

FOCUS BUCHAREST

A TRANSFORMING CITY

INTERDISCIPLINARY URBAN STUDIO | 24-28 MARCH 2014

LONDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS AND POLITICAL SCIENCE | ODAIA CREATIVA



“Focus: Bucharest. A transforming city” was a 5-day workshop organised by the Creative Room and LSE in the frame of the Regional and Urban Planning Studies master’s programme.



The LSE MSc Regional & Urban Planning Studies (MSc RUPS) is a strongly focussed and internationally based planning programme that has a long tradition in training both people seeking careers in urban and regional planning policy and mid-career professionals. Founded in 1966 by the departments of Economics, Geography and Government at the London School of Economics and Political Science, the programme continues to advocate a strong interdisciplinary agenda that challenges students to understand cities and regions from an economic, social and environmental perspective.

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Odaia Creativă / Creative Room is a non-governmental organisation based in Bucharest, Romania. Founded in June 2010, we use a mix of research, visual tools and new media to increase understanding of urban and regional development processes in Central and Eastern Europe for local communities and national/local authorities.

<http://www.odaiacreativa.ro>



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INTRODUCTION >

**TENSION AS A CHANGE GENERATOR.
“FOCUS: BUCHAREST. A TRANSFORMING CITY”
RUPS FIELD TRIP 2014**

Irina Paraschivoiu

Odaia Creativă / Creative Room

MSc Regional and Urban Planning Studies

There are cities which are popular in all planning books, and which any planning student dreams to see. There are cities which generate a magnetic attraction, either through their best practices, through their daring infrastructure projects, or modern architecture. There are also cities which have come to be known due to their social segregation, rapid expansion or simply because of failed public policy. Bucharest, however, is rarely on an urban planner’s mind map, although it may have an equally interesting story to tell and many learned lessons to share.

The idea of hosting this year’s RUPS annual field trip in Romania came naturally and I was surprised (and grateful!) by my classmates’ enthusiasm and excitement of making acquaintance with what came to be an urban lab for myself and colleagues from the Creative Room in the past 4 years.

Firstly, because I believe Bucharest can be a perfect case study for what the challenges of urban planning in Central and Eastern Europe are. Like most similar countries in CEE, Romania is going through a double transition process: one of consolidating democratic change, and a second one of moving to a free market economy and promotion of economic competitiveness in a global environment. Understandably, this has consequences for planning at an urban scale, ranging from issues of governance,

administration, community empowerment and economic efficiency. This means institutions (in the “way of doing things” meaning of the word) are not quite yet in place and that planning – as a profession and as field of practice – still has a lot to learn. As we all came to understand during the 5 day programme, this, however, gives room for creativity and innovation and for independent initiatives which play a more leading role in delivering change than in countries with more established planning systems. There is a certain excitement in being part of the process of shaping these institutions and ways of working, of filling in the gaps, or, to quote my LSE colleagues, of working with this “thrilling mess”.

Secondly, as in the case of other Eastern Europe countries, there is still a high level of polarization in Romania between the dynamic cores and the more rural, semi-rural or old industrial towns. Some growth poles are



catching up, but Bucharest as a capital city, scoring consistently much above the country's average GDP, clearly detaches itself as the centre of the country. However, at the scale of the city + metropolitan area (including Ilfov county, surrounding the city), the dynamics of the region catches many of the challenges which are similar throughout the country: high disparities between urban and peri-urban and rural areas, funding, provision of services, regional administration, and governance. This turns Bucharest into a perfect lab, not only for CEE, but also for the country itself.

Thirdly, there are lessons to be learned from how young urban professionals in Romania work towards shaping the planning system, filling in the gaps, improving quality of their work and implementing small changes with lasting impacts. There are opportunities for directing change, not only through bottom-up initiatives,



but also in the standards applied when working on development plans or when working with the academia in establishing diverse, interdisciplinary curricula. I hope these were all inspiring during our programme and that my LSE colleagues had a chance to interact and engage with the very diverse and active Romanian team and guests.

I thank everyone who gave some of their time to offer LSE Regional and Urban Planning Studies students a great experience in Bucharest. To my good friend and co-creative thinker, Anamaria Vrabie, for helping with coordinating the programme on the Romanian side. To the organising team - colleagues from Creative Room and MKBT – for bringing in their input, knowledge, contacts and occasional reality check. To Manuela Negriță and our wonderful student volunteers who were with us throughout the week. To Arch. Șerban Țigănaș and the Chambers' of Architects of Romania for hosting us and for their long-lasting partnership and support. To the British Council Romania, for making this booklet possible. To all speakers and organisations involved throughout the programme.

To Alan, Nancy and RUPS students for bringing their excitement, curiosity and energy to Bucharest and leaving some behind after their departure.

RUPS FIELDTRIP 2014

Dr. Nancy Homan & Dr. Alan Mace

Department of Geography and Environment
London School of Economics and Political Science

One of the true advantages of the MSc Regional and Urban Planning Studies is the diversity of our student body, which is made up of recent graduates and mid-career professionals from all over the world. This means when we engage in fieldwork in London we bring our various national perspectives with us inflecting our studies and interpretations of place with knowledge gained from our experiences in Europe, Asia, South America, Africa and North America.

However, the world is not London, despite what some city boosters might have you believe and this is where our annual fieldtrip comes into its own. Each year we organise a fieldtrip to a city outside London to focus on the processes, problems and successes in planning that make the city what it is. Some years we have relied on staff connections to organise the trip, others we have used our extensive alumni network to create exciting and interactive study visits and in other years our energetic student body has embarked on developing a trip all their own.

This year's trip was just such an event. It took us to Bucharest where we explored the planning dilemmas in this fascinating transitional city. Our trip was arranged by our current student Irina Paraschivoiu and we were hosted by the Romanian Chamber of Architects in their beautifully restored offices and the dynamic NGO Odaia Creativa (<http://www.odaiacreativa.ro/en/>). We were also very pleased to see two

former graduates of the programme Alex Gotcă and Marina Neagu!

We were struck by a number of things on our trip. The first was that, as a group, we really had no idea what to expect before we arrived in the city, which for us offered a sort of black box on our urban horizons. In this sense it was a city of mystery. We found the Bucharest to be an amazing mix of architectural styles - replete with intense boulevards some old and some new with large blocks of soviet and 1930s flats intermingled with quieter back streets with neo-Romanian and Liberty houses.

We also found a city, which for sure is experiencing all of the sort of transitional problems one might expect to find in a post-Soviet and post-crisis context in terms of its economy and governance. However, we also learned that with respect to much of the region Bucharest



was performing well in terms of its GDP. This is of course both a blessing and a curse as the city is able to attract outside finance but also acts as a magnet pulling people and resources towards it at the expense of other areas.

Alan and I would like to thank our hosts in Bucharest who so warmly welcomed all of us; Irina for her for her tireless efforts in organising the trip. She was invaluable both in preparing such an insightful and varied programme and as the go between with the Romanian Embassy before we departed. We are grateful to her for her management of the programme once we were there. We would also like to thank all the RUPS students who took part in the trip for making it a memorable and exciting experience!



