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# IMPROVING QUALITY OF LIFE IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

## Community centers as a means for rehabilitation of housing districts. The case of Bucharest

*In today's nomadic society, which is undergoing a process of relocation, the role of certain places as a source of identity cannot be the same as it was in the pre-digital era; places no longer point their inhabitants towards certain historical traditions and values.*

Françoise Choay <sup>1</sup>

### **General considerations**

The topic of this article was born of the many current discussions concerning Bucharest and its present condition, as opposed to that of the 'marvel' city that it once was.<sup>2</sup> One of the most problematic issues currently under consideration is that of the housing districts built in the socialist era.<sup>3</sup> These are large areas, mostly situated at the periphery of the city, but which over time have started to attack the city of Bucharest as a whole. This came about because the architecture of these districts is closely linked to the social dimension of the areas; a city is made of its people, and people move around, are influenced by and influence their environments.

A full account of the housing districts of Bucharest cannot possibly be narrated in a relatively small paper, such as this is; however, this research will try to identify the main periods in which these districts took shape, underlining their characteristics in terms of construction, social strata and the gradual change in the space-community relationship. In this context, some authors maintain that community manifests itself in more

than just the physical space which can be shaped by design or planning interventions.<sup>4</sup> I agree completely with this point of view. However, physical space is an initial precondition in order that people manifest themselves. If this space does not meet the needs of the people, its positive features should be identified and in some way recovered.

The actual aim of this paper is to identify ways in which to rehabilitate these condemned housing districts. I am not concerned here with a discussion of the buildings themselves. I am interested in the spaces between the blocks, the leisure areas – that are deserted, in the opinion of many, but in practice this is not altogether true – and all the possible spaces in the district where change could make a difference to the lives of the inhabitants. Thus, this paper will discuss the possibility of creating community centers, where people can engage in dialogue on various matters of interest.

The plans and texts consulted for this research were mainly taken from *Arhitectura* magazine, the most complete source of architectural data relating to the socialist period. Commentaries in this review and others that can be found in different books and articles of the socialist period ought also to be read, bearing in mind that information contained therein will not necessarily be accurate or the criticism harsh enough since the communist regime of the day permitted only that which suited its aims. Other sources include World Bank reports, compilations of data on Eastern European ex-communist countries and their housing policies, articles on current trends in town-planning, as well as accounts of Bucharest by foreign travelers, new post-communist approaches to the totalitarian society and the results of a social inquiry completed in 1993, which compares the ways of life ‘before’ and ‘after’ the events of 1989. Hopefully, these sources will provide a large and comprehensive basis for the solutions and conclusions reached by this paper.

## **1. The birth of the housing districts**

### ***a) Models***

The housing districts as we know them today were based on certain urban models.<sup>5</sup> The term *urbanism* is no older than the 19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>6</sup> and basically refers to a corpus of solutions to city problems. The traditional city of that time was undergoing rapid growth owing to unparalleled

demographic expansion and mass industrialization: it became 'narrow', unhealthy, with a confusing urban structure. Creating domiciles for the increasing urban population was among the most important issues of the day since housing was very limited and of extremely low quality. Some solutions were initially proposed by the theoreticians of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (including economists, doctors or even philosophers), rather than by the architects, who were more concerned with loftier issues, such as style.

Two main models resulted from the thoughts of the theoreticians. These can be classified as the *progressive model* and the *cultural model*.<sup>7</sup> For the purposes of this paper, I will refer mostly to the first model because this can be agreed to have been at the origins of the Romanian housing districts. Suffice it to say that both models tried to address the problems created by the developing industrial city. However, the solutions they advocated turned out to be mere utopias,<sup>8</sup> e.g. Fourier's phalanster (progressive model)<sup>9</sup> or the return to vernacular architecture advocated by Ruskin and Morris (cultural model),<sup>10</sup> and consequently the proposed schemes were not put into practice.<sup>11</sup>

Nonetheless, these ideas greatly influenced the architects of the following decades. Tony Garnier imagined a whole industrial city,<sup>12</sup> which was very rational, based on future-oriented principles such as hygiene (clean air, water, sun-light available for everybody) and efficiency. Beauty was not a priority for the progressists, for whom it was much more important that housing solutions observe type-needs (thus generally valid) for a type-individual. In fact, the type-order thus created was considered beautiful as it addressed these needs. However, it was somewhat ascetic and rigid, and possibilities for new interventions were completely neglected – even forbidden, in theory, as the solutions provided were considered optimal and, therefore, final.

There are, of course, many other examples - too many to be recounted here - that eventually led to a solution that was almost universally embraced after the Second World War.<sup>13</sup> Functionalism reached its climax with Le Corbusier's *Unité d'Habitation*, which is - as he put it - 'a machine for living'.<sup>14</sup> Garnier's scheme of the industrial city was developed by Le Corbusier into 'la ville radieuse', with a separation of the city functions into different zones. A whole area of this new type of city is dedicated to housing, that was to be divided from the areas of light and heavy industry by a green belt. This housing had to incorporate not only the apartments themselves, that were the living spaces of families and individuals, but also commerce, sports and educational facilities, as in the case of the

*unité d'habitation* in Marseille.<sup>15</sup> Interestingly, Le Corbusier tries this time to include in a vertical scheme (as opposed to Garnier's horizontal scheme for the city) an integrated existence<sup>16</sup> of a maximum number of functions linked to the housing function.

These examples were applied not only in Western societies, but also in Eastern Europe. Furthermore, socialist countries have had to experience yet another type of reality following the Second World War: that of 'socialist realism', based on a Soviet model. Romania was no exception to the rule, and Bucharest can be considered as a case study in this respect. Today's housing districts are the result of a sustained policy of creating housing for the working class implemented in the socialist spirit. A chronological approach<sup>17</sup> helps in identifying issues such as the initial design intentions in different periods of the socialist regime and how were these intentions carried out.

### ***b) Housing districts in Bucharest***

In order to understand how the city grew in the socialist years and, moreover, how this affected the whole structure of the city, it will be useful to refer to a scheme for Bucharest,<sup>18</sup> which describes the main housing developments (figure 1). The plan also shows the former so-called 'cheap housing':<sup>19</sup> the one-family house, each on its own private piece of land, built as either a detached, semi-detached or terrace house. After the Second World War, the communist regime began nationalization of private property and, at the same time rebuilding areas that had suffered bomb damage,<sup>20</sup> started construction of the collective housing. These were more appropriate to the egalitarian aspirations of the communist regime, which declared that workers should be given a decent home and that all accommodation should be the same, to prevent the creation of discrepancies in society.<sup>21</sup> The first to appear were the *cvartal* and, shortly afterwards, the *microraiion*.<sup>22</sup> The architecture of this collective housing follows the lines of the traditional city scale, balancing the public and the private space (though that could scarcely be called 'private' as these buildings had only tenants). On the whole, the *cvartals* strongly resemble the imaginative view of Fourier's phalanster (figure 2). Apartments consist of one or two small rooms and include a kitchen and sanitary facilities. The front yard is closely connected to the adjoining street and the main facades were quite imposing, respecting the Soviet socialist realism style. The backyard was used either in a traditional way (e.g. for drying laundry

or as a playground for children) or – if it was part of the precinct itself - became a small park, which developed over time into a relatively pleasant area (now including trees and bushes). However, all the schemes lacked a use for the service areas, which are in effect non-existent, with the exception of a few *cvartals* that have shops on the ground floor.

The end of the Stalinist period and the 1960s saw a degree of relaxation, which affected all areas of existence, political, social, and economical. In architecture there was a certain opening towards the Western rationalist urbanism, which was in effect promoted through the principles of the Athens Charter.<sup>23</sup> Functionalist apartment blocks - following the example of *l'unité d'habitation* (figure 3), but containing for the most part only apartments, and none of the other functions proposed by Le Corbusier<sup>24</sup> - were built in the peripheral zones of the city on the free areas near the newly built industrial areas.<sup>25</sup> These big ensembles were to house huge numbers of peasants who had come from country to the city after being offered employment in the context of mass industrialization. Location at the periphery had its own advantages. Firstly, the infrastructure already created to serve the local industry could also be used to supply the apartment blocks. Secondly, the distance between home and workplace was relatively short, facilitating transport. These are the possible economic explanations that account for the location of housing next to industry, however unhealthy such closeness might seem today. An ideological explanation owes its origin to Soviet literature, which was still influential in the period and states that, since the population of socialist cities was made up mainly of the working class, the homes of the workers should be close to their place of work: "the laws governing the principle of the working people's accommodation should be grounded in the principle of work itself, [...] so we have to consider their workplace."<sup>26</sup> Nonetheless, a positive aspect of these districts is that the apartments can boast of that minimum of functionalist comfort (e.g. running water, central heating), which was lacking in the traditional country household. Thus, living in a block in the city, together with having a decent job, suddenly became quite appealing to many.

