



**DANURB+ DANube Urban Brand + Building Regional and Local Resilience through the Valorization of Danube's Cultural Heritage**

# **D+Atlas**

**ATLAS of Hidden Urban Values  
along the Danube**

**Editors // A. Djukić, B. Kádár, A. Stan, B. Antonić**





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**D+ Atlas**

**ATLAS**  
**of Hidden Urban Values**  
**along the Danube** — 2022

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DANube Urban Brand + Building Regional and Local Resilience through the Valorization of Danube's Cultural Heritage

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# DANUrB+ DANube Urban Brand + Building Regional and Local Resilience through the Valorization of Danube's Cultural Heritage



DANUrB+ aims to reactivate underused cultural heritage and resources in shrinking settlements of Danube river's peripheral and border regions, to create new possibilities to make its towns and regions attractive again.

ne 2017



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DANUrB / Bačka Palanka, 2018



DANUrB / Danube Delta, 2019



DANUrB / Tulcea, October 2018



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# Foreword



## FOREWORD

Aleksandra Djukić, Bálint Kádár, Angelica Stan

**The Danube is the most international and multicultural river on Earth, the main connection for cultures in Central Europe and the Balkans, but also a spatial system fragmented by borders in need to reconnect in its identity.**

The natural wonders of this river and the capital cities on its shores usually get all the attention, but it is the smaller towns, often neglected in peripheral situations, that still today hold the multicultural essence of the Danubian Region. With this Atlas compiled by the DANUrB partnership our intention is to present urban communities along the Danube River which share similar tangible and intangible heritage in their local identities. One of the main aims of the DANUrB INTERREG Project is the reactivation of underused cultural heritage and resources in shrinking settlements of Danube river's peripheral and border regions in order to make them more attractive again.





A vision of a collaborating network of cities along the Danube allowed us to better understand the potentials for development whilst also exploring possible strategies. Therefore, it is our mission with this Atlas to show an interconnected spatial and cultural system of communities along the Danube, helping to understand the highly complex and dynamic transformation of our region through the centuries and to value its natural and built resources.

Besides the presentation of Danubian medium and small cities, and their undiscovered heritage and potentials, our mission was also to spread the successful stories and projects from the region, promoting the transferability of good practices to less developed towns. We aimed to make comparable the spatial development of the selected settlements along the Danube by using the common format of this Atlas for many diverse maps, photos, illustrations, and short texts.

The Atlas has five parts, and it is thematically organized into three sections regarding the periods of development: past, present and future. In the first introductory part the the-



oretical background about shrinking cities and border regions is explained, as well as the urban morphology of the cities along the Danube. Furthermore, the selection criteria of the representative cities for each period are explained. The second part is dedicated to the historic development of Danubian cities and towns starting from the period of early industrialization. The third part responds with the present situation underlining the current prospects and challenges in the urban development of Danube' shrinking cities. The fourth part is dealing with future prospects of development, through the presentation of the best practices in urban planning and urban design, showing urban acupuncture, grassroots movements and other innovative methods. The last part of the Atlas includes concluding remarks, recommendations, and visions for





the future development of medium and small Danubian cities. The large maps of the Atlas illustrate the following chapters explaining different aspects that influenced the development processes treated in the different parts. The small maps within the chapters are placed to provide better understanding of the selected urban areas and highlight the most important facts.

We hope this publication is useful as an introduction to regional and local urban development of Danubian cities, as a base for further research, as a teaching tool, but also as a source of information for locals and tourists. We therefore do believe that this Atlas will bring a new contribution to the spatial and cultural analysis of settlements along the Danube, empowering their potentials and visions for successful and sustainable development.



4.4

PLANNING URBAN SHRINKAGE ALONG THE DANUBE – A PARADOX OR A NEW NORMALITY?

// INTRODUCTION

Jelena Marić & Biserka Mitrović

**COULD MACRO-LEVEL URBAN PLANNING** be an effective solution to the issue of the shrinkage of many low-income cities in post-socialist countries in the eastern half of Europe? Although urban shrinkage is a rather complicated and often irreversible process, different global and local planning strategies are developed to overcome its consequences (Neill & Schlappa, 2016), which is often the subject of a “top-down” political regulation. These intentions have opened new perspective for traditional urban planning, embracing different novelties.



**Fig. 279 /** The new building of the Gallery of Lower Austria is the flagship project of the Danubian city of Krensdorf, in Austria. The building was built as the city entered reurbanisation phase in the late 2010s (Author: Bwag, 2019; Source: Wikipedia Commons).

