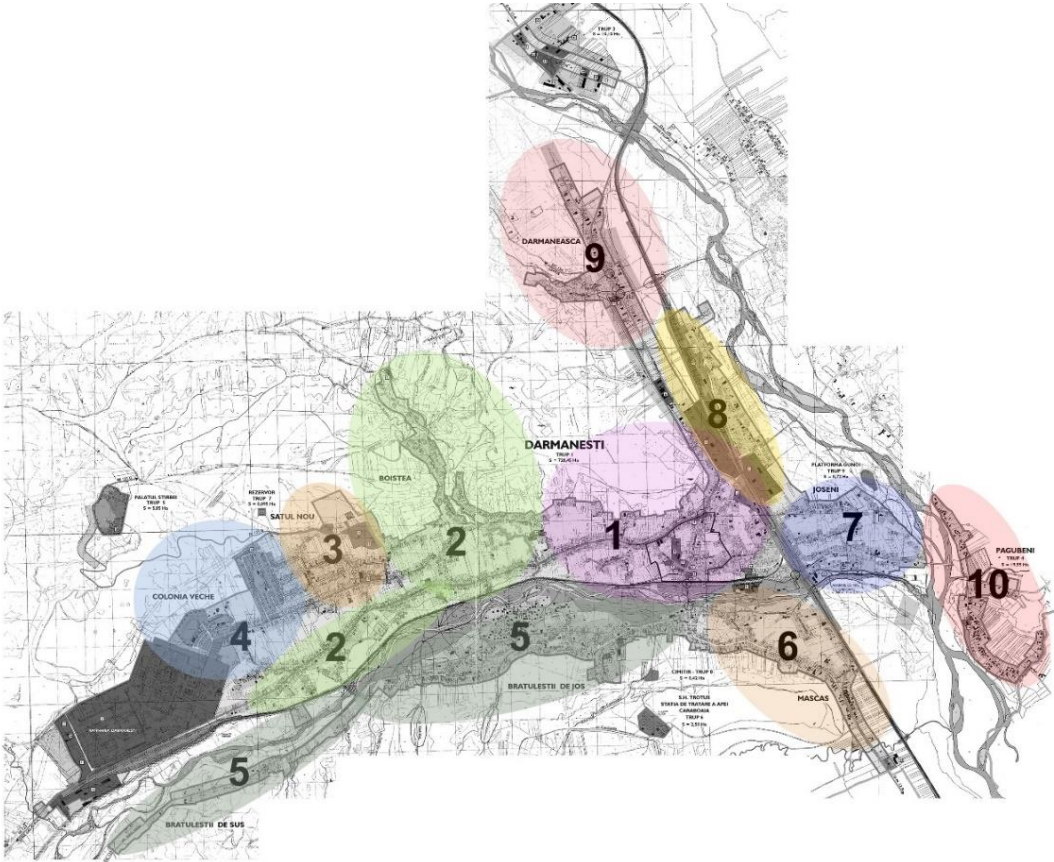


Figure 3.3 : Ten neighborhoods of Darmanesti in town.

3.2.5. Functional zoning

While the residential area is well represented by the individual house that gives locality's rural specificity, the economic function frames the urban character. The administrative territory of Darmanesti sums 27 192.62 ha, out of which 3.06% represents farming land as 6687.51 ha, while the forests has the majority of almost 75% (General Urban Planning of Darmanesti, 1998, p. 8-9). In the Annex A is depicted the functional zoning in Darmanesti town drawn after the General Urban Planning (2008).

According to the necessity and the population number, the area of "public interest objectives" is concentrated in the main center of Darmanesti town and near the second Refinery center, while in other villages contain no more than education, commerce and community center. The service area developed during the communism and currently updated to new necessities after 1990 privatization, leads to various commercial units spread throughout the town.

Specific to socialist cities, the establishment of town's civic center on the hearth of Darmanesti neighborhood it is desired to take over locality's representation function by bringing together the administrative apparatus, cultural buildings, services and block of flats with 3-4 floors. The fall of the communism interrupts the project, consequently the current image it is rather disorganized and ambiguous. While the main civic center has rural characteristics performing the administrative function, the second civic center appear more urbanized. However, none meets the requirements of a city center.

3.2.5.1 Residential area

Residential area occupies the largest surface from Darmanesti with 51.73%, whereas in the belonging villages the proportion is higher, as in the case of Lapos with 90.52%, respectively 85.85% in Plopu. It dominates houses on the ground floor, less with two floors, whereas the few block of flats with 3-4 floors above the ground floor, built during the regime, are concentrated in the two centers. Figure 3.9 depicts the areas in Darmanesti where the two centers are located. The organically evolved homestead plot patterns along the rivers' valleys, creeks and roads³², leads to "malfunction" and

³² Pronounced directions of town's outline is due to homesteads development along roads DJ123 and DN12A, as well Trotus Valley (see Urban General Planning of Darmanesti town, 1997, p. 44).

“dispersion” within the locality and among the network of settlements due to big distances people have to go through to reach places.

Large plots lead to low density of the stock; hence, the current image of the town is that of a village. Considering the agricultural function of the area, it makes sense to have reasonable land per each homestead. However, the recent systematization plan proposes a delimitation of the buildable area, increase in living space and a wide range of other aspects related to proper functioning and less fragmented territory.

Small, rectangular plots³³ divided on a regular limited area are introduced under the systematization plan by the communist regime to obtain more free land and a higher density for housing. In the Figure 3.4 are two examples of areas from Darmanesti with different plot patterns for individual houses. While one organically developed with unregulated surfaces and large agricultural land specific to a locality that evolved over time (right), the other (left) suggests a rectangular plot division, not more than 700 sq. m., in two newly established neighborhoods during the communist regime, known as New Colony and ‘Satul Nou’ (map extracted from Urban General Planning of Darmanesti town, 2008).



Figure 3.4 : Example of two areas in Darmanesti with different plot patterns.

3.2.5.2 Economic activity area

The economic activities are well represented in Darmanesti and in Salatruc locality, whereas in the belonging villages is almost inexistent. In Darmanesti the units are placed in the west (the Refinery) and in the extreme east with access to transportation, whereas all it occupies a total of 12.64% town’s area.

³³ For instance the relocation of the Village ‘Poiana Uzului’ in Darmanesti in 1969 conducts to small, rectangular division of plots where the homestead have 400-500 square meters, not more than 700 (Alexa et al, 2004, p.116).

3.2.6 The economic factor

The economic advancement in Darmanesti differs according to historical context and the main actors involved. Development in the area, inclusive in Darmanesti, starts from the end of XIX centuries after the establishment of Stirbei estate in 1872 when the place becomes favored by Romanian and foreign investors. Several factories³⁴, a bank and enterprises raise the living standard and assure jobs for people, contributing after the World War II to the nomination of Darmanesti as the biggest commune from Bacau County and one of the most important from Romania.

After the Nationalization from 11 June 1948, to the newly state's properties are added new investments, most notable being the Refinery in 1949 and Uz Valley Barrage, which transforms the locality in "a huge construction site". In this context, among the localities in the area Darmanesti holds the weight of economic units for wood and oil exploitation and processing, as well electricity production (Alexa et al, 2007, p15).

Under the communist regime, the mixt agro-industrial function developed considerable and rapid than in other historical contexts. Although many locals reach to hold qualification in skill labor³⁵, they keep a rural life style centered on self-service as farming and animal breeding confined within each homestead, an available solution to respond to an undeveloped service function.

Due to topography of the area, "fragmented agriculture" is made on individual plots for personal consume. Thus, agriculture as economic development occupies secondary position by comparison with the industry.

The transition period comes with major transformations in the economic sector, whereas layoffs due to closure of most enterprises or reduction of activity are common. An increase in the number of people doing farming and rural related activities, together with gradual emergence of private enterprises it brings, to some extent, improvement.³⁶

³⁴ At the end of XIX and beginning of XX century factories are founded for the exploitation and processing of wood, along with mines and other enterprises (see Alexa et al, 2007, p.13-14).

³⁵In 1989, 4000 of locals have qualification in different sectors, where the Refinery absorbs the most of the working force. If in 1949 only 10% of the Refinery employees were locals, in 1989 it reaches 95% (Alexa et al, 2006, p. 1-2).

³⁶ For an outline of the enterprises see General Urban Planning of Darmanesti town (1997, p. 11-12) and General Urban Planning of Darmanesti town (2008).

3.2.7 The social factor

Population has an important growth during the communist regime period, especially after '70s. This increase is made due to immigration for job opportunities in the locality. Data collected from the year 1774 shows a constant, but slow increase in the population and homesteads in Darmanesti settlement (Table 3.1, Table 3.2 and Table 3.3). In just almost 50 years (1912-1966) it becomes more than double, taking a faster pace after 1966, mainly due to Refinery production. However, the transition period, brings a slow increase due to fall of the industry. To be mentioned that since 1838, the population in Darmanesti is counted together with the villages Boistea, Darmanasca, Mascas, Bratulesti, Pagubeni and Joseni (Alexa et al, 2007, p. 20). Moreover, in the Figure 3.2 and 3.3 is given the evolution of population in Darmanesti, Salatruc, Plopu and Lapos villages according to period 21.02.1956-01.01.1998 (General Urban Planning of Darmanesti town, 1997).

Table 3.1: Evolution of population and homesteads in Darmanesti.

| Year | 1774 | 1816 | 1830 | 1838 | 1912 | 1930 | 1941 | 1966 | 1992 | 1998 | 2000 |
|-------------|------|------|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------|--------|
| Houses | 104 | _ | 299 | _ | 858 | _ | 1,268 | _ | 4,080 | 4,280 | _ |
| Inhabitants | 520 | 750 | _ | 2,330 | 4,434 | 7,091 | _ | 8,967 | _ | 14,198 | 14,363 |

Table 3.2: Evolution of population.

| | 1956 | 1966 | 1977 | 1992 | 1993 | 1994 | 1995 | 1996 | 1997 | 1998 |
|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|------|
| 21.02 | 15.03 | 5.01 | 4.01 | 1.01 | 1.01 | 1.01 | 1.01 | 1.01 | 1.01 | 1.01 |
| 11,622 | 11,698 | 12,805 | 13,883 | 14,030 | 14,035 | 14,239 | 14,129 | 14,112 | 14,198 | |

Table 3.3: Evolution of population.

| Year | 1986 | 1987 | 1988 | 1989 | 1990 | 1991 | 1993 | 1994 | 1995 | 1996 | 1997 |
|------------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Births | 260 | 298 | 302 | 311 | 248 | 227 | 221 | 200 | 209 | 184 | 188 |
| Deceased | 129 | 119 | 130 | 136 | 152 | 140 | 150 | 138 | 148 | 163 | 147 |
| Natural Growth | 131 | 179 | 172 | 175 | 96 | 87 | 71 | 62 | 61 | 21 | 41 |
| Local Residence Changes | 165 | 145 | 187 | 160 | 340 | 124 | 109 | 119 | 150 | 156 | 124 |
| Settling Residence in the Locality | 63 | 93 | 54 | 35 | 84 | 64 | 58 | 99 | 145 | 109 | 160 |
| Migration Growth | -102 | -52 | -133 | -125 | -256 | -60 | -51 | -20 | -5 | -47 | 36 |
| Total Increase | 29 | 127 | 39 | 50 | -160 | 27 | 20 | 42 | 56 | -26 | 77 |

The same trend is registered among the natural growth due to propaganda to encourage births during communism, while decreasing consistently after communism due to hardships. While local residence changes in other locality shows an almost constant

number between '86-'97, the surprise comes with people moving into Darmanesti reaching an increase of almost 300% between these periods. Table 3.3 shows that more people are leaving the locality after '86 than moving in, taking migration to negative value. However the total increase is positive with the exception of 1990 when population decrease drastically, coinciding with the close of enterprises.

3.2.8 The cultural factor

Culture is seen in all aspects of people's life as their lifestyle, behavior, customs, folklore, and remarkably, in the way they built and design their houses. The dwelling becomes a catalyst for continuity and adaptation of culture. All the most important moments in people's life are important sources that inspires folklore and shapes the traditional customs. The rural house it is an indicator of people's spiritual and cultural character. Here is the place were dowry for the future wife is carefully prepared, were by the endeavor and creativity of the women, traditional clothes and ornamentation is made.

The location in the depression Darmanesti surrounded by mountains has offered protection for people to nurture a rich folklore, "well represented by customs powerful rooted in the history of the place" transmitted from generation to generation from very old times (Alexa, 2008).

3.2.9 Housing evolution

3.2.9.1 Evolution of the rural house in Darmanesti

The rural house in Darmanesti knows a continuum transformation and adaptation throughout the history of the area. Moreover, the economic advancement reflects dwelling's improvement, the number of rooms, the space and the comfort for each family.

"The home of my grandparents built in 1895, with one room which was used as kitchen and room for sleeping, and were three children studied [...], doesn't look like the home of my parents built in 1925 with two rooms, or with the one built by my parents in 1950 with four rooms, or with the other built by them with 6 rooms after the resettlement in the year 1969-1970, or with the home built by me in 1960. The space for each stage become bigger, the interior division, the furnishing and its equipping become more comfortable. The same happened with all my neighbors, all living in Darmanesti." (Alexa, 2009, p. 9)

Figures 3.5, 3.6 and 3.7 depict the rural character of Darmanesti as well the transformations the individual house and homestead undergone in terms of architectural style and materials over the years, which have departed from the image of the ‘traditional village’(Url-3).

