

New Europe College GE-NEC Program 2002-2003 2003-2004



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ISSN 1584-0298

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Ph.D. in History, the Central European University, Budapest, 2004

Dissertation: Restructuring and Envisioning Bucharest: The Socialist Project in the Context of Romanian Planning for the Capital, a Fast Changing City and an Inherited Urban Space

Collaborations with the Open Society Archives, Budapest (OSA), the Romanian Institute of Recent History (IRIR), the Civic Academy Foundation, Bucharest (FAC)

Participation in international conferences and colloquia in Cluj, Budapest, Krakow, Berlin, Sighet, the Hague, Bucharest, Athens

Articles published in Romania and abroad on intellectual history, oral history, architectural history, architectural heritage

THE “WOUNDED” CITY: REMEMBERING SOCIALIST RESTRUCTURING AND REINVENTING BUCHAREST AFTER 1989

After the socialist period came to an end in 1989, “the state of the city”¹ became a controversial issue in Bucharest cultural circles. The meaning and identity of the capital city was the subject of endless debate in the cultural mass media.² Intellectuals, with a need to reassess their identity as citizens of Bucharest, were confronted by two main issues. Firstly, interest for the city was triggered by the dilemma as to what to do with the results of the radical redevelopment scheme that took place in Bucharest in the 1980s - a 4km boulevard called the Victory of Socialism Boulevard (*Bulevardul Victoria Socialismului*), which was subsequently renamed Union Boulevard (*Bulevardul Unirii*), the perspective of which ends in the giant House of the Republic, later renamed House of the People and then again Palace of the Parliament. The second reason for reassessing their urban identity was brought on by the resurfacing of an old frustration among the cultural elite, who thought Bucharest had failed to prove it was worthy of the status of a modern European metropolis. The combination of the two unleashed a vortex of lamentations that, in the years to follow, spawned a panorama of justifications, cries for help, mourning, rage, nostalgia, shame, frustration, pride and wishful thinking.

Section A of this paper discusses how intellectual debate was followed by both foreign and local mass-media. In many cases, ideas, myth and stereotypes traveled back and forth across national borders. Themes were borrowed from the outside media, only to be sold back as “local specificity”, or lent abroad only to be bought back as examples of “how foreigners see us”. Section A will also include background information that will facilitate understanding of section B, which will present the various dominant discourses on the city.

Section B is centered on two themes: the legacy of the socialist period in the city, and how it influenced perception of Bucharest as a capital city.

Section C suggests how scholarly literature on Bucharest could reach beyond the popular metaphors of the 1990s and back to the streets of the city in a search for historical information, spatial knowledge and everyday experiences that could illuminate how different strata of Romanian society (and different categories of Bucharest inhabitants) have managed to cope and continue to cope with a radically changed cityscape.

A. New interest in Bucharest in Romania and abroad

Immediately after the end of the communist regime in Romania in December 1989, the physical state of the city became a controversial issue in cultural circles in Bucharest. The media devoted a lot of space to debates on the “destruction of Bucharest.” The architectural elite plugged the issue ad nauseam in an attempt to draw attention to the “new role” architects and specialists could play in the “recovery” of the city and Romanian society in general.³

Most debate centered on the socialist project of the 1980s. The changes in December 1989 left the so-called “civic center” a vast construction site. Monumental buildings and wide avenue vistas found themselves in a wasteland of rubble. Half-finished structures were surrounded by confusing, large open spaces that were the result of the razing of old city districts to make way for the new center. The secrecy that surrounded this project of the previous decade increased the state of shock and bewilderment felt by public opinion when the extent of the urban intervention was acknowledged: some 40,000 people were reported to have been displaced; several medieval churches (most rebuilt in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries) and much nineteenth century architecture had been destroyed. This gave birth to the long-lasting metaphor for Bucharest in post-socialist writing: “the tragedy” or “the drama” of the city.⁴

The decade that followed December 1989 was poor in urban action, but rich in conceptualization and reappraisal of the “problem” of the city. A favorite theme when lamenting the fate of Bucharest in the early 1990s was the “uniqueness” of Bucharest.⁵ The city was considered so “deeply wounded” by communist barbarism that not even the war damaged cities of the Second World War were a good comparison. As a city whose affliction was brought on not by nature or war, but by conscious political decision, Bucharest was proclaimed unique in its sufferings. But

rather than drawing attention to the city and its problems as expected, this view in fact helped to confine discussion of the city to a local, self-centered and self-pitying discourse.

Despite the existing discourse of uniqueness of Bucharest, the Romanian situation can be compared with another case from the history of modern urban planning: the similar decision faced by Brazil in the early 1960s. Mainly for political reasons,⁶ the government of Juscelino Kubitschek began an ambitious and costly project of building a new capital for Brazil in the period 1955-1960. The next government, which took office in 1961, inherited a large construction site that was later to become Brasilia, the new capital. In the five years that followed, the new regime was caught in the dilemma of “the folly of continuing with Brasilia and the crime of abandoning it.”⁷ In the following decades, Brasilia was continued and eventually finished.

The situation in Bucharest in 1990 was similar. The communist regime was gone, but its half-finished project was still there and could not be ignored.⁸ The first question to be asked was “What is to be done with the House of the People, the most powerful testimony of how decadent a political regime can become?”⁹ This decision, with its many political implications, was a difficult one. However, as in the case of Brasilia, the political elite eventually decided to continue with the project, despite protests from the literati.¹⁰ Anca Petrescu, coordinator of the construction works for the House of the People during the 1980s, was re-assigned as manager of the unfinished building. In 1996, before the building was completed, the government decided that Romanian Parliament should move there and soon after the huge building became known as the Palace of the Parliament. Many buildings on and around the boulevard were leased or sold to international corporations and companies that finished the buildings in a piecemeal fashion, modifying the appearance of their assigned space to fit with more contemporary design concepts. While the first part of the boulevard, from the *House to Piața Unirii*, is said to be an area in which nothing happens, the second part of the boulevard is lively and active.

The way in which the local intelligentsia presented the issue also shaped international understanding of the problem. The debates of the 1990s perpetuated a number of fallacious myths that international journals occasionally embraced indiscriminately. As early as 1990, local media and urban professionals grasped the enormous opportunity for advertising themselves that the poor state of the city offered. Continuous lamenting

was quickly understood to be an efficient strategy by which to put Bucharest, Romanian architecture and Romanian architects in the spotlight of the international media.¹¹ As a consequence, many assessments of the international press originated with the strongly politicized message signaled westward by the local elites.

While the socialist project for Bucharest's new civic center was only subject to international media exposure in the 1990s, the socialist plans for systematization of the villages had been under the spotlight since the 1980s. Romanian exiles, together with the exiled Hungarian lobby, had long denounced the Romanian systematization program. It was presented in the 1980s as a barbarous plan to eradicate the traditional peasant way of life and the specific ethnic rural heritage of minorities living in Romania.¹² After 1990, it became clear that news of the destruction of villages inside socialist Romania had been deliberately exaggerated in an attempt to elicit more European protest.¹³ The destruction of Bucharest, on the other hand, only became a sensation abroad after 1990, and it surprised everyone with vivid images of the enormous House and the long boulevard, but especially with accounts of the wastelands surrounding the "ghostly buildings" of the unfinished project. As one foreign journal noted, Bucharest was at the time probably the least known European capital after Tirana.¹⁴

After many decades of isolation, Romanian specialists and scholars saw again the possibility of advertising their work abroad. The clear interest being directed by the rest of the world to post-revolutionary Romania was eventually channeled by these intellectuals toward the problems of the built environment. Historians, art historians and architects began to write for foreign journals. With Romania's heritage having been damaged in the socialist period, the situation of Bucharest's architectural environment and the Romanian villages after systematization became favorite topics. The "destruction" of Romania's villages, towns and cities during the socialist period had clear journalistic appeal. Aided by the interest this subject aroused abroad, Romanian specialists incorporated additional information pertaining to the history of the city, the various architectural trends in pre-socialist Romania (in particular modernism), and broader Romanian cultural and intellectual issues.¹⁵

One of the first "exports" of this kind was a *Monuments historiques* issue from 1990, which was focused entirely on "wounded" Romanian heritage.¹⁶ Well-known names in Romanian culture contributed to this issue, including: an art historian and specialist in historical monuments

who had protested against the demolitions in the 1980s (Răzvan Theodorescu); and a senior architect whose name had been known since the interwar period (Emil Paul Miculescu).¹⁷ In Romania, the “wounds” inflicted on national heritage were exposed in a major exhibition held within a few months of the events of December 1989 entitled “The State of the City.” Another exhibition, “The Monuments of Romania, 1977-1989,” made further use of all the criticism, disappointment and subversive materials collected secretly by “preservationists” in the 1980s¹⁸ by exhibiting previously unreleased material, photographs of the demolitions and historical monuments in a state of decay, as well as privately gathered remains from the houses and monuments demolished in the civic center area.