THE CITY NEEDS TO BE DISCUSSED AND TRIED

Arch. Șerban Țigănaș

President, Chambers of Architects of Romania

We are interested in the city. Moreover, we need better cities, cities changed for the better, because we live and work in cities or, even if we don't live or work there, we are permanently connected and depend on what happens in cities. For today's and tomorrow's people, the city is one of the most important complexities by itself and referred to nature.

The city develops, but for this the city needs to be discussed. Nobody has the knowledge or the power of administering the development and life of cities based on an applicable model which, when taken into account, can solve all problems. The complexity that I was talking about, the multitude of layers and interests is so big that the city cannot be tamed or conciliated, without being discussed by those who are most interested (and who is not?) by its state. Bucharest is the most active and dynamic Romanian city, a natural feature of a capital city. As great as its economic dimension is and its development potential are its problems which generate expectations on behalf of everyone who uses and lives in it. The city's state is felt, discussed and must always be the object of attention. The city always needs ideas, because it is unique and unforeseeable, regardless of its administration's strategic capacity and the operational capacity of those responsible with managing its complexity.

We are in a phase in which the Romanian civil society is growing up, after it started structuring itself through voluntary and increasingly

qualified association of those who are now called “the NGOs”. The NGOs are interested in society, heritage, environment, culture, children and youth, in minorities, animals, and in the essential joys of life in cities. We are in the stage in which all these – frequently overlapped on similar interests – make their voices heard, show their efficiency and contributions, manifest regularly and tenaciously or sporadically and less effectively, according to their resources and possibilities. For some, this type of activism is a way of living. It is time for these energies to gather, to converge in order to succeed to contribute to a quality leap, visible and awaited by the city’s residents. Practically, contemporary society cannot be conceived any longer without civil servants and activists in dialogue, collaborating and opposing, constructing and negotiating at the same time. It is the natural game of balance which I can compare to that which is established between ecosystems in nature.

Architects are a part of this balance through the nature of their profession and of the missions which they must accomplish. As an organisation, the Chambers of Architects of Romania has taken upon itself the role to support and help those who are activists for quality of life in cities. The Chambers is host, friend and collaborator for good causes, supporting interdisciplinary, research, experiment and exchange of ideas for good causes related to the needs of the city. The architect is defined as a ferment of progress, as a city changer, aware that in order to bring its contribution, who must collaborate to identify problems and find solutions. This is why the workshop organised by the Creative Room is welcomed and we are certain they will continue to discuss the city and try the city.



DAY 1 - MON 24 >

PERSPECTIVES ON BUCHAREST METROPOLITAN AREA

Anamaria Vrabie

Creative Room / MKBT

As any capital city, Bucharest engages the area located in its proximity in convoluted ways. Administratively designated as Ilfov county, comprised by 40 local administrations, it is actually a frail collar surrounding Bucharest and a territory which struggles to capture the proximity advantages of the largest urban agglomeration in Romania. Although the term metropolitan area is extensively used in the local context in order to illustrate the interdependence between a core city and its influence area, it lacks governance power. Until now, Romanian legislation has only allowed different types of agreements for cooperation between local administrations which do not have mandate over shared budgets and taxes or, at least for a common development vision and plan.

In spite of this, there is no standstill in real life. Parts of Ilfov county do offer an easy way out from the post-socialist living standard that most inhabitants on Bucharest still experience, even though the local administrations cannot provide key public services like sewage systems or primary schools. The new suburbanization trend plays out as in many other parts of the world, with a mix of car-dependency, one family units, compact or scattered around fields of rural or small urban settlements and a commuting pattern always leading towards Bucharest for jobs, schools and shopping.

The relative economic and spatial power of Bucharest has also fuelled the development

of key sectors, such as logistics (Dragomirești Deal and Chiajna), creative industries (Buftea), research and development (Măgurele). Whether these sectors will be able to have a sustainable future depends on entrepreneurial talent, but also on key investments in infrastructure and quality of life. The stake remains one of vision and will. Adaptation of models of green belts, integrated governance, thriving and compact suburbs are plentiful, the challenge is to take into account the good, the bad and the improvised which have already taken place.



SUMMARY OF THE DISCUSSION

Panel: **Dr. Arch. Gabriel Pascariu** (UAUIM, MA program coordinator for Territorial Planning and Regional Development), **Alexandru Gotcă**, **Anamaria Vrabie**, **Marina Neagu** (MKBT)

The first session of presentations and discussions was held on Monday, 24th of March 2014, at the Romanian Chambers of Architects in Pictor Arthur Verona Street, no. 19, Bucharest. The meeting aimed to present and discuss the context of Bucharest metropolitan area.

Mr. Gabriel Pascariu made a short presentation about the metropolitan area of the city and the challenges that the authorities at different levels are facing in determining its border and managing its development.

Starting from the European context moving to the national, regional and local level the main ideas were as follows:

- Bucharest is a Metropolitan Area Category 4 and the eastern one in the EU, according to ESPON map of metropolitan areas;
- Is part of the axis Sofia – Athens – Istanbul;
- Is the largest city in Romania (with 2 million inhab., compared with other big cities in the country which have around 300.000 inhab.);
- Distribution of labour force is higher around Bucharest than in other big cities;
- Given the small distance between Bucharest and the Danube River, there are some discussions regarding a few old and new projects increasing the connectivity of the city;
- There is a discrepancy between the development of the northern and the southern part of the city (the northern



- part is highly connected to transport infrastructure);
- Neighbouring cities are becoming increasingly urbanized;
- There is no development scenario for the metropolitan area;
- Local trend in the development of Bucharest: two axes north-south and east-west; and one axis NW-SE (due to two corridors of water elements);
- Historic centre adjacent to Dâmbovița River.

Marina, Anamaria and Alexandru explained furthermore the operational facts:

- Bucharest – Ilfov region (NUTS 2) is considered to be one of the most developed regions in country, and, according to the EU criteria, will receive less financial resources in the upcoming programming period;
- Nonetheless, some of the neighbouring cities and villages around Bucharest are not fully equipped with public utilities and, given the ineligibility for EU funding, this is likely to pose problems in the region's further development;
- There is a high level of poverty in some neighbourhoods of Bucharest;

- Moving out to the suburban areas points out that the quality of housing and public spaces in the city is weak;
- European funds are important for the local budgets and have been primarily used for infrastructure;
- Bucharest doesn't have a mobility plan yet.

Anamaria Vrabie and Alexandru Gotcă underlined that two key problems were identified until now: lack of data for the metropolitan area and the current trend of suburbanization. Families who are moving in such areas are fully aware that they are in charge of the development and not the local authorities.

Marina highlighted that for the past several years, in the real-estate boom of Bucharest, the local authorities had excessively extended the construction area within the administrative limits. This decision led to population growth in Ilfov County. “The number of SMEs per administrative unit in the county also increased”, Alexandru added, “and the number of public facilities as well.”

There is also a problem of mobility for the people who work in Bucharest and most of them need to use their personal vehicle, because there is no public transportation and this aspect, from the perspective of local authorities, is not a reason for development.





DAY 2 - TUE 25 >

PARTICIPATION IN URBAN PLANNING AND NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT

Alexandru Gotcă

MKBT

The curious case of public participation in Bucharest has raised eyebrows and shed light on how public authorities manage public policy in a changing city, struggling to make sense of post-communism democracy and capitalism.

