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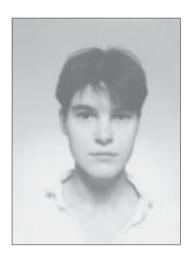# 2000-2001
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DANA JENEI
MĂDĂLINA NICOLAESCU
IOANA TUDORA
ANA MARIA ZAHARIADE

MIHAELA CRITICOS
ANDREEA MIHALACHE
GHEORGHE ALEXANDRU NICULESCU
IOANA TEODORESCU

Editor: Irina Vainovski-Mihai

IOANA TUDORA

Born in 1971, in Bucharest

Ph.D. candidate, "Ion Mincu" University of Architecture and Urban Planning
Dissertation: *Green Spaces: Structures and Urban Development Projects*
Ph.D. candidate, Université Libre de Bruxelles
Dissertation: *Modes d'appropriation et distinction dans le quartier Polona-Gemeni à Bucarest. La dynamique d'un paysage urbain*

Assistant Professor, Department of Landscape Architecture, University of Agronomic Sciences and Veterinary Medicine, Bucharest

AUPELF scholarship (2002-2003)
AUF research fellowship (2004)

Participation in workshops, symposia, and colloquiums on architecture
Numerous articles published both in Romania and abroad

CONTEMPORARY METROPOLIS: PUBLIC URBAN SPACE, COMMUNITIES AND INDIVIDUALS IN URBAN REALITY

> *Our "sophistication" hides major symptoms of cowardice centered on the simple question of taking position – maybe the most basic action in making the city. We are simultaneously dogmatic and evasive. Our amalgamated wisdom can be easily caricatured: according to Derrida we cannot be* Whole, *according to Baudrillard we cannot be* Real, *according to Virilio we cannot be* There.

> Rem Koolhaas, Bruce Mau, *S, M, L, XL*

I began this project with the intention of searching for ways to [re]create valuable public spaces through urban design and planning. From the outset, I placed particular emphasis on the issue of green public spaces, understood as a specific case of urban space, placed between the city and nature, anthropic and virgin, social and savage etc. During my research on how urban design responds to social needs and how it might generate different attitudes and ways of using urban space - thus inducing degrees of sociability – I arrived at a conclusion I was not comfortable with, and was thus compelled to make some major changes to the project, including changing its point of departure and some of the ways in which the entire argument is developed.

As a result of my direct observation of various cities, contrary to the opinion of some architects and planners, I began to question the capacity of urban design to have real impact on social structures and behavior. This loss of confidence in these "great", "rational", well-intentioned and well planned solutions came about for a number of reasons and the result

was that I redirected my inquiry towards other approaches to urban space and related issues. Mostly I began to have serious doubts about the potential success of grand-scale and controlled planning, particularly in respect of a "holistic" perspective on urban space in Romanian cities.

On the other hand, we can talk about the contemporary emergence of a general, far from friendly attitude towards the city. This can be observed at all levels: central and local administration, professionals involved in city building and planning, public media, visual arts, various sorts of literature, and citizen self-image. My argument is that we are confronted today with a shift between the "public image" of the city and its reality in terms of daily experience.

Therefore, I find myself in front of a completely inverted prospective of urban space. It is not a question of how to solve the problems related to urban space or how to build urban space. It is a question of finding out what urban space is after all, and what it should be, what problems need to be solved anyway, what are the [real] pressures and needs related to public space and by whom and how is this pressure being exerted?

I. THE CITY OF TODAY FROM A THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

Our contemporary cities are generally seen as strange organisms that we are no longer able to control. They appear fraught with problems, both new and old, that are the consequences of modern urbanism and explosive development of their territories.

Today our cities are characterized by: their ghettoization, rampant ethnic and class segregation, the dissolution of central ["downtown"] areas as political, economic, social and symbolic loci, desertification, an increase in the number of homeless, insecurity and violence on the streets, alienation of the inhabitants, and the new *blasées* characters and attitudes which characterize both the urban space and image. In all, it would seem that we are living in an age of general malfunction.

1. Architects, designers, planners - attitudes

Postmodern theory and critique, both in architecture and urbanism, denounces the lack of legibility of urban landscapes and the dullness of spaces as causes of alienation among inhabitants – as Venturi put it:

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"less is bore". The main issue in contemporary attempts to rethink urban space became *the quality of space*, "le cadre de vie". In searching for a way out of the dead-end road of the modern and rational city, an entire series of "solutions" were proposed for the recreation of a city: by urban planning and control, by "guerilla architecture";[1] involving shattering the city into pieces, or by reinforcing its traditional centric structure and recovering the historical – and melancholy-picturesque; by advancing new and novel technologies of urban utopias dominated by "independent" deterritorialized cities, or by invoking regionalism as a technique for recovering the city's identity; or by implementing a variety of 'globalizing' strategies in an attempt to "deconstruct" the specificity of this or that culture.

While deploring the loss of public life and the coming to power of an all pervasive incivility, some architects (including Oscar Newman, Andres Duany, Peter Katz, and Peter Calthorpe) attempted to resist this "aggression" by means of a *defensive urbanism*, involving a more rigorous separation between public and private through the development of "controlled neighborhoods", "gated communities" or an "urbanisme affinitaire".[2] The periphery slowly acquired a strategic position in the development of the city, the peri-urbanization coming to represent the dominant model of macro-restructuring, at least in the case of the United States. Jacques Donzelot asks whether this trend might represent a sign of city's death or just an extension of the city as we know it.[3] Common to most of these experiments on the city's open body is the transformation undergone by the figure of *Man* into the *Individual*. In other words, it is asserted that one single common need came to be replaced by myriad desires awaiting gratification.

There are two main directions to these new approaches to architecture and urbanism: "historicist" and "revolutionary". While the former holds to a real or imagined past, the latter tries to "reinvent" the city. In both approaches, space plays a chief and thus unavoidable role.

New Cities *à l'ancienne*

In this case, which is illustrated by trends such as the Italian neorationalism, the Townscape movement, Neoclassicism, *l'arhitecture urbaine*, etc., the city is viewed as the place of memory that is both collective and able to actively participate in urban transformations.[4] Going deeper into the past, to a level that is all but impossible to transcend,

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"archetypes" are rediscovered and reinterpreted to fit the city's new functions and dimensions. Why this thrust? As Charles Jenks puts it, "Eclecticism is the natural evolution of a culture with choice [...] Why, if one can afford to live in different ages and cultures, restrict oneself to the present, the local?"[5] Why not the past? Why not choose to simply "recreate the sense of historical identity and security" by preserving monuments and traditional architectural motifs and creating an "urban palimpsest" by incorporation of "historical clues".[6] This theoretical orientation, based on *typologies* and *monumentality,* is influenced by the work of Derrida and Lévi-Strauss as well as by theoretical work of architects and theorists such as Gordon Cullen, Leon and Robert Krier, Aldo Rossi, Paolo Portoghesi, and Christopher Alexander. In practice, this trend is reputed to have produced such spaces as the Pedestrian Pocket (low-rise high-density housing with mixed-use areas and mass-transit-oriented) and new monumental ensembles of which the best known are those by Ricardo Boffil (whose projects, such as Place Catalonia in Paris, smack of Mussolinian architecture). We can include here - with a grain of salt and nostalgia - the "Grands Projets" of Mitterand, as well as Stalinist and "ethnic" architecture from Eastern Europe. After all the similarities between Lunatcharsky's "right to columns" and Boffil's "Versailles for the people",[7] the taste for decorum and "classical" ornamentation ought to be noted.

In this view, public space is conceived either as more private and controlled (as in the Pedestrian Pockets), or as a representative space that attends to the "pride of the city", or that of the "people". First and foremost, these projects are envisaged either as anonymous, neutral spaces, as in the former case, or, as in the latter case, as a series of signature designs, intended more to be admired than to be used, and meant to be acknowledged as "the main event in itself", rather than host public events.[8] It is no wonder that postmodern architecture and urbanism were regarded by Huxtable as "an old pastiche". "The language of this stage-set architecture indulges in a rhetoric that still seeks to express in ciphers systemic relationships that can no longer be architecturally formulated."[9]

New Cities as *no more cities*

This trend is, on its most "aggressive side", the sheer figure of anti-architecture and anti-urbanism. For representatives of this direction, the recreation of the city requires a stage of strategically fashioned pre-

purification: firstly, urban planning was deemed guilty of excessively controlling space, destroying the diversity of habitation, and eliminating creativity.[10] At the same time, Robert Goodman called planners "soft cops",[11] while Rem Koolhaas wasted no time in announcing "the death of urbanism"[12] as such: "Liberated from its atavistic duties, urbanism, redefined as a way of operating on the inevitable, will attack architecture, invade its trenches, drive it from its bastions, undermine its certainties, explode its limits, ridicule its traditions, smoke out its practitioners".[13] Now liberated from its duties, the city is also supposed to have won its liberation from its location and time, thus opening itself up to its own temporality – the Archigram's Instant City.[14]

