URBAN COMMUNITIES AND URBAN TRANSFORMATION IN THE
ROMANIAN PRINCIPALITIES
/ OLD KINGDOM ROMANIA (1831–1914)

International Workshop
16 April 2019
10.00–18.00

Conveners: Alex DRACE-FRANCIS and Bogdan POPA

Participants: Raluca ALEXANDRESCU, Constantin ARDELEANU, Simion CÂŁȚIA, Camelia CRĂCIUN, Alex DRACE-FRANCIS, Ger DUIZINGS, Silvia MARTON, Nicolae MIHAI, Bogdan POPA, Toader POPESCU, Laurenţiu RĂDVAN, Gheorghe–Marian ZĂLOAGĂ

This workshop is organized in connection with the Lapedatu Fellowships at NEC, sponsored by the Lapedatu Foundation (www.lapedatu.com)
PROGRAM

09.30–10.00: Coffee/Welcome

10.00–10.30: Introduction
Alex Drace-Francis (Amsterdam/Bucharest) ‘A city we don’t understand’? Reflections on the historiography of Bucharest

10.45–12.15: Infrastructures
Chair and discussant: Ger Duijzings (Regensburg)

Constantin Ardeleanu (Galați/Utrecht/Bucharest): Steaming towards modernity: From Küstenge to Constanța

Toader Popescu (Bucharest): On the fast track: Social and urban patterns in the evolution of the railway district in Romanian cities

Simion Câlția (Bucharest): The changing face of modernity. The Bucharest City Hall and the quest for the ultimate modern abattoir

12.30–13.30 Communities and ethnic groups
Chair and discussant: Gheorghe–Marian Zăloagă (Târgu Mureș)

Laurențiu Rădvan (Iași): Enslaved Gypsies and free Gypsies: the case of Barbu Lăutarul

Camelia Crăciun (Bucharest): Modernity and tradition in conflict at the turn of century reflected in the works of Jewish Romanian writers: Ronetti Roman’s Manasse

15.00–16.30 Political ideas and urban spaces
Chair and discussant: Raluca Alexandrescu (Bucharest)

Nicolae Mihai (Craiova): Urban spaces and “emotional communities” in Wallachia during 1848 Revolution

Silvia Marton (Bucharest): Elections in the Old Kingdom: Fraud and socio-political influence in urban politics (1866–1914)

Bogdan Popa (Bucharest): Reading social change: Booksellers and publishers as a category of the urban Middle Class in Old Kingdom Romania

16.45–17.15 Conclusions
ABSTRACTS

Alex Drace-Francis: ‘A city we don’t understand’? Reflections on the historiography of Bucharest

‘Bucharest is a city we don’t understand’, is the opening line of Romanian historian Nicolae Iorga’s 1939 *History of Bucharest*. Iorga’s assertion was aimed at a domestic, national audience (‘we’), but also reflects the shadow of international reception. His sentiment has a complex genealogy, traceable both in the remarks of foreign travellers and domestic commentators on the ideal or reality of Bucharest. Intelligibility is an important aspect of urban life: it relates most obviously to practical matters such as navigability but also to the conferring of meaning on human lives by according them an identity and a sense of their place in a larger order of things. In order to thematize the day’s work, I will ask why both foreign and domestic commentators have considered the city of Bucharest to be unintelligible, and also consider the situation of Romanian cities in general accounts of contemporary urban historiography.

**Alex Drace-Francis** is Associate Professor of Modern European History at the University of Amsterdam and Lapedatu Fellow at the New Europe College (2018-19). His publications include *The Making of Modern Romanian Culture* (2006), translated as *Geneza culturii române moderne* (2016); *The Traditions of Invention* (2013) and numerous works on Romanian and East European travel literature. He also published the anthology *European Identity: A Historical Reader* (2013).

Constantin Ardeleanu: Steaming towards modernity – from Küstenge to Constanța

The small Ottoman village of Küstenge was rapidly transformed by steam power in the second half of the nineteenth century. In the post-Crimean War context, a private company (the Danube and Black Sea Railway Company) built a railway across the Ottoman region of Dobrogea, one of the first in the empire. This had a significant impact on the Black Sea outlet, which gradually became a communication hub along Levantine trading routes. In 1878 Romania acquired Dobrogea and the seaport got new ‘steam’ for development within the Romanian national state. This turned Constanța into a laboratory of economic and national experiments. Until World War One, the population had grown from about 5,000 inhabitants to more than 30,000, and by the interwar period Constanța was the country’s largest commercial outlet.

