

RESHAPING THE HISTORIC CITY UNDER SOCIALISM:
STATE PRESERVATION, URBAN PLANNING AND THE POLITICS
OF SCARCITY IN ROMANIA (1945-1977)

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation analyzes the relation between planning and built heritage as part of the urban reconstruction process in socialist Romania. The argument challenges a common view that largely defined heritage policies in the Romanian context in terms of neglect and extensive destruction, and proposes instead to look at the construction and use of the historical built environment as an economic, political and cultural resource. It states that, despite the ideology of radical urban transformation, preservation did play a role in the process of reshaping urban landscapes under socialism, which is visible in the fragmented character of urban modernization policies, as well as in the resulting cityscapes. The topic of demolition and reconstruction is approached as part of strategies of economic development and urban planning, paying attention at the changing conceptual, institutional, and legal frameworks. The study contributes to the literature on urban modernization during the postwar decades, emphasizing the peculiarities of the Romanian socialist project as an ideologically-based strategy of development.

Centrally-devised economic policies prescribed a moderate pace of urban growth in the first two postwar decades, to shift to intensive industrialization and urbanization in the 1970s. These stages coincided with the rise and fall of modernism, which was replaced by the imposition of a more compact urban model, stressing higher building densities. The ideological vision of radical reconstruction was challenged (and constrained) by two types of preservationist agendas. Firstly, the Bucharest-based Department for Historic Monuments re-conceptualized the value of built heritage, stressing especially in the 1970s

the need to preserve and incorporate portions of the old town into projects of urban modernization. However, despite the efforts of dedicated professionals, the Department's activity was negatively affected by internal frictions and a limited understanding of its scope. As a result, it failed to develop a stronger institutional and legal basis, which would have allowed its experts to negotiate from a position of stronger authority with political decision-makers. Secondly, confronted with economic constraints and the scarcity of resources, decision-makers themselves elaborated an alternative "preservationist" agenda, stressing the need of saving on urban land, infrastructure and even old buildings. In the 1960s and the early 1970s, Ceaușescu personally criticized demolition as a waste of resources.

The second part of the thesis focuses on two case studies – the cities of Cluj and Iași – in order to argue for the importance of local legacies and visions in shaping the socialist project. If Transylvanian towns were perceived as having a compact medieval core worthy of preservation, in Moldavia and Wallachia the historicity of the old town was less legible in the inherited built fabric, and only individual monuments were singled out as heritage. The smaller case studies discussed in these chapters show how concepts regarding the specific character of the town were defined, challenged, and re-defined as part of urban redevelopment projects. At the local level, the creation of new regimes of spatial and social order depended on the extent to which various actors could manipulate the infrastructure of a system that was simultaneously rigid and porous. It concludes that, despite the rhetoric of grand schemes of action, the approaches to urban redevelopment have been rather local and contextual.

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The topic of this dissertation has challenged me to approach a field that was in some respects different from my previous projects. For my B.A. degree in art history, I analyzed a small eighteenth century village church. The M.A. program at CEU introduced me to the study of urban history, yet my interest in architecture and the city was largely framed from the perspective of symbolic politics and public space. The topic of my M.A. thesis focused still on a church, yet a larger one – the Orthodox Cathedral in Cluj during the interwar period. Given my background, I was at first hesitant to approach a topic dealing with study of “communism” (as it is still commonly known in the Romanian academia), which had been the focus period for some of my colleagues since the beginning of their university years.

I am particularly grateful to my supervisor, Professor Constantin Iordachi, who rejected a number of my initial proposals for a doctoral project and guided me towards identifying a topic of greater relevance. Looking back, I honestly believe that it would have been difficult to find a topic fitting better my research interests. Along the years, the approach developed from a very general idea regarding the destruction of built heritage in 1980s Romania, to the focus on historic city and urban planning. I would like to thank Professor Iordachi for his support, guidance and feed-back during this period, and for challenging me to find my own approach and voice beyond the well-known narratives.

Throughout these years, many other persons have contributed to the shaping of this project. I am grateful to Markian Prokopovych, who not only inspired my interest in urban

history, but also shared his time and patience to discuss with me at various stages of the research and writing process. Oana Țiganea, a friend and an architect specialized in restoration, has been my “technical adviser”. Since we first met at a conference in 2012, I could always rely on her feed-back regarding questions about confusing terminology, industrialization, and socialist cities. With her enthusiasm, dedication, and pragmatic spirit, Oana has been a true inspiration.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	v
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	1
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.....	2
INTRODUCTION	5
Bucharest, Demolition and Beyond. Preservation and the Coercive State	5
Literature Review	14
Planning, Preservation, and Urban Modernization after 1945	15
The Socialist City: Ideology, Modernization, and the Welfare State	22
Urban Planning and Architecture in Socialist Romania.....	31
Theoretical and Methodological Framework	40
Goals and Limitations of the Research	46
Note on the Sources.....	53
Structure of the Thesis.....	57
CHAPTER ONE. CITIES UNDER SOCIALIST RECONSTRUCTION: VISIONS, CONSTRAINTS, AND COMPROMISES.....	60
1.1. The High-Modernist City and Pragmatic Decision-Making	60
1.2. Two Meanings of Reconstruction	67
1.3. Producing Images of Urban Backwardness.....	72
1.4. Centralization, Decentralization, and Structural Constraints in the Organization of Technical Expertise	77
1.5. Addressing the Housing Problem.....	86
1.6. Questioning Postwar Modernism	97
1.7. Towards a New Urban Model: The Compact City.....	104
1.8. Conclusion.....	115
CHAPTER TWO. MONUMENTS OF CULTURE: ORGANIZING THE HERITAGE FIELD IN THE 1950s.....	119
2.1. Post-war Heritage Policies	121
2.2. The Legacy	125
2.3. Institutional (dis-)Organization and Areas of Expertise.....	130
2.4. Definitions, Inventories, and Legislation	141
2.5. Mismanagement at the Local Level	149
2.6. Proposals of Institutional Reorganization	152
2.7. Conclusion.....	157
CHAPTER THREE. HISTORIC TOWNS: RE-CONCEPTUALIZING URBAN AND ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE IN THE 1960s AND 1970s	159
3.1. Historic Towns and Historical Legacies	161
3.2. Organizing Experts and Expertise.....	169
3.2.1. The Institutional Organization of the DHM	169
3.2.2. Complaints, Shortcomings, and Failed Proposals of Institutional Reorganization.....	172
3.2.3. The DHM after the Dissolution of the State Committee for Architecture	177

3.3. The Book: Gheorghe Curinschi on <i>Historic City Centers</i> (1967).....	179
3.4. Claiming Heritage	187
3.4.1. Architectural Reserves.....	187
3.4.2. Listing Monuments.....	192
3.5. The Historic City in Urban Design Projects.....	194
3.5.1. Transylvania	194
3.5.2. Wallachia and Moldavia.....	200
3.6. Researching Urban and Architectural Heritage	208
3.7. Tight Budgets and Monuments at Risk	215
3.8. The Historic City Center in Focus.....	230
3.9. Heritage Reframed- From Buildings to Artworks.....	240
3.10. Conclusion.....	249
CHAPTER FOUR. THE TRANSYLVANIAN (MEDIEVAL) TOWN: CONTEXTUAL CONFORMITY AND MODERNIZATION IN CLUJ	253
4.1. Introducing Cluj	257
4.2. The Housing Crisis in the Postwar Years.....	263
4.3. Care of Monuments	273
4.4. Integrating the New into the Old.....	283
4.5. A Showcase of Heritage-Making: The Bánffy Palace	296
4.6. Modernism, Mass Housing, and Urban Expansion at the Periphery	305
4.6.1. The Elaboration of Systematization Plans.....	305
4.6.2. The Residential Districts of the 1960s and 1970s	311
4.7. Built Heritage and In-fillings in the Historic Center.....	315
4.8. Integrating the Old into the New	322
4.9. Conclusion.....	327
CHAPTER FIVE. THE MOLDAVIAN TÂRG: ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE AND URBAN CENTRALITY IN IAȘI	330
5.1. Introducing Iași	334
5.2. Plans for Postwar Reconstruction	337
5.3. Moderate Modernism and Urban Growth in the 1960s.....	342
5.4. Merging Modernist Design and Local Heritage.....	353
5.5. Dealing with Old Buildings: Maintenance and Neglect.....	362
5.6. An “Interesting” Example of Heritage-Making: The Dosoftei House	368
5.7. Demolition and Reconstruction in the 1970s: the Case of Dimitrov Street	374
5.7.1. Preliminary Calculations	374
5.7.2. Plans and Surveys.....	379
5.7.3. Attempts to Heritage-Making.....	382
5.7.4. Re-building Dimitrov Street	386
5.8. Conclusion.....	390
CONCLUSIONS.....	396
BIBLIOGRAPHY	425

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CC al PMR/ PCR- Comitetul Central al Partidului Muncitoresc Român/ Partidului Comunist Român [The CC of the RWP/RCP- The Central Committee of the Romanian Workers Party/ Romanian Communist Party]

CPCP- Comitetul pentru Problemele Consiliilor Populare [The Committee for the Problems of People's Councils]

CSEAL- Comitetul de Stat pentru Economie și Administrație Locală [The State Committee for Local Economy and Administration]

DMI/DHM- Direcția Monumentelor Istorice [The Department for Historic Monuments]

DSAPC- Direcția de Sistemizare, Arhitectură și Proiectarea Construcțiilor [The Department for Systematization, Architecture and Construction Design]

ICSOR-ISART- Institutul pentru Sistemizarea Orașelor și Regiunilor [The Institute for the Systematization of Cities and Regions]

IPC- Institutul Central de Proiectare [The Central Institute for Urban Design]

IRP- Institutul Regional de Proiectare [The Regional Institute for Urban Design]

ISCAS- Institutul Central de Studii pentru Construcții, Arhitectură și Sistemizare [The Central Institute for Studies in Construction, Architecture and Systematization]

ISPROR- Institutul pentru Proiectarea Orașelor și a Construcțiilor Publice și de Locuit [The Institute for Urban Design, Public Construction, and Housing]

SAS- Secția de Arhitectură și Sistemizare [The Department for Architecture and Systematization]

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

CHAPTER 1

Fig. 1.1. Map of Romania, showing the strategy of urbanization through the development of regional centers. Source: Gustav Gusti, *Forme noi de aşezare* [New Forms of Settlement] (Bucureşti: Editura Tehnică, 1974), 166.

CHAPTER 3

Fig. 3.1. The central area of Braşov. Source: *Arhitectura* [Architecture] 17.6 (1966): 53.

Fig. 3.2. The central area of Piteşti. Source: *Arhitectura* 17.6 (1966): 51.

Fig. 3.3. Survey of a street from the historic center of Braşov. The buildings' different state of conservation is marked in color: red stands for "good", blue for "fair" and green for "poor". Source: Institutul Naţional al Patrimoniului, Bucureşti, Fond Direcţia Monumentelor Istorice (INP-DMI), Proiect ISCAS 3271/ 2-1966, f. 46.

Fig. 3.4. Sketch representing the Large and the Small Square in Sibiu, with the Evangelic Church. Source: *Buletinul Monumentelor Istorice* [The Bulletin of Historic Monuments] 1 (1970): 40.

Fig. 3.5. Infill in a style replicating the 18th century buildings with closed verandahs, Bucharest, str. Şelari. Source: *Revista Monumentelor şi Muzeelor. Monumente istorice şi de artă* [The Review of Monuments and Museums. Historic and Artistic Monuments] 2 (1975): 8, fig. 8.

Fig. 3.6. The age of buildings in the historic area of Bucharest, according to the 1976 survey. Buildings before 1880 are marked in black, and those after 1945 in yellow. The different shades of orange demonstrate that most construction had actually been built between the two specified dates. Source: *Arhitectura* 28.6 (1977): 41.

Fig. 3.7. Revitalization proposal for the historic center of Brăila. Source: *Arhitectura* 27.4 (1976): 40.

CHAPTER 4

Fig. 4.1. The Palace of Justice in Cluj (photo from 1925). One of the representative public buildings constructed in an eclectic style at the turn of the twentieth century. Source: The Digital Library, Biblioteca Centrală Universitară (BCU) Cluj-Napoca.

Fig. 4.2. Panorama view of Kolozsvár/ Cluj, circa 1910. Source: The Digital Library, BCU Cluj-Napoca.

Fig. 4.3. Modernist apartment blocks situated across the House of Culture in Cluj. The upper floor of the old building on the left has been built atop in order to increase the living space, as well as to contribute to the monumental character of the square. Postcard from the early 1960s. Source: The Digital Library, BCU Cluj-Napoca.

Fig. 4.4. The House of Culture, shortly after its completion in the early 1960s. Source: The Digital Library, BCU Cluj-Napoca.

Fig. 4.5. The modernist design of the Mihai Viteazul Square in the 1960s. Source: The Digital Library, BCU Cluj-Napoca.

Fig. 4.6. The Bánffy Palace in the 19th century. Source: The Digital Library, BCU Cluj-Napoca.

Fig. 4.7. The Bánffy Palace in the early 1960s, before the restoration of the ground floor. Source: The Digital Library, BCU Cluj-Napoca.

Fig. 4.8. Fragment of the systematization plan (1965). The city's industrial area is marked in black, the residential ones in yellow, while the square-shaped central area in violet is identified as "subzone with historic character". Source: Arhiva Primăriei Municipiului Cluj-Napoca, Dosar DSAPC Cluj, 1/1965, Schița de sistematizare a orașului Cluj (August 1965).

CHAPTER 5

Fig. 5.1. Postcard from the 1970s, representing some of the most cherished architectural monuments of Iași. The predominance of religious architecture is easily noticeable. Source: Direcția Județeană Iași a Arhivelor Naționale (DJIAN), Colecția Stampe și Fotografii, 4765.

Fig. 5.2. The cityscape of Iași as seen from the tower of the Golia Monastery in the interwar period. The low-rise vernacular contrasts with the towers of churches and monasteries. The view is dominated by the monumental Palace of Culture. Source: DJIAN, Colecția Stampe și Fotografii, 1283.

Fig. 5.3. A lively commercial town. The Central Commercial Hall in the interwar period. Source: DJIAN, Colecția Stampe și Fotografii, 1304.

Fig. 5.4. Model of the 1960 systematization plan, focusing on the areas that would be reconstructed. The river separates the industrial area from the northern residential districts. The plan envisaged the reconstruction of residential areas with blocks in parallel rows. Source: DJIAN, Colecția Stampe și Fotografii, Album 7191, Orașul Iași în reconstrucție (1963).

Fig. 5.5. Modernist district Tudor Vladimirescu under construction. Some of the old houses were temporarily preserved. Works were being simultaneously performed for channeling the river. Source: DJIAN, Colecția Stampe și Fotografii, Album 7191, Orașul Iași în reconstrucție (1963).

Fig. 5.6. Union Square, view towards the south. The statue of Prince Alexandru Ioan Cuza can be seen on the right, as well as the 19th century Braunstein Palace, which was incorporated in the design of the square. Source: DJIAN, Colecția Stampe și Fotografii, Album 7191, Orașul Iași în reconstrucție.

Fig. 5.7. The façade of Casa Dosoftei in 1956, in an advanced state of dereliction. Source: INP-DMI, Dosar 5610, f. 92.

Fig. 5.8. Casa Dosoftei after restoration, presented as one of the city's emblematic monuments. In the background, the Palace of Culture. Postcard from the 1970s. Source: Source: DJIAN, Colecția Stampe și Fotografii, 5963.

Fig. 5.9. View of Dimitrov Street in the first half of the 20th century. On the left side, the Spiridoniei Tower. Source Source: DJIAN, Colecția Stampe și Fotografii, 1316.

Fig. 5.10. Plans for the construction of apartment blocks on Dimitrov Street. The new structures overlap existing patterns of land use. An entire row of houses would be demolished in order to enlarge the street. Source: INP-DMI, Proiect DSAPC Iași 3551/1971, A0.

Fig. 5.11. Demolition of houses damaged by the earthquake in March 1977. The tower blocks were almost completed. Source: Source: DJIAN, Colecția Stampe și Fotografii, 5981, f. 12.

INTRODUCTION

Bucharest, Demolition and Beyond. Preservation and the Coercive State

By the second half of the 1980s, the destructive consequences of the urban policies promoted by Ceaușescu's regime became a matter of international concern.¹ Reports and protest letters that reached Radio Free Europe denounced the increased scope of destruction: throughout the country, large scale operations of clearance and reconstruction targetted equally historic districts and individual monuments. Many of the preservationist concerns were summed up in a report compiled by historian Dinu C. Giurescu in the late 1980s and published with the support of international organizations such as ICOMOS (the International Council of Monuments and Sites) and the World Monuments Fund. Giurescu captured the proportions of the destructive actions in quantitative terms:

At this writing the architectural urban fabric of at least 29 Romanian towns has been 85-90 percent demolished and replaced by apartment buildings with a completely different urban character. Large scale demolitions are underway in an additional 37 towns.²

Moreover, in a decade of extreme economic austerity, massive resources were mobilized for constructing what was perceived as the epitome of these policies, the Civic Center project in Bucharest. During the 1980s, an area of seven square kilometers in the center of Romania's capital city was cleared of its inherited built fabric and turned into a

¹ "The international community has in the past lamented the loss of great works of art, important monuments and historic urban centers destroyed by wars and human neglect. [...] But never in our century has a human agency put into action a blatant and conscious peacetime program for the willful destruction of the artistic heritage of an entire nation, such as we now witness in Romania. To this momentous threat, the international community must respond and concert outrage into tangible action." Introduction signed by the Executive Director of the Worlds Monument Fund and the president of US ICOMOS to Dinu Giurescu, *The Razing of Romania's Past* (Washington, D.C: U.S. Committee, International Council on Monuments and Sites, 1989).

² Ibid., "Foreword".

major construction site. By the fall of the regime, the centerpiece of the ensemble – the controversial House of the People – was rising as a gigantic skeleton in concrete dominating the skyline of Bucharest. For many, the image symbolically captured the failed ambitions of a dictatorial regime.

Ceaușescu's highly contested urban redevelopment policies were part of a broader, nation-wide program known as “systematization”, which had been developed at theoretical level starting in the late 1960s. Inspired by the central-place theory,³ it aimed at reordering the entire network of localities into a more rational system and concentrating the population from scattered villages into larger settlements.⁴ More than a policy of social engineering and territorial planning, intellectual elites in Romania interpreted the program as a deliberate attempt at destroying the country's built heritage, and, by extension, its history. Moreover, the destructive actions would target equally the material culture of Romanians, and that of national minorities, with the purpose of creating a homogenized socialist nation. Heritage policies in socialist Romania tended to be thus framed from the perspective of the totalitarian paradigm, as a concrete manifestation of arbitrary power following the

³ In the socialist countries, industrialization and urbanization were centrally-coordinated. Based on the Marxist goal of diminishing the differences between town and country, social scientists devised methods for reducing regional imbalances in the distribution of services, aiming to create a system that would integrate economic and social planning by providing inhabitants with equal access to modern services and living standards. According to Jiri Musil, two strategies were taken into consideration: the first, based on the central place theory, aimed at a more even distribution of services in networks of localities, while the second, building on the polarization theory, concentrated investment and services in selected settlements. Jiri Musil, “Urbanization in Socialist Countries,” *International Journal of Sociology* 10. 2/3 (1980): 14. In Romania, the first strategy was applied in the 1950s-1960s, and the second one in the following two decades. The goal of reducing the number of settlements and concentrating the population in larger centers was also considered as an adequate solution in the Soviet Union (the “agro-towns”) and Slovakia. *Ibid.*, 40-44, 60-61.

⁴ For an analysis of the systematization policy, see Per Ronnas, *Urbanization in Romania: A Geography of Social and Economic Change since Independence* (Stockholm: Economic Research Institute, Stockholm School of Economics, 1984) for a top-down approach, and Steven L. Sampson, *National Integration through Socialist Planning. An Anthropological Study of a Romanian New Town* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1984) for the bottom-up perspective.

directives of the evil leader. Defined in cultural terms, the built environment became the ultimate embodiment of identity and history that the socialist state attempted to erase so as to create a new social order.

When placed into an international context, Ceaușescu's ambitious project appeared a historical aberration. For the Western observers, the House of the People was reminiscent of the great dictators' intentions to reshape the urban fabric through the construction of grandiose structures symbolizing their power.⁵ Also, in terms of urban redevelopment strategies, the project was strikingly diachronic. At times when in the West heritage was being turned into an industry,⁶ and significant investment was being channeled towards the reconstruction of lost historic structures and the rehabilitation of old districts, the built fabric of Romanian cities underwent radical transformation under the action of bulldozers and cranes. Despite economic dysfunctionalities, even socialist countries such as the GDR and the Soviet Union invested in the reconstruction of lost monuments in the 1980s.⁷ In this context, the rationality of demolitions in Romanian cities was highly questioned. While large scale clearance of neighborhoods defined as slums had been commonplace in the postwar world,⁸ such programs typically affected poor areas

⁵ Researchers compared Ceaușescu's plans for Bucharest with Napoleon III's Paris, Stalin's Moscow, Hitler's Berlin, and Mussolini's Rome. Maria de Betania Uchoa Cavalcanti, "Urban Reconstruction and Autocratic Regimes: Ceaușescu's Bucharest in its Historic Context," *Planning Perspectives* 12.1 (1997): 771-109. See also Bruce O'Neill, "The Political Agency of Cityscapes. Spatializing Governance in Ceaușescu's Bucharest," *Journal of Social Archaeology* 9.1 (2009): 92-109.

⁶ The term was coined in the 1980s in Robert Hewinson, *The Heritage Industry: Britain in a Climate of Decline* (London: Methuen, 1987).

⁷ Two illustrations of this policy, according to Florian Urban, are the "invention" of Nikolaiviertel, Berlin's medieval core in celebration of the city's 750th anniversary in 1987, as well as the rebuilding of the French and German Churches in Platz der Akademie/ Gendarmenmarkt. Florian Urban, *Neo-historical East Berlin: Architecture and Urban Design in the German Democratic Republic 1970-1990* (Farnham, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009), 100-132, 215-228. The rebuilding of the Sukharev Tower in Moscow in 1978 was mentioned by Timothy Colton, *Moscow: Governing the Socialist Metropolis* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995), 558.

⁸ Peter Hall, *Cities of Tomorrow. An Intellectual History of Urban Planning and Design in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Basil Blackwell, 1990), Cp. 8 The City of Sweat Equity (p. 241-272) and Cp. 12 The

identified by social scientists and planners as particularly problematic in terms of living and moral standards. On the contrary, demolitions in Romania seemed to cut indiscriminately through the old fabric, also targeting areas inhabited by the middle-class, where the physical obsolescence of buildings was questionable.⁹ Precisely for this reason, the issue received large coverage on the public agenda. Additionally, the state used coercive power as the last resource for policy implementation. In districts that would be subjected to “systematization plans”, the residents were forbidden to make housing repairs, and lived under permanent threat of the bulldozers.¹⁰ Since demolition work had to be financially sustained from local budgets, the Army was occasionally used for “shock interventions”.¹¹

An expression of the “cultural trauma narrative”,¹² the 1980s demolitions had a powerful impact on the ways in which socialist heritage policies and urban development have been conceptualized in Romania.¹³ However, while the Bucharest Civic Center

City of the Permanent Underclass (361-400); for overview of postwar urban renewal projects in a comparative context, see Christopher Klemek, *The Transatlantic Collapse of Urban Renewal: Postwar Urbanism from New-York to Berlin* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011).

⁹ Peter Derer, “Istoria unei restructurări anunțate. „Rădăcinile” restructurării zonei centrale din București” [The History of an Announced Restructuring. ‘The ‘Roots’ of Restructuring Bucharest’s Central Area], *Historia Urbana* 3.1-2 (1995): 189.

¹⁰ Giurescu, *The Razing of Romania’s Past*, 19.

¹¹ In 1980s Bucharest, historic monuments such as the 18th century Văcărești Monastery were demolished with the contribution of the Army. Similarly, in 1964, the military pulled down the building of the first institution of higher education in Romania, Academia Mihăileană in Iași. Mircea Radu Iacoban, one of the soldiers who participated in the demolition works, published in the 1980s a theatre play called *Hardughia* [The Ramshackle Building], in which he denounced the abusive destruction of old buildings. Constantin Th. Botez, Constantin Ostap, *Cu Iașii mână-n mână* [Walking Hand in Hand with Iași]. (Iași: Gaudeamus, 1996), vol. I, 175-176.

¹² Mihai Stelian Rusu used this concept of “cultural trauma narrative” to describe the anti-communist discourses promoted by Romanian intellectual elites in the post-socialist period. According to his argument, there is a discrepancy between the elite discourse and the nostalgic feelings of the population at large. Mihai Stelian Rusu, “Battling over Romanian Red Past. The Memory of Communist between Elitist Cultural Trauma and Popular Collective Nostalgia,” *The Romanian Journal of Society and Politics* 10.1 (2015): 24-48.

¹³ Post-1989 debates focused to a large extent on deconstructing the decision-making process that had led to the design and construction of the controversial House of the People. Questions of moral responsibility and agency, legitimately raised by the cultural elites, were also addressed in the name of the population

project understandably monopolized public and scholarly attention,¹⁴ it also obstructed the analysis of larger processes. Much of the literature focused on symbolic politics and authoritarian decision-making with powerful ideological underpinning. Usually building on their own experiences, the practitioners revealed details about a system that was capricious and unstable, depending on the political leaders' changing moods. Framed from their perspective, the narratives tended to be reduced to questions of agency and moral responsibility, typically narrowed down to the dichotomy political power vs. technical expertise.¹⁵

Without disregarding the relevance of Bucharest's Civic Center for understanding urban transformation in socialist Romania, I argue that one needs to take a step back from this major project for capturing a more complex picture of the interplay between heritage policies and urban change in the Romanian context. In this dissertation, I attempt to frame the question of the demolition from the broader perspective of the theory and practice of what was called "the socialist reconstruction of cities". I hold that interpreting the destruction of the inherited built fabric simply as the translation of an ideological prescription is insufficient for explaining the motivations and mechanisms behind this

forcefully relocated in order to implement these projects and who interiorized the decade as a traumatic experience.