However, there is a "diplomatic" variant of this "no more city" view, which appears to be more open to negotiation with its opponents through interdisciplinary study and dialogue. To take the case in point, Paul Davidoff's suggestion of 1965,[15] which led to the opening and democratization of the planning system, generated a new trend in architectural thought. Therefore, it gave way to a new polemic. Consequently, in 1967 the American Institute of Planners decided to sponsor an interdisciplinary approach via a "new kind of urban generalism", whose aim was to open new vistas in architectural thought and practice beyond the physical form of space and envisaging of environmental and social issues. The immediate result was that in the make up of this approach, style became secondary to environment and the periphery became central. In planning, aesthetic considerations gave way to abstract contexts – such as economic and social issues – leading to the marginalization of architectural styles. Coincidentally, the periphery (i.e. outskirts, *banlieues*) advanced towards the center of the city – not in a "military" sense, but in a strategic one. Some see this multiplication as the loss of the elite character of the aesthetic value, an expedient formula by which to advance social agendas to which architecture becomes the servant, thus losing its former preeminence. It is claimed that "much of the transformation in the debate can be attributed to powerful feminist critiques"[16] which introduced forcefully, strengthened or recast a whole chain of dichotomies that were to occupy a preeminent place in the ensuing debates: male vs. female, workplace vs. home, public vs. private, city vs. suburb, etc. With them, and often transcending them, previously "silenced groups" – handicapped, children, old people, ethnic groups, etc. – found their own place in the new, more democratic planning system. In Ali Madanipour's words "the battle between modernist

and post-modernist thinking partly dwelt upon the dichotomy between order and disorder, […] between reason and the senses as a source of our understanding of the world."[17] The paradox here is that modernism is conceived in terms of planning being a solution for everybody, while planning also becomes an egalitarian and civic solution whose main role was to "give modernity" to everyone. Modernism saw itself as a democratic response to the social and even the ecological problems, presented to humanity as a poisonous gift by the new industrial city. In its reaction to modernism, postmodernism considered it to be the cause of major social problems, inequalities and environmental issues. We are faced, in the by now fashionable modern-postmodern debate, by what would appear to be the same claims, and a similar agenda, yet coming from two "opponents".

On whichever side of this divide, whether on the side of the 'pomods' or the 'mods', the new and polemical attitudes increasingly elicited community involvement in planning issues. It was not long before planners developed a number of community forum "techniques", and today there is a whole range of approaches to community-participation urbanism (Judy Rosener counted thirty-nine different ways of conducting such "exercises," which, she observed, are "viewed as being time-consuming, inefficient, irrational and not very productive").[18] Born of these debates on "democratic" methods, the questioning Hydra reared its head: who has the last word? "Citizen involvement" in the planning process has clearly gone beyond the age of innocence, and can now be used simply as an opportunity for manipulation or for justification and subtle imposition of any kind of "rational" project. The act of living our lives seems enmeshed with lies in the open-endedness of the question and in the fact that modernism and postmodernism are as easily converted into ideologies as they are in contemporary philosophy or sociology. Architecture has caught up with a dilemma that has already been the cause of nightmares and anxiety in others.

2. Sociologists, philosophers, analysts, anthropologists and their attitude towards space / urban space – once again from a theoretical perspective

New communication technologies, new virtual communities, and the shift experienced by public spaces from being of physical nature and form to an abstract, communicational form, brought "space" into the

midst of an unrelenting intellectual discourse. On becoming the central issue, public space saw its dimensions multiplied and its territoriality was lost together with its sensual character. In short, it found itself to be an immateriality. Above all, its defining relationship with private space was transformed into a fictive border. The two spaces became interwoven: on the one hand, public space continuously invades private space, through the media and political correctness, while, on the other hand, private space invades the public space through the abandoning of the public role in favor of a direct expression of the individual, as Richard Sennet has put it.

There are many voices in today's culture that deplore the lack of civility in our society and its fragmentation in a scattered landscape of independent and indifferent individuals. They blame the city for having destroyed the cohesiveness of the public sphere and the sense of belonging to a certain space or place. This critique is normally the product of analyses of the public life made in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which – nostalgically, rather than lucidly – invoke the period of the city's golden age. Now, it is a matter of how history is trimmed and retold. One way of reporting the past is to take the view that the nineteenth century, as a result of the expansion of the bourgeoisie and loss of power by the aristocracy, led to the death of public life and civility [Sennett, 1974]. Another way of retelling the same story, in which Baudelaire and Benjamin are unsurpassed champions, espouses the view that the "same" nineteenth century was, properly speaking, the age when the public was shaped. Neither of these views is nostalgia-free, nor are they free from the casting of a longing eye back to this not-so-remote "golden age" (even if, for Baudelaire, its goldenness was rotten and thus shinier in its availability for modern expression). However we look at it, the nineteenth century can be seen as the century of the public, if we agree that: (1) the twentieth century belonged to the masses and their lethal culture, and (2) the publicness of the eighteenth century is somewhat suspicious at best. Even Sennett admits that the "public" of the Enlightenment was no more than that of subjects acting in public spaces and imitating an otherwise private and now dying aristocracy, or, to repeat Habermas, a rising bourgeoisie acting in order to construct a public sphere and public opinion in the semi-privacy of salons, cafés and clubs.

Other voices, however, do not fall into the trap of utopian or nostalgic temptation with the same ease that is worthy of a better cause. For them, bourgeois life or a romantic aristocracy in decline are not regarded as

ideal societies. On the contrary, they maintain that a contemporary society, which is on its way to dissolution, is the ultimate stage in a natural evolution: the most important asset of our historical efforts to achieve emancipation.

Postmodern society no longer conforms to traditional perspectives of what a "real society" is. Rather, it is arranged as a collection of free people living autonomous lives, dedicated to their desire for a better life. Our age is regarded as one of *l'apres devoir*[19] – an age of freedom and (just) tolerance towards our co–citizens. Let it be said that this tolerance appears to be more of an indifferent attitude than a way of accepting and understanding the *other*(ness).

Today's society is presented as one of individual autonomy, in which our roles are multiple, adapted to a multiplicity of social models, all of them optional and equally legitimate, a society manically driven by cultural hedonism[20] for which any *askesis* would amount to posing or abnormality. In consequence, "Truth", "Justice" and "Good" etc. are regarded by some theorists as relative norms that fluctuate with different projects and contexts of our social lives.[21]

Therefore, in each place we have a different role to play and our responsibility becomes vague, relative to this role instead of our *persona*,[22] which is thus absent from social life. All this led to the idea of a total absence of the new individual form any kind of social activity. As Lipovetsky argues, even revolutions, i.e. collective battles (feminism, children's rights, urban habitat, etc.), are the direct result of changes in the development of taste and psychological traits, of the individualistic values. Thus we can consider the abandonment of the city center in favor of more controlled and more 'tranquil' areas as a (primarily) American purism directed against "pleasure and decadence", and we can see urban sprawl as social critique and not as the result of a Fordist production, economic opportunity and redefinition of the "American dream" in the industrialization perspective.

In this fragmented world, with no guarantees of moral behavior and no utopian concept of a perfect society or perfect human being, a world in which our multiplicity of roles controls daily life, it is no longer possible to create a coherent image in the public space; only "adequate" images can be created in public spaces. This results in the new image of a shattered urban space, a spatial organization conceived as a transit facility joining two points and ignoring the rest of the territory. On the other hand, the socio-spatial segregation is engendered by the quest for areas

where *the stranger* can be controlled, non-dangerous, for places where *fake meetings* (as defined by Sennet and Bauman), when they cannot be avoided, can at least take place without any consequences. Urban space is organized in semi-closed spaces for different classes, ethnic groups and generations, etc. Zygmunt Bauman describes the ideal and never achieved city as a series of fortresses with well-defended walls, connected by a labyrinthine net of "spaghetti" (streets, highways, and intersections).[23] This is why our cognitive space is constituted as an archipelago and is not of a contiguous form. Furthermore, at the same time, it becomes increasingly remote as our moral space as we become more irresponsible in terms of what concerns the space. The aesthetic space, usually represented through affection and experience, and which normally arrests our attention, is transformed, due to the lack of real subjectivity, into an imposed space,[24] like a representation of our environment (or its occultation or promotion), as an "unreal" space, proposed from outside.

Meanwhile, the development of the individualist culture we are witnessing, constitutes a negation of individuality as such. We need to be part of a group, to be recognized somewhere as "one of us", to represent and to be self-represented by a style, by an "attitude". We are living in a perfect dichotomy of the self and "I". While the "I", as an exterior form, as brand and as public image is exacerbated (even aligned with a kind of assumed "difference"), the self is, by the same mechanism of affiliation, annihilated, denied and transformed into a self shared by the group. The associativity has gained unforeseen dimensions: for example, the desire to be part of a group can determine ex-parents to persist in their role of summoners, years after their children have left school.

No mater how atomized our societies might seem to be, and how deserted our public spaces appear, they still function as civic spaces (sometimes the very absence of civic space can function as civic space), they are keeping their symbols (though sometimes this can mean denying and negating the proposed symbol). Public spaces still serve as locations of protests, celebrations or public political commentary. They can still maintain their civic dimension: for example, as long as the Parisian students march down St. Michel, demonstrations take place in front of the Brandenburg Gate, in Tiananmen Square or Piata Universitîţii. For as long as governments continue to exercise the control over public spaces as a means to dominate society, we cannot really talk of the death of public spaces in their civic dimension.