In general, there are two basic approaches to the topic of urban shrinkage from the aspect of urban planning, which are developed on concrete goals and different perceptions of this phenomenon (Rink et al, 2011; Hospers, 2014). The first potential goal is to return the population to its pre-decline state, while the second approach is based on accepting the current state and adapting to it. A possible planning solution to retrieving the population is to increase the city’s attractiveness (Fig. 279), make them more appealing for new investments, and influence the quality of life through creative urban renewal and regeneration methods. The second approach is based on the understanding that a declining city must adapt in situ while focusing on preventing further urban decline and strengthening its socio-economic base (Fig. 280).

However, both approaches aim to increase urban densities as one of the major imperatives. While

the first approach particularly targets to increase “simple” population density through housing renewal, the other one is more focused on the increase of the use of underused urban space without implying housing densification, i.e., through the urban regeneration of open public space or cultural, retail and tourist places. In all shrinking towns, this means that urban-planning profession had to cope with and to create plans for abandoned places, forgotten cultural heritage, brownfield locations, unused infrastructure and the capacities of city public services.

In this section, the good practice of “macro solutions” to the issue of urban shrinkage are presented on the example of small and medium-sized cities along the Danube.



**Fig. 280 /** Ráckeve, Hungary: farmers' markets are traditional outdoor gatherings, important for socialisation and community pride in many Danubian communities (Source: P. Wolf, 2022).

R

- Hospers, G-J. (2014). Urban Shrinkage in the EU. In H. Richardson & C. Woon Nam (Eds.), *Shrinking Cities: A Global Perspective* (pp. 47-57). London: Routledge.
- Neill, W. & Schlappa, H. (Eds.). (2016). *Future Directions for the European Shrinking City*. New York: Routledge.
- Rink, D., Haase, A., Bernt, M. ... & Calza Bini, P. (2011). How shrinkage and local governance are interrelated across urban Europe: a comparative view. D12 Discussion paper on governance responses. Leipzig: Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research – UFZ. Retrieved from [https://www.ufz.de/export/data/400/39028\\_Shrink\\_Smart\\_WP6\\_D12\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.ufz.de/export/data/400/39028_Shrink_Smart_WP6_D12_FINAL.pdf).



4.4.1

CASE STUDY 1  
DANUBE REGION IN SLOVAKIA

L'ubica Vitková & Katarína Smatanová

The actions aimed at raising shrinking cities and regions are heterogeneous in the Danube Region in Slovakia. Most of them are realised on a green meadow mainly as sports and recreational facilities, financed mainly by the private sector. Examples are: the Danubiana Gallery – the museum of modern art (Fig. 281), golf resorts in Báč and Sedín (Fig. 282), sports and recreational complex X-BIONIC® Sphere near Šamorín, Slovak Ring and MALKIA Park near Orechová Potôň. The existing areas of thermal swimming pools in Štúrovo, Patince, Komárno, Veľký Meder and Dunajská Streda are improved, or the sites of monument heritage (manors, water mills, fortresses) are being restored. These realisations are increasing the level of recreation and tourism in the region (Fig 283).

A generous investment is the sport and relax complex X-BIONIC® Sphere near Šamorín, which is a multifunctional resort (Fig. 284-285). It combines the top equipment of the professional sports centre with a wide range of facilities for sports and relaxation for the public, but offers also other services (conferences, workshops) or occasional cultural and social events. The complex consists of several parts and separate areas focused on various sports. It includes an athletic, a swimming, an equestrian complex, with both indoor and outdoor facilities. The complex of this size naturally has an extensive technical background and accommodation capacity. Its restaurant facilities are also the social point of the wider area. The complex presents also an entrance to the area of Danube, as the complex lies directly on the riverbanks. The sports complex is an exceptional achievement in Slovakia in terms of size, its complexity, operational and landscape solution. Olympians have already found the area



Fig. 283 / New significant recreation and tourism projects in the Danube Region in Slovakia (Author: L. Vitková & A. Šeligova, 2022).



Fig. 281 / Danubiana Gallery – an island of culture on the Danube (Author: L. Vitková).

not only from Slovakia, but also from abroad, as well as ordinary visitors. It is an example of a combination of day and weekend recreation and facilities for professional athletes and a venue for domestic and international sport events.



Fig. 284-285 / New generous sports and recreation area X-Bionic Sphere – Central area (left); riding area (right) (Author: L. Vitková, 2021).



Fig. 282 / Sedín Golf Resort by the Small Danube (Author: L. Vitková).



- R Kissfazekas, K., Krklješ M., Stan A. & Vitková, L. (2019). Changes in waterfront land use along the river Danube in the state-socialist era. In: M. Benko, P. Gregor & L. Vitková, (Eds), Book on the unexplored cultural heritage in communities by the Danube: DAN-UrB 2017-2019 (pp. 70-77). Prague: Gasset.
- Lemak, O. & Vitková, L. (2021). Transformation of the Danube recreational areas. In M. Benko (Ed.), DOCONF 2021: Facing Post-Socialist Urban Heritage – Proceedings (pp. 228-239). Budapest: BME.