It was not only old and established intellectuals and “dissidents” that were heard. Public intellectuals associated with the rule of Ceaușescu, such as Anca Petrescu, also received the attention of the foreign media. She gave many interviews to foreign architectural journals and to newspapers and magazines with wide audiences. One of the first interviews she gave was to the *Wall Street Journal* in April 1990. Later, in 1994, she was interviewed by the German Keno Verseck for *Die Tageszeitung*. More recently, she was interviewed by the Hungarian architectural journal *Octogon*.¹⁹

At home, the attention she received was of a different nature. She became a scapegoat for the urbanistic and architectural excesses of the late socialist period. In 1990, the first issue of the Romanian independent architectural journal, *Arhitext*, criticized Anca Petrescu heavily, accusing her of collaboration, and for being responsible for the vast amount of national resources swallowed by the House of the Republic that she had designed. Since the Union of Architects was not ready to begin a witch-hunt, it proved easier to single out Petrescu as the only “tarnished” architect.²⁰ Some voices even suggested that the plans for reconstructing Bucharest had been her idea, something which can be easily refuted by the chronology of the events.²¹

Architects that had been marginalized in the latter decades of socialism acceded to important positions in the state administration and became powerful, authoritative voices in the media. Ascanio Damian, a former rector of the Institute of Architecture in the 1960s, and Mariana Celac, a dissident architect that had criticized socialist planning practices in the 1980s, were both members of the Council of the National Salvation Front, the interim power in the country after the collapse of the socialist

system. Another marginalized architect, Șerban Popescu-Criveanu, became head of the newly established Ministry of Urbanism and Territorial Planning.²²

After 1989, the focus of the socialist project, the huge “House of the Republic”, again became known as “the House of the People” in an attempt to change its political meaning as the locus of power of the previous regime. Together with the new boulevard, the House attracted attention both at home and abroad. The House was immediately opened to the public; well-rehearsed guides told Romanian and foreign visitors incredible facts about its construction, cost and dimensions. The feature of the new center that was foremost and easiest to grasp was its sheer size. Media coverage after 1989 indulged in providing detailed dimensions and figures for the entire architectural ensemble: the boulevard was sometimes two, sometimes four kilometers long; the House was the second largest in the world after the Pentagon; the project had needed as many as 10,000 workers²³; the main hall of the House contains a carpet of 1,000 square meters and weighing 14 tonnes; and so on.²⁴

While elite groups abhorred it as a symbol of totalitarianism, many normal Romanians and some foreigners found the building entertaining, and even worthy of admiration. Statements by foreign architects that compared the House and the boulevard with contemporary postmodern architecture around the world generated local outcry.²⁵ Other specialist publications were more cautious, such as two major British journals that featured the House of the People and the boulevard in 1991 articles, in which the over-decorated façades and fancy interiors featured as the favorite close-ups of the socialist project.²⁶

Given the interest coming from outside the country and the heated debates on the fate of the project within the country, Romanian architects seized the opportunity to advertise their abilities. The ensuing debate as to “what to do with the unfinished socialist project” involved many architects, both in Romania and in exile. A British architect of Romanian origin, Șerban Cantacuzino, suggested plans for a reorganization of the area of the socialist project as early as January 1990.²⁷

In 1991, the Union of Architects organized a National Contest of Ideas to find solutions for the House of the People and the surrounding area. It was an all-encompassing, informal contest. The entries were essentially more of a symbolic nature, ranging from architect’s suggestions to bury the “House” and transform it into a hill, to suggestions by primary-school

children to transform it into a “Palace of Toys.” This was followed by the international contest, “Bucharest 2000”. Begun in 1995 and completed in 1996, the contest was considered a big international success.

As early as 1992, the newly elected head of the Romanian Union of Architects, Alexandru Beldiman, had begun to discuss the possibility of organizing a major international planning competition for the “disturbed” area. The competition was justified in complex ways: it would promote Romania and Bucharest abroad; it would build contacts between Romanian specialists and their international counterparts; it would attract foreign investment to Bucharest; it would provide evidence that architects and planners can be of use in the emerging political order and that architecture-related matters - though not as urgent as economic issues - need to be acknowledged and addressed.²⁸

Alexandru Beldiman soon started to contact important members of the international planning community in order to identify potential members of an international jury for the competition.²⁹ Between 1993 and 1995, Beldiman and the Union of Romanian Architects looked for ways of financing the competition including by involving state institutions, such as Bucharest Municipality or the Ministry of Public Works. Finally, and with direct support from the president, the project was initiated.³⁰ The main entry requirement for the competition was that the existence of the House and the boulevard not be contested and the solutions proposed be “realistic”.³¹ The competition was announced in 1995 and the winner chosen out of 235 entries. The winning project was submitted by a team of architects from Hamburg, whose proposed solution was both “modern” (a cluster of skyscrapers surrounding the House) and involved the “memory” of the place (restoration of the trajectory of a number of disappeared streets).³² The project was unanimously praised in the Romanian cultural media. However, it still awaits the financing that would make its realization possible.

As a result of the “discovery” of Romania – its architecture, its capital and its architects – many foreign specialists intermingled with the locals and occasionally returned on a quest to understand this “unusual” city. Drawn by a curiosity and the lure of “Ceaușescu’s Palace and Grand Axis”, they soon became familiar with the fashionable attitudes toward the city that will be presented in this paper (section B). They slowly adopted the point of view of the natives and described Bucharest as an atypical city that could not be compared in greatness with Rome or Prague,

but could attract the foreigner with its subliminal and mysterious magnetism.³³

Local architects' views developed differently. Just as they found scapegoats for the ethical and social effects of their profession's involvement in the great schemes of the 1980s; in similar fashion, they used the socialist project as an explanation for their feelings of stigma. The project of the new civic center offered a façade to the faceless feelings of inferiority inherited from previous centuries. At the same time, while the socialist period was blamed for everything that did not function properly in the city, the interwar years were elevated to mythical status. The memory of the pre-socialist period was cleansed of any disharmonious elements so as to be presented as the Golden Age of the capital and of Romanian architecture. A prestigious and persistent cultural project initiated by the architectural elite after 1989 investigated and advertised the interwar modernist architecture of Bucharest. Three major exhibitions with accompanying catalogues, which stood out as beautifully designed in the grim context of the post-1989 publications, presented interwar Bucharest as a period of great enthusiasm, talent, progressive thinking and social cohesion.³⁴ In Romania, the exhibitions constituted some of the most important cultural events of the 1990s. Consequently, they were "exported" to Europe, taken on tour, held at prestigious venues (e.g. RIBA) and displayed at international events (e.g. the Venice Biennial). Thus, two visions of Bucharest polarized the collective remembering of its history: the socialist period and the interwar period. The socialist period was perceived and described as a bleak dystopia and the interwar period was transformed into myth. In hoping to bury the memory of the socialist era, architectural circles had helped to resurrect the memory of the interwar period.³⁵

B. "The catastrophe called 'the New Civic Center'"³⁶

This section follows the themes and perceptions that were used in post-1989 remembering of the 1980s transformation that coalesced to form a dominant discourse on the meaning and value of the new civic center.

1. Remembering versus forgetting: The role of history and memory

The complex reaction of the urban elites after 1989 can not be understood without addressing issues such as the relationship between history, the city and public memory. Similar to the situation in Germany after the Second World War, the pervasive message conveyed by these texts is that history had dissolved and that a new life cycle had begun. From this *Stunde Null* position annalists attempted to assess what had happened.

These authors expressed the overpowering feeling that they had just witnessed a great cultural disaster. Now that an entirely new epoch had begun, the “witness” metaphor suggests that the first task was to testify as to what had happened. Testimony was not only understood in terms of giving an impartial account but also as an act of narration, explanation and making sense of recent events.

At this point, “memory” became a central concept in these writings. While again comparable with the pervasive attitude in the aftermath of the Second World War, many voices believed that remembering the past would offer protection from future relapses into old patterns. Thus, the *nichts vergessen* attitude, seen elsewhere after the Second World War, found its Romanian counterpart after 1989.

Bucharest intellectuals took the task seriously: many voices implied that the most important duty incumbent on intellectuals interested in the city was to remember its recent misfortune as well as the (alleged) happy pre-socialist past; some began a crusade against oblivion: “We should never forget the tragedy of the Bucharest that vanished and those who have betrayed us and probably continue to betray us today.”³⁷ In their writings, remembering was opposed to forgetting in two important ways. First, the “tragedy” of the city during the socialist period should not be forgotten. Second, the memory of things past, of the period prior to the communist regime, should be kept alive, as a positive memory to be used to neutralize the influence of the malign post-socialist urban reality. Failure to do so was considered a cultural threat. They noticed oblivion of both kinds around them and warned against it.

Oblivion was considered treacherous, because it could lead to a dangerous intimacy with the monstrous - to a casual integration of the abnormal into the daily circle of life. If memories were not kept alive, the people might become used to the House of the People and the

boulevard. This would amount to a post-mortem victory for Ceaușescu and socialist Bucharest.

Certainly, something must be done quickly, especially because there is a danger: the unwarned population (and, alas, even foreign architects, who are not immunized at all against all the forms of totalitarianism, architectural totalitarianism included) tend to transform the area into a kind of fetish, masking present and future defoulements (sic): "Look! Ceaușescu was able to do something grand; he was able to change the city! . . ." The almost complete lack of information and architectural cultivation of the masses leads gradually to the worst possible thing: this architecture begins to please.³⁸

The first architectural exhibition on Bucharest in 1990, "Bucharest: the State of the City," attempted to oppose visually the socialist buildings with the old, demolished buildings they had replaced. It was one of the first appearances of the *nichts vergessen* attitude. The organizers considered the exhibition a symbolic warning, a moment of mourning and a "memento" to be kept and used to avoid future mistakes.³⁹ Despite this, cultural analysts complained that the exhibition was not perceived by the audience as an occasion for grievance and remembrance, but as an enjoyable, entertaining event.

