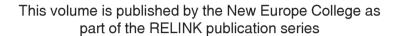
NEW EUROPE COLLEGE



LOST IN SPACE

Edited by Augustin Ioan



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EVERYONE'S SPACE, SOMEONE'S SPACE, NO ONE'S SPACE

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One could hardly find a more representative architectural symbol of the totalitarian regimes in Eastern Europe, than the "Block of Flats". Its omnipresent image, as negative as possible, engenders today a visceral rejection of the collective dwelling in general. The material and expressive poverty, the huge scale and the terrifying uniformity, and last, but not least, their disastrous state greatly explain this situation. For so many of us the obvious failure of the neighborhoods of the victor socialism or of the large ensembles of social dwellings in the free world would represent in fact, a failure of the collective dwellings in general. One forgets too easily that the block of flats, already existing in the ancient Rome, constituted one of the fundamental elements of modern urbanism. In this sense, mythical metropolises such as Paris and Barcelona are cities of "Blocks of Flats".

Any type of collective dwelling supposes a compromise, determined by the larger efficiency of the construction and of the utilisation of the land par rapport with the individual dwelling, types of relations clearly defined and regulated, as well as a certain mentality that allows the coexistence of several individual entities (families living in flats). The forms of association, rental, and purchase associated with the

"traditional" collective dwelling were based on the private property, state initiatives, or of local, philanthropic or employing authorities. The balancing of all the interests, including those of the general urban community, supposed the existence of negotiations and of ever improving transactions between the public and the private space. Between the individual dwelling unit – the flat – and the general space of the city are interposed several types of filters and limitations, physical, legal or implicit, that make it possible both the expression of one's individual identity, and maintaining the relationships with the "others'. The lots and the limited spaces, the clear delimitation of the common, from and individual property, the relationship with the exterior, all these find their expression in the physical conformity and the codification of the places: the "front" and the "back" of the building, the various types of the courts – either open or more or less closed -, the intermediary spaces, the visual or symbolic limitations, etc. To all these is added the overleaping and articulation of the novel urban shapes with the civic space of the whole community, as well as with the historical space, that of the collective memory.

The various models of the socialism all share the absolute domination exerted over the public space. The private space is reduced to that of the flat itself, whereas the semi-private one, to that of the hallways and annexes. The complete urban space, continuous, homogenous, and belonging to everybody, organized thoroughly scientifically, and representing one of the main fantasies of modernism, found its true application ground within those political regimes. One obviously cannot identify completely the modernist utopia with this kind of regimes; if we only think of the "new cities" and the neighborhoods of social dwellings of the 50s and the 60s in

Western Europe. But he authoritarianism, the collectivism and the egalitarianism, the myth of the scientific objectivity, the obsession of the industrialization and typification, specific to the totalitarian project of Eastern Europe did allow a remarkable integration of many of the fundamental principles of the modernist urbanism's theories.

On the other hand, the city and the architecture never represent strictly a determined result, a faithful projection in the physical space of a certain society, and even less that of a political project. Beyond any local specificity and the solving of objective material problems, any production of architectural or urban spaces and objects are entangled in a complex web of relations with the social and economic ensemble, as well as with the professional theories and principles; these relations involve of course, a certain degree of subordination towards ideology, but also a whole game of compromise and resistance, ethical principles and functional and esthetic conceptions.

As for the inhabitants themselves, there is a large gamut of nuances between creating the "new man" required by the regime, and the resistance schemes of closeness and individualization of an imposed frame.

In Romania, too, the period after '89 led to a loss of the absolute control and to the explosion of an urban life strangled until then. The individualization tendencies, of privatisation of the space accelerated and reached forms practically impossible before. However, the coagulation of a public space, beyond the strictly administrative sense of the word, the cohabitation mechanisms and of constitution of urban communities haven't appeared yet. The space formerly known as "belonging to everybody" tends to be either invaded by each of us taken separately, or reduced to strictly utilitarian structures and to be considered as "belonging to nobody".

The urban crisis is also a crisis of the urbanism itself, and cannot be reduced only to the material poverty, to the actual chronic lack of resources and to the state of the constructions and of the equipment.