¹⁴ In my opinion, as early as the mid-1990s, Mariana Celac provided the most common-sense explanation for the Bucharest Civic Center. She emphasized the exceptionality of the project, reflected in its scale, the use of coercion for freeing the land, as well as the impressive mobilization of material and human resources in a relatively short time span. Celac insisted that the project should not be regarded as a civic center but rather as a palace preceded by a ceremonial boulevard for festivities- an imperial-like ensemble, mainly destined to display power. Mariana Celac, "O analiză comparată a limbajului totalitar în arhitectură" [A Comparative Analysis of the Totalitarian Architectural Language], in Lucian Boia, ed., *Miturile comunismului românesc* [The Myths of Romanian Communism] (București: Nemira, 1998), 287-305

¹⁵ Maria Raluca Popa provided an overview of these opinions in interviews with some of the most important experts of the period – architects and art historians. Maria Raluca Popa, "Understanding the urban past: the transformation of Bucharest in the late Socialist period", in Richard Rodger and Joanna Herbert, eds., *Testimonies of the City. Identity, Community and Change in a Contemporary Urban World* (Aldershot, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007), 159-186.

transformative process. The communist governments in the Eastern Bloc approached urban transformation as imminent, radical in form and politically legitimate given the passage to a new mode of production. Marxism, however, provided few indications about the practicalities of the process. As Françoise Choay has pointed out, unlike most critics of the nineteenth century industrial city, Marx and Engels did not denounce the “chaotic development” of existing cities, nor did they advance radiant visions of the urban future. On the contrary, they regarded social reform and urban improvement as inadequate instruments for addressing inequality in industrial cities. In the short term, the housing problem was identified as the most urgent issue on the agenda. Appropriation of housing from the wealthy classes and its redistribution to the workers appeared to be the simplest way of addressing the problem. However, no clear solution was proposed for the long term, since it was argued, quite logically, that the form of the new cities under communism could not be anticipated.¹

How did the communist rhetoric in Romania approach this ambiguity? How was the ideology of radical transformation going to be translated into concepts, visions, and policies, and how would it relate to the inherited urban form? How was it influenced by larger processes, such as strategies of economic development and urban growth? Which institutional and legal mechanisms were at work and how were they used in practice? What kind of values were attached to the existing built environment, and to what extent was it conceptualized as heritage? Finally, what do we learn about the experience of building socialist cities in Romania if we look at the province instead of the capital city?²

¹ Françoise Choay, *Urbanismul. Utopii și realități* [Urbanism. Utopias and Realities] (București: Paideia & Simetria, 2002), 28-30.

² One argument stated that the radical interventions in Bucharest were “prepared” by similar actions of radical reconstruction in the province (one suggestion was, for example, Suceava, in north-eastern

My dissertation attempts to address these questions by proposing a methodological shift from the common view that equals building demolition to the destruction of heritage. Instead, it suggests approaching this question as part of (urban) planning and development, paying attention to the changing conceptual, institutional, and legal frameworks. My argument is based on the assumption that reducing the meaning of the historical built environment to a cultural one ignores not only the more complex debates regarding its significance and management, but also the changing professional discourses on the value of built heritage in the postwar decades.

The thesis contributes to the study of postwar urban modernization policies by investigating the relations between planning and preservation in industrializing socialist cities in Romania. While my argument is constructed around the concept of “historic city”, I do not consider it only as a spatially defined architectural and urban ensemble. Rather, I am interested in the processes that informed the articulation of this concept, and the disputes around its value. As many studies on urban development have focused on the demolitions of the 1980s, my research aims to go beyond this, to examine the 1950s-1970s, and also to shift attention from Bucharest to the province. Methodologically, I chose to go beyond discourse analysis and symbolic politics, to investigate how economics and power intersected in strategies of urban development. To this purpose, I aim to explore the motivations, the strategies and the limitations of the actors involved in the process of transforming the inherited built environment.

Romania). Derer, “Istoria unei restructurări anunțate,” 190. However, no further research has been initiated to test these assumptions. As I argue, every city developed at its own pace, depending on its established profile and the availability of investment. For most cities, the plans prepared in the 1960s established a gradual restructuring of the urban fabric, culminating in the 1980s with the reconstruction of the central area.

In order to pursue my research agenda, I structured it into two complementary levels. First, I aim to identify the major discursive, legal, and institutional frameworks that have informed, on the one hand, the policies of urban reconstruction, and on the other hand, the preservationist agenda. Second, I narrow my focus down to the level of municipal policies, for observing how centrally-formulated agendas of socialist modernization intersected with local visions and historical legacies. For this purpose, I take into consideration two case-studies – Cluj and Iași – two of the most important provincial cities in Romania, the “regional capitals” of Transylvania and Moldavia, respectively.

Romania’s socialist industrialization was initiated as a Soviet-inspired ideological project aimed at radically modernizing an economy that was largely rural and agricultural. In the process, it has turned millions of former peasants into townspeople and transformed, often beyond recognition, the inherited cityscapes. Despite its impressive scope and long-lasting consequences, however, the urbanization process and its impact upon the built environment have benefitted from comparatively little scholarly attention.³ The rapid pace of change, the opacity of decision-making processes, instances of repression and arbitrary power, as well as the inability to express the anxieties associated with these complex

³ In the late 1960s and early 1970s, teams of sociologists led by Miron Constantinescu investigated the integration of rural migrants into urban life. The areas selected for investigation displayed high, medium and low levels of urbanization. Tiberiu Bogdan, Mihail Cernea, Miron Constantinescu, Petru Cristea, *Procesul de urbanizare în România: zona Brașov* [The Urbanization Process in Romania: the Brașov Area] (București: Ed. Politică, 1970); Aculin Cazacu, Stela Cernea, Septimiu Chelcea, *Procesul de urbanizare în R.S. România: zona Slatina-Olt* [The Urbanization Process in Romania: the Slatina-Olt Area] (București: Ed. Academiei RSR, 1970); Mihai Brescan, Ioan C. Cioban, Mihai Diaconiță, *Procesul de urbanizare în R.S. România: zona Vaslui* [The Urbanization Process in Romania: the Vaslui Area] (București: Ed. Academiei RSR, 1973). The topic has re-emerged on the research agenda of both contemporary sociologists and historians. See for example Norbert Petrovici, “Socialist Urbanization in the Ceaușescu Era: Power and Economic Relations in the Production of Habitational Space in Cluj,” *Studia Universitatis Babeș-Bolyai, Sociologia* 1 (2006): 97-111. Recently, historian Mara Mărginean wrote a much-needed analysis of the urbanization process in Hunedoara, the closest example of “ideal socialist city” in the Romanian case. Mara Mărginean, *Ferestre spre furnalul roșu. Urbanism și cotidian în Hunedoara și Călan (1945-1968)* [Windows Toward the Red Furnace. Urban Planning and Everyday Life in Hunedoara and Călan] (Iași: Polirom, 2015).

processes, have all contributed to a poor understanding of the transformation of the built fabric under socialism. The national narratives have been framed from the perspective of the Bucharest-based architectural elite, while the voices of other actors – in particular those from the periphery – were less represented.

It is the purpose of this dissertation to illuminate concepts and policies of heritage-making and urban planning in socialist Romania by looking at intersections between centralized and local decision-making. My main line of argumentation states that, despite the ideology of radical transformation, preservation did play a role in the process of reshaping urban landscapes under socialism, and this role is visible in the fragmented character of the resulting cityscapes. This was due, on the one hand, to the lack of consensus regarding the definition of the new urban form. Visions were contested and reformulated following policy failure or changes in political optics. On the other hand, the implementation of visions was constrained by the pragmatism of everyday negotiations between various actors involved in the process of urban transformation. Despite the possibility of using coercion, the socialist state lacked the human and material resources to implement its ideologically-motivated agenda of urban modernization. Given the scarcity of resources, the old city could not be disregarded, nor its inherited built fabric simply erased; it was rather a question of how, to what extent, and for how long the old structures could be appropriated and used.

Moreover, I argue that two types of preservationist discourses and policies need to be taken into consideration. The first one refers to the common understanding of preservation as an action of maintaining old built structures and cityscapes based on a set of architectural, historic, and urban values identified by experts. In parallel with similar

initiatives abroad, Romanian preservationists proposed an alternative view of the modernization of old districts, arguing for the retention, renovation and revitalization of built structures and historic areas they defined as valuable. However, decision-makers also formulated their own “preservationist” discourse. In response to the scarcity of resources, they argued for the necessity of selectively maintaining the inherited built fabric, infrastructure, and patterns of land use as a matter of practical necessity. Beyond the ideological goal of creating a new social order and the totalizing scope of comprehensive planning, the socialist reconstruction of cities was conditioned by the requirements of economic planning and cost-effectiveness, implying the “well-thought” management of existing resources. Scarcity acted at different levels – lack of material means and human resources, time pressure, restricted access to information – resulting in compromises and fragmentations visible in the unfinished character of the new old city.

Literature Review

I articulate my argument in a comparative framework, drawing in particular upon literature discussing urban modernization after 1945. I am interested in questions of planning, urban design and preservation that have been formulated as part of professional agendas, and implemented by state and municipal authorities. In this subchapter, I start by discussing the key concepts used in the international debates and practice. Then, I narrow it down to the modernization of provincial cities, and the transformation of the built environment in the Eastern Bloc. In the last part, I focus on the literature discussing the Romanian experience of constructing socialist cities, and emphasize the novelty of my approach within this historiographic framework.

Planning, Preservation, and Urban Modernization after 1945

A first thematic framework for discussing the postwar city tackles broad processes that can be subsumed to the concept of urban modernization, such as industrialization and de-industrialization, the role of planning, and mass housing, as well as the rising importance of preservation.

Histories of postwar planning explain the successful expansion of international modernism at global level through the mobility of CIAM architects, and the diffusion of their ideas through publications and exhibitions.⁴ Although the theoretical claims of modernism had already been crystalized during the interwar years and summarized in the 1933 Athens Charter,⁵ it was the massive scale of destruction during the Second World War which offered the practical and ideological impetus for translating modernist visions into policies.⁶ As it was often emphasized, reconstruction projects were implemented through the alliance of interventionist governments and powerful technocrats.⁷ In the postwar decades, the planner became a key figure assisting political decision-makers in elaborating and implementing schemes of urban modernization.⁸ Following Marshall Berman's argument regarding the appropriation of modernity visions by powerful planners

⁴ Klemek, *The Transatlantic Collapse of Urban Renewal*. For a review of the topic, see Rosemary Wakeman, "Rethinking postwar planning history." *Planning Perspectives* 29.2 (2014): 153-163.

⁵ John R. Gold, *The Experience of Modernism. Modern Architects and the Future City* (London: E& FN Spon, 1997); Eric Mumford, *Defining Urban Design. CIAM Architects and the Formation of a Discipline, 1937-69* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 1-17.

⁶ Jeffrey M. Diefendorf, ed., *Rebuilding Europe's Bombed Cities* (London: Macmillan, 1990); Jeffrey M. Diefendorf, *In the Wake of War. The Reconstruction of German Cities after World War II* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993); Nicholas Bullock, *Building the Post-war World. Modern Architecture and Reconstruction in Britain* (London: Routledge, 2002).

⁷ Nigel Taylor, *Urban Planning Theory since 1945* (London: Sage Publications, 1998), 3-8; Rosemary Wakeman, *Modernizing the Provincial City. Toulouse 1945-1975* (Harvard University Press, 1998), 3; Miles Glendinning and Stefan Muthesius, *Tower Block. Modern Public Housing in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland* (New Heaven and London: Yale University Press, 1994), 3.

⁸ Taylor, *Urban Planning Theory*, 8-12, 27.

such as New-York's Robert Moses, it was argued that "the experts expressed modernity in terms of progress, science, efficiency, and rationality, and made themselves, for a time with the full blessing of the society, the sole interpreters of the modern."⁹ Large scale slum clearance, urban renewal and road improvement schemes ranked at the top of urban interventions during the 1950s and the 1960s.¹⁰ In addition, multistory apartment blocks from prefabricated elements that could be produced faster and assembled relatively easily became a cheap solution for addressing the housing question at the global level, in response to new standards of comfort and hygiene.¹¹

Brasilia, "the quasi-Corbusian city"¹², was regarded as emblematic for state-led efforts to construct a new urban form expressing the ideology of progress and social order. As James Holston argued, more than a showcase of architectural modernism, Brazil's new capital city was designed as a counter-image to the country's perceived backwardness. As the initial goals were undermined in the process of constructing the city, Brasilia remained a symbol for both the triumph and shortcomings of modernism in the first two decades after the Second World War.¹³

⁹ Per Lundin, "Mediators of Modernity: Planning Experts and the Making of the 'Car-Friendly City' in Europe," in Mikael Hard and Thomas J. Misa, eds., *Urban Machinery. Inside Modern European Cities* (MIT, 2008), 277-78.

¹⁰ Hall, *Cities of Tomorrow*, Cp. "The City of Towers. The Corbusian Radiant City: Paris, Chandigarh, Brasilia, London, St. Louis, 1920-1970," 204-240.

¹¹ For a comparative analysis at the global level, see Florian Urban, *Tower and Slab: Histories of Global Mass Housing* (Abingdon, Routledge, 2012). One of the most famous initiatives was the Swedish "one million homes program". See Peter Hall, "The Social Democratic Utopia. Stockholm 1945-1980", in *Cities in Civilization. Culture, Innovation, and Urban Order* (London: Phoenix Giant, 1998), 842-887. Equally ambitious was the British mass housing program, leading to the construction of 4 million public dwellings between 1945 and 1969, a number "hardly matched even in Eastern Europe". Glendinning and Muthesius, *Tower Block*, 1.

¹² Holston coined Brasilia as "a CIAM city", "the most complete example ever constructed". James Holston, *The Modernist City. An Anthropological Critique of Brasilia* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1989), 31. The term "the quasi-Corbusian city" belongs to Hall, *Cities of Tomorrow*, 215.

¹³ Holston, *The Modernist City*.

Similar agendas of postwar industrialization and urban modernization transformed cityscapes not only on the European periphery, but also in countries such as France and Great Britain. As Rosemary Wakeman wrote in the case of Toulouse, “modernization was about full employment in the newly mechanized industries, decent housing and regulated social welfare programs, and material affluence as the marks of social harmony”.¹⁴ Bureaucracy and technocratic power played a significant role in this process. Modernization implied identifying and attempting to eliminate the sources of perceived backwardness – in this case, “the city’s older urban community solidarities – the shopkeeper and the artisan world of the red-brick Toulouse”¹⁵. Wakeman’s main argument pointed out that modernism was not implemented on a blank page, nor did it erase the local traditions. Instead, the two merged in creating a new image for an industrializing city. In Britain, Simon Gunn analyzed the case of postwar Bradford,¹⁶ the fabric of which was similarly reshaped through industrialization and the implementation of modernist urban planning visions. As Gunn showed, the city’s postwar master plan was developed with a focus on satisfying the needs of local industry, which implied the development of public housing programs to accommodate the work force. Urban planning and architectural design were approached pragmatically, reflecting the principles of “a banal urban modernism, based on functionalism rather than the iconic, a modernism of office blocks, urban motorways and car parks, not of landmark buildings”¹⁷. In this context, conservation concerns were usually disregarded in the name of progress.

¹⁴ Wakeman. *Modernizing the Provincial City*, 3.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹⁶ Simon Gunn, “The Rise and Fall of British Urban Modernism: Planning Bradford, circa 1945-1970”, *Journal of British Studies* 49.4 (2010): 849-869.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 851.

Robert Morris summarized the success and dissatisfaction with modernism after 1945 from a broader cultural perspective, associated with cycles of economic growth and decline, and the corresponding societal attitudes they generated.¹⁸ As he argued, the economic prosperity and confidence that characterized Western Europe during the 1950s started to decline in the mid-1960s, and accentuated with the economic crisis of the following decade. In terms of architectural taste and urban planning, the period witnessed the rise and fall of aesthetic modernism, which initially had seemed to offer convenient solutions for building more efficient cities, and, more importantly, for successfully addressing the postwar housing crisis. State-run housing policies were denounced as demonstrating an “obsession with the slum”,¹⁹ while municipal officials feared that some of the modernist districts might turn into slums themselves. Apart from “functional failure”, dissatisfaction with modernism included also the critique of top-down planning, i.e., the implementation of functionalist schemes that disregarded the needs and wishes of local communities.²⁰ In the late 1960s, modernism collapsed under waves of criticism, which included dissatisfaction with visual monotony, rigidity, and top-down planning, as well as corruption scandals and industrial decline.²¹

¹⁸ Robert Morris, “Notes on the rebuilding of Europe since 1945. Remembering and forgetting. The British experience”, in Georg Wagner-Kyora, ed., *Wiederaufbau europäischer Städte. Rekonstruktionen, die Moderne und die lokale Identitätspolitik seit 1945/ Rebuilding European Cities. Reconstructions, Modernity and the Local Politics of Identity Construction since 1945* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2014), 64-79.

¹⁹ Approximately two million housing units were demolished in Britain as part of the postwar urban renewal policies. Dennis Rodwell, “Urban Conservation in the 1960s and 1970s: A European Overview,” *Architectural Heritage* 21 (2010): 9-10.

²⁰ Jane Jacobs is probably the best-known figure of the movement criticizing urban renewal programs in the US. Jacobs praised the positive values of traditional neighborhoods (e.g., diversity, mixed uses), and was a strong advocate for citizens’ participation in questions of urban planning. Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (London: Penguin Books, 1994); Klemek, *The Transatlantic Collapse of Urban Renewal*, 109-121.

²¹ Gunn, “The Rise and Fall of British Urban Modernism,” 861-867. Alternative explanations have emphasized that the improvement of living standards raised new consumerist expectations, thus rendering modernist solutions obsolescent. Glendinning and Muthesius, *Tower Block*. 6.

The rise of preservationist attitudes has typically been presented as a reaction to the modernist credo of sweeping away the physical remains of the past. Since the late nineteenth century, particularly in the German-speaking countries, England, and Italy,²² the concept of historic town started to gain appreciation in response to the destructive effects of industrialization and modern planning.²³ As John Pendlebury observed, preservation developed as a scientific discourse using specific methods of classification and selection devised by trained specialists. It was an integral part of modernity, “bound into a complex dialectic with change, and used to confirm the continuity and stability necessary for nationhood”.²⁴

The tensions between preservation and change raised major dilemmas in the context of postwar reconstruction.²⁵ In cities that suffered considerable destruction of the built fabric, decision-makers had to weigh between the opportunity of radical renewal, and the preservation of traditional cityscapes. Jeffrey Diefendorf’s comparative investigation of postwar reconstruction in West German cities emphasized that these efforts implied pragmatic decisions and decisively modernist attitudes.²⁶ The inhabitants’ attachment to

²² Particularly influential was the Italian Gustavo Giovannoni (1873-1947). Trained in civil engineering and art history, Giovannoni addressed the problems of old districts – especially those resulting from poor hygiene and overcrowded buildings–, while remaining considerate towards the aesthetic values of the cityscape. He proposed that decisions regarding preservation and reconstruction would be informed by surveys paying attention to the historical and architectural values of the building stock. See Guido Zucconi, “Gustavo Giovannoni: A Theory and Practice of Urban Conservation,” *Change over Time* 4:1 (2014): 76-91.

²³ Michele Lamprakos, “The Idea of Historic City,” *Change over Time* 4.1 (2014): 17-20. The most famous advocate of the old town and its picturesque qualities was Camillo Sitte, with his *City Planning according to Artistic Principles* (1889).

²⁴ John Pendlebury, *Conservation in the Age of Consensus* (London: Routledge, 2008), 21.

²⁵ Diefendorf, ed., *Rebuilding Europe’s Bombed Cities*; John Pendlebury, “Planning the Historic City. Reconstruction Plans in the United Kingdom in the 1940s,” *The Town Planning Review* 74.4 (2003): 371-393.

²⁶ In case of individual structures, the building’s shell was retained and the interior modernized. Also, the preservation of townscapes implied retaining the street layout and the character of the old city rather than individual buildings. Diefendorf, *In the Wake of War*, 69-73.

familiar cityscapes and the need for continuity have also played a significant role in decisions for preservation.²⁷

In the 1960s and 1970s, preservationist agendas emerged both as bottom-up and top-down initiatives. Civic groups became active in organizing various forms of protest against announced demolition, often accompanying broader movements for political democratization, environmental protection and social justice.²⁸ However, as asserted by John Delafons, the role of the state has been essential in integrating preservation and planning through specific administrative and legal initiatives.²⁹ The legislation for area-based conservation adopted in different national contexts in the 1960s and 1970s can be seen as a specific manifestation of this attitude.³⁰ At the international level, the reconsideration of the historic city was acknowledged by the Venice Charter in 1964, while numerous events were organized in 1975 in celebration of the European Architectural Heritage Year.³¹ State-led preservationist measures aimed not only at protecting historic areas from comprehensive redevelopment, but also at enhancing their character through

²⁷ Similar arguments guided the postwar reconstruction in Sevastopol. Contradicting a top-down approach to postwar reconstruction, Karl D. Qualls showed that the plans devised in Moscow were rejected because of their lack of sensitivity towards local memory and context. Karl D. Qualls, *From Ruins to Reconstruction: Urban Identity in Soviet Sevastopol after World War II* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009).

²⁸ Erika Hanna examined preservationist struggles in 1960s Dublin, investigating various strategies used by pressure groups and activists in order to contest the destructive effects of modernist planning on the eighteenth-century Georgian city. Hanna showed how the arguments in favor of preservation expanded beyond the traditional focus on architectural and historic value of individual buildings, to refer to the old town character, and emphasize the inhabitants' emotional attachment to old streets and cityscapes. Erika Hanna, *Modern Dublin: Urban Change and the Irish Past, 1957-1973* (Oxford University Press, 2015). Similar analyses of preservationist grassroots movements are provided by Thordis Arrhenius, "Preservation and Protest: Counterculture and Heritage in 1970s Sweden," *Future Anterior* 7.2 (2010): 106-123, and Klemek, *The Transatlantic Collapse of Urban Renewal*, 129-173.

²⁹ John Delafons, *Politics and Preservation. A Policy History of the Built Heritage* (London: E& FN Spon, 2005), 1.

³⁰ A short list of these legislative measures would include the Monument Act (the Netherlands, 1961), Loi Malraux (France, 1962), the Civic Amenities Act (UK, 1967), the Urban Planning Act (Italy, 1967). Steven Tiesdell, Taner Oc, Tim Heath, *Revitalizing Historic Urban Quarters* (Architectural Press, 1996), 2; Larkham, *Conservation and the City*, 66-76.

³¹ For an overview, see Lamprakos, "The Idea of the Historic City".

alternative planning solutions sensitive towards their aesthetic and historic qualities. Thus, urban preservation came to be defined as a strategy of accommodating change in historic districts, integrated in economic and urban planning schemes.³²

The oil crisis of 1973-74 raised the question of the scarcity of energy resources, thus adding a new argument in favor of preservation.³³ Previously despised as places of decay and poverty, historic districts started to be re-imagined as sources of economic development in the context of de-industrialization.³⁴ Moreover, urban revitalization projects became a source of political power, promoted by various actors in order “to legitimate and consolidate their positions within the changing institutional framework [...]”.³⁵ While the re-orientation of urban economies towards consumption and services provided the financial resources for the revitalization of old districts,³⁶ “the approach [...] favored aesthetics and urban design and was less considerate towards socio-economic aspects, leading to conflicting approaches between the maintenance of old buildings and new functions”.³⁷ In short, gentrification and facadism³⁸ emerged as negative side-effects of the process. According to Neil Smith, “the ‘urban renaissance’ has been stimulated more by economic than cultural forces”. Rather than social concerns or aesthetic taste,

³² Tiesdell et al., *Revitalizing Historic Urban Quarters*, 4. As Peter J. Larkham has pointed out, from the practitioners’ point of view, preservation was perceived as a “reaction to the problem of ageing urban landscapes”, in the context in which both “the production and maintenance of the physical of the urban environment absorb a large amount of wealth”. Larkham, *Conservation and the City*, 58.

³³ James Marston Fitch, *Historic preservation: curatorial management of the built world* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1990), 32.

³⁴ Tiesdell et al., *Revitalizing Historic Urban Quarters*, vii.

³⁵ Rebecca Madgin, “Reconceptualizing the historic urban environment: conservation and regeneration in Castlefield, Manchester, 1960-2009,” *Planning Perspectives* 25.1 (2010): 32.

³⁶ Brian Graham, G.J. Ashworth and J.E. Tunbridge, *A Geography of Heritage: Power, Culture and Economy* (London: E. Arnold, 2000), 140-143.

³⁷ Rodwell, “Urban Conservation in the 1960s and 1970s,” 2-3.

³⁸ The practice of facadism, implying the retention of the façade while eliminating the rest of the building, was used to avoid the complicated task of adapting old spaces to new uses. Jonathan Richards, *Facadism* (London: Routledge, 1994).

consumption represented the key factor in plans for the rehabilitation of centrally-located districts.³⁹

The Socialist City: Ideology, Modernization, and the Welfare State

How does the socialist city fit into this broad picture? And how can one account for the specificity of the urban modernization projects devised by socialist countries?

During the Cold War period, a shared consensus in Western historiography stated that the political and ideological divisions between East and West had indeed produced a new type of city characteristic of the Eastern Bloc. R.A. French and Ian Hamilton famously argued in the introduction of a collective volume published in 1979 that the differences were generated mainly by the impact of Marxist ideology and the characteristics of the command economy.⁴⁰ Social scientists also pointed out that in the Eastern Bloc, fast-paced industrialization and urban transformation were invested with specific ideological connotations.⁴¹ Moreover, the low urbanization rates of most countries in the region in 1945 made change extremely visible.⁴²

Early explorations in the field include the work of James H. Bater and Blair Ruble.⁴³ Although the formulation of theoretical models was important for emphasizing

³⁹ Neil Smith, *The New Urban Frontier. Gentrification and the Revanchist City* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 50-55.

⁴⁰ R.A. French and Ian Hamilton, "Is There a Socialist City", in R. A. French & F. E. Ian Hamilton, eds., *The Socialist City: spatial structure and urban policy* (New York: Wiley, 1979). However, the authors noted significant differences among different socialist cities themselves, emphasizing that many urban settlements in socialist countries have "retain[ed] a great deal of their past." Ibid., 3-4.

⁴¹ Ronnas, *Urbanization in Romania*, 12.

⁴² French and Hamilton, "Is There a Socialist City", 2. See also Jiri Musil, "City development in Central and Eastern Europe before 1990: Historical context and socialist legacies", in F. E. Ian Hamilton, Kaliopa Dimitrovska Andrews, Natasa Pichler-Milanovic, eds., *Transformation of Cities in Central and Eastern Europe towards globalization* (United Nations University Press, 2005), 36. The urban population percent for 1950 indicate also significant differences among socialist countries: around 20% in Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Romania, as compared to 40% in Czechoslovakia, East Germany and Poland.

⁴³ James H. Bater, *The Soviet City: Ideal and Reality* (London: E. Arnold, 1980); Blair A. Ruble, *Leningrad: Shaping Soviet City* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1990).

the ideological underpinnings of the socialist city project,⁴⁴ researchers also observed that everyday realities differed considerably from the ideal image created through ideological statements and planning principles. In his analysis of the Soviet city published in 1980, James Bater identified numerous shortcomings in urban planning and municipal policies, e.g., tensions among actors with diverging interests, as well as the city soviet's lack of control over the organization of urban space.⁴⁵

After 1989, the analytical model tended to be put aside, as the opening of archives brought under scholarly analysis previously unexplored aspects of the urban experience in the former Eastern Bloc countries. Anthropologists, sociologists, historians, architectural historians, and urban geographers used a variety of methodological approaches in order to explore diverse aspects such as social change and everyday life, housing, urban design and architectural heritage.⁴⁶ The socialist urban experience was reframed from a broader European, global and comparative perspective, with particular interest directed towards

⁴⁴ James Bater famously listed the principles of constructing socialist cities. Bater, *The Soviet City*, 27-30.

⁴⁵ Ibid., Cp. 5, "The Spatial Organization of the Soviet City", 86-132.