4.4.2

CASE STUDY 2 // SMEDEREVO, SERBIA

Jelena Marić



**Fig. 286 /** “Godominsko polje” Industrial zone next to the famous Smederevo Fortress and the Danube – seen from the fortress (B. Antonić, 2018).



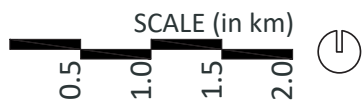
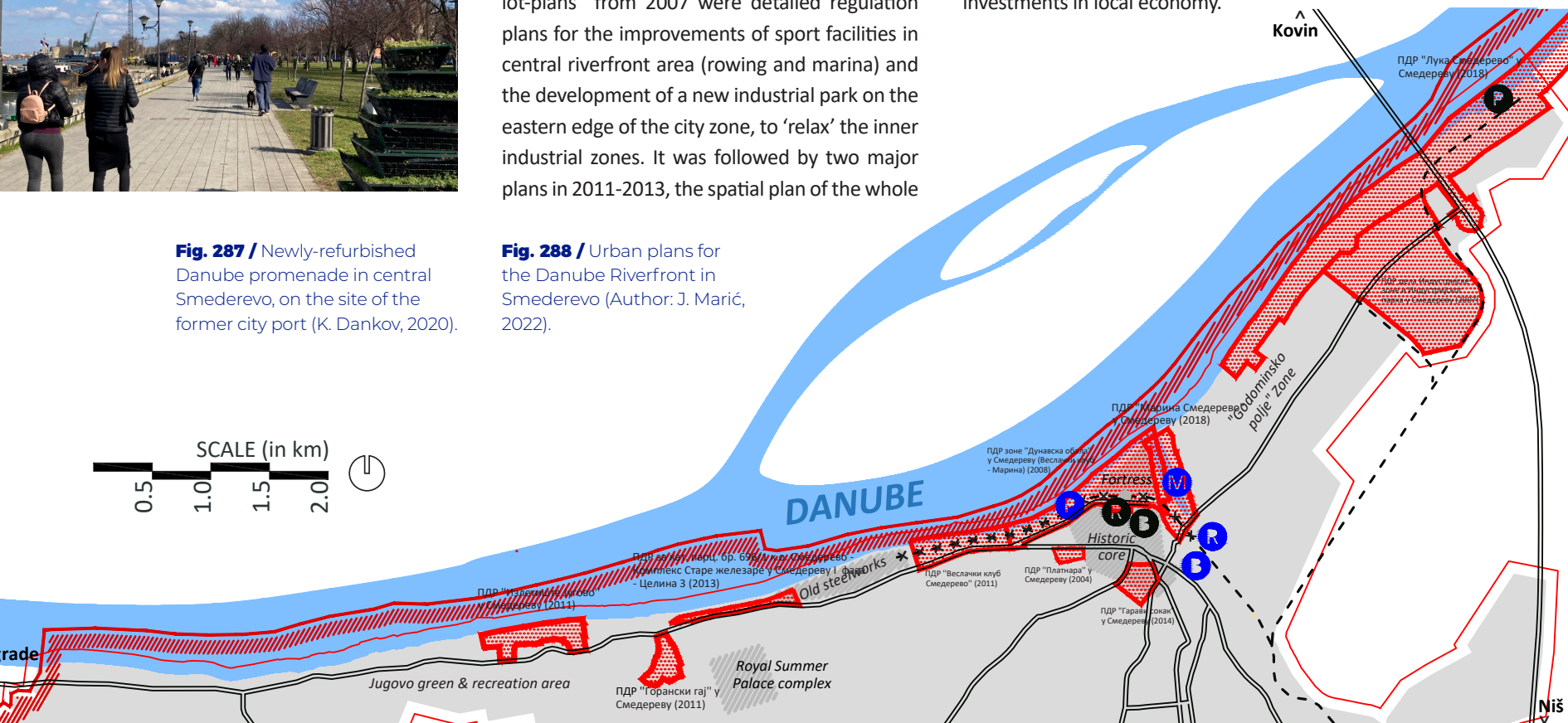
**Fig. 287 /** Newly-refurbished Danube promenade in central Smederevo, on the site of the former city port (K. Dankov, 2020).

Smederevo in central Serbia was a typical industrial city on the Danube in 20th century, spanning from all modern periods, from early industrialisation and port development before the World War I until the complete built-up of an important urban centre of heavy industry after the World War II, in the socialist Yugoslavia (Pavlović, 1980). At the end of this long-term urban transformation in the 1980s, the Danube Riverfront became a place of industrial estates and transport facilities (Fig. 286).