It is around the 30’s when the house starts to have two room by replacing the hunt with just one room. Like most of the current inherited houses, the two-room house has in the middle a hall called ‘tinda’, made of beams and placed on stone foundation with storage cellar, with more interior space and bigger windows, and a nice porch at the entrance.



Figure 3.5 : Individual houses in Darmanesti town.

The interior is specific to a traditional house; it has “cuptor vatra” (fireplace) used for cooking and heating the home, table, chairs, “laite” (wood benches), beds, closet for dishes, chest for dowry and case where flour is kept, whereas from the wood ceiling is hanged one or two “culmi” (strings) for clothes and towels (Alexa et al, 2015, p155). However, in time, the chest for dowry is abandoned as the interior adapted to new furnishing models; are introduced dish cupboards, whereas a room becomes ‘the clean room’ opened for special days and moments (Alexa et al, 2015, p189).



Figure 3.6 : Individual houses in Darmanesti town

The number of rooms increase evolving into more comfortable and better interior partitions. The wellbeing of the family it is reflected in the interior and the exterior decoration, which becomes more embellish and beautiful.

In time, the shingle roof is changed with the one made of tiles or sheet, while the stone foundation becomes a concrete one. Exception makes those few families, which afford a 4-5 rooms house and the roof of tiles.

Despite the development in Darmanesti after the World War II, still, the main used materials are still “paianta”³⁷ and “chirpici” (adobe) with “simple finish”. More, this type of construction system represents 80% from the housing stock in for the year 1997 (Urban General Planning of Darmanesti, 1997, p. 25, 33).

The rural house serves as binder for all the other components that form the traditional “gospodaria” (the homestead). The garden where peasants are planting vegetables, hemp and corn together with “ograda” (yard) enclosed by the house, the animals’ stable, pigs’ kennel, “hardughia” (summer kitchen) all form the traditional homestead, while the surrounding fence protects and keeps privacy (Alexa et al, 2015, p.155).

The social phenomenon like migration and tourism, and the exposure to European models conducted to “changes in rural building” that “have challenged the condition of Romania’s traditions” (Serbescu, 2009, p.37).

However, Serbescu (2009) considers that “a static, romantic perception of the vernacular could only prevent the development and the survival of traditions”. He suggests that this “landscape of mixture — a strange, unclear space in continuous turmoil” (p. 37) that has prevailed in all Romanian villages after ’89, is in fact a “way to adapt traditional ways of building to new requirements, constraints and possibilities” (p.48).

Trying to preserve the ‘traditional’ models only conducts to “persistent stereotypes that represent vernacular architecture as picturesque and charming, yet out of date and irrelevant.” (Vellinga, 2006; cited in Serbescu, 2009, p. 48).

³⁷ The construction system of houses’ walls consists from a wood skeleton whose empty spaces are filled or covered with different materials; in this case is adobe (www.dexonline.ro).



Figure 3.7 : Darmanesti town.

3.2.9.2 The communist interference

A major change in the housing pattern in Darmanesti comes with the investment in the locality during the communist regime. Systematization of the territory meant building restraints, narrowing the housing and homesteads surface to release more land for agriculture that would benefit the State, but also to provide the first steps for locality's transition to town. In Figures 10-19 block of flats, communal blocks constitutes the first break within the homogenous and unitary image of the settlement (Url-4; Url-5; Url-6).

The stages of the new housing planning is necessary to be discussed within the moments of industrial development in the locality (Table 3.4). Therefore, the construction of Refinery (1949-1950) led to the emergence of one floor individual houses in regime colony known as 'Old Colony', 'New Colony' (Figure 3.8) and the communal block named by the locals 'Tineretului'(Youth), which is considered a block for single people (recognizable in the Figure 3.20 with 'G' notation).

During 1950-1951 are given for use almost 50 houses in 'Old Colony', while in 1960 almost the same number in 'New Colony'. Made for the Refinery's engineers and their

families, the colonies offers high standards, with all the urban comfort. There are the only connected to gas and water supply, as well as canalization.

In addition, the ‘Old Colony’ is built after the “American model of villas with 1-2 bathrooms, combined with the interwar Transylvanian villas types which had also annexes for servants” (Alexa et al, 2015, p. 68). The ‘Youth’ communal block with the shared kitchen and toilets offers place to live to the workers in the Refinery. Although it is considered to serve only to single people, reports have been by the locals where families use to live in single room space, due to housing shortage. The same scenario is shared by the other communal block (‘O’ notation) were people complain by the inadequate condition on living together.

The second stage consists of four blocks (noted with D, E, F, K in Figures 3.20) built by the administration in charged with the construction of Uz Valley barrage (1965-1973) to accommodate the workers. Further, it follows the block (N) given for use in ’77 made again by the Refinery’s administration, and the other communal block (O) built by the administration of the furniture factory from ‘Salatruc’ for its workers. In 1969 in Darmanesti a new neighborhood emerges as ‘Satul Nou’ where the displaced people from ‘Poiana’ Village are moved. The inhabitants rebuilt their homesteads from the ground with materials provided from the State.

Table 3.4: Blocks characteristics. The notation ‘*’ is for communal blocks.

| | Construction (Year) | No Segments per Block | No Flats (Total) | No Flats/ Current Floor | No. Floors | Roof | Rooms/ Apartment | Services on the Ground Floor | Usage Change |
|-----|------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------------|---------------|------|---------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------|
| A | '83 put into use | 3 | 18 | 2 | 4 | Yes | 2 and 3 | Yes | Partialy |
| B,C | 2004 | – | 18+18 | – | 4 | Yes | – | No | No |
| D | around '67-'77 | 2 | 16 | 3 | 3 | No | 2 | No | No |
| E | around '67-'77 | 1 | 8 | 3 | 3 | No | 2 | No | No |
| F | around '67-'77 | 2 | 16 | 3 | 3 | No | 2 | No | No |
| G* | around '50-'65 | 1 | – | – | 3 | Yes | 1 | Yes | Partialy |
| J | around '80-'88 | 1 | 6 | 2 | 3 | Yes | 3 and 4 | No | No |
| K | around '67-'77 | 2 | 16 | 3 | 3 | No | 2 | No | No |
| L,M | around '80-'88 | 1 | 6+6 | 2 | 3 | Yes | 3 and 4 | No | No |
| N | '77 put into use | 2 | 36 | 4 | 4 | Yes | 2 | Yes | No |
| O* | around '77 | 1 | – | – | 4 | Yes | 1 | Yes | Hotel |

In the last years of communism the city hall shows concern about settlement's urban character and lack of housing for young working families, for which it builds four blocks (A, J, L, M) after 1980 until the end of regime, and another two during the transition period through the national social housing program known as ANL (B and C blocks).

In Figure 3.8 are specified 'Old Colony' (blue), 'New Colony'(orange), 'Neighborhood 'Satul Nou' (green) and blocks (yellow) representing the main housing stock built during the communism in the secondary center near Refinery (General Urban Planning of Darmanesti town, 2008).

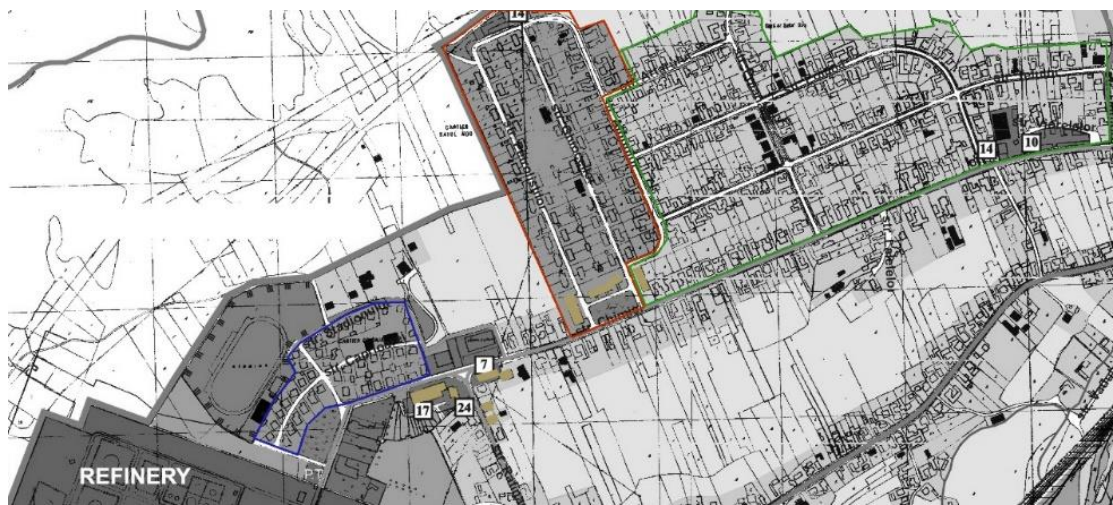


Figure 3.8 : Individual housing plotting made during the communist regime.

A considerable difference exists among blocks of flats built until 1980 in comparison to those that followed. First four similar blocks (D, E, F, K) built for the barrage's workers (with three apartments per current floor) and the one (N) made by Refinery (with four apartments per current floor) denotes economy of space and materials used.

Important improvements in the surface and number of rooms are identified in the blocks of flats made after '80 (A, J, L, M) once the city hall becomes the investor. It reflects an appreciable progress with two apartments per current floor and in the number of rooms of four, in some cases. Standardized elements and brick material is used in different percentages for all blocks, while those made in late period present also roofs, for better inclusion in the area. The Refinery acts as a catalyst for development in the commune and for whole the area during the communist regime. It is where the newly housing interventions are done and a secondary center is established (Figure 3.9 and 3. 20).

The major changes under regimes sums eight blocks of flats, two communal blocks, the two colonies and ‘Satul Nou’). In all the cases land is systematized on rectangular divisions and small plots. Interviews with the locals suggest no accounts of demolitions of houses for the sustained interventions during the regime.

In Figure 3.9 are depicted the two urban centers in Darmanesti where block of flats are built. The main one is placed in Darmanesti Neighborhood (right) and the other (left), secondary but more urbanized than the main one, is placed in Refinery Colony Neighborhood (General Urban Planning of Darmanesti town, 2008).



Figure 3.9 : Depiction of the two urban centers in Darmanesti.

Only one block (‘A’ notation) is placed in the main center, which had the function of civic center during the regime. In an attempt to coagulate and urbanize it, two blocks of flats are placed in its vicinity in the year 2004. Since the communist project could not reach finalization, the two urban centers in Darmanesti have the image of unfinished and unstructured sites, mostly the main center where the city hall is placed.



Figure 3.10: Block 'A' in the main center in Darmanesti.



Figure 3.11: Blocks 'B' and 'C' near the main center in Darmanesti.



Figure 3.12: Block 'D' situated in the secondary center near Refinery.



Figure 3.13: Blocks ‘E’, ‘F’ and ‘G’(renovated) situated in the secondary center near Refinery.



Figure 3.14: Block ‘G’ (renovated) situated in the secondary center near Refinery.



Figure 3.15: Block ‘J’ situated in the secondary center near Refinery.



Figure 3.16: Block 'K' situated in the secondary center near Refinery.



Figure 3.17: Block 'N' situated in the secondary center near Refinery.

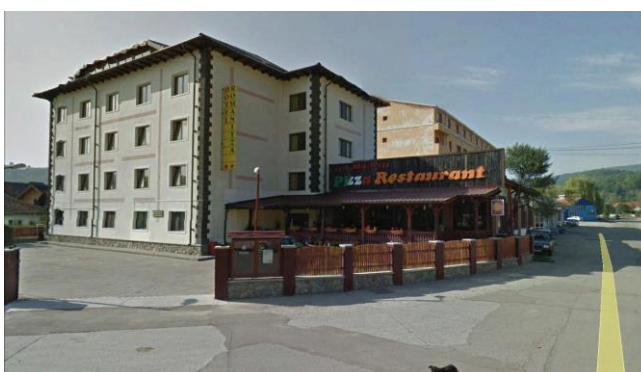


Figure 3.18: Hotel Romanita, former communal block ('O'), situated in the secondary center near Refinery.



Figure 3.19: Blocks 'L' and 'M' situated in the secondary center near Refinery.



Figure 3.20: Distribution of Blocks in Darmanesti in both centers.

In the Figure 3.20 is depicted the distribution of blocks in both centers in Darmanesti located at approximately 3, 5 km distance. While Darmanesti Neighborhood, which is also the center for the locality, is located on the map from the top having the blocks

A, B, C, the secondary center in Refinery Colony Neighborhood represents the second map from below, having the blocks D,E,F,G,K,J,L,M,N,O). Can be distinguished eleven blocks of flats (blue) and two communal blocks (yellow), whereas at the moment the one 'O' is converted in hotel (maps extracted from General Urban Planning of Darmanesti town, 2008). It also can be observed a more structured area in the second map where is the Refinery center due to major interventions and reconstructions during the communist regime, especially a rectangular plot division.

4. EVALUATION OF INHABITANTS' 'MEANING OF HOME'

This chapter's aim is to explore meanings of home for communist-era flat owners in former agro-industrial town Darmanesti. In doing so, the framework developed in chapter 2 is used as guidance for the interpretation of data obtained during the study.

