

Article

Towards a More Cohesive and Accessible City Centre: Bridging the Gap Between Historical Identity and Modern Community's Needs—Case Study: Lugoj City, Romania

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Abstract

The centres of historical cities have changed trying to accommodate modern urban needs, while maintaining the original bohemian atmosphere that represents the identity of the local community. Restoration, according to Cesare Brandi, goes beyond mere physical repairs and focuses on preserving the core historical and cultural significance of a building within its context. Brandi highlights the importance of the surrounding environment, suggesting that the “horizontal plan” around a structure should be prioritised to ensure its recognition within its historical setting. Decisions about preserving or removing additions should be informed by historical evidence, as modifications over time contribute to the building’s narrative. Aesthetic considerations are secondary to historical accuracy, with the primary goal being the preservation of the building’s relationship with its context rather than its visual appeal. This perspective aligns with Giovannoni’s view that preservation should not focus solely on individual monuments but on the broader urban fabric, which collectively forms the city’s historical environment. By respecting the context in which buildings exist, restoration efforts can maintain their role in the larger space. Ultimately, the aim is to balance the conservation of architectural value with modern needs, all while ensuring that the structure’s historical integrity is maintained. While there is extensive research on heritage conservation and accessibility, there remains a lack of integrated strategies that harmoniously address both cultural preservation and inclusive access. This paper presents an urban study made on the historical centre of Lugoj, a Romanian city with interesting architecture. This study aims to illustrate how creating an urban promenade can improve cohesion between old and new, creating a harmonious public space that reflects the identity of the local community. Moreover, the accessibility of the case study area is investigated, following four major categories of special needs, mobility, visual, auditory, and cognitive impairments, and offering recommendations for a better public space for all the citizens.

Keywords: heritage; public space; restoration; cohesion; accessibility



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1. Introduction

Historical cities are very often well preserved in Europe, leaving the marks of history for future generations. The needs of contemporary inhabitants and visitors differ from those of previous decades. This increases pressure on public spaces originally designed for different social and functional contexts. It is the responsibility of the local authorities to

find a balance between preserving what is valuable and creating new innovative elements for a better urban space. Contemporary urban environments are impacted by accelerated urbanisation and the systemic development of urban adaptive capacities for prevention, mitigation, and long-term resilience [1].

Within the Vienna Memorandum, UNESCO offered a new definition of historical urban landscape, which represents much more than historical city centres. It considers an urban area as the result of various layers of history, culture, and natural elements, which are not only physically defined but also influenced by visual perceptions and spatial relationships [2,3].

The importance of public spaces, especially the central ones within a city, was studied in multiple research areas, showing the fact that people are more prone to enjoy walking through a space that presents a lot of scenery and various details, rather than a simple, plain space [4,5]. This aspect highlights the importance of public space architecture [6]. Nowadays, most developed countries have succeeded in preserving the value and identity of local communities by preserving the historical areas and buildings, not only through restoration using innovative materials [7] but also by maintaining a vibrant atmosphere around these heritage assets [8]. Moreover, the heritage assets and public spaces represent an important element in the daily life of people because of their social and cultural implications, which are the core of the Lugo's identity [9].

As part of the process of preserving historical urban centres, one of the first steps should be represented by the knowledge of the existing conditions to understand which layers are valuable and which are less important and which are vulnerable and which are not [10]. Moreover, historical centres should be treated as part of the whole by ensuring a harmonious relationship between the centre and the other parts of the city [6,8]. At the same time, historical centres should be accessible to all citizens, including those with special needs, an aspect that was overlooked in the past conservation efforts but vital within new modern interventions and urban planning.

Aiming to clarify the interconnections and distinctions between heritage conservation and urban accessibility, a Boolean diagram was developed. This diagram visually maps the overlap of the two concepts as discussed, heritage-led regeneration and accessibility (Figure 1). Using VOSviewer software version 1.6.20, an illustration was obtained by analysing the research topics, with the aim of demonstrating their relevance and significance (the node sizes) as well as the connections between the research areas (the linking lines) [11]. The image displays the core research themes and how they interconnect within the field of cultural heritage, which is the central node. The different color-coded groups emphasise major thematic areas and the links between them and the central node. This visualisation illustrates the diversity of thematic areas and the connections between disciplines, providing a clear view of the range of research and fields related to the study and preservation of cultural heritage. The illustration highlights the lack of connection between cultural heritage and accessibility concepts. The last one is highly connected with the built environment concept but not precisely with the historical one, pointing out the opportunity of this research work.

The mapping of the heritage, accessibility, and inclusive design concepts illustrates the gap between historical integrity preservation and addressing contemporary needs, highlighting the opportunity for a further analysis. A new research direction becomes clear from this critical analysis, as the study should investigate in the future the challenges faced by the local authorities in addressing this conflicting demand. The bibliometric analysis highlights the challenges faced by historical cities in terms of urbanisation and accessibility demands, as the accessibility is rarely addressed in historic contexts, without many strategies that integrate preservation with urban cohesion and inclusivity.

2. Materials and Methods

In this study, a multi-method approach was used to establish a comprehensive understanding of the case, which included:

- Archival research—to collect data and to analyse historical documents, old maps, plans, and documents to trace the development of the area;
- Longitudinal study of the urban development—analyse the evolution of Lugoj in its historical and socio-cultural context;
- Visual examination and documentation of the physical degradation process—to analyse the material condition and conservation challenges;
- Synthesis and interpretation—correlating archival findings with visual observation for the conclusion about heritage conservation needs.

Furthermore, the concept of “Lugoj’s identity” is central but multifaceted, defying related interconnected expressions that are used within the paper:

- “The identity of the local community”—shared cultural, social, and historical consciousness of the inhabitants;
- “City’s identity”/“Lugoj’s identity”—overall image, character, and heritage embedded in the urban space;
- “Lost identity of the city/Lugoj”—aspects of historical and cultural importance that have diminished or transformed;
- “Identity quality”—a metric reflecting the integrity and perception of the identity in the city.

The research method used in this paper is qualitative, structured around two complementary layers. The first is a systemic observation characterised in objective and measurable criteria, used to evaluate concrete elements like physical barriers. The second is an exploratory observation, based on interpretative and qualitative methods to understand how heritage and accessibility are experienced, interpreted, and influenced by context.

While the systematic layer provides reproducible and quantifiable data, the exploratory one allows for a deeper understanding of lived experiences and the role of heritage in fostering social cohesion. These layers offer a comprehensive perspective that combines quantitative analysis with subtle interpretive insights.

2.1. Case Study Area

Lugoj is a town situated in Romania in the western area of the country and is crossed by the Timis river. Archival sources were studied to establish the historical development of Lugoj, the result being that the town existed since 1334. Initially the town occupied only the right side of the Timiș River by “Romanian” inhabitants, while the left side was occupied later by “German” settlers from around 1718 onwards. This historical layering built the basis of the context of the case study [15].

Lugoj is known for the many personalities who have made an impact in various fields such as art, music, theatre, architecture, ballet, gymnastics, engineering, and many others. The town is a mix of neoclassical with gothic architecture and eclectic architecture, most of the historical buildings being in the centre, including the Iron Bridge that connects the Romanian Lugoj and German Lugoj [15]. A longitudinal study of urban development was conducted to analyse the architectural and cultural evolution in the town centre, focusing on the landmark’s structures and buildings.

