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and the workshop
participants



Cities *Methodologies* | Bucharest

Exhibition / Workshop / Talks - Casa Scarlat Ghica & UNAgaleria, October - November, 2010

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On the cover: Mircea Nicolae - *Glass globes / 25 demolished houses*, detail, photo Simona Dumitriu

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Introduction

by Ger Duijzings

CitiesMethodologies | Bucharest, an exhibition with workshops and talks showcasing new and innovative methods in urban research, was held between 28 October and 5 November 2010, in Casa Scarlat-Ghica, a for Bucharest typical old and neglected villa in the courtyard of the National University of the Arts of Bucharest (UNA). It was organized in collaboration with the Galeria Nouă and the Association for Urban Transition (ATU). The concept was developed by Ger Duijzings (UCL School of Slavonic and East European Studies) and John Aiken (UCL Slade School of Fine Arts), who in May 2009 organised the first edition of *CitiesMethodologies* at University College London (UCL) with curatorial assistance from Rastko Novaković. While *CitiesMethodologies* went into its third edition at UCL, attracting work from across the globe, *CitiesMethodologies* | Bucharest was the first edition organized abroad, outside UCL. A second one is planned in Warsaw 2012.

The key idea of *CitiesMethodologies* is to showcase the processes through which scholars and artists in their research and explorations of the urban environment approach cities and gather useful data and material, instead of displaying —as is normally the case— the polished end products of their work. The emphasis is on innovative methodologies, particularly drawing on the work of (visual) artists, whose approaches are often idiosyncratic, intuitive, and improvised. From our perspective this is where the inspiration for innovation may come from. The exhibition is thought of as a walk-through exhibition, emulating the specific urban form of the street, which as a public and complex setting, provides opportunities for unpredictable encounters and synergies. The key to methodological exchange and cross-fertilization, which is crucially part of *CitiesMethodologies*, is talks and workshops, where artists, film makers, anthropologists, sociologists, architects and urban planners, present and discuss their work, where issues are raised, and questions are asked.

The initial idea for *CitiesMethodologies* emerged in 2008, when Ger Duijzings received a modest

amount of funding from the UCL Arts and Humanities Faculty to develop the Cities research theme.¹ He teamed up with John Aiken, the Director of the UCL Slade School of Fine Arts, in discussion with whom the event took shape. One of the tasks was to create an inventory of work done at university, and to invite collaborators from all corners of UCL with an interest in urban studies. It became clear that it was not possible to bring all strands of research together under one overarching theme, and so the idea grew to focus on methods and methodologies, an aspect all research shares. Scholars and artists gather data and visual sources through systematic encounters with the city, and they (implicitly or explicitly) employ a set of methodological tools, i.e. practical and often conventional steps to gather data or images. The questions that we put at the centre of *CitiesMethodologies* were: how do researchers and artists approach and tackle the city as a separate entity of research and exploration; through which spectacles and prisms do they look at urban realities; what do they do, how do they work, where do they look for the data that they need; what mistakes do they make, how do they make their hands dirty in terms of the practical choices they make in the process of data gathering and the collection of visual sources; and, finally, how do they, at the end of this research trajectory, process the data and materials they gather into formats that communicate their ideas and findings. The idea

was to draw the attention away from the polished and processed end products of their work, even though they remain a crucial point of reference, and to focus on process and practice, i.e. on how these outcomes are achieved through forms of experimentation, error and trial.

One of the aims of *CitiesMethodologies* has been to push the methodological boundaries in urban research. This is why we have been keen on including the work of artists (some of whom have come from UCL but most from outside university) who tend to explore cities in more improvised, playful, and idiosyncratic manners. Their work is often experimental, with the emphasis put on just doing something out of the ordinary, applying a certain procedure or protocol, without knowing what the actual outcome will be. The work of Anthony Luvera, a photographer who participated in the first edition of *CitiesMethodologies* (2009) and also presented his work at *CitiesMethodologies* | Bucharest, is a perfect example in this respect. For a number of years, he has been working in London and Belfast, building up an archive of thousands of photos made by homeless people (and those with experience of it) including assisted self-portraits. The decision he took was to organise weekly workshops, providing participants with disposable cameras which they would bring back the following week to be developed. He started this participatory photography project without a



¹ Additional support and funding was received from the UCL Slade School of Fine Art, UCL School of Slavonic and East European Studies, UCL Grand Challenges, UCL Urban Laboratory, and the Polish Cultural Institute.

preconceived idea of what the outcome of would be and how the archive could be put to use. It crystallised into an exploration of the inside experiences of homelessness, the everyday preoccupations and abstract and philosophical concepts developed by those who are homeless, and of their understanding and perception of the city. Luvera facilitated the creation of individual portfolios for each of the participants, which were included in the archive of images.

The work of Luvera shows that the arts and humanities can bring a proper understanding of the subjective experience of living in cities, by zooming in on categories of people inhabiting urban spaces, offering an intimate view of their problems and mindsets. As our cities and everyday lives in these cities are changing rapidly our methods to capture those experiences will have to change as well, which is at the core of *CitiesMethodologies*: to argue for reflection on method in the context of an object that is constantly in flux. Given the complex problems faced by contemporary cities, innovative, flexible, and multi- and inter-disciplinary research methodologies and formats are urgently required. A fine example is Margareta Kern's work with female guest workers from the former Yugoslavia in Berlin, who arrived in Germany in the 1970s. Her work or rather her work-in-progress, which was showcased in different formats at the first edition of *CitiesMethodologies* as well as in Bucharest, provides an intimate insight into the experiences of female migrant workers in a West-European city, but moreover provides a probing reflection on method and presentation of intimate and fragmented lives, through the presentation of family snapshots and personal memorabilia, and the artist's writing of fiction.

An important objective of *CitiesMethodologies* is indeed to creatively juxtapose different methods used by artists and scholars to uncover the experiences of the city, from oral history, literature, photography, and (documentary and experimental) film-making, such as the London-in-Motion films on East Europeans in London, to for instance the portrayal of contemporary Romanian cities through electronic music by Cosmin Nicolae, or the smellscape explored by Mădălina Diaconu in her work on Vienna. In that sense *CitiesMethodologies* makes an important contribution to what is a major challenge of urban research: to tap into the diverse, newly evolving and multi-faceted urban experiences of those who inhabit our cities.

The aim of many contemporary artists is not only to represent urban realities but to insert their work into the public life and public spaces of cities. Some installations, practices, and performances are deliberate interventions in order to provoke a public response, like the work of Polish artist Joanna Rajkowska (participant in the first *CitiesMethodologies* in London). Outcomes are not predictable, as became abundantly clear from Rajkowska's presentation about her Palm Tree project in Warsaw and the ways in which it became an urban symbol contested and appropriated by a variety of groups, politicians and activists. In a way her project is an example of an experimental and open-ended process which forms a reversal of what is the usual practice in academic research,

where the researcher defines the topic, formulates a key research question and a hypothesis, and then decides how he or she will go about gathering data and materials, i.e. what methods will be used to answer the question. This often becomes an overly mechanical process, justified by the need to obtain 'reliable' and 'representative' data.

Anthropological research is far more improvised and open-ended in this respect, and closer to the experimentation that is characteristic for the arts. This has been one of the premises of *CitiesMethodologies*: it may be productive and innovative to just 'do' and 'absorb', like the 'hanging out' in the case of anthropological fieldwork, and ask the salient questions about the material afterwards. It is in the process of *doing* that one may develop new approaches, topics, and raise interesting new questions. In this approach the methods come, if you like, first and the questions second.

One of the ideas that have emerged from *CitiesMethodologies* | Bucharest is that each city provides a specific physical, socio-political, and historical context, which partly defines and determines particular issues and problems, including the methodological ones. In one city certain approaches may be more appropriate and

suitable than in another. In Bucharest, the themes that imposed themselves were those of the brutal socialist and post-socialist ruptures and urban transformations (which are for instance explored in Mircea Nicolae's work), of urban segregation (in the work of Irina Botea), of abandoned urban space (the workshop projects), and the role of artists in engaging with these issues (in subREAL's or Marina Albu's work). One of the methodological issues that were at the centre of *CitiesMethodologies* | Bucharest is the intensely fragmented nature and factionalism of local academia and architectural and urban planning circles. The existence of informal groups and cliques, between and within the different professions and disciplines, prevents genuine communication and collaboration. This was the main rationale to organise an interdisciplinary workshop prior to the exhibition, with participation of young professionals and research students. The task of small interdisciplinary teams was to identify a controversial urban development project or complex space in Bucharest and put to work various urban research tools and practices, reflecting on process and method, and gathering a combination of *visual* and *non-visual data*. The aim was to build bridges of communication and develop a platform of debate and interaction,



crossing the usual disciplinary boundaries and exploring ways of working in mixed teams. This was an addition to *CitiesMethodologies* which had not been part of the London event.

It is our intention to 'export' and adopt the *CitiesMethodologies* format to other local contexts. The next edition of *CitiesMethodologies* outside UCL is envisaged to take place in Warsaw (2012), organised by a local organising committee and funded locally. The outcome will be different, matching the specific issues and ambience of that city, but with input from London and Bucharest. Part of the flexible and open concept of *CitiesMethodologies* is indeed for the most successful projects of each edition to be 'ping-ponged' around between the different cities where *CitiesMethodologies* is taking place. In Bucharest a selection of exhibits from the previous London editions were showcased and at the last London edition projects from *CitiesMethodologies* | Bucharest were exhibited. We welcome initiatives to carry out future editions elsewhere, and if truthful to the original concept, we will do our best to provide support and assistance.

***CitiesMethodologies* | Bucharest exhibition.**

28 October- 5 November 2010. Curators: Aurora Király and Simona Dumitriu. Location: Casa Scarlet-Ghica and UNAgaleria.

Artists: Wesley Aelbrecht, Irina Botea, Margareta Kern, London-in-Motion (LiM), Anthony Luvera, Cosmin Nicolae, Mircea Nicolae, Rastko Novaković & Ger Duijzings, Ro_Archive, Peter Sant, Alexandru Solomon, subREAL, Fusun Turetken, Eva Weber, and participants of the *CitiesMethodologies* Bucharest Workshop.

***CitiesMethodologies* | Bucharest talks.**

29-30 October 2010. Moderator: Ger Duijzings. Location: UNA Galeria.

Participants: Gruia Bădescu, Cătălin Berescu, Liviu Chelcea, Phil Collins, Călin Dan, Mădălina Diaconu, Simona Dumitriu & Raluca Ionescu, Celia Ghyka, Margareta Kern, Iwona Kurz, Anthony Luvera, Vera Marin, Norbert Petrovici, Ștefan Tiron, Varinia Taboada, Ioana Tudora.

***CitiesMethodologies* | Bucharest workshop.**

9-23 October 2010. Coordinator: Vera Marin.

Architects: Cristian Bălan, Marius Mitran, Mihai Moțcanu Dumitrescu, Mihnea Nicolae Simiraș, Sebastian Stan, Emilia Țugui.

Artists: Marina Albu, Bogdan Bordeianu, Daniel Djamo, Ioana Gheorghiu, Andra Jurgiu, Andrei Radu, Ștefan Sava, Zelmira Szabo.

Anthropologists and sociologists: Andra Mitia Dumitru, Marius Huza, Ionuț Pițurescu, Viorela Strat, Mihaela Țânțaș, Miruna Țircă.



Casa Scarlet-Ghica

The Cities *Methodologies* experience

by Aurora Király

At a time when, due to the general lack of funding and infrastructure caused by the financial crisis, Romanian artists withdraw in fictional projects and institutions, I was in the extremely fortunate position to be able to develop, together with colleagues, a truly interdisciplinary project which has the potential to be repeated in other formats in the future. Such an endeavor seemed to be very useful to me in the Romanian context for a number of reasons. In the first place, there is the city itself, which requires to be observed and analyzed from perspectives as various as possible. Secondly, there is the necessity of creating a platform for specialists from different fields and the need to share methods in an interdisciplinary manner.

Thirdly, there is the need and wish to involve students who take an interest in the process of urban space analysis and research.

The concept for *Cities Methodologies* developed by Ger Duijzings and John Aiken in 2009 in London is very interesting and versatile and can be adapted to different contexts. Working with the Bucharest project team (consisting of Ger Duijzings, Simona Dumitriu, Vera Marin and myself) offered one of the most pleasant and motivating professional experiences over the past few years. One of the aims of the project is to promote interdisciplinarity and create new synergies, and in a way our team clearly succeeded in this. Each of us initially contributed with knowledge specific to his or her

background, but during the development of the project we became familiar with so many different approaches that our own understanding became more complex and nuanced.

The list of participants was an adventure in itself, as the four of us were keen to invite all those we considered to be able to fill in a piece of this project's puzzle. During the development of the project, partly due to time and financial constraints, we had to settle on a reasonable number of participants. Yet all participants perfectly matched the project concept. The curatorial work as well as the practical preparation and organization of the project I shared with Simona Dumitriu. This process progressed

Exhibition view



smoothly and naturally, as we compiled the final list of participants and projects and their set-up and presentation in the exhibition space.

One of the crucial aspects of this exhibition was the venue we selected for the event. The National University of Arts in Bucharest gave us access to a building located on its premises close to its main building, a nineteenth century structure known as Casa Scarlat-Ghica or Casa Robescu. Having an intricate history, this is a neo-classical building was constructed in the second half of the nineteenth century and has the status of historical monument. The magistrate Alexandru Scarlat Ghica (1837-1918) lived here up until 1901. A.F. Robescu, professor of mathematics at the Matei Basarab High School bought the house at the beginning of the twentieth century and donated it shortly thereafter to the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Public Education. Until 1948, the building housed the Vocational School for Girls No.1, then it accommodated for some time the Fine Arts High School N. Tonitza, and finally it was home to a number of artist studios subsequent to an agreement with the Union of Fine Artists. In 2008, the National University of Arts arranged an architectural competition for the extension and functional remodeling of the university, and in 2009 the contract with the Union of Fine Artists was terminated in view of cleaning and preparing the space for the implementation of the selected architectural solution. The shortage of funds delayed the commencement of the construction work and in view of this the management of the university invited students and professors to develop temporary projects in this space.

Considering that the spaces dedicated to contemporary art and medium size cultural projects are relatively few in Bucharest and that only some of these target non-commercial projects, the Scarlat-Ghica house seemed perfect from several points of view. On the one hand we felt attracted to the complicated and anfractuouse history of the building and the utter deterioration of it — as a metaphor standing for the state of other similar buildings in Bucharest and for the center of the city fractured by many changes and architectural styles — evincing the state of the entire city at a smaller scale. Last but not least we were delighted by the large space it made available for *CitiesMethodologies* in compartments that



Iosif Király - Ro_Archive - Bucharest, 2008

perfectly suited the purpose of our project. The division of rooms helped to break down the presentation into separate artistic projects, installations, projections and so on.

Along the lines of the *CitiesMethodologies* concept, the exhibition functioned as a platform for presenting methods and approaches used by artists in their explorations of the city but also for presenting and examining the work that had been done (or was still in progress) by the different interdisciplinary teams consisting of artists, architects and social scientists that were created in the framework of *CitiesMethodologies* | Bucharest.

The exhibition did not take the traditional route of constructing a project from the start, but it rather functioned as a collaborative project mixing and arranging the pieces of a partially assembled puzzle. The concept had already been outlined and the emphasis was on process and used methods and less on final works and projects. In addition, we had the possibility of inviting some of the artists who took part in the previous editions of

CitiesMethodologies in London.

That being said, the exhibition *CitiesMethodologies* | Bucharest was a good opportunity to bring together artists concerned with this subject and the social, cultural and political issues that shape the urban context. The exhibited works, completed as photographs, video/sound installations, videos or documentary films, offered many relevant examples as to how artists record, reflect and question the city, and urban life and habitation in general.

In retrospect, one of the aspects that I found most rewarding was that the entire project functioned in an organic and unified manner. We succeeded to bring this across in the exhibition as well: the exhibition space clearly felt like an old and unsanitized house, where work was in progress, and one would enter its different rooms and gradually learn different stories. The tour of the exhibition started with the ground floor which housed the works of Irina Botea, Mircea Nicolae and Cosmin Nicolae.

Mircea Nicolae - *Glass globes / 25 demolished houses*, installation, 2010



Irina Botea's videos, such as *Elena the ladybug* and *Re-enactment*, reflect her interest in interacting with the individuals she filmed, giving intimate access to a series of stories depicting inequality and abuse, realities which in terms of harshness and toughness contrast with those of our own social and professional milieus.