Before examining and diving into the main subject of the thesis, the first part of this chapter is concerned with introducing the case samples.

4.1 Introduction of the Case Samples

4.1.1 Location

Three blocks (D, J, and N) are located in the secondary center next to Refinery, while block 'A' is in the main center that is known as the civic center in the settlement during the communism period. Block 'A' has the privilege to be located in the area of interest most desired in town, close to police and the city hall, adding to the financial value of apartments. On the other side, the blocks situated at almost 3,5 kilometers from the main center enjoy favorable environment with access to green areas and the forest at the periphery of the settlement.

Concerning transportation, block 'A' is favored as being few minutes away from the county and national roads that cross the locality. However, the less extended area of the locality makes easily accessible for the place where the rest of the blocks are located. Public transportation is available for both locations.

4.1.2 Layout and accessibility

Blocks' planning and implementation in Darmanesti reflects entirely the ideology of communist regime, as for those completed throughout the country without considering the local data and the already established values. Plots are restructured on the available land whereas the demolition of the existing urban fabric is not necessary. While the organically developed plot arrangement has the narrow side towards the street, on the contrary, those for blocks have the long side parallel with the road. This arrangement enables the use of the ground floors for services area and for better access in the block.

This is the case of blocks ‘A’ and ‘N’ for which the access in the buildings is made from the backsides. As for the other two, the main doors have direct connections with the street.

Additional land behind the blocks ‘J’ and ‘N’ is shared by some owners and used as gardens, garages or keeping animals as chickens, dogs and even pigs. Less concentration of housing in the area where blocks ‘J’ and ‘N’ are built give access to disposable land. However, for the other two cases it is noticed a greater concentrations of houses and gardens right behind the block ‘D’, whereas for the case of block ‘A’ land is more valuable and used as public domain, currently for car parking.

Furthermore, the residents living in the secondary center near Refinery rely on intimacy and a deeper connection with the environment, whereas the placement of benches in front of the blocks’ entrance for relaxation and socialization creates a quiet and relaxing atmosphere compared with the crowded main center. In addition, some owners use the available space in front of blocks ‘J’ and ‘D’ as gardens.

Except for those two cases where some owners have arranged garages in the free plots behind blocks, majority of tenants do not dispose of parking lots, cars being let on roadside or on other available space.

4.1.3 Block unit scale

Blocks’ height varies between 3-4 floors from the ground floor. The presence of roofs in blocks ‘A’ and ‘J’ is due to city hall engagement to offer more quality to the late built units,³⁸ as well for better integration in the rural environment. The use of brink on the facade of ‘J’ unit serves same purpose. Moreover, in the case of block ‘N’ the last floor is in fact a mansard floor that is added at the recent renovation made by ‘Habitat’³⁹. Initially, it had only three levels from the ground floor ending with roof-terrace.

Blocks’ footprint (Figures 4.2, 4.3, 4.4) differ according to the number of segment units it contains, as well due to the apartments on the current floor. These similar

³⁸ There are complaints from those owners who live in the last floor as water is leaking into their homes due to poor quality of the block’s terrace.

³⁹ The poor quality and problems with the water pipes in block ‘N’ made the residents to become part of an international program known as ‘Habitat’, which aids with block’s repairing. In exchange for this, ‘Habitat’ built an extra floor-mansard to recover the money from new apartments’ sell.

divisions have different entrances, common walls and share the design pattern which secure economy in construction, less time and land used. It varies from one to three segments in case of 'A' block. The apartments built in the '60s and '70's for the barrage and for the Refinery have three four apartments per current floor for high density while those implemented after '80s have not more than two per current floor.

The number of apartments per current floor decrease since the first blocks' implementation, while square meters per each apartment and per room increase. Except block 'N' that has a central core stair (Figure 4.1) which serves four apartments per floor, the number is of two apartments per current floor in the units built in the '80s, while for those constructed for barrage's workers have three. For the ground floor level, it is kept a constant number of two apartments, except block 'A' that has none since all area it is used for services. As for the stair type in the other three units, its placement on the lateral side of the building facilitate access to natural light. In the Figure 4.1 one stair is positioned in the center of the building, for block 'N' (left), while the other type is placed on the lateral side of the building facilitating access to natural light. The example is from unit 'D' (right).



Figure 4.1: Example of the two type of stairs.

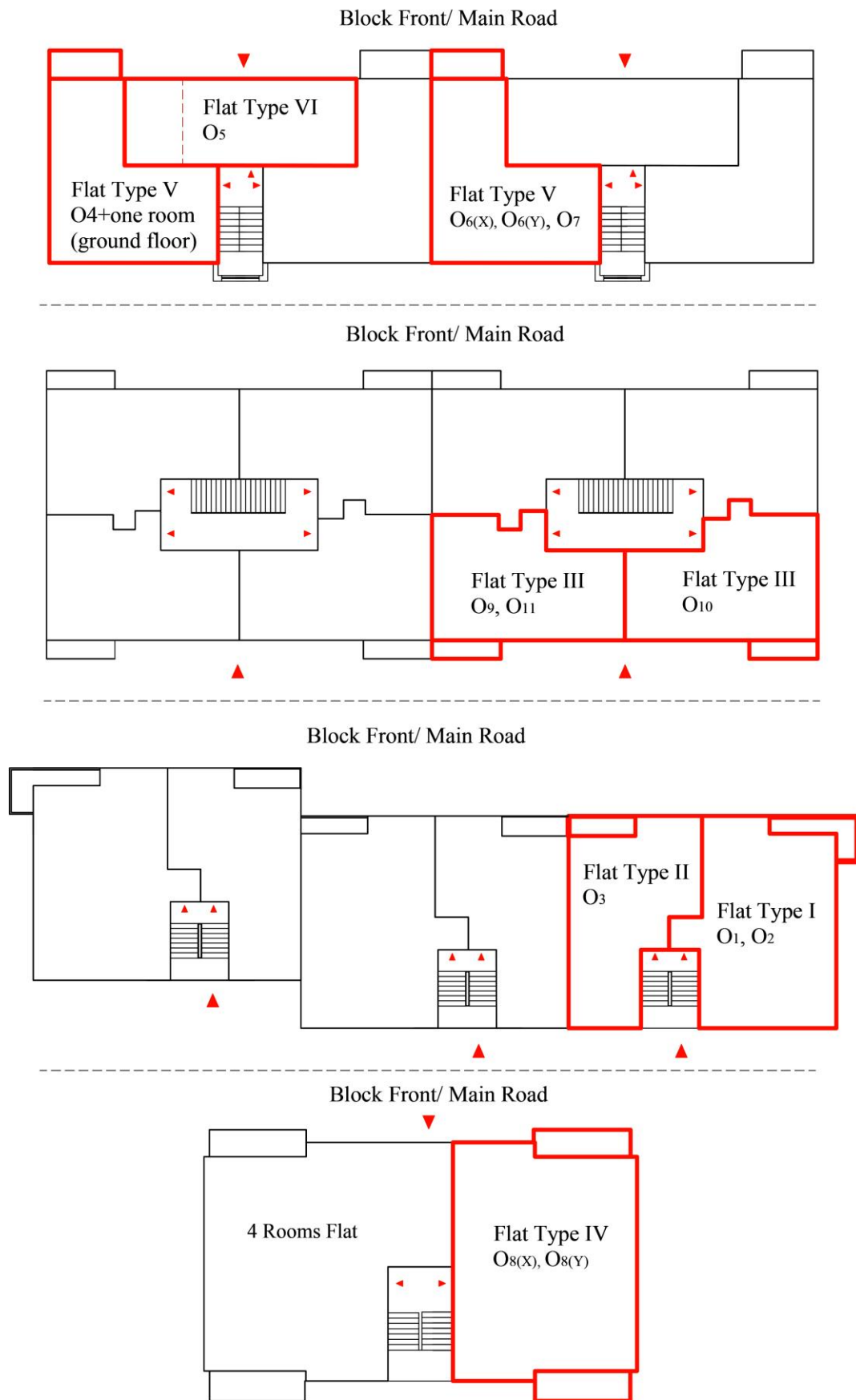


Figure 4.2: Plans for blocks 'D', 'N', 'A' and 'J'.

In Figure 4.2 are given plans for blocks ‘D’ with 2 block segments, ‘N’ with 2 block segments, ‘A’ with 3 block segments and ‘J’ with one block segment, having the notation starting from the top in the order previous given. Also, are mentioned the location of the entrance in the blocks, as well that in the apartments. More detailed, in Figures 4.3 and 4.4 are shown the apartments plans for the a current floor of one segment of each block. Therefore, in Figure 4.3 are depicted plans for one block segment of current floor in the case of block ‘D’ with three flats, (top) and for block ‘N’ with four flats (down), while in Figure 4.4 are those for one block segment of current floor in the case of block ‘A’ with two flats, (top) and for block ‘J’ with two flats (down).

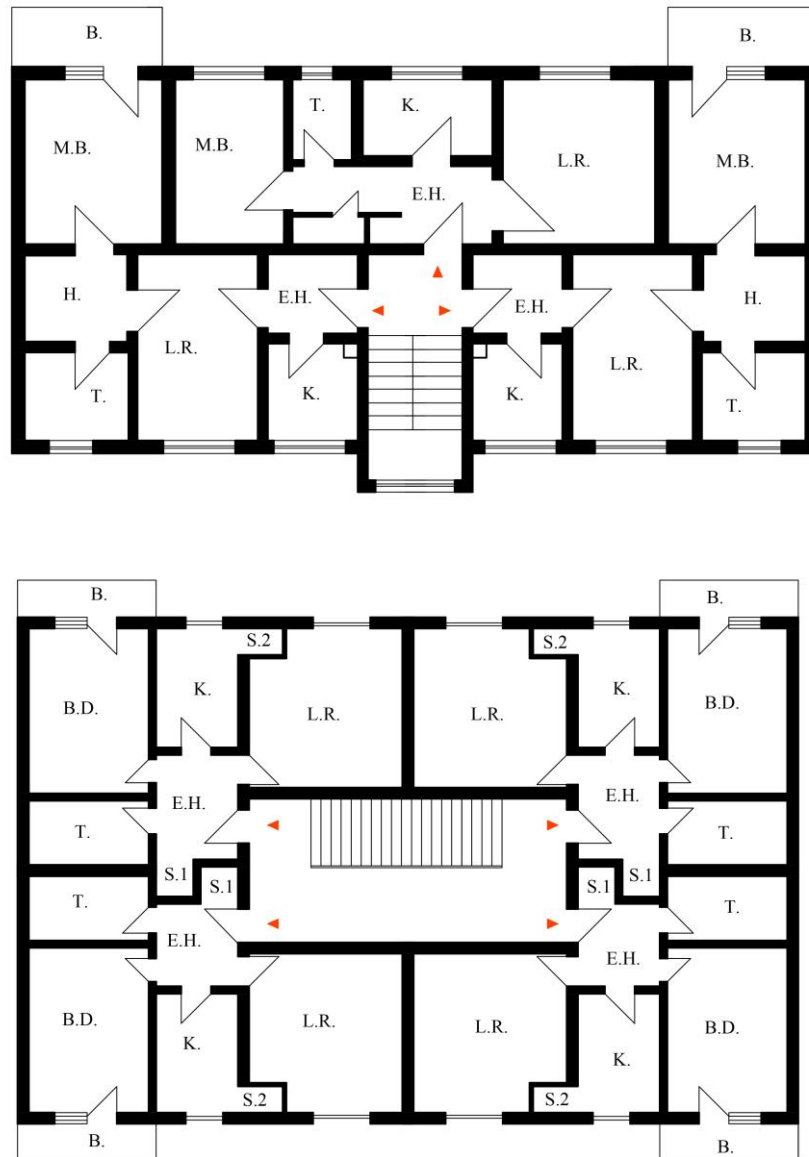


Figure 4.3: Plans for block ‘D’ and ‘N’.

Lack of documentation and contradictory information collected from the interviews does not offer a unanimous view about the construction system and materials used. However, considering the prefabrication and typification trend used throughout the country, on site observations and from the discussions with the households it makes clear that prefabricated elements are used in their production, although is not known under which percentage.