⁴⁶ A list would include Colton, *Moscow: Governing the Socialist Metropolis*; Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley : University of California Press, 1995); David Crowley and Susan E. Reid, eds., *Socialist Spaces: sites of everyday life in the Eastern Bloc* (Oxford: Berg, 2002); Stephen Bittner, *The Many Lives of Khrushchev's Arbat* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008); Mark B. Smith, *Property of Communists: The Urban Housing Program from Stalin to Khrushchev* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2010); Kimberly Elman Zarecor, *Manufacturing a Socialist Modernity: Housing in Czechoslovakia 1945-1960* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2011); Steven E. Harris, *Communism on Tomorrow Street: Mass Housing and Everyday Life after Stalin* (Washington, D.C. : Woodrow Wilson Center Press ; Baltimore : The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012); Katherine Lebow, *Unfinished Utopia: Nowa Huta, Stalinism and the Polish Society, 1949-56* (Ithaca : Cornell University Press, 2013); Virág Molnár, *Building the State: Architecture, Politics and State Formation in Post-war Central Europe* (London: Routledge, 2013); Krisztina Fehérváry, *Politics in Color and Concrete: Socialist Materialities and the Middle Class in Hungary* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013); Heather D. DeHaan, *Stalinist City Planning. Professionals, Performance, and Power* (Toronto- Buffalo- London: University of Toronto Press, 2013); Brigitte Le Normand, *Designing Tito's Capital. Urban Planning, Modernism and Socialism* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2014); Christine Varga-Harris, *Stories of House and Home. Soviet Apartment Life during the Khrushchev Years* (Cornell University Press, 2015).

social and cultural aspects as opposed to the political and economic focus of Cold War period historiography.⁴⁷

Stephen Kotkin's *Magnetic Mountain*⁴⁸ opened new methodological perspectives in the field, although his scope was naturally much broader than to produce a piece of urban history.⁴⁹ However, by presenting the industrial city as the embodiment of a new civilization that the communists sought to create, Kotkin placed the urban at the center of their modernization project. Drawing upon the work of Foucault, he combined an analysis of the state's great designs with insights into daily life so as to observe the manner in which socialism was envisaged, built and experienced. In investigating the materialization of the socialist utopia, Kotkin skillfully emphasized how great ambitions and expectations intertwined with everyday struggles, failures, and subversive actions. In addition, his work challenged two of the main ideological claims of socialism – scientific planning and equality – demonstrating how the socialist city emerged as largely unplanned and socially stratified.

Kotkin's book significantly contributed to reconsidering Soviet-style socialism as part of modernity – a legitimate product emerging from the intellectual framework of the Enlightenment. This shift of perspective opened a way for exploring the built and social fabric of socialist cities beyond the major projects which had initially caught the researchers' attention – in particular the new socialist cities.⁵⁰ The focus on modernity and

⁴⁷ See for example Steven E. Harris's discussion of Khrushchev's housing policies, whose origins are traced back to the 19th century pan-European housing reform, Harris, *Communism on Tomorrow Street*, 27-108.

⁴⁸ Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain*.

⁴⁹ On the broader impact of *Magnetic Mountain* on Soviet studies, see Igal Halfin and Jochen Hellbeck, "Rethinking the Stalinist Subject: Stephen Kotkin's *Magnetic Mountain* and the State of Soviet Historical Studies," *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*. Neue Folge 44.3 (1996): 456-463.

⁵⁰ The analysis of the first socialist cities has evolved from an initial focus on the built form as a reflection of ideology- for example Aman Anders, *Architecture and Ideology in Eastern Europe during the Stalin*

modernization also opened alternative research perspectives, shifting attention from violence, repression and the elites, towards the welfare state and its strategies of generating consensus among the population at large.⁵¹

Modernism offered considerable opportunities for comparisons between East and West, showing the extent to which architecture and urban planning trends cut across Cold War divisions.⁵² Official histories of socialist modernism indicate Khrushchev's endorsement of industrialization and standardization methods in construction in the mid-1950s as the power gesture that legitimized the return of modernist design in the East.⁵³ Scholars working on various case studies in the Eastern Bloc felt compelled to challenge the "superiority of the Soviet model", demonstrating that rather than following the Soviets in an exercise of self-imposed obedience, architects and construction engineers built on local legacies in modernist design, standardization and industrialization of construction.⁵⁴

Era. An Aspect of Cold War History, Cp. 8 The First Socialist Cities, 147-164, to social history approaches using a bottom-up perspective for examining the contribution of marginal groups such as women and the Roma in the construction of the new city e.g., Lebow, *Unfinished Utopia*, Cp. 4 "Women of Steel" (97-123).

⁵¹ Consumption as a research topic played an important role in re-evaluating the relation between state and society. For example, sociologist Krisztina Fehérváry has argued for an understanding of the socialist project in terms of "modernizing through materialities". Fehérváry, *Politics in Color and Concrete*, 4.

⁵² David Crowley and Jane Pavitt, eds., *Cold War Modern: Design 1945-1970* (London: V&A Pub., 2008); Vladimir Kulić, *Modernism in-between. The Mediatory Architects in Socialist Yugoslavia* (Berlin: Jovis Verlag, 2012); Vladimir Kulić, Timothy Parker and Monika Penick, eds, *Sanctioning Modernism. Architecture and the Making of Postwar Identities* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2014). According to an opinion expressed by Eric Mumford, the architects from the two political blocs "went on parallel, but separated trajectories". Eric Mumford, "CIAM and the Communist Bloc 1928-1959," *The Journal of Architecture* 14.2 (2009): 237. Other scholars have argued, that, at least in what concerns mass housing, the results have been surprisingly similar. Peter Hall noted that "especially in the 1960s, when the public housing program reached a frenetic peak, and industrialized building methods were favored [...], the resulting landscapes in Western European cities often came to be almost undistinguishable from their Eastern European socialist equivalents in Prague or Warsaw." Peter Hall, "The Centenary of Modern Planning Urban", in Robert Freestone, ed., *Planning in a Changing World: The Twentieth Century Experience*, (New-York: Routledge, 2000), 28.

⁵³ Andrei Gozak, "Attitudes towards Modern Architecture in the USSR and in Russia (second half of the 20th century: A Testimony", in Jean-Yves Andrieux and Fabienne Chevalier, eds., *La reception de l'architecture du Mouvement Moderne: Image, Usage, Heritage* (Université de Saint-Etienne, 2005), 434.

⁵⁴ Elman Zarecor, *Manufacturing a Socialist Modernity*. A similar argument was made in relation to urban planning. A case in point is Belgrade's postwar master plan, drawn by Yugoslav architects who had previously worked within the CIAM framework. Le Normand, *Designing Tito's Capital*, 19-24.

To any extent, the principles of the functionalist city were endorsed politically in an exercise of pragmatism, as they conveniently matched the economic modernization agenda of the socialist state, and its concern for cost-effectiveness.

Housing policies have lately benefitted from increasing scholarly interest. Moving beyond the quantitative approach of the 1980s,⁵⁵ and building on Ivan Szelényi's argument regarding inequality in housing distribution,⁵⁶ several researchers have explored the topic as part of a broader concern with consumption practices under socialism.⁵⁷ On the one hand, this body of literature emphasized the increasing scope of providing housing as part of the state's strategies of promoting welfare measures. On the other hand, and perhaps more importantly, it identified the citizens' agency and the everyday experience of acquiring and living in a modern dwelling. More recently, Florian Urban sought to address these concerns by placing the modernist housing estates of Moscow and East Berlin into the global context of postwar state-sponsored programs for mass housing. Moving from the European periphery to the postcolonial world, Urban explained the implementation of this architectural program in different political and socio-economic contexts through a shared agenda of urban modernization that combined welfare measures with concerns for progress through technological improvement.⁵⁸ Ultimately, dissatisfaction with socialist modernism

⁵⁵ J.A.A. Sillince, ed., *Housing policies in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union* (London: Routledge, 1990).

⁵⁶ Iván Szelényi, *Urban Inequalities under State Socialism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983).

⁵⁷ William Craft Brumfield and Blair A. Ruble, eds., *Russian Housing in the Modern Age. Design and Social History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); Smith, *Property of Communists*; Brigitte Le Normand, "The House that Socialism Built: Reform, Consumption, and Inequality in Postwar Yugoslavia," in *Communism Unwrapped: Consumption in Cold War Eastern Europe*, Paulina Bren and Mary Neuberger eds. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 351-373; Harris, *Communism on Tomorrow Street*; Varga-Harris, *Stories of House and Home*.

⁵⁸ Urban, *Tower and Slab*. His case studies include Chicago, Paris, Brasilia, Shanghai, Moscow, and East and West Berlin.

in the East was framed in similar aesthetic terms, i.e., urban monotony.⁵⁹ Its abandonment was more likely sanctioned through a political decision.⁶⁰

Municipal policies have been examined by Timothy Colton, who mapped the fragmentation of executive power, and the conflicting interests of various governmental agencies guided by the principle “look out for your own interest”.⁶¹ He emphasizes the fragility of the local administration when confronted with orders from the superior party apparatus, as well as its unwillingness to share welfare beyond the upper strata of society.⁶² Last, but not least, R.A. French has re-evaluated the legacy of the Soviet urban experience in a framework emphasizing the entanglements between generous visions, agency, and pragmatic action.⁶³

Socialist Cities and Heritage Preservation

While scholarly interest in the socialist planning of cities has increased, heritage and preservation have been explored to a lesser extent. Generally, the researchers engaging with this topic have attempted to provide a different narrative to the commonly-assumed stories of neglect and destruction. For example, Steven Maddox documented the extraordinary efforts of Leningrad’s preservationists to protect the city’s most important

⁵⁹ However, the consensus was not absolute; for example, architects in Hungary continued to work within the modernist framework as late as the 1980s. Virág Molnár, “Cultural Politics and Modernist Architecture: The Tulip Debate in Postwar Hungary,” *American Sociological Review* 70.1 (2005): 111-135.

⁶⁰ Le Normand, *Designing Tito’s Capital*, 231-242.

⁶¹ Colton, *Moscow*, 565.

⁶² Ibid., 565-66. Some of Colton’s observations seem just as raw as the policies themselves. He writes for example that “Goals low in the hierarchy of human needs, beginning with crude shelter, were the ones served best and most uniformly by public policy.”

⁶³ R. A. French, *Plans, Pragmatism and People: The Legacy of Soviet Planning for Today’s Cities* (London: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1995).

monuments during the Second World War and emphasized the reemergence of state preservation in the Soviet Union as an expression of patriotism.⁶⁴

The historic town in the Eastern Bloc has been presented either as the object of state-led heritage-making initiatives, or the embodiment of contested space politics. Heritage policies in various socialist countries carried the imprint of national or local legacies in the field. Poland and Czechoslovakia displayed particularly strong traditions in this regard. The reconstruction of Warsaw's historical core in the aftermath of the Second World War is usually described as an expression of patriotism and desire to overcome war traumas through maintaining the continuity of the built fabric. The reconstruction of heavily damaged structures, however, would not have been possible without the long-time engagement of Polish preservationists. Already in the interwar period, historic districts had been included in the definition of a historic monument, and surveyed as part of a nationwide scientific effort to document the built heritage.⁶⁵ The scope of urban heritage preservation has also been broad in Czechoslovakia, where thirty-five towns received protected status as early as the interwar period. Spared from major war destructions, they benefitted, starting in the 1950s from further legislative and institutional measures aimed at their conservation and sensitive integration within urban planning schemes.⁶⁶ In

⁶⁴ Steven Maddox, *Saving Stalin's Imperial City. Historic Preservation in Leningrad, 1930-1950* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015). The same argument was made by Victoria Donovan for the 1960s- 1980s. Victoria Donovan, "The 'Old New Russian Town': Modernization and Architectural Preservation in Russia's Historic North West, 1961-1982," *Slavonica* 19.1 (2013): 18-35. On the Soviet legislation for monument protection, see Jean-Louis Cohen, "Soviet Legal Documents on the Preservation of Monuments," *Future Anterior* 5.1 (2008): 62-80.

⁶⁵ The legislation promulgated in 1928 included historic districts and urban ensembles within the category of historic monuments. In the following years, the listed monuments were surveyed as part of a comprehensive effort, under the coordination of a Central Bureau. After the war, it was precisely the existence of these comprehensive building surveys that made possible the reconstruction of Warsaw's old town. Ian Zachwatowicz, *Protection of Historical Monuments in Poland* (Warsaw: Polonia Publishing House, 1965), 17-18, 24.

⁶⁶ Glennending, *The Conservation Movement*, 374. The protection of historic towns in Czechoslovakia was supported through an adequate institutional and legal framework i.e. the State Institute for the

Bulgaria, the interest in historic towns was manifested as a museological approach. Several historic districts with a declared protected status were “frozen in time” and preserved exclusively for touristic and cultural purposes.⁶⁷

During the 1960s, historic districts targeted by urban redevelopment projects became spaces for contesting state-endorsed visions of urban modernization. Disputes between preservationists and planners for the redevelopment of old neighborhoods, such as Arbat in central Moscow, were amplified by broad public engagement for preservation.⁶⁸

The 1970s brought a significant shift in preservationist attitudes, as the definition of urban heritage broadened to include previously neglected nineteenth century tenement districts.⁶⁹ Florian Urban documented the gradual “rediscovery” of nineteenth century districts in East Berlin, which resulted in several state-endorsed urban design projects aiming at the rehabilitation of old buildings and recreation of an “old town atmosphere”. These initiatives culminated with the “invention” of the city’s medieval nucleus, Nikolaiviertel, which was (re-)constructed to a large extent from prefabricated elements in a historicizing style in celebration of Berlin’s 750th anniversary. Urban locates the

Reconstruction of Historic Towns and Monuments, organized in 1954, and the 1958 conservation law, which recognized the protected status of urban conservation areas.

⁶⁷ The case of Plovdiv in Bulgaria became emblematic for this approach. In the 1950s, an area of 35 hectares containing approximately 200 mansions constructed in the so-called “Bulgarian Renaissance” style was declared an “ancient reserve”. Praised for its cultural value, the town was conserved and turned into an open-air museum, a process which had as a side-effect the relocation of most residents. Dennis Rodwell, *Conservation and Sustainability in Historic Cities* (Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 19-20.

⁶⁸ The movement was institutionalized through the creation of the All- Russian Society for the Safeguarding of Historical and Cultural Monuments. Bittner, *The Many Lives of Khrushchev's Thaw*, cp. “Preserving the Past, Empowering the Public” (p. 141-173).

⁶⁹ The reconsideration of nineteenth century districts became more widespread in the 1980s. The case of Kazimierz district in Cracow is indicative in this regard. A former Jewish district, Kaziemierz had been the objects of several non-implemented urban redevelopment projects in the 1950s and 1960s. However, in the 1980s, architects reconsidered its historical value and drafted alternative plans for “revalorization”, although only as much as 10% of the buildings were considered to be in a good state of maintenance. Monika A. Murzyn, *Kazimierz, The Central European Experience of Urban Regeneration* (Kraków: International Cultural Center, 2006), 120-136.

significance of this gesture in the field of symbolic politics. He argues that the making of built heritage and its appropriation as a form of usable past was intended to assert political legitimacy for the East German regime in the context of an economic crisis and rivalries with the West.⁷⁰ Nevertheless, many old districts remained in a state of neglect, attracting marginal groups and being associated with countercultural movements.⁷¹

Since major heritage sites or large cities are usually privileged in histories of preservation, Victoria Donovan has tried to show a different story, and mapped the rise and institutionalization of preservationist attitudes in provincial Soviet towns. As one might assume, in such contexts heritage policies were less spectacular, remaining dependent upon the benevolence of political leaders, and their willingness to support preservationist measures. In her discussion of local heritage policies, Donovan also addressed the question of human and material resources, stressing the implications of scarcer resources for preservation in provincial towns as compared to larger cities.⁷²

These historiographic frameworks offer, I believe, an adequate comparative perspective for discussing the Romanian case. Recent literature on socialist cities has already claimed the relevance of this topic as part of global histories of postwar planning and urban modernization. Most importantly, I argue, is the fact that these in-depth investigations challenged stereotypical views which had superficially reduced socialist cities to sad and heartless cityscapes of poor quality concrete housing blocks, showing

⁷⁰ Urban, *Neo-historical East Berlin*.

⁷¹ Especially in the 1980s, old districts such as Prenzlauer Berg in East Berlin have become settings for countercultural movements. Brian Ladd, *The Ghosts of Berlin: Confronting German History in the Urban Landscape* (University of Chicago Press, 1997), 107-108.

⁷² As she notes, “[...] although empowered by the union-level legislation, many local workshops remained shackled by the lack of material and human resources; at the end of the 1940s, the Novgorod and Pskov workshops comprised just five and four employees respectively, compared with thirty experts at the Leningrad workshop.” Donovan, “The ‘Old New Russian Town’,” 25.

instead a much richer and colorful picture.⁷³ Nevertheless, as noted by Rosemary Wakeman, there is still “little insight into how a postwar planning culture took hold in Eastern Europe, how it dealt with reconstruction and modernization, or its links with the outside world.”⁷⁴ My work attempts to bring a contribution to this field, showing the extent to which the Romanian case fits into and diverges from broader stories of planning and preservation in the postwar decades. In order to do so, it pays attention not only to the different ideological path and strategies of economic development, but also to the ways in which local legacies were reshaped as part of a state-run modernization program.

Urban Planning and Architecture in Socialist Romania

Dinu Giurescu’s *The Razing of Romania’s Past* (1989) is arguably the best-known book on preservation in Romania, quoted even in recently-published syntheses.⁷⁵ Its international popularity is due not only to the strong impact it made in the historical context of the 1980s, but also to the fact that it is still one of few books on the topic available in English. Although the publication was essential for emphasizing the excesses of Ceaușescu’s regime, the strategy used by the author was by no means exceptional. In the 1960s and the 1970s, British activists had similarly used strong metaphors to attract public attention towards the destruction of built heritage.⁷⁶ In a closer look, the limitations of the book are clear in the uncritical treatment of the Department for Historic Monuments’

⁷³ Krisztina Fehérváry introduced this metaphor into the title of her book, Fehérváry, *Politics in Color and Concrete*. Another critical analysis of the topic was provided by Kimberly Elman Zarecor, “Socialist Neighborhoods after Socialism. The Past, Present and Future of Postwar Housing in the Czech Republic,” *East European Politics & Society* 26.3 (2012): 486-509.

⁷⁴ Wakeman, “Rethinking postwar planning history,” 156.

⁷⁵ Glendinning, *The Conservation Movement*, 386-388; John H. Stubbs, Emily G. Makas, *Architectural Conservation in Europe and the Americas: National Experiences and Practice* (Hoboken: John Wiley and Sons, 2011), 403-406.

⁷⁶ Adam Fergusson, *The Sack of Bath* (Michael Russell Publishing, 1973); Colin Amery and Dan Cruickshank, *The Rape of Britain* (Paul Elek, 1975); James Stevens Curl, *The Erosion of Oxford* (Oxford: Oxford Illustrated Press, 1977).

activity,⁷⁷ as well as in the unproblematic presentation of various types of old buildings as heritage.⁷⁸ Although Giurescu's professional input cannot be contested, I suggest that the book should be considered as a preservationist manifesto⁷⁹ rather than a piece of historical analysis. Written in a historical context of social and political tension, by a dedicated historian and preservationist, it was primarily aimed at signaling the abuses of the political regime, and not at providing a balanced perspective on preservationist activity in socialist Romania.

After 1989, the literature on urban transformation under socialism was primarily produced by architects and architectural historians, followed by sociologists, and to a lesser extent by historians. Unsurprisingly, the case of Bucharest (and the 1980s) has been privileged in the interests of researchers. The interpretations oscillated between emphasizing the exceptionalism of the Romanian case (often through a totalitarian argument), and contextualizing it within the broader story of urban modernization.

Damiana Oțoiu's analysis of the Civic Center project provides a telling example of the totalitarian approach.⁸⁰ Unsurprisingly, the narrative focuses on the "supreme leader" who exercised an "absolute control" over urban planning, keeping the architectural production under firm ideological control. In this context, the only question worth

⁷⁷ For example, in order to emphasize the negative consequences of the dissolution of the Department for Historic Monuments, the period until 1977 is presented in a positive light, avoiding any mention of shortcomings and conflicts, while the 1980s are reduced to the story of a national cultural tragedy. This narrative reproduced by Glendinning, *The Conservation Movement*, 388.

⁷⁸ Rich visual illustrations demonstrate the wide range of buildings in various styles that fell victim to the 1980s demolition. However, these buildings are unproblematically presented as heritage, without any discussion of the concept in the Romanian case.

⁷⁹ Radu Ciuceanu, Daniel Barbu, Octavian Roske, "Condiția monumentului sub regimul communist, I" [The Approach to Monuments under the Communist Regime], *Arhivele Totalitarismului* 8. 1-2 (2000): 219-238.

⁸⁰ Raluca Maria Popa observed that explanations are largely subsumed to this paradigm, being either the expression of the "traumatic recent past", or stressing Ceaușescu's negative role as the "diabolic mind behind the project". Popa, "Understanding the past", 159.

investigating concerns resistance: which voices, however modest, opposed the plans for the radical restructuring of central Bucharest?⁸¹ Simply put, the totalitarian argument ultimately contests the logic of urban policies under socialism as products of an unjust and illegitimate system.

Other researchers have attempted to frame socialist urban policies from a *longue-durée* perspective, emphasizing elements of continuity with local urban visions, as well as their integration within broader (European) intellectual traditions of urban planning.⁸² This research direction reflected not only the need of a counter-narrative to the totalitarian paradigm, but also to the perception that Romanian postwar modernism emerged as an emulation of the “Soviet model”. At methodological level, architect Nicolae Lascu argued against conceptualizing demolition as rupture, proposing instead to perceive modernization and destruction as complementary and continuous phenomena.⁸³ Juliana Maxim highlighted the connections with the interwar debates between traditionalists and modernists,⁸⁴ and argued that the communists’ disregard for the old districts, commonly identified as slums, emerged from a broader intellectual framework criticizing the evils of the nineteenth-century industrial city. Her analysis of the “micro-raion” concept emphasized that the communist leadership rejected the traditional low-rise development of

⁸¹ Damiana Oțoiu, “Construind Victoria Socialismului” [Building the Victory of Socialism], in Ruxandra Ivan, ed., *Transformarea Socialistă. Politici ale regimului comunist între ideologie și administrație* [The Socialist Transformation. Policies of the Communist Regime between Ideology and Administration] (Iași: Polirom, 2009), 175-188.

⁸² Peter Derer, “Istoria unei restructurări anunțate,” 187-191; Raluca Maria Popa, *Restructuring and envisioning Bucharest: the socialist project in the context of Romanian planning for a capital, a fast-changing city and an inherited urban space 1852-1989* (PhD diss., Budapest: Central European University, 2004).

⁸³ Nicolae Lascu, “Modernizare și distrugere în istoria postbelică a orașelor românești” [Modernization and Destruction in the Postwar History of Romanian Towns], *Historia Urbana* 3. 1-2 (1995): 171-177.

⁸⁴ Maxim, *The New, the Old and the Modern*, 29-37.

Romanian towns, proposing instead urban redevelopment schemes that produced ruptures in the urban fabric in terms of the land use patterns, form, and scale of construction.⁸⁵

Questions of agency largely focused on the professionals' connection to political power. Memorial literature provides valuable insights into this field, insisting on the discrepancies between professional aspirations and politically-imposed constraints.⁸⁶ Based also on their personal experience, architects Ana-Maria Zahariade and Alexandru Panaitescu wrote informative synthesis works mapping the main developments in the architectural field from 1945 to 1989.⁸⁷ Irina Tulbure has analyzed the impact of socialist realism on architectural practice,⁸⁸ while Miruna Stroe has focused on mass housing during the modernist decade (1954-1966).⁸⁹ Confirming the statements made in the memorial literature, Stroe showed how the architects' initiatives were discouraged not only by economic constraints, but also by the opinions of reluctant politicians, who refused to offer space for experimentation and innovation.⁹⁰

⁸⁵ Maxim, "Mass Housing and Collective Experience: On the Notion of Microraion in Romania in the 1950s and 1960s," *The Journal of Architecture* 14.1 (2009): 7-26.

⁸⁶ Viorica Curea Iuga, ed., *Arhitecți în timpul dictaturii* [Architects in Times of Dictatorship] (București: Simetria, 2005); Ion Mircea Enescu, *Arhitect sub comuniști* [An Architect under the Communist Regime] (București: Paideea, 2006).

⁸⁷ Ana-Maria Zahariade *Arhitectura în proiectul comunist. România 1944-1989* [The Architecture in the Communist Project: Romania 1944-1989] (București: Simetria, 2011); Alexandru Panaitescu, *De la Casa Scântei la Casa Poporului. Patru decenii de arhitectură în București 1945-1989* [From the Sparkle's House to the People's House. Four Decades of Architecture in Bucharest 1945-1989] (București: Simetria, 2012).

⁸⁸ Irina Tulbure, *Urbanism și arhitectură în România anilor 1944-1960: Constrângere și Experiment* [Urbanism and Architecture in Romania, 1944-1960: Constraints and Experimentation] (PhD diss., Universitatea de Arhitectură și Urbanism "Ion Mincu" București, 2011). See also Tulbure, "Cvartale de locuințe din București în perioada 'stalinistă'. Locuire, imagine urbană sau simbol?" [Housing Cvatals in Bucharest during the 'Stalinist' Period. Housing, Urban Image or Symbol?], *Historia Urbana* 14.2 (2006): 367-374; Tulbure, "From Casa Scântei to Casa Poporului and Back. Architecture as Icon of a Totalitarian Regime," *Studies in History and Theory of Architecture* 1 (2013): 78-89.

⁸⁹ Miruna Stroe, *Locuirea între proiect și decizie politică. România 1954-1966* [Housing between Design Project and Political Decision. Romania 1954-1966] (București: Simetria, 2015).

⁹⁰ Ibid., 96.

Studies on the construction of representative urban spaces embedded with political connotations, such as civic centers or “new” socialist cities, went beyond aesthetic analyses, to stress the fragility of the planning system.⁹¹ Despite the outstanding political significance of such initiatives, the projects suffered from poor planning and deficient implementation.⁹² In her book on the urbanization of Hunedoara,⁹³ Romania’s most important center for heavy industry in the 1950s, historian Mara Mărginean analyzed the process of socialist urbanization at the intersection between top-down directives and micro-level struggles for resources.⁹⁴ Mărginean demonstrated that the “great” modernization project was filtered through partially overlapping networks of political and economic power, whereas “at the local level the authorities were conditioned by existing resources, changing legislation and local conditions.”⁹⁵

Research on heritage policies in Romania has been mostly framed from a positivist perspective. Beginning in the 1980s, Ioan Opriș published several overviews on the history of preservationist activity in Romania.⁹⁶ More recently, his work was continued by Rodica

⁹¹ Alex Răuță, “The State of Ambiguity of the Communist Civic Center in Three Romanian Secondary Cities: Brăila, Pitești and Sibiu,” *Journal of Urban History* 39:2 (2012): 235-254.

⁹² Sergiu Novac analyzed the never-implemented project of building a civic center in Brașov, a major industrial town in central Romania. Novac’s argument stressed the fragmentation of decision-making power at the local level, and questioned the custom of considering such projects as “failure”. Sergiu Novac, “The Civic Center. Failed Urbanity and Romanian Socialism in Its ‘Second Phase,’” *Community Spaces. Conception, Appropriation, Identity*, Graue Reihe ISR Impuls online 53 (2015): 30-42. In my opinion, one could even regard the state agencies involved in the urban renewal project as “developers”.