The day was centered on Favorit Initiative Group and their fight to save the forgotten and already derelict neighborhood cinema and turn it into a cultural mall. The story of the volunteers from the initiative group is just one of the many examples of bottom-up initiatives that challenge the public participation practice in Romania through community organizing.

The group started off as a Resource Center for Public Participation (CeRe) project, in 2007, when some of the residents of the neighborhood met to discuss local issues. CeRe encouraged them by promoting the belief that public participation is not just a trifle, but a principle that can be a real and important benefit for Romanian communities. Therefore, the design and mission of their actions had a social role, in order to get public decisions to meet the needs and desires of citizens and other local social actors. The aim was to promote, involve and demand solutions from the local authority – stirring up a system of urban planning that is mostly slow and timeworn.

Thus began a four year long struggle with the local authority during which promises were made, elections were held, projects were proposed, but no real change was seen.

The main ideas that concluded the session were focused on one hand, on the administrative barriers, lack of involvement of public authorities and dry and ineffective laws make it impossible to engage citizens. That is why most of the public policies are path dependent and have very little bottom up input and often lack hands-on data. On the other hand, the limitations of a very poor developed civil society – a direct effect of the communist era – with little social capital to rely on, make public engagement a double sided problem where efforts have to be made to involve not only public authorities but also citizens.



SUMMARY OF THE DISCUSSION

Panel: **Nicoleta Chiriță** (Centre for Resources on Public Participation), **Favorit community group**.
Moderator: **Alexandru Gotcă** (MKBT)

The second session of presentations and discussions was held on Tuesday, 25th of March 2014, at the Romanian Chambers of Architects in Pictor Arthur Verona Street, no. 19, Bucharest.

Alexandru introduced the context of Romania in communism, from the perspective of public participation. He argued that shifting from a framework where citizens were not allowed to express their opinion to being part of the decision-making process, is the main input of the session. The transition after 1989 was difficult and is still happening today.



Nicoleta (CeRe) introduced the organisation's work. She also highlighted the meaning of CeRe in Romanian which is "to ask" and is related to the organisation's mission, which is creating pressure from bottom-up, and thus making institutions more open and transparent. They work with 4 initiative groups in Bucharest: 2 groups in Drumul Taberei Neighbourhood, one in Lacul Tei Neighbourhood and another one in Pantelimon Neighbourhood". Nicoleta highlighted the difference between two concepts: community development and community organising. The first one is more focused on partnerships between stakeholders, paying taxes, implementing priorities. The second one refers to the action of engaging people to take action and to consult with each other. She also pointed out that national laws give the citizens the right to be part of the decision-making process, but they are not easily followed. NGOs lobby to ask the local authorities to participate in council meetings.

Favorit group followed up with a presentation of their activity.

The idea to start this initiative came from the desire of the inhabitants to have a place for regular community meetings. Following the discussions, it was concluded that the former Favorit cinema building (which was not used for many years and had become a place for homeless people) could be a great place for this cause and much more.

The cinema had been a cultural landmark during the years for Drumul Taberei neighbourhood. After 2002, it was almost in ruins, requiring two essential ingredients for rehabilitation: political will and investments. Favorit group summarized the main actions they have taken in the past 4 years in



lobbying for a transformation of the former Favorit cinema, as well as the challenges they faced:

- In August 2010 they had an awareness campaign, collected 300 signatures and succeeded to put on the agenda of the City Hall of District no. 6 the project called “Favorit Cultural Centre” – a multifunctional centre for all age categories;
- In November 2010, the Mayor of District no. 6 organised a press conference in front of the cinema to present the new 3D model of the future centre, but the citizens were not entirely happy because that project did not

- answer the requests in their petition;
- A new exhibition in 2012, following the change of the District Mayor, exhibiting the citizens’ messages about the cinema;
- The allocation of 180 000 EUR from the City Hall for the feasibility study;
- The first meeting with the District Mayor and District Chief Architect, where the group was consulted on their proposals and desires for the cinema, including suggestions of creating a public library;
- Lobbying for a transparent website for the project, where citizens could express their views;
- Receiving an award as a civil society group.

Some other key facts came out from the questions and answers session:

- Property rights became an issue, as the local authority was not the owner of the cinema and therefore could not allocate a budget for it;
- Local authorities do not have the human resources to organise public consultation, even though it is mandatory in the planning system;
- Sometimes external experts do consultation as a part of a development strategy, although it is not specifically budgeted as such;
- There needs to be a mediator and also political will in the planning process. Regulation doesn’t prevent planners from being more active on the ground;
- The information channels are very important for effective participatory planning;
- Participation is sometimes just tokenism, because there is not this culture of participation/deliberation;
- The system needs to become more mature, and build trust and capacity for local authorities.



DAY 3 - WED 26 >

COMPETITIVENESS AND ECONOMIC RESTRUCTURING

Marina Neagu
MKBT

The third day of the study trip was meant to offer a preview of Bucharest, in economic perspective.

The day started with a visit to the World Bank offices in Romania for a discussion on one of the outcomes of the Regional Development Assistance Program, conducted during 2013. This program consisted of a technical assistance package to the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration, resulting in an analysis of the competitiveness of Romania's main cities, an evaluation of the growth poles policy as well as a review on the spatial planning system. Mr. Marcel Ionescu-Heroiu, our host and coordinator of the RDA Program, presented mostly the findings of the former report that highlighted the main challenges of Romania's territorial competitiveness, based on the framework development by the World Bank in the 2009 World Development Report (Rethinking Economic Geography).

The afternoon continued the economic focus of the day, but via looking at intra-urban dynamics. The RUPS group visited the Floreasca City development area, which was gradually positioned during the last decade, as emerging central business district of the city. Our host organization, Raiffeisen Evolution, are the developers of the two main flagship investments in the area, the Sky Tower, which is currently the tallest building in Romania, as well as the recently opened Promenada Mall. Mr. Gert Widu, Project Director of Raiffeisen Evolution, guided us

through both these developments and offered us interesting insights on real estate investment dynamics, private-public sector interaction and future perspectives on the area.

All in all, the day offered an economic preview at both macro and micro-territorial levels, allowing students to integrate Bucharest in the broader territorial dynamics of Central and Eastern Europe, as well as identify similarities and specificities of intra-urban economic processes such as real estate markets, industrial site redevelopment and CBD formation.

SUMMARY OF THE DISCUSSION

Presenter: **Marcel Ionescu-Heroiu** (World Bank Romania)

The third session of the workshop was held on Wednesday, 26th of March 2014, at the World Bank Romania, UTI building, Vasile Lascăr Street. Marcel Ionescu-Heroiu, coordinator of the RDA gave a thorough presentation of the findings of the Regional Development Assistance Program, based on the World Bank Development Report in 2009 ("Rethinking economic geography").