The post-socialist transition brought the collapse of many industries in Smederevo in the 1990s, but also gave a new impulse to city retail and service sector. Aware of new conditions, the city authorities have initiated a new cycle of urban plans, to address and direct the regeneration of the Danube Riverfront (Fig. 287). Two first “pilot-plans” from 2007 were detailed regulation plans for the improvements of sport facilities in central riverfront area (rowing and marina) and the development of a new industrial park on the eastern edge of the city zone, to ‘relax’ the inner industrial zones. It was followed by two major plans in 2011-2013, the spatial plan of the whole

city area and the urban area, which settled the main planning goals and measures for the riverfront, including (1) the gradual transformation of inner industrial zones into business and retail parks, the (2) formation of new urban riverfront next to Smederevo historic core by abolishing the industrial railway and relocating the port and railway station outside the city centre and (3) the regeneration of already existing green and recreation zones in the western riverfront (Fig. 288). These goals and measures have been the cornerstones for the recent urban plans for capital investments, designed for a new city marina, a new “Godominsko polje” business-retail brownfield zone, a new port-business zone and a “Jugovo” recreation area. The overall goal of urban-planning process in Smederevo is to bridge aspirations to make the city liveable for both locals and the tourists and to bring the further investments in local economy.

**Fig. 288 /** Urban plans for the Danube Riverfront in Smederevo (Author: J. Marić, 2022).



· Pavlović, L. (1980). Istorija Smedereva u reci i slici / History of Smederevo in a Word and Image. Smederevo: National Museum.

4.4.3

CASE STUDY 3 // BERZASCA, ROMANIA

Mihai Danciu

Berzasca in Caraş-Severin County is the most active of all the municipalities located in the Romanian Iron Gates Gorge, being in a continuous process of revitalisation and post-industrial transformation. This process follows the natural course of the periodic reconfiguration of the socio-economic profile of the towns in ‘Clisura Dunării’, a local name for the Iron Gates. The most recent stage of unitary evolution for Berzasca took place between 1830 and 2004 and is characterised by the mining activities that left behind an ensemble of industrial buildings in the Cozla Area (Fig. 289).

Over time, the local administration has identified several revitalisation possibilities by establishing new functions in place of the former mine located on the banks of the Danube; first as an industrial and business park, then as a tourist destination. Therefore, the area was planned in the recent General Urban Plan as one of the green spaces, leisure, and sports, with the pos-

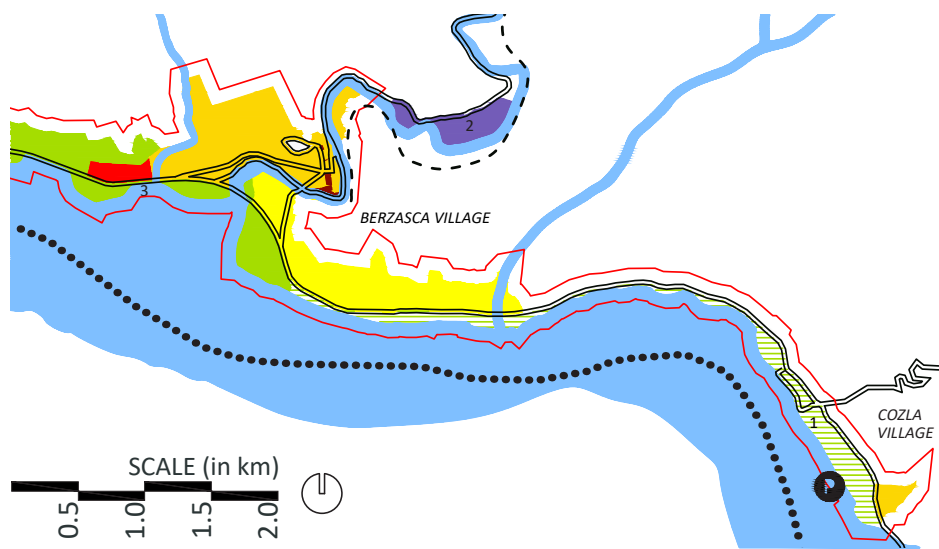
sibility of building lake houses in specific areas (Fig. 290). The plan has been applied up to the solution study level. At the same time, investors are being sought to enter into partnerships with the local authority to start investments in accommodation units, restaurants, and places for relaxation (Fig. 291-292).

Another process that deserves to be highlighted is the attention of local authorities to generate projects to increase the quality of life of residents and tourists by setting up public spaces in specific areas of the traditional fabric: in intersections or adjacent to secondary streets and green spaces (Fig. 293). All aforementioned steps were rewarded with the municipality’s certification as a tourist resort of national interest, thus creating the possibility of applying for external financing to implement the projects listed above and, therefore, responsibly addressing the issue of shrinkage of built-up areas.