Mircea Nicolae's installation entitled *Glass globes / 25 demolished buildings* reflects upon the tearing down of late nineteenth and early twentieth century houses from the city center and their replacement with blocks of flats and office high-rises. The artist transformed a number of glass globes found in a derelict glass factory into self-sufficient objects, making an obvious reference to those decorative Christmas snow globes which showcase enchanting winter landscapes on which snow falls quietly once the globe is turned upside down and shaken. Mircea Nicolae replaced the traditional snow globe landscape with pieces of bricks which he collected from torn-down houses and which he sculptured into houses, in a form similar to children's simplified drawings. On a nearby wall photographs of the actual demolished buildings were exhibited. The installation was completed

with a banner he took from one of the buildings under construction and a map which marked the location of the torn-down houses.

Cosmin Nicolae's contribution consisted of a sound installation which greatly added to the underlying beat of the entire project. The sound equipment was installed in a room which was too deteriorated to receive video installations and from where a constant sound mirroring Bucharest's skid rows traveled (the sound pieces had evoking titles such as *Tower block* or *Beton brut*).

At the first floor, the film *The solitary life of cranes* by Eva Weber (a German filmmaker based in London) provoked in visitors a more detached meditation on the rhythms and agitation of the city. Her film has the poetic quality of presenting and examining habitual situations from a new and unusual perspective, resulting in stories which cross all kinds of boundaries. It displays the life of the city as seen through the eyes of crane drivers who work at great heights and who, by the very nature of their occupation, watch the city from a distance and with detachment.

Margareta Kern's installation entitled *Guest* focused on the mass migration of laborers from the former Yugoslavia to West Germany. The work features especially women who moved to Berlin in the 1960s as guest workers and who still live and work there. The visitors were able to see slides from the personal archives of these women and at the same time had access to personal and official documents. One of the intentions underlying Margareta Kern's project was to transform these women's "stories into histories and conversely to turn histories into personal stories". The installation was constructed as an intimate work room where visitors would become 'guest workers' and browse through materials and documents, thus gaining access to the information.

Anthony Luvera's projects are similarly interesting in terms of approach, development process as well as results. During 2006-2008 he developed the *Residency* project, working with homeless individuals from Belfast and putting special emphasis on the ethical aspects of photographing vulnerable people and investigating the fine line of division between artistic control and subject empowerment. Similar issues were addressed in

Viorela Strat / Andrei Radu / Marius Mitran
Urban layers: marking mobile monuments in the public domain, 2010



the video exhibited at *CitiesMethodologies* entitled *Prologue to Isha*. This work reflects the artist's concern with the exchange between photographer and subject, through documenting the preparations for an interview with Isha, a woman suffering from schizophrenia.

In addition to presenting their works in the exhibition, Anthony Luvera and Margareta Kern attended the opening in Bucharest and delivered lectures. Their artistic projects, public talks as well as their collaboration with us in the context of *CitiesMethodologies*, provided an opportunity to become more familiar with the interactive work methods of these two artists who address social issues in their visual art projects.

For *CitiesMethodologies* | Bucharest, Ro_Archive presented a sample extracted from their 10,000 photographs database, showing the changing trajectories of their approach during the three years of the project's development, moving from a position of subjectivity to the recovery of the index value of the image. Initiated under the umbrella of the National University of Arts, Ro_Archive is coordinated by the architect and artist Iosif Király

and features young artists and art critics such as: Bogdan Bordeianu, Michele Bressan, Simona Dumitriu, Bogdan Gîrbovan, Raluca Ionescu, Andrei Mateescu, Cosmin Moldovan, Raluca Nestor, Cristiana Radu, and Larisa Sitar.

The idea behind the project Ro_Archive has been to produce an ongoing artistic documentation of the present. Since 1990, Romania has gone through a rough transition period involving major political, social and cultural changes. These transformations have affected all spheres of life. The effects of these dramatic turns can be easily seen on the 'face' of the city, in buildings under construction (not always with due authorization), in the new public monuments, in the inventiveness of urban inhabitants who adapt their living spaces in order to suit family needs (ground floor apartments being rented to small businesses or adapted to accommodate small family-owned boutiques or mini-markets).

Following the model of *Farm Security Administration*, *New topographics* or *La mission photographique de la DATAR*, the Ro_Archive team has traveled to many parts of the country and

photographed subjects relating to architecture, industry, agriculture, education, social programs, sports, and entertainment. The resulting database can be grouped according to the aforementioned fields or can be composed and recomposed in relation to the format of presentation (book, exhibition, lecture etc.) and the theme of the event. At the same time the images have different artistic qualities and styles representative for every participant to the project.

From the artistic duo subREAL (Iosif Király and Călin Dan) we exhibited images from the project entitled *Interviewing the cities*. The project started in 1999 with a double purpose: on the one hand to analyze, on several levels, artistic developments in various cities, and, on the other, to articulate the relationship of the artists' duo with people and places. The project consists of three series of staged photographs: first, portraits produced in collaboration with members of the local artistic communities; second, interviews with public monuments; and third, city overviews realized in *trompe l'oeil*, outlining the artificial nature of urban planning and its intimate relationship with the tourism industry and the mass-media. The







exhibition brought together a selection of black and white photographs varying in size and extracted from the sections entitled *Framing* and *Listening to sculpture* and made between 2000 and 2004 in Stockholm, Montreal, Zürich, Bucharest, Amsterdam, and Helsinki.

Among the participants to the exhibition worth mentioning are also: Wesley Aelbrecht with a video essay critically examining the ethnographic film-making practices of Pedro Costa who has been documenting housing transition in a slum area of Lisbon; Füsün Turetken with panoramic photographs featuring street elevations; and Peter Sant with the film *Chinatown, day for night*, about the urban night-time.

CitiesMethodologies | Bucharest included, in addition to artistic installations, a projection room screening films which document the attempt of artists, filmmakers and sociologists to analyze the city: a selection of films from the project London-in-Motion (made by the students from UCL and participants from outside the university, on East Europeans living in London); Alexandru Solomon's films *A dog's life* (on stray dogs) and *Apocalypse on wheels* (on traffic in Bucharest); or the experimental performance film made by Rastko Novaković and Ger Duijzings, entitled *Lebensraum / living space*. The film shows Ger Duijzings walking on the streets of London, reading passages from the diary he kept in 1992, when he was conducting anthropological fieldwork in war-torn Yugoslavia. The collaboration between Rastko Novaković and Ger Duijzings further evolved with a series of more recent artworks under the title *The geopolitical everyday*.

Last but not least, an important nucleus of the exhibition consisted of projects which resulted from the *CitiesMethodologies* | Bucharest workshop. Even if the emphasis of the workshop was on process, on the analysis and investigation of methods and on the benefits of working in multidisciplinary teams, the majority of teams succeeded in producing a visual or material presentation of their work. The inclusion of these projects in the exhibition was important to the participants because it provided an opportunity to relate their work to that of others and reconsider their projects from a broader perspective.

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In May 2011, I had the chance to present a selection of the Bucharest exhibition at the last edition of *CitiesMethodologies* in London, receiving feedback from both visitors and organizers. It was not until then that I was able to take the necessary (geographical, temporal and personal) distance to become fully aware of the qualities of the project developed in Bucharest. The work with students, the contributions of artists, guests speakers and other participants at all stages of the project (workshop, exhibition and debates), and last but not least the team's engagement and involvement in developing and carrying out this project, all these joint efforts created a powerful, dense and important event for both the artistic and academic community.



Exhibition views:
Ro_Archive, Marina Albu - *Acvilele Albe*, Eva Weber - *The solitary life of cranes*, Margareta Kern - *Guest*

The CitiesMethodologies workshop

by Simona Dumitriu

“Interdisciplinarity is always a site where expressions of resistance are latent. Many academics are locked within the specificity of their field: that is a fact... the first obstacle is often linked to individual competence, coupled with a tendency to jealously protect one’s own domain. Specialists are often too protective of their own prerogatives, do not actually work with other colleagues, and therefore do not teach their students to construct a diagonal axis in their methodology” (Julia Kristeva, “Institutional interdisciplinarity in theory and practice: an interview”. In Alex Coles and Alexia Defert, (eds.). *The Anxiety of Interdisciplinarity*. London: Backless Books, 1998, pp.3-21, here pp. 5-6).

CitiesMethodologies | Bucharest kicked off with an interdisciplinary workshop that took place at the National University of Arts in Bucharest (the UNA Gallery) between 9 and 23 October 2010. It resulted in seven interdisciplinary projects that were showcased at the main exhibition. The primary objective in each of these projects was to identify, apply and test a combination of methods in order to explore and analyze particular parts of Bucharest. Instead of formulating recommendations for how to solve concrete problems and issues, the scope of each project was to discover new and interdisciplinary ways of approaching the city by engaging with research practices of others. In other words, instead of looking at the city as such, we focused instead on the methods through which to approach existing urban realities, comparing them, outlining the differences and trying to foster dialogue. Aware of people's inclination to defend one's discipline even in the context of an interdisciplinary project, the participants – artists, architects, geographers, sociologists and anthropologists – collaborated on explorative case-studies, which they translated into a joint project, using visual and other material, and highlighting the specific contributions of each field to the ‘common cause’ of understanding urban realities.

In order to bring coherence and direction to the workshop, some key themes and focal points were defined:

- Urban voids and abandoned spaces
- Flux and dynamics of the city, in relation to urban voids and abandoned spaces
- Methods of site-specific observation and intervention
- Non-visual data (soundscapes, odor or smell maps, etc.)

During the first meeting, several interdisciplinary teams were formed, with the intention to distribute practitioners from the three main fields in an equal and balanced manner. Yet it proved impossible to make all teams work in perfect triangulation (which would have meant the inclusion of an artist, an architect or urban planner, and a sociologist or anthropologist). Some teams were dominated by

representatives from one particular discipline, while others were not even ‘complete’ as one of the three fields was missing. In the case of Marina Albu’s proposal, architects and anthropologists were invited to take part in an already existing project. Personal affinities, shared interests in one subject or another, the occurrence of real collaboration or the lack thereof resulted, understandably, in a number of deviations from the ideal workshop format.

The interdisciplinary teams had the task of identifying and exploring a site in Bucharest that matched the criteria and main themes of the workshop. After selecting the site, the participants spent some time there, getting acquainted with the surroundings as well as the other team members, discussing approaches put forward by all participants in relation to the chosen site and selecting a combination of (hybrid) methods with a view of proposing and producing, by the end of the workshop, a shared project to be included in the exhibition. The emphasis was on data gathering and the structuring of the project, as well as on the methods and ways in which information was collected, selected and used during the interpretation process.

The workshop included guest lectures by Vintilă Mihăilescu, Florin Tudor, Space Syntax, Mircea Nicolae, Celia Ghyka, Ioana Tudora, Liviu Chelcea, etc. On the day following the opening of the exhibition, British video artist Phil Collins was invited to discuss the results with the workshop participants and students of the National University of Arts. During the artist talk and the informal master class that followed, Collins screened samples of his work, including from his most recent film *Marxism Today* (a film on former teachers of Marxism-Leninism in what was once the GDR). This was followed by a lively debate. Apart from the obvious relevance of these matters for Romanian society, bringing to the surface our own shared obsessions with these issues, the conversation with Collins provided numerous very useful insights into the artist’s methods of production and collaboration.

The *CitiesMethodologies* | Bucharest workshop was a genuine experiment in what could be called applied interdisciplinarity. Its limits and potentials were intensely discussed, to the extent that there was also a sense of crisis or awareness of the insurmountable problems that this kind of dialogue poses. It became clear that the road to a more diagonal and interdisciplinary use of methodologies as proposed by Kristeva is full of obstacles, problems and tensions. However, it did lead to moments of concrete dialogue in the field or site research (in the form of simple and spontaneous conversations on waste ground locations or interviews in the middle of the city) resulting in new ideas that were useful to all, and triggering forms of reflection on methods which we tend to apply rather mechanically or intuitively. One of the real benefits of the workshop was the inclusion of artists. In the social sciences, the arts are usually ignored when exploring the possibilities and potentials of interdisciplinarity, even though many artists have perfectly appropriated the methods of examination and research developed and put forth in other fields, some in a mimetic manner and others because they have an inclination to research.

The workshop resulted in seven projects, which were all exhibited at *CitiesMethodologies*, reflecting different takes on interdisciplinary collaboration. The artist Marina Albu invited a number of friends, i.e. two architects and an anthropologist, to take part in her project *Acvilele Albe*. They formulated the existence of a fictional group of anarchists who lived in Bucharest between 1945 and 1948 on the abandoned and derelict premises of a former hospital. “I chose this building on account of the myths I heard”, Marina Albu wrote when explaining the selection of the ruined building from Dr. Iacob Felix Street 88. Considering that this site has been associated with stories told in the neighborhood, Albu intended to examine historicizing mechanisms. Consisting of films and interviews with the pseudo descendants of the artists as well as black and white photographs and fictional documents of actions that happened on the premises of the hospital, her project is about creating a new myth — the myth of a group of protesting artists who disappeared once communism set in – and making it into a ‘fact’ documented and noted on Wikipedia. Even if the project shows that in the viral internet era, rumors are not difficult to start, it flags up a real and profound issue: Romanian art needs myths, heroes and predecessors. In the context of the crisis of modern and contemporary art in Romania, an alternative art group such as *Acvilele Albe* is indeed possible and imaginable. A similar

occurrence is that of discovering and mythologizing now almost forgotten artists and the possibility that they may indeed contribute to a reformulation of still unwritten or projected histories.

Two teams selected the area of the (never fully realized) Văcărești lake as location for their projects. Video artist Ștefan Sava and architect Mihnea Nicolae Simiraș approached it from the position of the random explorer. The explorer ventures into a space with its own rules which are partially out of sync with urban realities and partially intersect with it. The Văcărești lake (a lake that does not exist and which consists of dikes without water) appears as the paradoxical ruin of the technical incapacity of the communist regime, now taken over by nature and vegetation, scattered with improvised living spaces and crossed by inquisitive explorers. “The explorer realizes that he has entered the remnants of a historical accident left by communism which is now governed by a set of rules which are strange for the urban individual. Somehow the laws that usually govern the urban environment do not apply here: nature buries and covers the marks of the accident and continues to evolve by itself, through its own will”. In their project, Sava and Simiraș tackle the issue of measuring this enclosed space, of examining the relations it forms with the outside, and of studying its urban surroundings which are peripheral to it. In the resulting project, consisting of a film, and accompanied by photographs and a drawing made by the architect and the artist, the Văcărești lake features as a place with its own flora and fauna. One almost expects to come across creatures such as those in the book *Dr. Ameisenhaufen's Fauna* by photographer Joan Fontcuberta (1988).

The investigations of the group made up of Bogdan Bordeianu, Andra Dumitru and Sebastian Stan proceeded backwards, documenting precisely this border through the ‘entry’ and ‘exit’ points from the Văcărești area — through a new shopping mall, a newly built, large and only partially inhabited compound of luxury apartment blocks, a military base — in the context of the map of this site and the transformations it has undergone in time. In this case, the study of the border turned into an investigation of protection and public security issues when the team members were stopped and held after they had unknowingly traversed the terrain of a military base. The digital photographs taken by Bordeianu (although they did capture sites that were not signaled as prohibited for image taking) were deleted by patrolling soldiers. Twenty photographs were finally recovered from the memory card by means of special software. They were exhibited as projections, producing a simple but disconcerting effect: twenty rather banal images of the surroundings, seeking to document the city and having nothing dangerous in themselves, become evidence for an equally simple question: What needs to be ‘protected’ and ‘secured’ in the public space, and why, and who decides about the anxieties, dangers and problems of security in today’s city?

The project of the team made up of Ionuț Pițurescu, Zelmira Szabo, Cristian Bălan and Mihai Moțcanu Dumitrescu focused on abandoned spaces in the Piața Matache area. The result of

their collaboration was an installation in which house numbers of abandoned and derelict houses were nostalgically and slightly ironically ‘preserved’ in jars, in the absence of real site preservation. The team members’ complex conversation in the context of this threatened space, conveying both the workshop themes and related notions of interdisciplinarity, was perhaps more important than the exhibited object itself. In their *Space dialogue*, this particular urban site is defined through a mix of two types of abandonment, which are both linked to market mechanisms. “Lately, people have been organising and assessing space here by de-contextualizing it. A market-like situation has evolved, and people are only interested in ‘merchandise’ while walking around, picking convenient items, and paying no attention to context or circumstances. This has been happening for the last twenty years now”. Carried out a few months before the demolishing works started for the new Buzzești-Berzei-Uranus Boulevard, erasing important parts of the Piața Matache area, their project can be seen as being relevant to the entire city, linking in with current political debates about *axes*, *journeys* and *traffic*.