The main ideas were as follows:

- Development strategies should primarily be targeted at people (not necessarily at cities, regions, or economic sectors);
- Looking at Romania, the recommendations of the World Bank focused on: investments in infrastructure (with 3 objectives: connect Bucharest to the West, connect lagging areas to leading areas, and allow cities to grow), stronger institutions for lagging areas, investments in quality of life and measures

- targeted at marginalized communities;
- The design of the interventions depend on two factors: the overall level of the region (lagging or developed) and the scale of the intervention (local, regional, national);
- Based on the report, 3 objectives were identified: (1) encouraging economic density and urbanization, (2) promoting efficient territorial development (this doesn't necessarily mean equality but rather competitiveness) and (3) continuing the regional integration process;
- Under the economic density objective, part of the World Bank's work was to look at functional urban areas (commuting patterns and employment around cities) and making a key recommendation for extending infrastructure to dense peri-urban areas; secondly, they recommended investments for improving quality of life in dense rural areas; thirdly, at extending the economic mass of cities and integrating marginalized communities. In order to create profitable and functional urban areas and address suburban sprawl, it is necessary to adjust local policy boundaries to the metropolitan level;
- Efficient territorial development implied looking at lagging areas, through different methods such as GDP rate and Local Human Development Index, both identifying the North-East of Romania and the South-West as the most lagging regions. These findings highlight the need to develop connective infrastructure towards these lagging areas;
- Recommendations for investment priorities focused on improving infrastructure and connectivity at the national scale, particularly in road and air transport, and better management of rail infrastructure. The rail network is deemed over-developed and not profitable: it could be made more efficient by downsizing it and introducing high-speed

rail where it is most useful. As for roads, the suggestion was to use the gravitational model showing attraction forces between places: this approach highlighted Bucharest and the Transylvanian Axis as priority investments areas;

- Different models have shown that such investments would increase productivity and economic efficiency, the country risking otherwise to be bypassed by European traffic flows; this is also the case for Bulgaria, both countries being cut off from the EU in terms of highway networks;
- Extending public infrastructure, especially in suburban areas— namely sewage, water, electricity are another key priority for investment;
- The aim is thus to move from a peripheral region in the EU to a regional hub.

The questions and answers session brought up some other interesting points:

- Ploiești is a case of economic spillover from Bucharest. Most of the economic growth there has been due to relocation;
- There has been a focus on improving road and air transport, as data clearly indicates that 90% of transport is done by road or rail;
- Some cities are cooperating across national boundaries and there is interest in cross-national boundaries functional urban regions;
- European Union's recommendations for Romania are different from those of the World Bank. The EU Barca report for regional policy focuses the priority on decreasing regional disparities. According to Marcel, the risk with this approach is that it will make Romania dependent on EU funds. Inversely the WB report argues in favour of strengthening booming areas, so that they can generate their own resources.

THE AFTERNOON SESSION ON THE 26TH OF MARCH AT PROMENADA / SKY TOWER DEVELOPMENT

Tour with **Gert Widu** (Raiffeisen Evolution Project Manager)

The development started in 2002, on a former industrial site (brownfield). The height of the building turned out to be a problem, for two reasons: one having to do with the difficulty of building high in Bucharest, due to earthquake hazards and a second one related to air traffic. As a part of the project, the airplane routing had to be changed. In 2008, the economic downturn jeopardized the project, but in 2010 the works could continue, and so they kicked off the development with the Promenada Mall, which took 22 months to complete, and was open by mid-October. The Sky Tower building was only



ready after 40 months. In time, other office buildings sprang in the area and prices have increased, partly as land becomes less available.

The Sky Tower measures 137 meters and is the tallest civil building in Romania at the moment, made of reinforced concrete and having deep foundations, 5 levels of parking and 37 levels (including technical floor) + ground floor. The core of the building is rectangular, and it is supported by reinforced concrete columns which are necessary to address seismic risk. One issue that came up during construction was the change of the fire regulations, which meant the project had to be modified. The Sky Tower has already been sold by the developer, while the Promenada Mall is currently rented up to 98.6%.

There was concern for the environmental quality of the tower, LED lighting was used, together with updated cooling systems, chill beam systems. Gas supply and electricity proved to be a challenge, and there was a need to negotiate increased capacity with the providers.

The building also reuses rain water. The project also involved changing zoning regulation for the area, together with the local authorities.

The Promenada Mall did not kick off before ensuring sufficient tenants. 60% of the shopping space was pre-leased before the construction would begin. The project took into account the priorities set for the mall: answering local demand but aiming for a day-to-day mall, where residents do their shopping, and not a weekend space.



DAY 4 - THU 27 >

CHALLENGES OF INNER CITY DEVELOPMENT

Irina Paraschivoiu

Creative Room / MSc Regional and Urban
Planning Studies

The main challenge for inner city development in Bucharest has been, in the past decades, that of improving quality of life for its residents while dealing with its socialist and pre-socialist legacy. Although local plans identify the “old” or “historical centre” or the “national area of interest”, administratively no such area is clearly defined. The 6 districts of the city – each having its own district Mayor and Council – administer a territory that spans from the city core towards its edges, in a proportional radius which doesn’t necessarily match functional boundaries. This is why the “inner city” thread of the “Focus: Bucharest” programme refers to the core city in its broadest understanding. It encompasses not only the designated conservation area, but also residential areas made up of blocks of flats and services uses – as opposed to the “metropolitan area”, which looks at the dynamics of the city + the Ilfov County (as per above).

There are several themes which define the underlying tensions of the city’s recent development. Bucharest’s post 1990 growth has meant that pressure for commercial development has been high in the city centre, leading to sometimes competing objectives: restoration vs. demolition, preservation vs. development. The restitution of inner city housing stock to its previous private owners, together with the extensive privatization of flats has made strategic planning for the inner city difficult. It has also meant that the maintenance of the housing stock was left largely in the hands

of their private owners, which in many cases lack the financial resources for a proper upgrading. Lastly, Bucharest still lacks sectorial policies such as a specific environmental action plan or a mobility plan. Consequently, the rapid increase in car ownership has led to traffic congestion, high CO2 levels and low energy efficiency. And, not surprisingly, it has fuelled a relative trend of residential suburbanization and sprawl.

Governance and city management remain at the core of the solutions the city needs in order to improve quality of life for its residents. Mixed-use, provisions of green and public spaces, improvements in air quality largely depend on the city’s capacity to define its vision and pursue it through clearly set targets and objectives.



SUMMARY OF THE DISCUSSION

Presenter: **Prof. Dr. Arch. Augustin Ioan**
(UAUIM)

The 4th session of presentations and discussions was held on Thursday, 27th of March 2014, at the Romanian Chambers of Architects in Pictor Arthur Verona Street, no. 19, Bucharest.

Arch. Augustin Ioan introduced Bucharest as not a city, but rather a gathering of villages. He explained its geographical location on the road between two points of interest: Ottoman Empire and Transylvania, and that the settlement appeared as a consequence of travelling for commercial purposes. “Merchants needed a place to rest and here they found a lot of inns. This is the way the future city was born”, he explained. “Arch. Dana Harhoiu in her book <Bucharest, a city between East and West> attempted to determine the origin of the town. She talked about the organisation of the communities within the city – each community was developed around a church; about the most important streets and routes for traders – such as Calea Moșilor; about secret underground paths within the historical centre and an urban pattern development – however, the last two statements she could not clearly prove.”

The city didn't have a geometrical development and it is similar to the cities from Transylvania. “We do not understand how the city was developed, but all the projects in Bucharest are trying to make it rectangular. We tend to invent axes in the city that were never there and then we construct them. But there is something missing: the 2 points of an axis – origin and destination, which in most cases here



do not exist.”