In order to better understand the mechanism of closeness. rejection and identification as well as the actual lack of balance in the city between the interests of the private and collective interests, there appeared these last years, various studies and theories within the human sciences field-sociology, anthropology, ethnology, history, etc., some of these studies focusing on the social groups in the block neighborhoods.¹ The specific of these disciplines engendered the considering of the architectural urban space merely as a frame for the social relationship, whose global features are almost identical for each category (socialist blocks, old streets) a predetermined frame, transformed as a result of practice and which is only briefly described. Beyond the indispensable determination of the social structure, of the closeness and socialization relations within these social units, there is still a risk for reducing the spatial relations the physical urban context simply to a level of localization and to its identification to the will and pressure exerted by the authority. The lack of awareness regarding the formal implication of the spaces and constructions themselves, beyond any political ideologies, over the social groups, can allow the perpetuation, for causes of inertia, of certain models. The new types of social dwellings buildings, proposed in the

See for instance V. Mihăilescu, V. Nicolau, M. Gheorghiu, "Le bloc 311. Résidence et sociabilité dans un immeuble d'appartements sociaux à Bucharest", Ethnologie française, 1995, 3, Armand Collin, Paris.

transition period, represent the rationale behind this assumption.²

The present paper tries to offer a discussion on the individual and collective space, starting from the means of the architectural analysis. The object of study is represented by a group of blocks of flats in the socialist era: the political conditions of the moment, the general context and the urban theories that determined the principles of the design, the realization proper and the adapting of the models, as well as the spontaneous transformation brought to the space by the inhabitants, throughout the historical evolution. I chose "Drumul Taberei" neighborhood in Bucharest, and within it. an urbanly representative subdivision - that of the Moghioros-Romancierilor neighborhood unit. Between the Stalinist urbanism and the large operations of placating the boulevards in the 70s and the 80s followed by the delusional campaign of demolishing and building of the last part of the Ceausescu era, the 60s, when most of this ensemble was designed and built, is the time of a relative liberalization. It was a time when the introduction of formulas closer to the modern theories of the time was attempted, and therefore, as I will try to demonstrate later on, it had a more distinct character of urban utopia. We are dealing at the same time with an entirely new neighborhood, built at the outskirts of the city and with no direct confrontation with the rest of the old city,

Thus appear the types of dwellings proposed by the National Dwelling Agency (NDA): the same groups of blocks positioned by chance within the old type of undetermined "green areas" with no concern whatsoever with regard to the place a community occupies, to the public or even to the private space, for that matter, to the urban context in general; the inner spaces though, will be larger, the buildings probably a little better built and equipped than 10 years ago.

which contributed to the purity of the model. Finally, in the category of the other large peripheral neighborhoods (Titan, Balta Alba, Pantelimon, Militari, etc.), Drumul Taberei still counts among the most appreciated by its inhabitants. All these elements facilitate the unavoidable delimitation of the analysis and the reading of the different layers of the urban reality in the socialist era and in the transition period that followed.

In order to better position the study unit in the general context, a short presentation of the modernist urban utopia seems necessary, as well as of the main steps in the production of the Romanian socialist town.

Correct Paradises

According to Françoise Choay,³ a synthetic definition of the utopia would include the following essential features: the character of model society, the opposition between this model and a real society, the critique of the latter being inseparable from the drafting of the former; the model frame (space) as constitutive and indispensable part of the utopia itself; the positioning of the model in a space and time externally abstract; the eternity of the very structure, the elimination of any later exchanges; the ignoring willingly or not, of some of the aspects of reality in view of a perfect solution for a limited number of elements, deemed essential; its elaboration by an individual (group of individuals) and regarding a society more or less vast.

All these characteristics can be discovered in the urban form corresponding to the society model. The complete order of the society is mirrored by the absolute order of the spatial

³ F. Choay, *La Régle et le Modèle. Sur la Théorie de l'architecture et de l'urbanisme*, Editions du Seuil, Paris, 1980.

organisation of the ideal city, in the unchangeable and uncompromising geometry created by precise mathematical laws.⁴ The rule doesn't generally accept exceptions. The organisation concerns even regards the slightest details, which supposes a high degree of homogeneity and equality of the individuals to which corresponds the repeatability and strict hierarchies of the built elements and spaces. The crystallized order of the new world can be preserved especially in an isolated system, with no exchanges with the exterior, the ideal cities being usually placed on an island. Basically, the ideal city has a permanent, regularized shape, determined by precisely ordered principles that, in their turn, determine the number and character of the relationships, in reality just as unchangeable and arbitrary, between the inhabitants.

However, beyond the taking over any principles of urban design, considered to be efficient, but in fact deprived of the very contents of the ideal city, the classical utopias were rather the object of contemplation, pedagogic tools, or forms of criticism of that particular society. On the contrary, "the activist utopias"⁵ of the 19th and 20th centuries, fully integrated to a context of fundamental exchanges and of apparently unlimited possibilities, were constituted in a "support of emancipation and transformation of an entire society".⁶ The theory of the rationalism of the spirit's and society's mechanisms involves

Obviously, not any geometric project identifies with a utopian social project. The hyppodamic plans of the roman cities, the American grid, etc. do not correspond necessarily either to some social revolutions or to some utopian aspirations: in most cases they merely illustrate a need for organisation, representing pragmatic answers to the functional needs, as well as the rationalization tendencies of the inhabited space.