3. An economic view: quantity and quality of the city

In the wake of modernity, the city dwelling can be considered to have been dominated by economic demands in an unprecedented way. That the city was both generated by and a generator of the economy – a territorial center that controls the market and manufacturing – is more than a mere platitude. However, industrialization brought with it new societies, landscapes and rhythms. Modernity was concerned with quantitative expansion and technological innovation in building production. This was in part due to the post-war reality, but also the result of new architectural and political ideologies.[25]

> "The social functions of urban life, political and economic, private and public, the assignments of cultural and religious representation, of work habitation, recreation and celebration could be *translated* into use-purposes, into functions of temporally regulated use of designed spaces. However, by the nineteenth century at the latest, the city became the point of intersection of a different kind of functional relationship. It was embedded in an abstract system, which could no longer be captured aesthetically in an intelligible presence".[26]

Today's city is considered to be more the result of economic changes and rules than of any other interactions. Spatial structure is generated by social segregation based on economic status and determines the way services are developed (schools, commerce, culture, etc.). The widening social gap, the restructuring trend in the labor market, mass culture, and affinities-based urbanism are considered the new forces within the city, the generating vectors of urban structure and space configuration.[27] The life in new affinities-determined suburbs is a question of personal choice. There is choice of location within the city, i.e. the choice of a personalized territorial structure within the urban space. Then there is also choice in terms of the facilities at that location and their quality. And finally, there is the choice of self-image through architecture. "Only the very poor, via public housing, are dominated by architects' values. Developers build for markets rather than for one man and probably do less harm than authorial architects would do if they had the developers' power".[28] The post-fordist era introduced a new qualitative dimension – "le cadre de vie"[29] – as a central issue in the social conflicts that were until recently oriented towards categorial and quantitave problems (this perspective can still be found in trade union movements). Henry Lefebvre[30] considers the urban

social landscape to have been transformed into a landscape of class conflicts and exploitation and the urban phenomenon to be economically determined. He also describes postmodern society as a society that in order to survive has turned against industrialization and begun a quest for the values of pre-industrial city, mainly as a means of reconstructing the central role of public space.[31]

Nonetheless, the main transformation of the city as a consequence of economic imperatives is the transformation of the city itself into a commodity. Today's city is the most important consumer product and its image is the most important factor in attracting new investment and businesses. Though not up for sale, the city still obeys the rules of the market. Choosing a city is no longer a problem of territory or accessibility, it is first and foremost a matter of image. Seduction is the main urban service. Architecture and urbanism are but iconographies of the new city show.[32] Furthermore, by following market rules, the city is renovated by private developers in the rhetoric of "rolling back the state", or in property-led projects (e.g., Canary Wharf and Broadgate at Liverpool Street Station in London, and Battery Park in New York). On one hand, this creates a new segregation in the city and a new desertion of the affected areas, that are subsequently occupied by offices and services in accordance with market logic. This lack of housing causes entire areas to become "temporary" or daylight areas.[33] On the other hand, however, we can talk about the globalization in city making as urban development has become an industry like any other and most developers work in big cities (e.g., Olympia & York – the developers of both Canary Wharf and Battery Park.) The standardization of urban landscapes, started by the International Style, is being continued by this globalization trend in real estate and development and is spreading similar concepts of space and urban form more than any other form of communication and is normally considered the most important factor in this standardization of lifestyles.[34] Culture has been transformed into economic geography.

II. PUBLIC DISCOURSE AGAINST THE CITY

Where is it coming from and where is it leading to?

Different analyses, documentary films, evening news journals, statistics and studies talk of the city as a place dominated by danger, insecurity and violence, and opinions of this kind are yet more virulent in respect of

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suburbs and the housing estates characterized by the ubiquity of the gray apartment blocks. If the city, its public space, is a stage, as Richard Sennett considers, then the star of the show today is *disorder*. Alongside ethnic and class segregation and urban sprawl, the urban riots of the 1960s and 1970s seem to be the central figures of this anti-urban[ity] discourse.

Moreover, one of the main aspects of this sort of media propaganda is the shift of philosophical discourse (abstract, objective, exterior) and the professional discourse (practical, involved, interior) on urban habitat and urban life. At the same time, these discourses are shifting from a daily reality *in situ*. While the former tends to be more pessimistic and to present the marginality (socially constructed and spatially represented) in darker colors, the latter is based on a more constructive attitude and on the quest for practical solutions on an urban and social level.[35] On the other hand, these "official" discourses are doubled by an identity construction discourse, influenced, if not generated by the first discourse, that revalorize and assume this negative image. This "second hand" city – as the periphery tends to be regarded – has begun to banish itself from a normal life, from a normal relationship with urban space; it seems to refuse to create its own places, landmarks, its own "positive" territoriality. It seems that even memory is bound to ugliness and uniformity and that it is impossible to introduce here any kind of significance. Now, even the inner prospective is as negative and accusative as the external. It is like a vicious circle of condemning and self-damning.

And simultaneously with the propagation of this vision of the peripheral inner city neighborhoods as areas of insecurity and perpetual danger, as places where the only events that take place are murder, rape and robbery, security networks were developed in the central, "civilized" areas. Security patrols, airborne patrols, security cameras, public guardians and private guardians, etc., all these measures only serve to emphasize in a quite artificial way the center-periphery differences and simultaneously blame "the outsiders" for the "desperate situation" of a city under terror. He who is not one of us should not be with us, sharing the same space. So we find ourselves in a vicious circle – the "incivility" requires security measures that provoke, in defiance, greater violence, and hence heavier measures and so forth. Not just a circle, but a downward spiral.

If, in most social analyses we find an over-valorization of eighteenth and nineteenth century societies in contrast to the contemporary individualism and state of dispersion of the communities, in urban planning

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theories and analyses we find a thread to follow in terms of admiration for the "architecture of reason and order". But what does reason mean?[36] Is reason order, symmetry, and straight lines? Is pure geometry or abstract mathematics the only, or the most pervasive form of reason? Reason means a cause, the justification of a gesture. So a city of reason will be – at least from this "reasonable" point of view – a city inside which we can read its construction as an endless chain of causality other than "my will, my image, my power"! It will be a city where we will be able to find everything in its most natural and logical place and developing its most expectable and logical relations (whatever "logical" means in these times). As Leonard Duhl idealistically said: "La morphologie physique de chaque type de communauté exprimait les besoins psychologiques et les systèmes de valeurs de ses membres."[37]

Thus, one of the main tasks in our attempt to find new ways of [re]building our cities is to revise our attitude in respect of what is rational: to find what is really necessary, justified, logical, not from a geometrical point of view, but from the point of view of the city in itself. What might a city in itself be? What is the essence of a city? It can be found in its people and their lives, in its form: "When we deal with cities we are dealing with life at its most complex and intense. Because of this there is a basic aesthetic limitation to what we can do with cities: *a city cannot be a work of art.*"[38]

III. URBANISM IN TODAY'S CITY – IN PRACTICE

The practice of urban construction and reconstruction has two main lines of force of development: firstly, the recovery and revival of urban areas valorized as business centers and commercial areas, and secondly, the reconfiguration of the urban habitat in order to create "defensible spaces".[39] All of this involves reduced public investment in government building programs. The main issues of the new urban projects are *amenity*, *security* and – under the influence of some important critics such as Jane Jacobs or Krier – the *mixed uses* for revitalizing the areas and against out-of-town commercial development.[40]

Rehabilitation and revival projects for new commercial urban areas are mainly concerned with historical centers or abandoned ex-industrial areas close to the center, most of which are protected sites. The first of these we will call a "flagship" development, dominated by visual and

financial goals. The common features of these interventions are: functionality orientated towards offices, commerce and culture; strong symbolic revival; visual diversity and use of public art; the signature of the architect for publicity (e.g., Richard Rogers' Centre Pompidou in Paris or Thames-South in London, Rem Koolhaas' Euralille, the attempt to commission Richard Meier for the Opera de la Bastille in Paris, Herzog's and de Meuron's Tate Modern, Ricardo Bofill's Place de Catalogne in Paris, or Bernard Tschumi's La Villette), and the implementation of "manifesto" projects. This "historical eclecticism" often tries to rebuild the city centers as spaces of memory, to recreate them as fundamental spaces of the *new traditional city*, to recompose urban spatial structures based on plazas, squares, colonnades, radial nuclei - in order to assure "a sense of historical identity and security" as Gleye puts it.[41]

However, these efforts are developed in a strictly formal plan that avoids the social plan and the awareness of its transformations (as far as it is possible to create a break between these two dimensions of urban space). This recovering on a "linguistic" level of a geometrical morphology cannot find its meaning in the absence of the user. Such absence is in part due to the exile of citizens to the outskirts, to residential zones, and in part to the profound change in the city users and their demands. We can now talk about a re-signification in architecture-city relations. The prestige, the public image, the brand, and even the artist convey the most important messages of this new architectural language.

In terms of housing projects there are manifestations yet more complex than this. However, the central issue seems to be that of *security,* thereby replacing the *amenity* of the 1970s and 1980s. That said, large-scale public investment and housing projects have also made possible the creation of private-public consortia and small community projects that involve inhabitants in the planning. Decentralization and exodus to the suburbs completes the picture of 1990s housing.