Within this general framework, this paper aims to look at how ‘steam power’ and political power pushed forward Constanța’s development and explores different avenues of research on the history of railways in peripheral countries.

**Constantin Ardeleanu** is professor of modern Romanian history at the ‘The Lower Danube’ University of Galați (Romania), and a research fellow at Utrecht University, within the ERC project *Securing Europe, Fighting its Enemies. The Making of a Security Culture in Europe and Beyond, 1815–1914*. His latest book is entitled *International Trade and Diplomacy at the Lower Danube: the Sulina Question and the Economic Premises of the Crimean War, 1829–1853* (Brăila, 2014).

Toader Popescu: On the fast track: Social and urban patterns in the evolution of the railway district in Romanian cities

The final decades of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century are the ‘heroic age’ of railroad construction in Romania. At the end of this interval, most of the current rail network had already been built. The development of the cities included in this network was heavily
influenced by the presence of railway infrastructure and by its associated opportunities and restrictions. This paper will follow the specific development of urban areas surrounding the newly built railway stations, by trying to answer several research questions:

A. Was there a pattern in the choice of the areas in which stations were built and, if so, how was it generated?
B. Were there specific urban operations associated to these areas, following the construction of railway infrastructure?
C. Did these areas exhibit a specific type of development (from a functional and social perspective) during the ensuing decades?
D. Were there any particular elements to the Romanian case (as opposed to the general case of the European city) in the answers to the questions above?

The research method will rely heavily on case studies, as identifying specific patterns requires covering as many cities as possible. Aside from Bucharest (which is always an unavoidable case, because of the scale and complexity of its problems), I will attempt to cover at least 12–15 other relevant towns in the Old Kingdom. Primary sources for the study of the Romanian situation will be mainly cartographical and archival; as the international situation is not the main focus of my research, and is used merely for comparative purposes, it will generally be covered from secondary sources.

**Toader Popescu** is an architect, assistant professor, PhD, “Ion Mincu” University of Architecture and Urban Planning in Bucharest (UAUIM), holding a specialization in history and theory of architecture and urban history.

**Simion Câlția: The changing face of modernity. The Bucharest City Hall and the quest for the ultimate modern abattoir**

In the present paper we will analyse how the municipality had dealt with the process of modernisation of the Bucharest slaughterhouse at the end of the 19th century and the first decade of the 20th century. During this time, the abattoir was an instrument of modernisation. The City Hall used it as an instrument of change: to transform human behaviour and professional practices, to introduce new sanitary norms and standards, to change the relationship between different market participants, in short, to modernize the way in which one of the most important food products was produced.

The slaughterhouse stood at the intersection of different modernisation processes, each with its particular rhythm of change, with different opportunities and constraints. We will analyse how the Bucharest administration had managed and applied scientific discoveries (for example the bacterial revolution) and how it had reacted to technological innovations (from the electric light to the microscope). Special attention will be given to the changing and the modernization of behavior and professional practices of the City Hall employees and other market actors. We will insist on the social dynamic resulting from the resistance to change of the various actors involved. For this purpose, we will focus especially on the practitioners of the meat trade, showing how they reacted and resisted to change, and how they tried to use the abattoir to block the process of modernization conceived by the City Hall.

Our paper analyses the municipality’s changing vision of modernity. We will bring to light how different institutions of the Bucharest administration (especially the City Council and the Board of Hygiene) had different understandings of modernisation, of their own responsibilities and duties, and how these in turn shaped the relation between them.