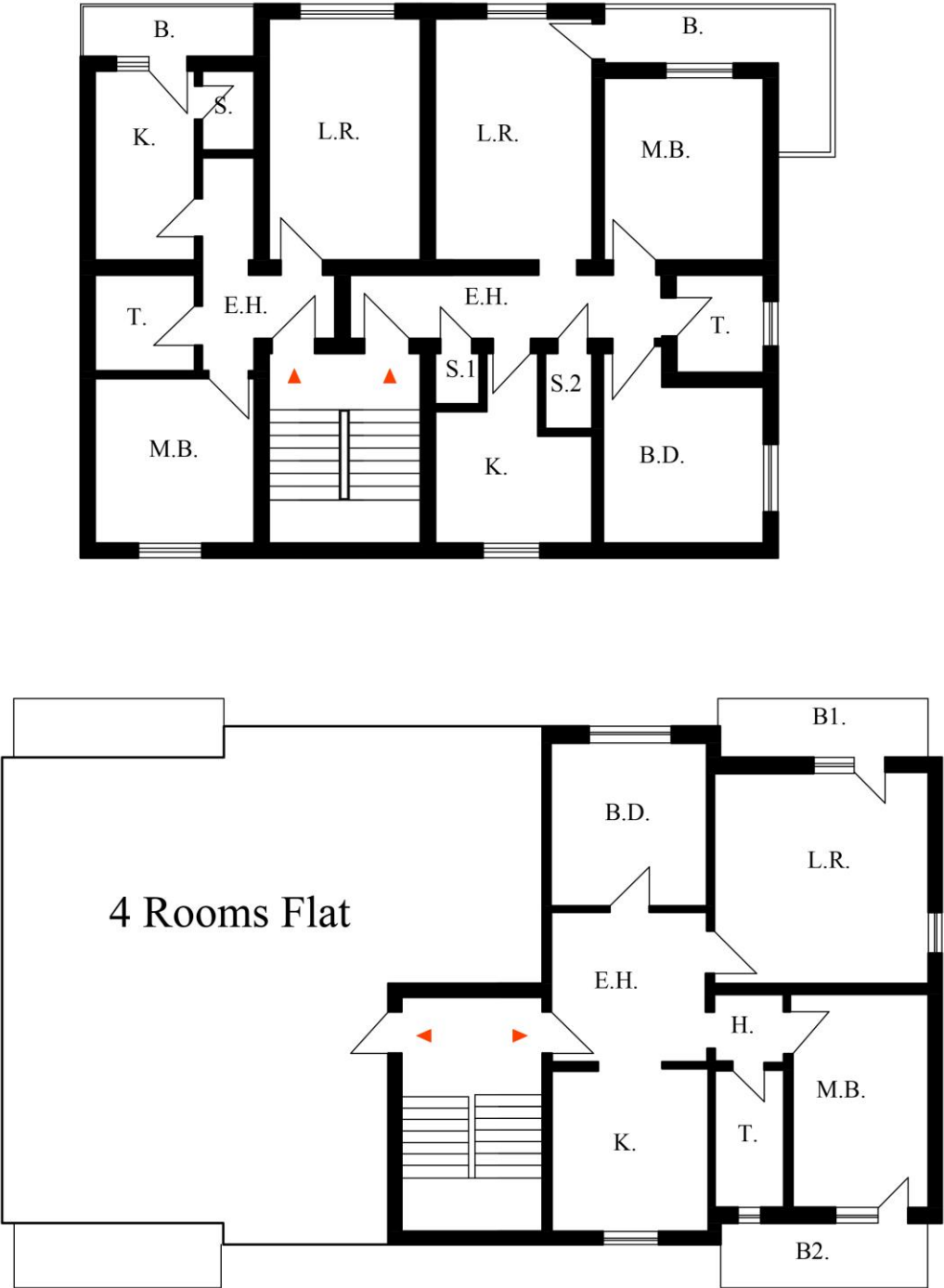


Figure 4.4: Plans for block ‘A’ and ‘J’.

The drawings for other blocks (Figure 4.5) waiting implementation in the '80s suggest that prefabricated elements are used for slabs, beams and stairs while the filling for the interior and the exterior walls is made with brick, information given by some of the residents during the interview (Documentation given by Darmanesti city hall).

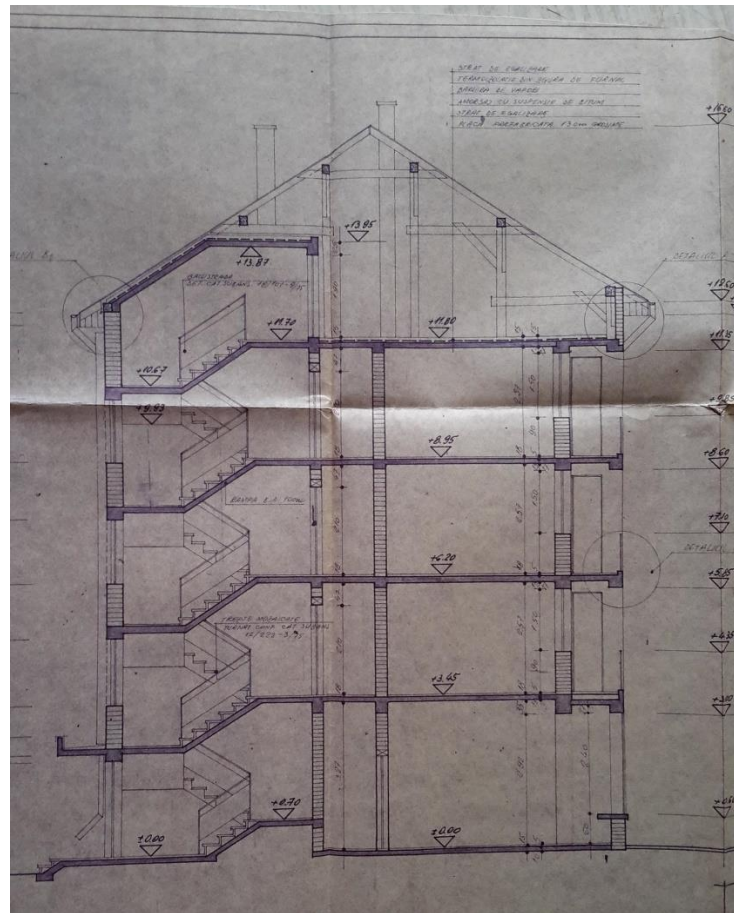


Figure 4.5: Example of cross section of block that was waiting implementation in the '80s.

4.1.4 Apartment unit scale

Apartments' layout varies in all four blocks, as are identified six alternatives overall. The reason for blocks' implementation weights in the quality and units' layout, in the size of the rooms and their spatial relationship. Figures 4.6 until 4.14 depict the position of case samples in the blocks. The apartments built in the '60s and '70 for workers have no more than two rooms per current floor with an area varying around 44-46 sq. m. (including the balcony). More comfortable and more space per each room is allocated for those implemented by the city hall for young families in the '80s are, whereas a two room apartment can reach the usable area of 52.28 sq. m. (including the balcony). Moreover, the level of comfort is clear visible for the three-rooms flat, for

types IV and VI. The following Figures 4.3, 4.4, 4.5 and 4.6 and Tables 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3 present the six apartment types in the order of their implementation in town. This is the proper way for one to follow the evolution of layout conformation.

Generally the living room's sides are almost equal, varying from 3.5x3.8 sq. (type II), approximately 3x3.5 (type I) and 3.5x4 (type III) reaching 3.3x5.5 (type V), 3.3x5.2 (type IV) and 4.5x4.6 (type VI) for those implemented in the last years of communism. In the same manner the master bedrooms varies from early built apartments to the late ones. Therefore, are distinguished 2.5x3.8 sq. (type II), around 3x3.5 (type I and III) increasing for 3.4x3.65 (type V), 3.3x 4 (type IV) and 3x 4.65 (type VI).

All flats share at least one balcony, even for the one on the ground floor, exception making the 'type II' with none. The balconies generally serve to master bedrooms or living rooms; exception is for 'F3' to which the door is changed by the owner to provide the kitchen. In blocks 'D' and 'N', for type I and type II flats, respectively type III, the documentation about rooms' dimension, as well their spatial relations is provided through site survey or through households' guidance when access to all rooms is not permitted. It is for this reason (Table 4.1 and 4.2) all dimensions are not available. However, the total flat's surface is provided through owners' recall. As for the flats, type IV, type V and type VI, in blocks 'J', respectively 'A', plans with all rooms' dimensions and surfaces, as well the total area, are provided by the owners.

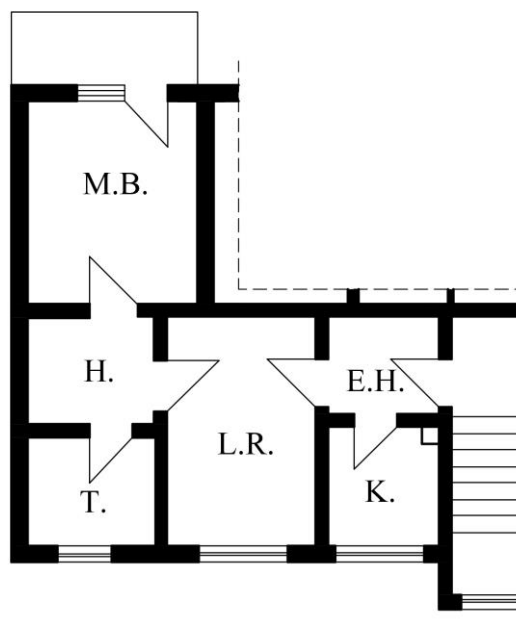


Figure 4.6: Block 'D', Flat F6, F7, flat type V, belonging to owners O7, O6-x, O6-y.

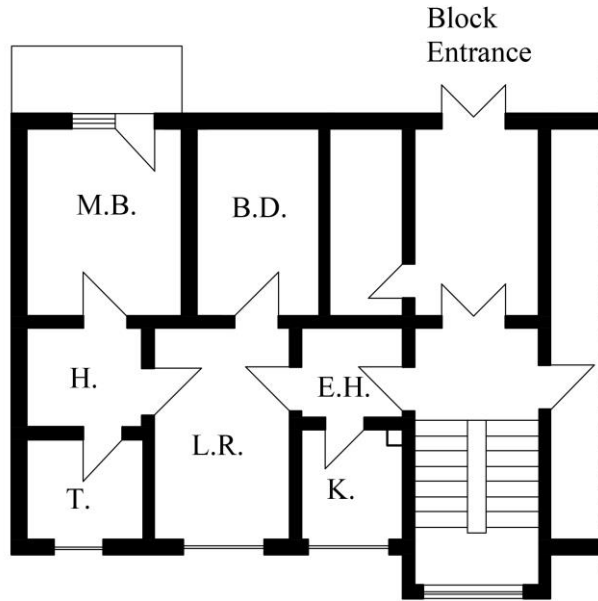


Figure 4.7: Block 'D', F4, flat type V+ one room, belonging to owner O4.

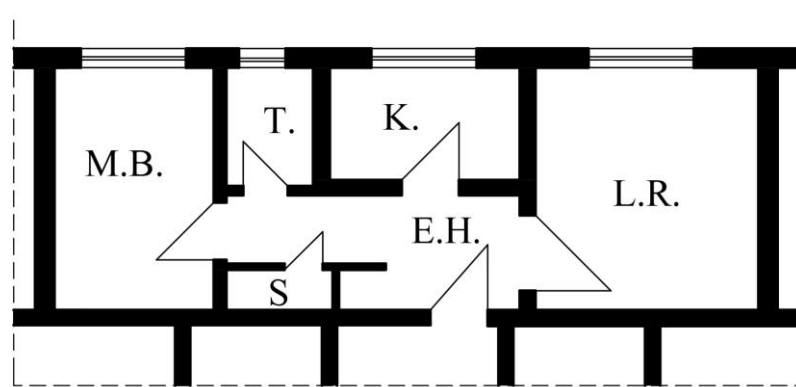


Figure 4.8: Block 'D', F5, flat type VI, belonging to owner O5.

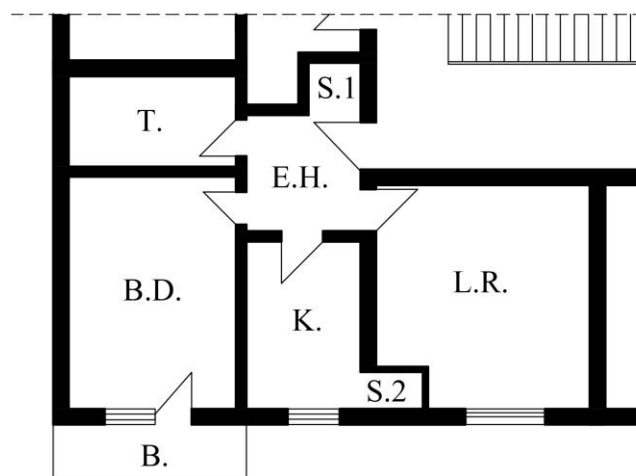


Figure 4.9: Block 'N', F9 and F10, flat type III, belonging to owner O9, respectively O10.

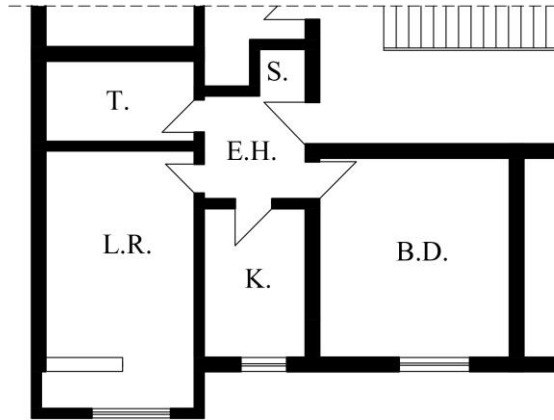


Figure 4.10: Block 'N', F2, flat type III, belonging to owner O11.