Dr. Augustin Ioan also spoke about the way we construct within the city, underlining that we tend to start many projects simultaneously, in different locations and of various sizes, and the local administration is not capable of managing all of them at once. Another issue pointed out was the way the city centre is divided, between all six districts of Bucharest (so managed by six different public administrations), and therefore it is hard to have control on the overall development of this area.

During the urban interventions made in communism, a significant part of the historical centre was demolished for the construction of the new civic centre, although demolition was popular before that period as well (for example, during the construction of Magheru Boulevard). “No one was against the demolitions. The

problems began when they realised the scale of these new interventions.” prof. Augustin Ioan explained. “As you have noticed in your visit to the Palace of Parliament, seen from above, the city has no specific architecture, no scale or type of construction. The real beauty of the city is behind the tall buildings, but in order to get there you need to use the boulevards. The communists did not have time to finish the city’s new structure and they did not take into account the urban fabric of adjacent areas.”

“There was a period of confusion after 1989 regarding the way we should construct in Bucharest. We wanted to preserve as much as possible in the inner city, but we did not have the specific regulations. In the period 2003-2008 when the real-estate development was high, the existing infrastructure of the city was not prepared to handle it. There were and still are several discussions on making Braşov city the



capital of the country. In this way we would not have so much pressure in Bucharest.”

Prof. Ioan offered some further explanations during the questions and answers session:

- It is not known how much money was invested in the People’s Palace. The architectural plans of the building were kept secret and there is a mystery regarding how many underground floors there are;
- Parking supply is private and not sufficient to satisfy the demand;
- There is a gap between the between the North and the South suburban areas regarding development. Local authorities should pay more attention to the needs of the southern part and to invest more there;
- Regulation has allowed for derogatory practices in development. However, the pressure for development has been very high and this helped to ease off some of it;
- The NGOs could come up with ideas, alternatives to a problem, instead of judging a project after its implementation or a decision once it was made;
- Restitution and ownership has had an impact on inner city development. The local authority doesn’t have an interest in buying heritage buildings, on the other hand many of those who received their property back cannot afford to invest in the type of interventions they would need.

What we offer

What we need

PRISDA

ARTIPERA

URBAN SCENARIOS

IBOM'S CLEARING

OBAMA CREATIVA

METRO CUB

DAY 5 - FRI 28 >

INTERACTIVE SESSION

The 5th day of the programme was held on Friday, 28th of March 2014, at the Romanian Chambers of Architects in Pictor Arthur Verona Street, no. 19, Bucharest. This aimed to be an interactive day, giving room to LSE students to get to know local organisations and experts, as well as for them to work in groups on their impressions and recommendations for Bucharest.



PECHA-KUCHA PRESENTATIONS

We had a great mix of short presentations given by different organisations and followed by a short café-discussion with RUPS students.

We thank all the organisations and people who shared some of their exciting projects:

Pierre Bortnowski
PRISPA / Matache Hall initiative

Lorin Nicolae
Arhipera

Maria Duda
Urban Scenarios / Faculty of Architecture, Spiru Haret University

Raluca Pop
Metrucub

Reini Stadler
Urban 2020

Loredana Brumă
Rhabillage

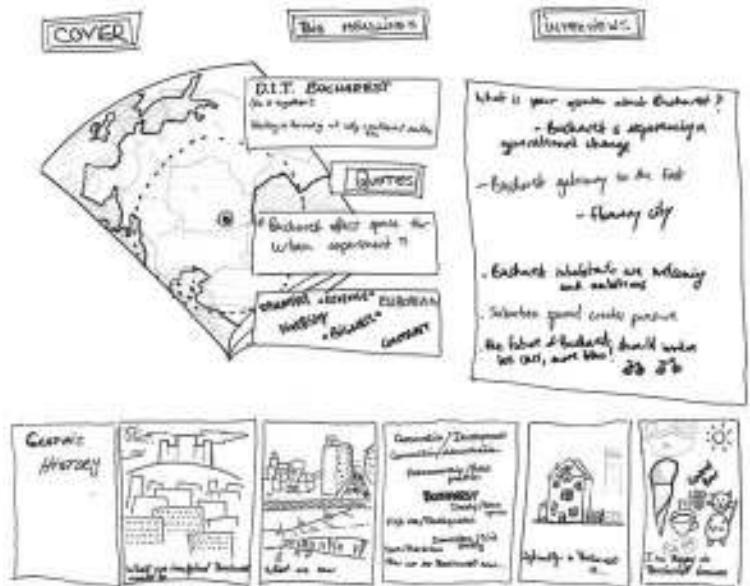
Vera Marin
Association for Urban Transition

Simon Hicks & Răzvan Zamfira
locan's Clearing

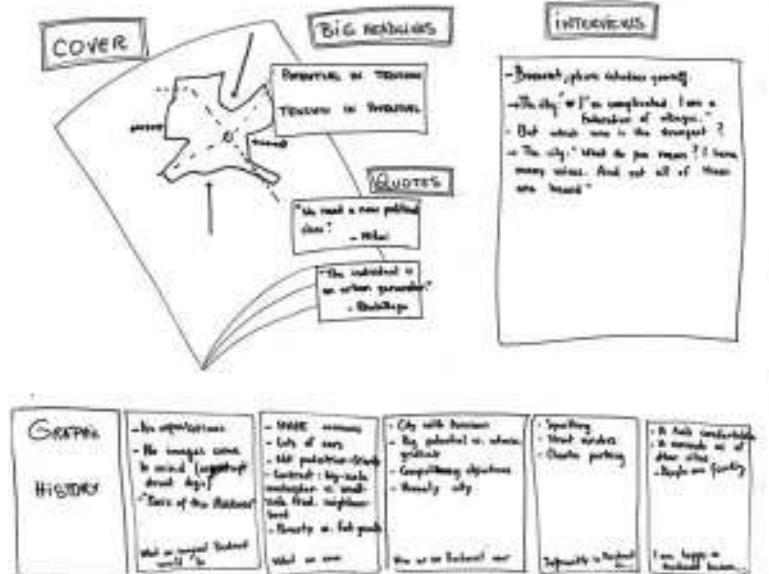
Irina Paraschivoiu & Anamaria Vrabie
Creative Room