In the old maps of the town (Figure 2), exactly in the same spot that is now the Iron Bridge, there was a wooden bridge that connected the two sides of the Timis River, meaning that its construction on that spot was not random and is keeping a part of the history.

it would mean destroying a document. Emphasis is placed on justifying the decisions regarding the modifications made [18].

From an aesthetic perspective, the values are reversed compared to the historical factor, which prioritised the preservation of additions. From the aesthetic standpoint, it is desirable to remove the additions. The determination of the dominance of one perspective over the other, based on value judgment and the specific case, will decide whether the additions are preserved or removed. Since the material is considered the vehicle for transmitting the image, it will never be predominant in relation to the image itself. Therefore, the work must “fade” as material so that only the image matters.

Regarding reconstructions, from an aesthetic point of view, if they create new artistic units, they must be preserved. However, if the reconstruction is questionable but removing it would result in the partial destruction of aspects of the monument, it should also be preserved [18].

The data collected through archival research, longitudinal studies, visual assessments, and content analysis generated a holistic understanding and established the conclusions concerning conservation and urban intervention strategies.

A recent “trend” in urban policies research is represented by the concept of the “Smart City”, which refers to the integration of digital technologies, such as information and data-driven solutions, to improve sustainability and quality of public life. For a historical city, this concept is based less on smart systems and technologies and more on solutions for the core issues in the existing city and surroundings. Based on this concept, three policy layers must be considered to turn a historically old city into a smart one:

- The cultural layer, which represents the strategy to build on the history and identity of the city to value those aspects and the perceptions of the inhabitants;
- The resources layer, which represents the strategy to reduce consumption and waste and increase sustainability;
- The governmental layer, which represents the strategy to build partnerships between all the actors involved in the life of a city and between nearby cities [19].

Regarding the governmental layer, a core step of this layer is represented by the existence of available public data. On one hand, it can provide knowledge and acknowledgment of the dynamic process within a historical city and, on the other hand, can represent the base for future actions for a more resilient and smart city by developing social practices and fostering social transitions [20]. The accessible public data can illustrate the way that people perceive and use the public space and can represent the base for future transformative actions and designs [21].

2.2. Historical Development of the Town

The town developed on the two sides of the Timiș River, which crosses the town, and was divided, as history is said, in two parts: Romanian Lugoj and German Lugoj. On the right bank, displayed in the northeast, the Romanian Lugoj was developed and, on the left bank, displayed in the south-west, was the German Lugoj. The two parts of the town functioned separately with all the administration until the year 1795, when they were unified [15].

Although the town was divided into two sides, its development took into consideration both. The Iron Bridge and the wooden one from before were taken into consideration and unified the existing street, creating the promenade from the North Train Station to the Prefecture Building (Figure 3).

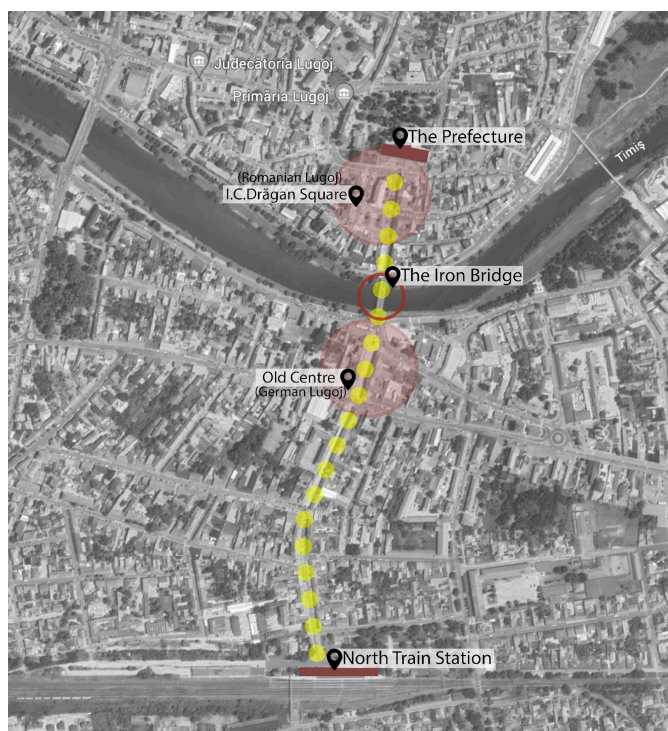


Figure 3. Map of the promenade from North Train Station to the Prefecture Building.

2.3. Urbanistic Development of the Romanian Side

The Romanian side is known to be the oldest part of the town, and this theory can be sustained by the organic development of the area. The streets have no clear configuration, they are relatively narrow, and they focus on different points of interest in the town, for example, the farmers' market and the church plaza (Figure 4) [22].



Figure 4. Old postcard of Elisabetas' market about 1904, known today as Iosif Constantin Drăgan square [23,24].

2.4. Urbanistic Development of the German Side

In 1717, colonisation started with the arrival of German and Slovak Catholic populations, who helped improve the region's economic status. The first colonisers settled on the left bank of the Timiș River, establishing a distinct locality known as German Lugoj (Figure 5). They were imperial craftsmen who contributed significantly to the region's economic growth [15].



Figure 5. Old postcard of the centre of German Lugoj, near the Iron Bridge, before the installation of the Electric Watch. The subject of this postcard is the Vertes Palace and, on the left corner, a small portion of the “Peta-Puscariu” House can be seen, known today as Pro Art Gallery [23].

2.5. The Iron Bridge Construction

The Iron Bridge was a highly anticipated project for the people of Lugoj, which became a reality in 1902, thanks to the contribution of the local municipality to the city’s urbanisation process. The introduction of the Iron Bridge into the city’s architecture also required several modifications to organise the area: the widening of the old Bridge Street—now Unirii Street—and the flanking of it with two monumental palaces, Bejan (1901–1902) and Haberehrn (1899–1900). The municipality proposed the construction of the Iron Bridge starting in 1887, but this was not possible until July 1901 due to economic reasons [25] (Figure 6).



Figure 6. Old photo from the construction of the iron bridge; the old wood bridge can be observed and the customs houses [26].

The palaces that were flanking the bridge in the northeast were built before the bridge, as can be seen in Figure 5, which is a historic picture from the time of construction of the bridge. It was constructed in the same spot as the old wooden one that existed as a pass from the German side to the Romanian side. Since the beginning of the first settlement in this area, there has always been a bridge in this exact spot.

Figure 7 is an overlap of the old map of the town over a Google map and it can be observed that not only are the bridges in the same spot but also the churches are. This means that the town kept the historic ones or reconstructed new ones in the same spot. This increases the value of both the bridge and the churches, since their place is not random but rather intentional.



Figure 7. (a) Town's plan from 1934; (b) town's plan from 1950; (c) town's plan from 2023; (d) overlap of all three plans; all plans are reconstructed based on historical photographs and on-site measurements [27].