One team focused on Ferentari, one of the neighborhoods of Bucharest which suffer most from violence, racism and poverty. Two members, Miruna Țircă and Marius Huza, are coordinators of Komunitas, which is an association that carries out community projects in the neighborhood. They both have experience working with the poorest members of the community. The other two members of the team were young artists, Ioana Gheorghiu and Andra Jurgiu (who is also a student in architecture), who visited this ill-famed part of Bucharest for the first time. Although at some point during their research the two halves of the group went their own way, each producing their own project, they shared common ground in terms of dealing with issues of social stigmatization and deprivation. Yet two very different positions emerged: Miruna Țircă and Marius Huza produced a large scale simple print, an enlarged image of Ferentari with a thin red line drawn in the middle of it, dividing the street and the city in two halves: the upper and the lower half, with no means of communication between the two. But where Țircă and Huza saw separation, Ioana Gheorghiu and Andra Jurgiu saw similarities and shared strategies of adaptation by the inhabitants of Ferentari. In these almost ‘rural’ parts of Bucharest people create small flower and vegetable gardens on what could be described as patches of public space. These improvised gardens show the two faces of Ferentari, on the one hand it presents itself as an almost idyllic rustic environment displaying resourcefulness. On the other hand, it also demonstrates the fragility of these ‘rural’ spaces in the city, some of which are located only a few meters away from the rail tracks that pass through the area, illustrating the gap between the ‘two halves’ of society.

Beyond the façade: a shop window exercise is the outcome of the joint project by Daniel Djamo, Mihaela Țânțaș and Emilia Țugui. The project started with an examination of the Victory of Socialism Avenue, which links Union Square with Ceaușescu’s House of the People (now House of Parliament). The objects of study were the empty



Ștefan Sava / Mihnea Nicolae Simiraș - *Crossing the border*; C-print, 2010



and abandoned shop windows of decommissioned stores found in this part of the so-called Civic Center. The team observed the relationship between the centrality of the Victory of Socialism Avenue in the symbolic geography of the city during the 1980s, and its current failure as a commercial area and a public space. The surviving stores are arranged according to strange symmetrical principles: if there is a café (or a bank, a mini-mall, or a travel agency) on one side of the street, there will be one similarly positioned on the opposite side. In their exhibit, Djamo, Țânțaș and Țuguș also linked the abandonment and empty spaces of the Civic Center, previously the core symbol of the Romanian socialist city, to the complete emptiness that defined shops (such as the *Alimentara*, *Gostat* and *ABC* stores) in Romania before 1989. Like in a children's game, the three authors reconstruct, out of photo fragments, three-dimensional montages of commercial spaces, suggesting an ideal outlook for these stores that were meant to be the symbolic showcases of the Victory of Socialism Avenue.

University Square is another important site in Bucharest. It represents one of the most important urban intersections, presently undergoing major restructuring. As part of these changes, four statues on the square (of Mihai the Brave, Gheorghe Lazăr, Spiru Haret and Ion Heliade Rădulescu), located in front of the University, were temporarily removed and transported to Izvor Park, in front of the House of Parliament. Marius Mitran, Andrei Radu and Viorela Strat designed an urban itinerary marked by stencils distributed between University Square and the site where the four statues were moved. Street interviews detail the public's attitude towards the temporary transformation of two important landmarks in the urban landscape, questioning the meanings of the terms *statue* and *monument* and exploring Robert Musil's classical argument about the invisibility of monuments and memorials.

Taken together, the interdisciplinary projects developed during the workshop provide interesting case-studies in which different approaches to urban space — including forms of social activism, methodological study, theoretical construction of interdisciplinary discourse and the poetics of minimal gesture — intersect. The following texts written by participants to the workshop provide additional information and nuances about the individual projects. They demonstrate the attention paid to collaboration and the evaluation of its limits in the exploration of a common interest in the urban environment.



Exhibition views - the workshop projects

Why organise or participate in a workshop called *CitiesMethodologies*?

by Vera Marin

In my career, the main challenge has always been to bring people together – people of various disciplinary backgrounds and with different experiences but all with an interest in urban life and the urban environment. This was what triggered my interest when I first heard about *CitiesMethodologies* (the event that took place in London in 2009) when it was briefly mentioned by Ger Duijzings in a presentation he gave at New Europe College in November 2009. Previously, as an urban planner and activist for a better urbanism in Romania, I had the chance to work with sociologists on various projects articulating ideas for a desired future, and the experiences were frustrating and interesting at the same time. Frustrating because we were somehow turning around in circles: I was expecting answers from experts whose role it is to understand people and their social environment in order then for me to propose interventions in space, while the sociologists were expecting answers from me in terms of what to ask people about space. We normally managed to overcome these initial difficulties. The way out was somehow our common preoccupation with solving problems, and finding solutions to improve both the space and living conditions of people. But what if there are no ambitions in solving problems? No projections for a better future for a place like Bucharest? And what if, besides planners interested in space, and sociologists interested in people, we include a third category of persons whose main activity it is to explore urban contexts through their own subjective responses, feelings and ideas about a place and its people? Yes, you guessed, that third category would be my description of artists.

The initial idea was to propose a day long exercise in which interdisciplinary teams bringing together representatives of all three categories (planners and architects, sociologists and anthropologists, and artists) would experiment by working together. We would start exploring a given controversial place or location (such as the area around the new Basarab bridge), spent a few hours in the field in teams of three, asking participants to document the site, each with their own specific instruments at hand, and then to talk in their team about these

approaches and compare and confront tools and specific disciplinary perspectives. In the evening, the teams were meant to give a presentation not only on their understanding of that site, but also on team dynamics and the use of applied methods in reading a place.

The principles remained the same, but the timescale of project expanded considerably not only because of my ambitions, but also because I received many good advice on how to properly organize an experiment like this, where it is indeed important to ensure that there is enough time to create common ground for communication within the different interdisciplinary teams. The exercise was after all designed to compare and confront methods and various approaches within each of the teams, by exploring a site together, without having to propose any improvement of that place. The objective was to just ‘read’ the place and to tell its story to others — and to be creative in this story telling, using visual tools, but also other means of communication. As part of the exercise, the workshop also had a teaching component. These were not the usual university lectures, but rather informal presentations where more experienced persons coming from one particular field (anthropology, sociology, visual arts, urban planning, and architecture) spoke about their research experiences, their own projects, and the tools they usually use. The speakers were asked to take a bit of distance from their usual activities and try to look at their own experiences having in mind the idea of ‘exploration’ — how to get closer to a particular place and how to better understand its characteristics: “what exactly do I do, or others that I know of from my own field, when we start exploring a site?”. This proved not an easy thing to do, neither for the persons presenting their work nor for the audience. The workshop participants often responded with their own specific perspectives in mind, asking only for the information that was pertinent for them. For the presenters, this posed the problem of how to make their work relevant to a public with such diverse profiles.

As previously indicated, the main objective of the

event was to overcome the lack of communication between various (professional) groups dealing with the city. We were hoping that if we brought them together, representatives of the three groups will be more willing to ‘see’ each other’s perspectives, methods and ways of understanding the city and they will start paying attention to each other’s work. It would help to do something about the climate of mistrust and ignorance that exists between the different practitioners of the urban disciplines: the artists do not like the architects taking over the scene, while architects and urban planners are often far too much preoccupied with trying to solve the practical problems of the city, reluctant to accept other possible approaches such as exploration, sensitive interpretation, and theoretical reflection, for instance about how the spaces and buildings they have created are inhabited by people. Sociologists have difficulties thinking of social phenomena in spatial terms, which sometimes causes an inferiority complex amongst them vis-à-vis the architects and urban planners.

I think that in most of the teams and in the workshop meetings (which took place during the evenings or during the weekends), the primary objectives were reached, even though it was not without problems and tensions. I think that more time would have helped to iron out these problems and tensions and ensure more confidence among the participants, but also between the organizers and the participants. It was a rewarding experience for me and it is my intention to organize similar workshops in the future, most probably as a summer school or as some other kind of event format that allows more time for team building.

InnerCITY: Văcărești Lake

by Ștefan Sava & Mihnea Nicolae Simiraș

The ‘abandoned’ place is a relative concept given the fact that a place can be abandoned from the inside while adopted from the outside. Thus, it is a matter of boundaries, of the relationship between interior and exterior, between center and periphery.

A totalitarian system generated such a place in the city, abandoned from the outside, yet adopted from the inside through self-identity. By chance, this place is separated from the city through a very clear and abrupt border. At the same time the only proof of its existence, when seen from the outside, is a slight curving of the horizon. It is a remarkable place, if we consider it through the perspective of the concept of the border, of the edge or limit.

It is presumed that a boundary is bilateral, with an exterior and an interior, which is in fact also valid in this case, but only in a conceptual sense. From a purely physical point of view, the limit is evident only from the interior: in this way it fulfills a

fundamental condition of a truly abandoned place. Through the act of crossing the border the individual enters this new and unknown space and begins its discovery. He explores and leaves marks and eventually encounters other explorers who are also adopting and appropriating this space in varying degrees. They simultaneously discover the center and relate to the periphery, and live the rare experience of being central in a periphery.

The next layer of exploration is of a historical nature. The explorer realizes that he entered the remnants of a historical accident left by communism which is now governed by a set of rules which are strange for the urban individual. Somehow the laws that usually govern the urban environment do not apply here: nature buries and covers the marks of the accident and continues to evolve by itself, through its own will.

There is a platform somewhere at the border, rising

above this environment, which is on the same level with the urban space at the other side of it. It is the only spot where urbanity manages to penetrate this space, if only by a few meters. It is an ambiguous place, a zone of interference, where man is placed in a position of power as high representative of the city. It is a political place.

These are some frames of the act of knowing this space, bits and pieces of representations and ideas which we discovered through dialogue, locating ourselves in an alternative space, in between the physical and the mental, on the border. We did not try an extensive analysis and we prefer to leave the sequence the way it is so that the images position themselves in the space, interacting in various ways, and decomposing and recomposing it in a diverse manner.

Invisible borders

by Marius Huza & Miruna Țîrcă

Huge oil and gas fields were recently discovered in a problematic urban neighborhood in Romania. Rumors about foreign corporations trying to appropriate the precious land are spreading. The Romanian authorities, provided with a unique chance to get rid of the bad neighborhood present themselves in the media as rescuers of the area by attracting direct foreign investment. They are determined to start up the business. Skimming the city archives, they found that important data about the neighborhood are missing, so they planned a search for data in the area. There, policemen discovered just one photo with a red line in the improvised gypsy houses. A seventeen-year old

kid, owner of the photo, declared: “I love playing with invisible borders”. Identifying the local people was a virtually impossible task, so the authorities made the gypsies an offer which they could hardly refuse: “We will make free IDs for you, but you will have to come with us to the police station”.

The strange behaviour of citizens and the missing data led the authorities to do a survey amongst the population of Bucharest to get a better insight into public opinion concerning the neighborhood. The conclusions were:

- 99% of the surveyed people declared that this is a dangerous area and that they would never go there
- On the question “How did you find out that the area is dangerous?”, 99% of the surveyed people answered: from newspapers and TV and through hear-say
- On the question “What is your understanding of the disparity between esteem and social stigma”, the majority said: “I like to be the recipient of esteem but I don’t know what stigma means”.

It was impossible to finish the survey because of lack of funding. It will be completed with money from the investors (foreigners and corporations).



Ștefan Sava / Mihnea Nicolae Simiraș - *Crossing the border*, 2010, detail

CitiesMethodologies | Bucharest - the workshop projects



Space dialogue | excerpts¹

Ionuț Pițurescu, Zelmira Szabo, Cristian Bălan and Mihai Moțcanu Dumitrescu

Here we are trying to explore and absorb the possible meanings of the term ‘abandoned’. And like others we reach the conclusion that ‘abandoned’ in Bucharest does not necessarily mean empty, uninhabited, and devoid of activity. From a larger area (between Piața Matache and Cișmigiu park) we selected two smaller and adjacent sections: the Matache market and the Feroviar Cinema (or former Marna Hotel). The latter is an ‘abandoned’ place, i.e. a deserted ruin and clearly derelict in the physical sense (only the outer shell still stands) but it also somebody’s property. It is well guarded. The former is full of activity and bustle, an area of cheap commercial structures which function in an improvised manner, and which stand next to an old and prestigious market house that seems on its way to being abandoned, or even demolished.

The area: a 110 years old market hall selling fish, meat and dairy products, a vegetable and fruit market, open air stalls and other market houses, selling clothes, household appliances and other things, the recent structures do not match the old-fashioned market house; intense parking during the day and the week, but almost deserted in the evenings and on Sundays; in the vicinity of Victoria Square, with much transit traffic, an important juncture in the transport system (metro, public transportation lines, departure points for inter-city travel, railway station); historically diverse functions typical of a central city area, but also many buildings with similar functions (stores, cinemas, hotels) now mostly abandoned or deteriorated; inhabited by Roma and urban poor, social segregation; real-estate pressure to build multi-purpose offices and high-rises, which form a striking contrast with the derelict and ruined buildings that become more frequent when advancing from Victoria Square into the Matache market area; at daytime the offices headquarters and Matache market share a certain dynamism, in the evenings both of them look similar in their abandonment....

A nice shell overgrown with vegetation (and even fauna).

A suspicious fire.

Prohibited access.

City Hall statements that they intend to keep the building.

In the meantime the metaphor of ‘commodity’ has been introduced.

Here people have been organising and assessing space by de-contextualizing it. Lately, a market-like situation has evolved, and people are only interested in ‘merchandise’ while walking around, picking convenient items, and paying no attention to context or circumstances. This has been happening for the last twenty years now. It is the case on several levels, from large houses and constructions to kiosks, stalls, covered markets, and commercial spaces.

The rest of the contextual issues such as aesthetics, fluidity, coherence, public utility, functionality, providing solutions to the numerous city needs are completely ignored. The elements of constructed space have become commodities and integrated development has to compromise continuously with local post-communist vision. The only criterion is commercial value: the space is sliced into pieces that are taken one by one, while nobody is concerned with the bigger picture. Nobody is interested in the forest when their concern is just their own tree and nothing more... So we may notice that people are not interested in the quality of the market as a whole since their attention is drawn only to individual commodities.

Your keywords: Transit, depopulation, market manipulation, pressure, monuments, density, precarious habitation, alienation, degradation, ruins, waste ground, diversity and segregation, picturesque and unwholesome, continuous frontage, inner yard surprises, intimacy and privacy.

My keywords: organic, fragile, vulnerable, exposed intimacy, instability and precarious habitation, living in the present, without a past and future, climax, euphoria, money, the extremes of sincerity and cheating, excessively open or gated spaces, I will add some more.....

‘Abandonment’: can be performed in relation to space or buildings, it may be institutional (creating a ghetto) or functional (introducing single function, home abandonment), social (segregation and

depopulation) and ‘relational’. I cannot find a sufficiently concise term.

‘Domestication’: is the appropriation of a space, the creation of its meaning and the transformation thereof through daily use (and adjustment) by a group or an individual. I believe domestication of space also means offering a sense of usefulness to people.

‘Things going wild’: on the one hand the abandonment of the effort to domesticate (not only the abandonment of space but also the other types of abandonment, i.e. the functional, esthetic and configurative), on the other the proliferation of non-places (anonymous, uprooted, depersonalized, standardized spaces, supermarkets, office buildings etc.) under the pressure of commercial and real estate interest.

A dialogue between ‘abandonment’, ‘domestication’ and ‘things going wild’: on the one hand the ruins of the Feroviar Cinema, accommodating a flourishing flora and fauna, and on the other hand the buildings of the Matache market, apparently crowded and dynamic, but showing a total lack of concern for context.

We started with a large area and eventually settled on two islands which can illustrate the two forms of abandonment: the classical spatial and physical one around the ruins of the Feroviar Cinema, and the social, aesthetic, and configurative one around the Matache market. Both illustrate the notion of space as a commodity. In both cases abandonment is determined by overarching commercial interests and real estate pressure in the respective space.