⁹³ Unlike the other socialist countries in Eastern Europe, Romania did not build a “new socialist city” that would symbolically represent the ideological claims of the regime. See Aman, *Architecture and Ideology in Eastern Europe*, Cp. 8 The First Socialist Cities, 147-164. Hunedoara was, however, the closest to embody this concept in the Romanian case. Also known for its fifteenth century Gothic castle built by Transylvania’s governor János Hunyádi/ Iancu de Hunedoara, the town had a tradition in the field of heavy industry since the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Its industrial capacities were expanded considerably after the Second World War as a result of the socialist policies of industrialization.

⁹⁴ Mărginean, *Ferestre spre furnalul roșu*.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 108.

⁹⁶ Ioan Opriș, *Comisiunea Monumentelor Istorice: secția pentru Transilvania: istoric și activitate* [The Commission for Historic Monuments- the Transylvanian Section. History and Activity] (Cluj-Napoca, 1983); Opriș, *Ocrotirea patrimoniului cultural: tradiții, destine, valoare* [The Protection of Cultural Heritage: Traditions, Destinies, Value] (București: Meridiane, 1986), Opriș, *Comisiunea Monumentelor*

Antonescu,⁹⁷ whose treatment of the socialist period was largely limited to legislation and pieces of well-known political history. Alternatively, Ioana Rus used a positivist approach to present the restoration works performed by the Department for Historic Monuments in Transylvania after 1945.⁹⁸

The explanations for the impressive scale of demolitions were looked for at the level of symbolic politics and mentalités. In this regard, oral history proved to be a useful resource for investigating attitudes towards preservation. Focusing on the 1980s Bucharest, Raluca Maria Popa pointed towards the “fragile preservationist mentality” displayed not only by the society at large, but also by the experts – mostly architects and art historians. Arguably, this was manifested in the neglect of architectural and art history in the curriculum of specialized institutions of higher education – including the Institute for Architecture – , the poor development of the Romanian preservationist discourse, as well as the professionals’ compliant attitude, reflected a long tradition of submission to political decisions.⁹⁹

Investigations at the level of policy-making brought a different perspective on the topic. Emanuela Grama approached the case of Bucharest’s Old Court,¹⁰⁰ a designated

Istorice [The Commission for Historic Monuments] (București: Ed. Enciclopedică, 1994). Despite enjoying access to the archives of the Commission for Historic Monuments, Oprea provided quite unstructured and uncritical analyses of the institution’s activity.

⁹⁷ Rodica Antonescu, *Locuri, ziduri și odore. Concepțiile cu privire la conservarea patrimoniului cultural în România* [Places, Buildings, and Precious Religious Objects. Concepts of Cultural Heritage Preservation in Romania] (București: Oscar Print, 2010).

⁹⁸ Ioana Rus, *Conservarea monumentelor din Transilvania în perioada 1945-1977* [Monument Preservation in Transylvania, 1945-1977] (PhD diss., Babeș-Bolyai University Cluj-Napoca, 2012).

⁹⁹ Popa, “Understanding the Urban Past,” 176-182.

¹⁰⁰ Emanuela Grama, *Searching for Heritage, Building Politics: Architecture, Archaeology, and Imaginaries of Social Order in Romania (1947-2007)* (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2010). The case of the Old Court was discussed in two further publications: Grama, “Letters, Plans and Walls: Architects and Archaeologists in 1960s Bucharest,” *Anthropology of East Europe Review* 27:2 (2009): 56-67; Grama, *Impenetrable Plans and Porous Expertise: Building a Socialist Bucharest, Reconstructing its Past (1953-1968)*, EUI Working Papers, Max Weber Programme 2012/23.

conservation area in the 1960s¹⁰¹, to examine the extent to which professional discourses, conflicts between various areas of expertise, and institutional fragmentation influenced the project of transforming the area into a heritage site and integrating it into the state's strategies of self-representation.

Without discussing built heritage per se, sociologist Liviu Chelcea looked at housing nationalization in Bucharest, and the strategies of appropriating and transforming old buildings in the context of changing property regimes.¹⁰² Chelcea's work also contradicted the stereotype of building neglect during socialism, emphasizing the tenants' efforts to maintain their houses in a good state of conservation, in spite of difficulties in securing construction materials and introducing modern amenities.¹⁰³

Although the methodological and thematic approaches have become more diverse along the years, relatively few aspects regarding the construction of the socialist city in Romania have been explored so far. The dominant narratives were produced by “insiders” – particularly members of the architectural elite – who emphasized the shortcomings of the system, and its authoritarian style of decision-making. Their critical perspective stressed the narrowness of official visions and the lack of opportunities, yet failed to provide a more nuanced picture reflecting upon the positions and motivations of different actors.

¹⁰¹ Bucharest's Old Court area attracted the interest of both architects and archaeologists. One heritage-making initiative focused on excavating and preserving the archaeological remains of the 15th century princely court, while a second one, promoted by architect Constantin Joja, aimed at re-imagining and reconstructing old Bucharest using one specific 18th century building type presented as the expression of Romanian urban architecture.

¹⁰² Liviu Chelcea, “The ‘Housing Question’ and the State-Socialist Answer: City, Class, and State Remaking in 1950s Bucharest.” *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 36.2 (2012): 281-296.

¹⁰³ Chelcea, “Ancestors, Domestic Groups, and the Socialist State: Housing Nationalization and Restitution in Romania,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 45.4 (2003): 714-740.

Moreover, the way in which architects portrayed their role reflects difficulties in defining their contribution to the construction of a socialist society.¹⁰⁴

Several gaps can be identified in the existing literature. Previous analyses of legislation¹⁰⁵ and institutional organization¹⁰⁶ have paid little attention to questions of policy and impact i.e., to the ways in which these frameworks were used and misused in practice. Although the built form of the socialist city was presented as resulting from a conflictual encounter between the old and the new, the researchers' focus has lain on the production of a new built environment. The old was analyzed only as part of the rhetoric of modernization – the negative other that needed to be replaced.

The study of heritage-making processes has rarely been considered part of urban modernization agendas. On the one hand, heritage tended to be framed either as an autonomous scientific domain, or subsumed in the state's strategies of self-representation. On the other hand, there is still a poor understanding on how redevelopment projects were

¹⁰⁴ A telling example in this regard is the collective volume published by former employees of the Institute for Urban Design in Cluj, in which they presented the most important achievements of the period. The volume was also intended to defend the architects' professional approach, under the assumption that they would be identified as the sole responsible for the failures of the socialist urban planning system. Although the contributions are unequal, the volume represents a very valuable source for following the projects in a chronological order. It is also useful for observing the architects' way of thinking, as the texts produced by various authors seemed to have benefitted from minimal editing. Eugen Pănescu, ed., *Cluj-Napoca în proiecte: 50 de ani: 1960-2010* [Cluj-Napoca in Projects: 50 Years: 1960-2010] (Cluj-Napoca: Imprimeria Ardealul, 2011).

¹⁰⁵ Mihai Marian Olteanu, "Legislația și sistematizare urbană în România socialistă (1965-1989)" [Legislation and Urban Systematization in Socialist Romania (1965-1989)], in Florin Soare, ed., *Politică și societate în epoca Ceaușescu* [Politics and Society in the Ceaușescu Era] (Iași: Polirom, 2013), 17-34; Cezara Mucenic, "Legislația privind monumentele istorice din România," [Historic Monuments Legislation in Romania], *Revista Monumentelor Istorice* [The Journal of Historic Monuments] 2 (1992): 14-20.

¹⁰⁶ The question of institutional organization has not been yet approached in a comprehensive manner. Researchers typically engage in reconstructing the organization of institutions they are particularly concerned with, using the available information i.e., usually a mixture of personal recollections and archival sources. In this thesis, I have adopted a similar approach, although a comprehensive analysis of the institutional structures would be absolutely necessary. A starting point in this direction are the entries in the volume Dan Cătănuș, ed., *România, 1945-1989. Enciclopedia regimului comunist* [Romania, 1945-1989. The Encyclopedia of the Communist Regime] (București: Institutul Național pentru Studiul Totalitarismului, 2006).

conceived and implemented, and what factors influenced decision-making processes.¹⁰⁷

The relation between preservation and planning remained unexplored, probably under the assumption that urban redevelopment meant exclusively comprehensive clearance.

For the time being, the institutional history of Romanian socialism remains at the level of dictionary entries,¹⁰⁸ although there has been some interest in exploring institutional power and policy-making, in the cultural field, for example.¹⁰⁹ Center-periphery relations are little explored,¹¹⁰ and there is scant knowledge on how local administration functioned.¹¹¹ Overall, the interactions between central and local actors and agendas have not yet been addressed in a thorough manner.

My research aims to address some of these gaps by offering insight into the process of urban transformation during socialism, and looking at the relation between planning and preservation as part of urban redevelopment projects. I try to capture the specificity of the Romanian case beyond the simplified vision of exceptionalism defined in terms of a purposeful destruction of the built heritage. I propose a different methodology combining insights from anthropology, urban geography, and heritage studies, and I apply it to a

¹⁰⁷ In the introduction of his study on heritage policies and urban design in East Berlin, Florian Urban has described some of the challenges faced by researchers when trying to decipher decision-making in socialist countries. Urban, *Neo-historical East Berlin*, 4-5. The difficulty or reluctance in ascribing agency mentioned by Urban is common in Romania, as well. At a recent conference, one Romanian architect characterized the rapid pace of urban change in the 1980s though the phrasing “the blocks were advancing”.

¹⁰⁸ Cătănuș, ed., *România, 1945-1989. Enciclopedia regimului comunist*.

¹⁰⁹ Cristian Vasile, *Politicile culturale comuniste în timpul regimului Gheorghiu-Dej* [The Communist Cultural Policies during the Gheorghiu-Dej’s Regime] (București: Humanitas, 2011).

¹¹⁰ Romanian historians investigating the “communist period” tended to locate power at the center, and thus focused primarily on the higher political elite and Bucharest-based institutions. On the contrary, shifting the focus to center-periphery relations seemed legitimate for scholars belonging to the Hungarian minority, interested to map the impact of socialist policies at the level of local communities. See for example the collective volume Ágoston Olti and Attila Gidó, eds., *Minoritatea maghiară în perioada comunistă* [The Hungarian Minority during the Communist Period] (Cluj-Napoca: Editura Institutului pentru Studierea Problemelor Minorităților Naționale, 2009).

¹¹¹ The attempts of providing an overview on local administration are approached as a mix of personal recollections, anecdotes, and pieces of archival evidence. Lazăr Marian, *Primarii Clujului 1919-2012* [The Mayors of Cluj, 1919-2012] (Cluj-Napoca: GPO Graphics S.R.L., 2013), 2 vol.

historical context. More specifically, I argue for the importance of understanding demolition not mainly as a gesture of destruction, but as part of urban (re)development strategies. Then, I advance a new argument, emphasizing the evolution and limits of the preservationist agenda, and the ways it intersected with the policies of urban transformation. In understanding how socialist planning worked, I propose an emphasis on constraints and scarcity as essential elements that modeled socialist projects. Based on this, I show that decision-makers elaborated an alternative “preservationist agenda” stressing the need of saving on urban land, infrastructure and, even old built structures. Finally, my research is based on case studies that have not been analyzed as such in the existent literature. In terms of temporal and spatial coordinates, I shift the focus from 1980s Bucharest, to the urban redevelopment of two regional centers – Cluj and Iași – in the period from the late 1940s to the 1970s, observing how planning and preservation at the local level were influenced by industrialization, urban growth, centrally-formulated directives, as well as changing conceptual, institutional, and legal frameworks. My arguments are supported by evidence from previously-unexplored sources, such as the archives of the Department for Historic Monuments, and those of the People’s Councils.

Theoretical and Methodological Framework

The empirical results of my research are framed within a conceptual framework derived from critical heritage studies, urban geography and anthropological approaches to socialism, space, power and material culture.

My argument is based primarily on the discursive construction of the notion of “historic monument”. Françoise Choay’s comprehensive study on this topic has explored

the emergence of heritage as part of the post-Enlightenment paradigm, and its integration within processes of nation- and state-building.¹¹² More recently, Astrid Swenson has argued for the importance of transnational exchanges in the articulation of local policies to monument preservation.¹¹³ Western systems of heritage protection – in particular the French one – have been regarded as models to be followed and consciously emulated elsewhere.

However, more than deconstructing processes of heritage-making, recent theoretical approaches to the field have taken a critical stance against the definition of the concept in the West i.e., based on professional expertise and validated through the institutional agencies of the nation-state. Lisanne Gibson and John Pendlebury engaged critically with the concept of “value” as constructed by a body of experts,¹¹⁴ while Laurajane Smith coined the notion of “authorized heritage discourse” to describe the Western hegemony in the field. Smith argued that such narratives tended to focus on artifacts that are imposing through their monumentality, scale, aesthetic qualities, and recognized significance for national history, while disregarding alternative conceptualizations (e.g., intangible heritage).¹¹⁵

¹¹² Françoise Choay, *The Invention of the Historic Monument* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001). Central to this agenda was the appropriation of artifacts by the state from the traditional owners, such as the church and the nobility. At a conceptual level, the field of heritage has developed in parallel with the canon of art history and the writing of national historical narratives. Heritage objects have been identified, selected, and categorized by experts, invested with representative meanings, and inscribed into national inventories. Especially treasured as symbols of a glorious past, many medieval monuments that were in a poor state of maintenance - sometimes even as ruins - were returned to an idealized “initial” state through restoration works.

¹¹³ Astrid Swenson. *The Rise of Heritage: Preserving the Past in France, Germany, and England* (Cambridge University Press, 2013).

¹¹⁴ Lisanne Gibson and John Pendlebury, eds., *Valuing Historical Environments* (Ashgate, 2009), 1.

¹¹⁵ Laurajane Smith, *Uses of Heritage* (Sydney: University of Technology, 2007), 4-30.

In this dissertation, I argue that, although relying on Western concepts of heritage, Romanian experts faced difficulties in articulating the “authorized heritage discourse”. Heritage-making processes sometimes targeted artifacts that were small in scale, lacked monumentality and told a blurred or insufficiently documented historical narrative. Or, borrowing from Foucault’s reflections on “banal” subjects of inquiry, it could be stated that the preservationists were challenged to make “visible [...] a layer of material which had hitherto had no pertinence for history and which has not been recognized as having any moral, aesthetic, political or historical value.”¹¹⁶ Thus, I argue that dealing with the “banality” of the inherited built environment in Romanian cities represented an additional difficulty in defining and protecting heritage in socialist Romania.

The planners’ perspective was different, since in their view the value was primarily framed from an economic perspective. In this regard, the concept of obsolescence is crucial for understanding modern attitudes towards the built environment. Technological progress justified the view that buildings, just like any other human-made artifacts, have a limited life-span, after which their replacement was deemed as necessary.¹¹⁷ In the West, the commodification of heritage in a period of industrial decline implied translating the cultural value attached to historic buildings into an economic value. Even in this context, the arguments for preservation had to be framed from an economically-sensitive perspective. As Nathaniel Lichfield explained, “urban conservation aims to restrain the rate of change in the urban system [...], with a view to achieving a better balance between conservation and development that would otherwise prevail.”¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶ Michel Foucault, *Power/ Knowledge. Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977* (New-York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 50-51.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 23-24.

¹¹⁸ Nathaniel Lichfield, *Economics in Urban Conservation* (Cambridge University Press, 1988), 9.

In both East and West, postwar planning relied on trust in expertise. Or, as Simon Gunn and Brigitte Le Normand have argued for Britain and Yugoslavia respectively, planning was based on *technocratic pragmatism*.¹¹⁹ For capturing the specificity of the Romanian case, however, I suggest the term *rudimentary pragmatism* – simple-minded solutions imposed either without much analysis, or based on distrust in technology and expertise. Although the experts’ opinion was also considered, rudimentary solutions emerged as the ultimate expression of utilitarianism and the struggle for resources, since they targetted the regime’s weakness – cost-effectiveness.

My approach to socialist planning is informed by the work of János Kornai and Katherine Verdery. Kornai’s argument regarding the embeddedness of “general, frequent, intensive, and chronic” shortage into the socialist economy is well-known.¹²⁰ Although “shortage” and “scarcity” are synonymous, I prefer to use “scarcity” since the first term is already strongly associated with Kornai’s conceptualization of “shortage economy”, whereas I refer to a variety of resources in short supply – including human resources and knowledge. Another essential piece of literature in the field is Katherine Verdery’s analysis of the shortcomings characterizing the socialist planning system, which was “not adequately planned, nor controlled”.¹²¹ This American anthropologist emphasized that the state’s redistributive power, envisioned as a source of strength and as an expression of socialist paternalism, turned in fact the system vulnerable. Instead of being concerned with the quality of their products, factory managers had to focus on securing the essential

¹¹⁹ Gunn, “The Rise and Fall of British Urban Modernism,” 858; Le Normand, *Designing Tito’s Capital*, xvi-xvii.

¹²⁰ János Kornai, *The Socialist System: The Political Economy of Communism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 233.

¹²¹ Katherine Verdery, “What was Socialism, and Why Did It Fall?,” in Katherine Verdery, *What Was Socialism and What Comes Next?* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), 19-38.

supplies necessary for production. For this purpose, they developed strategies of negotiation e.g., bargains, padding budgets, and the creation of formal and informal networks¹²² through which goods, information and favors were exchanged. In terms of economic planning, it should be also mentioned that official directives stressed cost-effectiveness above any other concerns.¹²³ Planners and other decision-makers were required to make “well-thought-out choices” [Ro: *alegeri chibzuite*] in balancing costs and benefits.

Furthermore, I follow Stephen Kotkin’s methodological approach in considering that the socialist city was shaped not only by great visions, but also by everyday constraints.¹²⁴ This perspective provides an insightful viewpoint for understanding how the “great modernizing project” of the socialist state was implemented at the local level. The works of other scholars, such as James Scott and Tania Murray Li, are also useful for approaching these two complementary aspects. James Scott’s analysis of legibility as intrinsic to modern statecraft offers the top-down perspective for capturing the strategies of the state.¹²⁵ Then, anthropological approaches focusing on local practices,¹²⁶ which converge with the Foucauldian approach¹²⁷ also used by Kotkin, allow for a better investigation of power fragmentation at the micro-level. As Tania Murray Li argued in a critical review of Scott’s arguments, implementing centrally-devised policies requires the

¹²² Kornai similarly emphasized the agency of “pressure or lobby groups”, which represent the interests of various industrial branches, institutions, or professional groups in the allocation of resources. Kornai, *The Socialist System*, 45.

¹²³ The political obsession with cost-effectiveness was denounced by architects as a source of permanent frustration. Ana-Maria Zahariade, *Arhitectura în proiectul comunist*, 35.

¹²⁴ Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain*.

¹²⁵ James Scott, *Seeing Like a State. How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

¹²⁶ Tania Murray Li, “Beyond ‘The State’ and Failed Schemes,” *American Anthropologist* 107. 3 (2005): 383-394.

¹²⁷ Foucault, *Power/ Knowledge*.

use of local knowledge, strategic thinking, and even creativity for “devising practices to translate shaky numbers into solid ones or failed projects into plausible versions of success.”¹²⁸ Overall, the argument stressed the importance of agency, expressed in “skill and initiative”, as well as “struggles to move from one conjuncture to the next one”.¹²⁹

My methodological approach also draws on urban morphology, which examines the historicity of townscapes and the transformation of their fabric over time.¹³⁰ According to Peter J. Larkham, the method implies “an understanding of the processes of morphological change, including cycles in the economy, building industry, but also in thought, legislation, architectural style and taste”, as well as “knowledge of the identity and actions of the agents of change: organizations, institutions, individuals; particularly those directly active in the decision-making process, but also those indirectly active”.¹³¹ The approach consists of two steps: first, it aims at understanding broader frameworks informing urban development schemes (e.g., attitudes, legislation, economic policy, aesthetic views), and second, it narrows the focus of analysis to case studies for observing the entanglements of these factors in the development of the city.¹³²

The use of specific methodological frameworks is conditioned by the availability of sources. If changes in legislation, institutional organization and attitudes are easier to document based on published sources and archival materials, it is comparatively more difficult to decipher decision-making mechanisms. As Florian Urban has observed in his research on urban design in East Berlin, decision-making was rather opaque and

¹²⁸ Murray Li, “Beyond ‘The State’”, 389.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 386.

¹³⁰ J.W.R. Whitehand and P.J. Larkham, “The Urban Landscape: Issues and Perspectives”, in J.W.R. Whitehand and P.J. Larkham, eds., *Urban Landscapes. International Perspectives* (London and New-York: Routledge, 1992), 1-10.

¹³¹ Peter J. Larkham, *Conservation and the City* (Routledge, 1996), 26.

¹³² Ibid., 24-26.

unpredictable.¹³³ Hence, my focus on decision and policy-making does not concentrate on ascribing responsibility to specific actors, but rather on exploring motivations and agendas, as well as strategies of promoting and negotiating specific aims. To this end, I use an anthropological approach analyzing “the practices of planning”, with the focus on locally-constituted instances of power and agency. I follow Foucault’s argument stating that power should be understood as “something that circulates”, divided among “the myriad of bodies” that he called “peripheral subjects”.¹³⁴ Although I investigate primarily the actions of individuals that were part of the state bureaucracy, and not those of ordinary citizens, I treat them as actors pursuing fairly independent agendas that they sought to frame within the “great” modernizing project of the state.

Goals and Limitations of the Research

The main goal of this dissertation is to investigate the rise of the historic town on the preservationist agenda in socialist Romania, and observe its intersections with policies of urban redevelopment in the process of constructing the socialist city. The focus on professional discourses and state policies, looking at the formulation of visions, plans and directives, and their negotiation and implementation at the local level.

Given the impressive rate of demolition in Romanian cities and towns, one could even question the relevance of studying the historic town in socialist Romania. Or, alternatively, the attempts of incorporating the historic city into urban redevelopment schemes could be simply dismissed as a failure. My argument is, however, that it is worth examining the process rather than simply acknowledging the result. To this purpose, I

¹³³ Urban, *Neo-historical East Berlin*, 4-5.

¹³⁴ Foucault, *Power/ Knowledge*, 98.

address a number of questions: How did planners and politicians think about the city and in which terms did they conceptualize urban change? How did they approach the existing built environment in relation to the broader goals of industrialization and urbanization? To what extent can we talk about a discourse regarding the old town in socialist Romania? What were the main arguments and limits of this discourse? How did the preservationists articulate their agenda and in how far did they go to contest the urban redevelopment plans proposed by the planning authorities?

In investigating these questions, one of my main goals is observe not only the formulation of concepts and policies, but also the shifts – the moments of rupture, the fragmentations, and the entanglements between continuities and discontinuities. This approach is justified not only given the changes of political leadership, economic policy, and aesthetic visions in socialist Romania, but also the re-conceptualization of built heritage, and the reconsideration of preservationists' role in urban planning. In looking at how visions and policies were articulated, I pay attention to agency and power dynamics, reflected in initiatives, debates, and conflicts. The ways in which different actors aimed to interpret and shape the broader goal of urban modernization are indicative of the fragmented form of the socialist city, despite the stated goal of radical transformation through comprehensive planning.

At methodological level, I attempt to investigate urban modernization going beyond the level of discourse analysis and symbolic politics. Although conceptualizations, visions, and ideological claims play an important role in my study, I combine them with the analysis of factors that articulated urban development on the field. I focus on institutional actors and their agendas, and follow their strategies for engaging with resource

management and scarcity. The broader framework of my work therefore focuses on the human, intellectual and material resources that were mobilized to construct of the socialist city. Although I concentrate my analysis on an area that has been defined as the “historic center”, I also observe the implications of broader urban planning strategies on this space.

The choice of case studies for this dissertation was motivated by claims advanced by the preservationist discourse in Romania, which traditionally differentiated between two types of historic cities: the Transylvanian ones, and those formerly belonging to the principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia. While the former category was perceived as containing a historic core worth of preservation in its entirety, the heritage value of the latter was rather restricted to individual monuments. In order to observe how these differentiations were reflected in urban policies, I chose to focus in the second part of the thesis on two representative cases, the cities of Cluj and Iași, which are comparable in terms of size, functions, historical pedigree, and cultural prestige. Both cities were (and are) regional capitals, and developed as centers for administration, culture, and, commerce rather than industry. During the socialist period, they were considered of regional importance in the network of localities, and they were both planned to reach 300, 000 inhabitants by 1980. Even though both cities took pride in their history, monuments and urban image, significant differences can be detected between them in terms of built form. The historic center of Cluj was enclosed by medieval fortifications and had a regular street network, with religious and civil buildings dating back to the beginnings of the medieval urbanization in the late twelfth century. In contrast, the historicity of Iași was less legible in its built environment. The triangular-shaped historic area contained an irregular network of narrow streets, and low-rise buildings of relatively recent date (starting with the early

nineteenth century). Based on the degree of demolition and reconstruction, my working hypothesis stated that one can speak of consensus among planners, decision-makers, and preservationists in the case of Cluj, while Iași would be a case of conflict.

In the following paragraphs, I will try to list some of the limitations of my research. While focusing on institutional actors, professional discourse and policy-making, I chose not to engage in depth with questions of identity and heritage. In other words, I am not looking at how various social and cultural groups formulated claims towards particular spaces and buildings in the socialist city, and what kind of heritage narratives they constructed around them. One reason is that state preservation and urban planning already represented a vast topic for investigation. The other reason is that I did not want to present a simplified version of heritage from below by focusing on the points of view expressed by cultural elites, and present them as valid for the society as a whole. The complex question of urban identities in socialist Romania has not yet been properly explored. To be sure, the prewar urban structures were seriously shaken by the war, ethnic conflicts, migration, communist repression, and postwar austerity – to mention just a few factors. Industrialization and rural-urban migration had a strong impact upon the city and its inhabitants, producing conflicts and anxieties. The newcomers were typically stigmatized as “uncivilized”, or “not urban”.¹³⁵ Social and ethnic dissensions sometimes overlapped, being negatively combined with the nationalist policies of the Romanian socialist state. Brining into discussion the ethnic aspect would have required a differentiated approach in

¹³⁵ Rogers Brubaker [et al.], *Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 114-116. A quote of an old Hungarian resident of Cluj referring to the rural migrants that have moved to the city is perhaps significant: “those stupid peasants, they cannot live without this [...] I don’t know how many times they showed on TV, how they kept pigs in the bathroom.” (Ibid., 116).

the two case studies. In Cluj, the Hungarians remained a strong minority group, while the Jewish community in Iași almost vanished from the city as a result of war violence and postwar migration. Additionally, one cannot simply assume that the newcomers disregarded local built heritage by default, or perceived it as something negative. Taking into account all these factors, I considered my focus on state preservation a necessary starting point, upon which to build much more complex narratives on urban identity and heritage.