**Simion Câlția** is assistant professor at the Faculty of History, University of Bucharest. He was awarded his PhD at EHESS (Paris) with the thesis *Villes ou villages dans les pays roumains (XVIIe et XVIIIe siècle)*. His field of interest is urban history. In the last years his main topic of research was the role of the municipalities in regulating the production and distribution of food, and the impact this process had on urban administration, on food business and not least on the townsmen.
This paper seeks to outline the status of Gypsies in Iași in the first half of the 19th century, focusing on the changes that this social category witnessed at the time. Around 1800, the town was already populated by a significant number of people in a state of servitude, with some clustered in several neighbourhoods (in Țigănie and Potoșa), and others spread throughout the town. They handled various crafts, some being ironworkers, others cooks or domestic helpers/maids. Some were still the property of the prince, and were the subjects of a new institution, which was created in the second half of the 18th century: the Naziria. Over time, the prince's Gypsies were increasingly used for public works in the capital. Between 1830 and 1845, they were used for various projects initiated after the Organic Statute had been adopted: to dig the ditch around the town, to work at the new Orthodox Cathedral and at the Socola gardens etc. They were better off than most Gypsies, who were the property of boyars and monasteries, cases of Gypsies owned by townspeople being rare. There were reports of people freed from slavery, but these were usually specific/singular/exceptional situations. Some Gypsies had been freed by their masters' last will or testament, owing to/in recognition of their faithful service. Others had obtained freedom after being ransomed by another boyar who opposed slavery, or even by the Gypsies themselves. Barbu Lăutarul was one of the ransomed Gypsies, who quickly became a musical celebrity at the time. From an early age, he had proven himself to be an exceptional cobza player, and became the starosta of the guild of lăutari (musicians) in Iași, a title he held with some interruptions until late in his life, in the 1840s. The files of the Eforia (the city council) in Iași mention him as such, as the new institution managing the town’s affairs did not only try to regulate this profession, but also to appease the many conflicts between Gypsies.

Laurenițiu Rădvan is Professor at the Faculty of History, “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iași; research on late medieval and modern urban history; studies and books published on social and economic history, urban institutions, historical sources.

Camelia Crăciun: Modernity and tradition in conflict at the turn of century reflected in the works of Jewish Romanian writers: Ronetti Roman’s Manasse

The second half of the nineteenth century witnessed profound changes in terms of demographic trends and communal organization with great impact on the Jewish lifestyle, community cohesion and identity preservation. Basically, modernization with its economic and social opportunities challenged the traditional values on which the Jewish society survived for centuries in Diaspora. This presentation follows/tracks these changes and their effects captured through the generational conflict literary theme in the works of Jewish Romanian writers; Ronetti Roman’s Manasse analysed this conflict in great depth, placing in contrast two legitimate positions inside the Jewish community: the traditional view pressing for preservation and traditional lifestyle, fearing also antisemitism and persecutions, and the modern perspective, striving for successful integration and inclusion, while retaining a symbolic cultural Jewish identity. Written at the beginning of the twentieth century and included in the repertory of the Romanian National Theatre of Iași, performed despite protests, the play presents a generational conflict expressing synthetically the main positions regarding the conflict between modernization and tradition within the Jewish society, each with their arguments and contestations.

Camelia Crăciun is Associate Professor in the Jewish Studies Department, Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literatures at the University of Bucharest. She has published monographs on the history of Jewish Romanian intellectuals (Scritori evrei de limbă română: de la rebeli marginali la critici canonici, Editura Universității Al. I. Cuza, 2018) and on Yiddish culture in Romania (Traduceri în limba română din
Nicolae Mihai: Urban spaces and “emotional communities” in Wallachia during the 1848 Revolution

One of the topics that still require attention from the researchers interested in South Eastern Europe regards the relation between national ceremonies and urban space. We chose to study this topic taking into account the ritualization of power during the revolutionary regime in Wallachia. Such a perspective could have its advantage in understanding what we have called a prehistory of the festive culture of the nation, at least if we accept seeing the nation as an “emotional community” (Barbara Rosenwein). Different from the festive culture of Phanariot power (Radu Păun) or the Organic Statutes Regime (Cristian Ploscaru, Mihai Răzvan Ungureanu), the revolutionary celebrations impose some interesting changes: a transformation of the participants from passive spectators into active actors (citizens), a mix of popular culture and modern ways of doing politics (discourses, practices, symbols), strategies of bringing together peasants and townsmen in the urban space, a reconfiguration of the urban topographies of power. However, the introduction of these forms of revolutionary celebration in the urban space in Wallachia embrace many aspects, sometimes divergent ones, and have to be seen as an experiment, not a success. For example, it is difficult to speak of a great success of the Revolution in the urban spaces from/in Wallachia with a multi-ethnic composition, such as Brăila, where the revolutionary commissars are quickly rejected by Greek and Armenian merchants, afraid of possible consequences for their commercial affairs (Turkish intervention). Studying the revolutionary ceremonies in some Wallachian urban centres (București, Brăila, Ploiești, Pitești, Râmnicu Vâlcea, Craiova, Turnu Severin), we try to emphasize how this process affected the traditional urban rhythm, prefigured the national ceremonies of Alexandru Cuza’s reign (especially 24th January, first National Celebration), marked the symbolic topography of the urban space and the body of the participants in their new hypostasis of citizens and members of a nation.