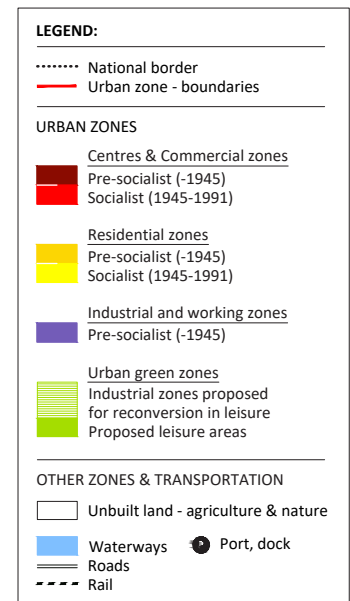


Fig. 289 / Former Cozla mine in Berzasca, nowadays a brownfield (Author: M. Danciu, 2022).

Fig. 290 / Planning for shrinkage in Berzasca. Public spaces in the centre and the former Cozla industrial site (Author: M. Danciu, 2022).



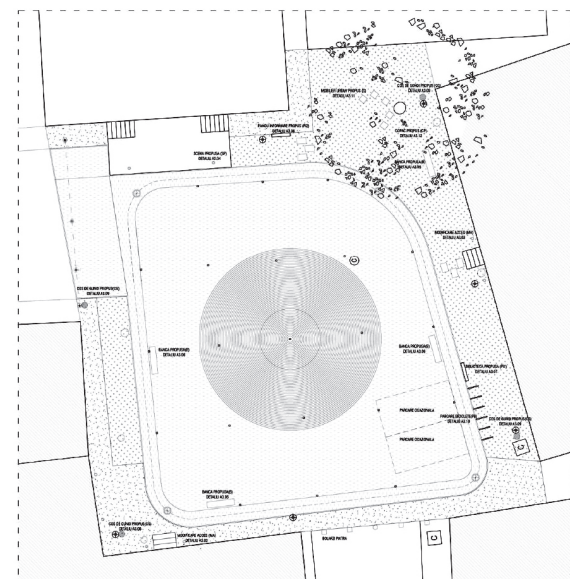
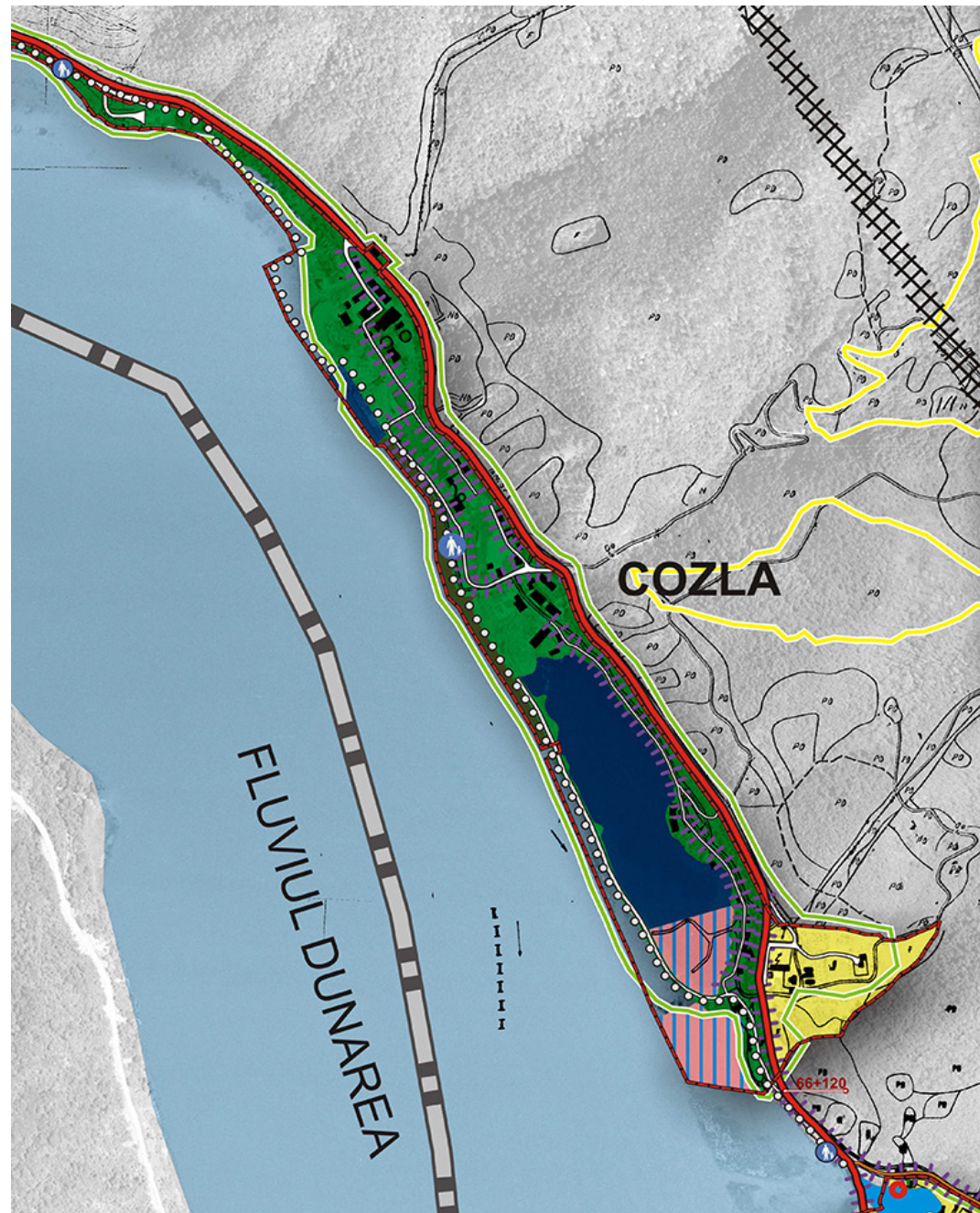
- R** · \_ADNBA (2010). Rehabilitation of an industrial site, Cozla Village, Romania. Retrieved from <https://www.adnba.ro/project/unbuilt>.
- \_ADNBA (2013). Public spaces Berzasca, Romania. Retrieved from <https://www.adnba.ro/project/unbuilt>.
- \_Gheorghiu, T. O. (2011). Studiu istoric pentru un fragment din “Clisura Dunării” – Berzasca / Historic Study for a Fragment of the “Danube Gorge” – Berzasca. Buletinul Comisiei Monumentelor Istorice, 22(1-2), 16-33. Retrieved from [https://patrimoniul.ro/images/BCMI/BCMI\\_2011.pdf](https://patrimoniul.ro/images/BCMI/BCMI_2011.pdf).
- \_Lotreanu, I. (1935). Monografia Banatului / Banat Monograph. Timișoara: “Țara” Institute for Graphic Arts.