In what concerns the temporal limits, I start in 1945 and finish in 1977. The starting point is not necessarily connected to the communists' coming to power, but rather to the end of the war, since my purpose was to include postwar reconstruction policies into my research topic. The year 1977 carries strong associations for the public memory in Romania. In early March of that year, an earthquake of a magnitude of 7.2 affected the country, causing the death of approximately 2,000 persons, injuring other thousands, and producing the collapse of numerous old buildings. As was usually the case in such circumstances,¹³⁶ authorities responded by pulling down many damaged buildings, while also proposing ambitious reconstruction plans.¹³⁷ Incidentally, at the end of the same year, the Department for National Cultural Heritage (before 1974, the Department for Historic Monuments), was radically reorganized. More precisely, most specialists employed by the Department were simply dismissed, and activity resumed in a condensed form, under strict political control. Unsurprisingly then, 1977 is considered to be a milestone for preservationist activity in Romania, being often (yet incorrectly) referred to as the year

¹³⁶ Similar measures were taken in Taskent after the 1966 earthquake. Paul Stronski, *Taskent: Forging a Soviet City, 1930-1966* (University of Pittsburg Press, 2010), 254-255.

¹³⁷ The consequences of the earthquake in Bucharest have been analyzed in Panaitescu, *De la Casa Scânteii la Casa Poporului*, 174-183.

when the Department for Historic Monuments ceased its activity.¹³⁸ Although institutional continuity was to a certain extent maintained, the preservationist agenda in the 1980s was significantly different, with local and non-state actors occupying a more prominent position in heritage debates. The scale of demolition, increasingly targeting central neighborhoods, generated strong reactions not only from the part of local preservationists, but also from the international public opinion.

The temporal framework selected coincides mainly with the period when state-led preservation was coordinated by the Department for Historic Monuments. By narrowing down the focus of my research on state preservation and planning, I am primarily interested in actors that were part of the state bureaucracy, and thus involved in decision- and policy-making. This methodological choice does not exclude the existence of other voices in favor of preservation, e.g., local intellectuals, artists, ordinary citizens, who expressed their views in non-institutional contexts.¹³⁹ However, I considered that moving away from forms of institutionalized preservation would have required a different methodological approach.

In this dissertation, I use the terms architects/ planners/ architect- planners to refer to the employees of the local Urban Design Institutes. The difference in the description results from their dual role as designers of individual buildings, and urban ensembles – in the later context, they should be more aptly be called urban planners. Paradoxically, despite the centrality of urban planning for the socialist project of modernization, the Architecture Institute in Bucharest did not provide a specialization in the field. In addition, despite the

¹³⁸ Gheorghe Mândrescu, “Desființarea Comisiei Monumentelor Istorice din Romania la 1 decembrie 1977” [The Dissolution of the Commission for Historic Monuments in Romania on December 1, 1977], *Studia UBB Historia Artium* 55. 1 (2010): 141-158.

¹³⁹ Ion Mitican, an amateur historian, documented many actions of protest and resistance of local intellectuals who opposed demolition in 1980s Iași. See “Ultima zi a străzii Sfânta Vineri” [The Last Day of Sfânta Vineri Street], <http://curierul-Iasi.ro/ultima-zi-a-strazii-sfanta-vineri-3533> (accessed June 1, 2016).

emphasis on collective work, standardized design and technical skill, the architects continued to locate their interests primarily within the realm of creative endeavors, and dreamed about using their skills in the design of representative, individual buildings.¹⁴⁰ Not surprisingly, this strategy of self-representation contradicted official views, according to which the architects' status was located within the field of production rather than artistic creation.¹⁴¹ In the Institutes for Urban Design, architects typically worked in interdisciplinary teams alongside engineers and economists. This approach was considerably different from the pre-war practice, when, depending on local resources, municipalities had employed a chief-architect and several engineers in charge of public works.

I use "preservationists" as a common term for the experts working for the Department for Historic Monuments i.e., architects, archaeologists, art historians, and historians. One of the claims I advance throughout this thesis is that the activity of Department has been marked by constant disagreements between different areas of expertise, as well as among the experts themselves. Some disputes were essentially professional (e.g., divergent opinions on restoration techniques), others institutional, and many even personal. Some of the preservationists were quite closely connected to the

¹⁴⁰ Interview with architect Vasile Mitrea, November 27, 2012, Cluj-Napoca.

¹⁴¹ The architects' status within the socialist scale of professional values was discussed in 1957 within the Central Committee's Section for Propaganda and Agitation. The nature of the architectural profession was brought under scrutiny, in order to establish if the Architects' Union should be part of the Section for Culture and Science, or, alternatively, of the one for Heavy Industry, Transportation and Constructions. Ultimately, the opinions converged towards prioritizing the architects' role as technicians participating in the production of material goods rather than valuing their creative efforts. From the Party's perspective, together with technicians and engineers, architects were directly responsible for the fulfillment of the state plan. ANIC, Fond CC al PCR, Secția Propagandă și Agitație, 5/1957, f. 32.

political hierarchy,¹⁴² others distanced themselves from the beginning, because they were former modernist architects who sought refuge in the field of monument protection.¹⁴³ While preservationists represented a highly heterogeneous body of experts, however, their activity was still based on a consensus regarding their professional duty, generally demonstrating commitment to the cause.

Note on the Sources

This dissertation draws on a variety of sources: written and visual archival documents (e.g., the minutes of the meetings of various institutional actors – including the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party – , institutional correspondence, reports produced by various departments in the People’s Councils, and urban redevelopment projects, as well as maps, sketches, and photographs), published sources (e.g., articles, newspapers, books, memoirs), and oral interviews. The process of identifying relevant sources has made the research challenging, yet rewarding. Many of the unpublished sources that I have used – here I refer in particular to documents from the local archives and those produced by the Department for Historic Monuments – had not been explored previously for the purpose of scientific research.

For the analysis of the preservationist agenda, I relied mostly on the archives of the Department for Historic Monuments, on specialized periodicals (e.g., *Revista Monumentelor Istorice*), as well as on articles written during the last two decades by former

¹⁴² Gheorghe Curinschi and Vasile Drăguț were two names mentioned by Eugenia Greceanu during our discussions. However, the issue is more ambiguous, as political connections constituted an important resource in the struggles for heritage, as well.

¹⁴³ The names of architects Grigore Ionescu, Richard Bordenache, and Paul Emil Miclescu are perhaps the best-known.

employees of the Department. My analysis focused on the minutes of the advisory board meetings, which document the DHM's agenda and its strategies of negotiation in debates with other actors. Discussions with architect Eugenia Greceanu, a devoted preservationist and a long-term employee of this institution, facilitated the understanding of broader processes and deeper motivations beyond seemingly dry decisions, while interviews with local architects offered a complementary perspective, showing how the activity of the Department was regarded at the local level. Although two thesis chapters of this dissertation analyze role of the DHM, it was not my purpose to offer a comprehensive picture on the activity of this institution, but rather to focus on some key aspects of the conceptualization and management of the built heritage. However, the challenges posed by the access to primary sources made me aware that basic instruments for a researcher's work, such as monographs and dictionaries are very much needed – for example one on Romanian architects.

For the mapping the shifts in the architectural discourses, I used in particular the specialized journal *Arhitectura*, which covered not only the debates among the professional elites, but also reported on projects implemented in provincial cities. In the case of journals and newspapers, the question of censorship remains essential. However, *Arhitectura* is far from a dry technical journal; the debates and critical opinions published in its pages demonstrate that the architects were not just paying lip service to politically-prescribed policies. My research on this topic was completed by the analysis of memoirs, oral interviews and pieces of recently-published secondary literature. Questions that emerged during the research concerned the extent to which architects in the province had access to specialized information, and more broadly, the differences among the profiles of top

professionals based in Bucharest – commonly studied in the literature – and those working in the different Institutes for Urban Design across the country, who were less known publicly.

The Central Archives in Bucharest provide documents from the Central Committee meetings, which offer insightful information regarding the ways in which urban transformation was discussed in high political circles. Of particular interest was to discover details about Ceaușescu's personal vision, which he imposed with increasing authority in Central Committee meetings. Although many architects intuitively speculated about Ceaușescu's vision based on their personal experience or rumors, to my knowledge no researcher has investigated these documents in order to capture his personal view.¹⁴⁴ Unfortunately, the archives of institutions that would be more relevant for the topic, such as the State Committee for Architecture and Construction, are not available for research. Information regarding its activity can only be inferred from meetings with the high political leadership. The archival foldings of the Committee for the Problems of the People's Councils, which provides relevant information about approvals of the systematization plans in the mid-1970s, shows the documentary potential of such sources. As a footnote, the fact that copies of urban design projects were sent for approval to different (central) institutions is an advantage for the researcher, since it increases the chances to identify them.

For the study of municipal policies, I relied on the documents produced by various agencies within the People's Councils. The sources available in local archives are, however, scarce and fragmented. The minutes of the Executive Committee meetings offer

¹⁴⁴ Miruna Stroe quoted extensively from the minutes of the Central Committee meetings, yet her analysis stops in 1966. See Stroe, *Locuirea între proiect și decizie politică*.

an overview on the activity of various departments, since each of them had to submit reports and discuss their activity within the general plenum. The year of the administrative reorganization, 1968, represents the end-limit up to which the archives of the People's Council have been made available for consultation. In Cluj, I have also identified several systematization projects in the archives of the municipality. Oral interviews and memoirs published by local architects facilitated the contextualization of disparate information from various archival sources. The interviews were also instrumental in understanding the internal mechanisms articulating everyday professional life.

A type of documents that would have been useful for my research – the projects for urban redevelopment produced by Institutes for Urban Design – are largely inaccessible for research. In the early 1990s, when the institutes were dissolved, the projects were either appropriated by their authors, or stored in improper conditions.¹⁴⁵ The smaller case studies I discuss in the thesis are based on copies of original projects that have been preserved by other institutions. In the case of Cluj, the most prominent members of the architects' guild have published a collective volume in which they gathered some of their most representative designs.¹⁴⁶

As a last point, it should be mentioned that a highly sensitive issue connected to urban redevelopment projects is that of property. Given the relatively small scale of buildings in Romanian towns, only about one quarter of them were nationalized. Moreover, besides private individuals, institutional actors such as churches still kept ownership of their properties, including those situated in the city center. After 1990, the restitution

¹⁴⁵ The architects I interviewed confirmed that similar situations occurred in Cluj and Iași. Interview with architect Vasile Mitrea, November 27, 2012, Cluj-Napoca and architect Gheorghe Heres, Iași, May 20, 2013.

¹⁴⁶ Pănescu, ed., *Cluj-Napoca în proiecte*.

legislation in Romania generated many conflicts over property rights. Given these constraints, archivists have been reluctant to allow me to consult documents concerning urban redevelopment projects, since these files typically included consistent documentation regarding expropriation.

Structure of the Thesis

The thesis is conceptually divided into two parts. In the first three chapters, I discuss questions of urban planning and heritage at the national level, aiming to identify the main concepts, policies, and debates that informed the transformation of inherited cityscapes in socialist Romania. In the following two chapters, I look at the intersection of heritage and planning policies at the local level, focusing on the cities of Cluj and Iași. However, the national and the local intersect in both parts, although in the first section the former is dominant, and in the second, the latter.

Chapter 1 discusses the main visions, pieces of legislation and pragmatic considerations that shaped urban planning in socialist Romania. It shows that urban development can be divided into two periods, corresponding to the two waves of industrialization, which also coincided with the rise and critique of modernism. The first phase was characterized by moderate growth and interventions considerate towards the existing urban scale. During the 1970s, the scope of urban planning was directed towards the reconstruction of central areas. This approach was motivated, on the one hand, by increasing availability of investment for urban development, and, on the other hand, by official visions promoting the compact city with higher population densities.

Chapter 2 follows the articulation of the preservationist agenda in the 1950s. In a period characterized by political repression and economic scarcity, a hand of dedicated specialists made significant steps for the re-organization of state preservation along new institutional lines, after the dissolution of the interwar commission in 1948. Significantly, the first national-level recording of historic monuments was undertaken in 1953, and promulgated two years later as a law. Efforts to create an institution with more authority failed, however, given the institutional fragmentation and the disputes among areas of expertise.

Chapter 3 explores the development of the preservationist agenda in socialist Romania during the 1960s and 1970s. It focuses on the articulation of the “historic city” concept, and on the role of the Department for Historic Monuments in promoting it as part of its agenda. Despite the elaboration of urban design projects aimed at revitalizing historic districts, the preservationists experienced difficulties in negotiating their alternative views regarding the redevelopment of these areas. Their initiatives were often constrained by the absence of adequate institutional and legal mechanisms reinforcing their position.

Chapter 4 focuses on the case of Cluj, Transylvania’s unofficial capital city. From the 1950s, urban planning documents singled out the area previously surrounded by medieval fortifications as historically-valuable. In the first two postwar decades, local architect-planners used a contextually-sensitive approach in the architectural remodeling of the squares and streets situated at the margins of the historic center. Few high-rise infillings, strongly contested by the DHM, were constructed in the 1970s. The successful preservation of the inherited built fabric in the center of Cluj was due to a mixture of factors, such as strong local preservationist legacies, the high population density of the

historic center, and the attitude of local architects, who focused on the construction of high-rise residential ensembles on the periphery, and avoided making definite proposals for the city center.

Chapter 5 analyses the case of Iași, the “old capital of Moldavia”. It explores the ambiguities embedded in the conceptualization of its built heritage, which differentiated between valuable individual monuments, and the mass of “decrepit” construction that constituted most of the building stock in the city center. Paradoxically, the (modernist) interventions in the 1950s and 1960s demonstrated consideration to the city’s character, although landmark buildings were occasionally sacrificed for the needs of traffic. In the early 1970s, the re-conceptualization of “historic monument” to include ensembles such as the nineteenth century commercial town clashed with plans for radical reconstruction.

CHAPTER ONE. CITIES UNDER SOCIALIST RECONSTRUCTION: VISIONS, CONSTRAINTS, AND COMPROMISES

1.1.The High-Modernist City and Pragmatic Decision-Making

In 1961, the Architects' Union organized a special exhibition in Bucharest to celebrate the Romanian Workers' Party's 40th anniversary. Unlike other similar events destined mostly for a public of specialists, the exhibition was carefully staged for the benefit of the masses. No effort was spared to provide the public with a comprehensive image of "the city of a new type" (Ro: orașul de tip nou¹): photographs, plans, urban design schemes, and models of buildings were generously displayed throughout the exhibition hall. Above all, organizers aimed to point out suggestively to the qualitative and quantitative contrasts between old and new city.² The former, it was argued, represented an outdated model of urban development, characterized by low building density and organic expansion of the suburbs, which should not be replicated in the future.³ Organizers reported an unexpected, yet welcomed public interest: 330,000 visitors of all ages and occupations, coming from the capital, the province, or even from abroad, openly declared their enthusiasm for the recent accomplishments of the representatives of the architectural profession in Romania. A selection of their comments published in the pages of the

¹ This ambiguous formulation suggests that the concept was far from being clearly defined, even within the specialist circles. While it carried obvious ideological connotations, relying on the dichotomy "new-old," the denomination remains silent on extent to which this term would actually reflect a different urban planning scheme.

² The postwar period was characterized by confidence in planners and expertise. As Jeffry M. Diefendorf writes in reference to West Germany, "exhibitions of plans and speeches by planners were intended primarily to persuade the public that the planner possessed good judgment, not to make planning an open and democratic process." Jeffrey M. Diefendorf, *In the Wake of War. The Reconstruction of German Cities after World War II* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 219.

³ Gustav Gusti, "Expoziția 'Arhitectura în RSR,' mai-iulie 1961" [The exhibition 'Architecture in the Socialist Republic of Romania,' May-July 1961], *Arhitectura* 12.3 (1961): 11-14.

Architects' Union journal conveniently reflected gratitude towards the Party and shared optimism for the future. As one visitor reportedly wrote referring to his hometown, "Within a few years, we will not be able to recognize anymore the city of Ploiești."⁴ The statement was interpreted as a benevolent approval of the popular masses towards the type of radical urban change prescribed by the Party and endorsed by the architectural profession.

Although an integral part of the postwar communist propaganda, ideas regarding the radical transformation of cities had already been advertised in the previous decades as an essential component of the modernist agenda.⁵ Both ideologies shared a belief in the inability of the "old world" to reform itself. Modernist architects saw the existing built environment as a space of visual and functional disorder, and demanded its erasure. New urban forms conceived on principles of order and rationality, expressed in "geometric simplicity and functional efficiency", would be then constructed.⁶ In the 1950s, the plans for the (high-) modernist city par excellence, Brasilia, were based on the utopian idea that urban design and planning can generate social order and, later, even produce a radical shift in the nation's path of development. Thus, the city was imagined as a "negation of Brazil," identified with such negative characteristics as corruption, backwardness, and ignorance.⁷ In his analysis of the construction of Brazil's new capital city during the 1950s and the 1960s, James Holston nicely captured the entanglements between aesthetics, politics, and socio-economic conditions. He referred to the "affinities between modernism as an

⁴ I. M. Ștefan, "Vizitatorii au cuvîntul" [The Visitors' Opinions], *Arhitectura* 12.3 (1961): 31.

⁵ James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 103-132; James Holston, *The Modernist City. An Anthropological Critique of Brasilia* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1989), 53-58.

⁶ Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, 106.

⁷ Holston, *The Modernist City*, 3-5, and Cp. 4, "The Death of the Street" (101-144); Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, 119.

aesthetic of erasure and reinscription, and modernization as an ideology of development in which governments, regardless of persuasion, seek to rewrite national histories.”⁸ However, more than making this an analysis of the modernist discourse, Holston aimed to discover how the utopian concept was gradually subverted in the process of constructing the city.⁹

Researchers of the socialist city also emphasized the contrasts between the utopian urban planning principles and their translation into practice.¹⁰ R.A. French captured the specificity of the factors that informed urban transformation in the Soviet space by emphasizing the negotiations between generous visions, pragmatic decisions taken under specific constraints, and the influence of key individuals.¹¹ Although these factors can be seen as generally valid for urban planning regardless of the context, I believe that the emphasis on pragmatism is particularly important for socialist planning, since it counterbalanced the prevailing assumption emphasizing the role of ideology in shaping the urban space.¹² Urban inequalities, reflected for example in differentiated access to services – among which providing housing was the most important – seriously questioned the limits of ideology in the socialist system.¹³ Also, as I try to show, reconciling the goals established

⁸ Holston, *The Modernist City*, 5.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ James H. Bater, *The Soviet City: Ideal and Reality* (London: E. Arnold, 1980); Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); R. A. French, *Plans, Pragmatism and People* (Pittsburg: University of Pittsburg Press, 1995).

¹¹ French, *Plans, Pragmatism and People*, 5.

¹² In the introduction of a collective volume published in 1979, R.A. French and Ian Hamilton famously argued that the specificities of socialist cities were generated mainly by the impact of the Marxist ideology and the characteristics of the command economy. R.A. French and Ian Hamilton, “Introduction” to R.A. French and Ian Hamilton, eds., *The Socialist City: Spatial Structure and Urban Policy* (Chichester; New York: Wiley, 1979), 1. Other authors related the specificity of socialist planning to its spatial structure, the remodeling of which was facilitated by central planning and state ownership of land. David M. Smith, “The Socialist City,” in Gregory Andrusz, Michael Harloe and Iván Szelényi, eds., *Cities After Socialism: Urban and Regional Change and Conflict in Post-Socialist Societies* (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1996), 70-78.

¹³ Iván Szelényi, *Urban Inequalities under State Socialism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983); Smith, “The Socialist City,” 70-98; Brigitte Le Normand, “The House that Socialism Built: Reform,

through central planning with local agendas, needs, and resources opened the way for negotiation and compromise solutions.¹⁴

The purpose of this chapter is to sketch a framework focusing on major urban planning concepts used by Romanian bureaucrats from the 1950s to the late 1970s, in order to illuminate the discussion on urban heritage and modernization policies in the following chapters. It seeks to address several questions: What were the officially promoted urban visions in postwar Romania and how did they relate to perceptions of the existing urban form? Which pieces of key legislation and political decisions framed the specific approach to the modernization of the built environment? How did the institutional actors responsible for the design and implementation of these projects weighted among different types of resources and pressures? What kinds of structural constraints articulated the process?

The chapter builds on the premise that politically-directed visions of urban transformation in socialist Romania were informed by modernization theory, in which the past-future relationship was largely identified with the dichotomy backwardness-modernization. The vision of radical change through the means of industrial expansion was projected against the background of a country which was poorly urbanized and industrialized. Within the Eastern Bloc, Romania's situation was closer to that of the neighboring Bulgaria and Yugoslavia,¹⁵ with an urbanization percent of only 20% and a

Consumption, and Inequality in Postwar Yugoslavia,” in Paulina Bren and Mary Neuberger, eds., *Communism Unwrapped: Consumption in Cold War Eastern Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 356-359; Krisztina Fehérváry, *Politics in Color and Concrete: Socialist Materialities and the Middle Class in Hungary* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), 77, 99-100.

¹⁴ See Chapters 4 and 5 of this dissertation.

¹⁵ Jiri Musil, “City Development in Central and Eastern Europe before 1990: Historical Context and Socialist Legacies,” in F. E. Ian Hamilton, Kaliopa Dimitrovska Andrews, and Natasa Pichler-Milanovic, eds., *Transformation of Cities in Central and Eastern Europe towards Globalization* (Tokyo; New York: United Nations University Press, 2005), 36. By comparison, countries like Czechoslovakia, the GDR, and Poland displayed urbanization rates of 40% in 1950.

weak industrial base, which had suffered from lack of financial and technological capital.¹⁶ The communists saw economic progress strongly tied to industry,¹⁷ and thus went against Romania's traditional path of development which had focused on agriculture and the rural world. From a broader perspective, equating modernization with industrialization represented a common feature of many countries on the European periphery.¹⁸

This direction differed significantly from the dominant urban visions promoted in interwar Romania, which were anti-urbanist in character. Rurality was considered as a defining feature of the Romanian national character, present even in urban areas. Most towns in Romania were typically described as large villages, as their districts (Romanian: *mahalale*) contained mostly individual houses (or villas for the wealthy strata) surrounded by gardens. In the words of Luminița Machedon, "people did not so much want houses with gardens as gardens protecting houses within."¹⁹ City centers alone usually displayed a specific "urban character" that translated into higher building densities. As geographer Victor Tufescu wrote in 1932, "here, the townsman would suffocate without a small garden, or when forced to live on the second or third floor."²⁰ Consequently, he envisioned

¹⁶ Bogdan Murgescu, *România și Europa. Acumularea decalajelor economice (1500-2010)* [Romania and Europe. The Cumulation of Economic Differences] (Iași: Polirom, 2010), 212-274. Murgescu considers Romania's economic policy during the interwar period as a failure.

¹⁷ While criticizing the social consequences of nineteenth century industrialization, the communists saw the new system of production as central to future economic development and social justice, when properly administrated through centralized planning. Fehérváry, *Politics in Color and Concrete*, 11.

¹⁸ James Holston described the "development ideology of the 1950s" in terms of a "state-dictated industrialization as the means by which underdeveloped countries could achieve rapid economic growth and a more favorable position in the world trade." Holston, *The Modernist City*, 18. In the case of Ireland, Erika Hanna also wrote about the political leaders' commitment to change the path of development from agriculture and small scale industry to industry and services. Erika Hanna, *Modern Dublin: Urban Change and the Irish Past, 1957-1973* (Oxford University Press, 2015), 6-21. Ireland was proposed by Bogdan Murgescu as a comparative example to the Romanian case. Murgescu, *România și Europa*, 418-440.

¹⁹ Luminița Machedon and Ernie Scoffham, *Romanian Modernism. The Architecture of Bucharest, 1920-1940* (MIT Press, 1999), 27.

²⁰ Victor Tufescu, *Iașii și orașele din nordul Moldovei* [Iași and the Towns in Northern Moldavia] (Chișinău: Cartea Românească, 1932), 7.

urbanization in Romania as a lengthy process, during which peasants moving to the city would gradually adapt to the new living standards.²¹

In addition to these perceptions that considered the lack of urbanity as embedded into the national character, urban planning had not established firm roots in the country. The production of master plans, required by the Administrative Law of 1925,²² had advanced with very small steps during the interwar period. Significantly, the architects assigned to develop the master plan of Bucharest in 1934-35 tended to work along the city's traditional path of development rather than trying to reverse it. Therefore, the zoning principle aimed at preserving the rural-like character of the city's suburban areas, while improving land division for housing construction.²³ Furthermore, unlike the communists' policy of connecting industry and urbanization, previously the two aspects had not necessarily gone hand in hand. In some cases, the development of industry focused on key points served by workers' colonies,²⁴ whereas urban development was fueled by bureaucratic expansion, commerce, and services.

During the decades of communist rule, Romania's path of development remained closely connected to industrial expansion, without major concessions being made to other sectors such as consumption and services. However, despite the tendency to perceive the socialist urban project as homogenizing, significant variations can be detected throughout

²¹ For Tufescu, urbanity-rurality was framed in ethnic terms; for example, he considered that the Jews were more urbanized as compared to the Romanians, and could live in areas with higher densities.

²² The legislation required that all urban localities would produce master plans within the following four years (Art. 69/ Law 95/1925). <http://lege5.ro/Gratuit/gezdiobthe/legea-nr-95-1925-pentru-unificarea-administrativa> (accessed March 10, 2016). Although the preparation of systematization plans within four years was specifically required by the law for administrative unification, it did not include any penalties in case of failure to comply. After four years, only sixteen towns had submitted such plans, among which only two met all the requirements for approval. Vlad Sebastian Rusu, *Evoluția urbanistică a Clujului interbelic* [Urban Development in Interwar Cluj] (Cluj-Napoca: Centrul de Studii Transilvane, 2015), 70.

²³ Machedon and Scoffham, *Romanian Modernism*, 98.

²⁴ I thank architect Oana Țiganea for pointing at the importance of this aspect.

the period. Shifts in power structures and diverse ways of channeling investment influenced the imagining and making of the socialist city. Urban visions were determined not only by architectural taste and international urban models, but also by variations in the distribution of investment and the reconfiguration of institutional hierarchies that reflected political struggles at the central and local levels. In what concerns architecture and construction, one can detect a significant turn from a technocratic approach (1950s-60s) to political control doubled by stronger economic constraints (1970s-80s). This paralleled the transition from an investment policy focusing on key industrial sites (1950s and partially the 1960s) to the aim of ensuring a more evenly distributed development throughout the country, better known as the systematization policy (1970s).²⁵

This chapter starts from the premise that throughout the period, visions of urban change in Romania remained anchored in the goals of high-modernism, aiming at producing a more ordered and rational space, easier to visualize and to control. In this sense, it used urban and territorial planning – called systematization – as an instrument to rearrange physical space, architectural objects, and people into coherent ensembles. I am thus interested in observing how the changes of vision related to institutional reorganizations, the cycles of centralization-decentralization, questions of style, and the relation between political agendas and areas of expertise. Finally, I hold that the policies of urban transformation were influenced by various forms of scarcity, as well as tensioned relations between professionals and politicians – the first relying on technical expertise, the

²⁵ William E. Crowther, *The Political Economy of Romanian Socialism* (New-York: Praeger, 1988). According to the urbanization theories of the period, the first phase would be modelled according to the polarization theory (i.e., directing development towards a selected number of settlements), and the second one following the central place theory (i.e., developing a hierarchy of settlements that would insure a more efficient distribution of services to the population). Jiri Musil, “Urbanization in Socialist Countries,” *International Journal of Sociology* 10. 2/3 (1980): 14.

latter, on the “vanguard role” of the Party and claims of pervasive control. Given the scarcity of resources, central and local bureaucrats displayed a specific “preservationist attitude”, necessary in order to accommodate ambitious goals within specific structural and economic constraints.