In the beginning, the districts were reasonably well planned; the necessary distance between apartment blocks so as to provide sufficient sunlight and ventilation was respected according to the initial rationalist principles.<sup>27</sup> Soon enough, however, by 1975, a new idea came to prominence: the flanking of boulevards with rows of apartment blocks, ten floors high, with the aim of rendering the boulevards more important.

Worse still, the major earthquake of 1977 devastated the city of Bucharest and the resultant damage provided justification for a program of demolishing that eventually spread to most of the city, irrespective of any need thereof.<sup>28</sup>

The zealous construction of apartment blocks did not stop there. On the contrary: some older districts were made more dense by the construction of additional apartment blocks between already existing blocks,<sup>29</sup> and most new *housing complexes* were planned from the very beginning to have a denser urban frame – something which was also ‘helped’ by a law passed in 1980 that introduced the requirement to define the boundaries of a city.<sup>30</sup> These housing complexes combined the apartment blocks of a big ensemble with the bordering of the boulevards and were essentially quite similar in structure. They also introduced an apparent social dimension to life in the housing districts through the construction of services, such as shops, schools and kindergartens or cultural points (cinemas and culture houses, community centers with multipurpose halls). However, this is somewhat debatable since the big ensembles already had such facilities themselves.<sup>31</sup> Nevertheless, some authors claim that this difference in terminology (*large ensemble* versus *housing complex*) is necessary and that is due to the fact that the housing complex – compared to the dispersed structure of the big ensemble - could be defined, according to the differences in the texts of new laws passed in that period,<sup>32</sup> as “a unit dimensioned and structured organically and rationally, which benefits from a social life, with a certain autonomy from other neighboring housing complexes”.<sup>33</sup>

These schemes continued until 1989, when the communist regime fell. Concrete shells of apartment blocks left unfinished remained as they were for a while. Some of these were acquired by companies and for the most part turned into offices. More recently, a few such apartment blocks were completed by the National Lottery and the apartments offered as prizes to winning players. But there is no coherent strategy to continue with a housing policy (be it the same or a different one) for the benefit of the many people who must share one apartment with their parents and children, nor has there been any serious consideration of rehabilitation schemes by the local administration, politicians or even private companies.

As mentioned above, chronology helps only in placing the housing districts in the context of the Romanian socialist reality. There are many other matters, such as the social migrations, which led to a different

social structure for the city, not to mention the near impossible task of defining Bucharest due to this massive change in its architectural heritage. These affect the whole city and should be taken into consideration if any serious steps towards a rehabilitation plan are to be made. The problems engendered in relation to these housing districts will be discussed in the following chapter.

## **2. Problems of the housing districts: the socio-psychological dimension**

The architecture of a given period cannot be approached without taking into account many other areas of the society. Architecture, therefore, goes hand in hand with the economic development of the town or city in question and indeed of the whole country. This development determines population migrations, which, in turn, affects the housing stock. Other major events exert their own influence in these matters. The Second World War was such an event for the period under study here.

This is not true of Romania only. It also happened in all the countries of Eastern Europe. Again looking at matters chronologically, the war “had a devastating effect upon the housing stock of the region [and] added to this, was a large influx into the towns during and immediately after the war.”<sup>34</sup> The report of a mission to Romania by the World Bank in 1979 identified some specific periods to be taken into account when dealing with housing and migration of the rural population to the towns. For instance, due to the post war situation, in 1950-1953 “urban employment increased without a parallel increase in housing and urban services, thereby suppressing migration to towns”.<sup>35</sup> Some years passed before economic policy was reconsidered and agriculture - i.e. rural areas – benefited financially; there was an “accompanying decrease in the rate of urbanization [which] also eased the housing shortage”.<sup>36</sup> However, there was renewed industrialization in 1958-1965, with an expansion of the heavy industry located near towns and cities. This continued up to 1978<sup>37</sup> and consequently there was renewed migration to towns and cities, this time in large numbers. As a matter of fact, between 1948 and 1975 the “urban population increased by 147 percent, [and] in 1975, the size of Bucharest was 7.1 times the size of the next largest city, Cluj-Napoca.”<sup>38</sup>

A significant chart in the same World Bank report<sup>39</sup> shows that by around 1970, people who had migrated from rural areas to towns and cities constituted a major percentage of total migrations in the country. Furthermore, “the migration rates [...] were highest among those between the ages of twenty and twenty-four”, and “60 percent of those arriving in urban areas were between the ages of fifteen and twenty-nine.”<sup>40</sup>

This brings us to a partial conclusion, which is of great use in this study, that today, the majority of the population residing in the big housing districts built during the socialist era are the first generation to live in the city (of those who came from rural areas). This is important as, by means of simple calculation, their respective ages can be obtained, ranging currently from 45 to 60 years of age. They continue to live in apartment blocks in these districts since the general housing stock has not been supplemented with affordable apartments since 1989. In fact, they often are forced to live together with their children (the second generation), and sometimes even with their grandchildren (the third generation) – thus quite often three family generations can be found in the same apartment. This makes for a very crowded environment, and there is much accumulation of tension in these districts. These tensions are juxtaposed with the hardships of the daily life, which in turn is due to the transition to a market economy and democracy.

At this point, I would like to turn to the quality of architectural and urban space. Not only did the architecture of the apartment blocks themselves suffer from the “standardized designs, where the main priority [was] a minimal use of materials”,<sup>41</sup> but the residual space between buildings and the services in the area were not properly considered in the planning of the districts.

Firstly, the apartments had to observe the main rule that “[they] should not contribute to waste of resources through ‘over-dimensioning’ and ‘over-finishing’”.<sup>42</sup> Apartments built in the period up to the 1960s had one or two rooms.<sup>43</sup> Later, however, “the share of apartments with three or more rooms increased, while the number of one-room apartments fell substantially”.<sup>44</sup> Some studies show there to have been an “improvement in living standards during the 1960s and 1970s because apartments had become larger and better equipped.”<sup>45</sup>

One of the important factors shaping the new social structure of the housing districts was the way in which flats were allocated. There were waiting lists and priority was given to skilled workers from large companies

and young families with many children.<sup>46</sup> Most of these were the very same peasants who had come to town and did not meet the criteria of urban civilization; their rural way of life mixing with that of the former urban periphery, which itself cannot be considered civilized in the true sense of the word.<sup>47</sup> The result was a generalization of the periphery on both an urban and social scale, and although the regime pursued the homogenization of society through the hegemony of the urban working class,<sup>48</sup> social segregation is still very apparent in the city.<sup>49</sup>

On a second but equally important level, came the services in the housing districts, e.g. education, health and culture, shops and catering facilities.<sup>50</sup> In the 1960s, when these services were becoming a necessity, it was the *school* that was considered most important<sup>51</sup> and obviously could not be lacking in a '*microraion*'. In fact it was the school factor that defined the radius of a functional unit in socialist urban planning, according to which children were not supposed to walk more than a kilometer to the school in the neighborhood. Later, *commercial units* were similarly considered to be local centers that defined a zone, as were also local *cinemas* and the *culture houses*, which included multifunctional halls (used mainly for communist propaganda events) and libraries (used for group readings of political-ideological texts).<sup>52</sup> We can conclude at this point that the principles governing planning were geometrical-rationalist, with a powerful ideological component, rather than socially oriented.<sup>53</sup> Articles written at the time criticized (albeit mildly) the planning of the districts for having lost its preoccupation with "those urban spaces of a small community where people can intervene and make them more personal in order to express their belonging to that community and territory".<sup>54</sup> What more can be said of the vague mixture of 'individual comfort' and 'collective satisfaction', which at that time were indicators of social integration?<sup>55</sup>

We can agree, therefore, that real social life was not necessarily encouraged, despite propaganda statements to the contrary. I would go further to say that the lack of proper meeting places was a deliberate policy of the period.<sup>56</sup> The image today of the housing districts is for the most part the result of powerful ideological factors – a matter agreed on by many authors, both foreign and Romanian. There was a formulation of principles in favor of the strictest economy in building that "has inhibited architectural innovation generally, creating the distinct impression that housing economics are a vehicle for ideologically-motivated social engineering to limit the independence of the individual".<sup>57</sup> Furthermore,

“it is important to understand the radical nature of these plans because they led to the intrusion of the state activity into every aspect of social and domestic life, and which had control over housing policy and the building program as one of its key long-term policy instruments”.<sup>58</sup>

Space is one of the most important factors that can shape a person’s profile and therefore instruments of psychology were widely employed to create a new type of society.<sup>59</sup> In the same sorts of apartments, different kinds of people were forced to cohabit. It was similar to squeezing shapes with differing forms into the same square box. It is a person’s personality and psychological profile, not mention education and real needs that determine the form of the person as shape in this analogy. Add to this rural-urban social interference and a pretty accurate picture can be painted of the mix existing within the communities of the housing districts.