- 1 Cozla industrial platform
- 2 Berzasca industrial platform
- 3 Egreta lake houses complex

**Fig. 291** / Former Cozla mine in Berzasca, planned as a green sports and recreation area in the General Urban Plan (Source: Capitel Proiect srl, 2007).

**Fig. 292** / Former Cozla mine in Berzasca, rehabilitation and redevelopment of an industrial site for offices, hotels and leisure (Source: AND BA srl, 2010).



**Fig. 293** / Public spaces in Berzasca. Park rehabilitation & public space for temporary market. Source: AND BA srl (2010)

## 4.4.4

CASE STUDY 4 //  
VIDIN, BULGARIA

Georgi Georgiev

Vidin inherited a significant built stock during socialism – public service areas doubled by area, retail and regional trade sites tripled, while sports and leisure zones territorially increased nearly four times. However, since the beginning of the post-socialist transition, the population significantly contracted, from 63,000 inhabitants in 1992 to just 40,000 in 2021. Thus, the city infrastructure has become a problem for maintenance and revitalisation.

In this inevitable situation, the city authorities refocused from a traditional industrial city image to culture-driven tourism based on visitors along the Danube Route and rich cultural heritage – Vidin historic centre along the river and with an ancient Baba Vida fortress. The main problem in this approach has been the necessity of the proper renewal and resource-demanding regeneration of Vidin central spaces, both physically and functionally.

To address this gap, the Vidin government adopted an essential general urban plan in 2008, which determined the main objectives of further development. Two main development corridors were planned: along the beltroad of the city and the riverfront (LSP, 2008). The first corridor targets the aforementioned industrial-business (re)development (Fig. 294). The main objectives were revitalizing the city brownfields at the southern and western peripheries and a new free business zone at the north-eastern edge of the urban zone, towards the New Europe Bridge and Romania, completed in 2013.



D+ Atlas



The second development corridor is directly related to the renewal of the Vidin centre and riverfront area through culture, tourism, and supplement leisure services (Fig. 404\_41). Aside from the main square as a traditional and the most vibrant urban node, three new nodes were proposed for this new development – the main node is the Fortress on the Danube Riverfront, plus two other ones related to the contact positions between the historic centre and the rest of the city. The main heritage sites in the zone between these four nodes have been refurbished last few years, such as the Vidin synagogue (Fig. 295) or old city walls with gates (Fig. 296). Aside from these key projects, the other smaller ones have been implemented: new pedestrian walkways, innovative urban furniture, lighting fixtures, etc.