Silvia Marton: Elections in the Old Kingdom: fraud, and social and political influence in urban politics (1866–1914)

The 1866 Constitution introduced a hereditary, liberal, and constitutional monarchy, in a regime that was intended to be parliamentary. The ample political freedoms, including freedom of expression and of the press, were counterweighed by the census-based voting system, and by very low literacy levels. All political actors denounced the electoral practices that corrupted, as they were emphatically asserting, the political representation of the nation and the very act of voting. The awareness of reprehensible electoral practices and moeurs and their denunciation accompanied the introduction of modern electoral procedures in Romania. I have examined elsewhere the continuity across parties and electoral cycles of electoral deviance and the array of fraudulent procedures, and
its condemnation by the protagonists themselves, in the attempt to understand the nature of the Romanian political regime from 1866 to 1914.

This paper will study the meaning of the act of voting in a census-based electoral system and in a hierarchical and non-equalitarian society in some urban constituencies (third electoral colleges notably in the cities of Ploiesti and Bucharest, but not limited to them) and during several electoral cycles for MPs elections to the Lower Chamber. The paper will discuss the fine line between fraud, political and social pressure, and undue influence during elections, in the context of gradual, but difficult democratization (understood both as an emancipatory and empowering process in the shaping of citizenship, and as the widening of representation).

The two main overall aims of the paper are to understand (1) the relation between urban life, (modern) national politics and the emergence of a wider urban participatory culture, and (2) the difficulties of the widening of citizenship rights, in the context of accelerated modernization-driven state- and nation-building.

The paper will bring together practices, discourses and conceptualizations of the historical actors themselves, from a varied range of sources (institutional archival documents, press, pamphlets, parliamentary debates).

Silvia Marton is assistant professor at the Faculty of Political Science, University of Bucharest, and associate researcher at the Centre Norbert Elias (France). She received her PhD in political science from the University of Bologna and the University of Bucharest. Her work is focused on the history and politics of corruption; nation- and state-building in Eastern Europe during the 19th century.

Bogdan Popa: Reading social change: Booksellers and publishers as a category of the urban middle class in the Old Kingdom

This paper aims to contribute to a wider debate on the existence (or non-existence) of a middle class or bourgeoisie in the Old Kingdom. I shall focus on a case-study, the booksellers, later publishers, which appeared during the first decades of the nineteenth century. A heterogeneous group, the booksellers-publishers had mostly an economic agenda. However, they were dependent on a number of factors, such as political decisions, illiteracy, and the small number of authors.

I aim to look into how the booksellers-publishers defined themselves, or were defined by others in terms of a social category. I also argue that, while a history of reading is necessary and does not lack sources, the historical investigation of the very structure of the society of the Old Kingdom needs to be updated. The well-known Romanian theories on the emergence of the ‘bourgeoisie’ need to be completed by case-studies. By their field of activity, which intersected with the economic, political, education and cultural establishments, the booksellers-publishers represent such a particular group within the society. While the most important among them were based in Bucharest and Iași, there were also smaller bookstores and publishing houses in other urban centres of the Old Kingdom. Therefore, this research aims to look also into the wider issue of how booksellers and publishers positioned themselves in the society.

Bogdan Popa is a researcher at the ‘Nicolae Iorga’ Institute, Bucharest and a Lapedatu Fellow at the New Europe College.

This workshop proposes to look at various transformations of the urban space in the Romanian Principalities and Old Kingdom Romania. The participants’ perspectives range from the role of infrastructure to the contribution of various ethnic or professional communities to the ‘modernization’ of Romanian cities.

Rather than addressing directly the contributions of the members of the Lapedatu family to these transformations and/or to their study, our workshop is to be seen as an acknowledgement of their role in the process of modernization on the territories of present-day Romania.