We will make a shelf with full and half-full bottles and jars on which photos of buildings from the area are glued as labels. The bottles represent the idea of commodity but also the notion of fragility. Underneath the shelf, on a table, we will place a model of the area in the form of a board game. The entire exhibit should suggest a stall or a kiosk. On a nearby wall we will project a film which makes reference to the parallels between these spaces as commodities and the market area. Should we write it down, the metaphorical references of the installation, or leave it to the visitor’s imagination? Let’s write it down for now...

¹ Compiled and edited by Ger Duijzings

Acvilele Albe

by Marina Albu

Description

The radical artist movement *Acvilele Albe* lived and worked in Bucharest, between 1945 and 1948, in a building at Dr Iacob Felix Street 88, called *The Incubator* by its members. Vincenzo David, Aldous Luke, Hortensia Sandu, Emilian Toader, Iza Damian, Bernard Basalici, Ivan Deatcu, Sabina Tesoiu, Corneliu Dima are those we were able to identify as being part of the group, but it is said that there were around seventy artists, philosophers and writers involved in the movement. Some of them were refugees who had come from Bessarabia and Bukovina and had arrived in Bucharest around 1940; some were Romanians with Polish roots, threatened to be deported, and others were ex-legionaries. All had had issues with the political regimes under which they had lived, and most of them had been deeply disturbed by the realities they had lived through and disillusioned by the ideals they had previously believed in.

Political views

In political terms they were against any kind of ideology, calling it 'False Knowledge', 'Illusion' or 'False Sense'. They saw ideology as a product of social reality and human consciousness influenced by a mix of political ideals and selfish interests. The group considered that also progressive politics did not always correspond with the needs and requirements of social development. All ideologies, according to *Acvilele Albe*, were used to justify and legitimize the governing parties, and indoctrinate science and education, thought and conscience, and society as a whole. In their view, ideologies always transform themselves into tools of domination and persuasion, distortion and manipulation. True knowledge and experience are hindered by the participation in ideological pursuits, i.e. the development, processing, grounding, promoting, and practicing of such doctrines. The solution offered by *Acvilele Albe* was isolation and seclusion, observation and personal unmediated experience.

Activity

Members of the group defined their actions and works as being inspired by 'a fight against commanded knowledge', 'non-fictional experiences' or 'individual exploration of the real', and they considered this as a prelude for the utopian 'Age of the Demise of Ideology'. They were working with drawing and text, they carried

out actions which resembled 'happenings', as they were later called, anticipating this kind of activity ten years before its first appearance and popularization in the west. Among members of the group, Karl Mannheim's book *Ideology and Utopia* (1929) was getting considerable attention, probably because of a three month residency the author had spent in *The Incubator* in 1946, as part of a research he did for the Institute of Education in London, one year before his death. The Jewish sociologist of Hungarian descent was to become a great source of inspiration for *Acvilele Albe*.

The end of The Incubator

The *Incubator* was attacked in 1948 by Romania's government, members of the *Acvilele Albe* group were arrested and convicted at staged trials, falsely accused of undermining the 'democratic regime' and of plotting with the 'Anglo-Saxon imperialists' in order to plan a third world war and attack the Soviet Union. On the walls of *The Incubator*, after the disappearance of the group, graffiti writings such as 'Think for yourself!' or 'Already Chewed = VOMIT' were found, as well as very remarkable constructed assemblages.

The Name of the Group

Acvilele Albe means *The White Eagles*, named after the solitary birds, which are said to mate for life. They build their nests, or aeries, of twigs and sticks at a vantage point high in a tree or on a cliff, in a permanent feeding territory and they add to their nests year after year, using the refuse of previous nests decomposing beneath the new additions. Nests can become enormous, measuring up to ten feet across and weighing well over one thousand pounds. The eaglets (usually two) do not develop adult markings until their third year, when they leave parental protection and seek their own mates and territories.

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Acvilele Albe or *How to Make Sense of Void*

"A house that has been experienced is not an inert box. Inhabited space transcends geometrical space" (Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*).

I chose a building by the stories and myths I heard about it. The building has not been used for a couple of decades. It stands on the premises of a state hospital. When one trusts a service or an institution, a place or a person, one cannot accept its abandonment. One cannot accept a void where one expects meaning. So I create meaning. *Acvilele Albe* is meaning. I want to create a myth so that I can fill up a void. A place with history, a place with memory, is no longer a gap place. The myth covers a period of uncertainty, a gap-time, the after-war period. By putting up a sign on the building at Dr Iacob Felix Street 88, I assign the period between 1945 and 1948 to the life and work of the radical artist movement *Acvilele Albe*. I supply them with a past. The edifice becomes present. Questioning the birth of myths, I work together with two architects and one anthropologist, using crowded public places as the stage for our constructed interviews around the building and the artists' movement. They create new personal identities for the interviewees, acting as mediators for testimonials of their grandparents, who had been members of *Acvilele Albe*, offering background sound stories for the casual listeners around, which can be disseminated in time by word of mouth.

Beyond the façade: a shop window exercise

by Daniel Djamo, Mihaela Țânțaș, and Emilia Țugui

In spite of our interest in post-industrial landscapes and abandoned spaces which are so characteristic for Bucharest, we decided to focus our project on a much more mundane but often overlooked facet of the urban abandonment: the empty windows of shops that have closed down. The economic downturn has made these a quite common view in all major cities around Europe and beyond, and Bucharest is no exception: where only a few years ago shop windows were displaying an abundance of merchandise, they are now left empty, and the ‘moved’ or ‘closed’ signs have replaced the ‘sales’ offerings, questioning our ideas of capitalism which we seem to have embraced much too readily. The capital’s high-streets, Calea Victoriei and Calea Dorobanți first came to mind but in the end we turned to an area where closing stores, empty shop windows and commercial space rental signs have become a defining part of the local ambiance – the area on Union Boulevard (previously Boulevard of the Victory of Socialism) between Union Square and Constitution Square.

On 25 June 1984, Nicolae Ceaușescu officially kicked off his project to radically reconfigure the centre of Bucharest, of which The House of the Republic (now House of Parliament) and the Victory of Socialism Boulevard are the most tangible results. The official start date was to fall on the fortieth anniversary of Romania’s “social and national revolution, of the free and independent development of Romania”, even though the demolition and construction works had started more than a year before. Ceaușescu’s grand project was an earlier dream, based on the monumental buildings he had seen in North Korea during his 1971 Asian tour. While he never managed to see his project finalized, since part of the projected buildings were never finished or even erected, the project itself has reached, if only partially, its initial goal: the new Civic Center is indeed monumental, the boulevard that forms its axis is deliberately longer than the Champs Elysees, and the House of the People (now House of Parliament) has become a new touristic hot spot assuming, at least partially, its planned function as centre and symbol of power which radically modified the city, not without a cost as is well-known.

Dominated by the hypnotizing image of the House of the People and hidden away by the dense foliage of trees which seem to claim the status of a local

“Unter den Linden”, the part of Union Boulevard between Union and Constitution Square is a vivid witness to the failure of the civic centre systematization project: rows of huge empty shop windows covered in tags and graffiti, with dozens of posters indicating that shops are abandoning the area and moving elsewhere, numerous banners signaling flats for rent or sale (some with the old phone area codes from a few years ago), and vegetation that wildly invades the pavement can be seen on both sides of the ‘fountain boulevard’. Among the few still not abandoned spaces are two banks, two temp recruitment offices, some luxury clothes and furniture shops as well as two trendy but lonely cafes located, in surprising symmetry, on two opposite sides of the street. Even after twenty years, commercial enterprises are doomed to fail on the former Victory of Socialism Boulevard. The few tourists and other people who are out there on their Sunday strolls prefer to walk on the tree-lined alley parallel to the marble buildings, and so the impressive commercial spaces at ground floor level are not very visible. At night there are few lights along the boulevard and not too many lit windows on the front side of the buildings either, just the blue glare of TV sets which the night guards on one side of the street watch to make their shifts pass easier. Daily life seems to happen somewhere behind the marble ‘curtain’ of buildings: that is where the cars are parked, kids go out to play, dogs are walked, carpets are swept, garbage is taken out, and people occasionally gather for drinks in the bars located in the basement of one of the few buildings that escaped demolition, or at the back of the newer blocks. The boulevard, with its opulently ornate buildings, remains just a vivid example of an urban façade.

Our project was to invite people to explore and interact with this abandoned façade. Since time did not allow us to develop the in-situ performance we initially had in mind, we opted for an installation that recreates a few shop windows for this boulevard which seems to be stuck in the past, as empty now as they were more than twenty years ago, irrespective of the type of shop anyone might attempt to open.

Drawing on this past and present emptiness and the arbitrary character of success of the shops on Union Boulevard, we developed the idea to

organize our shop window installation along the principles of the popular 1980s ‘bunul gospodar’ or ‘good housekeeper’ board game (the local socialist clone of Monopoly). Like in the original game, the itinerary around the shops is guided by the roll of the dice, taking the viewer on an “interesting and picturesque imaginary tour, ‘sprinkled’ with historical and cultural landmarks, recreational spaces, cafeterias, shops, etc.” We provided a mirror of what these shops could become if we were to transform the installation into life-size form in the abandoned shop windows on Union Boulevard. Whether they rolled the dice or not, the audience was invited to playfully explore what lies behind the façade.

Three meters from the railway track

by Ioana Gheorghiu and Andra Jurgiu

Until six months ago, the track of the trains that passed by Șinei Street were twenty-one meters wide.

Before the railway track went out of use, the land close to it was distributed through a kind of lottery process or just taken by the people who were living a few meters away from it. Until six months ago, the twenty-one meters were defining a homogeneous space, property that was claimed by the train passing by.

Twenty confined spaces (some half garden – half storage space, some enclosures for domestic birds) have put to use a space that is vacant since the track *București - Giurgiu* went out of use.

In Bucharest, on Șinei Street, people who act as if the small suburban community Ștefan Vodă still exists, do not witness anymore the connection between the city and other countries. The train does no longer pass by, loaded with sunflowers on their way to the oil factory, the children are not waving anymore at the cars crowded with girls and boys going on the Summer fair (*Moșii de Vară*), and if a president dies, he is no longer brought back to his

hometown by train. Now, the people just leave their house, cross, and go to their gardens.

“I was born here. Near the railway, there, on the other side, at the end of Niculae Drăgan Street. I was born and got married here. [...] The stretch going up there where the train traveled to the oil factory to deliver cereals, belonged to the Romanian Rail Company. The ten meters of land from the railway to the street... those ten meters belonged to the Romanian Rail Company. We had cattle and we rented grassland from the Romanian Rail Company for the cattle... we rented a grazing field stretching from the Jilava Train Station to the Jewish cemetery. [...] Well, I have lived here for fifty years, since I was a child, and I was eight or nine when it happened. It happened some twenty-five years ago... the train ran over a mute Roma woman, up there. There was also an accident here, a truck filled with timber exploded, its front turned ahead and the driver was caught under the wheels and got killed [...]. The train stopped going through here... we had a fast train going to Bulgaria, one to Germany... all these trains ... it is the first railway track traveling on the

route Bucharest – Giurgiu... this is the first railway track. It was a beautiful sight when that guy, the president of Bulgaria, died here, the train took him through here on the way to Bulgaria.”

“Hear the dogs! Vicious ones, after sunset you are afraid to cross the railway tracks. Didn't I tell you? It was a railway track leading to Baduc... transporting brick, transporting ceramic plates, floor tiles, transporting materials, but now perhaps Baduc doesn't exist anymore since the train does not go there any longer.”

“It used to be nice... when I came here... I played here as a child [...] From here the train went to the oil factory... it transported sun flower seeds ..., as carriages were passing through all night long... you could hear the train horn, it was making transports to Butoiu where they made barrels and it was making transports to all these factories... but in the end it did not have what to transport anymore and so they stopped it. [...] We split the land... we drew odds, each of us put those things in a hat and I was given a piece of land at this end.”

Ioana Gheorghiu / Andra Jurgiu - *Three meters from the railway track*, documentation photo, 2010



Trips

by Bogdan Bordeianu

The Văcărești Lake.

It is a lake that does not exist and has never existed as such. Even the dike, the constructed boundary of the lake, has given in under the attempt to fill it. Today it is just a boundary between the city and a place where the urban landscape ceases to exist. The project is a visual exploration of this boundary, a ‘mapping’ of it. It consists of three parts, based on the trips we made to this place.

20 non-existent photographs

These are the images of these photographs.

The last time we visited this boundary, we entered by mistake the premises of a military base.

I was accompanied by Sebastian on the last unexplored portion of the boundary. We were getting closer to an area where we suspected the city would become visible.

Two soldiers stopped us and then accompanied us, together with an army officer, to the public bureau in view of writing an official report about the incident and to be handed over to the police. Since the taking of pictures was forbidden, the last images were deleted. We were turned over to the police, we both received a warning and then we were permitted to go our way.

I applied a scanning technique to the memory card from which the photographs were deleted and finally I was able to recover these images, the images of photographs which do not exist anymore.

Urban layers: marking mobile monuments in the public domain

by Viorela Strat, Andrei Radu, Marius Mitran

We were wondering what ‘abandoned’ space means in the context of Bucharest. Is it exterior, interior, open, closed, real, imaginary, private, public, used, a house or a square? Since we could not decide, we started guessing. We speculated that any urban space can be turned, through action or the lack of it, into an abandoned space. In the beginning of our project, we focused on space itself. Then during the project, we observed certain activities that transformed a particular space and led to its abandonment.

Our attention was drawn by the temporary removal of four statues in the University Square area (of Mihai the Brave, Gheorghe Lazăr, Spiru Haret and Ion Heliade Rădulescu) which were transported to a remote and sparsely furnished area of the Izvor Park, close to the Palace of Parliament. The reason for their dislocation was the construction of an underground car park underneath University Square, to commence in 2010. We presumed that with the removal of the statues, the site was going

to be deprived of its symbolic significance. The space they left behind is now empty and restricted for public use. So the first important change in the urban geography of Bucharest, following the city hall initiative to restructure University Square, was the disappearance of a landmark. After their dislocation, without much noise and discussion, the four statues found a new home in Izvor Park. This became the second important moment in our analysis: the creation of a new landmark in Izvor Park.

The dislocation of historical monuments creates an interesting balance between old and new sites. We need to remember though that in 2012, the four statues will be moved back again to the original site at University Square, which raises another question: what will happen to the current site where the four statues are currently located? Will it disappear as a monumental space? Or will we be able to remember what was there before, just like many other parts of multilayered Bucharest?

Our findings revolved around the concept of abandoned space. We posited that, given the lack of urban regulations or the enforcement thereof, and the weak resistance against decisions taken by diverse actors in the city, such as the city authorities, property developers or owners of existing buildings, it has become possible for any site in the city to become abandoned. There is no exception to this rule.

What we did was the following. First, we sought to investigate how the temporary removal was perceived by ordinary citizens, interviewing them at both ends of the route that the monuments took when they travelled. Second, we designed a symbol or sign for mobile historical monuments — remodeling the existing symbol for historical monuments used throughout Romania — and inserted it along the route from University Square to Izvor Park through stencils. In this manner we marked the journey for those that wanted to see to the statues, walking from the original location to



their current one. We also intended to place bilingual plates with the sign on the fence currently surrounding University Square, marking the site and indicating that the statues have been moved, inviting people to follow the signs in order to reach their new location.

The purpose of the project was to develop a method of making visible the multiple transitory processes that take place in Bucharest. That's why after the statues return to their original site in University Square, in 2012, the signs will be pointing in the opposite direction, to Izvor Park, serving the same purpose of marking change and connecting two symbolic and monumental sites of the city.

In their original location, the statues formed a vernacular spatial reference for many inhabitants of Bucharest, who referred synecdochally to this site as 'la statui' or 'la coada calului', i.e., 'at the statues' or 'at the horse's tail' — a reference to the equestrian position of Mihai the Brave. Without the statues present, it is debatable whether the meaning will persist.

A variety of opinions were gathered from passers-by, both locals and people from outside Bucharest. Reactions ranged from indifference about the monuments and ignorance about their removal, to approval and enthusiasm for the dislocation and the statues' new location. Anger, sadness, frustration, and disapproval also figured among the responses that we received. All respondents had to answer the following basic questions: What is the first thing that springs to your mind when I say the word 'statue'? Do you have any knowledge about these particular statues being moved? How do you feel about that?