Despite this no effort was made to reconcile social differences - on the contrary. Before the emergence of housing districts, the majority of people lived in traditional house-and-garden units, either in villages or towns, and this translated into an inhabitant typology based on a specific spiritual matrix. But the traditional is inevitably opposed to the new, and the Party was set on creating the socialist *new man*. As was to be expected, this mixture gave birth to a hybrid man whose spiritual matrixes were distorted by the move to new living areas. This happened precisely because it was man, as a *spiritual entity*, that was absent from the collective housing program.<sup>60</sup> Man was considered only as a ‘work force’, the city being the place where this ‘work force’ needed to live,<sup>61</sup> and nothing more.

These ideas were so viciously propagated in the period, that the population eventually came to see the city only as an “excessive agglomeration”, in which the specific differentiating mark between town and village was *the apartment block*.<sup>62</sup> In fact, the apartment block is a small town in itself, offering a level of comfort that does not exist in traditional village homes (running water, central heating, modern furniture etc.) For many inhabitants of districts, a house is seen as a spiritual refuge, whereas the apartment is just the substitute to be lived in due to lack of other options (i.e. a house with all the above stated facilities cannot be afforded).<sup>63</sup>

This reinforces the idea mentioned above that “the replacement of the bourgeois individualism embodied in the individual private house with collective housing, an expression of the socialist collectivism, [...]

is an argument which proves that urbanism has served some very clear political purposes."<sup>64</sup> This replacement of the firm concept of *the individual* with the vague term of *the collective* is one of the main factors that contributed to a reversal of values,<sup>65</sup> whose scale of effect is hard to reverse. This is why it is so difficult today to find ways to rehabilitate the housing districts, both figuratively and literally speaking. Their social lives follow complicated paths. Some are grounded in the socialist behavioral patterns that still exist; others have adapted to the new life style of a free-market economy, which has brought freedom of movement, new ideas, the Internet and the fluctuation of money (more for the more enterprising, less for others). More importantly, it is also a question of the conflict of generations, as mentioned above, and which is an aspect that should not be ignored.

The new society – and regime – should at least try to reconcile some of these aspects. Otherwise, the people will not agree to participate and share responsibilities in the real rehabilitation of the many housing districts (which can neither be demolished nor left as they are). The following chapter will try to identify possible solutions for rehabilitation. It will not attempt to discuss ways of physically repairing the buildings as that is a topic in its own right and worthy of a PhD.<sup>66</sup> Admittedly, the rehabilitation of the buildings is probably the main problem of the districts and needs to be addressed urgently with a coherent complex policy. With regard to its interests and limited length, this paper will only investigate ways of revitalizing these existing areas from a social point of view and by considering functions and architectural spaces where people can interact and form new relationships.

### **3. Solutions for improving the quality of life in the housing districts**

In order to consider answers to the specific issues raised above, it is first necessary to define the terms used in the equation: district, neighborhood, working class, community center. The first two terms are somewhat similar, the *district* being commonly understood as an area defined spatially, by *neighboring* locations, and socially, by group identity and practices.<sup>67</sup> The following section will deal with definitions and an elaborate discussion of the latter two terms.

There is an obvious difficulty in finding the right equivalents in different languages for terms that relate to the city. By way of example, Françoise Choay considers the English *urban neighborhood* to be equivalent to the French *urbain de proximité* (local urban area), which defines “the closely-knit and diverse networks which have traditionally constituted the centers and districts of traditional towns as well as certain suburbs and outlying neighborhoods built in the twentieth century”.<sup>68</sup> Admittedly, she relates to French and English in a dialogue between herself, as a French woman, and the interviewer, who is English. Nonetheless, in the same manner, I think it appropriate to correlate this difference in terminology to this paper, which is in fact in English, whereas its subject is the Romanian reality.

Thus, the Romanian term for district is *cartier*, which derives from the French *quartier*. The term has been in use since the 19<sup>th</sup> century and it designates – as does the English *district* - a part of the city enclosed within an administrative boundary.<sup>69</sup> There are similarities between the French and Romanian definitions, as there are between French and Romanian life styles – so we could consider the text of Pierre Mayol, which refers to *le quartier*,<sup>70</sup> as a basis for understanding the Romanian term. According to Mayol, *le quartier* is a place where social commitment is manifested, that is an act of coexisting with different partners (e.g. neighbors, shop owners and assistants, etc.).<sup>71</sup> This place therefore constitutes a matrix of the social environment, as it is – for the inhabitant – a portion of urban space, in which a person is recognized by other actors who are playing the same game.<sup>72</sup>

The term *neighborhood* itself suggests a certain homogeneity, a link to tradition, the relevance of space in organizational processes and the tight link between people and space.<sup>73</sup> If this is so, can we speak today of neighborhoods in the socialist housing districts? Has the space of the districts influenced the people, who in turn have left a mark upon this space? In time, the socialist housing district has become a reality that has its own governing rules, a sort of internal organization. Is this organization able to find ways to develop a decent neighborhood?

These questions can only be answered if the term *working class* is also addressed. All over Europe, the majority of the populations living in big apartment block ensembles have traditionally been working class people. A recent European study on culture and neighborhoods found that today, due to changes in the urban economy and labor market, the “working class nature of the [districts’] population is becoming a minor

identity factor compared to the ethnic and cultural characteristics of neighboring inhabitants".<sup>74</sup> In Romania, the ethnic component is not currently very strong, but the cultural crisis most definitely is, for politico-ideological reasons already described. Besides this, there is another important feature to be considered: the kind of social life which existed in the housing districts in the socialist years is inevitably starting to fade due to the different perceptions of the different generations of the post-communist reality. Different sets of relationships are created, two social universes coexist, as do the guidelines of 'before' and 'after' 1989, which unsurprisingly separate most explanations of daily facts.<sup>75</sup>

"One of the fundamental principles of psychology, with a major educational value, postulates that – in order to form new moods, structures and behavioral patterns in an adult individual – it is first necessary to devalue his/her old moods, structures and behavioral patterns by forcing him/her to renounce them".<sup>76</sup> The communist regime achieved this. Long-term policy instruments left deep scars in people's behavior and altered a whole social structure. Could it be done in reverse, even if it takes longer than the first time? Recuperating real values and re-installing normality is normally more difficult than their destruction by force. New action must be firm, but carried out in a different manner than in the socialist period. Still, how can people be *gently forced* into something good?

Possible solutions for enlivening social life in the Romanian housing districts would have to be based on a complex analysis of this set of problems. The spiritual matrix defined in the previous chapter would have to be juxtaposed with the matrix of the social environment, as described by Mayol. However, both of these contain so many hybrid elements that it would still be difficult to find particularities that will still work.

In my opinion the key to easing existing conflicts lies in the creation of community centers in the housing districts. But what sort of community centers? As already mentioned, this term is difficult enough in itself to define. The English *community center*, being the best-known example, is basically a multipurpose building where different age groups can meet and carry out a range of activities (figure 4). It is an establishment run voluntarily in most cases by members of the community and is a place where they can establish a dialogue on various matters of interest. The center must fulfill certain requirements in terms of location, as well as the internal functional requirements illustrated in the scheme. It must be

near the center of the neighborhood it serves. Access to at least one bus route and a public car park must be assured. Good connection by footpaths is important and proximity of shopping centers should be considered, as this may encourage use of the community center as crèche and cafe. Finally, the center should be located near a school for workshop and sports facilities, and close to a park for summer activities requiring changing rooms which can be found in the center.