The bridge blends into the urban composition of the 1900s and has, over time, become an emblem of the city. Its parts were manufactured in Reșița, at the StEG factories, with a total weight of approximately 185,554 tons. The bridge consists of lattice girders, with the roadway placed on the sides that connect the crossbars, has two spans of 35 m each, and is supported by a central pillar and two embankments. The four small buildings at the foot of the bridge on the banks of the Timiș River were built in the spirit of local tradition, serving as customs houses for the bridge toll. They are rectangular in shape, with sober façades in a neoclassical style and solid foundations made of cubic stone. The bridge construction took a year, and its inauguration took place on 31 August 1902 [25].

In 1924, watchmaker Geza Herzl gifted two electric watches to the town in exchange for renting one of the customs houses on the Romanian side, a proposal that the mayor accepted. The electric watches were made from the same material and featured a similar aesthetic to the Iron Bridge; one was placed near it on the German side, while the other was positioned near the Townhouse on the Romanian side. This also marked the town's first use of electricity. However, in 1927, the watchmaker stopped maintaining the watches, and the one on the Romanian side was replaced by an electric streetlamp. The electric watch on the German side (Figure 8) remained over the years, becoming, much like the Iron Bridge, a landmark of the town [28].



Figure 8. The Electric Watch [29].

In 2020, the year marked 118 since its inauguration, the Iron Bridge was declared a historic monument, and a project for its restoration began documentation. It must be mentioned that the bridge had no interventions in its structure or appearance since it was built [30].

2.6. Evolution of Historical Buildings in the Central Area

The central public space in Lugoj is a small area, developed as a connection between the North Train Station and the Iron Bridge, as well as the Romanian Lugoj. The buildings are considered architectural values and are included in the protective area, but only a few of them are considered monuments.

The old theatre that stands on the corner, across from the Dacia Hotel, was first mentioned in documents in 1733; however, now it no longer represents the old appearance of the building. First, the building was built as a coffee shop and restaurant with social games. During 1835, in the courtyard, the first theatre in Lugoj was built. In 1866, the new owner built the building as it is known today, but its first floor was not built until 1900, right before the introduction of electricity. The building is a classical architecture having Corinthian columns and, between the columns, there are imitations of metopes decorated with griffins, and the interior is heavily decorated (Figure 9) [31].



Figure 9. The interior of the “Royal Restaurant” [23].

Dacia Hotel was mentioned for the first time in 1820 under the name “The Three Roses” and, since 1848, it has become an important place for the locals. The façade and appearance of the hotel as it is known were built in 1869 and the name was changed to “King of Hungary”. A fire in 1931 destroyed the statues that were standing on top of the columns and, during the restoration, it was decided to change the main ballroom room,

changing also its appearance. It is believed that the name changed again after the fire and the name remains until today. In 2002 the hotel regained its old historic appearance during another restoration, but the statues were never replaced. Dacia Hotel is an eclectic architectural building with Gothic elements like other administrative buildings from that period [32].

The Prefecture was built in 1843 and 1859 in Elisabetas square and is the perspective end of the promenade from the North Train Station. It is one of the largest administrative buildings in the city, with an imposing facade that follows the neoclassical architectural style with Gothic influences in terms of windows that are separated by Ionic columns inserted into the building walls. The front of the central body is simple with balanced decorations [33].

The People's Palace, located at the northeast corner of J.C. Drăgan Square, was built in 1904 according to the plans of the royal state architect Armin Willanyi. The building was constructed in the Art Nouveau style, featuring impressive decorations: pilasters with geometric motifs, wrought iron balcony railings, and ornaments typical of banking institutions—the beehive, symbolising abundance and accumulation. On the corner of the building, centrally placed, was the inscription “Virtute et Labore”—translated as “Honor and Work” [34].

The Klein House is located on the opposite side of the Iron Bridge, across from the former Prefecture, at the corner of the intersection between Unirii Street and Andrei Șaguna, in J.C. Drăgan Square. In 1895, the single-story house was demolished, and the current building was constructed with a ground floor and one upper floor. The building operated as a colonial goods and miscellaneous store named “La câinele negru” (The Black Dog) until 1948 when it disappeared due to the nationalisation of properties by the communists. The building is in the eclectic style of the late 19th century, designed by architect Ludwig Tischler. The façade of the building features moderate and balanced decorative elements, with a closed balcony on the corner of the building at the upper floor, topped by an elevated turret. Above the balcony, there was a painted life-sized dog, referencing the name of the store [35].

Verteș Palace is a building with an impressive history, both through its architecture and the way it stood out from the moment of its inauguration. Pharmacist Verteș Lajos purchased the “oldest pharmacy in Lugoj” in 1882, which had been founded in 1789 under the name “La Vulturele Albu,” located at the corner of the intersection between the current Splai Coriolan Brediceanu and Alexandru Mocioni Street—the old town centre. Starting in 1888, Verteș invested in advertisements, publishing them in newspapers across the country, and, in 1896, he officially opened the pharmacy in Verteș Palace. It became well-known throughout Europe due to the advertisements published in international newspapers. Verteș improved local recipes for creams that treated various ailments, as well as beauty creams [36].

The building that now hosts the “Military Circle” was known as the Casino. Also, an eclectic architecture building, with a central body in classical architecture. The façade is now missing the detailed ornaments, and its balcony is decorated with a wrought iron railing [33].

House Peța-Pușcariu is in the centre, on the corner opposite the Verteș Palace and close to the Electric Clock and the Cultural House. The building was inaugurated in 1871 with the opening of the “Amigo” café on the ground floor and, in 1907, the Ladislau Sziklay bookstore opened near the Dacia Hotel. From 1918 to 1945, the “Glassware and Porcelain Store” operated on the ground floor at the corner of the house. In 1901, with the introduction of electricity, the Electric Clock was placed in front of the house, at the corner of the building. Today, the “Pro-Arte” Gallery operates in this building. As for its

architecture, the building fits within the neoclassical style, with a simple façade. At the corner, there is a balcony supported by massive consoles, and the ends of the building are marked by frames crowned with semicircular pediments [37].

2.7. Conservation Status of Historical Buildings

Some of the buildings show signs of improper restoration or invasive interventions; others are in a state of moderate deterioration.

From the perspective of the dominant architectural style, the old town reveals the use of the neoclassical style for most of the historically significant buildings. These include the Old Theatre, the Peta-Puscariu House (now the Pro Arte Gallery), and the Vertes Palace. Additionally, one can observe a typology of chamfered corners, corner balconies, or bow windows. The most visually pronounced architectural style, which also fits very well with the city's identity and chosen theme, is represented by Art Nouveau (Secession), largely in its geometric form. This style is based on principles that reinforce and align with the lost identity of the city, first through the reinterpretation of classical concepts and their adaptation to architecture with the help of new technologies, then through the way these concepts are transposed across multiple layers, and finally through the simplicity and refinement of the line [36,37].

The Haberehn Palace is in a state of moderate deterioration. It can be observed that the building suffered some improper and invasive interventions on the ground floor, as seen in Figure 10.



Figure 10. The Haberehn Palace moderate deterioration. The picture was taken in 2021.

Across the street from Haberehn Palace, sits the well-kept and restored Bejan Palace; the buildings share the same age, as they were constructed in 1900, before the Iron Bridge. The building was designed by architect Karl Hart with a variety of decorations and details, rounded windows, and pediments. The design took into consideration the architecture of Lugoj and the chamfered corner where the balcony displays a view of the Iron Bridge [38].