The topic of the exhibition was as serious as you can get! Nevertheless, the spectacular does not mix well with the tragic. This is probably why not everyone who saw the exhibition fully understood its message. For example, the corridor-hall that was supposed to represent the Victory of Socialism Boulevard, constituted for some visitors a good occasion for entertainment. In some areas of the exhibition, a detached attitude could be observed among the visitors, while the people were in fact viewing an account of architectural genocide of such magnitude that it would have terrified any architect in the world.⁴⁰

"We can not be 'objective' regarding the trauma of the city!"⁴¹ exclaimed architectural critic Augustin Ioan,⁴² in justification of his negative, loaded discourse on the new civic center. Other voices went further, claiming that adoption of a clear stance against the socialist project was a moral requirement, a part of the *nichts vergessen* program. A decade later, the obsession with the meaning and role of "memory" was still alive. The author of a text written in 1999 appeals rhetorically to a chosen few to distance themselves from the unknowing mob that forgets and forgives:

Today, almost nine years after the events of December 1989, when walking down the street it appears that nothing reminds us of the obsessive decade of the 1980s, the most difficult period for the city out of all the communist decades. . . . Everything seems to have been erased forever (to the uninitiated in the art of decoding the history of the city) the painful memory of submissiveness and of long rows of people reduced to the antique condition of slaves, people that built the House of the People, today called the Palace of Parliament, a deep stigma on the structure of the city and the consciousness of each and everyone.⁴³

The second type of “memory” advocated by different intellectual “voices” is the remembrance of things past, of happy epochs that can neutralize in the minds of the people the negative influence of the socialist period. Entries in the diary of Octavian Paler published in 1990 make this point:

What was here before? Geta asked. We were walking down the boulevard, from Universitate towards Romana, on the left-hand pavement. I took a glance at the cold, impersonal, banal buildings. Standard flats. I don't remember. Don't you see? Geta asks. That is what those who demolish rely on. People forget. They forget very easily. In vain I struggle to retrieve from memory the old image of this spot. The discovery troubles me. If we, people from Bucharest and of a certain age, forget how the city of our youth and mature years looked like - what can we expect of others? We complete the destructive work of the dictator through the feeble opposition of our memory. We adapt to the ugly, gray buildings that they “blessed” us with. We get used to it. And children will believe this is how this city always looked.⁴⁴

This fight against oblivion was undertaken with a sense of urgency, as a last hope. The writers and analysts see memory as feeble, but as the only strategy of undoing history and setting things right where wrong had been done.⁴⁵ It is a metaphor for an act of symbolic justice. The anxiety that these voices express in their accounts of recent history reveal a mixture of fear and hope that can be easily explained from the *Stunde Null* perspective. There were different types of action available, but a decision needed to be taken quickly as time appeared to be in short supply.

Augustin Ioan urged that “something ... be done quickly, because there is a danger.”⁴⁶ The first team of town hall architects after 1989 was dubbed “the last chance team” in the *Arhitectura* journal. Another

architect, returning from exile in Paris in 1991, spoke of “desperate efforts to salvage the city” at a round table discussion named “remembrance of spaces past”, using a paraphrase of Proust:

The lost city is not totally lost, as long as it still lives inside us and as long as we make desperate efforts to regain it. And we must **quickly** find a method of acting upon ourselves so as not to allow the replacement in our minds of the old image with the new image that we do not want to accept. At the same time, immediate action is required, to stop the noxious influence of this images that continue to distort our minds.⁴⁷

This method of acting upon the mind prone to forgetting describes well the *nichts vergessen* attitude. Another explanation for the appeal of this attitude in elite circles is that “memory” was perceived as a political concept opposed to communism, an anti-communist weapon. Since the communist regime was thought to despise “history,” remembrance became a strategy of resistance and, consequently, a tool of the anti-communist intellectual. The socialist project was described as a conscious and evil attempt to “erase”⁴⁸ the memory of the city. And this “erasing” was normally blamed on the mad, evil and ignorant nature of both the communist leader and the entire system.

In 1990, the cultural newspaper *Romania literara* published a quotation from *Le Monde*: “The Victory of Socialism, this barbarous architectural delirium made [the churches] disappear, displaying a **lack of any trace of respect towards the past.**”⁴⁹ The 1997 introductory texts to the exhibition catalogue “Bucharest 2000” reads: “A leader afflicted by megalomania fathomed he could enslave the city and **erase its memory.**”⁵⁰ These two quotations introduce the metaphors discussed in the following sub-section.

2. Demonized architecture

The recent past has been commonly described as a latter-day apocalypse. The architectural critic Augustin Ioan even chose the title “After Armageddon” for one of his articles.⁵¹ This demonized perspective relates to the aforementioned belief in a communist conspiracy against memory, in which Ceaușescu had deliberately planned to destroy city, a plan that was pursued relentlessly. In some texts Ceaușescu is described as evil incarnate. A milder example is given in another entry in Octavian Paler’s diary:

The boulevard is a perfectly straight line, drawn over everything that stood in its way. Nothing mattered, nothing constituted an obstacle. It is frightening to watch the strip of asphalt that leads mercilessly to the Pharaoh-like image of the House of the People. How much hate can read in those straight lines! You must wholeheartedly hate a city to ignore what has to be sacrificed in such cool blood.⁵²

“Was the destruction of pre-existing Bucharest a mere contingency?” This question was put to a member of the architectural team that worked on the civic center.⁵³ The architect evaded a straightforward answer, though he did say that there had been a definite lack of understanding and respect for Bucharest’s architectural heritage. At any rate, the question indirectly referred to the fashionable interpretation that the civic center was merely a pretext for a “maniacal” attempt to destroy the existing city. It was part of an unofficial “plan” of memory-erasing. Ceaușescu allegedly chose a symbolic destruction of interwar Bucharest, the so-called Little Paris, out of jealousy and envy for the fame the city had enjoyed in pre-socialist times.⁵⁴

The “black” metaphors refer to either Ceaușescu or his “palace.” The House was ironically called “the People’s Monster”⁵⁵ while the boulevard was dubbed “the boulevard of insanity.”⁵⁶ Ceaușescu was either compared to Nero,⁵⁷ a pharaoh⁵⁸ or a primitive tribal chief.⁵⁹ The vocabulary employed was connected either to madness and dark powers, or to ignorance, stupidity and a corruption of taste.⁶⁰ Sometimes, all these descriptions are brought together to paint an all-encompassing negative picture.

The painter Sorin Dumitrescu provides the most vivid example of this tendency for demonization. In a public speech in 1990 addressed to an audience primarily composed of architects, he warned against the dangerous symbol that the new civic center allegedly represented. He noticed that the “monstrous building” and the boulevard were competing for space with the nearby Patriarchy Hill, the residence of the Romanian Orthodox Church. To this religious “axis of reference,” the new boulevard contributed as its “malefic counterpart”, thereby confusing the spiritual axis of the city. “You [the architects], being the ones looking for future solutions, should take into account that through this gesture [the building of the boulevard] the Devil was placed by the side of God!”⁶¹

The House was seen as bearing the mark of totalitarianism, and was therefore considered doomed by these analysts. They did not foresee a

chance to “normalize” this distorted landscape of evil.⁶² Augustin Ioan did not see a solution to the future fate of the House, unless the “evil” that resides within it be finally “exorcised”: “With the House, the act of exorcising the evil will require its annihilation as a symbol of totalitarian power.”⁶³

In 1997, Alexandru Paleologu reacted in similar terms against the planned reassignment of the role of the House of People as the seat of the Romanian Parliament: “The Parliament . . . is moved into a demoniac and sinister warehouse, built in the worst type of bad taste, compromising our position in the world.”⁶⁴

The metaphors of “madness” and “evil” were at times extended to include other protagonists in the creation of the new civic center. It was common to blame Ceaușescu’s wife, Elena,⁶⁵ and of all the architects involved in the project, Anca Petrescu, the chief architect, was considered the most “demonical” and “insane” of all:

She [Anca Petrescu] entered the game after noticing how respectable architects of the day did not accept Ceaușescu’s plans because they wanted a modern House. Ceaușescu wanted a styled House, a retro House and Anca Petrescu picked up the same vibes. I never could determine if the explanation was a parapsychological phenomenon of information transfer or if she was suffering from the same sickness.⁶⁶

In extreme cases, the demonizing went beyond the condemnation of individuals. Blame was diffused,⁶⁷ becoming a fatalist attitude, which saw the recent events as the logical outcome of the constant progression of “evil” in Romanian socialism, a curse or cynical joke of destiny.⁶⁸ “History” thus became the agent of destruction and fatality.⁶⁹ Previous decades were thought to have contained the seed of a madness that would only later be unleashed through the project of the 1980s. Alexandru Paleologu’s preface to a book of personal histories of inhabitants of the demolished houses is a case in point:

It was fatal to reach “systematization” in the extreme phase of “development,” under the star sign of the supreme Leader-Demolisher. . . . The curse of disrespect [for the built environment] existed before Ceaușescu . . . but these were individual manifestations with no “systematizing” scope. Then, after the earthquake in 1977, the madness began. . . . Even now, with that demolishing delirium appeased, the agony of some houses continues.⁷⁰

Another important figure, Ștefan Augustin Doinas, believed the destruction was not necessarily a tool of “history”, but was inherent to the nature of the city in general. He drew on the ancient Greek myth of the labyrinth to suggest that all cities have a gene that can cause madness. He saw destiny as being accomplished through human agency, here mixing the themes of fatality and the mad dictator:

Every metropolis is a labyrinth that has its devouring monster. . . . In Bucharest, however, this monster seems to have appeared in the form of a dictatorial couple very keen on building its Daedalus type of habitat, the People’s House, like a *memento* for the next generation that speaks against the lack of measure and grotesque.⁷¹

Unlike Ștefan Augustin Doinas, who saw the redevelopment project metaphorically as a “memento” with educational benefits for the future, other authors see the future of the city as compromised by its presence. Many portray the new center poetically as being forever haunted by ghosts of the past. The city was supposedly disturbed in its peaceful existence by this sign of the devil imprinted on its symbolic center.