C. Rowe, F. Koetter, "Collage City", *Supplémentaires*, Editions du Centre Pompidou, Paris, 1993.

⁶ Idem, 5.

the possibility of the creation of a world of absolute harmony and justice. In the context of thinking the city, "the progressist model, whose key-idea is that of modernity", was conceived as a unitary ensemble of principles, methods, and possibilities for application only in the between wars period, as an integrating part of the Modern Movement. For the first time the utopia could connect in practice to the technical conditions, but also to the esthetic and cultural conceptions of the elite of that particular epoch.

These determinations nuance the still deeply rooted conviction that the "blocks" were strictly the invention of a certain type of political regime. The ideological roots and congruent characteristics are still obvious. In the opinion of the modernist exponents, to the new universal order in which mankind entered, deeply different from the one of the previous epochs, shaped standard needs, scientifically determined. Solving these problems would produce a perfect world, functioning correctly and sublimely. All that needed to be found were the correct formulas, the architectural and urban prototypes, following the industrial standardization and mechanization methods and in the spirit of essentialism, simplicity and the objective esthetics of the artistic avant-garde.

Not only the industrial town of the 19th century, the tentacular and inhuman metropolis, a chaotic and corrupted Babel, but also the old, decayed and outdated centers were considered unfit and were to be replaced by an organized and technological return to nature, to the state of original bliss. The problems of the city, its explosion on the background of the industrial revolution were very real issues (things discarded today, when these towns have become at the same time lost

F. Choay, L'urbanisme. Utopies et Réalites: Une anthologie, Editions du Seuil, Paris, 1965.

paradises and models of urbanism). The hygiene, the nature, the equality, the integration of the new means, the efficiency and estheticism⁸ seduced both the totalitarian regimes and the post-bellum democratic societies. Then there was their application at an incredible scale and in a perverted form, which engendered later on violent rejection reactions.

The new spatial conceptions, generically called open urbanism, define a totally different type of urban space. The city is classified and zoned strictly in accordance with its main urban functions, among which dwelling, to each activity corresponding certain spaces. The human needs are reduced to the basic ones and all that represents the specificity of a city – its complexity and medley of activities, the differences, the articulations, and the collisions make way to an order defined by the designer.

If the geometric regularization, the ultimate hierarchy, the integrity and uniformity of the elements of the same category, the esthetic design of the plane, all represent features common to those of the ideal classic cities, the dialectical relationship space/construction is entirely upset. In the historical towns, the space has the role of figure, the buildings, with the notable exception of the monuments, defining, through fronts most often closed, the background and the limits of the spatial units. The circulation ways and the public areas in general are in relations of mutual determination with the lots and the built volumes. The public, private and semiprivate spaces are clearly

⁹ *Idem*, 5.

THE MATERIALS OF URBANISM ARE: THE SUN, THE SKY, THE TREES, THE STEEL AND THE CEMENT, in this order and in this hierarchy. And I see that around me the officials the most modern by their reputation prepare cities that will deprive people OF THE ESSENTIAL JOYS OF LIFE, FOR THE ENTIRE NEXT CENTURY" (Le Corbusier)

delimited, the versatility, the capacity for differentiation and evolution of this tissue being preserved throughout the historical evolution. In the modernist city, buildings become figures, the space – homogeneous and for everyone – is reduced to a neutral background. Thus, the corridor-street, the existing tissue had to give in to the composition of pristine buildings, floating in a spatial continuum, formed by huge parks and by streets, independent from the buildings themselves.¹⁰

The modernist model with its undeniable qualities (rationality, the momentary satisfaction of he basic human needs, execution efficiency, equality, conceptual simplicity) failed in creating a frame that could allow the particularization, identification, or simply the richness of spaces and relations of a genuine urbanism. The destruction of the old centers, the radicalism of the rejection of tradition equally added to the social failure of this model; in the socialist countries, where it practically determined the only form of constructing buildings, it contributed to the policy of social homogeneity.

Romanian Avatars of the Block

The Romanian blocks of flats in the pre-war period, in general rapport buildings or in co-ownership evince the characteristics of the classic collective dwelling described in the beginning of this paper. Besides, they were trying to satisfy the requirements of an urban population and were almost exclusively built through private initiative. The western models were several times adapted to the traditional tissue and to a certain spirit of the place. The courtyards facing the street, the intermediary spaces, the architectural elements of certain styles (from a pure version of modernism, until certain delusions of

Le Corbusier, *La Charte d'Athenes*, Les Editions de Minuit, 1957 (reed).

the neo-Romanian or Florentine style) don't make these constructions come out from the small country dwellings, to the extent they would have been predisposed to by the scale differences.