Group 2
Simon, Ellen, Fanny, Marie, Clémentine

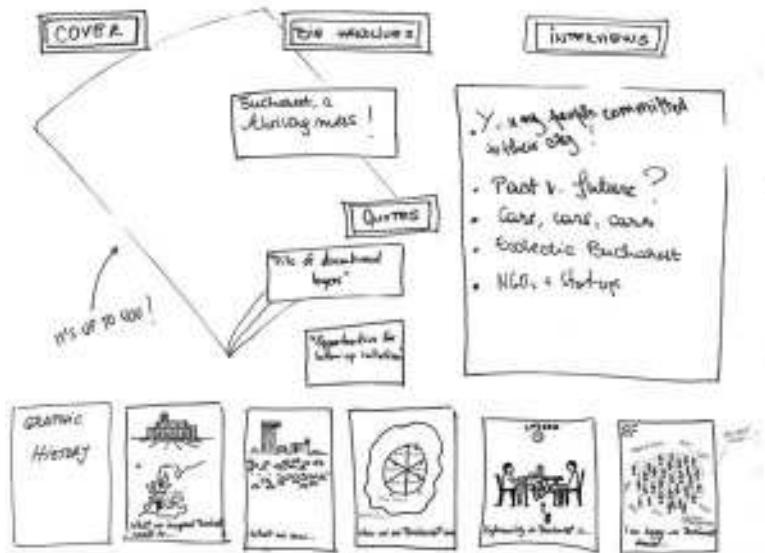


Group 3
Marc, Selina, Amélie

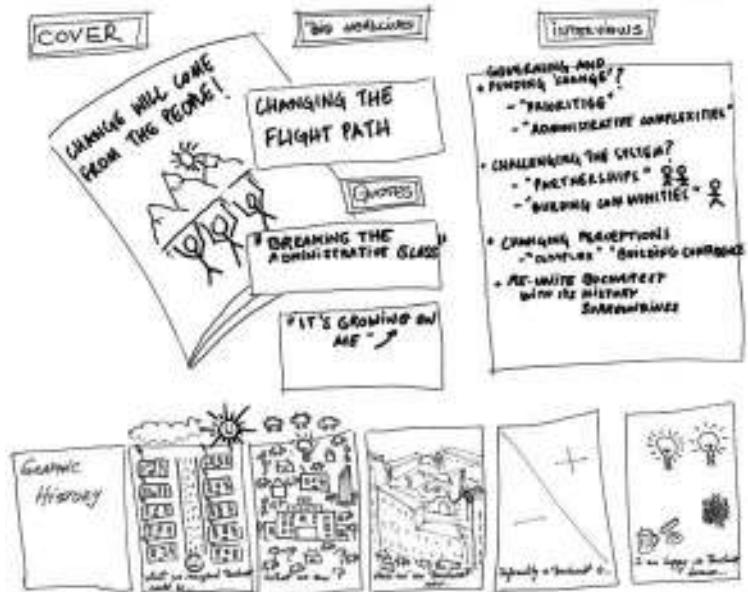




Group 4
Jairo, Fabian, Camilo, Nicola, Sara



Group 5
Nicolas, Andrew, Kate, Rachita



RUPS STUDENTS' CONTRIBUTIONS >



CONNECTING FRAGMENTS

Nicola Carnevali
MSc RUPS

As Jean-Paul Robert suggests¹, the city of Bucharest is assembled in a fashion that reminds the way space and time are constructed in dreams. Place of the improbable and unexpected, the city appears as fragments produced by a succession of calamities, collective fantasies and unfinished whims of a few men moved by compulsive desires and political neurosis; an assemblage that is not made by addition, but by substitution, by improbable and illogic association. What we have been trying to do, since the first day we arrived in Bucharest, is connecting those fragments in our minds.

The city turns around a hermetic space, the Palace of the Parliament and its fenced surroundings; in the middle stands an object without scale and without time, a cocktail of styles and precious materials hiding the fragility and bad quality of the structure; it once landed on Earth crushing everything that lay underneath and it is today still a big chunk, pretty hard to digest. All around, dwelling fortresses bound spaces beyond any reference to human scale; giant neon-brand-raptors hang on their top, so that it is clear that we can drink Coca-Cola and Heineken in Bucharest as well. Behind those walls and far from the traffic noise, a warm quiet reigns. Each house, surrounded by its own garden, exhibits its own individuality. Many of these structures seem abandoned: the lack of money of the owners and the negligence of public institutions has covered them with a timeless patina. The wild vegetation takes possession

of the buildings and penetrates into cracks and gaps, reminding us that this once was rural land. On the fringes, large plots of wasteland, like silent thoughts in forgotten corners of our mind, house marginalised communities. Not so far away, buildings that yesterday were standing still suddenly disappear in the early morning to make room for a new fantasy.

During this week we have tried, through workshops, encounters and urban explorations, to catch a glimpse of what is happening today in Bucharest; we have tried to understand, rationally and emotionally, which are the common threads running through all these different urban fragments. Certainly, wounds from a heavy recent history are still fresh, trust is hard to build and sustain in these conditions, and the public institutions haven't got down to work yet. Their introverted and exclusionary practices, inside administrative boundaries and behind fences, leave a large empty space that a growing network of non-governmental and bottom up initiatives try to fill. We have seen during this week how much potential for action those initiatives can bring, but what will be the next step of the strategy, as most of them end up hitting against the same walls?

1. Robert, JP (2013) 'Bucarest, le trousseau des songes', Criticat 11, p 25-29

BUCHAREST, SEEN AS A PALIMPSEST

Fabian Wenner
MSc RUPS

When, in the past, paper was a scarce resource, manuscripts would often be reused by effacing earlier writing and superimposing it with new writing. But every time an old inscription is removed and replaced with a new text, a new meaning, parts remain of what was there before. They shimmer through the new layer, and modern scientific methods can help to improve their visibility. This is called a palimpsest.

Bucharest is a palimpsest. As Augustin Ioan, Professor at the Ion Mincu University in Bucharest formulated it accurately in his presentation, it consists of multiple incomplete overlapping layers, each a remnant of an attempt to redesign the urban structure completely. Every half century, a new ruling elite tried to impose a different logic, a new design upon the city and 'scratched out' parts of the existing fabric, but never accomplished to eradicate entirely what was there before.

The result today is an appearance that many describe as 'eclectic': Magnificent, sometimes derelict 19th century urban villas next to almost rural neighbourhoods with bungalows, early modernist grand boulevards, 1950s socialist mass housing, and of course Ceausescu's brutal Casa Poporului redevelopment. But as soon as you leave the super-human boulevard with its Nomenclatura apartments, leading to the palace now used as Parliament, you can see the old 'logic', the former function and feel of the area like in a palimpsest. Bucharest has proven

to be remarkably resilient against 'grand plans' and attempts to tame its seemingly chaotic appearance.

Though urban planners might find this unsatisfactory to some degree, it is maybe a good thing. The most recent ruling logic, since the revolution of 1989 and the turn from communism to capitalism, is the market. Nothing shows this more vividly than the view out of the taxi window on the way from the airport to the city centre: A richly decorated neo-classicist building from the early socialist era, almost completely covered with billboard advertising for the epitome of capitalism: Coca Cola. After the privatisation of all social housing in the 1990s, 95% of the housing stock is now privately owned. The state railway company is deliberately sabotaged by the interests of the car industry. Our discussions with property developers and local planning practitioners revealed the lack of strategic, city- and region-wide planning due to the lack of a uniform urban government and inter-regional administrative bodies, and the ease with which developers can change zoning plans in their favour. They also revealed that corruption remains an issue to be tackled. As a result, office towers and shopping malls spring up everywhere.

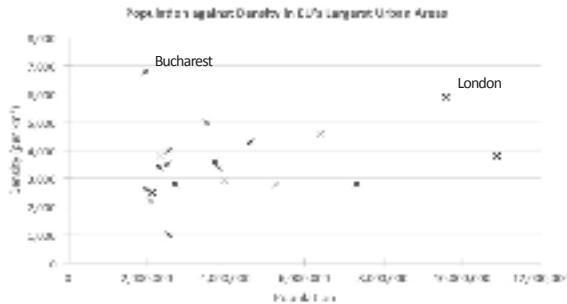
But as with the other layers of the palimpsest, the current swing from an almost entirely state-controlled economy to a laissez-faire system in 1990 will again not lead to a complete effacement. Market mechanisms will add a new layer to the resistant city, until a new logic arrives. Maybe this time, it will finally be a more just compromise between private property interests and the greater common good, a compromise that the country still seems to be on its way to.