**Fig. 295 /** The refurbishment of Vidin synagogue on the Danube riverfront historic promenade (Author: G. Georgiev)

**Fig. 296 /** The restored zone of the walls of Vidin medieval fortress (Author: G. Georgiev)

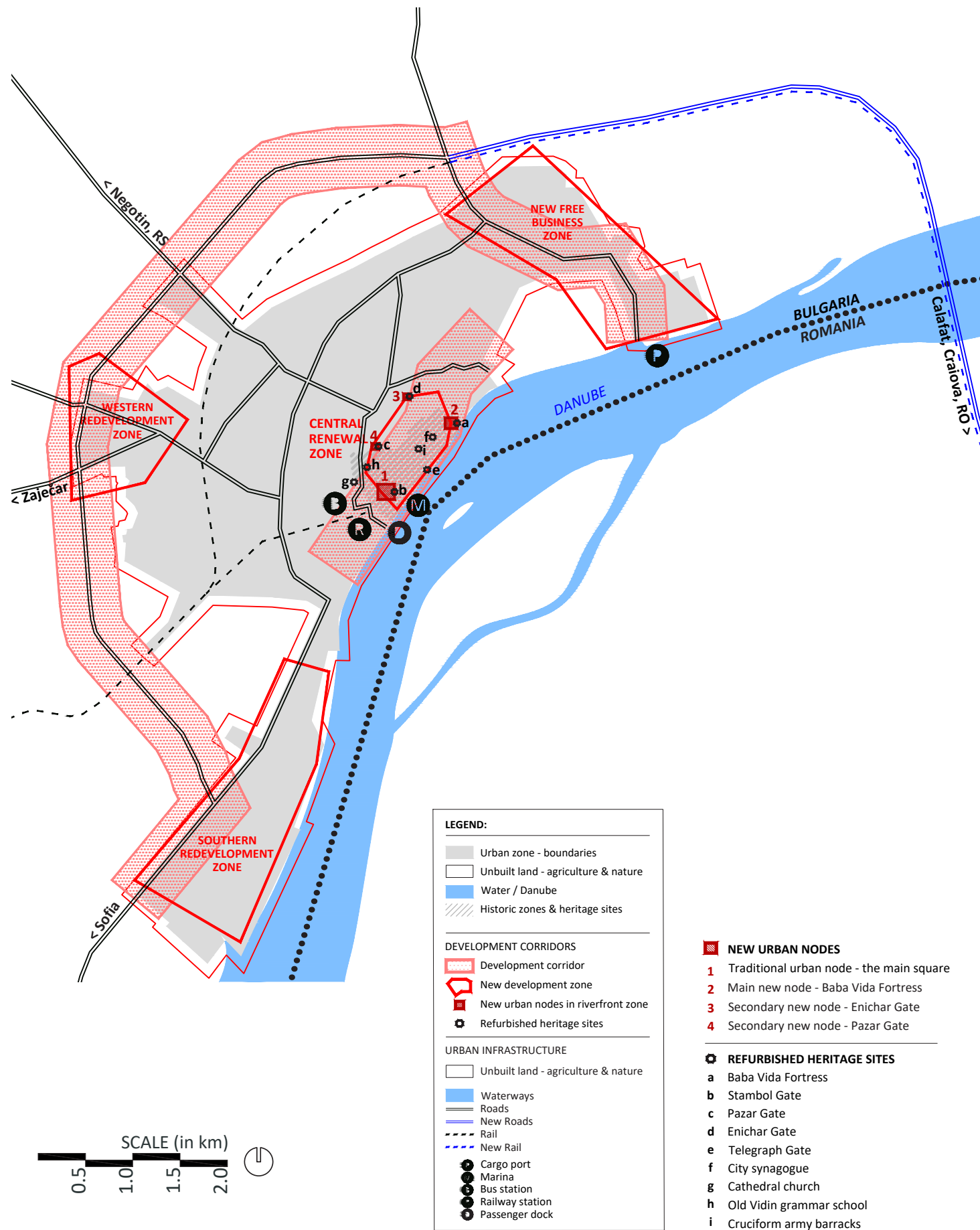


Fig. 294 / The development map of the City of Vidin (Author: G. Georgiev)