After the final installation of the communist regime, the construction of single-family dwellings was almost entirely eliminated, the block of flats remaining, especially for ideological reasons, the only option available. Even if part of the apartments were to become private property, the related land had the legal status of public space. One of the effects of this lack of options was the cohabitation, in most of the dwelling blocks, of people pertaining to the most varied social strata, a mixity that has almost never characterized the large neighborhoods of social dwellings in Western Europe. On the other hand, these ensembles served as the main way chosen for sheltering the new urban inhabitants, following the massive industrialization policies and of regrouping homogenization of the population. The forced housing in collective buildings, with none of the intermediary steps of an acculturation process was to mark forever the socialist urbanity, an urbanity with no means of creating urbanism. And in this field, the socialist leveling created a huge hybrid category, with tremendous integration and identification problems.

The first ensembles bear the stamp of Stalinist architecture and urbanism. The socialist realism, with its "socialist contents in national shapes" was characterized through a violent rejection of modernism and avant-garde, in all its manifestation. Thus, the urban unity was constituted of the

A. Aman, Architecture and Ideology in Eastern Europe during the Stalin Era: An Aspect of the Cold WarHistory, The Architectural History Foundation. INC New York, the MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachussets, 1992.

cvartal formed of flats on 3-8 levels, organized around an inner yard, closed or semi-closed. 12 This represented in fact a repetition of one of the formulas of the traditional European urbanism, which was given a highly emphasized monumental character. These classicizing tendencies and pompous details ("the people has the right to pillars, too", as the Soviet People's counselor for culture Lunacearski had said) were to grant the buildings at an immediate level of perception, the grandiose and perennial image of the regime itself. The execution techniques and the work hand remained in most of the cases the traditional ones, as the industrialisation in the construction field was only at the beginning. The architects themselves came from the pre-war period, an elite specialised in classicist urban spaces and buildings. On the other hand, the possibilities of the time, and the reduced damages caused by the war engendered in most cases a much lower number and more reduced scale of these ensembles in Romania than in the other socialist countries. Paradoxically, thanks to these characteristics and not lastly thanks to a monumental and populist aesthetics, the cvartals, built in Romania's probably darkest age, represented the most successful insertions of the socialist age in an already existing urban tissue. Despite the minuscule apartments and the unfit equipment, the Russian blocks still enjoy certain popularity and still have a high potential of integration and rehabilitation.

These buildings were hardly fit for industrial technologies, for the standardization and typifying so characteristic for the ideology and economy of the regime. On the other hand, the period of liberalization started with Stalin's death gave rise to

P. Derer, The Urban Dwelling: A Draft for an Evolutionary Approach, Ed. Tehnică, Bucureşti, 1985.

a policy of self-opening towards the Western world and of introducing certain new formulae close to the modern theories, which are reinterpreted in the spirit of the political and social context. The great districts from the outskirts of the town, as Drumul Taberei, have been built during that period. The irony of the relationship between political ideology and the architectural discourse and practice changes its sign: the blocks, which are even today perceived as the main symbol of the regime, were designed, in a context of relaxation, as expressions of a rebirth of modernity and in an effort of resynchronization with what was happening on the other side of the Iron Curtain.

Starting with the 70s, the focus shifted from the new peripheral districts to the town centre. Rather seldom in the case of the Fastern countries has the centre been "modernized" by demolishing and massively building in closed circuit on the great urban axes. The image of Bucharest as a "town of blocks" is due to these last two decades of dictatorship. The rehabilitation of the corridor-street, of the urban boulevard, belongs to the same general context of the epoch, namely that of the rejection as regards the theories of modernist urbanism. But the underlying reality of these were the efforts both of undertaking certain really "urban" models, as well as of saving the built substance and the "spirit" of the pre-war towns. The new boulevards of Bucharest cannot be denied a certain capacity to produce urban life, especially after the rebirth of private trade after 1989. But beyond their dull monotony, the main failure is the lack of any articulation with the existant city, with its natural environment. The brutal introduction of

A. Ioan, "Modern Architectural Disscourse after the Death of Stalin", New Europe College Yearbook 1995-1996, Humanitas, Bucureşti, 1999.

a new structure, which was to completely replace the older one, the spatial collisions, the concealment of the old tissue have all accompanied the character of a public space, which was total and homogeneous.