A gigantesque, ideologically imbued ensemble, founded by a celebration of power, was implanted into the very core that had generated the city (*nucleul generator*). Once materialized, it projected its presence upon the future of the city, lasting longer than we can now even imagine.⁷² Therefore, from whatever point one looks over the city, the image of this architectural and moral “lie” will haunt us forever.⁷³

This discourse of demonization that appeared after 1989 was not exclusively Romanian, nor exclusively related to architectural issues. Gregor von Rezzori, a German writer born in the Bukovina in 1914, revisited Bucharest in 1990, after an absence of 50 years. He summarized well the metaphors of madness and evil in a text written in 1994, in which he compared the discourse of the Romanian intellectuals he visited in Bucharest with post-war German attitudes:

It was similar [the Bucharest atmosphere] in the smallest details with the *Trummerzeit*, the time of the ruins in Germany immediately after the war. . . . They [Romanian intellectuals] were trying to explain what had happened, what was monstrous and puzzling like the psychogram of an oversized evil spirit. *Adolf der Fuhrer*. Was he mad? Could evil be present

in such an incredibly intensified form in flesh and blood human beings like me and you? Can the demonical, the devilish, be concentrated to such a monstrous extent in a single person, who, in every other way, was very average? Or was this individual, due to mysterious circumstances, the focus of all our Luciferian vibes? Did he focus them like a lens? . . . I felt a need to giggle. All these young people around me didn't know how old the world is. How deeply rooted in us is the wish not to see the truth. . . . The situation in Bucharest in 1990 and that in Hamburg in 1946 had a lot in common.⁷⁴

3. The two cities: the socialist versus the “organic”

The next set of metaphors describes the perceived difference in the nature of the socialist center in comparison to the rest of the city. While most of the built environment of Bucharest evolved gradually and in an unplanned manner, the new civic center represented a deliberate large-scale intervention in the urban structure that was sudden and followed a pre-existing plan. Other cases of deliberate planning in Bucharest happened in an area to the north of the new civic center. By contrast, in the southern part of Bucharest's urban core, previous cases of planned development were almost non-existent, a fact that makes the difference between the civic center and the previous built environment even more apparent. Intellectual critics responded to this contrast with metaphors.

Most voices adopted an organicist view. According to these authors, a city that had developed over time was superior to one that had been planned rationally. Despite this, planned urbanism has been in favor with architects and the wider public throughout most of the history of Romanian urbanism. In the particular context that emerged after 1989, the many voices that chose to adopt an organicist view did so not as an article of faith, but in opposition to the socialist intervention. Thus, they were prepared to advocate any cause that represented an opposition to that which they criticized.⁷⁵ This is again a case of selective remembering.

Attitudes ranged from mere acknowledgement of the incongruity between the two types of built environment, to a sweeping rage against the planned development that had replaced an “organic slice” of the city. Most commentators agreed that the new center did not connect well with the surrounding area, and described the intervention in terms of a “break”, “rupture”, “fracture” or “cut” in the city.

The new political and administrative center of Bucharest, placed on top of pre-existing districts, streets and monuments, has created a rupture in the entire inherited system of streets and boulevards due to the way it is located inside the concentric-radial structure of the city.⁷⁶

Other analysts present a vivid, emotional and value-loaded account of the “rupture” that the intervention produced. At times the description took on the form of an almost science fiction style ahistorical narration of a calamity of unknown type that had struck the city and continued to develop an independent life of its own in its very heart. “In the ninth decade of this century, a fracture was born and started to grow wide right in the middle of Bucharest.”⁷⁷ Another more recent text considered the intervention to be *contra naturam*, suggesting that the new center perverted urban life, history and the natural growth of Bucharest.

This enormous space, created through the ruthless demolition of a typical Bucharest district, of middle-class people, owners of elegant houses, including all the comfort, has produced a trauma on the level of the city and numerous personal tragedies. In practice, the demolition was ‘against the nature’⁷⁸ of the normal city development. . . . The development pattern of Bucharest is not that of a city with huge boulevards. “Little Paris” was famous for the picturesque nature of its crooked, slightly oriental streets, full of charm nonetheless.⁷⁹

The idea that the socialist project had committed an act of violence on the city also constituted the starting point of the *Bucharest 2000* contest. In 1995, the entire international competition organized by the Union of Romanian Architects started from the question of how to reduce the confusion created in the city structure by the new civic center. In the accompanying catalogue to the exhibition this goal was considered second in importance to an overall assessment of the entries:

Motives and Goals: 1. to identify necessary changes to the utility of the central area, according to the significance and values that a capital city in the year 2000 should represent; 2. to eliminate fractures and lessen the aggressions caused by the 1980-1987 urban operation in the structure, function and significance of the central sector, adjacent to Unirii Boulevard.⁸⁰

Moreover, various participants assimilated the view of the organizers and included these popular metaphors in the descriptions of their projects. For example, the explanatory text of a Romanian entry stated:

Since the city lives as the human organism does, we can offer it the tools that facilitate its natural recovery.... It is an attempt to reduce the tension between the 'slice' made in the 1980s and the traditional structure of the city by knitting together the urban fabric.⁸¹

The goal of the contest seemed over-ambitious in comparison to the pessimistic assessment of some authors who did not see any possibility of an integrated "recovery."⁸² They claimed that there existed two cities in one: the traditional alongside the socialist. These reactions can be grouped into two types - the more restrained statement by architect Gheorghe Leahu and the colorful and metaphorical statement by architectural critic Augustin Ioan:

The existing city can not assimilate this transplanting of new and triumphal boulevards and buildings organically. The existing city and the new center remain two separate entities, two foreign bodies.⁸³

The city can no longer recover from this blow, this fatal tearing-up of its very center. We cannot expect assimilation in the urban organism over time, for this is impossible due to the incompatibility of the two zones: the living zone of the old city and the ideologized corpse of the civic center.⁸⁴

The metaphor of the "crack" or "fracture" caused by the socialist project encouraged some authors to adopt the view that "two cities" existed side-by-side in the urban core of Bucharest. Even some of the titling is relevant in this metaphorical understanding. The Romanian architect Serban Cantacuzino, who lives in London and is a member of the RIBA, published an informative text on the history of Bucharest, entitled "Two Distinct Cities."⁸⁵ Others chose titles that suggested the authors' skepticism that the two parts, perceived as radically different in nature, can be made to correspond with each other and match each other. One architect called his text "Rupture and Continuity";⁸⁶ another "Bucharest: The Impossible Continuity."⁸⁷

4. From the “wound” to the “stigma”

The metaphor of the “wounded city” was derived from the previous series of metaphors. As argued, the “fracture” metaphor introduced the theme of the “two cities” in terms of the incongruent connection between the socialist area and the older area. The next series of metaphors envisioned the city as a “body” and the socialist intervention as surgery, a failed implant or a cancerous excrescence on the “body” of the city. I have called these metaphors, “medical” metaphors.⁸⁸

The “cut” is a term of transition. It again signifies violence, a radical act of disruption and, at the same time, it is also medical, reminiscent of one of the classic comparisons in modern planning history: the urbanist-architect as surgeon who “operates” on the city.⁸⁹ Nonetheless, the cultural analysts presented here did not see “surgery” as an act of restoring health. Rather it is considered a maniacal act performed by a violent doctor, which created the “wound”. The following gives an example of the transition from the rupture metaphor to the medical metaphor:

The widening rupture cut deeply into the city fabric, erasing houses, churches, hospitals and monuments. . . The axial crack ended in a barren hill, free of both natural and artificial elements and on which is preeminent a gigantic and posterous building.⁹⁰

The “wound” can have two different meanings. The entire area developed can be thought of as an “open wound”. Alternatively, the buffer zone of undeveloped land between the new boulevard and the pre-existing street pattern can be considered a “wound.” Gheorghe Leahu used the metaphor in the latter context:

Between the new center – pretentious and lavishly soaked in rich materials and decorative patterns – and the rest of the city, an open wound is left, a place of empty spaces, back streets and empty walls.⁹¹

The huge empty spaces that are still hidden behind the triumphal architecture of the new center constitute an open wound, unhealed, reminiscent of the brutal “indications” given and of the submissiveness of those who served “the golden epoch.”⁹²

Other “voices” considered the entire area to be an open wound. Some even introduced highly specific justifications to the architectural jargon.

One finalist in the *Bucharest 2000* competition provided the following explanation:

Why did this brutal intervention that stopped the normal development of the city appear to us as an open wound? More than anything, the negative message comes from the mixed effect that the disposition of these urban objects creates, from the monotonous corridor, artificial, without life, from the fraud of these forms without content. These spaces are ugly because they do not have a purpose, they are boring and unnatural.⁹³

The metaphor of the “open wound” in connection to a capital city was not unique in post-socialist urban landscape. A similar urban discourse could be found in Berlin in the 1990s. The prestigious architectural exhibition organized in Berlin in the summer of 2000 offered a large panorama of the different stages of Berlin’s history. Still, the organizers began from the present state of the city and justified the exhibition in terms of it having been born out of the necessity to revive the history of the city as a “memento” and a tool in “healing” the city. The exhibition leaflet circulated at the exhibition read as follows:

The many **painful wounds** suffered by the city in the course of the century – the economic and the social consequences of the First World War, the devastating destruction of WW2, and its being split into two halves as well as mended – have over and over again awakened a need for reorientation, and encouraged architects to attempt the concrete application of their theoretical concepts.⁹⁴

Romanian architectural circles were not unaware of the Berlin example. To an extent, it can be argued that the Romanian debate was influenced by the German polemics of the 1990s.⁹⁵ The voices discussed here advocated the “uniqueness” of the situation in Bucharest. Nevertheless, Berlin was sometimes considered an exception to the rule, and acknowledged as the only city with which Bucharest’s sufferings can be compared. “The only city that could be possibly compared with Bucharest is Berlin. Because of the wall, Berlin is also crossed by an enormous wound, still unhealed, but in the process of healing.”⁹⁶

Moreover, the *Bucharest 2000* competition was apparently triggered by the remark of an Italian architect who stated in 1990 that the area of Bucharest redeveloped during socialism had the “potential” to become

the counterpart of the ambitious construction sites initiated in the center of a unified Berlin.⁹⁷ As a result, Bucharest architectural circles began to consider the idea of an international contest for Bucharest.

The metaphor of the “wound” featured for a long time in writings on Bucharest in the 1990s. In 1999, it was still being used with all its suggestive power in an article on the results of the *Bucharest 2000* contest. “Going back to this cut on the body of the city, this open wound that still ‘bleeds’ today, we are tempted to categorize it for its symbolic nature as the **sign** of the difficult times past.”⁹⁸ The metaphor of the “sign” in this citation is relevant to a whole set of metaphors used during the 1990s. Expressions such as “sign,” “mark,” “seal” and “imprint” were all connected to the metaphorical manifestation of the “stigma” complex of Bucharest intellectuals, an intricate issue of local and national cultural identity.