It is not uncommon for balconies and chamfered corners to be present in most historical buildings along with bay windows (Figures 11–13). This was a common practice during the development of Lugoj.

The Iron Bridge is in good working condition, with the original load-bearing structure intact. It does not show major damage to the superstructure, but it certainly bears the marks of time. Corrosion is the most common form of degradation, varying in intensity, with the areas where the main beams are supported possibly being the most affected. These sections need to be cleaned and then reinforced, as well as checked for cracks and structural integrity. Additionally, the underside of the bridge generally shows corrosion in certain areas. The Iron Bridge no longer meets operational warranty standards, though it is still used by cyclists and pedestrians, while vehicle traffic has been restricted to small cars [39].



Figure 11. Dacia Hotel, 2021.



Figure 12. Old Theatre/Royal Restaurant, 2021.

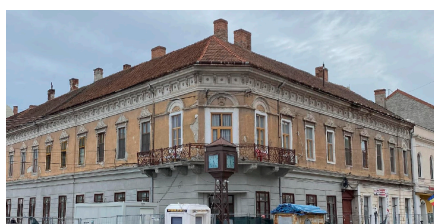


Figure 13. Pro Art Gallery and the Electric Watch, 2021.

So, in the historical city centre of Lugoj, the buildings are degrading, and just a few of them have been restored over the years. Some of their restorations were improper and lost the details of the decoration on the façade. In some cases, the interventions were applied only at the facades, without proper technical expertise and intervention at the structure or interior space. Overall, the degradation level of the buildings in the area is a medium one, without clear safety issues, but it affects the visual aspect of the public space.

2.8. Accessibility in the Historical Centre of Lugoj

However, the need for intervention on the historical buildings in the city centre of Lugoj should not be viewed exclusively from the perspective of preserving aesthetic or architectural values but also from the point of view of their functional adaptation. Accessibility is becoming an essential component of urban heritage, closely tied to the notion of public space for all [40]. From an ethical standpoint, the city is responsible for ensuring the quality of life of residents with permanent or temporary special needs. Official data indicate that, in Timis County, in 2020, there were over 25,000 people with special needs [41].

The adaptation of historical spaces is not only a matter of social responsibility but also a legally required one. Law 50/1991, H.G., no. 1056/2016 and Norm NP 051/2012 require that all public buildings ensure non-discriminatory access, establishing clear requirements at the infrastructure level for each type of impairment. Within the evaluation process of public buildings in the city of Lugoj, accessibility criteria were identified and analysed based on the previous NP051/2012 regarding the adaptation of civil buildings and urban

space, further supplemented by H.G. 1056/2016 and Order no. 189/2013. These normative documents regulate specific measures for four major categories of special needs: mobility, visual, auditory, and cognitive impairments. Each category involves specific interventions in the built environments (from accessible ramps and elevators to visual signage, tactile guidance, or adapting communication through pictograms and simplified information).

The main research question that guided this stage was as follows: “How well do public buildings in the historic centre of Lugoj comply with legal accessibility requirements for people with visual or mobility impairments?”

Although the Romanian national legal documents (NP051/2012, H.G. 1056/2016) cover four main types of impairments—mobility, visual, auditory, and cognitive—this study focused only on the first two. The decision is based on both methodological pragmatism and the architectural nature of the impairments. Mobility and visual impairments are strongly and directly influenced by the physical configuration and materiality of the built environment. Their experience in public space is shaped by elements such as spatial configuration, level differences, lighting, visual contrasts, and tactile guidance, all of which can be objectively observed and measured [42]. In contrast, cognitive and auditory impairments often require personalised technological, symbolic, or communicational interventions, which go beyond the scope of visual site assessment and rely on user-centred or immersive research methods, such as interviews, simulated route taking, or behavioural mapping [43]. These aspects will be addressed in future stages of research through qualitative methodologies.

Recent studies confirm this distinction: architectural capacity plays a decisive role in enabling independent access for people with mobility or vision impairments, while inclusive experiences for those with cognitive or hearing impairments often depend on digital augmentation, personalised guidance, and symbol-based solutions [42,43].

Five relevant criteria were selected for each special need, with minimum requirements provided for by the legislation in force.

The criteria for people with mobility impairments include (a) accessible ramp (slope $\leq 8\%$, ≥ 90 cm), (b) wide doorways (≥ 90 cm) with no high thresholds, (c) unobstructed interior circulation (corridors ≥ 120 cm), (d) adapted restroom (turning space ≥ 120 cm), and (e) accessible elevator ($\geq 1.10 \times 1.40$ m).

The selected criteria addressing the needs of visually impaired people are (f) tactile guiding paths, (g) Braille signage and tactile indicators, (h) visual contrast between elements, (i) even, glare-free lighting, and, lastly, (j) staff assistance for orientation, a criterion that is not explicitly present into national norms but was added by the author based on multiple interactions and discussions with visually impaired people regarding their experiences and needs in public spaces.

In this research, 16 buildings/public spaces in the historical centre of Lugoj were evaluated throughout the criteria presented before, following a visual assessment: (1) City Hall, (2) Former Prefecture, (3) Heroes Monument, (4) Catholic Cathedral, (5) Police Station, (6) Bejan Palace, (7) Iron Bridge, (8) Electric Watch, (9) History Museum, (10) Military Circle, (11) Dacia Hotel, (12) Old Theatre, (13) Catholic Church and Parish, (14) Vertes Palace, (15) Coriolan Brediceanu College, and (16) Traian Grozavescu Theatre.

The buildings were chosen for their crucial role in the collective memory of Lugoj, based on several criteria, such as same building age, architectural style, cultural value, central position within the city centre, public function, accessibility from the walking promenade, and importance for the local community. They are landmarks that reflect the evolution of the urban landscape, and they embody the cultural and historical identity of the city. By focusing on them, the study aimed to provide a clear understanding of the architectural heritage and its importance in the identity of the city. Moreover, the

selected buildings represent the buildings with public functions that are located within the case-study area (city centre) and should be accessible to the local community and visitors.

The significance is amplified by their 18th and 19th century origins, while showcasing a unique combination of neoclassical, gothic, and eclectic architectural styles. Their position to the promenade, the chamfered corners, bay windows, interior courtyard, and their public functions were key elements in the selection of these buildings for the study. They are mainly used for public purposes like administrative offices such as police departments and town hall, along with art galleries, museums, theatres, libraries, restaurants, coffee shops, and boutiques. The successive transformations and functional changes over time illustrate the evolution of the urban landscape and how necessities changed. Unfortunately, while they were once adapted to the changing needs, they no longer respond to today's diverse requirements.

The buildings were chosen to address a critical gap in the preservation and accessibility within cultural and historical sites. It highlights the need to create a balance between heritage conservation, accessibility, and inclusivity—maintaining the idea that historical monuments remain protected, accessible, and inclusive for all. By focusing on just these 16 buildings, which are considered the ones that meet the selection criteria, the research balances historical value, practical viability, and community relevance, while offering actionable insights and recommendations in the context of limited resources.