Two points of view are relevant to security as a main concern in neighborhood planning. The first of these, supported by theorists such as Alice Coleman or Oscar Newman, proposes "the transfer of the communally-used space to private ownership"[42] and a clear separation between the private realm of the house and public functions, in parallel with heightened security measures (walls, fences, surveillance cameras, no entry signs, security patrols, etc.). The second point of view, originating from Jane Jacobs' vision, states the necessity of a strong relation between public and private spaces, in which the latter is seen as the *controller* of

the former. The only real control on society is society itself, and the only secure urban space is that which is used and popular.[43]

With the first vision emerged the concept of *defensible space environment* and defensive urbanism, in a hierarchy at the top of which was situated the *golden ghettos*[44] project, a kind of elective tripartite urbanism: *lifestyle* communities – focused on the search for nature and sport facilities, with emphasis placed on *loisir*; *prestige* communities – built on social segregation and looking to express the *difference*; *security zone* communities – the gated communities within closed, guarded and controlled access precincts. These communities represent spaces of a new unsociability that bring together an underclass with no awareness of class and which does not regard itself as part of a society.[45] Some solutions with a stronger social dimension were proposed and built around the *sustainable communities* concept. A more "urban" solution is the Pedestrian Pocket, proposed by the New Urbanism movement, which focuses on environmental sustainability and *community building*, but which, despite its declared "anti-CIAM" attitude, produces rather similar results: separated pedestrian walkways, green amorphous spaces only with better details, monotonous housing, and a rustic atmosphere. The second - Transit-oriented Development - is an adaptation of the Garden city concept for new suburban neighborhoods and includes mixed-use centers and mixed-type housing connected by a fast transit system.[46] Both participate in the suburbanization, either on the level of urban structure or of urban life(style).

The characteristic elements of the new urbanism in our cities today are to be identified in the creation of a new and rich image based on prestigious buildings, in the presence of public art on the sites of large public rehabilitation projects of urban cores, and in the search for a new level of comfort based on isolation and security in the housing development.

Public art – or art in the city

One characteristic of urban contemporary developments is the transformation of public space into a sort of museum. From the point of view of artists, this is normally seen as liberation from the spaces and conventions of art galleries and as an opportunity for a "real" relationship with the public. From the point of view of the developers and urban designers, however, this is viewed as a means for regenerating and creating place identity. Public art has been used for (re)vitalization of

anonymous and un-appropriated spaces, of which La Défense esplanade is one of the best-known examples. However, liberation of art from the exhibition curators is followed by adaptation to the developers' demands, which normally tend toward "neutral" and unrepresentative works of art, despite the "democratic" promotion made together with the local community. The relationship with the "framing" architecture is also ignored in most cases, both from the point of view of visual coherence and social context.[47] The idea of a permanent decryption of public art in various codes of mass culture is a weak one as the sculptures are most of the time perceived as "parachuted" or formal and thus only become urban furniture, a rabble of stupid expressionless objects instead of the desired artistic panacea. "The street is dead. That discovery has led to frantic attempts at its resuscitation. Public art is everywhere – as if two deaths make a life."[48]

A strong shift in the discourses and interests of the artists has been noticeable since they view themselves as social critics and constructors of new patterns of socialization,[49] but they have to respond to the developers' inclination towards "soft art", and face the indifference of inhabitants, who find in these "objects" a "terrain" in which to express their artistic energies. Frederic Jameson has suggested that "the political relationship between works of art and the societies they are located in can be determined according to the difference between replication (reproduction of the logic of that society) and opposition (the attempt to establish the elements of a utopian space radically different from the one in which we reside)."[50]

We can consider the presence of public art in the city as having been there *for ever*. What is still particular to this mixture of space and art is, despite the claims of some authors, its incapacity to create character and sense, to symbolize space from a social point of view. Some artists consider that the art of the cathedrals or of the architecture of other public buildings is artisanal and repetitive and, by way of contrast, regard contemporary public art as capable of subverting the previous currents and of creating a cultural awareness. However, the "old" works of art, embodied in buildings, do still function as symbols of cities. Victor Hugo metaphorically equated monuments with books of stones: "Le symbole avait besoin de s'épanouir dans l'édifice. L'architecture alors se développa avec la pensée humaine; elle devint géante à mille têtes et milles bras, et fixa sous une forme éternelle, visible, palpable, tout ce symbolisme

flottant".[51] And modern public art does not find its way into public consciousness and does not represent landmarks in urban space.

One example of the presence of art in urban space and its involvement in urban renewal is given by the re-conquering of derelict areas for artists' studios. Artists and students accept living in slums and poor areas, while, at the same time, they recreate a sense of socialization and even spur economic growth. This tradition of transferring abandoned neighborhoods to artists has a long history (e.g., from 1745, when the Luxembourg Palace in Paris was offered to Charles Parrocel, and after the French Revolution, when Parisian churches and monasteries were occupied by artists, to the huge success of the Andy Warhol's Factory in New York in 1950s and 1960s). Today, the same phenomenon can be seen in the recovery of derelict industrial areas (e.g., in Liverpool, where James Stirling's Tate Gallery was built in the Albert Dock, or in Marseilles, where the Le Panier minorities ghetto was transformed into an artistic district).[52] This new art districts are opened to the public through temporary exhibitions and installations, thus transforming the city into a real stage on which inhabitants can make and maintain contact with art in most significant ways and can experience events in the presence of art, instead of ignoring it in their daily contexts.

The quest for individual comfort

Postmodern society is defined by individualism, by the desire to attain a better (personal) life,[53] by a life devoted to the quest for (personal) comfort. But what is comfort? Comfort is not a new task in our lives; it has been one of the main driving forces of our entire evolution. What appears new is its reduction to an almost entirely physi(ologi)cal dimension. A bigger car, a bigger house, a bigger garden (big = beautiful = comfort = prestige = happiness = etc.), a longer holiday in a "more exotic" place (no matter how artificial, crowded or agitated), and a new fur coat; all can become sources of our comfort. It is as if all we need is to have a full plate and sit in a leather fauteuil in front of 50 - 100 television channels. This *quantitative* vision of the *quality* of life is also one of the main sources of the public-private dichotomy. Private space is that which assures comfort, security, pleasure and relaxation, while public space is a space of transit, uncomfortable disorder and sometimes danger. The quest for city pleasures, for the ontological experience of the city and urban space as the place of events and *situations*, is replaced by

immersion in wild adventures brought into the domestic realm through the media. The fear of outside experience, the obligatory detour on our way home to avoid the "ugly parts" of the city, the lack of communication, insecurity, the permanent felling of being misunderstood, and the lack of a place of your own, all of these do not seem to be considered uncomfortable. The mechanical and almost essential refuge taken behind the front door is not regarded as a restriction of our existence, but as a blessing. However, the general public will almost always stand behind the traditionalists. In the public eye, architecture is about comfort, shelter, bricks and mortar. For those for whom architecture is not necessarily about comfort and *Geborgenheit*, but is also about advancing society and its development, the shock device may prove indispensable […] Architecture in the megalopolis may be more about finding unfamiliar solution to problems than about the quieting, comforting solutions of the establishment community.[54]

IV. PUBLIC, SOCIETY, COMMUNITY AND THEIR SPACES / URBAN TERRITORIES

What has become of public space in this society that is dominated by the individual and individualism? What are its limits and its features? A (re)definition of public space in the context of postmodern society is still difficult to set about due to the fluid and continuous redefinitions of spatial relations of which the only one that seems certain is the opposition between public and private. What can be considered a leitmotiv in urban and social theories and studies is a strange revalorization of rural and suburban spaces, almost tribal spaces, as melting pots of sociability, while the cities and their "no more public" spaces in particular are suffering from an inevitable and perpetual devaluation in this comparison with the far more "private" social territories.[55]

From a "technical" point of view, this definition of public space is made in terms of opposition to private space (that which is not private is therefore public) and focuses on two aspects:

- the legal – in terms of what is the public domain and what is the private domain;
- the functional – where there is public access and where access is controlled, such that the space, whether public domain or not, functions as a private.

Common sense dictates that "public space" should denote the system of open areas – streets, squares, plazas, parks and green areas. However, not all open spaces are public, and not all public spaces are open, as in *alfresco*. Kevin Lynch posed the questions as to how open spaces are, to what extent do they come under the control and use of the city's inhabitants, and how accessible they are from both a physical and psychic point of view.

At any rate, this common sense definition is superfluous and inaccurate so long as we are not able to equate the open and the public. Public space may not only be closed and non-urban. It may also be non-spatial from a geometrical and physical point of view. So we can have a wide range of visions of urban spaces from "all types of space between the buildings in towns and other localities […] geometrically bounded by a variety of elevations",[56] to visions like that of William Mitchell, who [re]creates in "Soft cities" in the virtual world an entire urban structure with neighborhoods, streets, communities and frontiers, and an urban life in E-Topia.[57] The bottom line is that public space is a "problem". It requires (a) resolution(s).