The operations of the 80s are the culminating point in the creation of the New Town. The frenzy of the Civic Centre of Bucharest has been sufficiently commented upon. Regarding the habitation in the blocks located at the border of the great axis, this has from the start been a secondary role compared to that of being the back-stages of the show of the Authority. Otherwise, the act of effectively living in these buildings is manifest in the period of the last ten years, and it represents one of the most interesting cases of distorting an initial concept. The former triumphant boulevard has become a prestigious address, in which bank headquarters, the trade of luxury, the apartments "looking to the fountains", the kiosks and the market stalls of "transition" erode and perseveringly pervert the integrity and purity of the initial concept. ¹⁴

Drumul Taberei, Bucharest: A Walk Through the Ideal City

Drumul Taberei has been the first great Romanian group of collective buildings that were constructed according to the revised and extended modernist principles.¹⁵ Personally approved by Gheorghe Ghoerghiu-Dej in 1962, at the stage of detail in systematizing, the project has been detailed and fulfilled up to 1973. The district's centre, which had been

See also S. Ghenciulescu, "The 'Victoria Capitalismului' Boulevard", in *Vineri*, a supplement of the review *Dilema*, edited by the Romanian Cultural Foundation, Bucharest, No 28, February, 2000.

¹⁵ *Idem*, 12.

allotted a place, has not become a reality up to the present time; instead, by subsequent "thickenings", the anticipated number of people (around 170,000 persons) rose to circa 300,000.

To what degree does the above-mentioned aggregate correspond to the theories of modernist urbanism, and, in general, to a utopian model? First, this should have been a closed community. The district, projected as a self-sufficient system, with all the necessary equipment, should have been the residence of those who would have worked in the industrial zone Militari nearby (which did not happen). The direct connection with the working place, with the commercial, entertainment, school equipment, would have meant an almost complete autarchy relative to the rest of the town. To the population having a pre-established number and relations – an exemplary society – corresponded a pre-established framework, which was set in front of the town, on a practically virgin soil – an exemplary space. These are conceived in opposition to the real town, the Bucharest of that time. To

Everything, the built and planned framework, the number of inhabitants, the types of activity and their frequency, all has been conceived of scientifically as practically immutable elements, the unpredicted, the accidents, the transformations, practically any personal evolution being eliminated. Almost

R. M. Gherghel, "The Structure and Organization of Residential Zones", in *Arhitectura* 1/71, Bucharest (issue dedicated to the sketch of Bucharest and the new residential aggregates' systematization).

[&]quot;A town having an old tradition, conceived of and dimensioned according to a different scale and for other functions and necessities, Bucharest has been outrun in the last decades by the requirements of our society which is now fully developing". T. Ricci, Actual Problems Regarding the Systematizing of Bucharest, in Arhitectura 1/71, Bucharest.

no aspect has been allowed to develop at random and outside a rigorous planning; both as regards the hierarchy and the decomposition into elements, from the sector (the whole aggregate), going through the micro-district, the group of buildings and the building, up to the apartment and the spaces contained therein. The annexed functions, clearly defined regarding the type, size, and location, obey to the same rules of rigorously defined usage.

All the inevitable aspects of the reality which were no part of this rigorous structure are ignored: the complexity and the freedom of social interactions, the individualization of typical elements, the unplanned evolution, the inhabitants' possibilities to approach and transform the space.

The applied spatial model is that of modernist urbanism. The traffic ways are strictly hierarchical: a great boulevard, other streets for the traffic of automobiles, a separated network for the circulation of pedestrians, having a very organic geometry. All the buildings, laid up after an orthogonal pattern, defined according to rules of sunlight orientation and modern compositional principles, float freely in a total space, an immense park, which covers the entire district. Besides the apartments (private spaces), the corridors and outbuildings (semi-private spaces), the grounds due to different equipment (treated as being a part of the whole), all the rest of the space is public.

Beyond the "utopian" characteristics proper, the aggregate is not just a projection of the political regime or of certain theoretical concepts. A compromise, as any artefact, it has been projected by the architects manifesting as individualities, subject to a system of coercion, but in a moment of relative liberalization and in a period in which the principles of the Chart from Athens, the founding text of modernist urbanism,

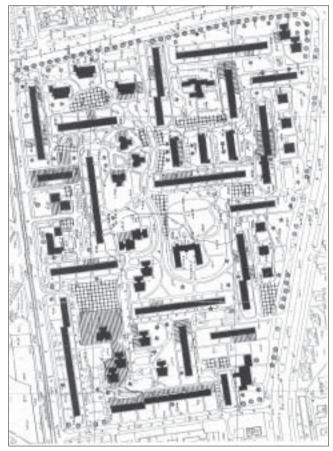
were still universally accepted. It is difficult to imagine today the significance of the chance given to young architects to project a huge modern aggregate, in an architecture which resumed the tradition of the avant-garde from the inter-war epoch (one of relative normality and synchronization with the civilized world), all these after the long "night" of Stalinism.

