



make better

Cunoaștere
pentru
regenerare urbană

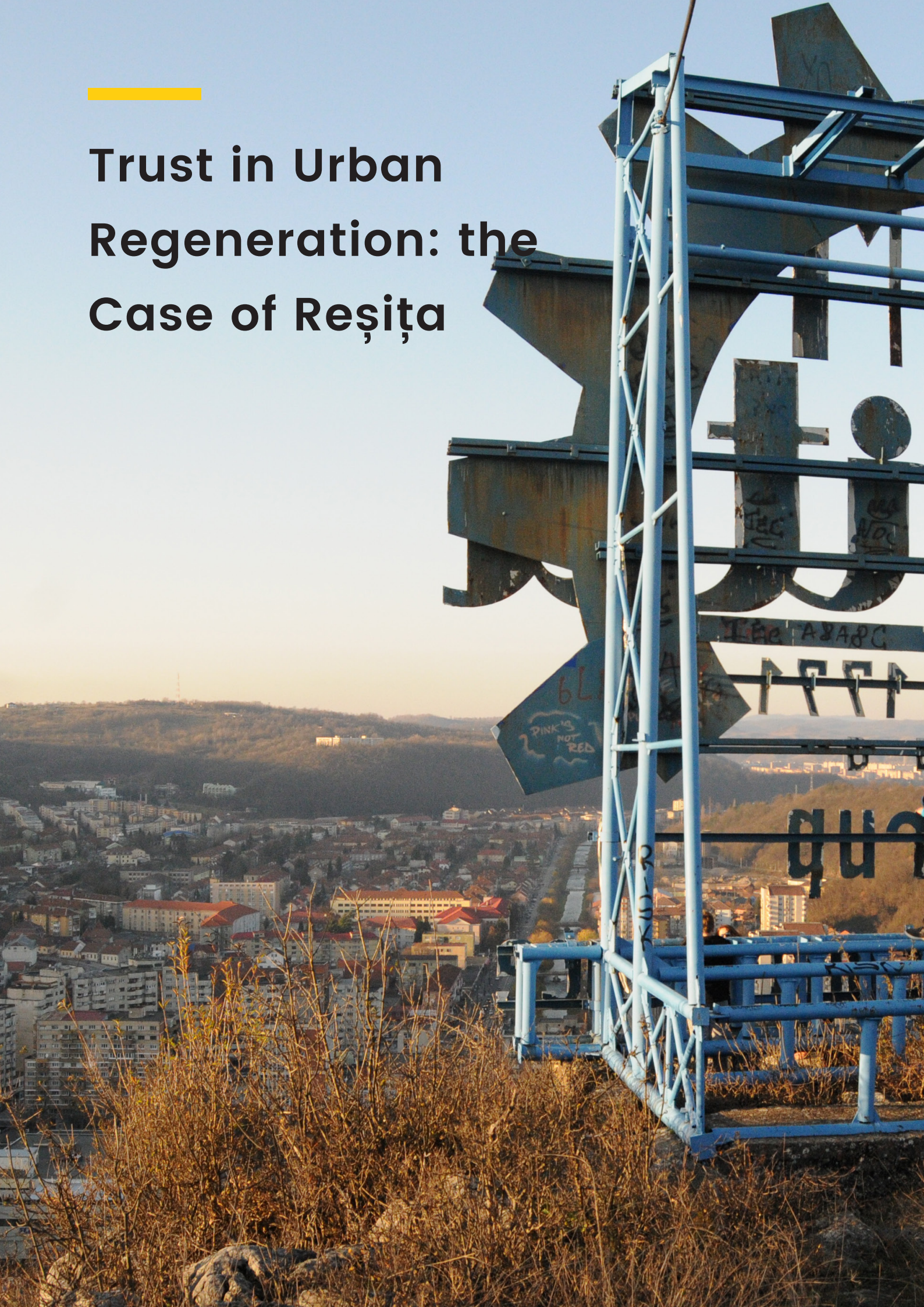
Reșița Case Study

Trust in Urban Regeneration

Make Better CITIES

—
The first 2 years of the
urban regeneration process

Trust in Urban Regeneration: the Case of Reșița



First steps towards urban regeneration. Grass-root impressions

Let's talk about cities! About forgotten cities and about their actual prospects of rebirth and development.

For example, let's talk about Reșița. A city whose development is closely related to the richness of Banat Mountains: the mineral resources used to be exploited in dozens of sites in the area; steel, tracks, engines, weapons, railway engines, hydropower turbines were manufactured once in Reșița. An entire value chain starting from the raw material picked straight from the mountain and becoming an advanced technological product. Austrian, Hungarian, German, Czech, South Bohemian Czech ethnic groups

settled in the area and all of them contributed to the development of the town. The inhabitants remember there was a time when their city would provide 20% of Romania's GDP and they are disappointed by the widespread downfall following December 1989. Do you find this familiar?

We find it familiar, too. Working in a ... depressed community, as we call it, is challenging. Not only has Reșița decreased in terms of population by approximately 30% in the last 30 years, but many of those who continue to live here believe that the city is dead, and they lost hope anything could be done.