Not all respondents addressed the questions fully or coherently. Below are some excerpts of the

responses that were collected:

University site answers

"I don't know" (Female, approximately 25 years old)

"They're not there anymore. I heard they are making other ones, I guess, or maybe they are rebuilding them" (Male, approximately 20 years old)

"I'm going to buy myself a newspaper!" (M, 80)

"They moved the statues to Izvor Park to build an underground car park here. University Square without the statues?! A square has to have one landmark at least, but if there's going to be an underground car park here in two years, well, that's fine" (F, 20)

"My heart aches" (F, 50)

"The statues here, they're missing" (M, 18)

"The Romanian state" (M, 18)

"Beautiful" (F, 25)

"That place [respondent points to the fenced area]... I know they are moving them to Izvor, but I haven't thought about it. I don't have any opinion about it." (F, 25)

"I am trying to think of what it stands for. A man of fame..." (M, 25)

"Useless, I can get my own statue, right?" (M, 30)

"Michael the Brave, who's gone..." (M, 15)

"The statue... the first thing... look, here

[respondent takes a look backward towards the statues' site] ... What?! They're gone! Oh, Mother of God, who took them? [respondent crosses herself]. They should be ashamed! They were gorgeous! They were around for an eternity." (F, 70)

Izvor park answers

"Dropped from a plane, totally inappropriate here, they were connected to that place" [University Square] (M, 40)

"Marble. They are really beautiful, I had no idea they were brought here from somewhere else, I'm not from here." (M, 40)

"Immobility" (F, 25)

"To be honest, I'm just here to guard" (F, 30) [a park security guard]

"You don't want to know, that m*** word. The viewers will see this. I find it odd, I have never seen any statues around Izvor park" (M, 20) [The respondent is referring to an obscene word in Romanian, equivalent to 'blowjob' which rhymes with the word 'statue' in Romanian].

"You see the old shit buildings, then you see this" [points to the statues] (M, 40, Austrian visitor)

"Michael the Brave, they should just leave him here, many foreigners will come to visit the House of the People and the statues are already here, whereas over there [at University Square] they lack visibility and aren't highlighted in any way, people are just passing by in a hurry and they don't even notice them" (F, 50)

"Michelangelo. I disagreed at first, but now I'm delighted because they give a face-lift to this park that nobody has cared about before. Even though, historically, they should be there [at University Square]. They look very good over here." (F, 50)

"A standing person, it looks just like these [points to the statues in Izvor park]. The City Hall somehow needs to spend all that money, there's an allotted budget every year." (M, 40)

At the *CitiesMethodologies* exhibition, the interviews were collated and displayed on a TV set. Another set screened the process of placement of stencils along the route that the historical monuments took. Alongside a map of the city was exhibited, as well as the newly designed mobile historical monument sign and photographs taken at both sites.





The good, the bad, and the ugly: shaping a methodology for the evaluation of public spaces in Romania

by Gruia Bădescu

Crumbling sidewalks filled with parked cars, entangled wires on the horizon, a dissonant symphony of brash commercialism, they have all colonized the public space of Romanian cities in the last decade. In cities once marked by a total control of the 'public', the public has seemingly fallen, leaving urban spaces invaded by an uncontrolled plethora of nuisances. Yet this is only one side of the story. At practically the same time, a number of Romanian cities embarked on various urban schemes, using variations of a universal recipe of repaving and pedestrianizing their historic centres, as well as planting a variety of playgrounds, flowerbeds and benches around neighbourhoods. Enter here discussions about gentrification, commodification of space through the new ubiquitous cafes and bars, the nature of post-socialist public spaces, national and regional 'exceptionalism' speculations or neo-marxist interpretations among the more scholarly circles. The moment I took my academic hat out and put my urban design practitioner hat on, the stringent question became how can one make sense of all this for better future approaches on interventions in public space. This is how the research project on the audit of public spaces in Romanian cities came about. This Space Syntax Romania project was funded by a grant for cultural projects of the Urban Observatory of the Union of Romanian Architects. It aimed not only to understand what goes well and less well in public space design in Romania, but also to create a framework and a methodology to evaluate the state of public spaces in Romanian cities, and to provide best practices for municipalities around the country.

The project was by itself a quest in defining and refining methods for the evaluation of public spaces. A large body of practice already existed in Western countries, but there was the challenge of applying procedures and methods issued for Western cities in the particular post-socialist context of Romania. Our project did not try to reinvent the wheel, but attempted to adapt it to Romania's rather bumpy roads where there is always a surprise lurking around the corner. How

can you understand public spaces in a political and socio-cultural context where 'publicness' is a dirty word? How can you study squares and streets as representative public spaces, in certain cities where 'park' is the only word that springs to mind when people are asked about public spaces? The list of questions can continue and I will explore here some of the conundrums that emerged from the research and from the debates at *CitiesMethodologies* | Bucharest.

We looked at public spaces from a multitude of perspectives, from analyzing the sheer geometries and configurations of space to exploring perceptions that users have on the design, maintenance, safety and uses of places, from pedestrian counts to semi-structured interviews, from modeling of accessibility patterns to observation and photography. The endeavour was essentially an interdisciplinary one, using a triangulation of methods emerging from urban design and architecture as well as the social sciences. One participant at *CitiesMethodologies* gave a presentation on interdisciplinarity using a metaphor — the interdisciplinary researchers are travelers who leave their home port, go and work in the world with others, then return to their home base, just as researchers return to their home discipline after working in an interdisciplinary team. The point was, she argued, that researchers involved in interdisciplinary work remain committed to their own field, just as the traveler remains committed to his home. As an academic and a practitioner who is deeply committed to interdisciplinarity, I disagreed. I introduced another metaphor, which I found more appropriate: the cosmopolitan. Being interdisciplinary, as being cosmopolitan, is about discovering the world and thriving on the diversity of ideas, theories, and methods. You do not return to your home port just satisfied that you saw how the others work, but you take what you see fit and valuable from all fields, you do not stay bounded by disciplinary limits, just as the cosmopolitan is not bounded by national boundaries or 'home'.

Despite the variety of methods used, there was a central element in the way we chose them: the focus was on people in the public space. We talked to them, recorded their perceptions of the public spaces, we observed their behaviour in space, counted pedestrian flows, followed them to see their routes and uses of spaces. We modeled space to see how accessible it is for people. This methods design was invariably based on a 'political' choice: public space is about people. Not about making car traffic smoother nor having 'aesthetic' design for design's sake. We favoured again a political choice, not people driving cars, but people in the urban space. People who walk, people who sit. Let me take parking for example — we examined parking not from the point of view of the car owner, but that of the pedestrian. What do people think of the parked cars, do they act as a physical obstacle for pedestrians, do they act as a visual nuisance for passers-by or people who sit in that space?

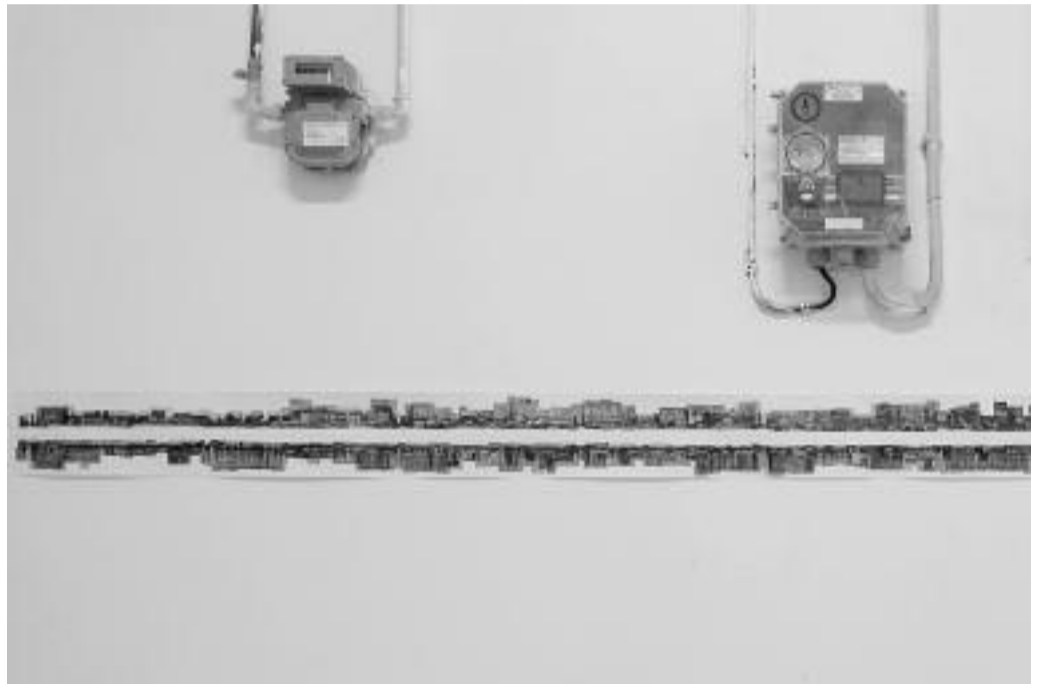
In this context, do these methods glorify an agenda of 'city beautification', as one participant at the talks alluded? Well, the measures that city officials have taken might have been connected to a project of 'beautification'. Our endeavour, however, was not to examine how 'beautiful' a place is, but how well it works for the people. This is not about imposing a certain aesthetic design model, it is about a model of public space design that is based on previous evidence and research on how places work for people, as well as an understanding of local perceptions.

Urban designers are not ashamed to admit that their field is a normative exploit. You research in order to better understand how to design. There is the goal of knowledge, but there is also the goal of practice. Consequently, these methods have to be designed to have relevance for practice. One example is the accessibility studies that Space Syntax Bucharest has been conducting, perhaps one of the most significant methodological novelties of this study. Each place has an inherent potential to attract people because of the geometry

of the street network. The accessibility analysis acts at two different levels — the global and the local. Places with high local accessibility are better circulated and have the potential to attract many passers-by, therefore commercial activities can thrive in such places. Other have a lesser accessibility and are more suited as places of relaxation. We obtained a model of the global and local accessibility using specific Space Syntax GIS software. Yet this gives us information about the potential, and not what happens. Measuring pedestrian flows told us how many people walk there or not. If the pedestrian flows do not match the predicted accessibility model, then something is wrong. The explanation comes from observation at the site and from what people tell you. Then you know what directions you want to take with the design — do you want to encourage flows of people or a space for relaxation or a mix of both.

The focus on people when you talk about public space came as an important shift in the Romanian context. In Romania, where architectural education encourages the concept that architects and planners are the city makers par excellence, specialists have little consideration of the views of ‘others’, ‘non-specialists’ on the ways the cities should look. For example, NGOs that deal with city issues are generally treated by the architectural community with contempt, being regarded as ‘dilettantes’ who should not speak up against ‘the specialist’. Participatory planning remains in Romania a strange concept, dismissed by specialists as naïve and foreign. One of the reasons is connected with the modernity-born fetish of ‘the expert’. Another one is the general distrust that architects have in the level of urban culture of Romania’s townsfolk. Romania’s urban dwellers, it is argued, are mostly rural folk who have been transplanted to the city by the socialist policies of industrialization. These policies changed the social fabric of Romanian cities, and in Transylvania, their ethnic one as well. As a result, their claim to urbanity is contested and their opinions on urban space are seen as dubious. People should be just the recipients of urban design, not stakeholders whose opinion matter. Even in our project team, when I advocated the importance of ‘soft’ methods such as semi-structured interviews and questionnaires, there were initially some voices that belittled the relevance of such an exploit — “You want to talk about what people think?! Look at their tastes: people are very fond of the giant dinosaur shrubs placed by a certain Bucharest district mayor in major intersections”.

The calibration of people’s perceptions with the expert’s voice became a central methodological concern. The results were striking. People generally revealed the same concerns as the expert with regards to a place, with one big exception: they generally disapproved of hard landscapes designs replacing green and unconditionally appreciated green public spaces. Here I needed my academic hat back on, and I reminisced of my exploration of why green public space design is appreciated by Romanian townsfolk, which led me some years ago from city design into ethnography. The answers, also then, were found by listening well to people.



Exhibition views:
subREAL - *Interviewing the cities*, Füsün Turetken - *Street elevations*, Anthony Luvera - *Prologue for Isha*,
and the projection room

Elena the ladybug and re-enactment

by Irina Botea

Walking-writing, inside, in-between, amongst, in flux. Measuring, dividing in fragments, intervals of lefts and rights. Game-walking. Dream-gaming. Talking. Recording that replaces the listening and the seeing.

Inside the cavity of the block

Elena danced near Obor, a major intersection and square in Bucharest. She was surrounded by her friends and cousins when I arrived. Between two blocks of flats, in a pass-way, the children had positioned themselves in a half-circle. The hallway amplified their voices and hand clapping. They had created a semi-open, semi-protected stage. She danced and they sang. I started recording them without any introductory words. Only toward the end of the recording did we begin to speak. People passed. They struggled to avoid the children's bodies. The passers-by avoided eye contact. Elena in turn gracefully avoided those strangers with her moves. She never stopped dancing. They sang, and the lyrics seemed to come from an adult world: a world of husbands and wives, of skirts being pulled down, of desperation and abuse. Like Elena, these children were immersed in that world. Powerful or defenceless? Adults or children? The distinction is porous and unstable. Staged or fly-on-the-wall recording? Cinéma vérité? How is the camera influencing the event? How do we read stories into and project fictions onto their dancing and singing event, in the liminal space between childhood and adulthood, a space for the powerful and powerless?

Re-enactment

Can you transpose a game from A to B? I first witnessed the game in Ferentari. It was a rainy day and I didn't have a camera with me. Next August I asked the children from a yard in Calea Griviței to play the same game with me. They did. They told me they are *puradei* [small Gypsy kids] Each child played the game differently, though when I saw it, the women came and talked first: "...at least he's not hitting me that hard, and only once in a while." "...what!? ...hit me... he doesn't dare..." "...so I told him, if you are going to spend all the money in the pub, how do you expect me to make food, go to Vasile and Gica, ask them for food..." "...I wonder how I should handle this. He came with the other woman and we are all living in the same bed..."

And again I don't remember when and how the desperate mothers and wives were gone and the kids came carrying a piece of fake wood, dirty and wet. The resemblance of a mortuary process, a burial captured my attention. Four of them were carefully carrying the dark red almost wooden piece.

They stopped.

One girl, Corina, prettier but leading the others in a bullying manner (how much bully can you be when you are five or six?). Younger and shorter than some boys, there she was definitely the leader. So the kids stopped, laid the piece on the pavement and formed a row.

First, Corina laid down on it, closed her eyes: "...I dreamt a flower..." and she woke up. Next second she was on her feet pushed by the others.

Next one laid down: "...I dreamt a lamp and spring..."

"...I dreamt a rabbit and..."

And they would push, and rush to be on that dreaming red moist board.

Corina was there to keep everything in order. She would cheat sometimes and dream two times in a row, and then just smile at them, the leader's privilege of abuse.

Sometime after, the convoy of kids moved to another spot on the pavement and started the dreaming game again, and again.

And it was, as I said before, grey and muddy and wet, the smell of a wet dog came close to me... everything was almost black and white, so much that the colours had been washed by that cloudy day. And this is a true story.

The mothers from Grivița were sceptic of me playing the game with their children. What will the children get in return for their playing and being filmed by me?! One of them had her hair being dyed bright red. Another punctured the white plastic bag and pulled the hair through the holes.

"I already thought of bringing chocolate and juice." They agreed for the children to play the 'dreaming game' with me. We started.

The game collapsed again for football, grapes and a super-8 camera.

"I dreamt that I had a wife"

"I dreamt that I was a football player"

"Should I dream? But, why? Why?"



Ladybug, video, 2007 - exhibition view



Sensory cartography: urban smellscapes

by Mădălina Diaconu

Thinking about the perception of cities in our everyday lives, we often tend to neglect the fact that we experience them in a 'synesthetic' manner. Cityscapes are also sensescapes, that is, multimodal sensory spaces that correspond with each other in the representation of the city, yet require specific methods of investigation. While visual and acoustic aspects of cities may be recorded, reproduced and designed, other senses resist systematic approach and description. Between 2007 and 2010, an inter-disciplinary research team from three universities based in Vienna and a Viennese museum explored both the haptic and the olfactory experience of cities, with a focus on public spaces. The general aim was to deconstruct the aesthetic metaphors of 'atmosphere' and 'flair', by looking for their origin in perception, and to analyse their sensory features, in particular those which might be specific for the Austrian capital. The project's aim was also to identify locations suitable for design interventions, sensitize decision-makers, practitioners in the field of architecture and design, as well as the general public to the non-visual qualities of public space, and draw attention to everybody's responsibility for shaping, deliberately or not, the olfactory profile of the city.