Public space and its publicness should be regarded from the point of view of segmentary social character (I am not referring here to the segregation phenomena, but to the variability of the different group scales with no negative connotation). We are talking about urban public space as a social product and about society as being in decline. In other words, we are talking about the sociability or un-sociability of a territory: what, in fact, is society when regarded in its relationship with space? Can we still regard a society as a whole and expect it to be represented by its entire territory? What do we actually mean by the practice of the city, the spatial practice? What does it mean to produce or generate a territory through daily practice? And who is producing it, and by following which strategy or logic? "Le terme de *projet transactionnel* signifie d'un côté la stratégie locale de la construction du territoire, car le territoire est génère à partir de l'espace, étant le résultat d'une action conduite par un acteur syntagmatique – acteur réalisant un programme".[58] Can society (abstract and general in its definition) be considered as an active actor in the (concrete and specific) urban space? If we can view urban sociability as a relational system developed in several parallel plans then we have:

- one-to-one relationships, the I and you level, that are still asocial, since the society in *sensu stricto* is rooted in a tripartite universe;[59]

- family and intimate group relations, based on common interests and desires, a sociability which is usually displayed in the private space;[60]
- territorial community relations determined by sharing the same daily space and place between private and public. Community's identity can be built on a rejection of the *other*, on an affirmation of and difference from outsiders, or on tolerance, mixture and affirmation of inner similitude despite the mixture (citizenship);
- de-territorialized community relations - the most common in modern society, shaped by common interest or self-expression and its transitory/temporary character;
- inter-communities, regional, national relations, etc. – the "large society" constructed by political means and a public official discourse.[61]

We should expect to see the same distinctions working on a territorial level; and while the "extreme" cases are relatively clear, the in-between cases are rather less so, because of the inappropriate definition of community (and the more or less implicit territoriality). For the community can be considered to range from one apartment block inhabitant, to a neighborhood, and to the city society itself.

In the traditional perspective public urban space is seen mostly as civic space, where the plazas, squares and main symbolic places of the city are regarded as target spaces, as "a destination, a purpose-built stage for ritual and interaction",[62] and used consequently for the hosting of "structured or communal activities" (festivals, riots, celebrations, bullfights, etc.). However, this vision of public space overlooks our daily life and our daily relations with(in) the city. This implies reducing public life to a series of meaningful events and using public space as an urban tool for arbitrating social conflicts, organizing "social harmony", or as a forum for democratic discussion.

There are two problems associated with this "polis"-inspired view of public urban space. One concerns the street, which is normally seen and conceived of as transit space, "spaghetti", corridor, and other kinds of socio-fugal spaces. On the one hand, the street is considered as not capable of becoming a *place* due to its non-homogeneous character and because, even if a given street has a strong visual identity, this still doesn't lead to a high imageability.[63] On the other hand, the street is perceived as an uncontrolled and unsafe space that is in conflict with

inhabitants and is the exclusive place of the automobile. The corridor street with sidewalks, invaded by commerce and suffocated by housing, which had been eliminated in Le Corbusier's city, is almost considered as a panacea of social disorders by some, such as Jane Jacobs, who sees in "streets and their sidewalks, the main public places of a city, its most vital organs".[64] What is certain is that streets are a part of our lives and part of public space. They can be as civic as any other place and should no longer be considered the realm of the automobile, only accidentally traversed by people. Entering a street can signify a revolution or simply an encounter with a neighbor. To walk on the street means not only passing from one place to another, but while wandering we think, forget, dream etc., it is a time for getting rid of troubles and daily burdens.[65] In spite of all the theories in favor or against the street as a place for gathering and hanging out, the fact remains that the street is becoming increasingly absent from our lives. With the exception of pedestrian streets and zones, all other parts of the network are mostly given over to spaces of transit, of quick and directed, but indifferent movements. Grouping of the commercial spaces around plazas, inner plazas and inside malls etc. is leading to the disappearance of the street as a vivid space and, consequently, to a growth in feelings of insecurity.

The second problem comes in the form of the development of *loisir* as the other figure of public life. If the urban agora mentioned above, the space of public *action*, is related to the city as *polis* where *all citizens* share in a community and tradition, this second kind of public space, as one of *distraction*, is related to the city as *cosmopolis*, as the new Babylon, where the inhabitants belong to changing and shifting groups, where communities cease to be connected to a particular location, and more a way of expressing difference rather than belonging. These spaces of *having a good time* are at the same time spaces of public life and social contact without being public places. They are what Ray Oldenburg calls tertiary[66] spaces, as opposed to house, office and school as primary and secondary spaces. These are places such as taverns, beauty salons, bowling halls, bars and cafes. Further, we can consider this tertiary space as the cultural signature of a city or country, just as we know the English pub, the French bistro, the Parisians cafes, the German beer cellar, etc.; all of which are associated with various city cultures and forms.

These *loisir* public spaces, in response to new social behavior, form part of the transformation of the city into a consumer object; and the new, adapted urbanism – as image construction – has brought with it

what can be considered as the main tendency of public-private space relations in urban space: the privatization of public spaces, a privatization that has several forms and degrees which we can observe:

- from the perspective of property, as a concentration of what was always a public ceremony – the stroll, the *flânerie*, the losing of time – in private spaces such as malls, halls, etc.;
- from a "behavioral" perspective, as the occupation of public spaces by segregated groups, gangs and the homeless, who use these spaces as their private spaces and control public access;
- from the perspective of control, as control of public spaces by a private agent (though not by Jane Jacobs's socially aware *eye upon the street*[67]) as, for example, in Battery Park, New York, and many other spaces where security is assured by private guards and private companies, which will lead to the control of access to public space.

As a result of these changes we can talk of a disneylandization of public spaces, of an ersatz architecture which "draws citizens away from a democratic, public realm into plastic temples of consumption".[68] Cities thus became collections of "invented" spaces from all times and spaces, with no authenticity, but simply the products of tourism and commerce.

Another aspect that seemingly does not concern public space is that of the community involving politics of housing development, castigated as inefficient and futile. The main limitation of these politics doesn't necessarily come from the way they take people's opinions into consideration, which is mostly a problem of constructing dialog and of the interests of planners and architects. It comes from the fact that all of this urban politics represent ways of defining community, and, consequently, its space. Usually this auto-definition of community space is made by dint of strong opposition to public space, not necessarily from the point of view of territorial relations (clear delimitations, etc.),[69] but from a psychical and behavioral point of view, by social distinction, encouraging refusal of the presence of the other, and by "defensive tools", which lead to a "privatization" of private space.

Complex security measures dominate both private and public space, almost as if they exist as defense against each other. Instead of ensuring measures of "civil" sociability, they actually discourage attempts at a possible re-conquering and re-appropriation of the space. In fact, they tend to disregard the "humanistic" aspects of living and, being influenced by economical and financial imperatives, propose a visual recovery of the areas in question and a simultaneous desertion thereof by evacuating

the "indigenous" population to facilitate replacement of habitable spaces by modern offices and, in some lucky cases, office apartments. Thus a normal, real, natural and nonstop city is replaced by a "nine-to-five" city, while an entire mélange of people is similarly replaced by Yuppies. This is a new enclave, in which misery and disorder are replaced by design and emptiness.

Nonetheless, we still find a vivid city, full of colors, of people gathering and hanging out; we still find small "agoras" where men debate and relive (even more energetically than the "real thing") the most recent soccer game. We still find a very active civic space of symbolic territories, determined by political and civic use of public spaces, their being deeply linked in people's *public mind*.[70]

V. ROMANIAN CITIES AND THE AUTOCHTHONOUS SOCIAL "REALITY"

Despite the differences in the controlling forces, both in the East and the West the modernist project resulted in a perverted version of the same rational and hygienist model: an anonymity of urban structure and space, a continuous gray, un-differentiated, generic, standardized city independent of culture. The suburb, *la banlieue, le quartier dortoir*, the *satellite city* – all are the same everywhere. They have the same inner hierarchy, the same dull concept. Our cities today are spaces/territories equally dominated on social, symbolic and visual levels by the apartment block housing estates.

Fifty years of communism and their consequences for the cities

The new Romanian "city of peoples" was built either as an overnight effort (for which the Romanian expression is "*hei-rup*") in the shadow of some huge industrial facility, or by way of the bulldozer on old city's streets in a quest for their shy modernity. Never completely urban, never really modern (despite the huge efforts made to succeed in the modernity project), and never inhabited by an urban population, the post-war Romanian city developed in a rather chaotic way, emerging from a mixture of systematic planning and *ad hoc* administrative solutions.

As a huge heap of apartment blocks and nationalized old houses (where they survived), Romanian cities have been a cluster of no-man's-lands

for the last 50 years. Their public spaces were just a nightmare image of "enthusiastic" meetings, in the past or still to come, opportunities for the celebration of socialist accomplishments. Deserted concrete spaces, surrounded by insipid and depressing "convex" buildings, even the old plazas, that have now become anonymous, were no longer able to find their color and sense of existence. People experienced their "publicness" in their own private spaces. Daily existence struggled to find tranquility and freedom from the ubiquitous and always watching eye of Big Brother. Public and community life was strangulated even within circles of friends, something normally considered private. However, in places regarded as sources of decompression and self-recovery, even in what was supposed to be private, without a mask, no one was able to rid themselves of the "role". Even private space contained strangers and suspicion. The alternative, the choice of giving up the mask, was similar to assuming a kind of ultimate risk.