Of course, this model would not be completely realistic in the Romanian environment as it is based too much on English reality. Neither can Christopher Alexander's well-known pattern language<sup>77</sup> help in establishing the needs of a multi-service center specific to a Romanian community. Furthermore, this community center would resemble too closely the culture houses of the socialist period, with their multifunctional halls and libraries, and as such might not be the proper answer to the problem. However, a kind of a community center has recently been established in some housing districts in the form of a program initiated by a number of parish churches to respond to the spiritual and social needs of the community.

Before exploring the several variants proposed by the priests of these churches, it should be mentioned that the big ensembles were originally built without any provision for spiritual life, as the church did not suit the communist ideal of society, promoting, in fact, opposite values. Not only were they not considered as an architectural type in the urban design of the rationalist districts, but the whole parish based structure – so typical of Bucharest (figure 5) – was shattered, no more so than in the 1980s which saw the deliberate demolishing of many churches. The parish structure had served as the organizing system of the administrative territory, in which the parish church was the geometrical and spiritual center of defined zones.<sup>78</sup> The accounts of several foreign authors writing about Bucharest also identified the parish unit with the small district called *mahala*.<sup>79</sup> The parish unit used to be relatively small, sometimes consisting only of a few houses around a church, a cemetery for the deceased of the community, a pub, tobacco shop, dressmaker's and a guardhouse.<sup>80</sup> Unfortunately, the dissolution of these traditional units started with the development of the new modern districts of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (a development which was cut short in Romania) and continued with the socialist housing districts, which represent the extreme limit of this de-structuring process.<sup>81</sup>

Some behavioral patterns of the *mahala* were nonetheless preserved in the housing districts, along with rural dwelling practices. Thus trying to recuperate the idea of the parish unit – in as far as it is possible – is not a bad idea. Some churches are already trying to implement this and I have taken three examples, each one typical of a specific housing area (figure 6).

*Dobroteasa church* is situated on Calea Văcărești, an old street in Bucharest that was transformed in the late 1980s into a forest of apartment blocks. Historically, the church stands near a once famous spring that is now blocked. It was the place the inhabitants of old Bucharest came to get good water to “combat anemia and weakness, which follow a febrile state”.<sup>82</sup> Due to fire, the old church was replaced by a 19<sup>th</sup> century building. Between the Wars, an active religious association<sup>83</sup> would feed the poor in the parish and provide daily shelter and meals for orphans and poor students of the community. Some 200 persons could benefit from this social establishment built on the grounds of the church. With the regime changed, the land was confiscated and the establishment shut down. The church’s current priest has managed to obtain legal papers which validate the boundary of the property and intends to raise funds to build several buildings, including a social establishment, a kindergarten, basic medical facilities, student accommodation and even a meeting hall for the use of the parish community. The construction would cover a surface of 3,400 square meters on a site fortunately still free of construction (see figure 6, above image on left).

Another example is that of *Sf. Vineri Titulescu church*. Its religious name is followed by the name of its location, on Titulescu Boulevard. The site is part of the area bordered by apartment block mentioned in Chapter 1. The church’s current priest has gone one step further: he has set up a social establishment on the left side of the parish house behind the church (see figure 6, middle). Unfortunately, there is no free land around the church for building any extensions, but the semi-detached house provides the community with some services that had existed previously, such as social assistance.

One very interesting case is that of *Pogorârea Sf. Duh church* in the Balta Albă-Titan district (figure 6, bottom of page). This is a new church, built after 1989 on public land in Titan Park.<sup>84</sup> The site adjoins the main street and it is only big enough to hold the wooden church, a small edifice for burning candles, a book and candle shop, and a small open chapel in front of the church entrance. The church was designed in a

*maramuresan* style by an old architect.<sup>85</sup> Unfortunately the architect died before its completion and his plans were strictly respected when the building was finished. The wooden structure of the high roof cannot sustain much weight and the attic cannot be used. However, the inside of the spire is used: it has six levels of approximately 50 square meters, each linked by a staircase. These levels perform different functions: the first (and largest) level is used as a meeting room for the parish committee; the second is a small library endowed with a few computers (with Internet access) – the books, both religious and literature, were provided by parishioners. Other levels are used as meeting spaces for poetry and philosophy groups or as classrooms for teaching offered for free to the poor children in the community. The church also organizes pilgrimages to various monasteries in the country, the journeys being both in pursuit of religious guidance and artistic and architectural education. One recent activity of the church concerns a social program to integrate orphans into foster or adoption families.

The great advantage of this type of centers (with the church as spiritual and social organizing structure) is that funds are normally easy to obtain. Communities that contribute are mostly made up of believers who act for the good of their church and the community. Sometimes nonbelievers also participate when they see the results the donations achieve. This does not always apply to fund-raising in communities, which suffer from the general lack of trust engendered by many an unfortunate financial transaction in the post-communist period.<sup>86</sup> These kinds of churches, that involve themselves in community life, can help rebuild the feeling of belonging to the community on a re-interpreted traditional parish structure.<sup>87</sup>

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On the other hand, the public space and the particularized private space of the district mix due to the practical daily use of this space.<sup>88</sup> This general observation applies in the case of the Romanian housing districts, especially in the time-space relation. This is understood as the proximity level between home and other points of interests in terms of *walking distance* – which goes hand in hand with the socialist urban planning of the housing districts in which service units (schools, commerce and cultural points) define the radius of a functional unit.

Another idea for developing a community space involves schools. Socialist school design was of course standardized, as were other buildings.

Consequently, with very few exceptions, all schools in housing districts look the same, having: a U-shaped building, classrooms on the outer edge and corridors on the inner side of the U, facing an internal open courtyard. This courtyard is mainly used as an outdoor playground in good weather and as an assembly space for celebrations and prize giving at the end of the academic year; it is also separate from the handball or basketball courts that most schools also have.

As this is my profession, I could not help considering some architectural solutions to improve the use of the school outside school hours. I thus arrived at the idea of a light structure to be built in the courtyard, which could be used as a multifunctional hall for various activities by the people of the local area: youth, adults, children or parents. This solution has several advantages. Firstly, as the schools are well positioned in the area (see previous chapter), they can act as centers of the respective areas – following the principle of location. Furthermore, the design of the hall can be integrated with the building and its form (and dimensions and cost) tailored to suit the needs of the community after consultation with the architects. Finally, the hall could be rented out by the school management, which could help build a school fund.<sup>89</sup>

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Lack of spaces for the social interaction that is essential to a normal community life is one of the major problems facing the housing districts. In France (which, spiritually, has a matrix of daily occurrence closest to Romania), the continuity between the ‘inside’ (apartment) and the ‘outside’ (city)<sup>90</sup> is ensured by two kinds of spaces: *the café* (for men) and *the boutique* (for women). As it is here that social contacts are made and news is exchanged, these spaces function as outlets that succeed in re-balancing the social atmosphere between the world of work and that of intimate life.<sup>91</sup> In socialist times, there were no such places outside the blocks themselves. This role was filled by the kitchens in the apartments.<sup>92</sup> Men would invite fellow neighbors for a drink and women would have coffee in the kitchen. Such an intrusion into private life of a family was actually thought of as beneficial in those times, when entertainment was scarce and the kitchen provided a warm intimate place (both literally, due to heating economy in the period, and figuratively). The apartment was *the* social space. People living on the same floor developed special relationships and the neighborhood of the floor has proven the most powerful of all. The many neighborhoods in an apartment block with several floors can be preserved by use of other relational channels. This

often means the children: children make friends easily and can bring their families closer.<sup>93</sup> Thus, families can jump from the status of neighbor to that of family friends, the main advantage of which is an alternating baby-sitting scheme.<sup>94</sup>

Another (outdoor) space which has acted as a social coagulator, and which still does, is the park. Although the big parks of the housing districts have been condemned "as a source of anxiety, crime, and lack of comfort," in which "the inhabitants are deprived the possibility of the social contacts essential to daily life",<sup>95</sup> in practice it is in the parks that children play, youths walk or jog, and grandparents and mothers exchange news (especially of their children), and many times talk leads to friendships.