The methodology of the project included the chemical analysis of samples collected in different places (identification of fragrant compounds through gas chromatography and mass spectrometry), the psycho-physiological interpretation of the effects specific odours (e.g. of vegetation) have on affective states, as well as a new botanical classification of scent-families, and the recommendation of blossom-scented plants which are suitable for the climate of Vienna, etc.

My own research within the framework of this project focused on the description of the olfactory experience and the assessment of possibilities to use odours in a positive and aesthetic manner, countering modern urbanistic strategies to repress odours and create homogenous 'landscapes'. In order to reach these research targets, I used questionnaires and in-depth interviews with different categories of citizens (i.e. people from various age groups, subjects with visual disabilities, people who were born in Vienna and residents who had arrived from elsewhere, tourists, etc.), besides traditional philosophical methods such as textual analysis (applied to the history of

aesthetics), hermeneutics and first-person accounts of experiences (phenomenological descriptions). I also explored with my students the possibility of raising our awareness for the odoriferous dimension of the urban environment by drawing two types of 'smell maps'. Firstly, they were invited to produce mental maps which required each of them to draw a map of Vienna and locate on it the smells which occurred to them spontaneously, using symbols or colours that were explained in a legend. Further parameters (such as how to draw the map, which symbols to use, and how to describe odours) were deliberately left open, in order to heuristically test the possibilities of visualising odours. Secondly, they were asked to produce monitoring smell maps, which required them to select an area to be explored at least once a month. They downloaded maps from the municipality website and recorded on them whatever odours they encountered during their walks and trajectories, using freely chosen symbols and explaining them in a legend. An alternative way to do this was to keep a diary of the smells for a particular area, e.g. for an underground line, which were more difficult to map.

On the whole, the research emphasizes the influence of social practices and narrative identity on the sensory perception and the distinctions and discrepancies between the constructed 'image of the city' and its 'atmospheres'. The difficulties in exploring this topic derive from the underdeveloped verbal competence of most people in describing the olfactory experience, the transitory character of odours, not to mention the paradoxical requirement that creative agents have to confront, i.e. to design smellscapes which escape regulation and evolve rather involuntarily in long-term cycles, by means of repeated practices and as a result of the interplay between on the one hand planned and the other contingent and unpredictable factors. Therefore the deliberate production of atmospheres should also include sociological and anthropological knowledge on lifestyles.

Concerning the suitability of methods, in-depth interviews are preferable to questionnaires, yet they imply a thorough search for *real* 'experts' (who are not necessarily to be found among visual artists or architects). On a different level, interdisciplinary research of sensescapes still needs to develop methodological solutions in terms of

creating and developing a set of shared tools, but it also needs to find new ways of communication beyond the enshrined and specialized scientific jargons of each discipline. Last but not least, universities still lack experience in backing up researchers in terms of managing interdisciplinary co-operations between institutions.

During *CitiesMethodologies* | Bucharest, I invited the participants to draw mental smell maps for Bucharest, which led to the following conclusions: many of the twenty-one 'smell maps' that were drawn mention *food*, including international and local fast food and home cooking; there was also a high frequency of green *odours* of vegetation (blossoming trees, burned leaves, cut grass) and water bodies (lakes) in the northern part of the city, as well as *traffic* odours, mainly exhaust fumes and gasoline. As expected, a specific ('humid') odour is ascribed to the underground, like in other big cities. Also organic smells, either of humans or of animals, are conspicuously present in the mental smell maps that were drawn. However, in comparison to Vienna, dust seems to play a much more prominent role in Bucharest, due to various causes (old books, traffic, buildings sites, industrial areas, etc.), as well as a persistent, yet hard-to-describe odour of fish, *maidan* (vacant ground), sewage and smelly and stale water. The olfactory profile of Bucharest is made complete by the dampness of the ubiquitous old, abandoned buildings. In general, the 'localisation' of odours lacks precision in terms of zones or city districts. The river Dâmbovița is almost absent from the mental image of Bucharest and the city lacks a symbolic centre. Stronger than in the case of Vienna is the awareness of social stratification, which can be identified in the spatial distribution of smells in the affluent neighbourhoods and the working class districts. In the Cotroceni district and the Dacia and Aviației Boulevards it smells of 'money and power', of linden trees and car air refresher. Juxtaposed to this, suburbs like Rahova and Ferentari, Crângași and Pantelimon smell of homeless people and of the rotting garbage deposited on the streets or at the market. Bucharest is a city where 'clean', 'corporatist' smells mix with the smells of 'fish' from the 'chaotic and unpredictable' suburbs. The exercise, even if done in a tentative fashion, showed strong evidence of how sensory experiences and urban smellscapes are linked with social practices and values, as well as personal interests and biographies.

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Urban - since 2002 in Bucharest



Emotional architecture: the beginnings

by Călin Dan

Although I am born and raised somewhere else, in the cradle of a small Central European town, Bucharest is my city of choice. I spent there what we use to consider for some reason the best part of our lives – my youth and the prime years of my manhood. I would characterize the relation with Bucharest in those years as mainly emotional, not in the nostalgia sense, but more in the sense of a two-way subliminal traffic: Bucharest was doing something to me through the language of architecture, through its urban malfunctions, through the light, and through its intricate social structures. I was doing something back to it,

through my daily routines, through my own breadwinning practices, and through my passive-aggressive art ambitions. Writing was in the 1970s and the 1980s very much the medium, so I guess that a lot of the bad poetry written by me back then was indebted to Bucharest, to its melancholic demise from the status of a big city to its self-destructive absurdism. Later on, in the 1990s, this emotional interaction became more straightforward with the help of my group activities with subREAL, manifest in videos and installations, and later in photographs.

Moving to Amsterdam in 1995 introduced another paradigm in my urban condition and from there on Bucharest became more and more an object, while still remaining a state of mind. In 2002, I coined the concept of 'emotional architecture', deciding that this will help me to identify the trauma underlying my relation with the city back home. The emotional architecture is neither a construction of brick and mortar, nor is it a state of mind, or a feeling; it is a dynamic flow of micro-events which occur constantly, and mostly unnoticed, between people and their habitat, between urbanites and the urban tissue, between citizens and their cities,

Sample city - production photograph, 2003



between architecture and those who live within and around it. I would have never noticed probably this flow of micro-events — with sometimes macro-consequences — if it would not have been for me living in Bucharest in such interesting times as the late 1970s and 1980s. Retrospectively, it looks like a standard case of emotional architecture at work. Soon after my arrival in the city that I wanted to conquer, Bucharest got badly shaken by a devastating earthquake which left many deaths and many ruins behind. In the aftermath of this catastrophe that proved to me how fragile architecture is, the events preparing the advent of Ceaușescu's Palace started to unfold rapidly.

Behind the closed doors of Power, decisions were made to change the face of the city radically. Architects started to work frantically on proposals for a new political and administrative city centre. Bulldozers were simultaneously put at work, demolishing indiscriminately whole areas of monumental living quarters, landmark institutions, hospitals, markets, churches, monasteries, and schools. We, the students from the art history department were sent around to register 'interesting' old buildings in areas that were to come next under the bulldozer. So, I started my professional life as a little messenger of demolition, a useless agent of memory. From behind their curtains, the local people were watching us take notes with almost the same fear and hate as the loathed *securitate* agents when they appeared in their streets accompanying the removal trucks and the ominous demolition equipment.

Next to being an immoral (because passive) witness, I became a candidate to the status of victim. Houses in the areas designed for demolition were cheap, so I ended up as a young head of family owning a small place in a charming neighborhood right on the edge of the no man's land where the gigantic Palace started to take shape. Huge trucks were shaking the wood frame of our house, day and night. At the beginning, they were taking away the rubble from the old housing areas. Later, they were bringing materials for the new thing to come. The whole area sunk under a thick cloud of dust that did not leave for years. Water and gas pipes were breaking constantly under the pressure of the traffic. Washing, cooking, sleeping, and warming up became random affairs. Getting into the city, a two tram-stops trip previously, became an adventurous march through the mud. Meeting the neighbors became a burden, since people were overly suspicious or simply depressed. Some older ones committed suicide, cutting short the unbearable tension of the feared visit from the removal team.

When it all stopped, Bucharest was another place altogether. In 2002, I started to look at it as a subject for a film. Not as a film set — but a subject. So, every day, for months I traveled around in an old dusty taxi, stopping in areas that seemed to bring back something of the old city. There, I wandered around, took notes, made photographs. I was no more the useless angel of demolition, but something of a city therapist. The taxi was my couch, the city my patient. Or was I the patient? Was Bucharest the couch where I was putting my trauma to rest? Was the taxi driver my therapist? Sometimes we were completely lost in an

environment that we both believed to be so familiar to us. Wandering through this medium-size city produced by a relative short chain of historical events proved to be as exciting as wandering through an old metropolis with a spectacularly long past. A decade of relentless demolition and construction cut the old tissue to the bone, ruptured the veins and arteries of the old body, made it into an unrecognizable mix of old, new, ruined, and half built, all alternating with large areas where a wild nature claimed what was taken away from urbanity. Obviously — that was the subject of my film: the incredible ability Bucharest has to compress centuries of change, multiple layers of existence, various accidents, in dramatic fractals of sculptural coherence. All I was missing was a mere detail — essential though: how could I wrap all this into a coherent narrative?

The answer was in my childhood, in that small Central European town. Back there and then, my parents were reading to me from a book with Romanian folk tales whose hero was Păcală (the fool, the one who fools you while being fooled), a character comparable to the Shakespearean buffoon, or to the famous Thijl Uilenspiegel, the liberator of the Flanders. From all the stories with Păcală that entertained my early years, one stayed with me for ever, obsessively. It goes like this: when their parents died, Păcală's older brothers decided to leave the village and try their luck somewhere else. Their young brother wanted too. But he was stupid, embarrassing, and had no horse. So, one elder brother says: "We leave on horseback, so why not meet later in the afternoon

in such and such place, at such and such inn? We will wait for you there. And hey, do not forget to pull the door after you when you leave — there will be no one to look after the house in our absence!" And so they went. A few pages later, the two brothers are having some wine at the inn, under the porch, when they see far, far away a tiny silhouette emerging on the horizon: a man with a huge door attached to his back is marching at good pace towards them. It is Păcală, pulling the door, as told, but then forever.

Why did this event generated by a semiotic confusion (between pulling and *pulling*) stay with me for so long? Was it because the burdened man is such an accurate icon for the condition of the urban migrant, for my condition? Was it because, more than an icon, the 'man with the door' is a walking sculpture, and a walking sculpture is both funny and scary (as the commander from Don Giovanni, for instance)? It is enough to say that in every house that I inhabited during my wanderings, there was always an extra door left after renovation, and every time I was thinking about carrying it through the respective city. Luckily, I did not, and then the time to delegate this performance to an actor for my Bucharest film came. The film is *Sample city*, and it is a carefully orchestrated following of the 'man with the door' in what is actually an attempt to connect in a non-story the points of time-space fracture characteristic to the city. The wanderer is both an embodiment of the accidental history of Bucharest and a personification of what could be the human version of an emotional architecture event.

Sample city - video still, 2003



Margareta Kern and Anthony Luvera in conversation

A rocky boat: reflections on research, process, and representation

AL: What a great recording device you've got here.

MK: It's really handy. I use it a lot in my work when I interview people.

AL: Do you have a collection of sound recordings that accompany *Guests*, the work presented at *CitiesMethodologies* | Bucharest?

MK: Yes. Although when I made the recordings my inclination was to use transcripts and this is what I told the women I interviewed. In the beginning of my work on the project I was focused on researching and hearing about their personal experiences of migration as I found that these stories were largely missing from official histories and national archives. I was looking at ways to

record their stories and at the same time be sensitive to their privacy.

AL: Do you feel that the translation that occurs when you transcribe an interview offers some kind of protection for your subjects and you?

MK: I feel it can provide protection to the subjects by offering anonymity. They can speak more openly and freely about their personal experience but it can also make them invisible. For me it provided a certain degree of freedom to be able to edit the text without being tied down by the original document.

AL: I can relate to some of what you are saying here. When conducting interviews with

participants for *Residency* I explained that I might use the sound recording or a transcript with their *Assisted self-portrait* and photographs. I wanted to be as clear as I could about my intentions for the recordings but at the time I didn't know exactly how I would use the interviews or if I even would. It was very much a process of research and exchange based on trust and my curiosity about their lives. I was keen to hear about the participants' earliest experiences of photography and to learn about how they felt about being described or represented as homeless.

I'm interested in how the processes of transcription, editing, quotation or selection might alter the original documents, the original terms of the invitation issued to the participant, or the



interviewees' intentions for agreeing to take part in the work. In much the same way that we're undertaking this process of sitting here, drinking coffee and recording our conversation, when it comes to editing and transcribing the recording it will be transformed and be manufactured into something else.

MK: I think a degree of editing in any representational process is inevitable and necessary if we are to create the work we feel satisfied with. But the editing process happens before transcription. When you and I switched the voice recorder on just a few moments ago something shifted. We know we are being recorded and in a way we become more aware of editing ourselves before we speak. When I stepped into the living rooms of the migrant women there was a shift because they didn't know me. They would have only just met me and were probably thinking: "Who are you? What do you want?"

AL: Did you find that moment uncomfortable?

MK: Yes, absolutely.

AL: I love how in that kind of moment the recording device, whether it's a camera or a piece of sound recording equipment is very much, as Susan Sontag described, a kind of a passport. For me it's a moment full of discomfort and curiosity. I have ambivalent feelings about this experience but I find it compelling at the same time.

MK: This discomfort doesn't have to be a negative

thing. Perhaps it's also about being in a new space, an unknown space, where you're not feeling sure of what is going to happen. Recently, I undertook a residency in the Department of Social Science at the University of Bath where I was talking to a sociologist about the double-bind of being an insider and an outsider that researchers often face, and how this creates a level of discomfort. He said that he saw this as a constructive discomfort — much along the lines of how you described it. In the context of art-making I see it as a form of critical discomfort. It sometimes feels exciting and sometimes it's terrifying.

AL: One of the things I'm keen to do with the people I work with is to address something of the source of this discomfort by asking questions like 'What do you think about being represented or described in a certain kind of way?' or 'How would you like to be represented?' To make an *Assisted self-portrait* I met with each participant a number of times in various locations chosen by them to teach the individual how to use a 5x4 field camera with a tripod, handheld flashgun, Polaroid and Quickload film stock, and a cable shutter release. The final *Assisted self-portrait* was then edited with the participant.

I've always been interested in seeing how I might involve subjects or participants in the process of creating their representation. More recently I've wanted to explore how I might extend this conversation in relation to exhibiting the work and in possibly constituting the collection as a public archive. A short time ago I was invited to take part

in a festival in London called *This Is Not A Gateway*. I decided to focus on three participants called Ruben, Picwick and Gypsy, and to invite Ruben to work with me to install the work in the exhibition.

MK: How did it go? What was the exchange between you like? What was Ruben's response?

AL: I brought a stack of material to the exhibition space; photographs, workbooks, Polaroids, drawings and *Assisted self-portraits*. We tested out different selections and arrangements of the material, and ways of putting the work up. It was very much a process of us both trying things out and discussing what we liked and what didn't like, and why. It was a process of push and pull from both sides; a negotiation focused on constructing a story using the material that I have collected. In the end Ruben said he was happy with how he was represented and he came along to the private view with a number of his friends and seemed to take great pleasure in the night.

MK: I find your series *Assisted self-portraits* very interesting in that respect. You seem to be addressing questions of self-other representation through the title and also through the image where we can see the subject operating the cable release with their own hands. To me this seems a key component to the work — the fact that the camera is triggered by the person in the photograph. We as viewers are made aware that we're looking at portraits of people who have experienced homelessness — an experience I associate with a

Opposite page: Anthony Luvera - *Assisted self-portraits* series and *Prologue to Isha*, exhibition view, 2010

Margareta Kern - *Guest*, installation, exhibition view, 2010



lot of uncertainty and vulnerability - and seeing them using the cable release becomes an incredibly potent symbol of their own agency over their lives and over the production of the image.