Daily communication was flooded with codes, with fake dissidence and childish feuds meant to impress. Every film watched "on video", every joke, every salami sandwich eater was a small act of "resistance". The bar, the cinema, the plaza, the store – all were hidden, reconstructed, reformed in private apartments. Everything was public and private at the same time. The city streets were nearly always empty, the whispers of public-private life could be heard from behind dark windows (otherwise the power cuts would always be greeted with cheers and yells by the children "out to play" – at least this is how some remember their childhood, when every aberration was a reason for grandiose adventure). All were strangers but friends simultaneously. There was a superimposition of a permanently suspicious attitude with solidarities of survival, both of which were generalized and petty. Equality was achieved: equally isolated, equally exposed, equally closed in concrete boxes, equally autistic. The few "actions" performed in public space were merely singular outbursts with no pretensions to coherence.

Communist urbanism is difficult to describe in terms of a normal planning. It was more of a developing strategy, a pathetic demonstration of our appetite for modernity (from an Eastern prospective) and the desired representation of state strength and will.[71] The result was a city represented more by the figures of the five-year plans, than by "flesh and bone". Public space, never very important in Romanian urbanism and represented up to that time by a handful of places full of automobiles (such as Piața Romană, Piața Universitîţii, Piața Victoriei and Șoseaua Kiseleff in

Bucharest) and some streets crowded with people (such as Calea Victoriei and Blvd. Magheru, again in Bucharest), became the almost standard "civic center", ersatz huge soviet spaces. The emblematic *cappo d'opera* of the time was (and is still held to be) the Palace Hall Place, seen as accomplishment of the modern dream. Typically, there was no place for people "inside", the "place" being just a way towards the foyer, a space of transit in a time when gathering was an offence. However, from the point of view of "national style" (as the local variant of historicist postmodernism) the crown was taken by Satu Mare town hall and provides us with a "lesson" in the concret(e)izing of popular heritage in "folkloric hysteria".[72] The rest consist of prefab images in tacky, dull concrete, with some attempts at decoration. We find the same thing everywhere, the same "identity" image and message stating that we are "proud of who we are".[73]

Twelve years of democracy and its new constructions

Unfortunately, after twelve years, we still do not know where we are, or where we are going. Reality is changing too rapidly, yet it is far too slow in achieving our complex goals. In saying it is changing too quickly, I mean to say that we cannot be certain of the things that remain constant, nor of whether the decisions we take today will not be abandoned tomorrow for being "no longer adequate" for the changed conditions. It is too slow because even if no element remains unchanged, the complex of factors seems to remain (nearly) "as before" and we are still living with the feeling that there is nothing we can do or change – a fatalist view that is, however, very mediated and fashionable and at the root of all our nervous breakdowns.

We are now shifting in the opposite direction, being in possession of everything with no form of discernment. The "I've built my house as I wanted to or as I knew how to"[74] has changed to an "I do what I want and where I want to". This is not related to the ability of the administrative and justice systems to maintain order in public places. It is something that comes from within us, is related to our capacity to order our affairs, and from this inner space to go on to negotiate our external territories in terms of what and how, and with whom we share them. It is related to our capacity for leaving the "rurban" existence and becoming real urban people.

The post-revolution city is currently in a state of perpetual transformation, with no clear and coherent (visible) tendencies. Populations are migrating from city to city, i.e. between cities, but without creating a new demographic structure. The only phenomenon with some coherence and certainly with a character of generality is the permanent retracing of the public, i.e., private delimitation. It is a phenomenon older than democracy, that relies on the construction of a "home" in the concrete boxes called houses and apartments. The inhabitants are redefining their habitats, they are (re)building places, and are tending to occupy spaces of the city that are *not theirs*. Space is controlled through new and continuous negotiations of the I and the other, of micro and macro territories. Here we can take note of the following:

- "publicization" of private space through public access functions is achieved in the private space of the apartment or the house. There are offices, shops, hairdressers, drugstores etc., all of which are improvised in private spaces and have the strange atmosphere of something between a real service space and the kitchen of a "female householder";

- privatization of public spaces into private access spaces is effected by the frenetic extension of the habitat into the streets and interstitial spaces, never really used as public. From the simple parked automobile that blocks the sidewalk, to entire streets blocked by a more powerful citizen in search of his own tranquility (e.g. Rozmarin Street in Bucharest, which is controlled by a guard from the Ministry of Defense at the request of a private civilian);

- privatization of the public spaces into public access spaces is also effected by chains of kiosks, bars, terraces, small retail shops, and clusters of market stalls which occupy sidewalks, squares, green spaces and even pedestrian streets;

All of these are forms of reciprocal invasions of space in a complete ignorance of any notion of what is "ours" or "theirs", or of what is private, common, community or public – all categories that never seem to function as they should.[75]

Further to the chaotic transformation of public spaces we also find:

- privatization of the private space to be the root phenomenon of those mentioned above. The closed balcony with windows, *other* types of door, the different garage, the pink wall, huge opaque fences, the yellow façade with broken mirror and red roof, a

porcelain dog in front of the door with lions at the gate, house minarets, the overwhelming modern high-tech apartment block near the little old merchant's house falling apart etc., all forms of [re]affirmation of the owner's personality, of delimitation of private space, at times aggressive in nature. The inhabitant is recomposing, extending, enclosing and adorning his property, but also redefining its functions and, above all, abusing his property as might be done with any possession.

All these phenomena and tendencies of retracing space are connected by the [re]definition of the private and public that is related to the following essential aspects of Romanian space:

▪ the "historical" absence of the property,[76] an absence which is equally "active" in both rural and urban space and which was enriched and empowered in communism when property was regarded as a new "original sin" from which all inequalities and injustice emerge. To own a house, a place, was, in the few cases when it was still possible, castigation in front of a rootless and acculturated society. The absence of private space made construction of public space impossible. Hence the cities, along with all other spaces of all scales and sizes, were no-man's-lands, and not places at all at the end of the last "communist era";

▪ the collective habitat. I am not referring here to the "properly urban" collective habitat, which became in the 1920s and 1930s a sign of modernity and emancipation, but to the more collectivist habitat found in the small industrial cities built virtually overnight, or in the huge ensembles present in any big city; to the collective habitat that became during communism (and still is today) the dominant habitat – albeit not necessarily in terms of numbers, but in respect of image and feeling. A peculiar domesticity developed in these apartment blocks, in a form of residence which reached a new "inner complexity", similar to the complexity of the street in terms of life and function. There was a level of conviviality as of a public space, merchandise exchanges occurred in the proximity of normal commercial activity, the staircase became both public and private space, play area and living room, street and lumber box. Again, public-private differentiation was blurred. The blocks of flats succeeded in achieving the utopia of all cities and planners' dreams: the creation of a tolerant and almost natural, social heterogeneity. These "*quartiers-dortoir*" are now becoming

problematic in the presence of unemployment and poverty; otherwise, they could (though not always) be unexpected places of real sociability.

While the old city districts (which escaped the bulldozer) are slowly gaining a new and maybe even more eclectic and strange image as a result of new insertions, usually in a completely different architectural language than their surroundings, the "residential" areas are still in the "bedroom" phase, i.e. still sleeping in their own selves. Downtown areas are being filled with new glass and marble buildings of prestige, with the red roofs and multi-minarets of the new domesticity, and the improvised boutiques/kiosks of new commerce (though these are already in the course of demolition in some areas). They are also being filled by the new eclectic windows and doorways of bars, cafes, boutiques, and with the old charm of popular terraces and, above all, with people. It seems that our centers are finding their way easily, their being more a problem of time and money than of initiative, interest and ideas.

However, what has happened to those gray areas of apartment blocks? Beside the renegotiation of the private space in search of a better life, we can see a negotiation in terms of their relationship to the center. There are some districts that are defining (in the absence of mayoral intervention as in the Drumul Taberei area) new, *ad hoc* local centers, usually created in a very non-architectural and unconventional way. In most cases, this centrality is constructed by refusing the old centralized areas created by communist era systematization. It is hard to believe this is an aware and clear "manifesto" gesture; it is more a display of instinctive sanity on the part of the inhabitants. The typical conviviality of the staircase (distorted in any case by its verticality and social eclecticism), which is in many ways similar to the traditional *mahala* atmosphere, is now showing in the street. Being there, living in these districts (at least for a while) proves that it doesn't mater how gray, dull and cheap the houses and apartment blocks are because, on the small scale of micro-territories, there are many signs and gestures that both result in and generate space appropriation, that make places. They have signs and traces inherent to the daily use of space, to habitation. The space that we inhabit becomes, in a certain sense, our own, regardless of how strange or inadequate it is, or how much we might want to escape from it. Moreover, besides the whole mythology of insecurity, aggression and incivility in these districts, they have (during the day at least) an astonishingly civilized and friendly atmosphere. It might be said of these people that, owing to their relative

poverty and rural nature, and despite their heterogeneity (workers, professors, old ex-boyars, unemployed, doctors, pensioners, housekeepers, newly emerged yuppies, fresh parvenu louts etc.),[77] they are at times succeeding in building a closer and more active sense of community than exists in the central areas where inhabitants behave much more as strangers to each other.

VI. TOWARDS A NEW COMPREHENSIVE NON-URBANISM OR A MICRO-URBANISM ABOVE URBANISM

> *Virtually all theories about the city are true, especially contradictory ones.*
>
> Charles Jencks, *The city that never sleeps*

Our cities are loved but mostly hated, wanted and despised. The reasons for this are changing, as are the "traditions". The dissipation, fragmentation or even disappearance of big industry (or just the expectation that this will happen in future) has caused market reorganization, a diversification of services, a new distribution within the city, all of which have provoked in their turn an intimate modification of city life, street atmosphere, inhabitants and their relationship to the city territory. Daily rituals are changing. The city has a sort of neutrality – bars, terraces and malls are full of claimed (and real) poverty. What one might find intriguing is the total disinterest in image and design. People are everywhere; no matter how improvised the place, how bad what is on offer, people are using everything and every space "like there's no tomorrow".

