

ABOUT POSSIBLE ARCHITECTURAL ROUTES AND LECTURES. BUCHAREST - A SHORT STUDY

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Abstract. Present paper is a study on architectural trails, routes, projects and possible perspectives on future ones in Bucharest. It is a first study from a series of many intended by the author, meant to list the existent cultural studies and interventions and suggest new path and links between tradition and innovation. The article proposes a discussion on Bucharest’s architectural routes and lectures, from a city-view understanding and an architectural-artistic perspective. Observations are noted in the sense of urban space perception, its visibility as a whole but also as landmarks, places, etc. Several referenced professional studies and maps are the base of the present paper, most of which in online space, available for architecture tourists and also for urban-local culture.

Key words: public space, tradition, innovation, culture, identity.

1. Premises

“According to the World Tourism Organization (W.T.O.), tourism is the world’s largest growing industry with no signs of slowing down in the 21st century. Tourism has the power to transform the reality and can become a legitimate, resourceful and efficient way to qualitatively change contexts. Yet, mass tourism contains, within it, a looming danger of voracious consumption of places and cultures. It also has the potential to plant the seeds of its own destruction before benefits are harvested.” (Gausa, 2003, p. 632).

Where do we like to take a walk in Bucharest? Do we choose predefined character areas? Or we choose areas of mixed architectural environment in an attempt to go through and lecture a large variety of spaces (Gehl, 2010)?

The area where the streets bare the name of capitals, or the Lahovari and Maria

Rosetti, up to Rosetti Square, offer a valuable built environment, similar to most other areas protected by a specific urban planning regulation. Perhaps it is an architectural cliché to choose an urban route for the promenade of relaxation or the walk with friends. And...we usually make time for architectural walks when visiting a foreign city because our time is dedicated to this activity – to know and to lecture. And maybe we are rarely in the disposition to find local urban atmospheres in our city, or to try to regard them in another light.

However, there is a new trend among the young (under 40) to experiment new urban spaces and to walk elsewhere than in their own neighborhood or in central areas (not including here the cultural patterns related to shopping malls). Plus a fashion maintained by the architectural tourism habits (or not) to wander a city (PanoVista A@2004, 2013), to discover its values, to lecture it, decode, understand, accept and

include it in the memories and spiritual atmospheres (Besculides *et al.*, 2002).

Considering that documented architectural routes have already appeared, including buildings, dates, location and map to spot them: Neo-Romanian Architecture (Anghel, 2011a), Ion Mincu (Anghel, 2011b), Henrieta Delavrancea Gibory (Sion, 2009) (Sion *et al.*, 2009), Arghir Culina (ArhiForum, 2013), Cristofi Cerchez (Ed.IstoriaArtei, 2013), Ion Berindey (Lăcraru, 2013), Marcel Iancu (GlobalMindscape, 2013) (Asociația E-cart.ro, 2010), we have at our disposal a certain thematic to familiarize with a specific style or atmosphere of an époque. We could have the view of the architect who experimented, in Bucharest's spaces, the feelings of an era through his own vision. And why not, we could even detach ourselves from the rest of the urban scenery, focusing on style, époque, history or the characters of the time - depending on how much we wish to deepen our lecture (M.N.I.R., 2013) (Chang, 1996).

The focus on architecture is what fascinates and unifies the journeys and neighborhoods. The difference in style and status makes the lecture more interesting and more able to enounce different forms of language, elements of detail and collections of style, author and vicinity. It can also launch an identity to the extent to which things become stable, re-memorable as history and atmosphere of the place. In so far as it proves itself authentic and emotional, it can become the holder of some memories of past happenings, an authentic and iconic space of the city for both citizens and visitors (Nae and Turnock, 2011).

The disappeared neighborhoods, places or buildings cannot be often discovered in the urban echoes and sometimes not even on

the internet (Salut Bucuresti, 2013) (DNL Web Design, 2013). These are disappeared characters of environments that cannot be remembered by image, nor appropriately promoted as ideas, sources, images, elements; they are culturally ...and physically lost (Metro-Roland, 2011).