DENSE FEELINGS

Simon Hicks
MSc RUPS

Within one recent interval of modest procrastination spent stumbling through Wikipedia's regressions, I came upon one small statistical insight that contextualised many personal observations I had made on recent trip to Bucharest. The fact is as follows: of the 20 largest urban areas in the EU, Bucharest has the highest density of 6,800 persons per square km. This significantly exceeds the top twenty average density of 3,585, and is even a stretch above the second highest population density of London at 5,900.



Bucharest, it seems, does lie at a vastly higher density than any other city in its population class. Perhaps because it is the only city in this list with a formerly ingrained totalitarian communist regime that engineered much of the central and suburban housing of the city. Indeed, it is the housing that I find most remarkable about this city. Nine-storey blocks and higher, front onto busy avenues and quiet side streets. Ville Radieuse comes to mind – but in Bucharest the communal green space between blocks are largely omitted. Small parks were seemingly hard to come by. Areas that one could have reasonably assumed to be public spaces on a map were often the site of car parks

or fast food outlets.

Despite the observable shortcomings in public space allocation, I felt a small envy to the housing form. Homes are dense enough so that one can walk from the centre of the city to the periphery in the course of a morning. Indeed, the distance from centre to edge is generally less than 5 miles – comparable to my 20 minute London cycle commute. This presents great prospects for city residents to have free access to central services. Furthermore, even the minor streets are wide enough to retain a sense of openness so one does not feel entrapped. They will often be tree lined, with small semi-public spaces at the main block entrances where residents set up small-scale garden project. Even the apartments I visited were reasonably proportioned (in comparison to London) and featured some kind of outdoor balcony space or winter garden. I have been informed by a resident that they will suffer from service failures with minor frequency, but this could perhaps be traced as a symptom of Romania's wider infrastructural deficiencies. Regardless, Bucharest's high density housing has in part played a role in preserving affordability in the city – though as I understand, rents are rising fast.

Overall, I get the impression that much could be learnt from a city where the majority of residents can live near and have reasonable access to the city centre. In the context of London where younger and poorer families are being increasingly decanted to ill-fated places like Dartford or Stevenage, it does seem that a little more Bucharest-style densification within zone 2 wouldn't go a miss – especially after witnessing first-hand the bedlam that ensued from recent tube strikes. The challenges faced in densifying London are, however, a tale for another time.



MEETING THE FAVORIT COMMUNITY GROUP

Lidia Staron

MSc RUPS

On the second day of the workshop we met four representatives from Favorit initiative group. The ladies in their sixties were telling us their story of the battle to save a local cinema. Motivation of the members of the informal residents group were diverse, some sentimental - trying to stop the progress of time, but also trying to protect an old good communal space. The community voice was heard by the authorities, as they said 'broke the glass'. How was that possible? Well, it was a hard and long process.

The local actors are extremely well organized and vocal. Members are very diverse, but the majority is retired long-time residents. There are young people too, but we haven't met them unfortunately. The initiative started as a reactive movement against the authorities who don't do their job, omitting the rights of residents. There was a lack of understanding of community needs, their rights for amenity space, culture and recreation. Firstly an informal group organized a series of interviews to better understand the local needs. A lot of the interviewed pointed out a rundown local cinema as a place they feel attached to. For the initiative group that was a perfect opportunity for a flagship project. Community needs its space to thrive.

Favorit (the community group is named after the cinema) had enough determination to make the authorities to account for their claims. Consecutive mayors recognized the Favorit problem and even put it on their agenda. But

this was only as a political manoeuvre. There was no real feasibility study/funding proposal for the new community centre. One mayor did propose an overblown project - a 'cultural mall' but not supported by any funding proposal. As community say it was only a 'show'.

The question here is how long an informal group can take the project forward. The determination of Favorit is impressive but probably they need a professional support to successfully liaise with the authorities. But the baton is now on the council side. They should change the attitude because the anger of the residents cannot last too long.

I'm hoping to come back to Bucharest one day as it is a fascinating place for me because I come from post-communist country too. The problems with unskilled power executors are the most familiar... I will be looking for a Favorit cinema.



NOTES ON COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION AND THE INNER CITY

Rachita Misra
MSc RUPS

The first few things that perhaps all of us noticed in Bucharest was how it was so different from other European cities- the wide roads, large number of cars and parking lots, the abandoned dilapidated buildings, shopping malls, advertisement hoardings, and the disorganized electrical wiring! These are some of the things that most of the European cities have managed to do away with, especially in their city centres- which are instead characterised by beautiful heritage buildings and strictly regulated facades.

But for me, being from India- a developing country, Bucharest seemed familiar. Low public funds, an evolving planning system characterized by poor management and problems with bureaucracy, along with an aspiring population for whom everything 'old' is something that is an obstacle to their way to 'development' and 'modernization', are only some of the problems that planners have to deal with everyday.

During this five day workshop, two of the sessions that stood out for me were- Community Participation and Inner-city Development.

The community participation session on Day 2 was led by CeRe- an organization that has been acting as a facilitator in the community participation process in Bucharest since the past five years. Nicoleta, from CeRe, was accompanied by representatives from one of the community groups- Favorit Cinemas Group.

While hearing them talk about their experiences with the local authorities in Bucharest, I started to draw out a parallel with community planning in London. With laws and institutions strictly in place, 'community

participation' comes naturally to the London residents. But it's not the same in Bucharest.

When you don't know how a system works or what your rights as a citizen are, how do you even start to question them? Nicoleta pointed out how Romanians are not accustomed to the idea of challenging the state power or contributing to the ideas that shape their neighbourhood. Thus, finding people who are willing to participate and be optimistic about the city administration has been one of her most challenging tasks.

The session also brought out a tension between the goals of redevelopment suggested by the communities and the plans foresaw by the government. This was something that we discussed further in our session with Ar. Augustin Ioan, professor at „Ion Mincu” University of Architecture and Urbanism, Bucharest. Talking about the history of development in Bucharest, he pointed out how the city has had a tradition of 'rebuilding' and bringing 'order' and 'geometry'. Further, with basic infrastructure still not in its place, and a complicated administrative set-up, one of the other key issues is prioritization of projects. Thus, do you try and solve the issues with property rights and restitution in the inner city? Or develop the outer city areas to provide for the growing needs of its aspiring population? We got the answer in the following afternoon with a visit to the sprawling north Bucharest- with patches of gated communities and office complexes.

The problems that Bucharest is facing today are complex and multi-layered, and through this workshop we were able to unravel only a few of these. But on day 5, through the pechakucha gathering, I also found the city to be a powerful source of inspiration- encouraging many young urban practitioners, architects and artists. I am sure, in Bucharest- the change WILL come from its people!