Obviously, the theoretical context of the project was of no interest for the inhabitants. But the private alternatives lacking, the relative comfort of the apartments exerted strong attraction (otherwise, many of these apartments had been from the start private property). The same annihilation of the freedom of choice contributed to the rise of a population made up of representatives of all social categories, except the nomenclature, and with a very good global image, during the past years. This, and the richness of green spaces – the "park" and, at times, the "forest" aspect, made up, until recently, an image having positive tones, as related to many other zones of Bucharest.

Living in Utopia

In order to better analyze the transformations brought about by the inhabitants of certain identical units and of a homogeneous space, we have tried to focus on one of the basic units, the micro-district (the neighbouring unit) Moghioros-Romancierilor, which is representative for the aggregate structure, and which underwent minimal planned modifications in the period which elapsed from the moment it had been given to public usage.

See, by way of comparison, the very negative image of some historical zones, having the great qualities of urban space and architecture (e. g., Lipscani), which continually deteriorate.



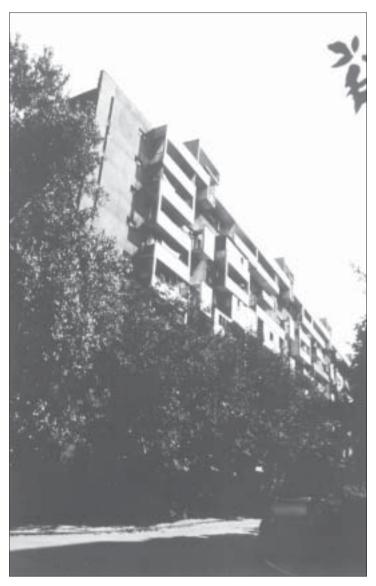
The Moghioros - Romancierilor neighborhood unit **Map of the transformations**

Constructions built after the original design	
Front or rear gardens	
Garages	\blacksquare
Provisional trade	
Farming lands	
Garbage depositing	\$

The first category of adapted spaces is the apartments. The interior arrangement has tried to compensate for the uniformity and rigidity of a given equalizing framework. Everything that could enhance comfort and reflect taste, identity and one's social status, had to be concentrated in the interior space. The exterior signs of the different nature of the inhabitants receive the form of arranging the balconies, as the "hanging gardens", or the numerous variants of enclosures, or as the replacement and decorating of the main doors to the apartment.

The corridor and the staircase represent by definition the semi-public most visible and used spaces in a collective building. There are here great differences between the variants in which space is treated: from a neutral passage space or which has become a no man's land with different degrees of degradation, up to its transformation into an actual space for meetings and representation. The interphone, the lattice (playing sometimes a decorating role), the plants, the photos as well as other arrangements describe different degrees of adaptation, enclosure in front of the exterior and sociability between the members of the social group in the respective blocks. These arrangements seem here and there to be the work of a common effort, or, on the contrary, of an individual action of expanding and marking the private space of the apartment.

As regards the exterior spaces, we are again dealing with more usage and adaptation categories. The classification, which is the result of direct research, serves to define these categories, but this should not be generalized. The whole ground has theoretically been under public administration, which does not imply its total neutrality. The groups of blocks, their massiveness define the subzones of the general space. On the other hand, the exterior limits – the streets with traffic,



The utopian dream: Apartments, free-standing prisms, a general park

the automobiles of greater or lesser importance, determine the difficulty of certain modes of adaptation or, on the contrary, the concentration of certain activities (e.g., trade). The interior traffic ways – lanes designed for public service or for promenade – serve in many cases to separate the different zones.

One first category is the spaces from the immediate vicinity of the blocks, delimited by the closest perimetric circulations. These are the grounds having the best chances towards adaptation by the inhabitants of the respective buildings, many of them being looked after and transformed, thus taking over the role of the traditional "front garden" or "rear garden". At times the interferences are limited to small planted and decorated spaces, individually looked after or in common, at other times the access ways are marked and amplified, by green pergolas, by adding benches, border stones, etc. The casual block entrance is thus transformed into a place as far as possible individualized and pleasant, a space of social contacts and of representation. Most of the times, these spaces are enclosed with plantations or lattice.

The rest of the space has been perceived as belonging to everybody, therefore to nobody. Which does not mean that it kept its initial unity. We can distinguish between three main types of transformation:

The first consists of the parts of the ground to which, by general agreement or by individual initiative, the function of *productive spaces* has been ascribed. We are dealing here either with *farming lands*, i.e., enclosed lots of land intended for growing vegetables, or with *groups of garages*, with their due access ways.