The base of the investigation methodology is represented by the conceptual framework linking heritage, accessibility, and inclusivity. Heritage represents the central point of the research by providing the historical and cultural content that needs to be protected. Accessibility represents the key tool by allowing users to benefit from the existing heritage. Inclusivity represents the linking element by ensuring an ethical and social framework to ensure that all members of society can benefit from that heritage. In this case, accessibility is not seen just like a technical aspect that needs to be considered but like an important social link that transforms heritage into a valuable shared resource for the historical city. So, the methodology evaluates the accessibility of the public historical buildings in Lugoj city as an intersection between three dimensions (Figure 14), evaluating whether the heritage buildings manage to ensure cultural preservation and social inclusivity.

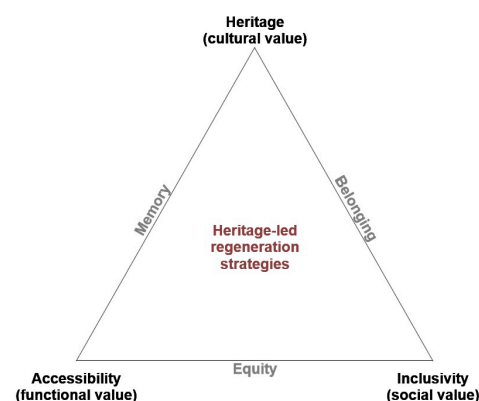


Figure 14. The three dimensions of heritage, accessibility, and inclusivity that were considered within the research framework.

The assessment was based on an observational research method, based on the previously presented ten criteria grouped in two categories: five criteria related to mobility impairments and five criteria related with visual impairments. Each criterion is based on an observable and/or measurable feature of the heritage building.

The results for each criterion were noted with four possible ratings, “Yes”, “Partial”, “No”, and “N/A” (not applicable), depending on the degree of compliance observed. This

scoring method aligns with other existing literature that applies to the same simplified scoring system to assess the level of accessibility [44]. Also, it was further inspired by recent studies that evaluate built environments based on observable criteria, without the need for user-reported data [14]. For each criterion, the rating system was attributed as follows:

- “Yes”/Existent = 1 point;
- “Partial” = 0.5 points;
- “No”/Absent = 0 points;
- “N/A” = excluded from calculation (criterion not applicable to that space).

The final accessibility score per building was calculated using Equation (1):

$$\text{Accessibility Score (\%)} = \left(\frac{\sum \text{Points Awarded}}{\text{Number of Applicable Criteria}} \right) \times 100 \quad (1)$$

For a replicable grid of evaluation, each criterion was analysed based on certain characteristics mentioned in legal documents. The following tables show how the points were attributed for the mobility-impaired criteria (Table 1) and visually impaired criteria (Table 2).

Table 1. Criteria designated for mobility-impaired users.

Criterion Designated for Mobility-Impaired Users	YES/Existent/✓ 1 Point	Partial/○ 0.5 Points	NO/Absent/✗ 0 Point
Accessible ramp	Ramp with slope $\leq 8\%$, width ≥ 90 cm, handrails	Ramp too steep, too narrow or missing handrails	No ramp at all
Wide doorways	Door ≥ 90 cm, no threshold	Adequate width but high threshold, or opposite	Narrow or obstructive door
Unobstructed interior circulation	Corridors ≥ 120 cm, clear of obstacles	Compliant width but with obstacles, or opposite	Narrow or blocked corridors
Adapted restroom	Turning space ≥ 90 cm, support bar	Only sink accessible, no bars	No accessible restroom
Elevator	Functional elevator, ≥ 100 cm, support bars	Middle lift or non-compliant elevator	No vertical accessible access

Table 2. Criteria designated for visual impaired users.

Criterion Designated for Visual Impaired Users	YES/Existent/✓ 1 Point	Partial/○ 0.5 Points	NO/Absent/✗ 0 Point
Tactile paths	Tactile guiding paths present and continuous	Decorative or contrast paths	No tactile guidance
Braille signage	Braille/tactile info in key areas	Simple tactile symbols only	No signage
Visual contrast	Strong contrast between elements	Slight or insufficient contrast	No visible contrast
Lighting	Even and adequate lighting, no glare	Present but insufficient or harsh	Dim or uneven lighting
Staff assistance	Staff trained and available assist	Friendly staff, no training	No orientation support

This initial stage served as an exploratory phase, designed to identify physical barriers to access and provide a basis for formulating interview questions and survey instruments that will be used in the next stage, to collect insights directly from the community.

A graphic representation (Table 3) indicating the general level of accessibility of each building in percentage is included in the left part of the table. Overall, it is observed that most buildings do not meet the minimum requirements for either type of impairments, with average scores between 30% and 50%.

Table 3. Accessibility level in Lugoj public buildings, where  = yes, existent;  = partial;  = no, absent; – = N/A, not applicable to that space.

BLDG.	CRT.	Cr. 1 Ramp	Cr. 2 Doors	Cr. 3 Circulation	Cr. 4 Restroom	Cr. 5 Elevator	Cr. 6 Paths	Cr. 7 Braille	Cr. 8 Contrast	Cr. 9 Light	Cr.10 Staff	%
1. City Hall												
2. Former Prefecture												
3. Heroes Monument			–	–	–	–					–	
4. Catholic Cathedral					–		–	–		–	–	
5. Police station												
6. Bejan Palace												
7. Iron Bridge		–	–		–	–					–	
8. Electric Watch		–	–	–	–	–						
9. History Museum												
10. Military circle						–						
11. Dacia Hotel												
12. Old Theater												
13. Catholic Church					–	–						
14. Vertes Palace												
15. C. Bredeceanu College												
16. Traian Grozavescu Theater												

The following table (Table 4) was made to provide visual references that support the objectivity and replicability of the accessibility study. Each image was selected to illustrate either its full alignment (“Yes”), partial alignment (“partial”), or lack of alignment (“No”) with legal standards on accessibility in Romania. For the labelling system, the number that indicates the building (out of 16 analysed) is used. Below each image, the corresponding

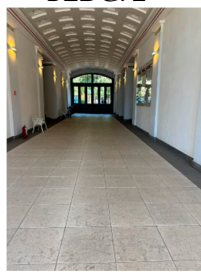
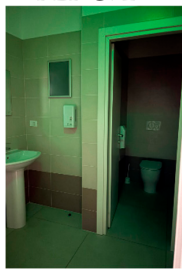
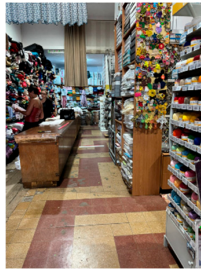
criteria is mentioned. Images marked “/Yes” demonstrate accessible features, such as wide doorways, wide corridors, or strong visual contrast between features. In contrast, images marked with “/No” highlight serious deficiencies, such as inaccessible toilets, absent ramps, or lack of visual contrast. “/Partial” examples capture situations where the element exists but does not fully comply with the dimensions or conditions, for example, the entrance ramp may only be accessible from the back but the elevator that is supposed to avoid climbing stairs is not working; the doors may be wide enough but have high thresholds that make it difficult for people in wheelchairs to access; tactile paths may be missing but the floor finishes include lines with strong visual contrast that can partially compensate for their absence; or there may be raised letters, even if they are not in braille, still providing a minimum of tactile feedback.