In center-periphery relations, the idea of the image of the city developed around a symbolic and valorized center is an overwhelming stereotype. The center is of positive character and is surrounded by increasingly weakly configured areas, un-appropriated, non-symbolized, amoral, asocial spaces. Nonetheless, the peripheral groups of apartment blocks and poor housing still survive and are even developing (in housing district), disregarding the "official" view. This will not last for long, however, as the urban politics of the local and central administration is counting on their destruction and vanishing. When will this be possible? And what will we do until then? The whole of urban politics is based on the ideas of central renewal and more peripheral development. What will happen in the meantime? For once Bucharest's problems are matters

of where to build the huge new cathedral, a new Government building, a hotel for Parliament, a highway, the new gated community or "quartier français" (which will replace a forest), a new tower as a symbol of our powerful economy etc. In the meantime, the government is proposing a national housing program in order to create middle-class neighborhoods [for the nouveau riches the problem is solved] and working-class districts. When the entire world is faced with the huge, destructive and uncontrollable problem of social segregation, we are looking forward to it, as it were, provoking it officially.[78] Again we are encountering the same anti-city discourse, the same devaluation of city spaces as long as they are not "historical", as long as they are not part of our "collective memory". Can the city still provide support for this memory that we theoretically share? Are we still sharing our spaces? The destruction of the centers, the buildings that are erected all around us overnight cut out our common landmarks. We are no longer part of the same space. This does not necessarily imply that we are more like strangers than we were before, or that we no longer have a sense of place. However, it implies that Culture, Truth and Beauty etc. are being replaced by cultures (subcultures), truths and beauties, and that we are living in a world of multiplicity. The choice is ours.[79]

The question remains as to whether it is still possible to redeem these imposed spaces, these "prefab places". We surely cannot count on their destruction. This ultimate act is too remote a prospect to wait for, and we cannot delay regaining these places as "human" spaces within the city until the virtual moment of their disappearance (and their replacing by who knows what). Are these dull areas apt to receive a human dimension?

The chaotic invasion of public space, the social mixture, the traditional uncontrolled growth of our cities,[80] the unusual half indifferent, half excessively familiar sociability, the contrast between architectural monotony and homogeneity and the cultural diversity of inhabitants, the strange territoriality, and the peculiar, extremely local and personal appropriation strategies; all these together create an important potential. In addition to these traditional assets of our cities, there is also a new phenomenon of space "valorization" developing in contact with the proudly assumed sub-culture(s) of MTV "underground" mainstream hip-hop, rap and graffiti. Of a sudden, the *boy from the quarter* (district) discovered an astonishing similitude with the *ghetto boy*. Beyond "quality" of music, we discover the new identity construct discourse of the *pastoral*

urban marginal society which provides an inevitable balance of the "ghetto image constructed on the rejected individual in a money-oriented society discourse" and the "I will never leave my neighborhood of truth and my real quarter [district] buddies story". Somehow these sub-cultures (if sub-cultures really exist in a world without Culture and in which Cultural Studies and Visual Culture look to everyday life and everyday experience for the creation of new patterns of imagination and new dominating, even ever-shifting cultures)[81] are combining the official anti-city discourse and a *my city* identity-awakening discourse. On the other hand, we have the phenomenon of the "traditional" wooden churches[82] that is present in all of these urban districts (if not of wood, then as an improvisation in brick), a reactivation of a very traditional logic of the city, with the *mahala* around the church, and attempts at recreating neighborhood social clusters. The question is whether, based on these two "historical" and "innovative" attitudes to the "gray districts", we can build an "anti-urbanism" that would reach "from the very bottom to almost up" and would be able to undermine the "original" message of the apartment block architecture thus recreating a new sense of place. Can all these acts of aggression against space transform the "product" house into the "oeuvre" house for each of us? Maybe, by approaching the apartment block ensembles as empty shells to be filled with "homes", rather than as heaps of residential units to be kept or destroyed, we will achieve an urbanistic resolution by un-urbanistic (if not anti-urbanistic) means. Learning from "popular" culture does not detach the architect from his or her status in high culture. However, it may succeed in altering high culture to make it more sympathetic to current needs and issues"[83]

To survive, urbanism will have to imagine a new newness. Liberated from its atavistic duties, urbanism redefined as a way of operating on the inevitable will attack architecture, invade its trenches, drive it from its bastions, undermine its certainties, explode its limits, ridicule its preoccupations with matter and substance, destroy its traditions, smoke out its practitioners. […] What if we simply declare that there is no crisis – redefine our relationship with the city not as its makers but as its mere subjects, as its supporters? More than ever, the city is all we have.

Rem Koolhaas and Bruce Mau, *S, M, L, XL*

NOTES

1   Robert Goodmnan, *After the Planners*, Simon&Schuster, New York, 1971, quoted by Nan Ellin, *Postmodern Urbanism*, revised edition, Princeton Architectural Press, 1999.
2   Jaques Donzelot, "La nouvelle question urbaine", in *Esprit*, novembre 1999 – *Quand la ville se défait* – on the multiplicity of forms of "urban sprawl" and "Le douceurs de l' 'urbanisme affinitaire'".
3   *Ibid.*
4   Aldo Rossi, "The Collective Memory", from *Architecture of the City*, 1966, in Malcom Miles, Tim Hall and Iain Borden, *The City Cultures Reader*, Routledge, London, 2000, pp. 172–173.
5   Charles Jenks quoted by Nan Ellin in *Postmodern Urbanism,* revised edition, Princeton Architectural Press, 1999, on "Historical eclecticism".
6   Historic Preservation Act – Great Britain, 1967, and Paul Henry Gley in *The Breath of History*, PhD dissertation, UCLA, 1983 quoted by Nan Ellin, *op. cit.*
7   Augustin Ioan, *Power Play and Nationa Identity*, Romanian Cultural Foundation Publishing House, Bucharest, 1999, p. 59.
8   Spiro Kostof, *The City Assembled*, Thames & Hudson, 1999, p. 181.
9   Jurgen Habermas, *Modern and Postmodern Architecture*, pp. 227-237, *apud* Neil Leach, *Rethinking Architecture*, Routledge, London, 1997, p. 235.
10   Richard Sennet, *The Uses of Disorder: Personal Identity and the City Life*, Random House, New York, 1970, quoted by Nan Ellin in *Postmodern Urbanism,* revised edition, Princeton Architectural Press, 1999
11   Robert Goodmnan, *After the Planners*, Simon& Schuster, New York, 1971, quoted by Nan Ellin, *Postmodern Urbanism,* revised edition, Princeton Architectural Press, 1999.
12   Rem Koolhaas and Bruce Mau in *S, M, L, XL,* The Monacelli Press, Inc., New York, 1995, p. 967: "The death of urbanism – our refuge in the parasitic security of architecture – creates an immanent disaster: more and more substance is grafted on our starving roots" – an affirmation that generated a huge wave of contradictory reactions and debates.
13   *Ibid.*, p. 971.
14   Archigram, "Instant City", in Malcom Miles, Tim Hall and Iain Borden, *The City Cultures Reader* Routledge, London, 2000, pp.125-128.
15   Paul Davidoff, "Advocacy and Pluralism in Planning", *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*, XXI [4], November, pp. 331-338, *apud* Richard T. Le Gates and Frederic Stout, *The City Reader*, Routledge, London, 1996, 2000, pp. 423-433.
16   *Ibid.*, p. 104.
17   Ali Madanipour, *Design of Urban Space*, John Wiley & Sons, Chichester, 1996, p. 75.

18 Langton, *Citizen Participation in America: essays on the State of the Art*, Lexington Books, Massachusets, 1978, quoted by Ian H. Thompson, *op.cit.*, p. 106.

19 Gilles Lipovetski, *Le crépuscule du dévoir* – Gallimard, Paris, 1992, quoted by Zygmunt Bauman, *Etica Postmodernă*, Amarcord, Bucharest, 2000, p. 6.

20 Gilles Lipovetsky, "Espace privé, espace public à l'age post-moderne" pp. 105-122, in *Citoyenneté et urbanité*, Ed. Esprit, Paris, 1991, pp. 110-111.

21 Zygmunt Bauman – *Etica Postmodernă* – Amarcord, Bucharest, 2000, p. 10.

22 *Ibid.*, p. 24.

23 *Ibid.*, p. 173.

24 Robert Ferras, *Ville paraître, être à part*, Reclus, Montpellier, 1990, p. 31 : "Espaces imposés? [...] C'est la representation du milieu [ou son occultation, ou la promotion] qui nous est proposée, et pas le milieu lui-même".

25 Jonathan Charley, *Industrialization and the City: Work, Speed-up, Urbanization,* 1995, pp. 67-68, quoted in Malcom Miles, Tim Hall and Iain Borden, *The City Cultures Reader*, Routledge, London, 2000, p. 67.