The development of a city is closely tied to the local community's perception, confidence and aspirations; these aspects are built or lost over time and they are relative to the past of the city. In a community where people believe all is lost, that nothing will work and that they'd better leave elsewhere – the reversal of the downward trend is very difficult.

Marina Neagu, co-founder of MKBT: Make Better

MKBT: Make Better proposes a different perspective.

MKBT: Make Better proposes a different perspective. After many months of travelling across the country and of working with dozens of municipalities and county councils, on urban regeneration or local development strategies, we can say that things are not as grey as they seem in Reșița. We are confident enough to state that the case of this city is better than that of many other cities with comparable population. However, the people of Reșița do not have this comparative perspective, especially when isolation is one of the main disadvantages they describe. The development of a city is closely tied to the local community's perception and aspirations; these aspects are built or lost over time and they are relative to the past of the city.

The theory of local economic development emphasizes considerably the idea of "self-fulfilling prophecy" – in short, the community's faith, mobilization and cohesion for an affluent future contribute intrinsically to the materialization of this future.

No city lacks potential. However, some cities do not know their potential. For Reșița, MKBT: Make Better has undertaken this role of curator of the potential and manager of confidence. And it works! We are thankful to all the organizations and people who enabled this process. The story of Reșița is told in more detail at page 6.

But first let's introduce ourselves!

MKBT: Make Better is an organization acting in the sector of urban development and regeneration in Romania; the organization was established in April 2014. We are concerned with the problems of our cities and we get involved to tackle the toughest challenges. We propose, outline and coordinate regeneration and development processes by which as many Romanian cities as possible should become their best possible version and the best "home" for their inhabitants.

We translate the development potential of the communities with whom we are working, and we endorse it by bringing together different but complementary specializations: urban economy, civil engineering, urban planning, geography, anthropology, and community development.

In the meantime, we have worked in almost 30 communities across the country, by offering support to local authorities, NGOs or even to companies, to help them to understand better the communities in which they conduct their activities and to generate strategies, programs, and services for their regeneration.

—
projects in
30
communities from
Romania

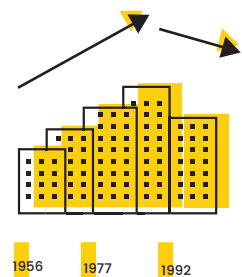


The great discoveries of our time do not stem from the search for remote territories, but from the way in which we look differently at territories nearby.

Marcel Proust adapted by MKBT: Make Better

Why Urban Regeneration in Romania?

Romania underwent one of the most radical urbanization experiments in the world, in the post-socialist space. From 27.2% urbanization in 1956, Romania reached 43.7% in 1977, respectively 54% in 1992. Twenty-five years later, most of the cities are dealing with the challenges of deindustrialization and restructuring of local economy, of population decline and of management of the urban built heritage.



Our approach for urban regeneration

We help cities and communities to see themselves with different eyes, to know and to fulfil their potential.

+ People-oriented approach

We do all these things by starting from the people. We analyze who are the people who live in the city, about their reasons to stay or to leave the city, about the aspirations of the city's inhabitants or decision-makers, but also about those who are currently excluded from the labor market or from the urban services and about those who act currently as an engine of development at the local level.

+ Space-oriented approach

Then, we look at the spaces in the city: where people live, where the city's attractions are found, the characteristics and facilities of the built heritage and of the environment, the land or buildings currently underused/ abandoned and available for new investments.

+ Particularities of Eastern European cities

We place everything in context, and we analyze the characteristics of the Eastern European cities that underwent similar urbanization processes, industrialization, considerable property fragmentation, sectorial approach of challenges and limited undertaking of responsibility.


+ Urban regeneration

We translate these things into a process of urban regeneration.

Urban regeneration is the smart approach for the rebirth of the cities and of their communities. It is a guided process seeking to reverse the economic, social and physical decline of the inhabitants who are faced with the degradation of the built areas, poor economic competitiveness and low quality of life.

Urban regeneration means to redefine the city's assets, the local community, the cultural, natural and social heritage of the place, as items of potential and development catalysts.





The challenges of the city should not paralyze us, they should help us discover who we are.

Bernice Johnson Reagon (adapted by MKBT: Make Better)

Reșița. Regeneration of the city

I. What was our starting point?

- Like other small and medium-sized town of Romania, the municipality Reșița faces major challenge of population decline and economic contraction, poverty and areas of urban segregation, a high number of underused or abandoned spaces; all of these stem from or are exacerbated by the post-1989 decline of large-scale industry, which had characterized the city's development for more than two centuries.

- The city's population has decreased by approx. 12,000 inhabitants in the last 25 years (the equivalent population of the small town in Romania). Of the people registered in Reșița 8.5% now live in another country, and 13% have expressed their intent to leave the country for good or temporarily in the next 3 years.

- There are many reasons for the city's population decline, and they are similar to the national trend: economic restructuring and limited possibilities of finding employment, few opportunities and facilities for spending spare time, but also the lack of trust in the city's development potential.

+ Nevertheless, there are many people in the city who want to contribute in order to cover some of these needs, both from among the representatives of the local institutions, civil society organizations, but also from among the economic operators and the community members who get involved in order to change Reșița for the better. Their efforts, however, are not joint and sustained in a way that could lead to the growth and coagulation of this tendency into a solid, co-created undertaking.