MK: When I started working on *Guests* I became fascinated with how academic researchers working in the social sciences negotiate the process of research with tangible outcomes and the level of fictionality that this process brings with it. I think every text is very much constructed. I think everything is constructed.

AL: Certainly. Even when research projects or processes are purportedly conducted in a way that is seen as organic, first-hand or transparent, there will always be a level of interference, manipulation or construction involved in some way. *Prologue to Isha* was the first time I picked up a video camera with the intention to make something for public display. I wanted to record everything in my encounter with Isha with this equipment — the process of preparing for the interview as well as the actual interview — so I switched the camera on pretty much as soon as I stepped through the door. Then in editing the footage what seemed to most effectively represent my interests in documentary representation was this setting up process; the push and pull of the relationship between myself as the photographer, Isha as the subject, and the recording equipment as a conduit. It seemed right to dispense with the documentary interview itself and just retain the prologue to the interview.

MK: So in a way you turned the camera on to the mechanism of construction rather than the constructed story.

AL: Yes, although even this may be seen as the creation of another story, something that was edited, selected and narrated in various ways. This has been one of the threads I've been keen to explore in much of my work. One of the key components of *Residency* is images that document some of the process of working with participants. Selecting these images was uncomfortable in some ways. For even though they might be seen as providing a view into the process of constructing the *Assisted self-portraits*, a certain process of editing and selection also occurred in order to incorporate these images.

MK: It seems to me that you are alluding to layers of construction that presuppose there is an authentic moment when the layers are peeled off and that all other moments are just constructions, whereas I am not so sure. On the other hand, I am really wary of going to the other extreme, and saying there is nothing there when we peel the layers of construction. I think there is a tension between different modes of construction, or different realities, and their representation. What both our practices are trying to engage in, I believe, are social realities of others, our own and the critical issues around the representation of this engagement.

AL: I agree that the idea of a pure or authentic representation of reality is flawed, but what I am more interested in is seeking out possibilities for sharing the subjectivity presented in the work that I make. To find ways to learn about other people's experiences and points of view, and to devise ways to represent these alongside my own view.

MK: But do you think you can ever represent those experiences?

AL: Well, I do think it's possible to represent the people I work with and something of their experience of the world but I don't think these representations, whether they are created by the participant or me, are necessarily the truth.

One of the things I find interesting in your work is the idea of manufacturing other people's memories or experiences through participation. How you create a kind of workstation in which the audience is invited to become active. I like how there is not just one line of narrative that the viewer is invited or prompted to follow but rather how there are a number of different storylines to pursue and assemble. The audience is very much invited to actively construct his or her own route through the material. I've found it interesting to watch you develop this body of work over the course of a number of years, unfolding different presentation strategies for the same collection of visual and written material.

MK: Yes, you saw this work develop right from its first showing in *CitiesMethodologies* London in May 2009. Over the past year and a half I have used different strategies of display in order to work through the research process and to understand different types of materials, and vantage points I can take. I'm glad to hear from you that a sense of manufacturing or constructing multiple narratives comes across as I felt this was important to attempt to convey. In the end I wanted to bring into the piece that experience of working through the

Workbook for *Assisted self-portraits*, featuring works in progress with and of Ruben Torosyan, Ruben Torosyan / Anthony Luvera



material and to give the viewer an active position of a creator of meanings and narratives. I wanted to make the process of creating stories by the viewer more conscious, which is why the work is set up as a cross between a research space, an archive and a workstation.

AL: It seems to me that we both share a strong interest in the research methodologies of the social sciences. I have always been very curious about the relationship photography has to these processes and strategies for acquiring and representing knowledge. Especially in relation to how photographs might be used in archives. In a sense it is in archives that photographs are able to function in their most pure state as free-floating bundles of information poised to be anchored by context. The slip and slide of different contexts by different archive-users for the same image is potent.

MK: It's what makes photographs so wonderful, so interesting to work with.

AL: Especially in relation to how an individual might be represented or perceived. How have the women themselves engaged in the process of manufacture in the installation of *Guests*?

MK: One of the women I met in Berlin, Zora, came to a collective reading of the transcripts during a group exhibition called 'Exposures' that recently took place at an ex-factory in Banja Luka, Bosnia-Herzegovina. There was an interesting moment when after different people in the audience took turn to read out sections from interviews, Zora was asked why she decided to

leave Yugoslavia in the late 1960s. She spoke about her experience of moving as a 'guest worker' to Berlin and her reasons for staying on to live there for nearly forty years. There was something really moving about that moment, something so direct and spontaneous.

Currently I'm thinking about ways in which I want to engage the women further with the project, especially in the light of Zora's spontaneous contribution to that public event. I have remained in contact with all of the women I interviewed, and I'll be returning to Berlin in a couple of months to visit them again. I'm considering whether to keep my engagement with them private or to make it more public, or whether I should incorporate them in the work more directly.

AL: Do you need to? Why do we need to represent the experiences we undertake as artists?

MK: This is a very interesting question. Perhaps it's partly because if we don't have 'proof' that the engagement took place then our interactions with others are absolved into life. I believe a lot depends on what position we take towards these types of engagements and their representation.

My project started during a two-month residency in Berlin, and I was expected to complete a piece of work in that period for an exhibition. However, the more I delved into the subject of memory, labour and migration, the more I felt I needed to take time to understand its complexities. I had only just made connections with the migrant women, and I wanted to take time getting to know them and

their stories. I could have set up my medium format camera and taken photographs of the women in a similar way to what I have done in the past, but I questioned what would these portraits tell us about the complex historical, social and political context of their migrations to West Berlin from socialist Yugoslavia in the late 1960s? All this meant that my engagement with the work went beyond the scope of the residency and became a long-term project. Because I questioned these modes of representation and my position within them, it was a very uncertain process but more and more I am seeing how this uncertainty is the right place from which to make my work.

AL: In a similar way I felt very uncertain about flying in to Belfast every Monday and coming back to London every Thursday through the period of making *Residency*. I felt a double outsider. I wasn't homeless and I wasn't from Belfast. And I couldn't help but have these thoughts in the forefront of my head every time I met with someone and asked them to share their photographs with me, to create an *Assisted self-portrait* or to take part in an audio interview. You're right, it can be difficult to have confidence in uncertainty, in giving yourself over to process and following lines of inquiry.

MK: Yes. It's like you're on a really rocky boat and you don't know where it's going to take you.

<http://guestworkerberlin.blogspot.com>
www.luvera.com

Margareta Kern - *Guest*, detail, 2010





*Assisted self-portrait of Maggie Irvine,
Maggie Irvine / Anthony Luvera,
from Residency, 2006 - 2008*



Mobile Warsaw: media in the city and the city as a medium

by Iwona Kurz

“Everyone who walks the busy streets of a city takes imaginary snapshots”
Charles Simic

Most people passing through city spaces are armed with their mobiles, photo and film cameras, tablets and laptops. They make innumerable shots, notes, connections, endlessly actualizing the invisible map of parallel and cross-cutting movements and paths. If inhabitants make the city, then the city is always on the move: shaping a reality of communication with others and also – at least in Warsaw – with the past.

Mobile city

In a way one could call Warsaw a post-city.

It is a post-war city — still after 65 years — because of the extent of destruction caused by World War Two. It may sound paradoxical, but contemporary Warsaw’s founding myth is grounded on the ruins of the war. The city’s foundation stone, if you like, was picked out of the rubble. Especially from the Communist perspective the new (socialist) life was to be organized out of ‘the ruins of the outgoing past’. Popular imagination, however, took its cue more from romanticism, perceiving Warsaw as the wounded and bleeding heart of a country and nation that had been at war. From this romanticized perspective, the official map of the rebuilt city was just a mask for the real Warsaw: the mediated city was populated by ghosts of patriots and soldiers, making Warsaw a city of burning offerings and sacrifices. The map of memory was made up of many local points marking places of real fights and killings. It became a decentralized construct, but nevertheless one rich in meaning.

In the aftermath of World War Two, Warsaw – with public discourse controlled through Communist censorship and with the centers of political power situated here – struck onlookers as a homogenous space organized around a phallic symbol of power: the Palace of Culture and Science. More than twenty years after the end of Communism, the infamous gift from the Soviet Union still reminds us that we live in a post-communist space.

Mobile people

Warsaw is also a post-1989 space. The Autumn of

the People (1989) opened the city and gave it back to its inhabitants, who were allowed to manifest not only their will of freedom but also their belief in the free market system, which was still strong at the time. The streets, formerly empty and under surveillance, now became open to cheap sellers, to colours, and to informal economic activities and a new aesthetics. Vast (and very expensive) spaces in the centre were appropriated by people, even though last year the city authorities regained it in the name of constructing a ‘real’ cultural centre there.

Warsaw does not have a strict centre and a transparent net of streets and crossroads. One can hardly find a bus or a tram not bearing the tag ‘change of route’. In the twentieth century the streets changed their names four, five, sometimes more, times. Clubs and cafés appear and disappear in the quick rhythm of being in and out fashion. And even the most experienced taxi drivers are not able to predict where will be the worst traffic jam today. The city seems volatile – for newcomers it seems unfriendly and chaotic, but for others it is dynamic, inspiring and energetic. In the aftermath of the war it became a mono-ethnic and mono-cultural place, now it flourishes again with growing class, social, political and also ethnic diversity (as a sideline, it would be worth looking at the issue of its mono- or multi-lingual character in terms of Bakhtin’s polyphony).

In 2002, the Polish artist Joanna Rajkowska planted an artificial palm tree at one of the most important intersections of Warsaw. She entitled her project *Greetings from Jerusalem Avenue* evoking the long-forgotten connections between the street’s name and the city’s Jewish inhabitants: during the nineteenth century, the avenue used to be the informal border of the Jewish part of the city.

The two landmarks – the Palace and the Palm Tree (the latter of which also hints at the association between the word ‘palm’ and ‘craziness’ in the Polish language) – not so far removed from each other demonstrate the changing nature of the city torn between a dynamic nowadays and a heroic but destructive past. They bring out the notions of the

private and public spheres, of centres and peripheries, and also of heterotopias. They make us think about the people who used to live here. They disturb every attempt at assuming a ready or seamless identity.

Mobile image

There is a famous anecdote about Sigismund Freud: when he was asked about the structure of the psyche and its complexity, he answered that our mental apparatus indeed resembles the map of a city (using the example of Rome as he did), but also a very special map. He wanted us to imagine the city through time, as something that exists not only in the present but through all its metamorphosis during history. The comparison he made between the map of city and the psychic map is interesting but it surely also complicates things: it causes problems for a researcher wishing to draw, along the lines of Michel de Certeau, all the paths of tactics and strategies, constructing the city and the life of its inhabitants.

Such a research requires taking into account the complicated network of dimensions that mediate in time and space and define the subject in the city: the past and the present, the daily routines and festive calendar, the historical, modern, formal and informal aspects of urban life, issues of race, class, gender, and places of living (the kind of housing, which part of a city), and even – in a sort of post-human note – the very notion of humanity (as there are also cars and dogs, for example, living with us). Similarly, the representation of the city includes well-known images and hidden images, which need to be retrieved from the deeper layers of common fantasy. There are images cited everywhere, circulating in books, the press, in postcards (as popular views), and there are the embodied images — as certain symbols provoke specific behaviors, being closely connected with social and bodily practices. Unending anniversaries of historical events, especially The Warsaw Uprising of 1944, stir up marches, rolls of honour, but also games and more trivial forms of commemoration. Last year — since the Smolensk catastrophe — we have seen similar bodily

manifestations associated with one of the most important symbol of Polish tradition: the cross. Trying to think about cities one has a long list of prominent predecessors, like, to name just a few, George Simmel, Friedrich Kittler, Richard Sennett, and of course Walter Benjamin whose *Arcades Project* is a perfect example of a research looking for a form mirroring its very subject: dispersed, fragmented, dissociate and dissociating city space.

Contemporary interpretations have to be based on existing texts of culture (literature, film, poetry, popular songs), but on bodily practices as well, also the ones that seem invisible or banal. This requires a sort of continuous workshop of the everyday — and for that purpose artistic input is needed. One may think of media projects: blogs, collages, montage movies (the model for which is Dziga Vertov's *The Man with a Movie Camera*), camera interventions — and of course performances responding to everyday or festive practices.

A Walk Through the Ghetto (2009), a project of the Israeli group Public Movement is a very good example of such a performance. The group explores the political and aesthetic possibilities residing in a people acting together, operating in public spaces, performing public choreographies, repeating overt and covert rituals. In Warsaw they proposed a walk — a reversal of the marches celebrating the anniversary of the Ghetto Uprising. The former ghetto, which was turned into debris in 1943, is nowadays a living district of Warsaw, but it is nevertheless an ambivalent space, producing different meanings for different groups: for its inhabitants, for Jews living in Poland, for Poles and for Israelis coming here to commemorate their murdered ancestors. In their performance, Public Movement invited people living in Warsaw to walk through the space but they included into this banal practice some disturbing, sometimes mocking gestures and behaviors: a Muslim prayer, the famous gesture of Willy Brandt, president of Germany, who fell to his knees at the monument of Heroes of Ghetto (1970), the singing of the Esperanto anthem and of a Polish song referring to the killing of workers in December 1970, all of which was a playful game of free public expression. It was at once a march, a manifestation, a new and alter- or counter-memorial ceremony, a guided tour, and an urban walk along a specific route.

In a mobile and dynamic city nothing is obvious, even though we tend to forget that in our daily routines. Inhabitants (and researchers) — living their lives in pace with the rhythms of the city — try to recognize this, mediating and mediatizing the characteristics of urban environments. They adapt their sensorium to the urban environment — and in the endless process they recreate it through different technical media. The mobile city cannot be grasped in immobile form.



Bucharest: the city as raw material and role model

by Mircea Nicolae

The context

Eastern Europe is no longer exotic, it is now more than twenty years ago that the Soviet Union collapsed. In the last two decades contemporary artists coming from this region produced their works and became known on the international art scene, making the realities and legacies of communism more or less known to the Western public.

However, totalitarianism and dissidence, the absurd urban realities created by forced modernization (such as in Bucharest), and the resulting cultural backwardness are no longer news to anyone. This mix of issues created a visual language, which sold well for a while, then became slightly outdated because of new art coming from places like China.

Nevertheless, on the street, within the everyday realities of post-communism so to speak, this attitude of detachment is hard to be found. The Soviet Union and its local dealership, the Romanian Communist Party, still make their presences felt in the most tangible of ways, requiring constant response and feedback from the people living in that environment.

Whether it is the buildings (seventy percent of the city's population lives in communist-built blocks of flats), mass culture (conveniently and exhaustively appropriated by advertising after it had been created by propaganda), or even person-to-person interaction, it seems that The Golden Era which started over sixty years ago is still shaping the present, or it is at least supporting it, as any good old foundation would.

For instance, the House of the People built by Nicolae Ceaușescu is still a dominant model for the villas of nouveau-riche politicians and businessmen who made their appearance after the Revolution of 1989. The same mix of plaster pillars, Neo-Classicist kitsch and pure nonsense can be seen in the centre of the city, but also in the gated communities on the northern limit of the city, even if a later taste for architectural minimalism added some diversity to this brew.

A new modernization campaign under the banner of the EU is paradoxically bringing to life some

old communist plans. Ceaușescu was expecting to start building 25-storey apartment buildings in the 1990s, and that is exactly what the City Hall started doing around the year 2000, lagging just a little behind the communist five-year plan. It does not matter that Bucharest is not suitable for tall buildings because of its humid, soft underground. Nor does it matter that historically the capital was a garden city made up of low-rise privately-owned houses.

And speaking of those old houses standing around the central area, they are still being demolished nowadays, just as they were before 1989. Today, it is not the communist Civic Centre which is trying to take their place, but high-rise office buildings. A very low interest in the preservation of the built heritage of the city prevails within the ranks of the local administration and business alike.

To wrap it up, citizens are still looking towards one another in fear and anger, but now under the pressure of money, not politics. Nowadays it is not the secret police or the burden of ideology, but the sheer force of the market that drives people away from each other, back into the isolation of their home, of their car, of their restaurant table at the mall.