1.2. Two Meanings of Reconstruction

The concept of “reconstruction”, typically describing a variety of policies aimed at recovering after the war, dominated postwar urban planning debates. Large-scale destruction of urban centers from bombings and fighting between ground forces affected, although to different extents, almost every state involved in the conflict.²⁶ Although the idea of recreating lost townscapes prevailed in some cases such as Warsaw,²⁷ Budapest,²⁸ or Sevastopol,²⁹ work was restricted to selected buildings embedded with particular connotations for national or local history.

Overall, the idea of reconstructing cities by applying modernist urban planning principles predominated. On the one hand, planners and bureaucrats were in favor of replacing the old, partially damaged urban fabric with technically modern cities.³⁰ On the other hand, a new generation of (Western) architects trained during the interwar years in the spirit of the modernist principles of Le Corbusier strongly advocated a new type of urban design, focusing on functionalism and thus privileging sanitation, the needs of traffic,

²⁶ Jeffrey M. Diefendorf, “Introduction: New Perspectives on a Rebuilt Europe,” in Jeffrey M. Diefendorf, ed., *Rebuilding Europe’s Bombed Cities* (London: Macmillan, 1990), 1.

²⁷ David Crowley, *Warsaw* (London: Reaktion Books, 2003), 24-53.

²⁸ Erzsebet C. Harrach, “The Reconstruction of the Buda Castel Hill after 1945,” in Diefendorf, ed., *Rebuilding Europe’s Bombed Cities*, 155-208.

²⁹ Karl D. Qualls, *From Ruins to Reconstruction: Urban Identity in Soviet Sevastopol after World War II* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009).

³⁰ Diefendorf, “Introduction: New Perspectives on a Rebuilt Europe,” 8.

and the provision of modern housing.³¹ Preservationist solutions also carried a strong modernizing touch. The rebuilding of historical structures typically implied using modern materials, simplified architectural forms and new functions, while the street layout was usually retained for practical reasons, in areas where the underground infrastructure remained intact.³²

In the Soviet Union, the rebuilding of destroyed cities was also regarded as a top priority. Like their Western counterparts, Soviet planners attempted to rationalize urban design and modernize infrastructure, although preserving a traditional neo-classicist language for the façades.³³ With Khrushchev's critique of the architecture of Stalin's years in 1954 and his subsequent endorsing of industrialization and standardization methods in construction,³⁴ the modernist movement was again present in both East and West. However, postwar modernism was much more pragmatically-oriented compared with the interwar avant-garde,³⁵ also with fewer international exchanges between architects from the two political blocs.³⁶

Although Romanian cities suffered comparatively less war destructions,³⁷ the concept of "reconstruction" was widely used in the architectural and political discourse of

³¹ Peter Hall, *Urban and Regional Planning* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1975), 73-76.

³² Diefendorf, *In the Wake of War*, ch. 4, "The Face of Reconstruction: The Role of Historic Preservation."

³³ Qualls, *From Ruins to Reconstruction*, 54-55.

³⁴ Andrei Gozak, "Attitudes towards Modern Architecture in the USSR and in Russia (second half of the 20th century: A Testimony," in Jean-Yves Andrieux and Fabienne Chevalier, eds., *La réception de l'architecture du Mouvement Moderne: Image, Usage, Heritage* (Université de Saint-Etienne, 2005), 434.

³⁵ Radu-Alex. Răuță and Hilden Heyden, "Shifting Meanings of Modernism: Parallels and Contrasts between Karel Teige and Cezar Lăzărescu," *The Journal of Architecture* 14.1 (2009): 41.

³⁶ Eric Mumford, "CIAM and the Communist Bloc, 1928-1959," *The Journal of Architecture* 14.2 (2009): 237.

³⁷ The wartime destruction of the urban fabric was mentioned also in the Romanian case as a reason for reconstruction. See, for example, M. Locar, T. Evolceanu, "Reconstrucția socialistă a orașelor din RSR" [The socialist reconstruction of cities from SRR], *Arhitectura RSR* 10.2 (1959): 5. The most affected city was Ploiești, an important center for oil exploitation, with 80% of the buildings in the city center destroyed. Iulia and Eugen Stănescu, "Distrugerile provocate de bombele aeriene asupra orașului Ploiești în anii 1943-

the period. It reflected a different meaning, however, associated with the ideology of radical change promoted by the communists. In the Romanian context, the term was inscribed into the title of a decision of the Central Committee of the Romanian Workers' Party from November 1952, aimed at the institutional reorganization of the architectural practice and urban planning. The introduction of "The Decision on the Construction and Reconstruction of Cities and the Organization of the Architectural Activity"³⁸ focused on a critique of the existing city, seen as an expression of class exploitation, backwardness, and poverty. The core argument revolved around the "rural" characteristics embedded in urban areas, reflected in low population and building densities, the absence of basic amenities, and anarchic (i.e., unplanned) development. As the title seemed to suggest, the deficiencies in the Romanian urban system would be remedied through the construction of new industrial towns, as well as through the reshaping of existing towns according to different planning principles. In order to implement this ambitious, yet vaguely-defined program, the document established the three institutional pillars in the field: the State Committee for Architecture and Construction, the Architects' Union,³⁹ and the Institute of Architecture.

1944" [Destructions Caused by Aerial Bombing Over the City of Ploiești, 1943-1944], *Historia Urbana* 1-2 (1995): 211-216.

³⁸ The decision was published in the newspaper of the Romanian Workers' Party, *Scînteia* [The Sparkle], November 14, 1952. The publication of the Decision was followed by a variety of articles on the topic featured in the same newspaper e.g., praising the Soviet architecture: Nicolae Bădescu, "Arhitectura sovietică, cea mai înaintată din lume," [The Soviet Architecture, the Most Advanced in the World] (*Scînteia*, November 20, 1952), poems by A. Toma, "Slăvire cânt orașelor-minune," [I Praise the Wonder-Cities] (*Scînteia*, November 27, 1952), the review of a socialist realist novel "Noul oraș" [The New Town] by Ștefan Andrei, *Scînteia*, December 20, 1952), as well as a summary of the constitutive meeting of the Architects' Union (*Scînteia*, December 21 and 24, 1952).

³⁹ Unlike the Society of Romanian Writers, which was reorganized in 1944 and again in 1947, the Architects' Union was re-established along new institutional lines relatively late, in 1952. This was partly due to the dependence of the construction industry on a strong economic and political base. Another part of the explanation, according to architect Ana-Maria Zahariade, was the weakness of the architectural discourse, which did not threaten political power. Ana-Maria Zahariade, *Arhitectura în proiectul comunist. România 1944-1989* [The Architecture in the Communist project: Romania 1944-1989] (București: Simetria, 2011), 92-93.

Grounded in the Romanian realities and clearly endorsing the communists' transformative agenda, the critique of the existing city should be understood in the broader context of the postwar years. Dissatisfaction with the inherited built environment was widespread in the 1950s and 1960s, leading to radical redevelopment schemes like the US urban renewal programs.⁴⁰ The hopes for a better future found their aesthetic expression in the modernist claims for functionality and efficiency, while the years of economic growth after the war encouraged an optimistic approach towards change. Urban planners perceived the large-scale clearance and rebuilding as necessary in order to provide inhabitants with better living standards and eliminate the deficiencies of nineteenth century industrial cities.⁴¹ Overall, and regardless of the proposed urban design solutions, the concept of reconstruction took on positive connotations in both the West and the recently constituted Eastern Bloc, implying progress rather than nostalgia.⁴²

The enthusiastic embrace of the new was connected to a century-long tradition of considering the built environment, like any other human-made object, as obsolete. Trust in technological progress brought about by nineteenth century industrialization generated the idea that every product had a certain lifespan, after which it could be replaced by a more advanced version. In his analysis of urban design policies in East Berlin, Florian Urban argued that urban reconstruction was to a small extent ideologically-motivated. Rather than

⁴⁰ Peter Hall, *Cities of Tomorrow. An Intellectual History of Urban Planning and Design in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Basil Blackwell, 1990), 247-254. A comparative perspective of postwar urban renewal programs is provided by Christopher Klemek, *The Transatlantic Collapse of Urban Renewal: Postwar Urbanism from New-York to Berlin* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011).

⁴¹ Robert Morris, "Notes on the Rebuilding of Europe since 1945: Remembering and Forgetting; the British Experience," in Georg Wagner-Kyora, ed., *Wiederaufbau europäischer Städte. Rekonstruktionen, die Moderne und die lokale Identitätspolitik seit 1945/ Rebuilding European Cities. Reconstructions, Modernity and the Local Politics of Identity Construction since 1945* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2014), 67-71; Nigel Taylor, *Urban Planning Theory since 1945* (London: Sage Publications, 1998), 20-36.

⁴² Florian Urban, *Neo-historical East Berlin: Architecture and Urban Design in the German Democratic Republic 1979-1990* (Farnham, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009), 71.

a desire to get rid of the material reminders of capitalism, the policy of replacing obsolete urban fabric was justified by officials' functionalist concerns, and their firm belief that old buildings inferior in all respects as compared to those produced in the present.⁴³

In the countries of the Eastern Bloc, the reconstruction discourse was framed from the perspective of historical materialism. A new urban form was defined as the logical outcome of passing to a new mode of production.⁴⁴ In the Romanian context, the concept of urban reconstruction was theorized by Gustav Gusti, the vice-president of the State Committee for Architecture, Systematization, and Construction. In several articles published in *Arhitectura* in the early 1960s, Gusti pointed out that reconstruction should not imply adding to the structure of the existing city, as had previously been the case.⁴⁵ Traditionally, urban development had occurred through the partial renewal and adaptation of the built environment to each new stage of historical development. These interventions could be characterized as having a “therapeutic” effect, solving problems on a short-term basis. Nevertheless, in long term, this approach arguably perpetuated the same errors. In contrast, socialism was supposed to mark a clear break with the past and its urban growth strategies. Continuing in the same propagandistic tone, unfortunately devoid of practical solutions, Gusti proclaimed that socialist urban planning would not attempt to “cure” the historically accumulated ills, but it would prevent them through revolutionary action.⁴⁶ The

⁴³ For an excellent analysis of the concept of the obsolescence, and its differentiated interpretation in East and West, see *ibid.*, 37-43.

⁴⁴ Radu Laurian, “Pregătirea cadrelor de specialiști în urbanism” [The Training of Urban Planning Specialists], *Arhitectura* 10.2 (1959): 47; Gustav Gusti, “Influența noilor forme colective de viață asupra trăsăturilor orașului socialist” [The Influence of the New Forms of Collective Life on the Characteristics of the Socialist City], *Arhitectura* 13.2 (1962): 2-5.

⁴⁵ Gusti, “Expoziția ‘Arhitectura în RPR,’” 16.

⁴⁶ Gusti, “Influența noilor forme colective de viață,” 4-5.

idea of improvement, implying compromises with the old fabric, was theoretically excluded.

In a later intervention, Gusti contextualized this theoretical approach in the specific geography of Romania. As the urban network in Romania was considered dense enough, the builders of socialism would not insist on the idea of creating new towns, as had initially been suggested in the early 1950s.⁴⁷ Rather, the qualitative change was to be expressed through the creation of new economic and social profiles for every locality. In other words, industrial investment would produce a break in the supposed linear development of existing towns, redefining their entire profile.⁴⁸ The “revolutionary change” was thus not a matter of innovative urban planning methods as one might have expected, but simply of investing in the development of industrial capacities. The absence of any concrete discussion on the appropriate urban form left this field open only for the implementation of aesthetic visions that would fit the economic and political agendas.

1.3. Producing Images of Urban Backwardness

In the first part of the 1950s, the government channeled few resources towards urban modernization projects.⁴⁹ the transformation of the city was approached mostly at a

⁴⁷ The suggestion was probably made in an attempt to follow the Soviet model, which indeed had focused on the development of new towns. Jiri Musil notes that, from an ideological perspective, the Soviet model followed the indications of Lenin, who recommended that industry would be located in the close proximity of raw materials, rather than those of Marx and Engels, who believed that industry and population should have been more evenly distributed. Musil, “Urbanization in Socialist Countries,” 57.

⁴⁸ Gustav Gusti, “Teme și sarcini fundamentale ale urbanismului nostru contemporan” [Fundamental Tasks of Our Contemporary Urbanism], *Arhitectura* 15.6 (1964): 2-7.

⁴⁹ In the first post-war decade, Romania’s economic situation significantly worsened due to the heavy war reparations the country was required to pay to the Soviet Union. Large parts of the country’s industrial output and natural resources were directed towards the Soviet Union through the so-called SovRoms, joint Romanian-Soviet companies. In terms of housing construction, is it telling that only 872 apartments were built in Bucharest between 1949 and 1952, in a period when the population grew by approximately 100,000 inhabitants. J. M. Montias, *Economic Development in Communist Romania* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1967), 16-25.

rhetorical level. More precisely, the focus fell on criticizing the existing urban conditions. The introduction of the Decision of the Council of Ministers (mentioned above) from November 1952 offers a telling example in this regard:

The exploitation regime of the bourgeoisie and the landlords have left a heavy legacy for the towns in our country. Developed in an anarchic way, according to the narrow interests of the bourgeoisie and landlords, the towns in our country exhibited a striking contrast between the rich districts of the dominant classes and the poor neighborhoods, in which people used to live in misery, in dilapidated houses without running water, sewerage, and light.⁵⁰

The text constructed a simplified, bipolar, and abstract image of a city in which social and spatial segregation overlapped. It also presented planning as an instrument of class domination, implying that inequality had resulted from the asymmetrical distribution of investment leading to the virtual absence of spatial order and modern infrastructure in peripheral areas. In reverse, the central districts inhabited by the wealthy classes had been provided with public services and amenities. Since the inherent contradictions of the capitalist city had resulted from its conceptualization as a set of disparate spaces, socialist urban planning aimed to reverse this process by considering the city as a unit.⁵¹ Rather than an instrument of control and regulation over urban space, systematization was thus advertised as a means of bringing about social equality and providing all inhabitants with similar living standards by using the instruments provided by centralized planning.⁵²

The “difficult legacy of the past” became a recurrent motif of the urban transformation propaganda. Although framed in a Marxist perspective, the discourse in fact criticized the general conditions of urban development in Romania: the anarchical development of the exiting urban layout, expressed in the messy and ill-regulated street

⁵⁰ *Scînteia*, November 14, 1952.

⁵¹ As Nigel Taylor observed, comprehensive planning is in fact part of the utopian tradition. The idea was generally embraced and promoted by modernist architects. Taylor, *Urban Planning Theory since 1945*, 24.

⁵² E. Cristian, “Urbanism și planificare” [Urbanism and Planning], *Arhitectura* 1(1950): 18-19.

network, the low densities, of both the built environment and population, and the precarious condition of most of the housing stock.⁵³

Conveniently for the communist discourse, the typical image of urban backwardness was projected upon the periphery inhabited by the urban proletariat. Although the connection between industry, poverty, and underdevelopment could not claim national-level relevance given the low degree of industrialization of Romanian towns, such images were nevertheless presented as generally valid for the Romanian urban context. A description of one of Bucharest's districts describes that:

Grivița⁵⁴ [...] used to be a miserable district, a typical example of the Bucharest 'mahala',⁵⁵ which had been kept in a pathetic state of backwardness and poverty, with improvised and unhealthy housing; built randomly, disregarding urban planning rules, with battered streets lacking the most elementary civil works. [...] The heavy exploitation from the workshops was completed by the promiscuous conditions in which the railway workers and their families used to live.⁵⁶

In her doctoral thesis, Juliana Maxim focused on deconstructing the communist criticism of the urban periphery. She argued that “architecturally and rhetorically, the socialist city was built around the denunciation of the slum and its claim to reverse its process of appearance and growth.”⁵⁷ Maxim anchored this discourse not in the Marxist ideology alone, but connected it with criticism of the nineteenth century industrial city and the living conditions of the poor. Thus, she concluded, this rhetorical strategy situates the socialist city within the industrial capitalist urban models and their corresponding

⁵³ Marcel Locar and Titu Evolceanu, “Reconstrucția socialistă a orașelor din Republica Populară Română” [The Socialist Reconstruction of Cities in the People's Republic of Romania], *Arhitectura* 10.2 (1959): 5-7.

⁵⁴ The district had a symbolical meaning for the Communists due to a major strike in 1933, where some of the party members, including the general secretary Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, had been involved. The moment was appropriated by the communist propaganda and turned into the object of major commemorations.

⁵⁵ “Mahala” means peripheral district in Romanian; taken from Turkish, the word denominated initially the general category of residential district.

⁵⁶ “Grivița Roșie, 1933-1963” [Red Grivița, 1933-1963], *Arhitectura* 14.1 (1963): 2.

⁵⁷ Juliana Maxim, *The New, the Old, and the Modern: Architecture and Its Representation in Socialist Romania* (PhD diss., Cambridge: MIT, 2006), 27.

bourgeois ideology of progress and rational domination over the future.⁵⁸ At the same time, Maxim suggested that the Romanian communists' vision must have been strongly influenced by the spectacular, yet poorly controlled growth of Bucharest during the interwar period,⁵⁹ with its strong social contrasts and weak municipal regulations.⁶⁰

Although I do not contest the validity of Maxim's argument, I suggest that the discourse advertised by the communist propaganda is taken too much for granted. In this case, Grivița represents a convenient example supporting the communists' strategies of self-representation. I would suggest, however, that the criticism of the urban periphery could be more rightly understood as inscribed into a broader critique on the "rurality" of Romanian cities. Urban inequalities had emerged not so much as part of the process of production-driven urbanization, but rather in the absence of it. The urban policies promoted by the communists sought to overcome the "village-like" character of Romanian towns by stressing high densities as defining urbanism, and discrediting the traditional individual house.⁶¹

Interestingly, images of "urban backwardness" were not limited to those describing the periphery of large cities such as Bucharest. Given the goal of reordering the national territory according to a network of industrialized settlements, the provincial town – "the place where nothing happens" – was also identified as a symbol of a bygone age. It was depicted as an expression of petty bourgeois culture and economic underdevelopment. Arguably, such towns had grown from a commercial core developed around the central

⁵⁸ Ibid., 28, 58.

⁵⁹ A Master Plan for Bucharest was designed as late as 1934-35. Its anti-urbanist character was reflected in the intention of preserving the city's traditional "garden town" character consisting of low rise housing and green spaces. Machedon and Scoffham, *Romanian Modernism*, 98.

⁶⁰ Maxim, *The New, the Old, and the Modern*, 28-30.

⁶¹ David Turnock, "Housing Policy in Romania," in J.A.A. Sillince, ed., *Housing Policies in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union* (London: Routledge, 1990), 153-154.

market – in Romanian, they are referred to as “târg,” which means precisely market place – and had extended freely along the main roads, with houses surrounded by gardens. They were presented as displaying a “[...] disharmonious [...] aspect. If the town grew, the growth would be limited to the center; only the vegetation and randomness could bring some picturesqueness.” Furthermore, the buildings “expressed the petit-bourgeois vanity,” “with no connection to our culture.”⁶² The serenity and picturesqueness previously appreciated in such towns were now deemed superficial.

With its characteristic cynicism, the bourgeoisie was praising the “patriarchal” charm of the provincial towns – a charm through which it was trying to hide the economic and cultural backwardness [...] of towns lacking the most basic requirements of a civilized life.⁶³

The industrial facilities of these localities were dismissed as rudimentary. Therefore, they were considered “trapped” somewhere between feudalism and capitalism, with the periphery displaying a characteristically rural aspect.⁶⁴

As the industrialization process spread towards different regions of the country, the discourse left aside the class struggle rhetoric, focusing instead on emphasizing the benefits of modernization. In the opinion of those Bucharest-based architects assigned to remote regions to design and construct new industrial and housing facilities, the only appealing aspect seemed to be the prospect of transformation. They described the housing stock as displaying a “dark and monotonous appearance,” while the urban space was characterized by “uncontrolled development, lack of utilities, low densities, [and] poor housing.”⁶⁵ Simply put, the modernist gaze totally disregarded and devalued the local in

⁶² “23 August, sărbătoarea eliberării,” [The 23th of August, the Celebration of the Liberation] *Arhitectura* 10.4 (1959): 18.

⁶³ The declaration published in *Scînteia*, November 14, 1952.

⁶⁴ “Un oraș patriarhal” [A Patriarchal Town], *Arhitectura* 17.1 (1966): 10.

⁶⁵ Mariana Vereanu, “Sistematizarea unor orașe din regiunea Bacău” [Urban Systematization in the Bacău Region], *Arhitectura* 16.1 (1965): 2-10.

order to legitimize its erasure. At a rhetorical level, the focus on industrializing provincial towns produced a reevaluation of the communist discourse on reconstruction. Significantly, it shifted the emphasis from social inequality to economic concerns and pointed towards the inadequacy of the inherited built environment in the context of centrally-coordinated strategies of economic development. Party directives stressed economic efficiency over aesthetic or comfort concerns, urging architects to focus their efforts for providing cheaper housing for an increasing urban population.⁶⁶

1.4. Centralization, Decentralization, and Structural Constraints in the Organization of Technical Expertise

During most of the 1950s, the socialist program of modernization and urban reconstruction was managed by centrally-based institutions. While the decision reflected state buildings efforts directed towards the creation of a centralized bureaucratic apparatus, it also had practical motivations since most architects were concentrated in Bucharest. The State Committee for Architecture and Construction (hereinafter the State Committee for Architecture) was created in 1952 as the equivalent of a ministry.⁶⁷ It was entrusted with coordinating, approving, and controlling architectural and urban design projects. Architect

⁶⁶ Locar and Evolveanu, “Reconstrucția Socialistă a Orașelor din RSR”. In the same period (April 1959), architects were invited to visit in Bucharest the exhibition “The Construction and Reconstruction of Cities between 1945 and 1957.” Initially assembled in Moscow in 1958, during the Fifth Congress of the International Union of Architects, the exhibition aimed to document the experience of postwar urban reconstruction in the Eastern Bloc and the West (e.g., France, Great Britain, and Sweden), displaying similar architectural solutions used by architects across the Iron Curtain. “Expoziția internațională ‘Construcția și reconstrucția orașelor în perioada 1945-1957’” [The International Exhibition “Construction and Reconstruction of Cities, 1945 - 1957”], *Arhitectura* 10.2 (1959): 52-55.

⁶⁷ The State Committee for Architecture and Constructions was founded on December 15, 1952.

Nicolae Bădescu, considered a politically-loyal figure,⁶⁸ was appointed as the head of the Committee. Involved in the purges inflicted upon the Institute of Architecture in the late 1940s and early 1950s, Bădescu had published several articles in which he traced the ideological line to be followed by the members of the profession.⁶⁹

The organization of the architectural activity required tremendous efforts in terms of training and the organization of expertise, since the activity of the State Committee for Architecture was to start almost on virgin ground. Romania lacked a tradition of urban planning, and most urban localities did not have a master plan, although such initiatives had existed during the interwar period. In addition, Romanian architects had little experience with urban design, since their activity mostly focused on the design of individual buildings.⁷⁰

In order to create local networks of technical expertise, and stimulate its further development, Secții de Arhitectură și Sistemalizare [Departments for Architecture and Systematization, hereinafter SAS] were created as part of each People's Council. The SAS were headed by chief-architects, directly responsible to the State Committee for Architecture. However, given the shortage of specialists, design projects for the whole

⁶⁸ Nicolae Bădescu (1912-1991) was trained as an architect in Bucharest between 1929-1933. His career in the field began only after 1946, when he was employed at the Faculty of Architecture. See Florica Dobre, ed., *Membrii CC ai PCR (1945-1989). Dicționar* (București: Editura Enciclopedică, 2004), 87.

⁶⁹ Vlad Mitric-Ciupe, "Stalinizare și destalinizare în arhitectura românească. Odiseea unui arhitect întemnițat politic" [Stalinization and De-stalinization in Romanian Architecture. The Odyssey of an Architect as Political Prisoner], in Cosmin Budeancă, Florentin Olteanu, eds., *Stalinizare și destalinizare. Evoluții instituționale și impact social* [Stalinization and De-stalinization. Institutional Evolutions and Social Impact] (Iași: Polirom, 2014), 190-191. For a list of Bădescu's articles criticizing cosmopolitanism, see *ibid.*, fn. 28 and 31. For the atmosphere at the Institute of Architecture during the years of Stalinization, see Eugenia Greceanu, "Sovietizarea învățământului în arhitectură" [The Sovietization of Architectural Education], in Viorica Iuga Curea, ed., *Arhitecți în timpul dictaturii* [Architects in Times of Dictatorship] (București: Simetria, 2005), 111-144. Despite its initial political engagement and contribution to the purges in the Institute of Architecture, Bădescu was remembered as an essentially technocratic figure, who took interest in monument protection. Interview with Eugenia Greceanu, Bucharest, October 20, 2012.

⁷⁰ Grigore Ionescu, *Arhitectura în România în perioada anilor 1944-1969* [Architecture in Romania, 1944-1969] (București: Editura Academiei R.S.R., 1969), 19.

country would still be centrally produced by ISPROR [Institutul pentru Proiectarea Orașelor și a Construcțiilor Publice și de Locuit/ Institute for Urban Design, Public Construction, and Housing]. A distinct institution with similar profile, called Proiect București, was created for Bucharest.⁷¹

Efforts of concentrating power at the center, however, had their limits. In the mid-1950s, the effects of excessive centralization were criticized at the Plenary of the Central Committee of the Romanian Workers' Party (27-29 December 1956). Apparently, the focus on developing the central apparatus left few qualified specialists to solve problems at the local level. In order to reverse this process, the political leadership decided to increase the responsibilities of the People's Councils, while simultaneously reducing the number of central ministries.⁷² The immediate effect of decentralization was the establishment in 1957 of sixteen Institutes for Urban Design – one for each of the major administrative divisions (regions) – aiming to cover local needs in terms of architectural and urban design and planning.⁷³

In the following years, Party officials put a greater emphasis on physical planning – commonly known as systematization. This direction became more prominent after the RWP's Plenary in 1958, which marked a return to modernism and the introduction of large-

⁷¹ The first IPC [Institut Central de Proiectare/ Central Institute for Urban Design], founded already in 1949, started its activity as a modest workshop for urban systematization. With the foundation of the State Committee for Architecture, it was enlarged and renamed ISPROR [Institute for Urban Design, Public Constructions, and Housing] and later ISCAS [Institutul Central de Studii pentru Construcții, Arhitectură și Sistemizare/ Central Institute for Studies in Constructions, Architecture and Systematization]. Gustav Gusti, "Două decenii de sistemizare complexă și construcție socialistă a teritoriului" [Two Decades of Complex Systematization and Socialist Construction of the Territory], *Arhitectura* 15.6 (1964): 30; Ionescu, *Arhitectura în România*, 19-20.

⁷² ANIC, Fond CC al PCR, Secția Cancelarie, 11/1957, f. 52-56.