+ The city currently holds 380.84 ha of industrial sites, occupying 16% of its built-up area. Of these, just 40.65% are active, while 36.33% are dilapidated or already demolished, and 23.82% are in conservation. They are completed by other dozens of currently unused business and cultural spaces. If they are managed correctly, they can become more than 2,000,000 m² of land available for investments, new opportunities of employment or leisure time spending for the inhabitants, spaces that support the interaction and cooperation of those who work for the growth of new opportunities and for the city's renaissance.



When you are stuck in a problem and you cannot see beyond it, an external party may show aspects or may come up with ideas you simply did not consider

mayor of the municipality of Reșița

II. Steps taken in 2016 – 2018

The approach of MKBT: Make Better for the regeneration of Reșița included 4 main pillars of action:

Brownfield redevelopment

- Although only 40.65% of the total industrial sites are currently functional, the 250 years of industry in Reșița are now very visible in the city: furnaces confirm it, as do the impressive buildings and dozens of brownfield hectares. In 2016, there was no information about the industrial sites in the city, the ownership conditions and their potential.

+ We started by visiting and cataloguing all the active or abandoned industrial sites of the city. We drew up 11 datasheets for 19 analyzed sites, amounting to 380 ha of industrial land. We filed at least 17 series of requests of data and interviews for the clarification of the ownership, of the readiness for use and of the potential uses through functional reconversion.

- One particular challenge was the identification of a very complicated ownership status for that apparently compact zone that, in fact, is shared by 47 public and private owners, active or insolvent entities, many of them having posted mortgage guarantees, some of them sold even to companies registered in Cyprus or in the Cayman Islands.

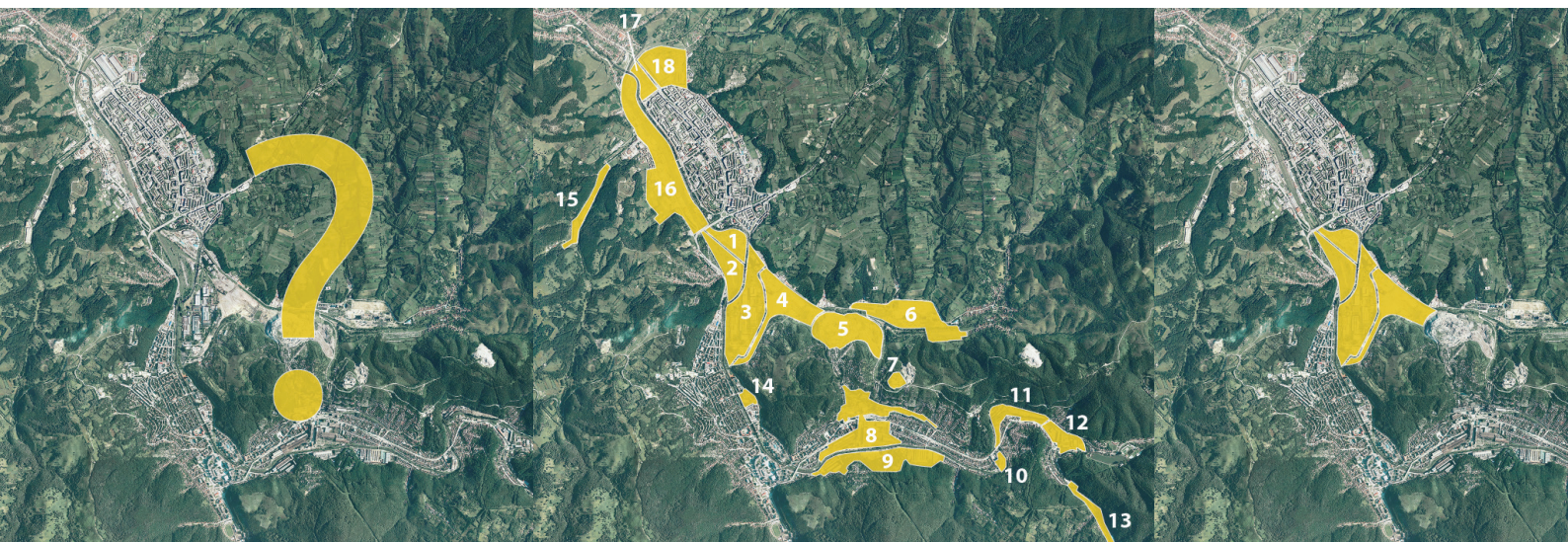
+ Then, for the Mociur-Valea Țerovei Area – where the most important available land resources of the city are positioned centrally, with good accessibility – we drew up guiding catalogs for the promotion of the investment opportunities, both for the developers who could contribute to the re-functionalization of some of these lands, to better respond to the the residents' current needs, and for the investors who could capitalize the sites for job creation.