The metaphor was initially introduced to refer to the area of the new socialist center, as in this example: “... the House of the People, the present day Palace of Parliament, a deep stigma on the structure of the city and the consciousness of each and everyone”.⁹⁹ However, it expanded in the 1990s to include an entire cultural and urban “complex,” as presented below.

The term “stigma” has two uses in these texts. It is considered a physical sign, imprinted on the “body of the city,” as well as a symbolic sign, imprinted on the minds of the people. In the physical sense, the stigma was read as a mark of the socialist period, a visible sign impossible to erase. The symbolism of this image comes from the medieval practice of stigmatizing the living flesh of a human body, as a punishment for moral decadence. The body-city parallel was thus continued. “Probably no violent fire, no cataclysm, no earthquake destroyed the city as much as the totalitarian power that put its **megalomaniac seal** on the ‘body’ of the city.”¹⁰⁰

The second use of these metaphors refers to a mental “stigma.” I discussed earlier how some intellectual voices considered that the oblivion of things past equaled a symbolic post-mortem triumph of the socialist project. In the same sense, the mental “stigma” implied that the hate for history that the socialist period supposedly displayed prevailed over the minds of the people. The communists deleted a “slice” of the city and, at the same time, a slice of the “memory” of the city and the “memory” of people. This empty spot was configured not as a neutral,

blank area inside the city and inside the “memory,” but was loaded with the negative connotations of a “stigmatic” wound, imprint, sign, seal, and so on.

The destruction of so many monuments, streets and forever lost places, the exodus of thousands of people thrown out of their houses and the open collaboration of those who stained their honor putting themselves in a servile way in the service of communism and dictatorship, all these remain linked to the new center, like a **black spot impossible to erase inside the memory of Bucharest.**¹⁰¹

The “stigma” was more than just a neutral sign (scar, wound, etc.), even one that is impossible to erase. The term was usually blended with the panorama of inherited attitudes and feelings, such as shame, pride, honor and hidden wishes.¹⁰²

C. Landscapes of memory: a more inclusive story

The alternative to the dominant discourse on the recent intervention in the landscape of Bucharest proposed by this paper can be seen as an exercise in “mastering the past” or, to use a term from recent German cultural history, “*Vergangenheitsbewältigung*”.¹⁰³ Having surveyed the difficult process of integrating the recent past into the urban memory of the city, which was the subject of intellectual debate recorded in print in the 1990s, this paper investigates whether a more inclusive writing of the history of the changes could accomplish the task of dispersing controversial recent urban issues into less debated spheres of the past. It attempts to achieve this by giving a “voice” to the different layers of more private types of memory attached to this particular “place”.¹⁰⁴

I argue that the urban stories imprinted on the urban landscape of Bucharest are still struggling to become “memory”.¹⁰⁵ They are not yet integrated into the larger imaginary body of the city as a distinct part of its past. It still needs to settle into the collective memory. As part of the recent past of the city, this particular urban story is yet to be “mastered” entirely. Searching for alternatives to the dominant, negative interpretations of the past could help place this landscape of memory within the other layers of the city’s historical palimpsest.¹⁰⁶

Though rarely acknowledged as such, I see historical research as one of the best ways of “healing the wounds” of the city. Through urban history, a contested part of the recent past of the city could be “finished with”,¹⁰⁷ a page could be turned, and “ghosts” of the past be disabled in their attempts to haunt the present-day city. As part of the process of “coming to terms with the past”, the large-scale intervention in the southern part of central Bucharest has to be accepted in the collective memory as an area of history. Therefore, it must be cast back into the layers of urban memory where it can not affect the present as it did before.

This task can be accomplished by using a more inclusive historical approach. The collective meaning of the landscape in question is not only a result of prominent local intellectuals’ readings of the past, but a patchwork in which different levels of memory of the place are interwoven.¹⁰⁸ These levels may include the previous inhabitants of the area displaced by the civic center project, the current inhabitants of the new apartments, the workers that were employed on the building site for almost a decade, and most of all, people found today on the streets of Bucharest - people who find their way through the place, walking or driving through, coping with it on a daily basis. Their partial accounts would help knit the “place” back into the fabric of the city it belongs to and exorcise the ghosts of the past. Therefore, the “non-place”,¹⁰⁹ as it is thought of by current scholarly wisdom, can be returned, through story-telling and map drawing, to become an accepted urban place.

Such a project would use the methodological tools of both oral history and cognitive mapping. The possibilities that this would open up to the researcher are myriad. I outline below some possible directions for further investigation.

There are two main directions of inquiry that I propose: one, using interviews of different types of Bucharest inhabitants to uncover their memory of the place under scrutiny, as it was before the changes; the second, aiming to disclose the attitude of those same people toward the new urban situation that misplaced the old neighborhood they may, or may not have known.

The foreseen difference in attitudes between the dominant discourse and the partial histories uncovered on the streets of the city and in the minds of inhabitants could come from “cognitive mapping” field work. While the dominant mental maps published by the media in the 1990s

focused on the “destruction,” the mental maps made possible by interviews and drawings with “voiceless” inhabitants could show a tendency to weave the “sour spot” back into the larger fabric of the city. Daily trajectories of inhabitants and daily contact with the area in question would make possible a better understanding of the gradual process in which the landscape has changed, and of how the trauma of the changes was absorbed by the population at large.

The interviews and mental mapping should help change the focus of literature on the subject. The tendency to keep the image of the city frozen in an apocalyptic vision, which condemns a large area of the city to be a place of continuous mourning, would be replaced by a more inclusive approach that defines the area as culturally constructed through the different layers of memory and attitudes that people attach to it. It would be an attempt to give the area back to the city and sew it into the larger urban folklore of the city as a whole.

As in other places,¹¹⁰ this methodological change of focus would disclose important information about exactly what day-to-day collective memory chooses to forget and what to remember. For example, the demolished Sfânta Vineri church, a spiritual landmark in the 1980s, lingers on in the memory of the inhabitants as would be shown by a study of their knowledge of the exact location of the church and their continuous use of the name of the church in referring to the specific area where it once stood. On the other hand, many of the churches that were demolished would most likely not be identified by many people on the map and their memory would be largely forgotten (such as the church that used to be where the well-known Connex office building now stands).

Another possible case study would investigate people’s ability to find their way through the streets surrounding the new boulevard. Many old streets of the demolished neighborhoods still exist, but are fragmented, cut in two or more parts, and many fragments of old streets now bear different names. It would be relevant to see how many people identify what is today George Georgescu Street as part of the important city thoroughfare of old, *Calea Rahovei*; and how many realize that this part of the street was cut off and isolated by the insertion of new apartment blocks. Similarly, other studies could investigate how many would choose the old street *Popa Nan*, now dissected by the new boulevard, as a quick route to connect two popular locations of the new landscape – *Piața Alba Iulia* and the largely renewed *Calea Calarasilor* (Universitatea

Hyperion). Thus, old and the new would melt into a more integrated landscape.

The words of Aurelian Triscu, an architect who in the 1990s was one of the strongest advocates of a new urban vision for Bucharest, serve as a symbolic guideline for future, more inclusive research. He places emphasis on the architectural heritage that still exists, as opposed to concentrating what is missing and the trauma of having lost it:

Still, if I look at the areas adjacent to the new civic center, there are certain valuable buildings that have survived. [gives many examples] Regardless of how much was destroyed, these places, for me, are like the healthy skin around the wound that slowly closes and heals . . . the wound. Therefore, coming from the one side and from the other, I could see how . . . it could be possible with discernment and love [to improve the area.] It can not be solved otherwise, except by slowly, getting closer and closer. [. . .] I believe that the city, the intermediary area that comes from the outside and gradually approaches the civic center, could be improved from both sides, from inside out, but also from outside in. In the 'Bucharest 2000' contest there were such proposals that saw the problem from the outside in. That is, it was those who were defenders of the heritage of the city that adopted this view. . . It is a mistake to believe that there are two camps. From all the examples that I gave you [earlier in the interview] it becomes apparent that those who defended the heritage were also gaining advantages for the modern architecture around, too. [. . .] And that is exactly what I envision for Bucharest. From the Udricani area, with the old buildings that survived in that area, one can advance gradually up to the backs of the new building on the boulevard [the former *Victoria Socialismului*] with some connecting buildings, inserting old in new and new in old. For example, to let here and there an open perspective between new apartment blocks, an opening towards something old that survived. [. . .] I believe that is what has to be done . . . knitting, darning, patching! Just like that, gradually, gradually, with good will, like a granny that works on a woolen sweater for her grandchild. . . . That's what today's 'grandparents' should do for their 'grandchildren,' to prepare their woolen sweaters. Because this woolen sweater . . . is the street network of the city, and it is very important to the life of the locals. [. . .] There are many, like me, who believe that Bucharest can live. Despite all the blows that they received, I believe that . . . our cities can come back to life, and furthermore, I believe that they can become to more than what once was.¹¹¹