⁷³ For the activity of the Regional Institutes for Urban Design in the first years after their establishment, see Miruna Stroe, *Locuirea între proiect și decizie politică. România 1954-1966* [Housing between Design Project and Political Decision. Romania 1954-1966] (București: Simetria, 2015), 81-84.

scale industrialization and the standardization of construction.⁷⁴ The term “systematization” was introduced in the denomination of the State Committee for Architecture, which was reorganized in 1959.⁷⁵ Although it remained essentially a technical institution, the Party intended to bring it more clearly under its command.⁷⁶

Fig.1.1. Map of Romania, showing the strategy of urbanization through the development of regional centers. Source: Gustav Gusti, *Forme noi de aşezare* [New Forms of Settlement] (1974), 166.



In addition, the local administration received important tasks in this field, through the decision of the Council of Ministers from November 20, 1959. This decision made

⁷⁴ Functionality seem to have been central to Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej's vision on urban reconstruction. He openly stressed concerns for functionality in urban planning already at a meeting of the Council of Ministers in November 1953, one year before Khrushchev's criticism of socialist realism. See Emanuela Grama, *Impenetrable Plans and Porous Expertise: Building a Socialist Bucharest, Reconstructing Its Past (1953-1968)* (EUI Working Papers, Max Weber Programme 2012-2013), 4.

⁷⁵ Ionescu, *Arhitectura în România*, 19 fn. 2.

⁷⁶ ANIC, Fond CPCP-DSPC, 16433, f. 29, 35-36.

People's Councils responsible for elaborating the systematization plans – simplified versions of master plans.⁷⁷ Unlike their interwar versions, which focused mostly on urban beautification and public works, the systematization plans reflected the spatial consequences of the economic prognosis. The information provided included not only urban development indicators (e.g., the built area, zoning, traffic, green spaces, main facilities), but also the location of new investments (e.g., industry, housing, facilities) for the period of the five-year plan. After elaboration, the instruments guiding further urban development required both technical and political approval, by the State Committee for Architecture and the Council of Ministers. Particular emphasis was put on reducing the costs of investment through the rational choice of land and by using a local work force and resources. The plans would be elaborated and supervised by the Department for Systematization, Architecture, and Construction Design (renamed as such in 1959, formerly Regional Institute for Urban Design), under the guidance of the chief architect of the region. The decentralization of urban planning was presented as necessary for the successful implementation of the goals established in 1952, by transferring the tasks of urban reconstruction to local institutions that could address them more efficiently.⁷⁸

Despite these organizational efforts, Regional Institutes for Urban Design could not keep up with the high demands placed upon them. An article from 1960 pointed out that the organization of urban planning activity at the local level was advancing at a slow pace, mostly because of the shortage of qualified specialists – architects, engineers, and economists. While chief architects were expected to be the most competent advisors of

⁷⁷ HCM 1678/ 1959. A short analysis of the main principles guiding the formulation of systematization plans in the late 1950s can be found in Stroe, *Locuirea între proiect și decizie politică*, 96-97.

⁷⁸ “O importantă hotărâre privind activitatea de sistematizare a orașelor” [An Important Decision Regarding Urban Systematization], *Arhitectura* 11.1 (1960): 4.

local decision-makers, these positions were actually not filled in many cities, or alternatively, the jobs had been taken by individuals without adequate training. In 1960, it was reported that only 12 out of 16 regions employed trained chief architects, and that these positions were still not filled in many of the 170 towns.⁷⁹ At the same time, the overwhelming majority (96%) of architects was still working in Bucharest-based design institutes, although the Council of Ministers had increased the pressures to transfer them to different regions of the country.⁸⁰

Also, despite the official focus on systematization, this field suffered the most from the lack of trained specialists. For example, in 1963, in Târgu-Mureș there were just two architects working on urban planning, although the entire institution employed about three hundred persons.⁸¹ Moreover, the topic was only superficially taught at the Architecture Institute in Bucharest, an aspect which was criticized by Cezar Lăzărescu, one of the leading architects of the period.⁸² Arguably, the architects working for the Regional Institute for Urban Design were not attracted by urban planning projects, the elaboration of which took extended periods of time, and preferred instead the traditional design of individual buildings. Therefore, it was often the case that younger and inexperienced architects were entrusted with this task, which also had an impact on the quality of the projects.⁸³ Beyond the overwhelming workload, creative design was frustrated by the strict

⁷⁹ Marcel Locar, “Pentru dezvoltarea urbanismului socialist” [For the Development of Socialist Urbanism], *Arhitectura* 11.4 (1960): 5-7.

⁸⁰ Mara Mărginean, *Ferestre spre furnalul roșu. Urbanism și cotidian în Hunedoara și Călan (1945-1968)* [Windows Towards the Red Furnace. Urban Planning and Everyday Life in Hunedoara and Călan] (Iași: Polirom, 2015), 148-49, fn. 6.

⁸¹ Mihail Caffé, “Unele probleme ale proiectării de arhitectură și urbanism în R.A.M.” [Some Problems of Architectural and Urban Design in the Hungarian Autonomous Region], *Arhitectura* 14.5 (1963): 18-21.

⁸² Cezar Lăzărescu, “Problemele actuale ale dezvoltării orașelor” [Current Problems Regarding Urban Development], *Arhitectura* 18.4 (1967): 3.

⁸³ Interview with architect Vasile Mitrea, November 27, 2012, Cluj-Napoca.

economic indicators, time pressure, and the scarcity of construction materials, as well as by the frequent changes in legislation.⁸⁴

As architect Vasile Mitrea, a former employee of the Regional Institute for Urban Design in Cluj recalled, perhaps not without some exaggeration

the limitations started with the drawing board, when I was being told that I can only build a certain number of square meters, which cannot cost more than a certain amount. For example, if in one place I chose a door that would cost 3 lei over the maximum price, my project would have been rejected. If I was not using metal products from Buzău, it was not fine, because it meant I was choosing something more expensive. In what concerns regulations and norms, one was obliged to obey. Otherwise the project would not be approved. In what concerns urban planning – one would need that many inhabitants per hectare, that much green space. The only place where one could bring a contribution was the position of the block. But that was not a substantial part of the project.⁸⁵

Faced with these constraints, the architects did not feel stimulated to use their creativity or fight against limitations imposed through legislation or economic planning. Instead, many of them preferred to invest a minimum of effort into performing their professional duties, turning into what Mitrea called “clerk-architects.”⁸⁶ Furthermore, the architects’ daily activity was frustrated by material constraints, often preventing access to the most basic work instruments, such as specialized publications or even essential tools.⁸⁷

In the eyes of the political leadership, the focus on decentralization ultimately made the very existence of the State Committee for Architecture superfluous. Its dissolution was discussed during the Plenary of Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party organized on 6-7 October 1967,⁸⁸ two years after Ceaușescu’s coming to power in 1965.

⁸⁴ Ibid.; Lăzărescu, “Problemele actuale ale dezvoltării orașelor,” 4.

⁸⁵ Interview with architect Vasile Mitrea, November 27, 2012, Cluj-Napoca.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ In 1964, the architects from the Institute for Urban Design in Iași complained that budget of the institution did not allow them to purchase the three specialized publications – *Arhitectura*, *Buletinul de Informare Tehnică* [The Bulletin for Technical Information], and *Buletinul CSCAS* [The Bulletin of the State Committee for Constructions, Architecture and Systematization] – whereas common tools of strict necessity, such as the banal type line, were often missing. DJIAN, Fond SPOI-SS, 33/1964, f. 513.

⁸⁸ The coming to power of Ceaușescu implied a redistribution of power among center and local power holders, which took the form of decentralization. The Plenary of the CC of the RWP organized on 6-7

The institution was accused of inefficiency and mismanagement, as well as of overspending and wasting resources. Despite the criticism, architect Bădescu, the head of the Committee, continued to argue for the necessity of a central organism able to provide technical advice and qualified control on the construction industry. Although disappointed with the decision,⁸⁹ Bădescu's speech reflected dignity and modesty:

I am personally in a difficult situation, being employee of the only institution that is proposed for dissolution. I want to make it clear that I will not argue for keeping a position that was offered to me and which I found too high for me 15 years ago. I accepted it out of discipline, not vocation.⁹⁰

Without openly addressing the accusations raised against the Committee, yet implying that the institution had correctly performed its duties, Bădescu continued to emphasize the importance of technical expertise and of maintaining a unified framework, even in the context of administrative decentralization. Aware that decisions were ultimately political, he continued to stress the importance of the trained adviser alongside the political decision-maker:

During the break, comrade Maurer⁹¹ suggested – as a joke – that I should present something about the history of architecture. I would only like to recall that Louis XIV, Peter the Great, Stephen the Great, or Brâncoveanu⁹² had next to them a master – builder, architect, and

October 1967 decided on the administrative reorganization of the country, switching from the Soviet-inspired “regions” to the traditional “districts” (județ).

⁸⁹ Interview with architect Eugenia Greceanu, Bucharest, October 20, 2012. Greceanu recalled that architect Bădescu was in a state of shock after the dissolution of the State Committee for Architecture. Although all the other employees had been transferred to other institutions and the headquarters of the Committee were virtually empty, he continued to go for months to his old office.

⁹⁰ ANIC, Fond CC al PCR, Secția Cancelarie, 139/1967, f. 109-111.

⁹¹ Ion Gheorghe Maurer (1902-2000), prime-minister of Romania between 1961 and 1974.

⁹² Stephen the Great (1457-1504) and Constantin Brâncoveanu (1688-1714), princes of Moldavia and Wallachia respectively, also known for supporting the construction of numerous monuments – in particular churches and monasteries.

urban planner (intervention of Ceaușescu: Manole⁹³), who advised them, and whom they consulted in their creative initiatives.⁹⁴

Through Decree 650/1969, the State Committee for Architecture ceased its activity on October 15, 1969. After its dissolution, its duties were passed to a central institution coordinating the economic activity of the People's Councils i.e., CSEAL [Comitetul de Stat pentru Economie și Administrație Locală/ the State Committee for Local Economy and Administration], thus losing the focus on technical expertise in favor of a more politically-oriented agenda.⁹⁵ A further re-organization occurred in 1972, following the National Conference of the Romanian Communist Party in July, which traced the coordinates of the national level systematization program.⁹⁶ The institution was re-configured as the CPCP [Comitetul pentru Problemele Consiliilor Populare/ Committee for the Problems of People's Councils], envisioned as a mixture of political power and technical expertise. Its members included the vice-presidents of the Executive Committees of the People's Councils, as well as specialists representing various areas of expertise connected with systematization (e.g., architects, economists, geographers, sociologists).⁹⁷ As a consequence, this succession of institutional reorganizations resulted in increasing

⁹³ Ceaușescu referred here to a medieval Romanian folk poem regarding the master builder Manole, entrusted by the prince of Wallachia to build a monastery. However, the construction could not be completed until a living person- which happened to be Manole's pregnant wife, Ana- was built within the walls of the monastery. In the end, the master builders themselves were left to die on the roof of the completed building, as the prince feared that they could construct another monumental structure that would be even more beautiful than their masterwork. Apart from the fact that the reference is a bit misplaced, it is also indicative of Ceaușescu's style of interrupting fellow speakers and expressing his opinions freely.

⁹⁴ ANIC, Fond CC al PCR, Secția Cancelarie, 139/1967, f. 113.

⁹⁵ ANIC, Fond CPCP-DSPC, 16433, f. 28: Decree 674/1969 and 453/ 1969.

⁹⁶ Per Ronnas, *Urbanization in Romania: A Geography of Social and Economic Change since Independence* (Stockholm: Economic Research Institute, Stockholm School of Economics, 1984), 60-64.

⁹⁷ Law 10/1973, online at <http://lege5.ro/Gratuit/he2dinbx/legea-nr-10-1973-privind-comitetul-pentru-problemele-consiliilor-populare> (accessed January 10, 2016).

power for local authorities in deciding on the transformation of the urban form, while the institutions granting approval for projects became more politicized.

1.5. Addressing the Housing Problem

The housing question was central to the transformation of the built urban fabric during state socialism. By placing this issue high on their social agenda, the communist parties in Eastern Europe proclaimed their commitment to solving this issue to the benefit of the working class.⁹⁸ The promise put increasing pressure on architects and state officials, who had to identify resources which could be mobilized for this goal, as the urban population constantly increased through rural-urban migration.

In the immediate postwar period, state authorities made a first attempt to increase residential space through building nationalization,⁹⁹ a measure that brought approximately 22%-25% of the existing housing stock in Romania into state property. However, this policy arguably contributed little extent to improving living conditions for the population at large,¹⁰⁰ since most of the living space confiscated from private owners was either distributed to the new privileged class, or inadequately transformed into office space. Rather than a well-coordinated top-down initiative, the appropriation of buildings through nationalization has been described as the sum of inconsistent actions carried on largely

⁹⁸ Fehérváry, *Politics in Color and Concrete*, 80. The extent to which the Party fulfilled this promise, as well as the citizens' strategies of pressuring for its accomplishment have been analyzed especially during the Khrushchev's years. Mark B. Smith, *Property of Communists: The Urban Housing Program from Stalin to Khrushchev* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2010); Steven E. Harris, *Communism on Tomorrow Street: Mass Housing and Everyday Life after Stalin* (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press; Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012); Christine Varga-Harris, *Stories of House and Home. Soviet Apartment Life during the Khrushchev Years* (Cornell University Press, 2015). For Yugoslavia, see Brigitte Le Normand, "The House that Socialism Built," 351-373.

⁹⁹ Decree 92/ 1950.

¹⁰⁰ Iván Szelényi mentions the same phenomenon in Hungary in Szelényi, *Urban Inequalities*, 30.

from below for the benefit of various individual or institutional actors, a situation that has the side effect of altering interiors and general building degradation.¹⁰¹

However, while nationalized buildings could be considered a potential resource in the main cities, construction of new housing was in any case necessary in smaller towns subjected to intensive industrialization. In the early 1950s, high Party officials disagreed over the extent to which the needs of an expanded industry would be matched by corresponding investment in the housing provided for the working force. The leader of the Romanian Workers' Party¹⁰², Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, insisted that the construction of industrial facilities (especially for heavy industry) should be given absolute priority, while providing housing should be postponed to a later date. Vasile Luca, Minister of Finance, argued that the two aspects were interrelated: without adequate housing and facilities, the cadres could not be expected to live there and develop the economy.¹⁰³ Apparently, Dej's opinion prevailed during the 1950s. State authorities directed more substantial investment in housing construction only after 1958, with the introduction of large-scale industrialization and standardization of construction following the Plenary of the Central Committee of the Romanian Workers' Party in November of that year.¹⁰⁴

Areas prioritized for industrial investment, such as Hunedoara and the Jiu Valley region,¹⁰⁵ also benefitted from the first postwar housing projects, the design of which was

¹⁰¹ Liviu Chelcea, "The 'Housing Question' and the State-Socialist Answer: City, Class, and State Remaking in 1950s Bucharest," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 36.2 (2012): 281-296; Mihaela Șerban, "The Exceptionalism of Housing in the Ideology and Politics of Early Communist Romania (1945–1965)," *Europe-Asia Studies* 67.3 (2015): 443-467.

¹⁰² The denomination under which the Romanian Communist Party founded in 1921 was known between 1948 and 1965.

¹⁰³ Mărginean, *Ferestre spre furnalul roșu*, 98.

¹⁰⁴ Zahariade, *Arhitectura în proiectul comunist*, 55.

¹⁰⁵ Ionescu, *Arhitectura în România*, 51- 55. Many of these projects are analyzed in Irina Tulbure, *Urbanism și arhitectură în România anilor 1944-1960: Constrângere și Experiment* [Urbanism and

not intended to produce any significant ruptures in terms of scale.¹⁰⁶ Moreover, the introduction of Socialist Realism stimulated interest in the vernacular and the local as inspiration for the new architecture,¹⁰⁷ which resulted in ethnographic research around the main industrialized areas.¹⁰⁸ For example, an exhibition dedicated to local traditional architecture was organized as part of the research for the project to design working-class housing in Hunedoara.¹⁰⁹ The Party soon judged this approach, however, as unsatisfactory and interrupted the project in its construction phase, since it produced low densities and arguably continued the traditional layout of the “oraș-gradină” (garden-town, i.e., with family houses surrounded by a great deal of greenery).¹¹⁰

The ambiguity between urbanist and anti-urbanist approaches was traded in favor of the first option with the modernist turn in the late 1950s. During the Plenary of the CC of the RWP in 1958, the Party’s general secretary Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej delivered a Khrushchev-inspired speech criticizing aspects of architectural practice. While also mentioning aesthetic concerns, he focused mostly on economic problems, urging architects to reduce the cost price of buildings, and introduce industrialization of construction on a larger scale. Architects were asked to focus on building cheap, good quality housing within

Architecture in Romania, 1944-1960: Constraints and Experimentation] (PhD diss., Universitatea de Arhitectură și Urbanism “Ion Mincu”, București, 2011), 222-253.

¹⁰⁶ Ionescu, *Arhitectura în România*, 41. See also Zahariade, *Arhitectura în proiectul comunist*, 54.

¹⁰⁷ The imposition of Socialism Realism as an architectural style actually complicated the relation between the old and the new city, which had been initially defined as antagonistic from an ideological perspective. Romanian architects travelling to the Soviet Union to admire “the cities of socialism,” declared that the cohabitation between the old and the new appeared as clearly expressed in a “harmonious integration” between the districts developed historically and the additions of the present. Radu Laurian, “După o vizită în URSS” [Following a Visit in the USSR], *Arhitectura* 6.3 (1955): 34.

¹⁰⁸ “Sistematizarea regiunii Hunedoara” [The Systematization of the Hunedoara Region], *Arhitectura* 2.2 (1951): 10. The interdisciplinary teams included many specialists that had been active during the interwar period. For example, sociologist Henri Stahl initiated geographic and demographic research as part of regional planning team.

¹⁰⁹ “Expoziția ‘Arhitectura populară în Hunedoara’” [The Exhibition ‘Traditional Architecture in Hunedoara’], *Arhitectura* 2.4 (1951): 3-14.

¹¹⁰ Ionescu, *Arhitectura în România*, 14-17.

the established city areas, since any expansion of the city limits implied additional costs related to the extension of the utilities.¹¹¹ Despite the fact that Marxist theory considered the land a common good, in practice the value of urban land was determined by the quantity and quality of the infrastructure, i.e., “improved” land in contrast to “natural.”¹¹² Given the permanent pressures for cost-effectiveness, this aspect gradually took on key importance in the regulations concerning urban reconstruction.

The (re)turn to modernism turned quickly into a success story. A typical picture displayed in the pages of the Romanian newspapers in the 1960s featured new apartment blocks under construction with prefabricated elements. The accompanying text usually explained that under the guidance of the Party, constructors were “bringing order” in “old, unsanitary districts,” while building new, beautiful, and spacious apartments. In just a matter of days, familiar places would be unrecognizable as a result of the intense construction activity. New technology, modern design, and dynamic young people¹¹³ were

¹¹¹ The rejection of Socialist Realism was delayed in Romania as compared to the Soviet Union. Despite the fact that the style came under attack in 1956 on formal grounds (see for example M. Urzică, “Despre unele exagerări în proiectarea arhitecturală” [On Some Exaggerations in Architectural Design], *Arhitectura* 7.1 (1956): 32), and the journal *Arhitectura* re-published Khrushchev’s speech from 1954 in the issue 8.9 (1957): 46-47, the confusion persisted, as some leading architects such as Horia Maicu continued to promote it *Arhitectura* 9.1-2 (1958): 5. The speech delivered by Gheorghiu-Dej in 1958 finally put an end to these debates. See “Extras din expunerea făcută de tovarășul Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej la ședința plenară a CC al PMR din 26-28 noiembrie 1958” [Fragment of the Speech held by Comrade Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej at the Plenary Meeting of the CC of RWP from 26-28 November 1958], *Arhitectura* 9.1-2 (1958):10-11. An analysis of this episode, emphasizing the impact of Khrushchev’s speech on housing design and the construction industry in Romania is provided by Stroe, *Locuirea între proiect și decizie politică*, 40-66.

¹¹² I borrow the concepts from Dick Bryan, “‘Natural’ and ‘Improved’ Land in Marx’s Theory of Rent,” *Land Economics* 66. 2 (1990): 176-181. Although Bryan’s argument refers to agricultural land, the two categories would fit also for the analysis of urban development, in which “natural land” would be located at the periphery, presupposing urban expansion and investment in utilities, while “improved land” would already contain infrastructure, thus capital and labor input.

¹¹³ More than laboratories producing the new townscape, construction sites became also spaces forging new urban identities. Lacking any professional qualification, young male peasants coming to the city in search for jobs would primarily be employed on construction sites as daily, unskilled workers. Here, they could acquire a job specialization and become part of the working class. A sociological study from the mid-1960s confirmed that the insertion of former peasants into the urban life occurred mostly through education and construction sites. The new architectural and social landscapes of the socialist city were therefore closely interconnected. *Scînteia*, December 20, 1952; for the sociological study see *Scînteia*, September 6, 1967.

contributing to reshaping the townscape. “Comfort” and “modernity” became two of the main concepts describing the specific qualities of the new housing stock, typically situated on the periphery of existing towns. The new apartments were described as spacious,¹¹⁴ equipped with central heating, running water, and plumbing, and designed to accommodate domestic consumer devices such as washing machines and refrigerators. Such images made a strong claim about the ability of the new political regime to provide higher, modern living standards for the population.¹¹⁵

Following the Soviet terminology, in Romania the new modernist districts were known as micro-raions. Aimed to replace the traditional neighborhood, the micro-raion would contain within its perimeter all the facilities necessary for modern life (e.g., cultural, commercial, health care, educational).¹¹⁶ In the Romanian case, the modernist design with high-rise apartment blocks displayed in large green spaces was a radical departure from the traditional parcels with individual houses, usually placed along the street.¹¹⁷

National-level statistics proudly recorded the gradual increase in apartment units: if during the period 1951-1959, 124,000 apartments had been built in urban areas, the number was matched in only three years (1960-62), by the construction of 118,000 apartments.¹¹⁸ The decade of 1961 to 1970 registered an overall number of 529,000 units,

¹¹⁴ In 1961, this was calculated at a value of 30 square meters for 2 rooms.

¹¹⁵ Juliana Maxim, “Developing Socialism: The Photographic Condition of Architecture in Romania, 1958-1970,” *Visual Resources* 27.2 (2011): 154-171; David Crowley and Susan E. Reid, “Style and Socialism: Modernity and Material Culture in Post-war Eastern Europe,” in Susan E. Reid and David Crowley, eds., *Style and Socialism. Modernity and Material Culture in Post-war Eastern Europe* (Oxford: Berg, 2000), 9.

¹¹⁶ David M. Smith considers the mikroraion, with its spaces for collective life and the wide range of public facilities provided (in theory) as the embodiment of socialist urban planning ideas. “How far a city as a whole could be described as socialist in its physical organization was largely a matter of the extent to which it was dominated by the mikroraion.” David M. Smith, “The Socialist City,” 76.

¹¹⁷ For an analysis of the concept, see Juliana Maxim, “Mass Housing and Collective Experience: On the Notion of Mikroraion in Romania in the 1950s and 1960s,” *The Journal of Architecture* 14.1 (2009): 7-26.

¹¹⁸ Gustav Gusti, “Două decenii de sistematizare complexă și construcție socialistă a teritoriului” [Two Decades of Complex Systematization and Socialist Construction of the Territory], *Arhitectura* 6 (1964): 29.

and the following decade 1.2 million. According to Bogdan Murgescu, such numbers should be taken with a grain of salt, as they referred to “conventional apartments” measuring 30 square meters, while other aspects such as the loss of housing space through demolition were nowhere mentioned.¹¹⁹ In order to increase the number of housing units, the government also supported the construction of individual homes by providing state credits. Following legislative measures adopted in the 1950s and 1960s,¹²⁰ approximately one third of the housing stock of the period was constructed by private individuals.¹²¹ In the following decades, however, this initiative was dropped in favor of an almost exclusive focus on apartment blocks.¹²² In 1967, Ceaușescu admitted that the state had to acknowledge its limits in supplying housing space for its citizens. At that point, it was optimistically estimated that in the 1980s it would be possible to reach a medium value of 10 square meters per person, meaning an increase of 2 square meters as compared with the 1960s norms.¹²³

As the following example suggests, the practice of building microraions was very different from the concept, since most of the public facilities were “lost” in the process of bureaucratic approval. In 1967, the microraion E 19 was to be built in the Tomis North area in Constanța, Romania’s main port at the Black Sea. The microraion would include 42 blocks with 3,641 apartments, one high-school, two kindergartens, two schools, one health

¹¹⁹ Murgescu, *România și Europa*, 351-352.

¹²⁰ Mihai Olteanu, “Legislația și sistematizare urbană în România socialistă (1965-1989)” [Legislation and Urban Systematization in Socialist Romania], in Florin Soare, ed., *Politică și societate în epoca Ceaușescu* [Politics and Society in the Ceaușescu Era] (Iași: Polirom, 2013), 17-34. Individual houses would be constructed on land distributed by People’s Councils; Mărginean, *Ferestre spre furnalul roșu*, 184-185.

¹²¹ 190,000 units (1951-60); 144,000 (1961-70), and only 60,000 (1971-80), data provided by Murgescu, *România și Europa*, 352, fn. 119

¹²² The decision was probably connected to the official recommendations on limiting urban expansion. See subchapter 1.6. regarding the ‘preservationist measures’ enforced by central authorities.

¹²³ ANIC, Fond CC al PCR, Secția Cămară, 139/1967, f.164, 171.

center, public utilities, and one public toilet. From the initial cost estimated at 275 million lei, the political, technical, and economic forums of approval proceeded at successive cuts. The State Committee for Construction, Architecture, and Systematization approved a budget of 267 million, cutting one kindergarten, the parking places, and the festivity hall from the list; the State Committee for Planning agreed on only 251 million, which meant further sacrificing the green spaces, playgrounds, the high-school, and the second kindergarten. It also recommended that most blocks be eight-story high, and that 62% of the apartments would consist of two rooms. From all the facilities proposed, the Committee agreed on building two schools and a public toilet. In the end, probably given the policies promoting higher birth rates imposed by the regime, the State Committee for Local Economy and Administration insisted on the construction of nurseries for children under 3 years old. For an estimated population of 12,000 inhabitants, it was calculated that two nurseries with 80 places each would cover the needs.¹²⁴

In many towns, mainly the central areas were considered for redevelopment because they were already served by utilities.¹²⁵ Construction on the periphery followed a theoretical concept, but punctual interventions in the city center were guided by immediate necessities. As one chief-architect admitted in the mid-1960s, demolition in central areas

¹²⁴ ANIC, Fond CC al PCR, Secția Cămară 191/1967, f. 245.