The city as raw material

Why should one want to live here? This is a question that usually comes up after you get to know Bucharest. The answer is simple, for businessmen at least: there is big money to be made. The same applies for the administration of the city.

Even for artists, the city is an incredible resource. You just go out in the street and something happens. A building is demolished, expensive cars drive by in very poor surroundings, a bridge is being built, but it takes longer than expected and double the money. All injustice is there to be observed, out in the open. On the aesthetic level, one can even delight oneself with visions of interwar Modernism contrasted with post-war functionalist doom embodied in the apartment blocks.

Moreover, for someone keen on working on the streets of Bucharest, there is such an abundance of

material that one starts to wonder where to start. The former communist factory awaits its visitors. Maybe it sits just around the corner. The same goes for the old, redbrick mill from the 1900s. One has to go there now, before it gets completely covered with graffiti, before people who recuperate metal from it will make it collapse completely. And there is always that friendly, smiling, laughing hole in the pavement. Lots of sand and granite blocks to do things with. Only in Kiev and Kishinev (Chișinău) did I find such fertile confusion and disarray.

By comparison, Western European cities seem too neat and a bit sterile to work with. In Bucharest you always feel that you are shopping for free, whether it is materials, striking images or subjects that you are looking for. The city is very generous with its misery, its paradoxes and its resources. They are all wasted on the compassionate and the indifferent onlookers alike.

The city as raw model

Looking at Romanian Modernism before and after the war one is sometimes tempted to ask if there is any connection to its European counterpart.

Sometimes Western models and modes are implemented in such a manner, that they seem substantially transformed, either via a different social structure (a sort of pre-modern, feudal aristocracy before the second war) or via a lack of economic resources (which made communist apartment blocks have very few formal variations based on a very limited number of basic models).

The connection is undoubtedly there and the differences are not always that big. However, the final product is always the result of a translation process, which mutilates and adapts the international discourses and standards to local needs. The main characteristic of this process is the possibility of endless negotiation, with utter disregard for any criteria that might otherwise seem as fundamental or essential. Ecology, law and historical continuity become easy targets.

In Bucharest, the underlying assumption is that nothing matters too much and that all is temporary – an interesting philosophy, if one is able to take it positively. On the negative side, the irritating gaps

between thinking, saying and doing are always there to be observed, and can even be experienced intimately. Mistakes in building, in saying and acting are so obvious, that one is always tempted to either laugh or cry. Sometimes it makes sense to try to be intensely indifferent, but there is always something keeping you awake anyway. Being critical is part of being a citizen, although civic action and coherent collective discourse is lacking.

You stumble in the street. A metal stump stands only several centimetres above the asphalt. Absurd contraptions are everywhere; prosthetic-like objects just the same. Broken chairs, broken windows, broken doors still work because they have just been repaired in a fast and cheap way.

Everything seems to come together, or come apart, under the rule of the same convulsive algorithm: the landscape changes every five minutes, what is

modern looks old, the shantytown is quite contemporary in its appearance, precarious things seem durable and what is durable is always temporary. In the end, certainty fails to certify anything.

The ancient, the modern and the hyper-modern are mixed and together they either look too old, too scrappy, or too boring altogether. However, they never seem to look uninteresting, revealing in some way or another the realities or ideas of the people who either built them or use them.

The city is in fact so transparent, deviant and curious in its workings that it calls for an enormous, engorging need for analysis and observation, as well as for an infinite series of practical solutions, whether they are cultural or pragmatic in nature.

Mircea Nicolae - *Glass globes*, production stage, 2010



Looking down on or looking up to Bucharest's public spaces

Militari and Drumul Taberei between vernacular design and urban policies

by Ioana Tudora and Mihai Culescu

Bucharest today is a city confronted with rampant political resignation: the seven town halls (both the six sector or municipal ones and the main metropolitan one) are hotbeds of corruption, and civil society is too weak to form a credible resistance against the construction and development mafia since the population remains, for the most part, passive. In this rather grim context the future of public spaces cannot be very bright. Usually neglected by the municipalities, small public spaces (squares, street alignments, parks, etc) are nevertheless once in a while subjected to huge and useless investments such as for exotic plants or kitsch 'amenities'. This kind of 'care' for public spaces is reinforced particularly during the regular electoral campaigns, in order to impress the awed population.

Meanwhile, important public spaces, such as parks, lake shores, sport clubs and swimming pools are dismantled in order to make place for malls or other real estate developments. This happens in the most discreet way, far from the public eye. In addition, the public spaces surrounding the communist apartment blocks are more or less abandoned by the municipality, and if not they are mutilated by weird and expensive ornamental objects. Where public administration is generally ignoring these small (but extensive) spaces, neighbourhood dwellers are using them in a variety of ways. Green surfaces are transformed into parking lots, garages are placed on the vacant and 'free' land, and little shops are erected.

Those spaces which have fared better are usually cared for by neighbourhood dwellers. Some people, those that live on the ground floors of the former socialist apartment blocks, create their own private gardens in front of their windows, on what is in actual fact public space, thus increasing the inhabitable surface. Others are creating shared do-it-yourself spaces, improvised and used by groups of neighbours, indicative of a DIY mentality that has the potential to transform temporary spaces (Haydn and Temel 2006). Yet, in spite of the lack of coherent policies at the municipal level, the Administration of Public Spaces sees it fit to sometimes destroy these informal and improvised

arrangements based on small personal and collective investments in the name of 'civic' values or aesthetic or ethical arguments.

In this context it is appropriate to talk about a fight for public space and public spatial resources. The city authorities, in tandem with the big developers, are imagining public space as a repository of all sorts of empty plots, ready to be filled with huge structures, according to a sort of logic of exploitation that defines these public spaces as unused capital (Haydn and Temel, 2006). Ground floor dwellers, on the other hand, are imagining the very same plots as private spaces, as tentacles of their apartments, while others have appropriated them to park their car, fighting with the other neighbors over whether a parking lot can be 'owned' and if so by whom. Women are dreaming about informal playgrounds for their kids, men are dreaming about grills, beers and backgammon. Meanwhile different professionals are imagining perfect mono-functional solutions: architects are dreaming about new houses to be constructed, town planners are imagining new streets or other kind of infrastructural solutions, landscape architects keep talking about urban ecology and the maintenance of green (non-ornamental) areas.

In this conflicting ambience we have tried, together with our students, to imagine how to create a congruous environment in the Drumul Taberei and Militari areas. Those are two of the largest assemblies of communist apartment blocks in Bucharest, with more than half million people living there today. The usual approach to such a project would be to start with a birds-eye-view strategic plan. This is the 'professional' attitude, consistent with the way in which those neighborhoods were initially conceived anyway (what the Danish architect and urban designer Jan Gehl has called bird-shit urbanism, where the architects' droppings are deposited on the land underneath). This top-down perspective does not pay attention to the little gestures nor the little spots of conflict or harmony. It is an abstract image of a future city that nobody can imagine in every detail. Nevertheless, as Mies van der Rohe taught us, "God is in the details", so we have tried to

approach a large scale project from a bottom-up perspective, starting from the details in search of a more general vision. Thus, in the framework of an urban landscape planning project the students analyzed the vernacular spaces around the blocks, as well as the general open space framework of the whole district, aiming to understand both private necessities in the proximate spaces of dwelling but also the urban general layout of green and public spaces.

The project, which students develop during the fifth semester of their studies in landscape design, has two aspects. The first is a more anthropological one, focusing on actual space uses, and on individual and community behavior in and approaches to public space. Interviews and observations made *in situ* reveal a series of appropriations of public space, generating both conflict and cooperation between groups of dwellers or between 'insiders' and 'outsiders'. The 'insider' status is not necessarily granted on the basis of one living in the neighborhood, but rather on forms of participation in joint activities such as gardening, spending time in the self-built pavilions, sharing the play-ground or other public spaces. Thus, along the lines of Norbert Elias's concepts of 'involvement' and 'detachment' (Elias, 1987), it is possible to discern a detached 'outsiders' approach and a parallel vernacular construction of public spaces and of the community, generated by common practices and involvement in DIY projects for a shared benefit. In the light of the fact that the decisions that matter are usually made on a higher political level, this kind of vernacular interventions are normally temporary intrusions in a site that seek to make alternatives evident (Haydn and Temel 2006). Where the 'insiders' are explaining their actions as a reaction to the lack of care shown by the local administration and as a solution for their needs, the 'outsiders' (authorities, developers, urban designers, or even the uninvolved dwellers) are often claiming the illegality of the vernacular occupations, an attitude that is more often than not also motivated by their own private projects.

The second aspect of what students are doing is to design an urban plan, focusing on green

infrastructure and public spaces networks, which aims to propose a coherent and comprehensive green system, integrating and connecting peripheral natural areas, urban parks, and wastelands recovered through landscape design. At the same time, based on the first part of the study, the aim is to integrate the vernacular perspectives and practices of the 'insiders' and to propose further detailed projects that can be matched with and incorporated into the 'outsiders' perspectives. Thus the strategic plan is not generated by a 'general' vision, but is rather the result of a process of negotiation between the existing realities and daily practices of actual space use and the more 'abstract' necessities of the entire city, like public health, accessibility, social integration, urban ecology and sustainable development.

Unlike most urban design projects our aim is not to search for aesthetical solutions, i.e. design for the sake of creating generic beauty, but to try to develop an ethical approach, based on functional, social and ecological requirements which can respond to both the general strategic demands and small communities' needs and identities.

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Chart created by students: Simona Boboceanu, Andreea David, Raluca Dincă, Cristina Stănescu



Biographies:

Gruia Bădescu is a urban design consultant at Space Syntax Romania. In 2009 he finished his Masters Thesis with the title *Public space in the post-socialist city: the case of Bucharest*, at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE). He received his BA in geography and European studies in 2007 at Middlebury College, Vermont, USA (thesis with the title *Architecture, identity and politics in the reconstruction of German cities after the Second World War*).

Irina Botea is a visual artist, whose works combine cinema verite and direct cinema with reenactment strategies, auditions and rehearsals. She lives and works in Bucharest and Chicago, and she is currently teaching at The School of The Art Institute of Chicago. Solo and group shows include: New Museum (NY), National Gallery Jeu de Paume (Paris), Reina Sofia National Museum (Madrid), Gwangju Biennale 2010, U -Turn Quadriennale (Copenhagen), 51st Venice Bienale, Prague Bienale, Kunst-Werke, (Berlin), Casa Encendida (Madrid), Salzburger Kunstverein, (Austria), Kunsthalle Winterthur, Argos Center for Art and Media (Brussels), Artefact festival (Leuven), Rotterdam Film Festival, HMKV Halle (Dortmund), Casino de Luxembourg, Kunstforum, (Viena), Foksal Gallery (Warsaw, Poland), MNAC (National Museum of Contemporary Art (Bucharest), Museum of Contemporary Art in Szczecin (Poland), Center for Contemporary Art Ujazdowski Castle (Warsaw).

Călin Dan. With a background in art history and theory, Călin combines in his work research and free invention, developing projects that bring together social concerns with aspects of entertainment and pop culture. Călin received international recognition with his videos and photographs from the series *Emotional architecture*, where he explores the delicate balance between people and their habitat. His work has been showcased in international film festivals (Osnabrück, Oberhausen, Rotterdam, La Rochelle), art biennales (Venice, Sao Paolo, Sydney), art museums and galleries in Europe, the USA and Australia. His videos are distributed currently by Video Data Bank, Chicago.

Mădălina Diaconu is Dozentin at the Institute of Philosophy of the University of Vienna. Between 2007 and 2010 she was project manager of the research program 'Haptic and Olfactory Design: Resources for Vienna's Creative Industries'. Relevant publications include the monographs *Tasten, Riechen, Schmecken. Eine Ästhetik der anästhesierten Sinne* (Würzburg 2005), *Bukarest – Wien. Eine kulturhistorische Touristik an Europas Rändern* (with Lukas Marcel Vosicky, Berlin 2007), and *Sinnesraum Stadt. Eine multisensorische Anthropologie* (forthcoming). She co-edited the volumes *Sensorisches Labor Wien. Urbane Haptik- und Geruchsforschung* (with Gerhard Buchbauer, James G. Skone, Karl-Georg Bernhardt and Elisabeth Menasse-Wiesbauer; Berlin, London 2011), and *Senses and the City. An Interdisciplinary Approach to Urban Senses* (with Eva Heuberger, Ruth Mateus-Berr, and Lukas Marcel Vosicky, Berlin, London 2011).

Ger Duijzings is Reader in the Anthropology of Eastern Europe at the School of Slavonic and East European Studies in London, Director of the Centre for South-East European Studies and Co-Director of the Urban Laboratory at University College London (UCL). He published widely on the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia, and is author of monographs on Kosovo (2000) and Srebrenica (2002), and co-editor of a

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Simona Dumitriu teaches at the Photo-Video Department of the National University of Arts in Bucharest and is a member of the visual research project Ro_Archive. As a New Europe College fellow, she does research on post-1945 Romanian art. She has a PhD in visual arts, with a thesis on the archive as instrument and concept in contemporary art.

Aurora Király is a visual artist, curator and cultural manager. Since October 2001 she is the director of Galeria Nouă Association – a NGO which supports and promotes contemporary art. Between October 2001 - March 2008 she curated an important number of exhibitions and events at the Galeria Nouă exhibition space. Starting from 2007 she coordinates *Witnesses XXI - Revisiting the Past* (project in progress) – a collection of video interviews with Romanian artists, art critics and curators from different generations. In 2006 she was the editor of the bilingual book *Photography in contemporary art. Trends in Romania after 1989* published by Galeria Nouă at Unarte Publishing House, Bucharest. In 2007 she joined the research team of the National University of Arts Bucharest and she started to teach at the Photography and Time-Based Media Art Department.

Margareta Kern is a London based artist, originally from Bosnia-Herzegovina, whose practice explores the potential of image-making as a critical engagement with the social and political sphere. A graduate of Goldsmiths College (BA Fine Art, 1998), and University College London (MA Visual and Material Culture/South East European Studies, 2010) her work has been shown extensively including Impressions Gallery (Bradford), Tate Modern (London), Museum of Contemporary Art Budapest, Institute of Contemporary Interdisciplinary Arts Bath, HDLU Gallery (Zagreb), Kurt-Kurt Gallery (Berlin), and Margaret Harvey Gallery (University of Herefordshire). www.margaretakern.com

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Vera Marin has a PhD in Urban Studies (UAUIM, Bucharest and IUL – Institute for Urbanism Lyon) and is the president and coordinator of ATU – the Association for Urban Transition. She has a Masters degree in Project Management (SNSPA). She teaches at UAUIM – Urbanism and Architecture Institute Ion Mincu and is a founding member of OAR – the Order of Architects Romania. She has coordinated or participated in a large number of research projects, such as the research consortium ACUM – *Art, Urban Communities, Mobilization* (2005-2008, coordinated by UAUIM) and *REAL*.

Mircea Nicolae was born 1980 in Romania. He studied at the University of Bucharest, where he earned a degree in European Cultural Studies from the Department of Literature, with a final thesis on the House of the People. Then, he enrolled for a Masters in the Anthropology of Space at the Ion Mincu Institute for Architecture, Bucharest. Nicolae currently lives and works in Bucharest. He has developed a distinctive body of work researching the economical and socio-political structure of Bucharest through anonymous interventions in public space. He reflects on the social consequences of consumption, urban legislation and architectural production. His latest work called *Romanian Kiosk Company* won the Special Prize at the 2010 edition of the Future Generation Art Prize. The jury consisted of Daniel Birnbaum, Okwui Enwezor, Yuko Hasegawa, Ivo Mesquita, Eckhard Schneider, Robert Storr and Ai Wei Wei.

Ioana Tudora teaches at the Landscape Architecture Department of the Agronomical Sciences University in Bucharest. With a Master degree in Urban Form and Urban Planning (UAUIM, Bucharest) and a PhD in Sociology (SNSPA, Bucharest), her main fields of research are: landscape architecture and planning, urban open spaces, urban sociology and anthropology. In 2011 she was invited professor for Project Studio and Master dissertation co-tutor at TU Wien, Department of Urbanism and Landscape Architecture. Since 2010 Ioana Tudora is project manager for RPR – The Bureau for Contemporary Studies. She takes part in a large number of research projects, such as the research consortium ACUM – *Art, Urban Communities, Mobilization* (2005-2008, coordinated by UAUIM) or *LE:NOTRE Green Infrastructures e-learning course*.

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