11 data sheets
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sites

19 analyzed
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sites

380 ha
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land

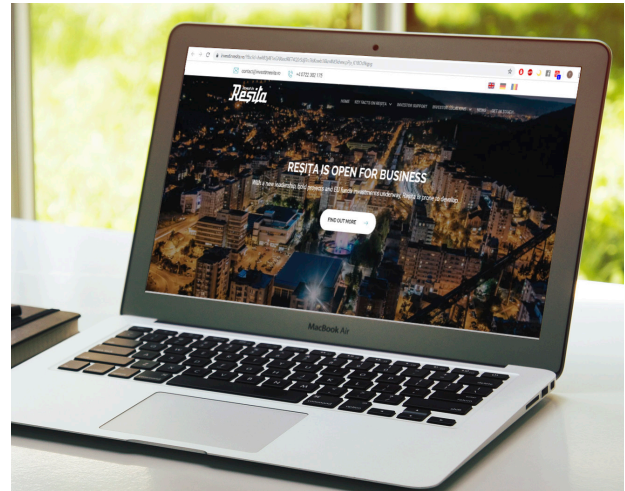
47 land
owners



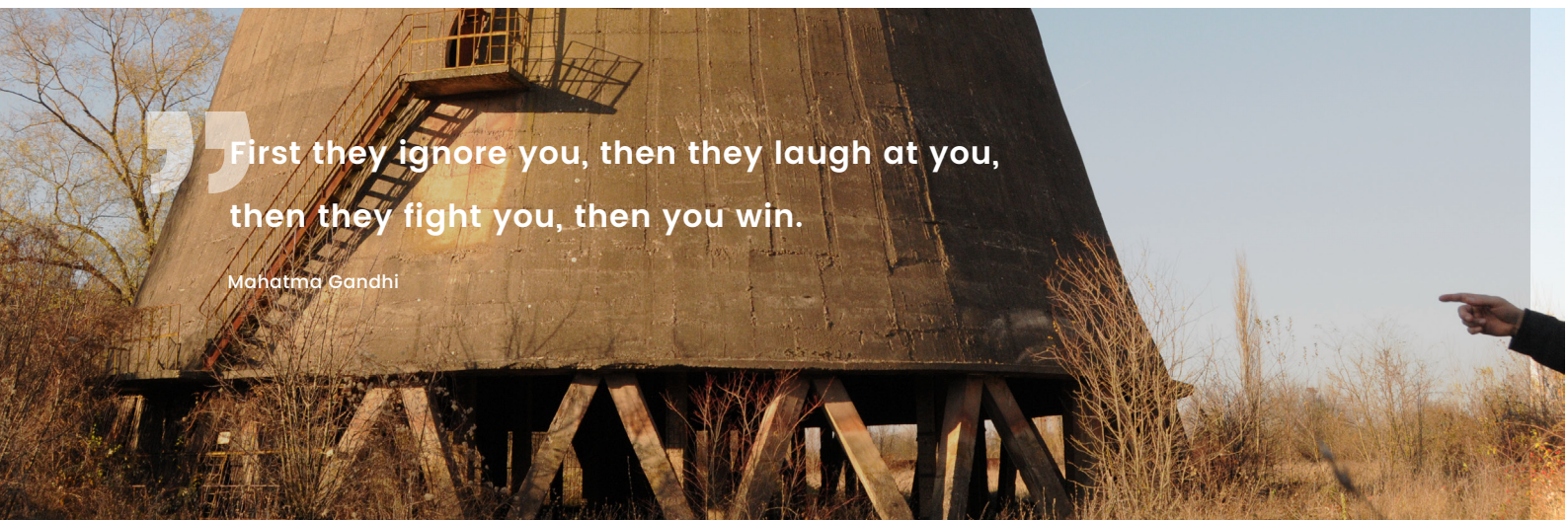
The promotion of the potential of these sites, the whole **Invest in Reșița** campaign, and especially the willingness of Reșița's mayor's office and the undertaking of the necessary steps for the start of the regeneration process have put Reșița on the agenda of important national and international events and meetings. Following this promotion campaign, Reșița has attracted the developer they were seeking, who has already purchased the land is on the verge of starting building, and is currently conducting advanced negotiations with a number of private investors, which could result in a capital inflow for the city. Of course, the condition is that this process should be pursued with the perseverance and the patience required by long-term vision.

+ In parallel, we developed communication plans for three segments of public – residents, visitors, and investors, which could gradually build the confidence in the city's development potential.

+ We asked the community: what is needed, in terms of new functions in the city? What do the people lack in Reșița? What could attract and make sense for the city's present and future? We organized 3 focus groups with different age groups, with the inhabitants, 29 interviews with companies, NGOs, mayor's office departments for the definition of some premises of use for this area and other promising areas of the city, while we would analyze and compare with data and official statistics, which should outline the locality's economic and social profile.



- Thus, we found out that two of Reșița's industrial colossi, the Reșița Steel Works and the Car Factory, now count together approximately 1500-2000 employees, as compared with more than 25,000 in the past; we also found out that Reșița "lives" on wholesale and retail (the economic sector with the largest turnover and largest number of employees in the local business environment), but also on remittances from those who left; that the employed population (16-to-64 years old) registered in the municipality of Reșița at the 2011 census was only 54.7% of the total population fit for work; that most of the young people want to leave the city; that the people of Reșița need (better paid) jobs (with a wider range of choices in terms of specialization), that they want to have meeting and event spaces where those with initiative could conduct and grow their activity; that, because of the lack of local alternatives, the people of Reșița spend most of their budget of (non-food) shopping in Timișoara, and that the recreation and sports facilities for spending their spare time in the city are insufficient.