As the space is perishable, and the information disappears as quickly from the web space as from the physical space, many of the cultural projects (with this objective) in which was invested, are no longer showing their locations on the dedicated web sites. Projects of cultural promotion for Bucharest as: *Lost Gardens 2009*, *Discover Bucharest ID and II 2009-2010*, *Performance evaluation of public spaces 2010* as well as others like *Mântuleasa Neighborhood*, *Bordei Pattern 2011*, *Saving the past we save our future 2012* (Observatorul Urban București, 2013) have never benefited from enough informational support for an effective promotion.

Sometimes there are books of recollection which we had or used to study, or urban guides to resume - or even fantasies, stories, histories and theories difficult to check, all containing a great deal of charm regarding the panorama of a city. All these are memories of some places whose disappearance generated non-places (Augé, 1995).

Shepherd Bucur and the small church that bears his name is one such example. The suite of never used forts along with the leitmotif of Romanian realm perishability and the theories of successive disasters that grinded the city core by continuous destruction and construction in successive layers, or the destiny as a capital for a country, then kingdom, then country again, next kingdom and finally republic, in different declinations - have made Bucharest an unstable, moody and undecided city in terms of defining its own image.

The story of the Little Paris, past and present mundanity, can be a story. But how do we grasp it? What have we kept since then, besides the architectural models? What is part of the city's identity? Or how can we extract those valuable elements of the past and present, to say that they are forming that identifiable whole and the authentic mix for the specificity of the place, for Bucharest?

2. A brand?

It is true that there are specific places, named, undeniable reference points, that could be part of lines pointing to a brand (of image and atmosphere): The Old Center, The University Square, Calea Victoriei, People's Palace, or landmark buildings for the residents, that are "studied" even for the admission at the Faculty of Architecture (thus they are considered part of the visual general culture): The Romanian Athenaeum, The Royal Palace, The Intercontinental Hotel, Romexpo Pavilion, The Circus, Stavropoleos Church, Carul cu Bere, again Calea Victoriei with its Telephone Palace, Episcopal Palace, Village Museum, etc., or places which in the future will no longer be identifiable even though they used to be notable urban references (Cina), and places with transiting/double identity (see the situation *with Bucharest National Theatre*) (P.M.B., 2013) (Tilley, 1994).

Pedestrian zones in search for social space also make their appearance together with a better life within the old city center and the occasional pedestrian zone on Pictor Verona street - maybe a future preparation of a cultural pedestrian axis and an urban development - (ArhiForum, 2013b). Here there is no shortage of activities and small businesses searching for local specificity: Cărturești, O.A.R. Garden, etc. But almost one by one small manufactures and commerce businesses are disappearing from both old center and central boulevards, which doesn't get us closer to a

the full marketing potential of the image of an European city (Richards, 2001).

Thinking quickly of an urban life style, here, the presence of the coffee shops and restaurants could help the center as well as the promenade areas. And we could speak about the beginning of a fashion, but not yet of a creative trend to support the urban atmosphere by marketing and appearance. However urban design fairs for creators and artistic are a very exciting start for the local place mood, and a great way to promote the local activity and people (Mazzanti, 2002) (Turnock, 1990).

Returning to the architecture as defining of the city, the Architecture Annuals (O.A.R., 2013) and Biennales (U.A.R., 2013a) (U.A.R., 2013b) carried in the recent 20 years of contemporaneity, are illustrative for showing the trend and professional fashion-ism, but also the indination either to modernism (considered a cultural predisposition), or to a global fashion-ism brought as artistic language to Bucharest. There are few new aesthetics and nuances developed and still neglected, perhaps from a mannerism or conservatism. Nevertheless the icons are something to be sought for architectural objects, and there are some examples conceived and designed to this purpose (Mihăilă, 2012).

Several fellow architects are either preoccupied to think promoting the new undiscovered-yet national style, or to create a new national style, with all the implications of a new nuanced minimalism of a modernist language provenience, or are chronically involved in disputes pro or against the destruction of heritage - the later being a real problem, with many nuances given by the already made and un-managed compromises of the local administration. But yes, we also have the architecture resulted from the last 20 years, without labeling and urban trails or much

marketing of the urban and the present, which in fact is missing in the architectural tourism (Light, 2001).