NOTES

- 1 The title of the first exhibition about the city in 1990 and the title of the subsequent catalogue of the exhibition, "București – starea orașului" (Bucharest: the State of the City), April-May 1990, Sala Dalles, Bucharest, organized by The Union of Romanian Architects.
- 2 The prestigious cultural events of the last decade that made the fate of Bucharest their main topic included: Issue 190 (1996) of the cultural journal *Dilema* entitled "Architecture and Urbanism"; the issue of the cultural review *Secolul XX* 5-7 (1997) entitled "Bucharest"; the talk show "Profesiunea mea: cultura" (*My profession: Culture*) with Nicolae Manolescu on the private television channel, ProTV, in March 1998, which focused on a discussion with architects.
- 3 See the Manifesto of Romanian Architects of 1990: "We aim to pool our talent and professional honesty in order to correct the urban and architectural errors of the last decades and to elaborate projects that should aim to benefit our citizens." "Manifesto of UAR", *Arhitectura* 1-6 (1990), 47. Unless otherwise noted, all the excerpts quoted in this paper were translated by the author of this paper.
- 3 "Drama" is used with a meaning very close to "tragedy". There is a slight difference of intensity between the two. See Leahu, *Bucureștiul dispărut*, 104: "The new center of Bucharest as we know it was preceded by a huge drama. A large part of the city is forever lost. This disappearance also affected tens of thousands of people and hundreds of institutions."
- 4 The theme was launched as early as 1990. The organizers of the first exhibition after 1989 to tackle the issue of the city's destruction, called "Bucharest - the State of the City" (May 1990, Sala Dalles), stated: "The exhibition was intended to be a signal. Present-day Bucharest is definitely a unique city in Europe, if not in the entire world. The enormous wound made in its heart by the brutal intervention of the dictatorship, which has remained unhealed, must be treated with care, because the healing should leave as few marks as possible." See Alexandru Beldiman, "Bucharest: State of the City", *Arhitectura*, 1-6 (1990), 16.
- 5 Kubitschek won the elections in 1955 mainly on the back of the political slogan "I will build Brasilia". See Armin K. Ludwig, *Brasilia's First Decade: a Study of its Urban Morphology and Urban Support System* International Area Studies Programs, University of Massachusetts at Amherst, 1980).
- 6 Ludwig, "Introduction" in *Brasilia's First Decade*, 1.
- 7 "Ceaușescu disappeared . . . but his prefabs are still among us, still violate our space, mutilate the landscape and the life of Bucharest. He didn't live to see the cyclopean shack [the House of the People] on the *Mihai Vodă* Hill completed. He left it to us to 'enjoy' the privilege." See Stelian Tanase, *Revista* 22, 8 June 1990, quoted in Anghel Marcu, "În loc de critică", *Arhitectura* 1-6 (1990): 189.

- ⁸ *România literară*, 13 September 1990, quoted in “În loc de critică”, 190.
- ⁹ Alexandru Paleologu, *Revista 22/Plus* 45 (1997), 4, quoted in Augustin Ioan, “După Armageddon: O cercetare duală a arhitecturii noului centru civic”, *Secolul XX 5-7* (1997), 269. Florin Biciușcă, “Șansa”, *Secolul XX 5-7* (1997), 285.
- ¹⁰ A Romanian exhibition on the Jewish-Romanian interwar architect Marcel Iancu was exported to Zürich after being held in Bucharest. A local journal commented: “After the fall of the Iron Curtain, the modern architecture of other East European countries was made known to us. . . . By exhibiting it in our country they want to draw attention to the fact that their countries were also part of European modernity and into which they intend to be re-integrated.” See “Universale moderne: Die Architektur der Moderne in Rumänien, 1920-1940: Eine Ausstellung in Zürich”, *Basler Magazin* (2 Nov. -1996), quoted by Luminița Machedon, “Voices from the Past: Modern Architecture in Romania”, *Arhitekt Design* 2 (1997), 9.
- ¹¹ Dan Ionescu, “A Chronology of Western Protests against Romania’s Rural Resettlement Plan, March-September 1988”, RFE Research Papers, *RAD Background Report* 212 (Romania), 20 Oct. 1988. George Schöpflin, “The Role of Transylvania in Hungarian Politics”, *RAD Background Report* 236 (Hungary) 29 Nov. 1988. Also Romanian Fund documents, box 3: *Hungarian Situation Report* 7, 12 May 1982, Item 1; *Népszabadság*, 19 June 1984; RFE East, B wire, 24 July 1988, 15:56, “Ceaușescu denies discrimination in Romania”; RFE, Radio Budapest, 7 Feb. 1989 (Munich – CMD), on the village razing program in Romania; Document from May 1989, “*Falurombolas a Szekelyföldön*” (in Hungarian). All documents in OSA.
- ¹² Barrick, “Village Destruction was Slowed by Architects”, *Building Design*, 12 January 1990, 32.
- ¹³ Keith Spence, “Paradise to be regained.” *Country Life*, 13 September 1990, 222-223.
- ¹⁴ The 1990s was a decade in which Romanian architectural exhibitions traveled throughout Europe: from Zürich and London, to Venice. Architect Ștefan Lungu joked in an oral history interview that European architects were making fun of their Romanian colleagues for incessantly bringing to the attention of international professional circles the same recycled exhibitions, usually centered on Bucharest. These exhibitions had two main themes: the golden age of interwar architecture and the doomed age of socialist architecture. At the same time, Romanian architecture students were involved in the first exchange programs. The best Romanian architects received coverage in British journals. See Clare Melhuish, “Glory Days of Modernism: Romania’s Heritage of Cubist Architecture” *Building Design*, 14 February 1997; David Wild, “Buildings that Were Hidden from History: Romania in the 1930s, Architecture and Modernity”. *Architects’ Journal*, 27 Feb. 1997, 53; Ana-Maria Zahariade, “Moderne in Bukarest” *Werk, Bauen*,

- 15 *Wohnen* 1-2 (1994): 60-63; Neil Leach, "Eastern Block: Romania" in *Building Design*, Oct, 13, 1995, 12-13; Deborah Singmaster, "Working in Romania" in *Architects' Journal*, 17 Aug 1995, 39-40; "Testing Times", *Architects' Journal*, 23 May 1990, 24-29; Interview with Ștefan Lungu, AIOCIMS, tape 1528 II, side B, page 22 in transcript.
- 16 I paraphrased the title of Răzvan Theodorescu's front-page article for the issue of *Monuments historiques* focusing on Romania. See Răzvan Theodorescu, "Un patrimoine blessé", *Monuments historiques* 169 (June-July 1990), 5-6.
- 17 Paul Emil Miclescu, "Bucarest, capitale de la Roumanie", *Monuments historiques* 169 (June-July 1990), 108-109.
- 18 *București: starea orașului/Bucharest: state of the city*, exhibition catalogue (Bucharest: 1990). "Expoziția Monumentele României 1977-1990" in *BCMI* 2 (1992).
- 19 Brigid Grauman, "The House Ceaușescu Built", *Wall Street Journal*, 27 April 1990; Keno Verseck interviewed Anca Petrescu for *Die Tageszeitung* on 10 January 1994 and published a Romanian translation of the interview as "Construirea Casei Poporului, un efort național enorm și creativ" in *Arhitectura* 1-4 (1996), 56-58. Anca Petrescu "How I Became Designer for Ceaușescu?", interviewed by Ivan Andras Bojar, *Octagon: Architecture and Design* 1 (2002): 63-65.
- 20 For this and the above see "Romanians Attack Architect's Politics," *Architect's Journal*, 2 May 1990, 9.
- 21 *Ibid.* Anca Petrescu was a young architect of 25, with barely any experience as an architect, when she started to climb the professional ladder in the competition for the new center. The idea of a civic center had long been in existence in architectural circles. See my PhD dissertation, chapter IV.D.2.a, "The Origins of the Project".
- 22 Adrian Barrick, "Architects join in Romanian Struggle". *Building Design*, 9 February 1990, 8.
- 23 Leahu, *Bucureștiul dispărut*, 104: "It took over a decade to be built and an army of 100,000 people. The construction site for the House of the People had 20,000 workers."
- 24 "Not to be missed: the Parliament Palace", *Bucharest in your pocket*, Summer 2001: "Everything has monstrous dimensions: 84 meters high, 12 floors, a surface of 300,000 square meters. The largest hall, the Union Hall, is 16 meters high, has a surface of 2,200 square meters and a sliding roof that can let a helicopter fly through. The carpet in the hall is of 1000 square meters and weighs 14 tonnes. For the chandeliers 3,500 tonnes of crystal were used, the largest of them weighs 3 tonnes and has 7,000 light bulbs."
- 24 Architectural critic Augustin Ioan was among the first to note this contrast of opinions between Romanian and foreign architects: "[Romanian] architects suffered fits of indignation upon hearing the opinions of some naive

- individuals (naive due to being Westerners) whereby the area of the *Victoria Socialismului* Boulevard, and even the House of the People itself, was regarded as the greatest post-modern intervention in Europe." See Augustin Ioan, "Le postmodernisme dans l'architecture: ni sublime, ni complètement absent", *Euresis* 1-2 (1995), 239.
- 25 MacLean and Mălineanu, "Frontis", *RIBA Journal*, February 1991, 6-10; Codruț Mălineanu, "Brave New World," *Architects' Journal*, 23 January 1991, 22-27.
- 26 "Plan to Soften Ceaușescu Legacy Unveiled". *Building Design*, 12 January 1990.
- 27 One of the participants in the contest, Florin Biciușcă, wrote later an article listing all the "opportunities" that the international competition provided Romanians in general and Romanian architects in particular. See Biciușcă, "Șansa", *Secolul XX* 5-7 (1997), 285. On the subject of how Romanian architects viewed their role in the society after 1989, my MA thesis can be consulted, especially the section "Facing the Crisis: the Architect as Savior". See my thesis, "Elites, Society and Architecture: an Intellectual History of Post-Socialist Bucharest", MA thesis, Central European University, 1998.
- 28 Peter Barefoot, "Healing the Wounds", *Building Design*, 5 June 1992. Prestigious names from the international architectural elite agreed to be part of the jury: Kenneth Frampton, Fumihiko Maki, Claude Vasconi, Barry Bergdoll, Vittorio Gregotti.
- 29 Alexandru Beldiman, "București 2000", *Arhitectura* 1-4 (1996), 2-3.
- 30 One of the members of the jury described the requirements such that "Little was specified beyond rough percentage usage. . . and no specific buildings were required. The ground rules were that no major demolition of either House or boulevard would be considered realistic; that contestants were to restore a lost urban coherence and provide for Bucharest's emergence on the European economic and political stage; and that the restoration of the famed seventeenth century Mihai Vodă Monastery to its original location was favored." See Barry Bergdoll, "Competition Report, Remaking Bucharest: Are Ideas Enough?", *Architectural Record*, November 1996, 49.
- 31 The co-ordinator of the project was Meinhard von Gerkan, the German architect who supervised the redevelopment of Stuttgart. See *București 2000* (Bucharest: Simetria, 1997); "Concursul International București 2000", *Arhitectura* 1-4 (1996); See the notes by a member of the jury: Barry Bergdoll, "Competition Report, Remaking Bucharest: Are Ideas Enough?", *Architectural Record*, November 1996, 50: "Von Gerkan envisions traces of 'historical memory' for the sinuous and picturesque pre-1989 street network of the area by allowing perimeter blocks to be pierced by pedestrian paths weaving through the lines of streets erased by Ceaușescu ¶–\$%¶–Œ bulldozers."
- 32 As in the case of architect Pierre von Meiss, who visited Bucharest several times for extensive periods and became involved in the local debates,

planning architectural competitions and publishing many articles on the subject both in Romania and abroad. In the opening of a 1993 article he said of the Romanian capital that “Bucharest is not the city of clarity and visibility, as it is not the city of architectural uniformity, it is not dramatically displayed and does not have marked orientation points.” See Pierre von Meiss, “Fragmentiertes Bukarest”, and “Bukarest: Fragmente eines Kriegstagebuchs”. *Werk, Bauen, Wohnen* 3 (1993): 56-61.