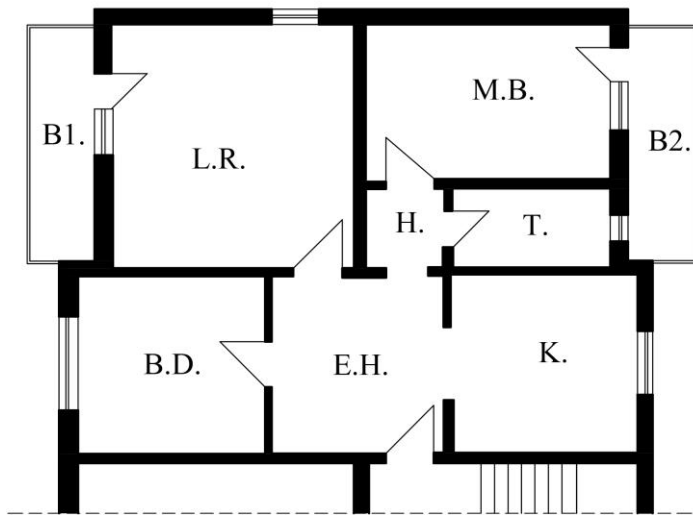


Figure 4.11: Block 'J', F8, flat type IV, belonging to owners O8-x and O8-y.

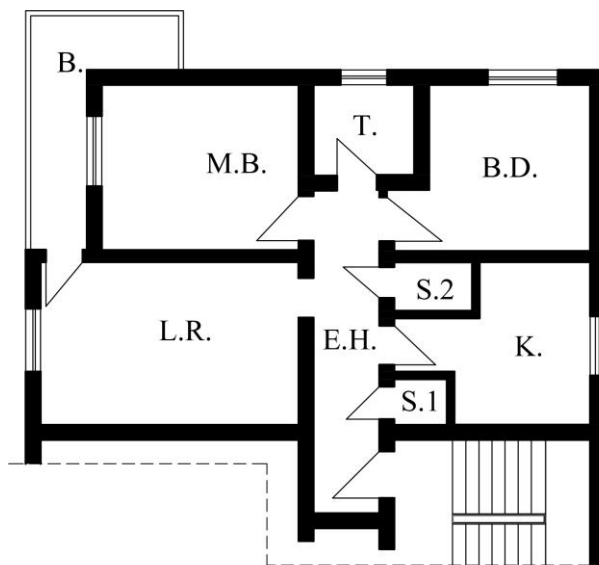


Figure 4.12: Block 'A', F1, flat type I, belonging to owner O1.

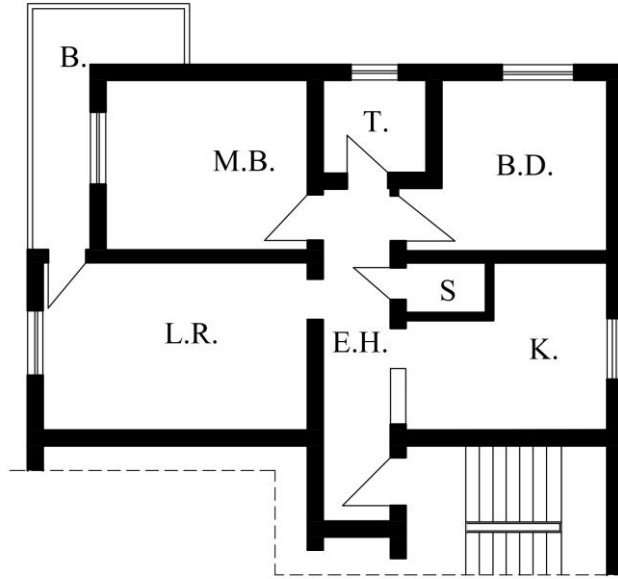


Figure 4.13: Block 'A', F2, flat type I, belonging to owner O2.

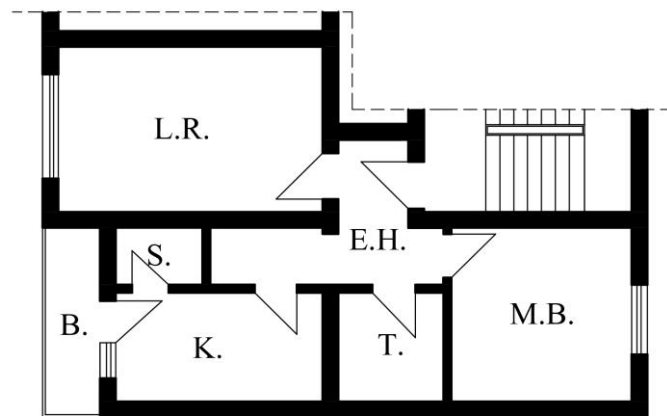


Figure 4.14: Block 'A', F3, flat type II, belonging to owner O3.

Table 4.1: Dimensions for type I (left) and type II (right), in block 'D'.

| Code | Space | Surface (sq.m.) | Code | Space | Surface (sq.m.) |
|------|---------------|-------------------|------|---------------|----------------------|
| E.H. | Entrance Hall | – | E.H. | Entrance Hall | – |
| H. | Hall | – | L.R. | Living Room | 13.5 |
| L.R. | Living Room | approx. 13 | M.D. | Bedroom | 9.5 |
| M.D. | Bedroom | approx. 10.5 | K. | Kitchen | approx. 5.5 |
| K. | Kitchen | approx. 4 | S. | Storage | – |
| T. | Bathroom | – | T. | Bathroom | – |
| B. | Balcony | – | | Total | approx. 48.86 |
| | Total | approx. 46 | | | |

Table 4.2: Dimensions for type III (left) and type VI (right), in block ‘N’ and ‘J’.

| Code | Space | Surface (sq.m) | Code | Space | Surface (sq.m.) |
|------|---------------|-------------------|--------------|---------------|-----------------|
| E.H. | Entrance Hall | 4.84 | E.H. | Entrance Hall | 11.55 |
| L.R. | Living Room | 14 | H. | Hall | 2.48 |
| B.D. | Bedroom | approx. 10.5 | L.R. | Living Room | 21.16 |
| K. | Kitchen | 6.6 | | Master | |
| S1. | Storage | 1 | M.B. | Bedroom | 13.95 |
| S.2 | Storage | 0.8 | B.D. | Bedroom | 12.34 |
| T. | Bathroom | – | K. | Kitchen | 11.96 |
| B1. | Balcony | – | T. | Bathroom | 4.65 |
| | Total | approx. 44 | B1. | Balcony | 4.65 |
| | | | B2. | Balcony | 6.09 |
| | | | Total | 77.84 | |

Table 4.3: Dimensions for type IV (left) and type V (right), block ‘A’.

| Code | Space | Surface (sq.m.) | Code | Space | Surface (sq.m) |
|--------------|---------------|-----------------|--------------|---------------|----------------|
| E.H. | Entrance Hall | 6.71 | E.H. | Entrance Hall | 5.16 |
| L.R. | Living Room | 17.16 | L.R. | Living Room | 16.82 |
| | Master | | | Master | |
| M.B. | Bedroom | 13.2 | M.B. | Bedroom | 12.42 |
| B.D. | Bedroom | 10.56 | K. | Kitchen | 7.9 |
| K. | Kitchen | 9.81 | T. | Bathroom | 4.28 |
| T. | Bathroom | 3.78 | S | Storage | 1.6 |
| S1. | Storage | 0.9 | B. | Balcony | 4.01 |
| S.2 | Storage | 1.5 | Total | 52.28 | |
| B. | Balcony | 8.16 | | | |
| Total | 71.78 | | | | |

4.1 Inhabitants’ ‘Meaning of Home’

This chapter’s section responds to the research question ‘what are inhabitants’ meanings of home’. The aim is to understand households’ complex and lived experiences of home for the case of communist-era flats in former agro-industrial town Darmanesti, by exploring their meanings of home. In-depth interviews correlated with data taken as site observations form the main body of evidence. However, as Richards (1990) suggests, this process comes with the “difficulty to separate the intertwined meanings of home” (Soaita, 2015, p. 13).

4.2.1. Home as agency and control

Homeownership, which comes with the privatization of block of flats, indeed requires residents to take responsibility not only for their apartments, but also for the whole block, afferent communal spaces like gardens and alleys. As it becomes difficult for the government after 1989 to manage and allocate funds for the maintenance of the entire housing stock, the release of this charge opened up for the new owners in Darmanesti a taste for discipline.

Ultimately, ownership implies the opportunity for the households to use their autonomy and recreate the space of their home-flats. The sense of being in control is best rendered for those interventions that have never been possible under communist dictatorship. Evidence is provided on this regards under the form of:

- Alterations, demolitions and extensions of flats' physical space with the purpose on creating a more suitable and comfortable place.
- Use and management of the common space inside/outside the blocks.
- Actions taken by each individual for block's common maintenance or with the purpose on overcoming all kind of inherited shortages.

4.2.1.1 Alterations and demolitions of doors, walls and storage rooms

First, homeownership implies greater freedom over one apartment's space, which is seen in the case samples as alternations and demolitions of the physical space. These changes best depicts inhabitants' efforts to make their small and uncooperative apartment comfortable and serve their needs.

It is common on changing the original layout by tearing down nonstructural walls and doors for a better overall use of space; change the size of a room to have the impression of a bigger space, remove boundaries and fluidize circulation or redirect it. Except for three apartments (F6, F7, F10) that have no interventions, three units present minor revisions like transforming one door into an arcade, while five of them have major interventions concerning the walls and storage rooms (F2, F3, F5, F8 and F11). In Figure 4.16 such interferences of the physical settings are displayed. The differences from the original plans and the actual situation is shown through owners' recall and data collected during the interviews. In the Figure 4.16 are exemplified the most common and accessible interventions as space enlargement through demolitions or making a connection between two rooms by tearing down doors. The resulted

threshold is whether left as rectangular or is given the shape of an arcade. Most commonly, the spaces used for this intervention are entrance hall-secondary hall, entrance hall-kitchen or entrance hall- living room. Doors, walls and storage-rooms alterations and demolitions applied to flats units in Figure 4.16 are outlined starting from above in the following order: F5 (block D), F11 (block N), F2 (block A), F3 (block A), F 8 (block J). The current situation is on the left, while the one before alteration on the right. Emerged from a rural type lifestyle is the essential presence of storages. Despite the small space area, almost all apartment types have or had at least one storage room.

As it is emphasized in Figure 4.16, in four cases storage units are demolished to create more space for the kitchen, bedroom and for the entrance-hall space. It abolishes boundaries among room areas with different function and gives psychological comfort of an enlarged space, as well better space management and usage of it. As the owners spend most time in the kitchen, a bigger space would serve them better. On the other side is the idea of openness that most owners claim they expect from these interventions. Figure 4.17 shows the level of intervention in the apartment F8 by removing the door and enlarging its space with an arch, while on the left side a window frame still reminds by the demolished storage door. Further, in the Figure 4.18 is depicted a partial demolition of the storage room for the entrance hall, place that currently accommodates the refrigerator



Figure 4.15: Doors removal in the case of F8 (left) and for F9 (right).



Figure 4.16: Alterations and demolitions applied to flats units.

Layouts F3 and F11 denotes a different approach on the nature of intervention. In F3, the access in the balcony is given from the kitchen by changing the place of the door from the living room (Figure 4.16).



Figure 4.17: Demolition of the kitchen door and storage rooms in ‘F8’.

To create more space for a two room-apartment the owner from F11 extends the bedroom’s space, which in the original layout is living room, by making the balcony part of it. For this intervention the door and window is demolished and walls are built on the sides of the balcony. A visual effect of a bigger space is at least the household hopes to obtain since the shape of the space limits a proper use (Figure 4.19).

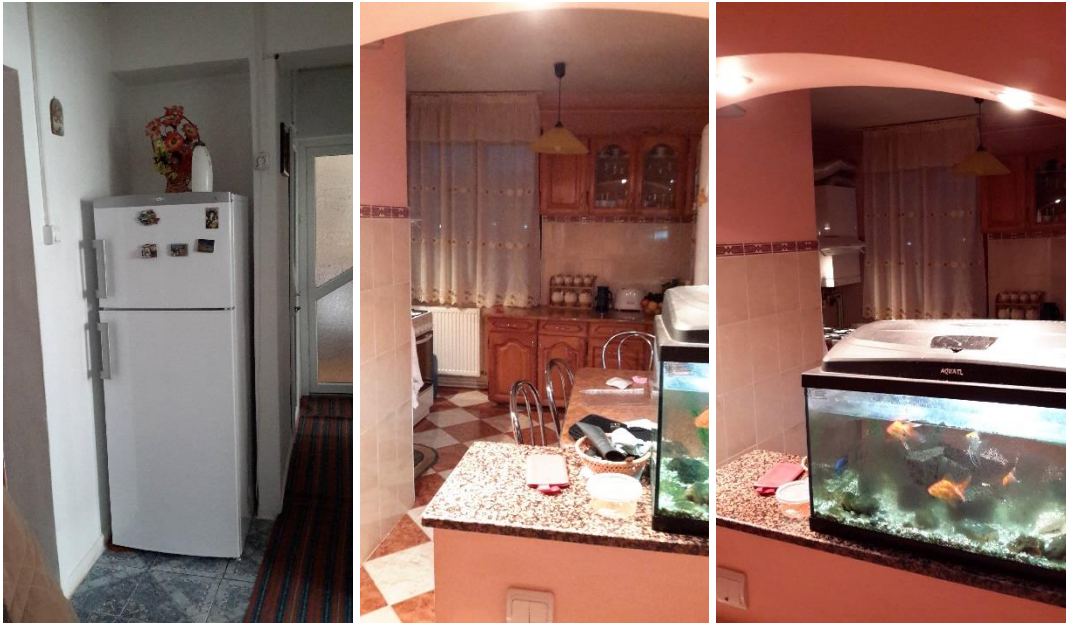


Figure 4.18: Demolition of partial storage room in F5 (left) and totally removal of the door and one storage room in F2 (middle and right).