It is true that we, and also the tourists have where to go to museums (PMB, 2004), and these museums have become points of attraction through proposed activities or atmosphere as the result of a correct management (Galí-Espelt, 2012) in the last years. I am referring here to the Romanian Peasant Museum, Village Museum, M.N.A.C. - National Museum of Contemporary Art, etc., or even to the event The Night of the Museums, or to the parallel initiatives such as those in gems or books fairs from the Geology or History National Museums of Romania. Some of the museums have started activities for children - as part of the urban integrated education. (Richards and Wilson, 2007) We began to have also cycle tracks, but still not many are usable, and some don't leave enough space for sidewalks (Light, 2001) (HartaVeloRomania, 2013). Urban fairs for Mărțișor holiday, Eastern, Christmas, antiques, objects or vegetable fairs initiated by the City Hall(s) are something that is now part of the atmosphere and culture of the place (World Tourism Organization, European Travel Commission, 2005).

A reflection for the future could be the urban culture accepted as it is defined, not hiding the urban markets or un-aesthetic street or itinerant commerce, the authentic local products (including the culinary ones - as the ones used to be sold in Hala Matache), the graffiti areas, the derelict houses (see building Carol 53) (Baez and Herrero, 2012) or an eloquent walk in the communist neighborhoods from different decades of Bucharest (Light, 2000).

3. Conclusions

All these could be connected and integrated designed ingredients to create a smooth

urban life, particular atmospheres and pleasant conversations in the city. It could be also useful to compile an architectural guide useful for the correct lecturing of the city from both exterior and interior. So the artists (whether architects or not) would be able understand the freedom of their times in a more creative way which includes the traditional and the values in an innovative approach (Gehl and Gemzøe, 2003).

From the point of view regarding the architectural tourism, a wide proposal for urban routes has to be accessible both as information and urban route; in this context the urban space needs perception, performance and places to exist.

The existence of one Bucharest Architecture City Guide (Celac *et al.*, 2005) and several architectural routes are very important to develop further urban routes and imagine new kind of art-architectural performance, making from the urban space a specific and an emotional place.

Bucharest presence in the TimeOut (TimeOut, 2013) site and reappearance of the magazine, but also as Phaidon & Wallpaper City Guide (Phaidon, 2013) would be a necessary feature to put it on the world fashionable and worth to see map.

Today the city tour (Russo, 2002) depends much more on authenticity structured on different layers of importance: city life identity and urban atmosphere, design and details (old but also new), fashion and people (from the street and important names), music or noise of the street, art, architecture and performance of the place, urbanity culture. Sustainable politics for Bucharest should be understood as a coherent perception mode of city architectural collections (traditional and the new), urban spaces as performance places, historic famous sites and archives, minority

sites presence, points for pilgrimages (Lasansky and McLaren, 2004), paths, elements, signs, markets and specific culture (Metro-Roland, 2011).

The city needs a specific urban life, an opening towards new sensibilities same as international cities, design and designers, creators of the new modernity of the present (Knox, 2011), landmarks, icons and fashions, fame and famous places and figures.

The poetics of space, the experience of architecture and its background, the city landscape and the mix of images and their historical references are thoughts for the future of urban and architectural planning policies. Nevertheless the sense of time and space is connected to the memory of a certain city. And the question is: what are the best times of the city, the golden times of the past or of the future?

Possible thinking of the future architectural tourism policies should include the present tendencies in style, shape and design of the built landscape, new unknown and discrete buildings and authors fashioned as preferences from bottom-up, urban heroes or villains. Certain knowledge about urban pop culture, hidden urban habits and wasteland could be relevant, and the past 20 years of places with history should bring more sincerity to the successive moods of city patterns.

A common code of the city identity should contain points, links, memory, monuments, design accidents, architectural objects, urban silhouette, and future designed city-lines and cityscapes. Innovation within the city should be a measure of all components of historical traditions and cultural patterns that could define an expressive perception of the city with all components of the public space.

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