The second type of occupation, specific for the period of transition, is the provisional trade in kiosks or market stalls,



A superposition of individual "homes"

the only function, which is probably surveyed by the authorities (without being based on any kind of planning). If the commercial function planned in the beginning was located in the so-called isolated complexes alongside the main boulevard, the boutiques obey only the profitableness rules. They are totally absent in the inside of the aggregate, being concentrated almost exclusively around the bus or tram station, and alongside the main enclosing streets. Thus, the traditional commercial street is spontaneously reinvented, trimmed with all types and categories of services, from beer and restaurants, inevitably with their terraces, up to retail trade, photo shops, hairdresser's saloons and grocer's shops.

Finally, we have the spaces with no specific activity attributed, and which can indeed be called *nobody's spaces*. In this category we have the spaces initially planned for children's play and which are in a process of decay, the richly planted areas looking increasingly more like *fragments of forest*, as well as those used for the wild and consistent depositing of garbage of any kind. Finally, we have the rest of the initial territory, with no significant interventions made – *neutral space*.

What kind of conclusions can be reached from these observations, in the absence of sociological and anthropological studies, or at least of some up-to-date statistics? And to what degree can these conclusions be extrapolated?

First and foremost, beyond the flaws of the urban model, which is otherwise discussed since long, and for which efforts are put since a few decades in order to find alternatives, the above-described tendencies suggest certain qualities of the space and of the buildings which allow a more favorable social reception: for instance, the basic unit from which a territory is being transformed is not the block, but the staircase grouping apartments. Then, semi-public interior spaces and the due

grounds of the smaller buildings, with five levels, seem to be more looked after than those of the tall buildings. A smaller community probably determines a higher degree of identification and responsibility, while there probably exists, other factors lacking, a critical threshold in the coagulation of such a community. Strikingly, great differences appear between units that are initially quite identical in shape. They are probably due to different locations and neighborhoods and to the social composition and the presence of more or less dynamic factors (like the personality of the elected administrators).

At another reading level, there can be distinguished the signs of an irrepressible vitality of certain groups and individualities to oppose both a social homogenizing and depersonalizing project, and certain architectural spaces too little differentiated and individualized. The equalizing and frozen framework of the "ideal city" generates individualizing reactions, the inventing and reinventing of certain forms of sociability, of approaching the space, sometimes in manners which belong to some personal and social reflexes which some believed had disappeared. "The front garden", "the commercial street" – unitary by its continuous front sides, and integrating the differences and inherent evolutions, would be part of the spontaneous mechanisms of reinventing the urban, which nevertheless, as it seems, is opposed by the ruralizing tendencies (are the gardens with vegetables to be explained only by poverty and the lack of resources?), which appear in the same spatial context.

The problem of social space, however, remains, even beyond the juridical definition, the problem of the balance between the public interest and the private. In the totalitary state, the public space is that of the ultimate authority, which



A front garden

tries to control and, eventually, to repress any kind of manifestation of private space, of individuality, and of any kind of free, contractual form of relationships. In this context, the withdrawal, the semi-clandestine taking hold of the space, can be understood as forms of the survival of personality, and of individuals actually. The explosion of such phenomena after the fall of absolute control and in the period when new systems are built must not surprise us. The civic space does not even exist in the absence of a strong private space. I do not think that we have to regret the integrity impossible to maintain of utopias born sometimes out of the best intentions.

But beyond asserting individuality, we can be worried by the delaying of the coagulation of a space of urban society. Regarding the aggregate under study, garbage deposits right at the limits of idyllic gardens and "smart" shops point towards



Shopping street, detail

an absolute segregation between private spacers and the rest of the urban environment. Thus, the individual territories or of the small groups form a patchwork of juxtaposed enclaves, placed in a no one's land. The image can be extended, with some adjustments, to the whole of the urban phenomenon. From the barracks, intended for people to live in, of the former regime, the blocks tend to be transformed into unorganized aggregates of individual habitation. The feelings of identity and of responsibility seem to stop at the limits of personal propriety (legal or implicit), having no relation with the town other than that of consumption. From enclosing the balconies up to throwing the garbage into the street (all being explicable actions), the general behavior indicates the same withdrawal, the same rejection of urban space and of the rules of a community.

Perhaps all these are only inevitable manifestations of a transition towards a normality of which rules have not yet been established and accepted. Or maybe we go indeed, on a personal track, towards a global logic of introverted and autonomous objects, in which urban space, as a support of identity, tends to be replaced by a multitude of other frameworks.