The only notable exception is the former Prefecture, which, following a recent restoration, has integrated several accessibility measures, such as an access ramp, adequate lighting, including a functional elevator (the only one found in these buildings), and an access ramp, but remains partially non-functional in terms of inaccessible vertical circulation but also tactile signage. A significant percentage of evaluations was classified as “Partial”, indicating the existence of apparently compliant but insufficiently functional elements—such as wide doors with high thresholds or visual contrast, these often having a chromaticity with earth tones, lacking contrast. A correlation is thus emerging between recently restored buildings and a higher level of accessibility, suggesting that the needs of people with impairments are currently being taken into account and it is possible without affecting the patrimonial value of the building.

Also, an accessibility imbalance can be observed between the functions of the buildings. The administrative ones, such as the prefecture and the city hall, are highlighted by a higher level of accessibility, benefiting from facilities such as functional elevators, compliant doors, and adequate lighting. This is in contrast to buildings with religious or commemorative functions such as the Gothic Cathedral or the monumental eras, which are deeply deficient in terms of accessibility, lacking compliant ramps, chromatic contrast, and adequate lighting. The worrying aspects constant throughout the sample are the lack of sanitary groups dedicated to people with locomotor impairment but also of tactile carpets dedicated to the orientation of people with visual impairment. Also, the staff present in some buildings can constitute a punctual support but cannot compensate for the lack of the infrastructure necessary for an autonomous use of the space, but its almost complete support is to be appreciated. Overall, there was a slight tendency to comply with the requirements of people with reduced mobility through the partial presence of ramps, while accessibility for people with visual impairments remained almost non-existent, limited to random visual contrasts most of the time.

During the evaluation, interactions with staff in public buildings provided important clues about how accessibility is perceived and understood in practice. In most cases, initial responses were reserved, accompanied by a slight reluctance or confusion. When a general question was asked regarding the possibility of discussing accessibility, the interlocutors seemed unsure, sometimes tempted to redirect the request to another colleague or office. However, the situation quickly changed after concrete examples of the questions were given, for example, “is there a wheelchair access ramp?”, at which point the attitude became more open and the tone of the conversation more friendly.

Table 4. Visual references for accessibility study: “✓” = yes/existent, “◐” = partial, and “✗” = no/absent presence of criteria.

✓	BLDG. 1	BLDG. 1	BLDG. 15	BLDG. 2	BLDG. 3	BLDG. 16
						
Cr. 2 Doors		Cr. 3 Circulation			Cr. 8 Contrast	
✗	BLDG. 2	BLDG. 16	BLDG. 6	BLDG. 14	BLDG. 16	BLDG. 15
						
Cr. 4 Adapted restroom		Cr.3 Circulation	Cr. 1 Accessible ramp		Cr. 8 Contrast	
◐	BLDG. 1	BLDG. 1	BLDG. 1	BLDG. 6	BLDG. 3	BLDG. 9
						
Cr. 1 Ramp		Cr. 5 Elevator	Cr. 2 Door	Cr. 6 Paths	Cr. 7 Braille	

A common issue was the lack of knowledge of technical terms in the field of accessibility. For example, when a question was asked about the existence of tactile carpets for the orientation of visually impaired people, an employee redirected the research to a local carpet store, considering that the question referred to a decorative product. This type of confusion suggests that accessibility is still perceived superficially, without a real understanding of the standards or functionalities involved.

During the building assessment, a lack of familiarity with technical accessibility terminology among public institution staff was noted. This can lead to partial or incorrect application of legal requirements, especially in historic building rehabilitation projects. The effective implementation of accessibility measures depends on both constructive solutions and the training of staff responsible for managing public spaces.

3. Results

A coagulated historical urban space is based not only on the preservation of the existing heritage but also on the preservation of the identity quality. This can be supported

by ensuring a diversity of social and functional elements, highlighting the need to integrate both urban heritage conservation and social and economic development [45].

To effectively address these challenges, recent studies and policy directions both conducted in Romania and internationally regarding heritage, cultural, and regeneration in the urban context emphasise general strategies for urban heritage development.

- Adaptive reuse and functional repurposing—revitalising underutilised areas by converting them into mixed-use spaces, which could include residential, commercial, cultural, and possibly research functions [46];
- Reinterpreting existing heritage structures through new functional uses—this could include tourism and education [46];
- Sustainable mobility—addressing the needs and enrichment of the public spaces as part of regeneration [47,48];
- Heritage-led strategies—generate a driving force for regeneration by utilising cultural and historical heritage and exploring new uses for spaces [47];
- Comprehensive and cross-disciplinary urban preservation—extended focus beyond the historic core to include the wider urban space, using both conventional and innovative methods [48];
- Reinventing the city’s image through a cultural lens and building a stronger collective identity—connecting tangible heritage with intangible aspects as memory and emotional resonance [49];
- Community development—focusing on identifying local resources and engaging community members actively [49];
- Developing distinct tourist routes—creating routes that highlight cultural, historical, architectural, and natural attributes [49].

Giovannoni emphasises the important distinction between monuments and fabric, noting that the latter gives meaning to the former. Although he admired grand monuments, he also appreciated the simpler constructions that followed traditional styles and patterns, which together created a unified environment he described as a “collective work of art.” According to him, preservation should focus on the entire setting, not just individual buildings; a whole neighbourhood or town, in fact, could be viewed as a monument.

The environment is described by Giovannoni as being closely linked to “contextualism” but carries a broader meaning. We translate it as “respect for the setting.” The historic cities were viewed as “a living organism,” and the ambiance reflects an attitude of reverence for the city as it has evolved over time, accumulating layers of history and character. It emphasises the reciprocal relationship between architecture and urbanism [50].

Some general rules emerge:

1. A historic area should not be touched before finding its role in the territory and, in the central historic area, small functions can be introduced that are compatible with the historic area and with themselves.
2. No historical monument should be redesigned or restored, isolated from its environment, and even small architecture is important; they form the context.
3. It is important to determine what needs to be restored to preserve the morpho-typological atmosphere of the old town and its ambiance; the details are the qualities of the old neighbourhood.

Adaptation of the historical urban areas to contemporary life can be obtained by ensuring a set of public policies and interventions, such as the improvement of the public facilities without altering the historical image. This can be obtained by introducing contemporary elements that can contribute to an improved public life, also being in harmony with the existing surroundings [51].

Historically, the investigated area is rich in significance, featuring a series of monuments along the route, as well as several buildings in the protected zone that hold equally great value.

From an aesthetic perspective, the city centre area of Lugoj city is not particularly advantaged, and there are inconsistencies between the public space and the monumental buildings. A major aesthetic issue is the mismatch between the types of activities being carried out and the areas in which they take place. For example, most events, cultural or otherwise, are held in J.C. Drăgan Square, which is heavily surrounded on three sides by roadways, while, on the fourth side, there are café terraces, and the space itself is relatively small (Figure 15).