One particular lady, Corina M., has recently put together all the information she could gather and developed a project for a mothers' center. 30 years old and the mother of three, Corina left her job as a physicist due to household responsibilities. Her interests had changed and she found herself surrounded by at times overwhelming problems. She started to study psycho-sociology at the university, and with the new perspectives this gave her she grew interested in establishing a center to help women cope with the challenges of motherhood. This club was to have a daily program and would perform several functions: there would be a consultation room for the psychological counseling of mothers (run by appointment), a meeting room with a kitchen for mothers to have coffee and talk and await consultation, a playroom for children, where children could play under supervision (no educational pretensions) while their mothers are in consultation or engaged in other activities. These activities could be artistic, which would invest in women's creativity and helping them to feel motivated and useful. For example, if a woman wishes resume playing the piano again after having given it up on becoming a mother, she would be able to rehearse at the center and give a concert to raise money for other community activities. Similarly, mothers might paint pictures at the center and hold an exhibition to sell the paintings for modest amounts for the benefit of the center.

As part of her research, Corina made an inquiry with the women of her district. The results show that women would be happy to participate in the activities of such a center. This could be set up first as a pilot project, with funding from a financing program (e.g. PHARE) and then developed into a network, if successful. The center could be based in an apartment, or be made up from the larger space of two or three adjoining flats on the same floor, in which case the flats should have a flexible

construction – pillar and beam – to facilitate the necessary repartitioning. This would continue the ‘tradition’ of the floor neighborhoods formed in previous decades, solve the baby-sitting problem that arises when mothers engage in other activities, enhance dialogue between members of the same community in terms of continuing relationships already established in the park or forming of new relationships, and ease households tensions due to generational conflict or the pressure of motherhood.

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The three solutions proposed by no means cover all existing possibilities. We cannot afford to behave as if life went on as usual, as older spatial orders like the neighborhood run the risk of disappearing because they are unable to find ways of preserving and adjusting their special intensity in new fragmented social environments.<sup>96</sup> The *shopping malls* are the newest form of entertainment space in Bucharest. Here people meet or go to see and be seen. They have become centers of peripheral areas and have revitalized them. An example of this kind is the Bucharest Mall in Dudești, a former ‘ghettoized’ area inhabited by gypsies. The Mall has radically transformed the area. A ‘natural implant’ in terms of new population has occurred as prices for apartments have grown: people of higher social standing have moved to the area,<sup>97</sup> which has become an extension of the city center. The same is expected to happen in the Balta-Albă area where a French company is planning the construction of a large shopping complex in a part of the park<sup>98</sup> (though, a recent newspaper article highlighted opposition by local people to any interference with the park).<sup>99</sup>

One current idea in planning is the challenge of creating more satisfactory central spaces in the new urban areas on the edge of cities.<sup>100</sup> Reduction of human activities down to the level of the work/sleep pattern has been proven wrong. The attraction of the city in terms of its cultural institutions has proved stronger.<sup>101</sup> Could the generalized periphery introduced by the communist regime be turned into a network of district centers linked to the city center? This idea should be considered by the public administration, politicians and other bodies involved in the process of city development.

## Conclusion

Common opinion has it that Bucharest is a collage-city.<sup>102</sup> Many different communities can be encountered due to the variety of housing and areas of the city. In the socialist period the social mixture became even greater in both the districts and center of the city, despite the purpose of the program for socialist reconstruction of the towns, which was to 'eradicate of the contradiction between center and periphery'.<sup>103</sup>

Bucharest's housing districts are alienating spaces, which extend their influence beyond their physical limits. The motivation behind this research was to meet the need of real dialogue among members of today's Romanian society. The art of coexisting with different partners (discussed earlier) should lead to such *dialogue*. Learning to respect others in both public and private spaces is the main requirement for a healthy society that aims to move forward and leave the scars of communism behind. Such dialogue can only exist in places where people meet to share their various experiences.

Rehabilitation of the housing districts should therefore consider the creation of a varied architectural environment, as opposed to the standardized shapes advocated in years past. This could be the alternation of blocks of flats with areas of detached houses wherever there are large surfaces of unused land. Examples of this can already be seen in the Balta Albă-Titan and Fundeni districts. There must also be creation of new services, e.g. shopping malls, centers for mothers, multipurpose halls etc., which should respond to the real needs of a de-structured and disoriented society in which groups are trying to define their new positions. These services can either be placed in newly built edifices or existent spaces could be renovated to suit the given functions (e.g. schools, apartments). The latter solution might appear more appealing at first glance on financial grounds. In Glasgow, for example, a city with housing districts and problems similar to those in Romanian, cultural projects involving children have brought life to the most deprived peripheral neighborhoods.<sup>104</sup> If they can do it, why cannot we?

On the other hand, Bucharest is a city that has never had big plazas. In the pre-war period, Bucharest was made up of small communities centered around churches and organized on a parish structure. Re-consideration of this structure may lead to re-establishment of small district centers which would act as focal points for the community. The big ensembles do not operate as big neighborhoods in their entirety. Small

neighborhoods exist at various levels, in which people pursue relationships established previously or make new friends, as a result of an influx of new interests.

The lack of a *feeling of belonging*, whether accepted or contested, is probably due to the traditional type of urban Bucharest property.<sup>105</sup> In general, however, people tend to belong somewhere. They need to recognize others and be recognized in their turn in order to structure their daily existence. The neighborhood as *lieu de la reconnaissance*<sup>106</sup> should be understood in terms of space defining characters. It is all the more important to have neighborhoods, as they can also be an antidote to the so-called cyberspace of today's society, which is always on the move.<sup>107</sup> Place is still a source of identity. Each district has its own types of people; researches conducted by social scientists at this level are still few in number and sorely needed. A multitude of solutions to a variety of problems in distinct areas can offer a real alternative to pre-determined answers to a complex issue that deserves farther investigation.

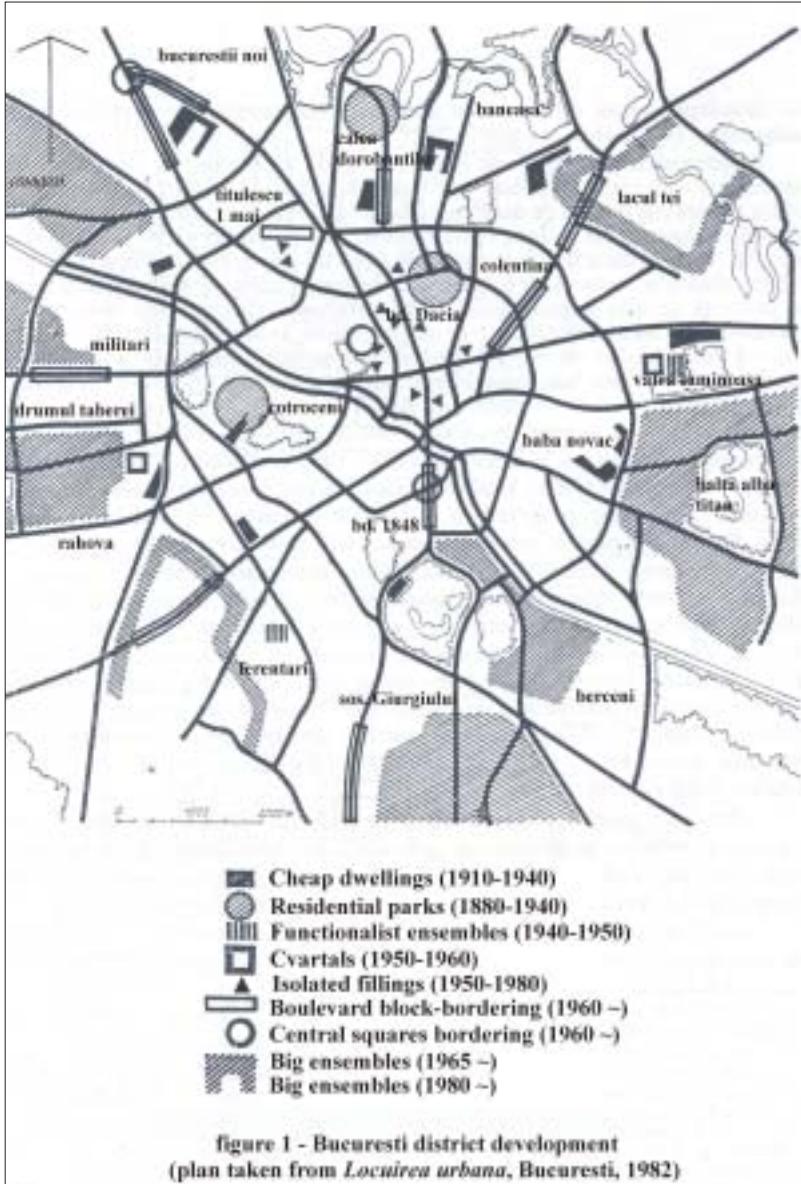


Figure 1. Bucharest, district development  
(source: Derer, Peter - *Locuirea urbană*, București, 1982)