Figure 4.19: Extension of the living room and the reconstruction of walls for the balcony in F11 .

4.2.1.2 Management over the gardens

Blocks of flats ‘N’ and ‘J’ has the advantage for residents to benefit from land behind them and use it how they consider properly. Figure 4.20 represents examples how owners arranged it according to their needs. Besides gardens on the same land, are distinguished car garages, dogs, chicken, pigs, and rabbit cages. Enclosure with fence of each property to restrict access is one of the main characteristic through which each resident protects its property. Moreover, the effort submitted to build on these land is another form of management over one’s space .



Figure 4.20: Gardens behind block ‘N’ belonging to apartments’ owners.

4.2.1.3 Claiming the environment

It is common for the owners to use the shared space in the blocks for their own needs. While all, except block 'D', are equipped with storages at the basement floor, the poor condition of those spaces does not allow for proper use. The same situation is for the mansard spaces for buildings 'A' and 'J'. Therefore, the need for more storages cause for the residents to invade the common space within their block.

Even though it does not require ownership over the apartment, the door fronts mostly serve as temporary storage, avoiding to overload the interiors. Figure 4.21 and Figure 4.22 represents examples of such.



Figure 4.21 Door fronts used as storage in block 'N'.

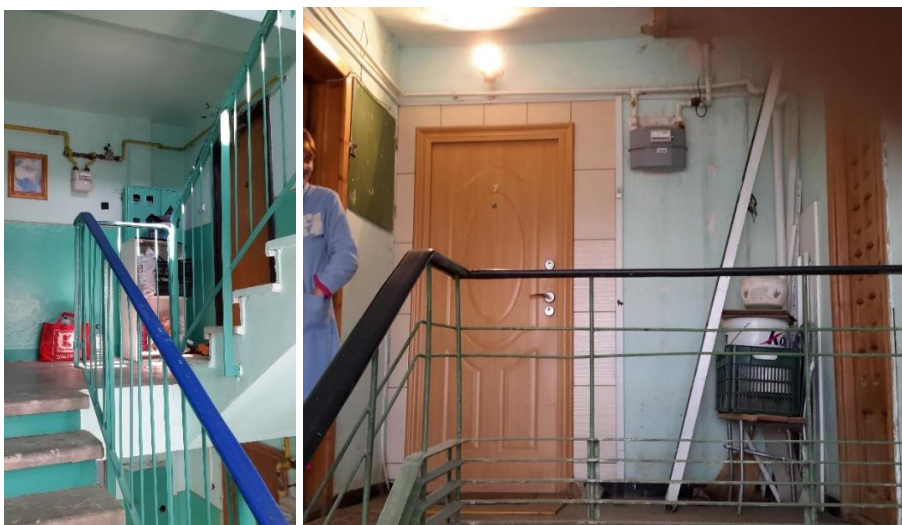


Figure 4.22: Door fronts used as storage in block 'J' (left) and block 'D' (right).

Further examples represents different ways residents claim their environment. They use boundaries like in Figure 4.23 to delineate a certain territory or like in Figure 4.24 where they actually built storages in the free space under the stairs. Since space lacks in their small apartments, residents turn to the common areas to enclose and use as their own.



Figure 4.23: Claiming the space in front of the door in the case of F5.



Figure 4.24: Storage spaces built under the stairs in both segments of block 'D'.

Furniture arrangement like in the case of the entrance in block D denotes another organizational and regulatory level for holding a space. Unlike the previous proceedings, in Figure 4.25 is depicted an area used by all inhabitants, a meeting point.



Figure 4.25: Furniture used to delineate areas with specific purpose.

4.2.1.4 Autonomy over facades

Homeownership has also an effect over the unitary image of blocks' facades. Invariably the changes taken by each individual within its own interior space reflect on the exterior. In Figures 4.26 and Figure 4.27 are exemplified the nature of interventions and variations. Closing the balconies with windows or in some extreme cases construction of walls on their sides, window system renewal or insulation coverage in the right of one's apartment, leads to a mosaic facade.



Fig. 4.26: Interventions over facades for block 'N' (left) and 'A' (right).



Figure 4.27: Interventions over facades for block ‘D’ (above) and block ‘J’ (below).

4.2.1.5 Maintenance and housing improvement

“If they said we are the owners, we organized”, mentions owner O5 from block ‘D’.

Taking care and improving their housing condition is considered one of the biggest challenge for the households. If creating a more comfortable place within their own apartment would come with certain ease, taking decisions together and allocating funds to overcome certain shortages of the entire building it is considered a burden for all involved.

Disconnected from Refinery's boiler after 1989, all households living in flats in the second center are put in difficulty as their hot water or heat for radiators in winter halted. In this case, remained to each family to install their own central heating system. Owner O9 from block 'N' recalls that during communism "it was so hot that we were staying (during the winter) with doors and balconies open".

Since authorities are not held responsible for the housing stock, blocks' problems develop into an ongoing dispute and debate among owners and the city hall, as well between residents themselves. Owners O10 and O9 recall the situation in their block 'N' when faced with difficulties regarding cutting water, block's canalization system and leaking roof-terrace problems. They have been in the position to take responsibility and form block association.

"We did (block) association like this. It was summer and two individuals (residents from two flats) did not pay the water bill which in time collected in a big amount. [...] like this, the water was cut (to all block). We stayed two months with no running water [...] and during the summer. "(Owner O9)

She further mentions that they couldn't receive any support from the city hall: "We went to the mayor and he throw us out".

"We went and asked around and was said to us to make association in order to be able to receive help. There were also those living in the last floor that always had problems with the leaking of the roof-terrace, no matter what they would put to cover. After we start with Habitat. They did their housing there (an additional floor of apartments) and did our canalization. The water in the block was put by us."

After making association things have improved considerable, as block 'N' is accepted in the Habitat program.

"We did association and after the contract with Habitat followed as this block was almost collapsing. Why? Because the basement was full (of water), nobody was repairing it and because of this was breaking (referring to block's structure which was deteriorating because of water erosion). They (Habitat) built also the roof, which is very good. We have changed the canalization that is not passing from the basement anymore but from the staircase. We did good things and we want to do more." (Owner O9)

Moreover, the administrator in block 'D', which is owner O4, admits forming the association in their block in order to benefit from the Habitat program. For unspecified reasons they were not eligible to enter. Further, she recognizes that after the revolution with the cut of the state's resources, each family had to handle with caution their income:

“At the beginning the heat was coming from Refinery [...] now you don't know how to be more economical, to pay less (because it is used central heating on gas).”

Other owners also describe their actions and involvement on starting associations and dealing with the problems of inherit housing stock. Owner O2 from block A says:

“We (all owners from 'A' block) would like to put a door with intercom system (to restrict the access in the building) and [...] we would change windows from the staircase. I prefer to be able to close and clean them, and only then we can put flowerpots (on the staircase).”

Nothing describes best control and agency over the space than the situation after the revolution when residents are put in the position to organize themselves under block's associations and start to solve ongoing housing issues. For those owners actively involved in the maintenance process, they take a certain pleasure when talking about their accomplishments on blocks' rehabilitation.

Care and beautification of the shared space represents a reason of pride but also of concern since is quite challenging to reach a joint agreement and for all households to give same amount of time, availability and resources. In fact it denotes a continue negotiation and frustration among some residents.

“We did (new) doors at the entrance, whitewashed, we put curtains (in block's entrance). [...] We are doing with turn at cleaning (the common space of block and in front of it).” (Owner O5, block 'D')

A different situation is in block 'N', where the relation among neighbors is quite tensioned when it comes for cleaning the staircase.

“This staircase, I swept them at the Christmas time. If I do not clean them, nobody does. However, I am not the cleaner of the block. I am doing it when I see is very dirty. [...] In front of the block if I do not go to clean nobody does.

[...] Now the spring is coming. If I do not go out to dig and put flowers, nobody goes out. Last year I whitewashed the staircase, I was the one to collect the money.” (Owner O9, block ‘N’)

While ownership makes people more responsible and willingly to take action, it comes after long discussions and mediation how and what to do. It makes some owners to remember the favorable conditions that the communist brought. Not owning an apartment does not seem, however, an impediment for owner O9 since she considers that in that period other benefits existed like a secure income, jobs and less worries.

4.2.2 Home as physical structure and financial investment

Home is not seen as a financial investment for the simple reason, as one of the respondents puts it “everything is dead in Darmanesti”. Although all the households emphasized the qualities of the area as being “beautiful and quiet”, they also have admitted that the place is not “what it used to be”. There are no prospects on obtaining a job or services that could provide a good life standard. Buying the apartment one used to live with rent before the Revolution is seen more a necessity than an opportunity due to the inherited housing shortages. Owner O9 states that wasn’t bothered at all living with rent due to the fact the State was handling everything: “We use to live with rent, but we were paying something insignificant, something symbolic.”

Despite the challenges and the limited space of some of the apartments, comes as a surprise that all residents emphasize the qualities of their flat and block, as well of the area surrounding it. They do so by referring to those aspects that makes it superior than other apartments or blocks in Darmanesti.

“(Mine) is well proportioned and seems spacious in general, unlike other apartments, for example like the apartment belonging to ‘x’ (owner O4) where the extra room that she has is very small as my kitchen.” (owner O5)

“This is the best block from Darmanesti because the walls are done from brick.”
(Owners O9 and O10)

While residents located in the first center indicate the location of their block as being very good in the town compared with those near Refinery, in turn, those from the second center highlights the qualities of the environment being near the forest and green area.

4.2.3 Home as community

Investigating whether flats support or stand for community has a relevant meaning within this mixed urban-rural environment. As it is mentioned in previous chapters, the rural house had the function of binder for the people in the Darmanesti commune. Obvious the context and conditions have changed over time, mentioning as key moments the communist period and the ongoing transition, which may have modified the social relations and bonds. As an observer and from the discussions with the residents under target, as well with the locals, evidence shows a sense of community is kept among the people, where everybody knows everybody's life.

However, there is a general view regarding residents' relation in Darmanesti and the interviews confirms it, that people interact less and the bonds are not as powerful as they used to. Owners O2, O3, O8-x, O8-y, and O11 explains lack of communication with neighbors due to unavailable time, where an essential aspect is also the fact they haven't born or grew up in town.

Owner O9 tells her desire to live in an individual house with courtyard for the reasons of more autonomy, intimacy and the chance for her not to communicate with others unless necessary, while mentioning "(at the house) I have courtyard, I have garden, and I don't care (about the neighbors)."

Both owners O9 (block 'N') and O1 (block 'A') emphasize the fact that living in block does not make people to act 'evil', as they referred to the change in social relations brought by the capitalism when people are "preoccupied about others wealth".

"[...] not the block has changed people, because I live in this block since young age. (During communism) neighbors were very united, and we use to keep parties. If it was the birthday of someone everybody came together." (Owner O9)

Many of the interviewees born in the area, mention the idea of community being very important before 1989.

Owner O1 (block 'A') doesn't want for their block to enter Habitat program for rehabilitation, fearing that has "to coexist" with newcomers or the least desirable situation where "gypsies would buy" new flats. She further expands:

“Why I don’t want (for new neighbors to come), because is already very hard to come together as owner association, as community. It is very hard, even harder if we are more. Very hard. [...] It is hard to work with people. To come together and take decisions. With young people is easier, though. (Owner O1)

“Why people don’t socialize anymore. Because some have more. Before we were all equal. Now it is very hard for us, is the mentality of people after the Revolution.” (Owner O1)

“Residents from my building have block-life, they usually go to work, I haven’t seen them taking walks, go to barbeque, nowhere.” (Owner O1)

While taking care of the inherited space comes as burden for residents, efforts are made towards a favorable outcome for the common interest. Yet, coming together and agree upon decisions dose not only in itself becomes a concern but has the effect, in some of the cases, to jeopardize the relationships among neighbors. They consider that not all residents get involved equally in blocks’ common issues.

Customs and traditions with the occasion of important holydays brings people together, though. For instance Christmas, all households admit receiving carol singers in their homes.

It is recognized in unanimity by most of the interviewees that block ‘D’ is a place where all residents are like “a big family”. Owner O5, which came 26 years ago in the building, considers herself to be the newest in the building. Households O4 claims that during communism people in all blocks were united as they are now: “we remained the same”, says O4. Moreover, residents from block ‘N’ (O9 and O10) and from block ‘A’ (O1) confirms that neighbors in all blocks use to spend much time together and always help each other before 1989.

“We help each other. [...] those that grew in the countryside with neighbors are more united. Now, more recently you hear some feel envy on others.” (Owner O5)

“Outside on the hall we brought chairs, table, and we gather, now that is hot outside, we stay there, not in the home.” (Owner O5)

“For Easter holiday we all go on the first and second day to visit, but for the third day we gather all in front of the block. (Owner O5)

The unity in this block is even recognized by other residents in other blocks.

4.2.4 Home as the territory of family and friends

Findings suggest, “home is family “and the households clearly affirms it. It replicates what Soaita (2015) concluded about family as being the most important thing. Data concerning the history of the place-flats whether exits problems with the family members, overcrowding during the communist regime or just a place that reminds of the childhood, family is at the core of people’s existence.