REZUMAT

Lucrarea propune o abordare a problemei spațiului individual și a celui al colectivității, pornind de la mijloacele analizei arhitecturale. O astfel de discuție implică cercetarea articulării între teoriile arhitecturale și urbanistice și materializarea acestora, ideologiile și regimurile politice, mecanismele de identificare, apropriere si refuz a spațiului de

către locuitori. Baza de studiu o reprezintă cartierul de locuințe colective Drumul Taberei din București, ansamblu considerat reprezentativ pentru perioada de relativă liberalizare și de acceptare parțială a modelului modernist de către regimul socialist. De fapt, scopul principal al studiului îl constituie determinarea și interpretarea transformărilor spontane aduse unui spațiu aproape omogen și unor unități identice.

Determinând în prezent o respingere viscerală a locuirii colective în general, "blocul de locuințe" socialist nu reprezintă totuși decât unul dintre tipurile acestei categorii. Imobilul de apartamente ca element fundamental al metropolelor secolului al XIX-lea, de pildă, a presupus crearea și negocierea permanentă – legală sau implicită – a echilibrului de interese, a delimitărilor și tranzițiilor între spațiul public și cel privat, în sfârșit al articulării cu spațiul și cultura orașului existent. Diferitele modele din anii socialismului au în comun dominația absolută a spațiului public, un spațiu total, continuu și "al tuturor", organizat în mod științific. Aceste trăsături comune ale proiectului social și ale utopiei moderniste s-au materializat în marile cartiere ale anilor '60.

După o sumară trecere în revistă a principalelor caracteristici ale utopiilor sociale și ale modelelor spațiale corespunzătoare, precum și a specificității utopiei urbanistice moderniste, vor fi prezentate avatarurile românești ale blocului. Perioada de liberalizare și deschidere a determinat în mod paradoxal, prin încercarea de resincronizare cu modernitatea, aplicarea cea mai apropiată de principiile originale a modelului urbanistic progresist. Se va încerca o lectură a formelor urbane și arhitecturale ale ansamblului studiat, prin intermediul grilei de criterii care definesc modelul inițial (societatea – model și spațiul – model, încercarea de soluționare

perfectă a unor elemente considerate esențiale și ignorarea celorlalte, ierarhia și segregarea strictă a funcțiunilor, colectivismul și egalitarismul, spațiul urban continuu sub forma unui parc în care plutesc construcții izolate etc.). Fiind vorba despre un ansamblu real, un artefact, forma sa nu reprezintă doar o proiecție a unui regim politic sau a unor concepte teoretice, ci mai degrabă un compromis între acestea, constrângerile sociale și economice și individualitatea și creativitatea proiectanților. Pe de altă parte, populația nu a "respectat" categoriile sociale stricte prevăzute prin proiect, mixitatea obligată favorizând reacțiile de diferențiere și personalizare.

Dincolo de individualizarea apartamentelor, marcarea sau, dimpotrivă, păstrarea caracterului neutru sau degradarea spațiilor semi-publice (holuri, case ale scărilor), cartarea transformărilor aduse spațiilor exterioare descrie poate cel mai bine modurile de receptare și folosire ale spațiului. Din fostul ansamblu spațial neutru au fost decupate zone cu diferite grade de apropriere și identificare: grădini în jurul blocurilor, marcarea acceselor, spații productive (grupări de garaje și terenuri agricole), comerțul provizoriu, și, în sfârșit, spațiile nimănui, neafectate vreunei anumite activități – fragmente din pădurea inițială, terenuri în părăsire, locuri de joacă mai mult sau mai puțin decăzute, zone reziduale transformate în depozite de gunoaie.

În lipsa unor studii sociologice și antropologice, se pot totuși trage câteva concluzii asupra unor tendințe de individualizare, inventare și reinventare a urbanului – "grădina din fața casei", și "strada comercială", combinate cu reflexe de ruralizare, ambele în opoziție cu cadrul inițial egalizator al "cetății ideale". Toată această irepresibilă vitalitate a manifestărilor grupurilor și indivizilor nu pare însă să

depășească definirea unor teritorii private, a unor enclave disparate, juxtapuse într-un spațiu al nimănui. Identificarea și responsabilitatea par a se opri la limitele spațiului propriu, replierea și refuzul urbanității părând a caracteriza "orașul de tranziție", în ansamblul său. Rămâne în final întrebarea dacă avem de a face cu manifestări inevitabile ale tranziției, sau în ce măsură spațiul urban public (dincolo de definiția strict legală), tinde să fie redus la o colecție de cadre introvertite și autonome ale identității și sociabilității.

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