2 Fight against urban segregation

- In Reșița, there is a high number of marginalized urban areas, with damaged housing resources, issues of accessibility, geographical isolation and difficult access to employment, healthcare and educational services for the communities. On average, more than 50% of the housing existing in the marginalized urban zones are overcrowded; in two of these zones, the share is nearing 100%. Four

thousand one hundred and fifty people are believed to be at risk of poverty and social exclusion in the territory associated with the main zones of marginalization in the city. Integrated intervention is difficult both because the funding possibilities for such areas are limited and because Romania lacks good practices in integrated investments for the fight against the vicious circle of poverty.



“The effects on the community are not immediately apparent. But if you manage to offer reasonable housing to a segregated family, to offer the opportunity of education to a child, to help them evolve and grow differently, in a healthy environment – then we have the opportunity to integrate these marginalized families and to hope for a better future for the whole city”

Ioan Popa, mayor of the municipality of Reșița

+ In 2016, we offered support to the establishment of the Reșița Local Action Group. The main purpose was to create a working and collaboration platform for the public institutions, civil society organization, economic operators, representatives of the marginalized communities of the city, for the identification of needs, the finding and implementation of solutions regarding the urban regeneration of the city's marginalized neighborhoods. The Reșița Local Action Group (LAG) was established officially in 2017, including 14 entities, of which: 2 institutions, 4 companies, 7 NGOs, and 1 university.

+ In 2017, we coordinated the drafting of the local development strategy for 5 such zones in the municipality of Reșița, through the CLLD (Community Led Local Development) instrument. **The evaluation score placed the strategy in the 3rd position in the country; the strategy went to the implementation stage, which means a dedicated funding of 7 million euro for the implementation of a first set of integrated projects in these areas; this amount of money is to be spent by October 2023.**



A “smart” city is not distinguished by how it takes care of its special sites – every city does that –, but by how it deals with its “ordinary” sites.

Aaron M. Renn, urban analyst and The Guardian contributor

3 Promotion of the investment portfolio

- Until recently, the municipality of Reșița has been reflected negatively in the local and national media, since it lacked an association with a perspective of growth and investment potential. Furthermore, until 2016, local municipal initiatives were limited to reactive measures and the existence of a specifically and proactively competent team was not encouraged with respect to the support and development of the local business environment and the establishment of direct relationships with potential investors. Locally, the widespread perception is that of a “dead city” with a “dead industry”, lacking any opportunity of recovery. Nevertheless, work on site has shown that there are still many local companies and undertakings whose activity is prosperous, despite the fact that it is not known and appreciated as such.

+ In 2018, we launched the campaign “Invest in Reșița”, for Reșița’s enhanced visibility to investors, its improved reputation and confidence in the city’s economic potential. The campaign was preceded by a number of actions promoting the city’s opportunities of investment and increase of its capacity to draw investors and to develop the local business environments; these actions had started in 2017.

+ Invest in Reșița in numbers

17 17 chambers of commerce
+ other mediators were approached

20 20 investors approached for the investment plans in Reșița

1250 visitors **5124** views
on the **investinresita.ro** platform in the first 2 months after its opening

5 national brand events, where the special guest was the mayor’s office of Reșița.



I knew that Reșița had a development potential, I was not aware that it was so important, but I am very happy that it is. This way we, the employers, can pass it forward that Reșița offers opportunities! It has a lot to do with the mindset and we need to remember that we have resources – workforce, conditions for training, dual school –, we have opportunities and especially willingness from the local authorities. We have a point from where to start!

Robert Chelariu, SPALECK SRL



+ Beyond the significant steps taken to attract investors, we need to acknowledge and support the existing assets. In Reșița, hundreds of entrepreneurs invest daily efforts, commitment and vision for the creation of jobs, the provisions of services and products for the local and external market, and for the support of the city's economy. We have included them in the gallery of local entrepreneurs, a component of

the **investinresita.ro platform**, precisely for the recognition of the local businessmen's commitment and efforts toward the growth of Reșița by entrepreneurship. .

+ 18 local entrepreneurs involved in the campaign Invest In Reșița, both in this gallery and in the film promoting the city, which can be found on the platform.



Investments and development in the absence of capacities are not truly possible. Urban regeneration does not mean model-solutions simply applied by a single entity – for example, the mayor's office. It requires the shared effort of all the directorates and the cooperation of trained people who want to do better for Reșița

Bogdan Suditu, housing and territorial planning expert, MKBT: Make Better

4 Improvement of local capacity

- The challenges of contemporary cities may be dealt with solely in partnership, by the cooperation of the local institutions, civil society organizations, economic operators, and community members. In small cities, however, the capacity to manage the portfolio of investments in the city or areas in need of complex urban actions is generally low. Furthermore, the institutional players, the NGOs, and the companies do not have the exercise and practice of shared work and, especially, of shared practice.