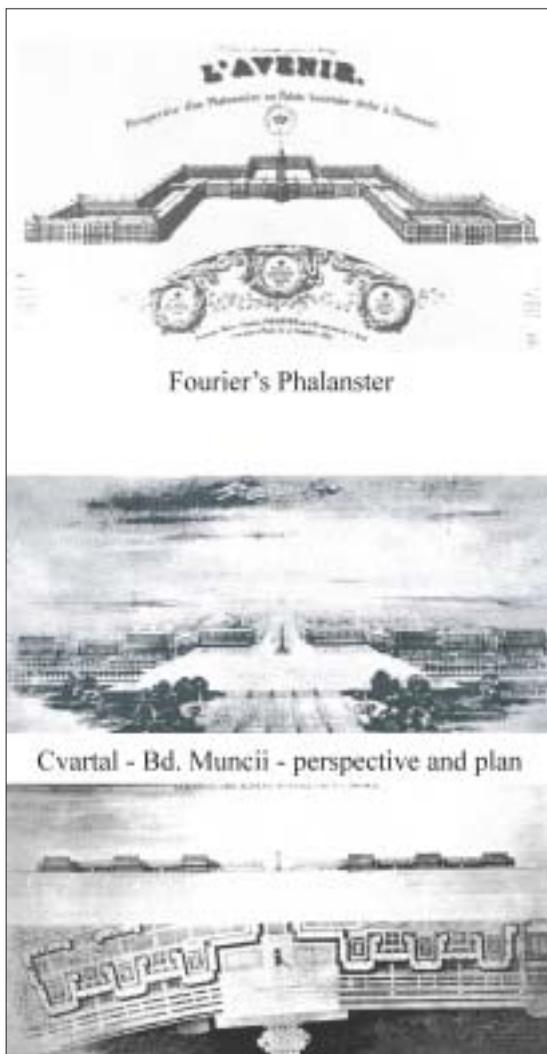


Figure 2

- Fourier's phalanster (source: Considerant, Victor-Prosper – *Description du Phalanstère et considérations sociales sur l'architecture*, Guy Durier, ed., Paris, 1979)
- Cvartal – Muncii Boulevard, Bucharest, perspective and plan (source: *Arhitectura* magazine 7/1955)



Unité d'habitation - Marseille



Balta Albă - Titan - blocks

Figure 3

- Le Corbusier - Unité d'habitation, Marseille (source: author's photo)
- Blocks in Balta Albă-Titan district, Bucharest (source: author's photo)

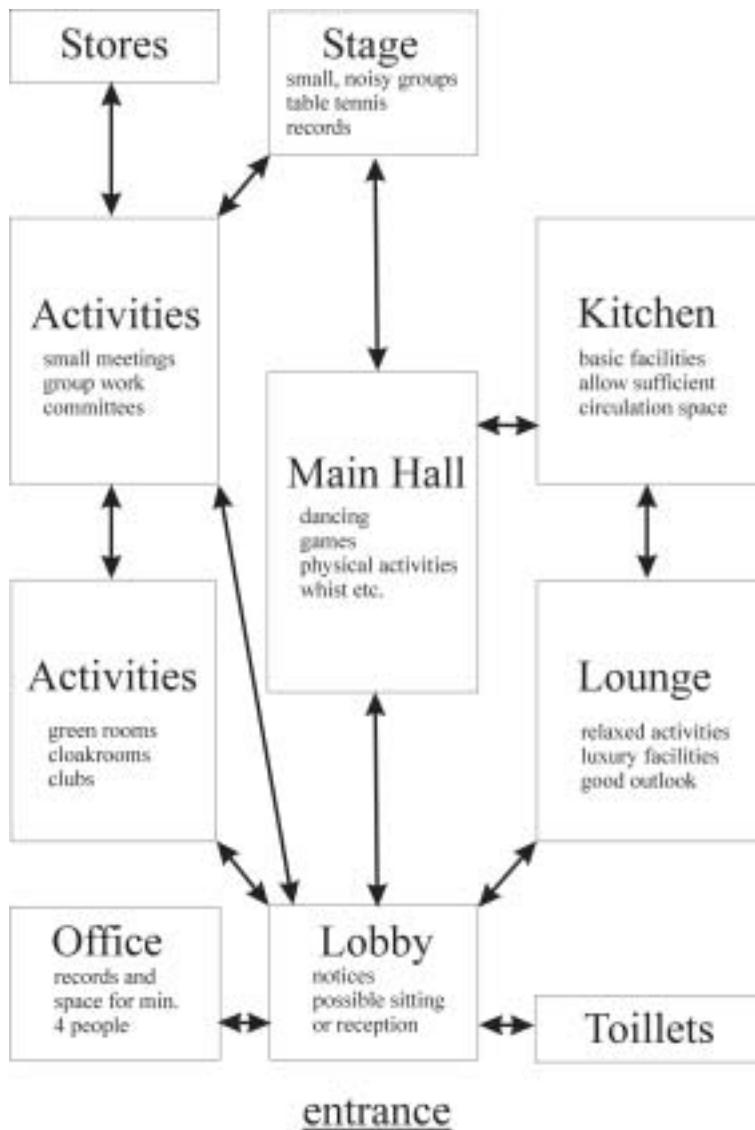


Figure 4. An English community center scheme (source: *Building a Community Centre*, National Federation of Community Associations, London, 1969).



Figure 5. Parishes in Bucharest – detail of eastern part and complete plan of the city (source: Harhoiu, Dana – *București, un oraș între Orient și Occident*, Ed. Simetria, București, 1997)



Dobroteasa Church and neighbouring blocks



Sf. Vineri - Titulescu Church and Parish House



Titan Church and neighbouring blocks

Figure 6. Three churches in Bucharest: Dobroteasa (above), Sf. Vineri – Titulescu (middle), Pogońrea Sf. Duh – Titan (bottom)  
(source: author's photos)

## NOTES

- 1 Françoise Choay's commentary in *Culture and neighborhoods*, volume 4, Council of Europe Publishing, 1998, p. 73.
- 2 There is an idyllic view of Bucharest as being 'le petit Paris' of the pre-communist period, which is still preserved mainly due to nostalgia. We do not propose to debate here this issue; for different books and articles on Bucharest, see the bibliography at the end of this paper. Although most of these discussions cannot be easily localized - as talks and commentaries about Bucharest are frequent in all media, milieus and classes - it is worth mentioning that issues such as *București, Secolul XX*, no. 4-6/1997 have approached the city from various angles.
- 3 A recent debate on the rehabilitation of housing districts around the country (including Bucharest) was initiated by the Association of the Chief Architects of the Cities (Corpul Arhitecților Șefi de Municipii).
- 4 For ample discussion of neighborhood design and the shaping of a community, see Talen, Emily, "The Problem with Community in Planning", in *Journal of Planning Literature*, Nov. 2000, vol.15, Issue 2, p.171, 13p.
- 5 Urban models are discussed by Choay, Françoise in *L'Urbanisme, utopies et réalités*, Éditions du Seuil, Paris, 1965, pp. 7 - 83.
- 6 Apparently, architect Cerda from Barcelona was the first to use the term 'urbanism'.
- 7 "Le modèle progressiste et le modèle culturaliste", Choay, Françoise, *L'Urbanisme*, op. cit.
- 8 For detailed examples (illustrated commentaries) of the two models, see Teodorescu, Ioana, "Cartiere de blocuri. Modele și practică", in *Octogon*, no. 10/ 2002, pp. 21- 26.
- 9 See Considerant, Victor-Prosper, *Déscription du Phalanstere et considérations sociales sur l'architectonique*, Guy Durier, ed., Paris, 1979.
- 10 See the works of John Ruskin, such as *The Poetry of Architecture* (1837) and *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849) or William Morris' *Lectures on Socialism* (1883-1894) and *Lectures on Art and Industry* (1881-1894).
- 11 With the exception of the work colonies founded by Robert Owen in Scotland (New Lanark) and in the United States (New Harmony), as far as the progressive model is concerned. As for the cultural model, Ebenezer Howard's garden city followed the line of Ruskin and Morris and favored the idea of individual rather than collective property supported by the progressists; the garden-city model was quite successful in England, but its green belts around the city are contested nowadays, as they act as a sort of defensive wall, prohibiting city expansion, see *Culture and neighborhoods*, op. cit., p. 49.
- 12 Garnier, Tony, *La cité industrielle*, London, Studio Vista, 1969.
- 13 This happened mainly because there was a need to rebuild the cities quickly following the war damage suffered in many European countries.