26 Jurgen Habermas, "Modern and Postmodern Architecture", *apud* Neil Leach, *Rethinking Architecture*, Routledge, London, 1997, p. 233.

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29 Jaques Donselot, *op.cit.*

30 Henry Lefebvre, *Le droit à la Ville*, Edition Anthropos, Paris, 1967.

31 Henry Lefebvre, quoted by Jaques Donzelot, *op.cit.*

32 Peter Hall, "Planning and Urban Design in the 1990s", in *Urban Design*, no. 56, October 1995, quoted by Tony Lloyd-Jones, "The Scope of Urban Design", in Clara Greed and Marion Roberts, *Introducing Urban Design; Interventions and responses*, vol. IV, *Exploring Town Planning* , Addison Wesley Longman Limited., Harlow, 1998, p. 33.

33 Marion Roberts, "Urban Design and Regeneration", in Clara Greed and Marion Roberts, *Introducing Urban Design; Interventions and Responses*, vol. IV, *Exploring Town Planning*, Addison Wesley Longman Limited., Harlow, 1998, p. 88.

34 Ali Madanipour, *op. cit.*, p. 142.

35 Gerard Althabe, "Promotion symbolique et logiques sociales", in Althabe, Gerard; Lege, Bernard; Selim, Monique, *Urbanisme et réhabilitation symbolique. Ivry, Bologne, Amiens*, Ed. Anthropos, Paris, 1984, pp. 13-70. Anthropological studies in Ilot San Lorento, HLM buildings in Sevrin, Ivry, Bellevue in Nantes; Floris Paalman in *Kidnapping the Bijlmer*, *apud* Sarah Bennett and John Butler, *Locality, Regeneration & Divers[c]ities*, vol. 1 in A*dvanced in Art & Urban Futures*, Intellect Books, 2000, a study on the new

sociability in Bijlmermeer in Amsterdam, also studied by Rem Koolhaas and Bruce Mau, *op. cit.,* pp. 860-887.

36   Michel Foucault in *Space, Power and Knowledge*, quoted by Ali Madanipour, *op. cit.*, p. 76: "I Think the central issue of philosophy and critical thought since the eighteenth century has always been, still is, and will, I hope, remain the question: *What* is this Reason that we use? What are its historical effects? What are its limits, and what are its dangers?"

37   Leonard Dhul, "Le point de vue d'un psychiatre", *apud* Francoise Choay, *L'urbanisme, utopies et réalités. Une anthologie*, Ed.du Seuil, Paris, 1965, p. 380.

38   Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, Pimlico Random House, London, 2000, p. 386.

39   Oscar Newman, *Defensible Space: People and Design in the Violent City*, Architectural Press, London, 1973, quoted by Tony Lloyd Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

40   Tony Lloyd Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

41   Paul Henry Gley, *The Breath of History*, PhD dissertation, UCLA, 1983, quoted by Nan Ellin, *op. cit.,* Paul Henry Gleye identifies seven elements of responsible preservation: reconstruction of monuments: repetition of the traditional architectural motifs; reaffirmation of the center-periphery relation; incorporation of historical clues; retention of perceived city scale; adoption of historical design ordinance; retention of traditional land uses in town centers in order to create the desired sense of historical identity and security and a searched "urban palimpsest".

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43   Jane Jacobs, *op. cit.,* pp. 39 – 65 ("The uses of sidewalks: safety").

44   Jaques Donzelot, *op. cit.*

45   *Ibid.*

46   Both described by Tony Lloyd Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 35; see also Nan Ellin, *op. cit.*

47   Marion Roberts, "Art in the Public Realm", in Clara Greed and Marion Roberts, *Introducing Urban Design; Interventions and Responses*, vol. IV in *Exploring Town Planning*, Addison Wesley Longman Limited., Harlow, 1998, p. 119, 121.

48   Rem Koolhaas and Bruce Mau, *Generic City*, p. 1253.

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53 Gilles Lipovetsky, *op. cit.,* p. 109.

54 Bernard Tschumi, *Architecture and Disjunction*, MIT Press, Cambridge Massachusets, 1994, p. 247.

55 Richard Sennet, *Les Tyrannies de l'intimité,* Ed. du Seuil, Paris, 1979, p. 81.

56 Robert Krier, *Urban Space*, Academy Editions, London, 1979, quoted in Ali Madanipour, *op. cit.*, p. 10

57 William Mitchell, *Soft Cities*, *apud* Malcom Miles, Tim Hall and Iain Borden, *The City Cultures Reader*, Routledge, London, 2000, p. 320 and *E-Topia:Urban Life, Jim-but not as we know it*, MIT Press, 1999.

58 Octavian Groza quoting Raffenstein in *L'espace public et l'espace privé dans les villes roumaines*, pp. 53-58, Les Chaiers du Séminaire "Science Humaines" de Bucarest, No. 2, juin 1996, p. 53.

59 Zygmunt Bauman, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

60 Richard Sennett, *op. cit.*

61 Octavian Groza, "Les échelles spatiales de la territorialité roumaine", *New Europe College Yearbook* 2000-2001.

62 Spiro Kostoff,*The City Assembled*, Thames & Hudson, 1999, p. 123.

63 Yi-Fu Tuan, "Space and Place: A Humanistic Perspective", in J. Agenew, D. Livingstone, A. Roger, *Human Geography. An Essential Anthology*, Blackwell Publishers, Oxford-Massachusetts, 1996, p. 447.

64 Jane Jacobs, *op. cit.*, p. 39

65 G. M. Cantacuzino, *Despre o estetică a a reconstrucţiei*, Paideia, Bucharest, 2001, p. 47 – "A merge pe stradă nu înseamnă numai a trece dintr-un loc în altul; umblând, omul vrea să se mai gândească, să uite, să viseze… adică să se regăsească un timp, dezbărat de povara grijilor."

66 Ray Oldenburg, *The Great Good Place: cafes, coffee shops, community centers, beauty parlors, general stores, bars, hangouts, and how they get through the day*, Paragon House, New York 1989, quoted by Tridib Banerjee, "The Future of Public Space", p. 9 – 25 in *Journal of the American Planning Association*, Winter 2001, Vol. 67 Issue 1.

67 Jane Jacobs, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

68 Michael Sorkin, *Variations on a Theme Park*, Noonday Press, New York, 1992,quoted by Lynn Hollen Lees, "Public Spaces – Social Aspects; City and Town Life", p. 443 – 466 in *Journal of Urban History*, August 1994, Vol. 20 Issue 4.

69 Jane Jacobs, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

70 Lynn Hollen Lees, "Public Spaces – Social Aspects; City and Town Life", p. 443 – 466 in *Journal of Urban History*, August 1994, Vol. 20 Issue 4.

71 Augustin Ioan, *op. cit.*, p. 48.
72 *Ibid.*, p. 155.
73 Octavian Groza, *L'espace public et l'espace privé dans les villes roumaines*, pp. 53-58, Les Cahiers du Séminaire "Science Humaines" de Bucarest, No. 2, juin 1996, p. 53 : "Pendant le socialisme, les projets transactionnels des villes roumaines n'ont fonctionné que comme des modèles réduits du projet national, souvent contre les besoins, en ignorant les spécifiques des territoires, dont les acteurs réalisaient partout le même programme."
74 G. M. Cantacuzino, *op. cit.*, p. 56.
75 Octavian Groza, *op. cit.*, p. 54: "… l'espace – territoire idéal que l'on veut imposer, est en réalité remplacé par une multitudes des territoires sémi-légaux, chacun ayant ses propres lois, conformément aux désirs de petits chefs impliques. Ces ersatz de territorialité, toujours en opposition les uns contre les autres, ne peuvent guère être assimilés à des mécanismes d'autorégulation des interactions établies entre les habitants et l'espace – territoire approprié. Ouvert au pires exces ou laissé à la plus grande indifférence des pouvoirs publics, un tel territoire est amoral."
76 Octavian Groza, « Les Echelles spatiales de la territorialité roumaine », *New Europe College Yearbook*, 2000-2001.
77 Bart Goldhoorn, "Struggle for Life", in *Archis* no 12, 1993, about the ensembles of apartment blocks in Eastern countries, quoted by Floris Paalman, *op. cit.*
78 Prime Minister, Adrian Nastase's discourse about ANL – National Housing Agency strategy for main cities – spring 2001.
79 Zygmunt Bauman, *op. cit.*, p. 8.
80 G.M. Cantacuzino, *op. cit.*, p. 55 "Anyway, what can be said is that Bucharest grew by chance/fate and that all sorts of citizens have done what they were able or willing to, without any protection from the State, without a master thought. Thus, the only Bucharest quality was, until now, its development in an almost absolute liberty, with ever broken regulations or in the most fantasist way. So, with all its sins, with its lack of monumentality, with the tangled streets, with the stylistic chaos, with its contradictions, with the tragic or funny aspects, with the its caricature modernism and its funny traditionalism, with either extremely occidental or extremely oriental aspects, Bucharest, the city of all the contrasts, is an authentic document for somebody who is looking for the truth about the Romanian urban planning tendencies."
81 Nicholas Mirzoeff, *An Introduction to Visual Culture*, Routledge, New York, 1999, p. 29.
82 Augustin Ioan, *op. cit.*, p. 230.
83 Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, Steven Izenour, *op. cit.*, p. 161.

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