“I don’t think it can be one without the other, the apartment without my parents. [...] the apartment means childhood”, says O1, which currently owns the flat where she grew up as her parents moved to an individual house in Darmanesti. She further expands: “I didn’t let my parents to sell the apartment because I’ve realized is a mistake”. The household, which is in her early 30s, gave up to her life in a big city to come back home.

“The first thing I wanted to do in the apartment (when she designed it), I liked when all the family was coming together in the past, with cousins, everybody. That’s why I did (bought) a big and solid table.”

She further express the regret that the table is not used how she desired, and those gatherings do not take place. Instead, she spends time with her family at their house.

A similar case is owner O4 when she is asked if she wants to move to an individual house:

“I got use here. [...] I grew up here; I have never lived in other place. I would like more space, why to lie, but we comply with what we have. [...] Even if I move from here, still I would turn back, I think I couldn’t stay in other place.”

Home becomes an emotional enclave for all of the residents, whether the grown up children remember their childhood with all the family in the flats, or the parents sigh for their children that left home to work or to study in the big cities. The ones left recall through stories or memories like photographs the absence and time spent together. Overcrowding during the communism where rooms were multipurpose, where parents and children use to share rooms and same beds and still enjoy their home, emphasizes the fact that through their behavior could overcome the restraints of the physical setting .

Household O3 connects his home with a sad moment in the family life when he says they become less members at home with his father passing away in a mine accident.

Owner O5 shares the development on buying her apartment while was in the middle of a divorce with her ex-husband:

“I wasn’t divorced and my brother had to endorse me, in order (for my husband) not to appear (on papers) because I bought it (the apartment) alone. I received it through repartition and I had to buy it right after. My divorce was not pronounced yet and I did not wanted to share it with my husband. I asked my younger brother for help and after we bought it he gave up his share in my favor. At that time was need it two salaries (to be able to buy an apartment) but I was alone. [...] Although I handled to pay the rate alone.”

The struggle and misunderstandings among family members are present also in the case of owner O10. While legally separated from her husband they still live together in their two-room apartment, although in different rooms.

The idea of family is remembered by many users when talking about those who had to leave after the revolution in Italy or in Spain due to lack of work in Darmanesti. It is also the case of some interviewed residents and their families. For example in block ‘N’ is reported that ten families migrate in other countries, while in block ‘D’ there are eight. This does not counts the number of families that are separated where at least one member has left, while the others are still living here.

As one household states, “they went to work and after to turn back and build a house”. The notion of house has a tremendous significance to ground a person and a family, to give a purpose in life. This idea exists from very old times as being deep rooted in Romanian way of life, to bring at the center of one’s existence the home and the family. No matter where one goes, it is always a place, for later, to come back.

Owner O7 retrieves a crude reality persistent all over the country during the communist regime, where people were afraid to criticize Ceausescu even within the walls of her own apartment with the other family members. There were not few the cases where individuals have handled their relatives to authorities due to the use of defamatory words towards the state.

4.2.5 Home as place of relaxation and comfort

Comfort represents an important issue for flats' occupants. Before the Revolution the State used to take care of blocks' maintenance, repairing and even cleaning, while the period that followed mobilized all inhabitants to take control over their space, to improve their life standard and wellbeing.

During the interviews the an important question is raised by the researcher: why not moving to an individual house. The answers received best describe home-flats as places of relaxation and comfort. Seven dwellers, from six flats, do not consider in the near future moving in an individual house and one of the main reason they provide is being easier to live in an apartment. "You close and leave" they says. There is no coincidence that these individuals have work and spend less time at home. However, all said that is mandatory when moving into a house to dispose of all facilities that an apartment has. Other three owners said that they do not want to move because they just got used living like this, even though they do not work except doing farming.

"Too expensive, too much time you have to allocate caring a house and you don't have time to do anything else, to see the world, to practice hobbies", says owner O8-y where he and his wife are both doctors in Darmanesti, spend much of their free time outside their home at the mountains.

Household O5 compares the flat with an individual house:

"I wanted at some point (to move in an individual house) but [...] was said to me that I am a single person, [...] because there is always repairing to do, like the roof. If you choose to stay in a house you need a man." (Owner O5, divorcee, female)

Choosing the life in an apartment over the individual house brings the idea of home as a place of quietness, not as much as a refuge because, in the case of Darmanesti, the outside world is a familiar one where residents feel most of the time safe.

Although the general atmosphere in Darmanesti is one of relaxation, people have a tendency to keep themselves always busy. If not working in a paid job doing farming, they visit the surroundings or they spend time together with friends and neighbors. This, at time, can be exhausting whereas the apartment offers that moment of recovery. Owner O3, living alone, refers to his apartment the only place where he can sleep in

quiet. He even mounted blinds to the windows in order to be in total dark during his sleep.

While the majority attribute silence to their home-flat, owner O9 considers that only an individual house can bring it:” after a specific age you need silence.” The owner in her 60’s, living alone in a two-room apartment, manifests her desire to leave the apartment and move to an individual house as the only place that can bring the comfort she longs for. However, she mentions with pride how she arranged her apartment.

“Now I cannot stand the block. Before I was younger, I could stand. Because there is no activity. You stay; you do not go anywhere, lack of communication. [...] First, lack of space. [...] I need a living room to take lot of light and to be spacious. The bedroom its good like this, does not bother me too much, but I would like a living room as the whole apartment. I would like an open and big kitchen.” (Owner O9)

The level of comfort after the revolution increase for all owners and motives are multiple. First, overcrowding is not an issue as it was before. In four flat cases the owners recount about the days during the communism when the family members had no intimacy, no space for their own, rooms were multipurpose and sleeping spaces was a problem.

Practices of homemaking best describe the approach on doing the apartments more comfortable and serve as evidence to understand the effort invested. All residents that use to live during the regime in these apartments mention how they increase comfort by the introduction of central heating systems, the alterations and demolition of the physical setting, renewal of floors, walls, windows and doors, as well the change in furniture style and arrangement within the apartment.

4.2.5.1 New furniture design and arrangement

Getting rid of the old-style furniture, which was not practical and use to occupy lot of space, is the most important step to create more space and comfort as most of the owners suggest. In addition, the adjustment of more storage cabinets represents another way to increase comfort and create more free space. The following examples express this tendency, of a well thought arrangement in their opinion, done with custom furniture (Figures 4.28 and 4.29).



Figure 4.28: Example of storage cabinets in the bedroom of F9 apartment.



Figure 4.29: Example of storage cabinets in the kitchen in F1 (left) and F9 (right) apartments.

4.2.5.2 Renewal of floors and walls finishing

Most common in all apartments is the desire of the inhabitants to offer more comfort and esthetics through floor and wall renewal.

One of the first thing the households did once they became the owners is to replace the original poured concrete floor (Figures 4.30 and 4.31) present in almost all rooms and in all the apartments with a more aesthetic one. This type of finishing still exists on the stairs and hallway areas, but also in one of the flat (F6) as the owners could not afford to change it (Figures 4.30 and 4.31). However, in most of the flats, the living rooms and bedrooms were originally covered with natural parquet, whereas in some flats where economy was important it is used concrete floor covered with colorful linoleum.

In the case of kitchens and bathrooms, the original walls finishing consists on half with paint which serve as waterproof, while for the other half with whitewash. On the walls behind the sinks in the kitchen and bathrooms as well in the case of bathtub are used ceramic white tile for protection against mold.

Currently almost all owners ‘modernized’ these spaces with colorful ceramic tiles and parquet (Figures 4.32, 4.33, 4.34). Having walls straighten is another improvement necessary that the majority of the households have done, whereas exception makes flat F6 for owners’ lack funds. In Figure 4.30 it is shown an example of the original floor made from poured concrete used in the blocks’ hallways (in this case for ‘A’ block) similar with the one in apartments’ floor.

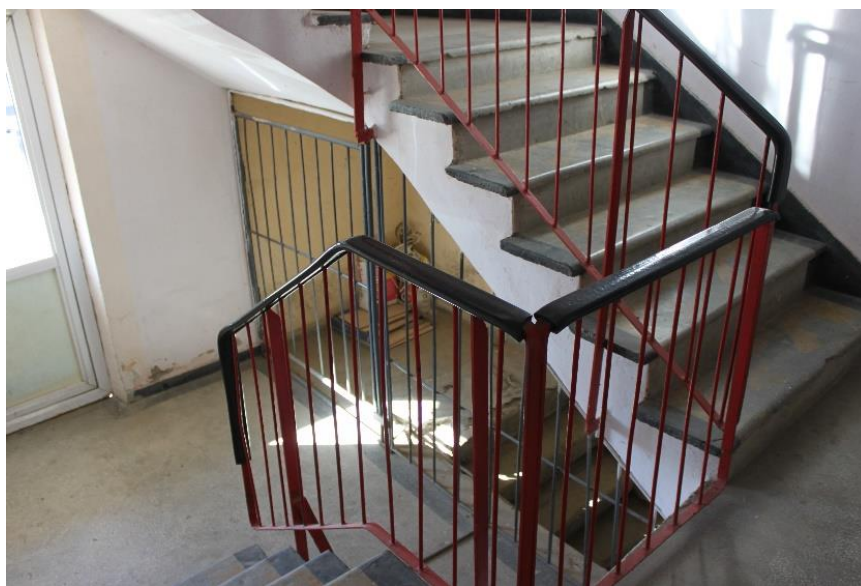


Figure 4.30: Example of the original floor made from poured concrete in ‘A’ Block.



Figure 4.31: Example of the original floor from poured concrete in F6, block ‘D’.



Figure 4.32: Example of floor renewal in F1 (left) and F8 (right).



Figure 4.33: Example of floor renewal in F11 (left) and F2 (right).



Figure 4.34: Example of floor renewal in F4.

4.2.5.3 Doors and windows renewal

The interior and entrance doors, as well windows are changed. While for the interior doors, the tendency is to use wood or PVC, for the entrance doors metal is preferable. (Figure 4.37). For better insulation of the interior, the windows' material mostly used

is the known system ‘termopan’ with PVC joinery profile and special glass system that acts as thermal barrier.

However, there those that cannot afford to replace the old wood-used joinery applied to all flats during the regime. While asked about it the households can show regret on not being able to improve their apartment. While the renewal process is seen mostly for the owners to feel comfortable within their home-flats’ space, it also adds value to their status. In the Figures 4.35 and 4.36, there are examples of the original doors and windows made of wood material painted in white.

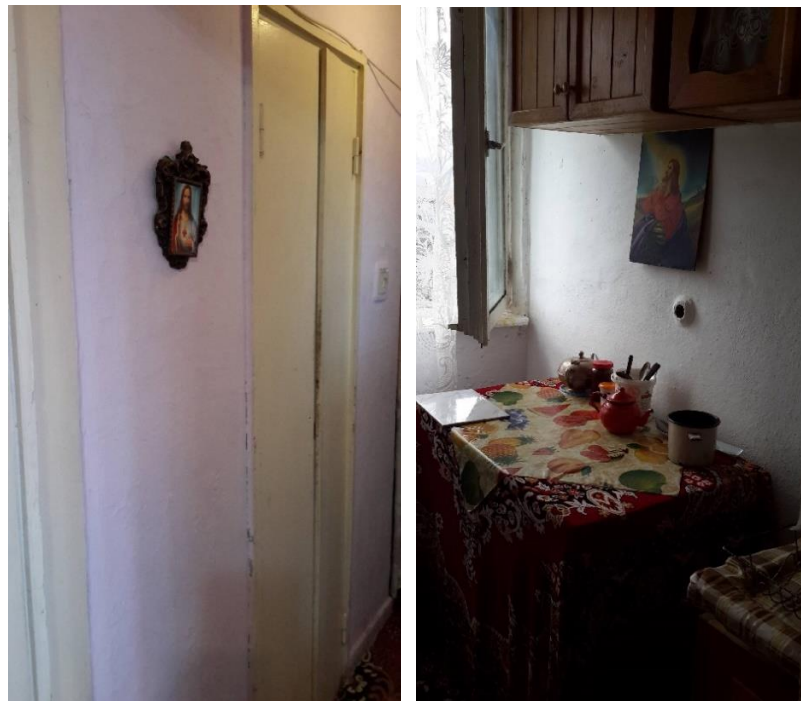


Figure 4.35: Example of original storage door and windows in F6.



Figure 4.36: Example of original interior door, in F6.



Figure 4.37: Example of doors renewal in F3 (left) and F8 (right).

4.2.6 Home and self-identity

The lifestyle in block of flats reflects households' desires and free choice. While owners O7, O9 and O10 wish to move to an individual house in a near future they are pleased with their apartment. They identify themselves with their home as they see their apartment as a quiet, easy to maintain place, where one can relax after a busy day.

In fact, in this specific rural-urban environment where majority of town's inhabitants live in an individual house, for someone making the decision to live in a flat reflects not only ones identity, but also the constant negotiation of the self which life fits more, which are the advantages or disadvantages in staying or moving. This state of wondering of each individual and between the family members is a repeating pattern met in all the interviewees. The following recall best describes it:

“I lived in the city in Brasov and I use to come (in Darmanesti) to see my grandparents. I stayed here during vacation time of one month. It was nice my stay here, but now I came and I moved and I don't want to leave from here... well is quiet and the area is beautiful, but as for possibilities with school for children, for job, it is hard. We have to commute (for work); from this point of

view, (it is hard). After I have sent my son to school to Bacau I have preferred to move there, but my husband does not want. [...] If you don't stay all day at home, the apartment is like... you come and rest, except you are cleaning and cooking, you don't stay all the time and doesn't seem (the apartment) as a burden. Instead my husband is very clear: he wants to move to house, he says he had enough from block.”