33 There were similar developments in Berlin at the time: “The campaign to rebuild the [royal] palace was backed by a spate of books that appeared in the wake of the unification containing photographs and drawings of old Berlin. These burnished the image of the pre-World War I monarchical age as the time of the city’s greatest splendor and beauty. Nostalgia for that bygone era often reflected aesthetic and political naivete.” See Wise, *Capital Dilemma*, 114.

34 “[Romanian architects] want to forget the last 50 years and go back to a cultural point in the 1930s, to the time of Brancusi, when Bucharest was known as ‘little Paris’ and the Romanian leu was on a par with the dollar.” See Deborah Singmaster, “Working in Romania” in *Architects’ Journal*, 17 Aug 1995, 40. Architect Neil Leach, one of the foreign professionals who recurrently visited Bucharest after 1989 was reported to have noticed that “there is an obsession with modernism in Romania, which represents a ‘repression of memory’ and a harking back to the golden pre-communist years’. See Clare Melhuish, “Glory Days of Modernism: Romania’s Heritage of Cubist Architecture”, *Building Design*, 14 February 1997, 18. Another foreign architect explained Romanian architects drive towards a ‘golden’ past and apologized for Westerners ignorance of the modernist movement in Romania: “Romania is taking a keen interest in its own past; not the immediate past, of course, but the golden years of the 20s and 30s. . . After five decades of cultural deprivation, the revival of interest in Modernism is of paramount importance in the recovery of the nation and its representation in the wider world. There has been a fundamental weakness in our knowledge of the avant-garde in Romania . . . due to lack of scholarship, research or even the most obvious kind of publicity. This paucity of information has led to much confusion about what was there, and what is left. Thankfully . . . artifacts are resurfacing. Romania was certainly not out on a limb. . . After years in the wilderness Romanian architects, artists and historians are now looking back at this international era.” See Dennis Sharp, “Romanian Revival”, *Architectural Review*, April 1997.

35 The phrase is taken from Augustin Ioan, “Dysneyland-ul comunist” in *Arhitectura și puterea*, 68. In English in original.

36 These are the closing remarks of the book by Gheorghe Leahu, *Bucureștiul dispărut*, 106.

- 37 Ioan, "Dysneyland-ul comunist" in *Arhitectura și puterea*, 68. In English in original.
- 38 Alexandru Beldiman, "Expoziția București, starea orașului" (The Bucharest exhibition: State of the City), *Arhitectura* 1-6 (1990): 17: "This first exhibition on Bucharest after the revolution wanted to send out a cry: Beware! Martyred city! Can be healed through love and knowledge!"
- 39 Adrian Mahu, "Expoziția București, starea orașului" (The Bucharest Exhibition: State of the City), *Arhitectura* 1-6 (1990): 17.
- 40 Ioan, "După Armaghedon", *Secolul XX* 5-7 (1997): 268.
- 41 Augustin Ioan is one of the few architectural critics to appear in the Bucharest cultural world after 1989. His approach is usually theoretical and speculative, even hermeneutic. I find his texts extremely relevant to the attitudes towards Bucharest under examination here. See the bibliography for some of his main publications.
- 42 Corina Iosip, "Perspective teoretice privitoare la viitoarea structură urbană a capitalei și concursul 'București 2000'" (Theoretical perspectives on the future urban structure of the capital and the 'Bucharest 2000' contest), *București: MIM XIII* (1999): 353-354. For a discussion of the "stigma" metaphor see my PhD dissertation, section V.B.4, "From the 'Wound' to the 'Stigma'".
- 43 Octavian Paler, "Din jurnalul unui scriitor interzis" (From the diary of a banned writer), *Contrapunct*, 29 June 1990, quoted in "În loc de critică," *Arhitectura* 1-6 (1990), 190.
- 44 According to one member of the jury, Romanian participants in the international competition for the new civic center in 1995 considered the occasion appropriate for taking revenge on the socialist period: "Those witness to Ceaușescu's operation were especially eager that the solution be not merely a reasonable path for the future, but, in addition, that it exercise some retribution for the past." Barry Bergdoll, "Competition Report, Remaking Bucharest: Are Ideas Enough?" *Architectural Record*, November 1996, 50.
- 45 See previous reference 38.
- 46 Ștefan Manciulescu in "În cautarea spațiului pierdut – masă rotundă la Dalles cu ocazia a 100 de ani de la înființarea Societății arhitecților români," *Arhitectura* 3-4 (1991): 6. My emphasis.
- 47 This attitude is not specific to authors that concentrate on Bucharest only. On a much larger scale, the socialist period is commonly seen as having planned to "erase" the history of the entire country. See Dinu Giurescu, *The Razing of Romania's Past*.
- 48 Frederic Edelman, *Le Monde*, quoted in *România literară*, 20 September 1990. My emphasis.
- 49 Liviu Ianăși, "The History of the Contest" in *Bucharest 2000*, exhibition catalogue, bilingual (Bucharest: Simetria, 1997), 25. My emphasis. See also

- 50 “Both cynical and ignorant of city history and culture, the communist regime
justified the crack [the boulevard] with the call for a modern epoch.”
- 51 Ioan, “După Armaghedon” *Secolul XX* 5-7 (1997) : 268-276.
- 52 Paler, “Din jurnalul unui scriitor interzis” (From the diary of a banned writer),
Contrapunct, 29 June 1990, quoted in “În loc de critică”, *Arhitectura* 1-6
(1990), 190.
- 53 “Modestia nu era la ordinea zilei” (Modesty was not a keyword in those
times), interview with Franz Echeriu, interviewer unknown, *Arhitectura* 1-4
(1996): 59.
- 54 Beldiman, “Refacerea țesutului urban” *Secolul XX* 5-7 (1997): 79: “That
[interwar] Bucharest, became one of the European landmarks and was
dubbed ‘*Le Paris des Balkans*.’ That Bucharest had been singled out for
destruction.” Italicized text in French in original.
- 55 Ascanio Damian, an architect involved in the building of *Casa Scânteii* in
1953, found that this controversial Stalinist-style building [1990] appeared
now to be a “totally successful building compared to the People’s Monster.”
See “Urbanismul: studiu de etapă” (Urbanism: the study of a stage) minutes
of the television talk-show “Tomorrow’s Society” by Emanuel Valeriu, from
7 June 1990, in *Arhitectura* 1-6 (1990), 6.
- 56 Sorin Dumitrescu, speech at the 100th anniversary of the Romanian
Architects’ Society, Sala Dalles, 1991. The speech is summarized and quoted
in “În cautarea spațiului pierdut”, *Arhitectura* 3-4 (1991), 6.
- 57 Nero is considered to be quite mild in spirit compared to the ruthless
Ceaușescu. “It was a fatality to reach “systematization” in the extreme phase
of “development,” in the zodiacal sign of the supreme Leader-Demolisher.
Compared to him, poor Nero was in fact, as he declared himself, just an
artist, a director that staged a grand pyrotechnics show. He was a
contemplative spirit. But, in the end, as big as it may be, a fire can not
irreversibly kill a city.” Alexandru Paleologu, “Prefață: Moartea caselor”
(Preface: The Death of the Houses), in Deciu (ed.), *Povestea caselor: București,
orașul pierdut* (Bucharest: Simetria, 1999), 8.
- 58 See the above excerpt from Octavian Paler’s diary. Also, an architect, Andrei
Pandele, considered the Bucharest 2000 competition to have as its main
focus “the restructuring of the area ravished by the Pharaonic airs of the
‘Golden Epoch.’” Andrei Pandele, “Ce ne spune un participant”, *Arhitectura*
1-4 (1996), 61.
- 59 Sometimes several metaphors are coupled together: “Monumental
ensembles and Pharaonic constructions meant to immortalize a new society of
the tribal type and its dehumanized representatives.” Șerban
Popescu-Criveanu, *București: starea orașului/Bucharest: State of the City*,
exhibition catalogue, bilingual (Bucharest: 1990), 13.
- “He [Ceaușescu] tried to substitute [modern styles] with unchecked
decoration - deliberately rich, specific to the individuals lacking in culture
and discernment.” Gheorghe Leahu, *Bucureștiul dispărut*, 98.