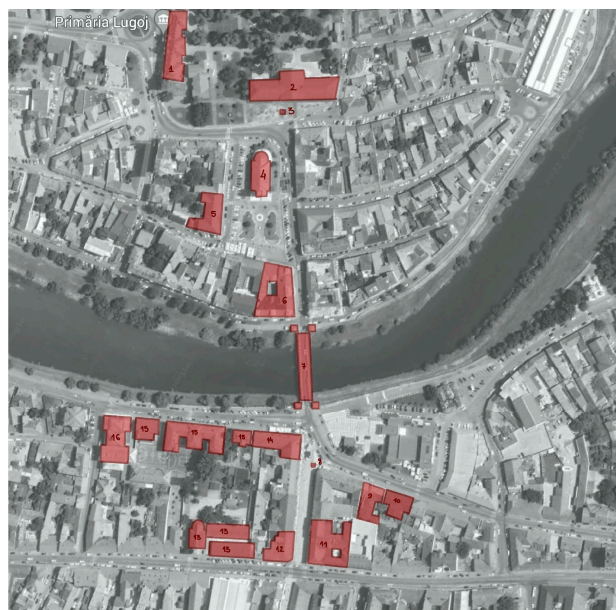


Figure 15. Map of historical buildings (1. City Hall, 2. Former Prefecture, 3. Heroes Monument, 4. Catholic Cathedral, 5. Police station, 6. Bejan Palace, 7. Iron Bridge, 8. Electric Watch, 9. History Museum, 10. Military circle, 11. Dacia Hotel, 12. Old Theatre, 13. Catholic Church and Parish, 14. Vertes Palace, 15. Coriolan Brediceanu College, and 16. Traian Grozavescu Theatre) [27].

For a synthetic visualisation of the general level of accessibility, a thematic map (Figure 16) was created in which each building in the sample is graphically represented according to the average score resulting from the evaluation.

Alongside this, the summary table highlights the scores obtained for each analysed criterion, differentiated by the two types of special needs (visual and locomotor). The percentage representation provides a clear overview of the discrepancies between buildings but also of the correlation between the time of restoration and the level of compliance with accessibility standards. Recently restored buildings tend to obtain higher scores, while unrenovated historical monuments or those with a commemorative function (such as monuments or some churches) remain profoundly inaccessible. The map thus allows for a comparative, contextual, and spatial reading of the data, bringing an additional dimension to the quantitative interpretation and supporting the idea that accessibility is not just a technical issue but an urban one, integrated into the logic of the functioning of the city centre.



Figure 16. Accessibility map—evaluation score (1. City Hall, 2. Former Prefecture, 3. Heroes Monument, 4. Catholic Cathedral, 5. Police station, 6. Bejan Palace, 7. Iron Bridge, 8. Electric Watch, 9. History Museum, 10. Military circle, 11. Dacia Hotel, 12. Old Theatre, 13. Catholic Church and Parish, 14. Vertes Palace, 15. Coriolan Brediceanu College, and 16. Traian Grozavescu Theatre).

From the ambient architectural point of view, the entire area lacks coherence as the public space cannot be perceived as one and the aesthetic aspect in general. The green space is almost non-existent as a perceived area because it is hardly accessible. The green embankment of the Timis has a remarkable relation with water but unfortunately no connection with the public space in the central area of the town; also, the width of the river makes visibility from one bank to the other possible with the naked eye.

The central public area presents functional, representational, and configurational but especially environmental ruptures due to the different manners of urban, architectural, and visual development. A first step for a more cohesive urban space would be to consider the entire area as a historical promenade with urban pockets, as presented in Figure 17.

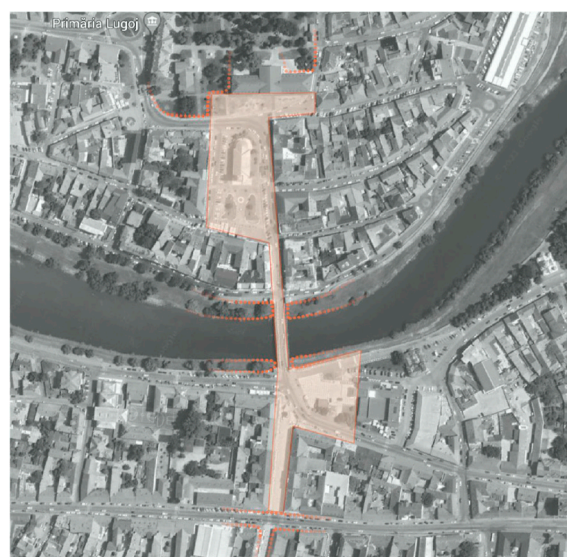


Figure 17. Historical possible promenade (intervention area and possible extension areas) [27].

Moreover, the traffic in the actual situation is perceived as a factor that does not allow people to perceive the public space as a whole (Figure 18), so the ideal situation would be to extract car access from the historical promenade, or at least to apply traffic calming strategies that will prioritise the people, for example, applying cubic stone instead of asphalt.



Figure 18. Existing traffic for cars (in red) and people (in yellow) [27].

A simple measure with great impact would be to bring a common language to the pedestrian zone in the central part of the city, respectively, the walking plan, and to be able to continue this language throughout the city so that it is perceived as unitary because the existing walking area in the city centre presents a series of materialities and non-conforming joints that create a visual and aesthetic discomfort. Moreover, a common pavement material for the entire historical promenade would ensure a more cohesive public space, because, in its actual form, the space is perceived very differently from various points, as presented in Figure 19 [27]. The treatment of the urban slab will take into account the possibility of its repetition also outside the area on which the project is focused, the main purpose of this aspect being the horizontal and vertical connection of the various landmarks. The horizontal plan will consider the marking of various important events throughout history but, also, the marking of important buildings known to citizens as “landmarks” of the city.

The main idea is to restore/resuscitate a lost identity of the city by restoring the common urban slab and inserting some attractive poles in the form of controlled viewpoints (Figure 20), thus referring to several architectural, aesthetic, and historical levels to different events, moments, or personalities that marked and made Lugoj famous.

The study conducted on public buildings in the historical area of Lugoj municipality regarding the inclusiveness of the city highlights a fragmented reality in terms of their adaptation to the minimum accessibility requirements. Although current Romanian legislation (Law no. 50/1991, Law no. 448/2006, and NP 051-2012) provides for the mandatory accessibility of all public spaces for people with special needs, the application of these norms is often superficial or uneven. Many of the interventions observed in the field—steep or blocked ramps, non-functional elevators, and narrow toilets—reflect a lack of institutional commitment, as well as a deficient understanding of the real accessibility standards.

At the same time, the analysis highlights a clear contrast between the functions of the buildings. Administrative institutions generally show a higher level of compliance (even if partial), while spaces with religious or symbolic functions are almost completely inaccessible. This trend is not specific to the local context. Recent studies show that the

lack of accessibility in heritage buildings is a recurring problem throughout Europe in the absence of clear intervention methodologies adapted to the historical context [52,53].



Figure 19. Perception of the public space from different points [27].

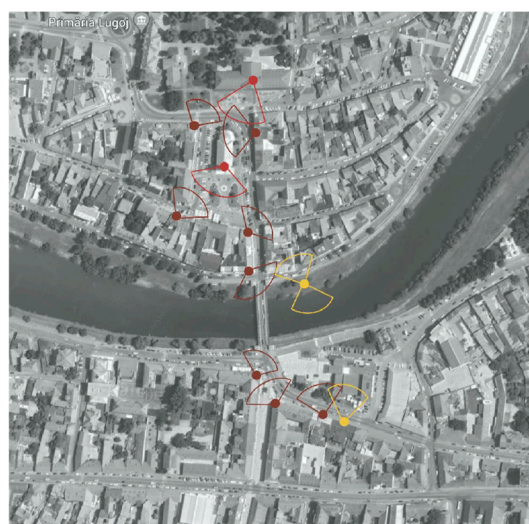


Figure 20. Controlled viewpoints: existing (in red) and proposed (in yellow) [27].