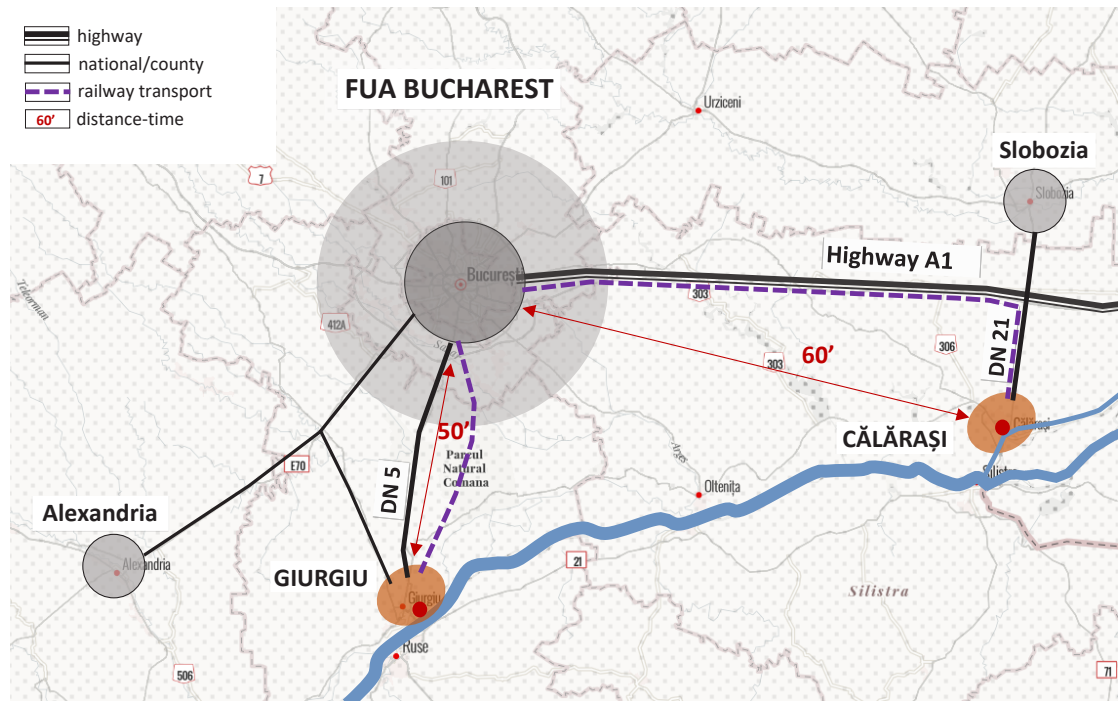
4.4.5

CASE STUDY 5 //  
GIURGIU & CĂLĂRAȘI, ROMANIA

Mihaela Negulescu

One of the factors that triggered the shrinking process of many peripheral small cities is the poor quality of their connectivity within the regional and national territory. That made these cities less accessible than the bigger ones, polarizing their economic performance and migration patterns. Hence, better transportation connections are critical in stopping and reversing urban shrinkage in these cases.

The Danubian cities of Giurgiu and Călărași in south Romania are examples – they have the opportunity to improve their connectivity through the high-speed roads and railway transportation planned by the National General Transport Master Plan, adopted in 2016 (Fig. 295). As a result, these two cities will gain improved accessibility and attractiveness in the region, within an average of one-hour distance-time from Bucharest, the Capital City and its area of influence with a population of about 2,7 million inhabitants (WB, 2017; Negulescu, 2018). This is a primary prerequisite for Giurgiu and Călărași to become “gate-cities” to the Danube. These attractive leisure destinations capitalise on both cultural heritage and on the unique landscape resource that is the green-blue corridor of the Danube (DANURB, 2019).



The opportunity and effectiveness of the strategic connectivity and accessibility improvement are already confirmed by the recent developments in Călărași, in which the contemporary arrangement of two beaches on the Borcea Branch of the Danube River – Samskara and Pod4 beaches – has led to growing leisure tourism, especially from Bucharest (Fig. 296).

Fig. 295 / Giurgiu and Călărași as “gate-to-Danube” cities, 0-60-minute distance from Bucharest (Author: M. Negulescu).



Fig. 296 / Samskara Beach on the Borcea Branch of the Danube, in Călărași, Romania (Author: F. Radulescu).

- R** • DANURB – Danube Urban Brand (2019). DANURB CLOSING CONFERENCE. INTERREG Danube Programme. Retrieved from <http://www.interreg-danube.eu/news-and-events/newsletters/4534>.
- Negulescu M. H. (2018), Considerations on the Management of Accessibility Improvement Impact on Land-Use. *Journal of Urban and Landscape Planning*, 3, 37-50. DOI: 10.54508/JULP.03.04.
- World Bank – WB (2017). *Magnet Cities: Migration and Commuting in Romania*. Washington: World Bank.

#### **Annex \_ 01 \_ No Cities**

**TABLE 1 /** The status of an urban settlement in the countries of the Middle and Lower Danube Region (Author: B. Antičić, 2021; Data: Official statistical offices of enlisted countries)

#### **Annex \_ 02 \_ City Size**

**TABLE 2 /** The average size of an urban settlement per country in the Middle and Lower Danube Region (Author: B. Antičić, 2021; Data: Official statistical offices of enlisted countries)

#### **Annex \_ 03 \_ City \_ Division**

**TABLE 3 /** The possible division of urban settlements – cities and towns – in Middle and Lower Danube Region by NUTS EU territorial organisation (Author: B. Antičić, 2021; Data: Official statistical offices of enlisted countries)



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