Flats as places of one's identity are portrayed in those case sample of five women, mostly living alone, where the challenges in life become impregnated and part of the territory they own. Photographs and memories about their life story lie as remainder of the life conditions that shaped their character. No wonder they all are among those that born in the area and moved in the apartment during the regime. The same can be said for the one male living alone. Apparently, home has an instrumental role in his life, for relaxation and sleeping just. However, the interview reveal the connection with his home due to the hardships him and his family went through while living in the apartment.

Apartment blocks represents most of all a barometer of change for those that use to live during the communist regime in the same place; all except for three flats have same owners. Is not coming as a surprise that only these specific owners have mentioned throughout the interviews the difference between the previous (during the regime) and current situation. Whether it is about current housing shortages, job opportunities, migration, the misunderstanding of freedom or change in people's behavior, or on the contrary, the lack of freedom is all seen and felt in one's lifestyle in these apartments. Therefore, the self-identity of an individual and his/her family at any moment reflects in their homes.

4.2.7 Home as place for self-expression

In the confined space of one's apartment self-expression and practices of personalization represents a way to extend the boundaries of the physicality and to express one's character and aspirations.

Apartments' furnishing exemplify owners' ability to use the available financial resources and own view to personalize their space. Costumed furniture or different styles it comes together to create a mosaic. The following images of living rooms and

bedrooms exemplifies how owners express themselves through décor (Figures from 4.38 till 4.46). As well, objects and photographs are displayed in a meaningful manner. For instance, in flat F8 the owners' hobbies became important aspects in the flat's décor (Figures 4.38). In the case of F1 the design of the apartment has been changed and photographs have been pulled off after an undesirable divorce, whereas new photographs depicting her life passion-horses rewrites owner's life story.



Figure 4.38: Living room in F8.



Figure 4.39: Living room of flat F6 (left) and bedroom of flat F6 (right).



Figure 4.40: Living room in F1.

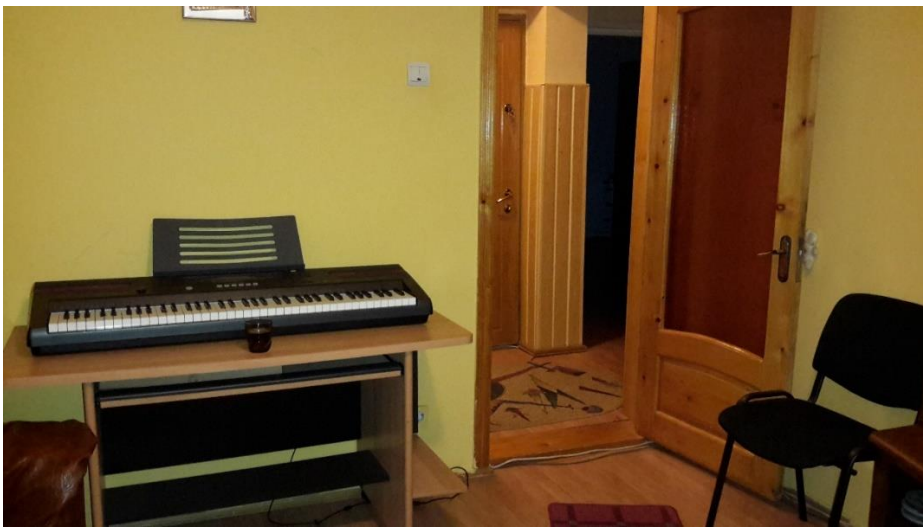


Figure 4.41: Living room in F3.



Figure 4.42: Bedroom in F3.



Figure 4.43: Living room in F9.



Figure 4.44: Living room in F4.



Figure 4.45: Living room in F5.



Figure 4.46: Living room in F6.



Figure 4.47: Living room in F5.



Figure 4.48: Living room in F7.

4.3 Conclusions

The evolution of family life in these flats and the relationships with neighbors, friends and the community in Darmanesti during the period that came after 1989 reflects in various ways the lifestyle in a rural environment. For this reason, the emerged meanings of home provide suggestive parallels with a rural way of life that is given by the level of social connections, the role of the physical setting of blocks of flats it has for the community, as well the activities and behaviors observed and recalled by the households themselves during the interviews (Table 4.4).

Table 4.4: 'Meanings of home'.

| Meanings of Home | Traits of flats' 'meanings of home' which are a reflection of a rural lifestyle in Darmanesti |
|---|---|
| Family | The connection between home and family is very strong for all residents, shown through their life stories which all involve the flats presence, or through the display of memories as photographs about the family members; |
| Community & Friends | Everybody knows everybody's life; All households come together for blocks' common issues as maintenance over the common space or repairing; Customs and traditions still persist in a strong manner in locality Darmanesti; |
| Agency and Control over the Territory | Alterations, demolitions and extensions of flats' physical space; Alterations and use of the inside/outside common space of blocks as being their own; Interventions on the facades as: closing the balconies with windows; window system renewal or insulation coverage in the right of one's apartment; Maintenance and block condition improvement by all residents; |
| Comfort and Wellbeing | Practices of homemaking: introduction of central heating systems, the alterations and demolition of the physical setting, renewal of floors, walls, windows and doors, as well the change in furniture style and a proper arrangement within the apartment; A place for relaxation and intimacy from the outside world; |
| A place of Self Identity, Self Expression and Personalization | Inhabitants easily identify themselves with their home-place, as the flat takes over the cultural and social function that usually is assigned to the rural house; The self is expressed in the interior design through furniture, spatial organization and alterations brought to the physical setting; The sense of 'rootness' or the feeling belonging to one place is stronger among those households whose family use to live in the area during the communist regime as the history of the family interrelate with the history of Darmanesti. |
| Physical Setting | All residents emphasize the qualities of their flat and block, as well of the area surrounding it; Households refer to those aspects that make their apartment, their block or its location superior than their neighbors; The flat offers status to its households; The physical setting has an important role to relate individual to community; |
| A place of Permanence and Continuity | The communist-era apartment is able to confer psychological, social and affective comfort, as well to be able to act as a container and carrier, just as the rural house, in maintaining the social-cultural values in the area; 'Home' is not restricted to the physical setting of the house, but borders become permeable through memories, kept feelings and sensations, and story-telling; |

2. CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSIONS

2.1 Short Presentation of the Thesis

The aim of this thesis is to understand households' complex and lived experiences of home, how they connect and relate to their home environment for the case of communist-era flats in former agro-industrial town Darmanesti, by exploring their meanings of home. The first chapter offers an overview of the research problem, aim, scope, and methodology of the thesis. In the second chapter the concepts of 'home' and 'meaning of home' are conceptualized by reviewing an adequate scholarship on the theme.

To organize a relevant theoretical framework for the unique research context, the notions are framed not only from a western perspective but also are addressed within the available literature in communist and post-communist societies. Further, in a relevant manner, the particular perspective of the Romanian rural house completes the survey.

The third chapter comprises two parts both aiming to express the conditions and context of housing with emphasis on the communist and post '89, when the country is exposed to significant economic, political and socio-cultural changes. This section contributes on describing the reasons *why* the research is necessary to be conducted.

The investigation shifts from a country scale, in the first part of the chapter, for a focus on Darmanesti settlement as a former agro-industrial town, with important function and perspective during the communist regime. Data about the locality and its housing evolution are addressed in the second part of the chapter.

The fourth chapter brings forward the human factor as a result of thirteen indepth interviews with owners in eleven communist-era flats in four blocks in Darmanesti. The researcher to make sense of 'meaning of home' evaluates households' narratives and experiences. For this, the theoretical framework developed in chapter 2 is used to interpret and understand the data. Residents offer essential information about the advantages and challenges living in this type of environment during and after the

regime, the level of attachment and interaction they have with the physical setting of apartments, as well the social life these structures are able to maintain. Therefore, respondents accounts and evaluation of the on-site observations stand as evidence on building a meaningful exploration of home.

2.2 Framework and Scope of the Thesis

Most of the research on ‘home’ and ‘meaning of home’ targets western societies, whereas east European countries belonging to former Soviet Bloc are inadequate represented in the international scholarship. The specific conditions of communist-era block of flats as their planning and implementation, as well the ideology behind the project intrigue researchers from many disciplines and countries. However, for Romania the application of housing policy during the regime has a deeper significance in what scientific community refers to bring a major shift in perception of own persona, the community and the society overall. It negates the previous people’s well-established values, social aspects and life style by imposing a new housing pattern and a new way of life.

Various studies address the subject of domestic space in former socialist countries within the ‘privacy’ and ‘place making’ framework, which undoubtedly are considered big challenges for flats’ residents during regime. Investigations that are more recent emerge as response of housing privatization with implications on the new user-flat relationship and appropriation of the physical setting.

However, ‘Meaning of home’ framework surprise a multitude of aspects on various levels. It is able to bring an understanding about the intimate user-flat relation, the way he/she relates and experience home, as well to grasp the implications it has the post ’89 changes on this connection, mostly the privatization of the housing stock and the fail of the industry in former agro-industrial towns.

The level of interventions on the Romanian rural environment during the communist regime is considered to be unique, as no other country suffered to such extend. This study meant to offer a unique perspective on communist-era flats’ ‘meaning of home’ in the urban-rural environment of former agro-industrial town Darmanesti, as such contexts, unlike the big cities, reflects the most country’s identity.

2.3 Summary of the Findings and Conclusions

While citizens in the '90s embrace private ownership throughout the country, the current situation in Darmanesti depicts a situation of conflicting feelings among the households, between what meant the communist regime and the challenges that came after. At least, for the case of those respondents who used to live in the area during the communism (nine of them), especially in the block of flats, there is a constant and consciousness oscillation between nostalgia, regret and self-empowerment.

Job opportunities, home availability to a certain extent and maintenance of the housing provision, studded with a sense of equality throughout citizens represents those aspects that secured a quiet and predictable life. Social, economic and political changes, which occurred after 1989 brought unexpected disruptions and challenges for the residents. In fact, interviewees suggest that buying their rented apartment once with privatization it is seen more as a necessity in order not to remain homeless rather a highly desirable occurrence. The ongoing shortages of the housing stock reveal less enthusiasm for some owners due to their financial inability on repairing or improving the housing stock.

Findings are in concordance with other studies' results where homeownership makes residents responsible with not only their home flat but also with the entire block and its surroundings. Agency and control over own and shared space is one of the recurrent meaning of home. The desire for more space and comfort makes to consider the opportunity as owners to play an active role in the design and reconfiguration of the place. Walls, doors, windows renewal and demolition denotes a certain degree of autonomy than never before.

The level of comfort and wellbeing after the revolution increased considerably in all case samples making it one of the main characteristic of home-flats. This is also due to decrease in overcrowding, which is not an issue as it used to be. In four samples the owners recount about the days during the communism when the family members had no intimacy, no space for their own, rooms were multipurpose and sleeping space represented a problem.

Current practices of homemaking reflects also one's identity and self-expression. Apartments' furnishing exemplify owners' ability to use the available financial resources and their own perspective to personalize their space. Moreover, photographs,

meaningful objects and memories that usually involves the family, it bring forward the emotional connotation of home.

The family is found to be the most important meaning of home throughout all the samples. Data concerning the history of the place-flats whether exits problems with the family members, overcrowding during the communist regime or just a place that reminds of the childhood, family is at the core of people's existence.

An essential meaning of home is that of the community. It comes as no surprise considering the specific characteristics of the rural environment in Romania and the role the rural house has in forming the community. Residents tend to distinguish themselves from others by emphasizing the qualities of their apartment or block, or of the area in which are located.

Home as locus of privacy and as financial investment are not explicit meanings of home. A history on overcrowding during the regime, the connection with neighbors in the block and the role it has within the Darmanesti's community result in residents' not feeling the need for privacy. Home not seen as a financial investment is due to two reasons. First, there is an awareness in all of the respondents that their house cannot have any value due to the poor condition of the area. Second, in the case of those which used to live in the apartment for many years, have reached to assign to home an emotional value while not looking at it as a physical entity.

The case study reveals meanings of home grouped into six categories: family and community; comfort and wellbeing; control and agency over the territory due to home ownership; a place of self-identity, self-expression and personalization; a physical setting; a place of permanence and continuity.

However, interviews suggest that flats' physical alterations and overall changes is more a response to the exposure to global trends and the desire to create more comfort similar to other countries, than it is a result of a lifestyle with shortages in these apartments, under the influence of the communist regime. In this respect, one owner mentions that visits in many countries and having contact with different ways of life, made her not to stand her apartment's lack of space and lack of light . For this, she has tried to create more space through furniture' arrangement.

All the households who use to live in the apartments before '89 suggest a 'normalization' of living with limited space and overcrowding. They all recognize

space deprivation but at the same time, they show pride on overcoming it through wise management of space. It is for this reason households recall mixed feeling of excitement and restrained when talking housing privatization after '89.

The location is extremely important resulting in unique meanings of home. In this respect, the results show communist-era flats takes on the characteristics of the rural house. Findings are important on rendering the policy for new housing implementation in this environment. While the results cannot extend to all localities that undergo this process, it offers a perspective to be taken in consideration for future research.

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