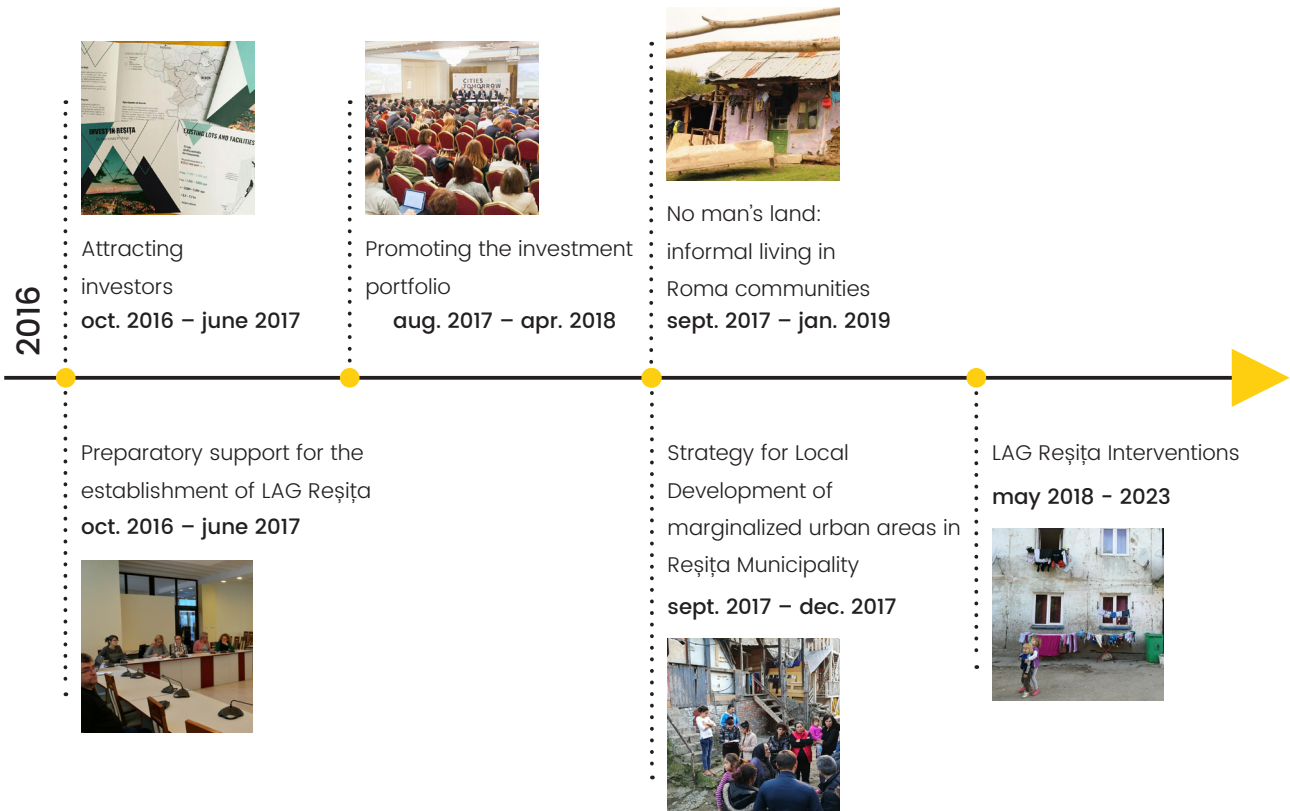
+ The mayor's office of Reșița was the ideal partner and worked together for the outlining and execution of this action. The vision and courage to support a process with barely visible results on the short term, but with a greater impact on the long term have been vital. In these 2 years, we organized dozens of work meetings with 15 directorates, services, and compartments of the mayor's office, and 5 training sessions for the directorates involved in the urban regeneration process, on topics such as the development of the local business environment, the management of the public land resources, communication to the residents, investors and tourists.

+ The Reșița LAG was designed as a long-term partnership, with the intent of extending its scope also beyond the above-

mentioned strategy and to mobilize additional sources of funding and know-how networks. Thus, the Reșița LAG is currently an implementation partner together with us and 3 other organizations in the country, in an advocacy projects regarding the approach of the informal housing issue.

+ In the 2 years, we invited social entrepreneurs in Reșița, to have their significant initiatives known and to inspire the local community's faith in their city's development potential; we also encouraged various other civic initiatives. Our inspiration stemmed from those at NESST, Social Impact Award, Future Makers, Asociația pentru Relații Comunitare, Nod Makerspace, but also projects closer to us in terms of geography – for example, the Herculane Project, Mina de Idei Anina.

+ In the spring of 2018, we offered support to a local group of initiative, for their involvement in the establishment of a Community Foundation for the county Caraș-Severin, which will join the 16 other such entities already existing in the country.