- 14 'La machine à habiter' is a concept found in most of Le Corbusier's works, such as *Vers une architecture* (1923), *Urbanisme* (1925), *La Charte d'Athènes* (1933) etc.
- 15 This is the most 'luxurious' and the best preserved among Le Corbusier's buildings of this kind, and was also redone recently. See Teodorescu, Ioana, op.cit.
- 16 Derer, Peter – "Reflexe urbanistice ale transformării modului de locuire", in *Arhitectura* 3/1971, p. 20.
- 17 Details of the housing districts of the socialist period were compiled by Peter Derer from various issues of *Arhitectura* magazine, which provides a large collection of plans and commentaries of the time in this respect. See Derer, Peter, *Locuirea urbană*, Ed. Tehnică, București, 1985.
- 18 Taken from Derer, Peter, *Locuirea urbană*, op. cit., p. 170. I am indebted to Prof. Derer who graciously agreed to let me publish the scheme in this paper.
- 19 This housing was built in 1910-1940 for the lower-middle class (e.g. teachers and clerks) and were relatively cheap at the time; later, it turned out they were a better alternative to living in an apartment block and their price increased drastically in the socialist years.
- 20 Collective buildings with private apartments also existed before the communist era, but their use was somewhat different: the buildings were constructed in central areas, the big apartments being occupied mostly by lawyers, architects, professors etc.; on the other hand, the smaller apartments and studios apartments were a sort of city refuge for those who lived in the outskirts of the city and wanted to stay in the city overnight.
- 21 It was never planned that the communist elite should live in collective housing; rather they abusively occupied the residences of the former upper classes.
- 22 It is hard to find an equivalent in English for the two words, all the more so because their usage in the architectural literature is relatively confused as they are juxtaposed around the 1960s. The '*cvartal*' is usually a precinct of apartment block of about 3 or 4 stories, whereas the '*microraiion*' is an imported Russian concept which defines the basic urban unit of the larger housing district and covers "housing, industry, services and recreational facilities" (Sillince, J.A.A., ed., *Housing Policies in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union*, Routledge, London, 1990, p. 151). As such, some works of the period consider the '*microraiion*' to be "the smallest structurally complex unit with an autonomous level": Derer, Peter – *Locuirea urbană*, op. cit., p. 150.
- 23 The Athens Charter is a document which resulted from the talks on housing issues at the International Congress of Modern Architecture in 1933. It was mostly Le Corbusier who supported these principles, one of whose palpable results is the *unité d'habitation*, *The Athens Charter*, Grossman Publishers, 1973.

- 24 See above for the description of Marseille *unite d'habitation*.
- 25 Although this was in accordance with Le Corbusier's 'ville radieuse', interestingly enough a decision of the Executive Committee of the Communist Party of USSR on 1 August 1932 adopted the "principle of separation of functions in the city plan", which meant exactly the "creation of industrial zones separately from housing districts, with a protection zone in-between", see Velescu, Oliver, "Ideologia 'restructurării urbane'" 1944-1972 (I), in *Arhivele Totalitarismului*, in no. 17, 4/1997, pp. 68-69.
- 26 Iakovlev, V.E., *Amplasarea întreprinderilor industriale în orașe*, translated from the Russian, Bucharest, 1954, quoted in Velescu, Oliver, "Ideologia 'restructurării urbane'" 1944-1972 (I), op. cit., p. 66.
- 27 Such is the case of the *Balta Albă-Titan*, *Drumul Taberei*, and *Berceni* districts (see figure 1).
- 28 An example is the whole of the residential area of *Uranus*, based on the traditional type of housing (small houses with gardens), which were removed to make room for Nicolae Ceaușescu's megalomaniac area around the former Victoria Socialismului boulevard (now Unirii boulevard) and Casa Poporului ("The People's House", which ironically now houses the Romanian Parliament).
- 29 Due to increasing density in Romanian cities, see Sillince, J.A.A., ed., *Housing Policies in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union*, op. cit., p. 152.
- 30 This meant that cities could no longer expand outside this perimeter, so everything that was to be built had to be built inside the newly defined borders.
- 31 My opinion is that this is only a question of false terminology - typical of the communist regime - in terms of the definition of the difference between the former 'mare ansamblu' (big ensemble) and the later 'complex de locuit' (housing complex). In effect, they are one and the same thing because apart from the new density, they are not very different in structure, the same blocks being employed as housing units and the same sort of services available in a similar area.
- 32 Laws no. 57, 59/1974 and 37/1975.
- 33 Rău, Romeo and Mițuță, Dan, *Unități urbanistice complexe*, Ed. Tehnică, București, 1969. But, as Peter Derer also notes (in *Locuirea urbană*, op.cit., p. 157), this definition overlaps with the term 'microraión'.
- 34 Sillince, J.A.A., ed., *Housing Policies in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union*, op. cit., p. 36.
- 35 Tsantis, Andreas C. and Pepper, Roy, *ROMANIA - The Industrialization of an Agrarian Economy under Socialist Planning*, (Report of a mission to Romania by the World Bank), The World Bank, 1979, p. 460.
- 36 Ibid, p. 461.
- 37 The report for the World Bank finishes in the year 1978, and also takes into account the earthquake in 1977.

- 38 Tsantis, Andreas C. *ROMANIA - The Industrialization of an Agrarian Economy under Socialist Planning*, op. cit., p. 135.
- 39 *Ibid.*, p. 136.
- 40 *Ibid.*, p. 137.
- 41 *Ibid.*, p. 290.
- 42 *Ibid.*, p. 288.
- 43 In Romania, the number of rooms in a house/apartment does not refer to bedrooms only, but also includes the living/dining room; kitchen and bathrooms are considered as facilities and therefore do not count towards the number of rooms.
- 44 Tsantis, Andreas C., *ROMANIA - The Industrialization of an Agrarian Economy under Socialist Planning*, op. cit., see table 12.12 at pp. 298-299.
- 45 Sillince, J.A.A., ed., *Housing Policies in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union*, op. cit., p. 164.
- 46 Turner, Bengt, ed. (with Jozsef Hegedus and Ivan Tosics), *The Reform of Housing in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union*, Routledge, London 1992, p. 227, and Velescu, Oliver, "Ideologia 'restructurării urbane'" 1944-1972, in *Arhivele Totalitarismului*, (II) in no. 18, 1/1998, p. 69.
- 47 Velescu, Oliver, "Ideologia 'restructurării urbane'" 1944-1972 (II), op. cit., p. 71.
- 48 Turner, Bengt, ed., *The Reform of Housing in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union*, op. cit., p. 219.
- 49 Sillince, J.A.A., ed., *Housing Policies in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union*, op. cit., p.156. On the heterogeneity of housing districts, see the social enquiry in block 311 in Militari district, Bucharest, in Mihăilescu, Vintilă (with Viorica Nicolau, Mircea Gheorghiu, Costel Olaru), "Blocul - între loc și locuire", in *Revista de Cercetări Sociale*, 1/1994, pp. 70-89.
- 50 Sillince, J.A.A., ed., *Housing Policies in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union*, op. cit., p. 152.
- 51 Derer, Peter, *Locuirea urbană*, op. cit., p. 150.
- 52 Strat, Cătălin, "Tehnici de propagandă comunistă în România", in *Arhivele Totalitarismului*, (I – period 1945-1960) in no. 22-23, 1-2/1999, pp. 226-241 and (II – period 1961-1962) in no. 24-25, 3-4/1999, pp. 219-229.
- 53 Peter Derer criticizes this, as well as the lack of social cultural centers in the neighborhoods: "the too slow coagulation of neighborhood social relations", in *Locuirea urbană*, op. cit., p. 162. The critique is quite vague and ambiguous though, which is understandable for the period when the book was published (1985).
- 54 Matei, Adriana, "Mutații sociale determinate de schimbările conceptului de locuire în condițiile urbanizării", in *Arhitectura* 1/1979, p. 56.
- 55 Derer, Peter, *Locuirea urbană*, op. cit., p. 178.
- 56 In the socialist period it was thought that meetings could degenerate into political manifestations.