Accessibility is not a fad or an option but a basic condition for public space to be truly inclusive. In a city where the past is valued through built heritage, the present must provide guarantees for the equitable use of these spaces by all citizens, regardless of their physical or sensory capabilities.

4. Discussion

This study offers an exploratory assessment of the investigated strategies, effectively addressing the two initial research questions, appropriate for small and medium-sized European cities.

How is it possible to balance heritage preservation with modern accessibility and cohesion needs in historical cities? The answer to this question lies in the approach that has to consider both the past and the present by harmonising the language of architecture, aesthetics, and functionality, by adopting a strategy that relies on:

- Reconnecting spaces through a common aesthetic language and a cohesive architectural urban space;
- Planning based on community-centric design by prioritising community needs in public spaces that respect the historical context;
- Keeping the interventions minimal to avoid altering the historical buildings while ensuring accessibility for all.

How can heritage-led urban regeneration strategies enhance connectivity and accessibility while preserving the historic urban morphology? The answer to this question lies in the approach that balances methods that maintain historical integrity while embracing modern needs, by enhancing connectivity and accessibility while preserving historic urban morphology:

- Assess the existing barriers in historical areas in a comprehensive way;
- Make a priority of preserving the urban identity;
- Implement minimal interventions such as an accessible and attractive promenade with controlled perspectives;
- Evaluate regularly and improve accessibility.

How well do public buildings in the historic centre of Lugoj comply with legal accessibility requirements for people with visual or mobility impairments? This study has shown that they comply very little, with minimal resources. To reduce this gap, we propose the following courses of action:

- Develop a local guide to good practices for adapting historic buildings, based on national regulations and inspired by existing international guides [54].
- Train staff in public institutions on accessibility criteria and how to relate to people with special needs as a minimum measure of information and openness [55].
- Create a participatory accessibility monitoring system, which includes local administration, specialised organisations, and representatives of affected communities, according to good practices promoted at the European level [56].
- Adapt heritage intervention guides by introducing reversible or minimal solutions (mobile ramps, discreet tactile signage, etc.), which do not affect the historical value but increase the functionality of the building [57].
- Create a local digital register of the level of accessibility in public buildings, accessible to citizens, similar to initiatives such as Wheelmap.org [58].

Moreover, in Lugoj city, accessible public data regarding the degradation state of the historical buildings, as well as regarding the accessibility in public buildings, does not exist, leading to the need to perform individual on-site investigations that cannot be used in the future for further studies. That is why a public database regarding the city's historical centre would be important for sustainable regeneration strategies. One of the limitations of this research work is represented by the accessibility to the obtained data. That is why the next step of this research work will be represented by the creation of a mobile application. This application will provide updated information regarding the accessibility score of each

public building that was investigated, together with other relevant information about the architecture of the building.

The research work presented in this paper represents a first step of a holistic approach for accessible historical public space, highlighting future working directions:

- Developing interviews with the local community and stakeholders;
- Developing a mobile application for accessible public data;
- Developing a design guide for strategies and interventions.

Current approaches tend to prioritise design compliance with norms and normatives, and they do not necessarily include participatory planning processes. Involving in a further research step the local community, the end users, and the stakeholders in the planning process would reduce the gap between heritage and accessibility, promoting the sense of inclusivity.

5. Conclusions

Lugoj's lost identity unfolded on several levels related to intellectuality, history, art, music, theatre, industry, and sport but which, today, are no longer visible. The research highlights the need to superimpose on several levels the different reinterpreted identities that can be transposed into the local architecture, respectively, in the urban slab of the city to bring them back to life.

This study revealed a significant lack of coagulation within the layers of the historical urban space, with many potential valuable spaces, but without putting first the needs of the community. Bringing back to the same architectural, aesthetic, and functional language the areas with significant inconsistencies would significantly contribute to ensuring a better common space.

These needs were born with the more frequent reporting of irregularities within a public urban space, mainly because of the lack of a macro strategy but also because of the atmosphere that was perceptibly lost by the citizens due to the introduction of elements that do not fit into the historical context. Once those inconsistencies are noticed, it is impossible for them not to be perceived by passers-by.

The strategy at the site level is to render an atmosphere in relation to the history, culture, and memory of the place layer so that the area is perceived as historical more than through some buildings but also through the space that surrounds them. The buildings would not be directly affected but the public space that surrounds and connects them would be treated as a minimal intervention. Moreover, the strategy must include measures to make the public space accessible for people with impairments.

This study has highlighted a lack of a holistic approach for the historical public space of Lugoj, leading to a space that is no longer attractive for the local community. Repurposing existing structures, engaging local communities, promoting cultural initiatives, and designing distinctive walking routes are strategies that demonstrate how heritage-driven urban renewal can strengthen connections and accessibility without undermining the historical identity of urban environments. Activating unused/underused spaces and integrating cultural elements, both tangible and intangible, into urban planning, these interventions aim to be an inclusive, context-sensitive, and sustainable model of heritage urban development. The combination of adaptive reuse, the reinterpretation of heritage assets, cultural narrative building, creation of defined promenades, and community empowerment reflects the multifaceted role heritage can have in urban regeneration.

At the same time, the study on accessibility highlighted the lack of resources for people with impairments, reinforcing the idea that it is mandatory to integrate inclusive design principles when urban regeneration strategies are applied in the city centre. Despite the central location and cultural importance of the analysed buildings, most of them failed

to meet a significant number of the accessibility criteria. These findings underline the urgent need for coordinated urban policies that further aesthetic restoration and prioritise functional inclusion. Rather than treating accessibility as a secondary feature, it should be treated as a core design principle, ensuring that future interventions are both culturally sensitive and socially equitable. The results point out a future research direction, the next phase of our project, which involves community engagement.

This paper contributes to the fields of heritage preservation and accessibility by two means. The first one, which is conceptual, refers to the multi-layered analysis of Lugoj city and the proposal for the integration of the cultural identity into urban public space through architecture and urban planning. The second one, which is analytical, refers to the identification of the lack of cohesion in the existing historical urban centre, with the specific inconsistencies between heritage preservation and community needs.

There are some limitations of the research work, mainly related with the fact that the analysis is only made on one case study. Moreover, although the study highlights the central position of the community perception within the analysis, it does not yet integrate interviews and participatory strategies in the proposed interventions. That is why several future research directions arise, such as community engagement, comparative studies, and addressing the challenges faced by the local authorities in the process of integrating accessibility in the process of heritage preservation.

In conclusion, it is important to preserve the historical image of the buildings located in the protected monumental area by alternating between preservation and recognition of the community value, while also introducing new urban elements in harmony with the general atmosphere to respond to the current needs of the people. The principles of the proposed strategy in the city aim to create a promenade in the historical area, which will guide people to the important points and buildings, marking and redefining the identity of the city, according to all the plans in this study.

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