No man's land:
informal living in
Roma communities
sept. 2017 – jan. 2019



In fact, people should be re-drawn close to the city – including the young people who are studying or working elsewhere. Activities targeting them could be designed, which could show the city in a different light and encourage them to come, at least in the weekends, and support local projects

Loredana Gaiță, OAR Timiș





Reșița has always had ups and downs. But it has always regenerated owing to clever actions.

local participant in the discussions Regeneration of the City, 20th of April 2018

III. The event Reșița. Regeneration of the City, 20th of April 2018

At the end of two years of pro-regeneration process, MKBT: Make Better and the mayor's office of Reșița organized a review event and explored and validated – together with representatives of the community, entrepreneurs, institutions and local NGOs – the next steps required for the regeneration of the city. Apart from the summary of the steps taken and of the actions already performed, the event, hosted by the mayor's office of Reșița, also included the presentation of an example of an urban regeneration project in Romania and the activity of four working groups for the proposal of promising ideas and recommendations.

The discussions led to a number of working principles for the future actions of urban regeneration, but also actual projects that could be implemented in the near future and could continue or complete the actions taken until now.



The consistency of this meeting – we seemed to be one-on-one: a resident of Reșița – an important professional from another sector, another field – has given me hope and motivation. It is a sign that Reșița matters, deserves and can do more.

Dana Lupșan, Mansarda Hub for the Young



A quarter of Romania's industrial heritage is in the county Caraș-Severin. We need to use the local industrial heritage and cultural landscape, and this can be done by a project of an itinerant museum

Gabriela Pașcu, Anina Mine of Ideas



Resurse

+ Important stakeholders

Mayor's office

(promoter of dialogue/ initiatives and/or initiator of the necessary framework for the participation of the residents)

The city's residents

Inhabitants who left the city;

Owners' associations

NGOs

Initiative groups

LAG

Professional bodies

Employers

Other organizations/ entities specialized in specific sectors or willing to get involved

+ Potential external resources:

European and government funds;

Investors and developers who can contribute to the application of some of these ideas;

Young people who have left the city or the new young people.

Already mobilized know-how that needs to be implemented

Working principles

The local community's constant involvement in the definition of the agenda, of the action and activity plan (People need to believe in the city!)

Enhancement of sense of community

Mayor's office as promoter and initiator, but not as the single implementer and sponsor;

Construction and promotion of a positive image of Reșița – among the residents, visitors, and investors – by:

- Promotion of the city's assets
- the use of existing resources as an engine of economic development (natural heritage, cultural / industrial heritage of the city, the city that offers access to a specific quality of life); activation of the city's industrial heritage;
- promotion of local cuisine;
- Continuation and extension of the campaign **Invest in Reșița**

Improved communication:

- o of the mayor's office actions on the short, medium and long term – smart communication based on the city's plus points and constructive actions, rather than on problems,
- o timely communication of the mayor's office actions, so that they are comprehended by the residents;
- o of the calls for the residents' involvement in actions organized by the mayor's office and/or the possibility that they initiate themselves various projects/ actions
- o between the local players in all the phases of the development of a project (preparation, implementation and dissemination of the intervention), for the avoidance of doubled efforts.

Consistent rather than point-based actions, for the improvement of the residents' participation and faith:

- For example, every Sunday, every evening, action X takes place

Coordination of the investments (avoid interventions doubled because of the lack of communication among the players implementing actions in the city – e.g. 2 swimming pools, 2 climbing walls, etc.)

Inclusion of the marginalized communities and their participation in the decision-making / discussions regarding the future and necessary actions in the city;

Emphasis on the training, specialization and employment of vulnerable groups

Actions for drawing back home the residents who left the city:

- calls for participation in local actions or events,
- facilities/programs/grants offered during the faculty years, which should encourage them to invest home, not in any other place.



Actual projects

Creation of a museum of industry

Creation of a public space dedicated to discussions for the generation of ideas and the residents' involvement in the city's development; the organization of citizens' forums;

Recurrent events for the residents;

Exhibition spaces/ circuit of micro-museums in the city, not just downtown;

Spaces and facilities for youth, in order to encourage their retention and/or to attract new young people in the city;

Mapping of the city's resources and of its strong points (open spaces register, monuments, e.g.: there are 10 trees historical monuments)

Promotion of exemplary initiatives – in the media / a publication of the community (e.g. the old man who has been sweeping and painting the curbs on his street for years!)

The creation of a functional network of the residents who have left the city, so that they become ambassadors of their city and/or get involved in various actions; Programs / facilities / grants stimulating the desire to invest in their home place;

An umbrella-association or a framework of cooperation between the mayor's office and the residents / entities willing to commit to various actions, e.g. by mini-grants allowing the residents or civic groups to initiate and develop projects in the city; the mayor's office could be a participant in this association, but the association/form of association should not report to the mayor's office;

Connecting Reșița with the country, by improved infrastructure and better roads in the city;

Transforming Universal (former shopping center, currently unused) into a multicultural hub, business incubator, a place where new ideas and project can grow, which residents can access;

Transforming a decommissioned thermal substation in the Moroasa neighborhood into a climbing hall;