BUCHAREST'S LOVE AFFAIR WITH THE CAR

Reiner Kravis
MSc RUPS

Upon our arrival in Bucharest three of my classmates and I decided to head to our apartment not by taxi but via public transportation. The bus was somewhat cheaper than a taxi but it also offered me the chance to take a long look at Bucharest on our lengthy ride into town. Beyond the typical box stores and highways one would expect to find in any suburban region such as Otopeni what struck me immediately about the area was the large amount of automobile dealerships. As our bus entered deeper into the city towards Piața Unirii this theme continued as the amount of cars seemed to become larger rather than smaller. Once our bus had reached its terminus in the heart of the city we were dropped off in the middle of a massive square where six to eight lane roads encompassed us. These massive boulevards, along with the constant sight of congestion, cars parked on sidewalks due to a lack of space, and the sounds of car horns waking me up most mornings at my Unirii apartment left an impression on me and made me wonder why the city was so car-crazed.

My first thought was that the citizens of Bucharest all owned cars due to a lack of transportation options. This idea was quickly dismissed when I saw the Metro map of the city and the extensive tram and bus lines that integrate together to form a respectable public transportation system that is still expanding. Thus, what was the cause for this high amount of cars? The answer that became apparent to me was the revolution in 1989 and the accompanying transition from communism to

capitalism. Before 1989 owning a Dacia involved high costs, long wait lists, and was thus not a typical household item. But today things are different and cars are available to whomever can afford them. Further, when talking about the issue to some local residents accompanying us on our week long session I learnt that owning a car in Bucharest today is a sign of being someone and becoming independent. Owning a car has become a part of the culture of the city. This is of course a generalization, but I believe that it holds truth. In communist times most people used the public transportation system to get around. Today however, people can take their own means of transit to work via the car. But this has led to bad rush-hour congestion and a lack of parking spaces that results in cars owning more sidewalk space than pedestrians do. I think that the city will have a difficult time in reducing congestion and shifting people back to the public transportation system as it is not an issue of the public transportation systems size but rather a cultural mind-set one. This issue captivated my attention most during my six days in the city, and while it needs addressing it will not prevent me from coming back soon to Bucharest and hopefully the rest that Romania has to offer.



CONSERVATION CHALLENGES

Gwenaëlle Dubois

MSc RUPS

Wandering through the streets of the inner Bucharest, one is struck by the city's architectural eclecticism. While the smallest streets offer a collection of old buildings of different styles: byzantine, art nouveau, transylvanian etc.; the boulevards that seem to go on forever immerse the wanderer into a succession of blocs. An impressive example is Piata Unirii, a gigantic empty space surrounded by large roads and tall buildings covered with adverts. And only ten minutes walking from there: the old city centre, partly converted into a night venue.

This – somehow odd – mix is the result of the position of the city: between Orient and Occident, a stopover for merchants and caravans on their way to Transylvania; its consolidation through the aggregation of towns and villages; and its history of ongoing demolitions and (re)constructions. Consequently, Bucharest is definitely an historical town, but not as it might be always conceived - attached to a particular time in history or a particular style -, a city which diversity reflects rich historical influences, as a meeting point between Western European, Turkish and Slavic cultures.

From Bucharest's tortuous history and transformations exist a lack of understanding about its formation. But, maybe the mysteries around the city's growth participate to give Bucharest an atypical charm...

Particularly striking is the scale of transformations that occurred during communism, characterised by massive boulevards cuts and the construction of housing blocs. The tools used to that ends were

demolitions, demolitions, and more demolitions, which led to the destruction of an area of almost the size of Venice and the removal of thousands of people. This is particularly observable in the area embracing from Piata Unirii to Ceausescu's Palace of the People. This eccentric and enormous project is today a point of identification for the city, while it remains a contested and sensible manifestation of the darkest times of Romania's history.

These legacies and mysteries today give Bucharest its distinctive and original shape, but are also at the roots of many issues in heritage conservation. Part of the heritage is not in its best state, but for a city still concerned with its communist past there are surely more urgent priorities, concerning infrastructure and land property for instance.

What to preserve or to tear down? Rebuilding, but according to an authentic historical state or allowing new design? Moreover, in case of such a contentious heritage as the Palace, questions of ethics and construction of historical identity, which are not those that planners and local authorities traditionally deal with, are to be taken into account.

Bucharest faces many challenges concerning its heritage, but this can also be seen as an opportunity. Heritage conservation is not only preserving historical buildings in their best historical and authentic shape, it is also adding new to the ancient, to add our trace of the past for future generations. In Bucharest, the transformations that are going on now and will go in the next years are also a way to contribute to its multicultural city's history. Its identity might not be fixed and allow us to stay within the comfortable boundaries of being able to label everything we see, but may better be that of a city which truly welcomes evolution as a way to accommodate social and cultural change.



THINKING BACK TO THE INNER CITY

Selina Bull
MSc RUPS

The idea that the city is the sum of several layers may be familiar to students of urbanism. It seems that one of the great temptations of urban planners everywhere is to remake the city with grand schemes and plans. I recall discussing in a seminar during the fall term whether it was better to plan with grand schemes, or to plan incrementally. It seems that Bucharest has offered us the lesson that even if planning by grand scheme could be better, it is highly unlikely to be accomplished. We may only be able to plan by increments, tempting though the comprehensive city project may be.

I think we are also acquainted with the issue of incoherent urban administration from our experience in London. The 32 boroughs have very different, and often competing, interests, and this caused some trouble when the regional government was abolished in the 1980s. Some would argue that London has been able to 'take-off' and make the most of development opportunities since the (re)establishment of regional government. The 6 sectors in Bucharest all have a piece of the pie, but perhaps not the incentives and structures in place in order to work together. Furthermore, it seems that the administrative structure - e.g. local governments not having enough power - also causes problems because people bypass local government and go straight to the General Mayor; this may exacerbate problems with corruption.

One issue that seemed completely foreign to me was the difficulty of defining property

rights. As a Canadian, I had never thought of the barriers to sorting out land ownership in a post-communist country, and how this might impact development. Yet, as I thought about this more, I can link it to an example from my home province, British Columbia. Most of BC's lands are not settled by treaty, and are therefore unceded aboriginal lands. Thus, aboriginal groups in BC have been staking land claims for decades and this often impedes development - although it is more often resource development outside urban areas. However, many residents of BC would not feel that this is necessarily a bad thing. Alternatively, in Bucharest, people seem to feel that it will be difficult to move forward as a city until land ownership is settled.

Overall, our program in Bucharest has offered us completely unique experiences, as well as some opportunities to learn from the links we can draw.



THE WHITE CUBICLES OF BUCHAREST

Fabian Wenner

MSc RUPS

Bucharest may be a city of chaotic car traffic conditions. Others may think of it as a city of an eclectic architecture style mix and of concurrency of renewal and decay. But in reality, Bucharest is a city of white cubicles.

Barely large enough for one person to fit in (admittedly, there also seems to be a posh 2-person version), the white booths usually feature not more than a door, a window, and a chair. Within the surrounding of an eclectic architecture style mix, the standardised boxes form a soothing recurring element that conveys familiarity. And security. Because this is what they are there for: In a land of low labour wages and a public security provision that is not trusted, landowners hire private guards to protect their property, and for them, they install the white cubicles as shelters. And since many landowners seemingly had the same idea at the same time, they all look alike. The Romanian version of CCTV, with elements of Hoxha's bunkerisation programme in Albania.

To document this striking feature of Bucharest, we have collected an exclusive collection of the most beautiful boxes in the most fascinating locations. Enjoy!

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WAY TO FLY.











Booklet designed by: Nicola Carnevali & Alessandra Mossa



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