- 57 Sillince, J.A.A., ed., *Housing Policies in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union*,  
op. cit., p. 136.
- 58 Turner, Bengt, ed., *The Reform of Housing in Eastern Europe and the Soviet  
Union*, op. cit., p. 218.
- 59 Golu, Mihai, "Dimensiunea psihologică a totalitarismului. Cazul regimului  
comunist", in *Arhivele Totalitarismului*, no. 19-20, 2-3/1998, pp. 75-84.
- 60 Velescu, Oliver, "Ideologia 'restructurării urbane'" 1944-1972 (II), op. cit.,  
p. 70.
- 61 Quoted from Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej's speech at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Congress of the  
Romanian Worker's Party, in Velescu, Oliver, "Ideologia 'restructurării  
urbane'" 1944-1972 (II), op. cit., p. 63.
- 62 Mihăilescu, Vintilă, "Blocul – între loc și locuire", op. cit., p. 74. For a survey  
of students in 2002, see also Teodorescu, Ioana – "Loc plăcut, loc neplăcut",  
a study on the quality of places, to be published later at Ed. Polirom, in a  
collection of the works of a symposium held in Iași, Romania, entitled  
"Teritorii, scrieri și de-scrieri".
- 63 Mihăilescu, Vintilă, "Blocul – între loc și locuire", op. cit., pp. 74-75.
- 64 Velescu, Oliver, "Ideologia 'restructurării urbane'" 1944-1972 (I), op. cit.,  
p. 64.
- 65 Golu, Mihai, "Dimensiunea psihologică a totalitarismului. Cazul regimului  
comunist", op. cit., p. 76.
- 66 Tănase, Raluca, *Analiza unui set de disfuncționalități majore și soluții ale  
urbanismului operațional pentru construcția, renovarea, întreținerea și  
administrarea locuințelor și zonelor de locuit* (marile ansambluri), PhD thesis,  
completed in June 2002 at the Technical University of Construction in  
Bucharest.
- 67 *Culture and neighborhoods*, op. cit., p. 23.
- 68 Ibid, p. 69.
- 69 The more popular term in Romanian used to be '*mahala*' – a term also  
employed by French authors such as Ulysse de Marsillac or Paul Morand  
(see bibliography) – but I shall discuss this later, in connection with the  
parish (*parohie*).
- 70 Certeau, Michel de (with Luce Giard & Pierre Mayol), *L'invention du  
quotidien; 2. habiter, cuisiner*, Ed. Gallimard, Paris, 1994. The part dealing  
with *Habiter* (Living) is written by Pierre Mayol, pp. 15-185.
- 71 Ibid, p. 17.
- 72 Ibid, p.18.
- 73 *Culture and neighborhoods*, op. cit., p. 23.
- 74 Ibid, p. 108.
- 75 In a social inquiry conducted after 1989 in a Romanian housing district,  
people mostly sorted information in terms of this time aspect: "before, it was  
like that, today it is like this". See Mihăilescu, Vintilă, "Blocul – între loc și  
locuire", op. cit, p. 80.

- 76 Golu, Mihai, "Dimensiunea psihologică a totalitarismului. Cazul regimului  
comunist", op. cit., p. 81.
- 77 Alexander, Christopher, *A Pattern Language Which Generates Multi-Service  
Centers*, The Center for Environmental Structure, California, 1968. The  
book presents a network of activities and patterns resulting from the practice  
of designing, which are analyzed separately and then recomposed to suit a  
new design idea, on the basis of sequences. These sequences offer the  
designer different sets of relationships and help in prioritizing patterns which  
should be considered in the design process.
- 78 Harhoiu, Dana, *București, un oraș între orient și occident*, Ed. Simetria,  
București, 1997, p. 31.
- 79 The term *mahala* appears in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, signifying a district as a structural  
element of the city. For an introduction to the matter, see Voiculescu, Sanda,  
"Parohia – spațiu de agregare religioasă, socială și urbanistică", in *București*,  
Secolul XX, no. 4-6/1997, pp. 146-153. For foreign authors describing the  
*mahala*, see Marsillac, Ulysee de, *Bucureștiul în veacul al XIX-lea*, Ed.  
Meridiane, București, 1999, p. 87, 124 and Morand, Paul, *București*, Ed.  
Echinox, Cluj, 2000, pp. 125-132.
- 80 A German traveler's note in 1856, in George Potra's *Bucureștii văzuți de  
călători străini*, 1992, p. 112.
- 81 Voiculescu, Sanda, "Parohia – spațiu de agregare religioasă, socială și  
urbanistică", op. cit., p. 152.
- 82 Marsillac, Ulysee de, *Bucureștiul în veacul al XIX-lea*, op. cit., p. 249.
- 83 *Asociația Frățiorii Domnului* – information kindly provided by father Sima,  
the present priest of Dobroteasa church, as all the other data on the proposed  
recreation of the parish ensemble.
- 84 It is to the merit of priest Adrian Niculce that he persuaded the Administration  
of Public Land to rent the church this piece of land and mobilized the whole  
community to contribute to the funding of works.
- 85 Maramureș is a northern county of Romania. The illustration on figure 6  
shows the wooden church (which is typically *maramuresan*) with its high  
spire and open exonarthex on three sides.
- 86 Bankruptcy of state-owned banks, funds and societies, some due to the  
transition period and others to frauds and swindles.
- 87 An idea also supported by Sanda Voiculescu in the conclusion to her article  
on the parish, op.cit.
- 88 Certeau, Michel de, *L'invention du quotidien*, op. cit., p.18.
- 89 The Reform of Education, which was initiated in 1997 and co-funded by the  
World Bank and the Ministry of National Education, had a particular  
component which dealt with the development of school management and  
finance.
- 90 "Le 'dedans' (du logement) et le 'dehors' (de la ville)" - Certeau, Michel de,  
*L'invention du quotidien*, op. cit., p. 21.

- 91 Ibid, p. 38.
- 92 Mihăilescu, Vintilă, "Blocul – între loc și locuire", op. cit., pp. 80-81.
- 93 Ibid, p. 80.
- 94 Ibid, p. 81.
- 95 Derer, Peter, *Locuirea urbană*, op. cit., p. 152.
- 96 *Culture and neighborhoods*, op. cit., p. 62.
- 97 This idea is also advocated in *Culture and neighborhoods*, op. cit., p. 55.
- 98 \*\*\* "Vânzătorii de apartamente din Titan vor să urce prețurile" (title: "Apartment sellers in Titan to raise prices"), in *Capital* (Secțiunea Investiții), no.23/ 6 June 2002, p. 37.
- 99 \*\*\* "Parcul IOR va distruge de 'betoane'", in *Libertatea*, 24 June 2002, p. 5. The article is tendentious (title reads: "The IOR park will be destroyed by concrete"); the answers seem to indicate people's irritation with an unformulated question that has to be guessed at: "would you like your park to be turned into a district center?" This is, in fact, not true, as the section of the park under discussion is a piece of land not currently in use and surrounded by a tall fence; the rest of the park will remain un-changed.
- 100 *Culture and neighborhoods*, op. cit., p. 53.
- 101 Velescu, Oliver, "Ideologia 'restructurării urbane'" 1944-1972 (I), op. cit., p. 69.
- 102 Quoting from Pierre von Meiss in Voiculescu, Sanda, "Parohia – spațiu de agregare religioasă, socială și urbanistică", op. cit., p. 146.
- 103 Velescu, Oliver, "Ideologia 'restructurării urbane'" 1944-1972 (I), op. cit., p. 68.
- 104 *Culture and neighborhoods*, op. cit., p. 54. See also Glendinning, Miles and Muthesius, Stefan, *Tower Block: Modern Public Housing in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland*, Yale Univ Press, 1994.
- 105 Voiculescu, Sanda, "Parohia – spațiu de agregare religioasă, socială și urbanistică", op. cit., p. 148.
- 106 Certeau, Michel de, *L'invention du quotidien*, op. cit., p. 23.
- 107 Françoise Choay's opinion in *Culture and neighborhoods*, op. cit., p. 73.

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