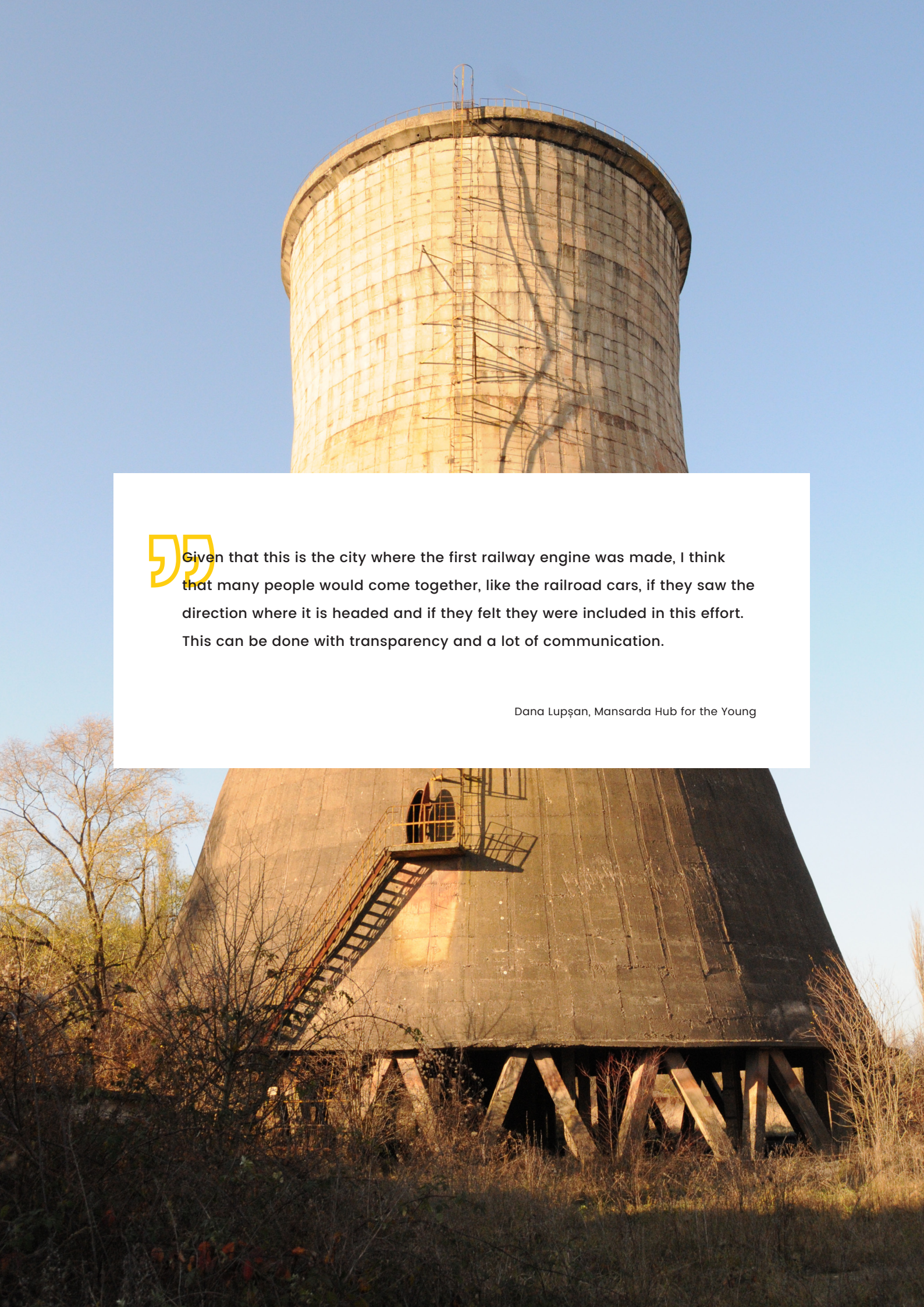
Implementation of an internal management regulation regarding the industrial heritage;

Building a visual identity of the city, which should be used in communications: slogan-message (ex. "The city in nature"), symbols (e.g. cableway, the kinetic fountain), reference-events for the residents (e.g. every day, an hours of music downtown);

Creation of a community platform for communication among / with the residents, constructing toward 2021, with the invitation to participate in various actions (e.g. Donate time for your city)

Participatory actions for the residents of the Mociur area;

Clarification of the legislation and its adaptation for the support of the local public administration.



Given that this is the city where the first railway engine was made, I think that many people would come together, like the railroad cars, if they saw the direction where it is headed and if they felt they were included in this effort. This can be done with transparency and a lot of communication.

Dana Luşşan, Mansarda Hub for the Young

The following team members have faith in Reșița



Marina
Neagu



Mihai
Șercăianu



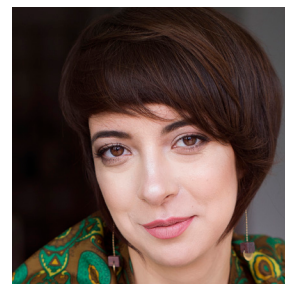
Bogdan
Suditu



Ana-Maria
Elian



Andreea
Bahrin



Anamaria
Vrabie

We, the members of the **MKBT: Make Better** team, continue to stand by the side of Reșița and we trust that we will soon hear good news about projects started from and for the community.

You can visit us on pe www.mkbt.ro

www.facebook.com/MakeBetterPlatform/

Instead of a
conclusion, we offer a
continuation ...

— and | make +

Do you want to take on one of the
projects? Remember that a single
vertical (|) person can turn the
minus (-) into a plus (+).





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