- ⁶⁰ Sorin Dumitrescu, speech quoted in “În cautarea spațiului pierdut”, *Arhitectura* 3-4 (1991), 6.
- ⁶¹ “Still, the seven years that passed prove that although life can regenerate, ‘the new civic center’ will not be allowed to become part of normality because it is not its architecture that fascinates, but its symbolic meaning.” Ioan, “După Armaghedon”, *Secolul XX* 5-7 (1997), 269.
- ⁶² Ioan, “Dysneyland-ul comunist” in *Arhitectura și puterea*, 70. In English in original.
- ⁶³ Alexandu Paleologu, *Revista 22/Plus* 45 (1997), p. IV quoted in Ioan, “După Armaghedon”, *Secolul XX* 5-7 (1997), 269, footnote 3.
- ⁶⁴ Ștefan Augustin Doinaș referred to the “dictatorial couple”. Ștefan Augustin Doinaș, “Atracția orașului”, *Secolul XX* 5-7 (1997): 8. See full quotation below, reference 71. Many of the interviews conducted in this research mention Elena Ceaușescu as a malefic presence in the shadows, inspiring Ceaușescu’s acts of destruction. See interviews with Constantin Hariton, Cristian Moisescu, Theodor Ionescu, AIOCIMS.
- ⁶⁵ The first mayor of the city after 1989, in an interview in *Baricada*, 28 august 1990. Quoted in “În loc de critică”, *Arhitectura* 1-6 (1990), 191.
- ⁶⁶ Sorin Antohi sees the specific Romanian way of coping with the recent past (*Vergangenheitsbewältigung*) is “the idea of a general guilt without guilty parties”. See Antohi, *Civitas Imaginalis*, 245.
- ⁶⁷ In the exhibition catalogue *Bucharest: State of the City*, Alexandru George summarized all human disasters and natural catastrophes that Bucharest had suffered during the course of time. He depicted the socialist period as the “black culmination” of all these previous misfortunes of the city. See Alexandru George, *București: starea orașului/Bucharest: State of the City*, 7-8.
- ⁶⁸ The imagery used in the documentary film “Architecture and Power” produced in 1990 after a script by Augustin Ioan is typical of this metaphor of the “blind fate” that struck the city. At the end of the film, a blind and ragged man is seen rummaging among the debris, garbage and scattered blocks of stone that surrounded the recent constructions in the city’s new center. See “Architecture and Power”, based on a script by Augustin Ioan, video tape, Bucharest: Agerfilm, 1990.
- ⁶⁹ Paleologu, “Prefață: Moartea caselor” in *Povestea caselor*, 8-9.
- ⁷⁰ Ștefan Augustin Doinaș, “Atracția orașului”, *Secolul XX* 5-7 (1997): 8.
- ⁷¹ Dana Harhoiu (2001), *Bucharest: A city Between Orient and Occident*, 18.
- ⁷² Iosip, “Perspective teoretice”, *București: MIM* XIII (1999), 354.
- ⁷³ Gregor von Rezzori, “După 50 de ani”, *Secolul XX* 5-7 (1997), 256-257, my translation. Excerpt from *Gresengemurme*, (Munchen: Bertelsmann, 1994.) Translated into the English by Susan Bernofsky with the author as *Anecdote: a Summation* (New York : Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1996).
- ⁷⁴ See below reference 79.

- 75 Leahu, "Bucureștiul dispărut", 93.
- 76 Liviu Ianăși, "The History of the Contest" in *Bucharest 2000*, 25.
- 77 "Contra naturii" in the Romanian text. The author placed the expression in inverted commas to suggest it was a metaphor.
- 78 Iosip, "Perspective teoretice", *București: MIM XIII* (1999), 354. I do not agree that "Little Paris" referred to the oriental charm of the small streets, but on the contrary, to the lively boulevards of the beginning of the century, with its European shops, fashion displays and activity. In her biased remembering of the socialist project, the author conveniently forgets the strong advocacy of modern boulevards and impressive buildings that the Bucharest "mythology" had always included.
- 79 *București 2000*, 25. See also page 26: "The contest aims to reintegrate more than 450 hectares of the central zone into the heart of the city . . . [it is intended to] smooth out the connection between this area and the remaining center as well as set the targets for integration on a city level."
- 80 Project 182 by Anca Mitrache from Bucharest, Romania, *București 2000*, 236. In English in original.
- 81 The same skepticism was displayed by an interviewer questioning a member of the international committee of the contest, the Polish architect Crzysztop Chwalibog. The interviewer asked "Could the disharmony between the existing wound and the rest of the city ever be overcome?" *Arhitectura* 1-4 (1996), 53.
- 82 Leahu, *Bucureștiul dispărut*, 93.
- 83 Ioan, "Disneyland-ul comunist" in *Arhitectura și puterea*, 68. In English in original.
- 84 Șerban Cantacuzino's text was translated into the Romanian as "*Două orașe distincte*" and published in *Secolul XX* 5-7 (1997), 11-30. The editor does not provide more details of the original British source.
- 85 Adrian, "Ruptură și continuitate", *Arhitectura* 3-4 (1991), 53.
- 86 Șerban Nădejde, "București: imposibila continuitate," *Arhitectura* 1-2 (1998), 36-38.
- 87 See my MA thesis "Elites, Society and Architecture" chapter "Facing the Crisis: the Architect as a Savior", 63-64.
- 88 Urban planning as "surgery" is an old theme of European urbanism. In mid-nineteenth century France, Paris appeared as a "sick city" and Haussmann as "surgeon". "Cutting" and "piercing" became synonymous with the opening of new streets: "After the prolonged pathology, the drawn-out agony of the patient, the body of Paris was to be delivered of its illness, its cancers, and epidemics once and for all by the total act of surgery." See Anthony Vidler (1978), *On Streets*, edited by S. Anderson, quoted in David Harvey, "Paris 1850-1870," in *Consciousness and the Urban Experience*, 177-178. As presented here, Bucharest was perceived as having undergone a "maniacal" operation by a mad surgeon (Ceaușescu) and was

now a “sick body” as a result of the intervention, and not due to a lack of it (as with Paris).

89 Liviu Ianași, “The History of the Contest”, 25.

90 Leahu, “Bucureștiul dispărut”, 93.

91 *Ibid.* 106.

92 George Postelnicu *et al.*, “Mutation as Urban Challenge”, *Arhitectura* 1-4 (1996), 48.

93 “Berlin 1900-2000 - City of Architecture, Architecture of the City”, exhibition leaflet, Berlin, 23 June-3 September 2000. My emphasis.

94 An example of the many polemics surrounding the “recovery” of unified Berlin can be found in Vittorio Lampugnani and Daniel Liebeskind, “Simply Difficult: a Debate on German Architecture”, *Journal of Architecture* 1, 4 (1996), 269-282.

95 Alexandru Beldiman, “Refacerea Țesutului urban”, 279.

96 The architect was Roberto Pirzio. According to Ianași, “The History of the Contest”, 26.

97 Corina Iosip, “Perspective teoretice”, 354. My emphasis.

98 *Ibid.*

99 *Ibid.* The word “body” is in inverted commas in the original, suggesting the reference to the human body is not fortuitous and that the author had in mind the image of the medieval practice. (*pecetea megalomaniacă*)

100 Leahu, 102. My emphasis. (*pata neagră de neșters*)

101 See the second chapter of my dissertation, “Chapter II: Bucharest as a Capital City: Perceptions and Expectations as part of an Identity Struggle”.

102 The term is used in the German literature to refer to the attitude toward the past that appeared in Germany after the Second World War. The expression “mastering the past” thus originally referred mainly to the Nazi past but also more recently to the legacy of the communist regime in Eastern Germany. See Gabriel D. Rosenfeld, *Munich and Memory*; also Rudy Koshar, *From Monuments to Traces*, 4-5.

103 “Place” is a rich concept. It will be used here with the sense of “cultural landscape” or “the personality of a location”. See Dolores Hayden: “Cultural landscape [is a] combination of natural and man-made elements that comprises, at any given time, the essential character of a place.” (Dolores Hayden, *The Power of Place*, 16)

104 I follow here a new trend in human geography and urban history and see “urban landscapes as storehouses for social memories”. (Dolores Hayden, “The Power of the Place” 9) Cities are seen as “theatres of memory”. (*Idem*, 11)

105 Edward Soja used the “palimpsest” metaphor to describe the different layers of landscapes of memory in the urban history of Los Angeles. See Edward Soja, *Thirdspace, Journey to Los Angeles*, 12.

- ¹⁰⁶ The struggle to “finish with the past” is also present in Gabriel D. Rosenfeld’s account of post-Nazi Munich. See Gabriel D. Rosenfeld , *Munich and Memory*, 32.
- ¹⁰⁷ Recent scholarship on the urban history of “cultured landscapes” promotes this socially inclusive approach: “The historian who confronts urban landscapes in the 1990s needs to explore their physical shapes along with their social and political meanings. Learning the social meanings of historic places by discussing them with urban audiences involves the historian in collaboration with the residents themselves as well as with planners and preservationists, designers and artists.” (Dolores Hayden, 13)
- ¹⁰⁸ The “non-place” concept is dismissed by Dolores Hayden as misleading. A “bad” place can not be so easily dismissed as a place in its own right, with as many cultured connotations as a “good” place: “As a field of wildflowers becomes a shopping mall . . . must still be considered a place, if only to register the importance of loss and explain it has been damaged. . . Place needs to be at heart of urban landscape history, not on the margins, because the aesthetic qualities of the built environment, positive or negative, need to be understood as inseparable from those of the natural environment.” (Dolores Hayden, 18)
- ¹⁰⁹ A similar study on the memory of old places and names that still exist in a changed environment was written by Alan Pradd on Stockholm.
- ¹¹⁰ Interview with Aurelian Triscu by the author, AIOCIMS, tape III, face A, pages 37-40 in the transcript.

ABBREVIATIONS

AIOCIMS – *Arhiva de Istorie Orală a Centrului Internațional de Studii asupra Comunismului din cadrul Memorialului Victimelor Comunismului și al Rezistenței de la Sighet, Fundația Academia Civică, București*

BCMI – *Buletinul Comisiei Monumentelor Istorice*

RFE/OSA – Radio Free Europe / Open Society Archive, Budapest

RIBA – Royal Institute of British Architects

MIM – *București: Materiale de Istorie și Muzeografie, Revista Muzeului de istorie a Bucureștiului*

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MARIA RALUCA POPA

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