¹²⁵ Investment in the development of urban infrastructure was usually necessary in order to build districts at the periphery. The blocks inserted in the city center typically bordered the main streets. Up to four-story high, and designed in an unpretentious modernist architectural style, they were still respectful towards the relatively modest scale of the towns. For some examples, see Sarah Marcovici, C. Săvescu, “Detalii de sistematizare ale centrului orașului Ploiești” [Systematization Details of Ploiești City Center], *Arhitectura* 12.1 (1961): 31-33; N. Scully, “Ansamblul de locuințe de la Suceava” [Housing Ensembles in Suceava], *Arhitectura* 12.1 (1961): 48-49; Mariana Vereanu, “Sistematizarea unor orașe din regiunea Bacău” [Systematization of towns from Bacău region], *Arhitectura* 16.1 (1965): 2-12. ANIC, Fond CC al PCR, Secția Cămară, 34/1959, f. 1-12. Plan presented by the local first-secretary of Brăila during a work visit in Brăila and Galați in 1959.

was initiated without in-depth preliminary studies and “without a theoretical conceptualization of the notion of city center.”¹²⁶

Housing shortages remained an everyday reality despite the construction fervor. As a result, in their discussions with local administrations, central authorities repeatedly insisted on the maintenance of the existing housing stock. During the Plenary of Central Committee of the Romanian Workers' Party in 1956 it was specifically emphasized that “the maintenance of the housing stock requires clear measures for performing at the right time [...] building repairs.”¹²⁷ Another report from 1958 signaled that the housing problem had worsened due to deficiencies in the management of the housing stock, and held both local administration and the tenants as responsible for the situation.¹²⁸

Although demolition was unavoidable in the process of urban reconstruction, in practice it turned problematic especially since it involved the need to relocate large numbers of residents.¹²⁹ Other factors such as age, location, and technical equipment played a role in the scheduling of such operations. In many cities, the politics of investment distribution and the existence of empty plots within the city perimeters allowed only “minimal and indispensable” demolition to take place in the 1960s, while more serious interventions were postponed for the future.¹³⁰ Initially, planners had proposed ambitious reconstruction schemes, only to realize how highly unrealistic they were. In the case of

¹²⁶ Teodor Coheci, “Problemele sistematizării oraşului Craiova,” [Issues regarding the Systematization of Craiova], *Arhitectura* 16.1 (1965): 43.

¹²⁷ ANIC, Fond CC al PCR, Secţia Cămară, 11/1957, f. 107.

¹²⁸ ANIC, Fond CC al PCR, Secţia Gospodăria de Partid, 4/1958, f. 25-26.

¹²⁹ M. Silianu, “Probleme actuale de urbanism din RSR” [Current Problems of Urban Planning in the Socialist Republic of Romania], *Arhitectura* 13.2 (1962): 6. The compensation for the constructions and plots appropriated by the state was calculated according to the Decision of the Council of Ministers no. 1676/ November 20, 1959, which remained valid until the end of the 1970s. Compensations were calculated according to the type, quality, and degree of wear and tear of the construction. Olteanu, “Legislaţie şi sistematizare urbană,” 28.

¹³⁰ Vereanu, “Sistematizarea unor oraşe din regiunea Bacău,” 3.

Hunedoara, one of the main centers for heavy industry, with a history going back to the late 19th century, the systematization plan designed in the 1950s called for the demolition of all the buildings in the old center, with the notable exception of representative public buildings, such the Gothic Castle, the cathedral, and the Town Hall. The idea was eventually dropped, as the authorities acknowledged that demolition would only worsen the difficult housing situation. Not only was the housing stock insufficient, offering as little as 4 square meters per person compared with the required value of 8, but a consistent number of the working class had to be accommodated in semi-permanent barracks.¹³¹

In this context, the maintenance of the existing housing stock appeared as a necessity rather than a choice: “Confronted with the need to solve as fast as possible the housing problem, we are forced to rigorously preserve the exiting building stock, which could be still used in acceptable conditions.”¹³² In the case of major cities such as Bucharest, it was likely that such areas would be centrally located. As the chief architect of Bucharest, Horia Maicu, explained in 1963, demolition would gradually advance from the periphery to the city center:

In order to maintain the rate of demolition and relocation of families within acceptable limits, the reconstruction of the city will start on large lands, partially free or with unsanitary construction, and will focus to a lesser extent on the central area, which will be rebuilt after 1980. The reconstruction of the central area, which still displays a usable built stock, will be accomplished through gradual demolition and the preliminary installation of infrastructure.¹³³

While officials stressed the need to preserve the old housing stock in a good condition, they provided few incentives for its maintenance. Archival evidence seems to

¹³¹ The official estimations counted approximately 13,000 workers accommodated in one such “barrack district” in 1957. Mărginean, *Ferestre spre furnalul roșu*, 126-27.

¹³² Gusti, “Două decenii de sistemizare complexă”, 32.

¹³³ Systematization plan of Bucharest, discussed at “Plenara Uniunii Arhitecților din RPR” [The Plenary of the Architects’ Union in the People’s Republic of Romania], *Arhitectura* 14.5 (1963): 54.

suggest that political initiatives in this direction were not properly supported. At the CC Plenary from 1967, comrade Gheorghe Vasilichi¹³⁴ raised the issue of financially supporting the maintenance of private homes by means of increasing rents: “We came to the conclusion that the housing which remained in private hand is [currently] subjected to [gradual] destruction, simply because the owners do not have the opportunities to maintain it, or are not interested.”¹³⁵ As he further explained, the low rents paid by the tenants were insufficient to cover even the most basic maintenance works. Therefore, he suggested that rents should be increased not in order to extract more money for the state budget, but as to provide owners with the resources necessary to support the upkeep of their buildings.¹³⁶

Despite a consistent bottom-up pressures demanding authorities to address the housing issue based on social need, the system functioned according to its own class logics. One Party-led investigation from 1967, conducted in response to a large number of complaints addressed to Ceaușescu personally, offers interesting insights into the official approaches to this problem. In 1966 and 1967, about 53,000 citizens had addressed letters to the Central Committee, complaining about problems regarding housing distribution and maintenance. Most petitioners denounced the difficult living conditions, and the degree of overcrowding, as well as the lack of utilities. Party-led verifications reported numerous cases of families living in “totally inappropriate conditions,” meaning extremely dilapidated buildings, with four to six persons sharing a room of 4 to 10 square meters,

¹³⁴ A member of the Romanian Communist Party since 1927, Gheorghe Vasilichi (1902-1974) led a tumultuous life until the Party came to power. A metal-worker by training, Vasilichi was imprisoned in 1934, escaped to the Soviet Union one year later, and participated in the Spanish Civil War. During the Second World War, he joined the Resistance Movement in France, and was imprisoned in Dachau. After the communists seized power in Romania, he was appointed minister of Education (1947-49), and Mines (1949-51), followed by further bureaucratic positions. Dobre, ed. *Membrii CC ai PCR (1945-1989)*, 606-607.

¹³⁵ ANIC, Fond CC al PCR, Secția Cămară, 139/1967, f. 172.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

which lacked electricity and running water. Quite openly, the report acknowledged that housing distribution was guided by “subjective criteria,” while bureaucrats treated these issues with superficiality, neglect, and incompetence. Housing distribution fell under the responsibility of the Executive Committee of the People’s Councils, as well as factory managers. Instead of prioritizing large families living in difficult conditions, the best apartments were allocated to privileged groups of “employees with special responsibilities” (Ro: “salariați cu munci de răspundere”). As has been also argued in the case of other socialist countries, the state operated with its own definitions of social merit according to which it rewarded its most valuable servants.¹³⁷

In 1967, approximately 110,000 persons applied for housing in Bucharest alone. Theoretically, the number of the apartments to be built during that year – 13,500 – could have covered roughly 10% of the demand. However, in practice, most apartments had been distributed even before being constructed, leaving only 5% (446) of the total number to be divided among those in need. The bulk (7,100) was to be sold to citizens – thus to people who already owned financial means to afford housing. A significant number – 3,850 – was destined to ease the popular discontent regarding demolition. Furthermore, 2,103 apartment units were reserved for the state’s most faithful state servants, employees of the Ministers of Armed Forces and Internal Affairs. The report had to acknowledge that low income families were disadvantaged not only by housing distribution policies, but also by the program supporting the construction of private housing, which required a deposit of 30% of the total construction cost. In conclusion, it can be inferred that such families would

¹³⁷ Szélenyi, *Urban Inequalities*, 75. In the Yugoslav case, Brigitte Le Normand suggest that these were the new class of technocrats and managers rather than the “red bourgeoisie.” Brigitte Le Normand, “The House that Socialism Built,” 358-359.

continue to be accommodated in old, poorly-maintained buildings. The rents that the state deliberately kept at a modest level in order to prevent the enrichment of the owners provided no incentive for maintenance, leading to further building degradation and even loss of living space. The report identified local administrations as main responsible for this situation, and directly accused local bureaucrats of abuses, lack of taking responsibility, and preferential distribution of housing. The commission drafting the report was particularly dissatisfied with their failure to solve problems at the local level, since the citizens' complaints would be forwarded to other institutions, ultimately and inevitably reaching the Party. Although the report stated that the allocation of housing should be made on criteria respectful of social needs, it provided no clear solutions on how this idea could be implemented.¹³⁸ As Liviu Chelcea also observed, although from an ideological point of view the criteria for allocating housing space should have been guided by social welfare concerns, in practice the process was strongly influenced by pressures from different institutional actors.¹³⁹ As a result, the less worthy citizens received the less valued accommodation spaces, making poverty and the old building stock intimately connected.

1.6. Questioning Postwar Modernism

In the mid-1960s, the ability of modernist design to address urban problems efficiently started to be questioned at the international level. The criticism focused to a large extent on the social consequences of planning cities “from above,” seeking a sense of order which was geometrical rather than experienced. Modernist public spaces were

¹³⁸ ANIC, Fond CC al PCR, Secția Cancelarie, 202/1967, f. 20-44.

¹³⁹ Chelcea, “The Housing Question,” 290.

perceived as discouraging human interaction, whereas districts made of prefabricated blocks had turned into hubs for social problems.¹⁴⁰

In the Romanian case, the anti-modernist critique targeted economic and aesthetic aspects equally, being embraced by various actors in order to support sometimes divergent agendas. The issue started quite innocently with the architects themselves criticizing the aesthetic formulas of postwar modernism. In the mid-1960s, voices within the architectural profession admitted that despite their best intentions to create a functional and ordered city, the simple lines of modernism had actually depersonalized the inherited urban silhouette, while the new urban landscape looked rather monotonous and dry. Valuable buildings had been demolished in order to enlarge streets and adapt them to the needs of modern traffic.¹⁴¹ Also, it appeared that the specialists' criticism was matched by a high level of popular dissatisfaction regarding the aesthetic qualities of the new housing districts, often defined as monotonous. Apparently, the old city center was still preferred by the inhabitants "despite its disorder," as it displayed an overlapping of functions and styles that people usually found attractive.¹⁴²

In the pages of *Arhitectura*, the chief-architect of Bucharest complained about the disregard for the natural environment in the planning of new districts,¹⁴³ while the most

¹⁴⁰ The emblematic figure of this critique was Jane Jacobs. See Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (London: Penguin Books, 1994); Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, 132-146 (focusing on Jane Jacobs's critique); Hall, *Cities of Tomorrow*, 254-260; Klemek, *The Transatlantic Collapse of Urban Renewal*, 109-121.

¹⁴¹ Mircea Stancu, "Proces de creație arhitecturală - nu sistem funcționăresc!" [Process of Architectural Creation, Not Bureaucratic System!], *Arhitectura* 18.3 (1967): 12.

¹⁴² Horia Hudiță, "Construcția și reconstrucția orașelor și noile ansambluri de locuit" [The Construction and Reconstruction of Cities and New Housing Ensembles], *Arhitectura* 17.1 (1966): 21-23; Octav Doicescu, "Probleme ale arhitecturii noastre actuale," [Problems of Our Contemporary Architecture] *Arhitectura* 18.2 (1967): 5-6; Horia Hudiță, "Paralelă contemporană: variabilitate, economicitate," [Contemporary Parallels: Variety, Cost-effectiveness], *Arhitectura* 18.3 (1967): 4-5.

¹⁴³ Horia Maicu, "Ansamblurile noi trebuie să respecte cadrul natural" [The New Ensembles Should be Respectful Towards the Natural Environment], *Arhitectura* 17.1 (1966): 6.

comprehensive critique was expressed by Grigore Ionescu,¹⁴⁴ a well-known architectural historian and dedicated preservationist. Ionescu seized the opportunity to make a case for the preservationist agenda, criticizing both the monotony of the new districts and the architects' disregard for the traditional qualities of the urban fabric. He wrote that

[...] we have often ignored the historic city. I have seen many of the cities which changed during the last years, I have seen them before and after restructuring, and I have to confess that I do not recognize anymore some of those I used to know. Or, better said, I recognize one in all. Planners neglected one important aspect: the specific character of the city [...] despising those buildings legally considered historic monuments and those architectural ensembles which gave local specificity [...].¹⁴⁵

To conclude, Ionescu did not refrain from characterizing the new districts as “sad and boring,” while providing counter-examples of the successful restoration of nineteenth century districts in the GDR and Bulgaria.¹⁴⁶ This assessment pointed to the fact that modernization could be more sensitive towards the existing cityscape, suggesting a contextualized approach in which valuable old buildings should be preserved and completed by in-fillings, in a moderate architectural style excluding strikingly contemporary forms.¹⁴⁷ Some architects encouraged exploring the picturesque look of old streets through pedestrianization, despite a perceived functional obsolescence in the housing stock.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁴ One of the top specialists in the field, Grigore Ionescu was the author of the first synthesis on the history of architecture on the territory of Romania. Grigore Ionescu, *Istoria arhitecturii în România* [The History of Architecture in Romania], 2 vol. (București: Editura Academiei Republicii Populare Române, 1963, 1965).

¹⁴⁵ Grigore Ionescu, “Să punem în valoare vechile ansambluri arhitecturale” [Let us Valorize the Old Architectural Ensembles], *Arhitectura* 17.1 (1966): 8-9. It was unusual for an article arguing for the preservation of old districts to be published on the first pages of the issue, since such topics tended to be pushed towards the end of the issue. Interestingly, a very similar statement was made in the mid-1960s by one of the representatives of the cultural elite in the Soviet Union, Dmitrii Likhachev, who asked in an article published in 1965 “Do you really think that all the cities of our Motherland should look like each other?” See Victoria Donovan, “The ‘Old New Russian Town’: Modernization and Architectural Preservation in Russia’s Historic North West, 1961-1982,” *Slavonica* 19.1 (2013): 26.

¹⁴⁶ Ionescu, “Să punem în valoare vechile ansambluri arhitecturale,” 8-9.

¹⁴⁷ Horia Teodoru, “Monumente istorice și de arhitectură din București” [Historic and architectural monuments in Bucharest], *Arhitectura* 22.1 (1971): 56.

¹⁴⁸ Cocheci, “Problemele sistematizării orașului Craiova,” 44.

In response, the defenders of modernism argued that this style had accomplished the task of providing a more comfortable and rationally-organized housing space, while it also created public spaces served by a variety of facilities. Modernism was, after all, the aesthetic language of the present, and there was no question of returning to an “archaic style.” It was suggested that the problem was not the style itself, but rather the ways in which it was (mis-)used. The argument implied that the architects’ creativity had been severely constrained by the production of relatively few typified projects, indiscriminately applied throughout the country. In order to improve the situation within the limits of the system, the architects needed at least be provided with a broader variety of standardized projects.¹⁴⁹

When politicians embraced the antimodernist critique, they subordinated it to economic concerns, reflected in various forms of scarcity discourse. Unlike the late 1950s, when the focus fell on the supposed expensiveness of construction materials, the criticism of the microraiion idea addressed the waste of space, as the high-rise blocks were positioned within spacious green areas. Architects were reminded that land was a scarce resource and urban expansion by means of constructing peripheral districts took away parcels otherwise meant for agricultural use. They were urged to use the land rationally (i.e., increase the density of construction), since the expansion of cities implied additional costs for the installation of utilities. In addition, the new housing program developed by the Central Committee in 1968 established that the number of apartments built per year would double. However, the government refused to allocate any supplementary funding for housing

¹⁴⁹ E. Szegedi, “Cu privire la particularitățile specifice ale orașelor” [On Urban Specificity], *Arhitectura* 14.4 (1963): 56-57.

construction,¹⁵⁰ which implied that in practice the production costs of a standard apartment had to be cut by half. In addition, strict restrictions on built areas forced local decision-makers to schedule parts of the city with low density housing for gradual demolition, as to secure the necessary land required for new construction.¹⁵¹

In order to address the supposed waste of space produced by the “towers in the park” approach applied in the construction of modernist districts, architects were required to increase the density of already built districts through the insertion of new blocks, a policy that came to be known as densification (Ro: îndesire). As one could assume, this action led to the destruction of green spaces and playgrounds in districts already devoid of spaces for community life. The question of the appropriate density in urban areas turned highly politicized in the mid-1960s. The official vision promoted from the highest political circles considered high densities as an expression of urbanity, whereas the lower densities, rather common in Romanian cities, were perceived as a symbol of underdevelopment and a reminder of the country’s rural character. Moreover, without any consideration for the local context, the densities of major European cities were presented as examples to be followed, thus adding further pressure on urban planners.¹⁵²

¹⁵⁰ Constantin Furmuzache, Willy Juster, Petre Iliescu, Victor Sebestyen, Mariana Vereanu, “Probleme actuale ale realizării ansamblurilor urbane” [Current Problems in the Construction of Urban Ensembles], *Arhitectura* 20.2 (1969): 26-28.

¹⁵¹ For example, in the case of Ploiești it was explained that all districts “poorly built and badly located” would be subjected to gradual demolition. The residential area would be organized based on the intensive use of the territory, following a structure determined by the major street network. *Arhitectura* 24.2 (1973): 29.

¹⁵² Comparisons with “the advanced countries” (the so-called “model-economies,” e.g., GDR, Czechoslovakia, the Soviet Union, France, West Germany) were part of the everyday working instruments of Romanian planners. Applying the modernization theory (the need to catch up with the more advanced countries), Romanian economic planners used the levels reached by these countries in order to establish targets for the national economy. Vlad Pașca, “Limitele raționalității în politica economică a României socialiste. Planul de perspectivă 1960-1975” [The Limits of Rationality in the Economic Policy of Socialist Romania. The Perspective Plan 1960-1975], *Studii și articole de istorie* 82 (2015): 78.

According to architect Miruna Stroe, density is in fact a weak instrument in urban planning. Despite its perceived accuracy, the concept can easily be manipulated due to its numerous definitions, such as the number of inhabitants per housing units, the living area, built surface, and built volume. This was precisely the case in socialist Romania, when the definition of density was modified through a political decision in 1966. The new method of calculation focused on the living area (Ro: suprafață locuibilă) instead of the previously used number of inhabitants/surface.¹⁵³ As Stroe argues, this change altered the concept of microraion. Not only did the focus on density, as a quantitative instrument, ignore other aspects such as the quality of life or aesthetics, but this new definition tended to disregard the space necessary for amenities and public spaces, which reinforced the tendency to construct “dormitory districts.”¹⁵⁴

The criticism of the modernist microraion, followed by the enforcement of the densification policy, reflected not only economic concerns, but also, I would argue, a new vision on the adequate urban form. As archival references seem to indicate, the personal vision of the head of the state, Nicolae Ceaușescu, played an essential role in shaping the new urban ideal. To a larger extent than his predecessor Gheorghiu-Dej, Ceaușescu sought to transform his urban visions into nation-wide policies. Shortly after becoming the head of the Party, his traditionalist, anti-modernist views emerged in political debates. For example, in a discussion with Gheorghe Stoica¹⁵⁵ at the Plenary of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party in 1967, Ceaușescu made a case for the importance of

¹⁵³ Miruna Stroe, “Relativitatea unui concept: densitatea urbană” [The Relativity of a Concept: Urban Density], *Arhitectura 1906* 3 (2015), online at <http://arhitectura-1906.ro/2014/10/relativitatea-unui-concept-densitatea-urbana/>, last accessed February 2, 2016.

¹⁵⁴ Stroe, “Relativitatea unui concept”; interview with architect Vasile Mitrea, November 27, 2012, Cluj-Napoca.

¹⁵⁵ Gheorghe Stoica (1900-1976), member of the Romanian Communist Party since 1921, occupied various positions in the state and Party apparatus, Dobre, ed., *Membrii CC ai PCR*, 549-550.

the old city center. Stoica¹⁵⁶ suggested that in the socialist city, the concept of center was no longer relevant. Taking the example of the Balta Albă district in Bucharest, he showed that the living conditions provided by the new districts in the outskirts were superior as compared to the ones offered by the old buildings in the city center, which still lacked basic amenities such as central heating. Ceaușescu replied that the specific qualities of the city center did not necessarily revolve around notions of material comfort: “Do you know what the center is? It is the same as in the past – there where the theatre is closer, where you have many things that you do not have and will never have in Balta Albă.”¹⁵⁷ When Stoica continued his argument regarding the erasure of differences between different areas within the city as an accomplishment of socialism, Ceaușescu stubbornly insisted on the idea of spatial hierarchies: “[...] comrade, Balta Albă is not the center. The center is still Calea Victoriei¹⁵⁸, the boulevards we all know.” Later, he continued by enumerating the famous Capșa coffeehouse, and the traditional walks on Calea Victoriei, suggesting, paradoxically, that despite its focus on solving the housing problem, socialist modernism could not provide the kind of urban experience traditionally associated with the city center.¹⁵⁹ There was something in the old city which was irreplaceable, or impossible to replicate. As I argue in the following subchapter, this early intervention announced some of the main characteristics of Ceaușescu’s urban vision, which meant reimagining the city as a sum of hierarchical spaces, and privileging the center over the periphery.

¹⁵⁶ Stoica had had a previous intervention regarding the principle of collective decision-making in People’s Councils

¹⁵⁷ One of the emblematic modernist districts of Bucharest built in the 1960s, analyzed by Juliana Maxim in her doctoral dissertation, as well as further articles. For her arguments, see Juliana Maxim, “Bucharest. The City Transfigured,” in Vladimir Kulić, Timothy Parker and Monika Penick, eds., *Sanctioning Modernism. Architecture and the Making of Postwar Identities* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2014), 11-36.

¹⁵⁸ The most important boulevard in modern Bucharest, a space of socialization and promenade.

¹⁵⁹ ANIC, Fond CC al PCR, Secția Cămară, 139/1967, f. 166-167.

1.7. Towards a New Urban Model: The Compact City

During the 1970s, urban planning was put under stricter political control. A series of legislative measures regulating urban and territorial planning, i.e., systematization imposed new visions and policies regarding the appropriate urban form. Simultaneously, political views were granted a more prominent role in the advisory process, which culminated in the requirement that all systematization plans would be submitted for Ceaușescu's approval.¹⁶⁰

The main characteristics of the systematization program had already been laid out at the National Conference of the Romanian Communist Party from December 1967, focusing on the administrative reorganization of the country. Ceaușescu's coming to power was reflected in the restructuring of the central and local power networks, doubled by an economic policy aimed at distributing investment more evenly throughout the country.¹⁶¹ According to Party documents, the program was to reverse the negative effects of "the anarchical development in the past," which had resulted in small and scattered localities inadequately integrated into a broader regional network, while also providing officials with a "clear concept for urban and rural development." While criticism revolved around the usual suspects – irrational land use, low densities, waste of resources – the planning strategy was to be based on studies determining the economic profile of every region and locality.¹⁶²

¹⁶⁰ Olteanu, "Legislație și sistematizare urbană," 18.

¹⁶¹ Zoltán Csaba Novák, "Impactul reformei administrative din 1968 asupra politicii PCR față de minoritatea maghiară" [The Impact of the 1968 Administrative Reform on the RCP Politics towards the Hungarian Minority], in Ágoston Olti and Attila Gidó, eds., *Minoritatea maghiară în perioada comunistă* [The Hungarian Minority during the Communist Period] (Cluj-Napoca: Editura Institutului pentru Studierea Problemelor Minorităților Naționale, 2009), 291.

¹⁶² ANIC, Fond CPCP-DSPC, 16433 (Acte normative privind activitatea de sistematizare), f. 20-27.

Along the critique of the microraiion and modernist planning, the Plenary imposed a new vision of urban development, which emphasized the need to save resources. People's Councils were advised, on the one hand, to avoid demolition of the old housing stock, and on the other hand, to locate new housing developments along the existing streets. In terms of style, architects were urged to combine elements of Romanian traditional architecture with modern trends, and pay attention to the valorization of monuments and historic areas, which would emphasize the specific character of individual cities. In order to apply these ideas to city planning in the shortest time, all urban localities were required to elaborate new systematization plans, as well as systematization details for central areas and large housing ensembles, to be presented for Ceaușescu's personal approval in 1973.¹⁶³ It was precisely the inherent contradictions between redevelopment and preservation contained in these requirements, I argue, which allowed local decision-makers to exploit their meaning, and promote their own agendas while invoking the authority of legislation.

The formulation of the program along the lines noted above was further entrusted to a Governmental Commission subordinate to the Council of Ministers – an interdisciplinary team reuniting architects, sociologists, geographers, engineers, law experts, economists, historians, and bureaucrats representing various ministries. It received a political blessing at the RCP Conference from 1972 and was passed into a law in 1974, becoming the “blueprint for restructuring the economic map of Romania.”¹⁶⁴ The program aimed to promote a harmonious economic development at the national level by arranging all urban and rural localities in a strict hierarchy according to their function¹⁶⁵ and guide

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Ronnas, *Urbanization in Romania*, 60.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 64.

authorities in the allocation of investment. On the one hand, systematization was to fulfill the ideological goal of providing equal living standards for all citizens, while cancelling the differences between city and village. On the other hand, the implementation of the program was conditioned by significant constraints, such as saving on space¹⁶⁶ and energy.¹⁶⁷ A consistent part addressed rural systematization,¹⁶⁸ also motivated by the need to conserve agricultural land.¹⁶⁹

Few critical remarks were officially expressed towards the program. In a discussion in the early 1970s about the urban development of Bucharest, preservationists cautiously reminded planners that architectural heritage included not only listed monuments, and that buildings “with a more modest architecture and less known historical past” reminiscent of the “old [urban] life” should not be overlooked.¹⁷⁰ In the same context, stronger criticism was formulated by sociologist Gheorghe Chepeș, whose main argument stated that systematization had been reduced to economic planning, fully omitting the human factor from the calculations. Moreover, he added, economic planning itself was nothing more than the extrapolation of exiting data about demographic processes, although no evidence would support the premise that urban development would follow a preexisting pattern. Furthermore, Chepeș criticized the modernist districts not on the basis of their

¹⁶⁶ High urban densities were promoted especially due to questions of saving urban land. Interestingly, the models taken into consideration were in particular major cities from Western Germany such as München, Stuttgart, and Frankfurt. Cezar Lăzărescu, ed., *Urbanismul în România* [Urbanism in Romania] (București: Editura Tehnică, 1977), 4.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 3-4, 12-16.

¹⁶⁸ A look from below suggests that rural systematization was comparatively more difficult to implement. Steven Sampson argued that the official requirements could be successfully enforced only to the extent to which local leaders managed to persuade the population. Steven L. Sampson, *National Integration through Socialist Planning. An Anthropological Study of a Romanian New Town* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1984). According to archival sources, Party checks revealed local officials’ inefficiency in implementing the legislation, allowing for the construction of single-floor houses, and disregarding the established limits of built areas. ANIC, CPCP-DSPC, 4849/1975, f. 6, 9.

¹⁶⁹ Ronnas, *Urbanization in Romania*, 64.

¹⁷⁰ Teodoru, “Monumente istorice și de arhitectură din București,” 56.

visual monotony, but for the lack of communal spaces and services. As he showed, the current urban planning strategy had actually produced “dormitory districts” constraining social interaction, while the city center was still preferred for its vivid public spaces.¹⁷¹

The absence of “social centers” in the new districts criticized by Ceaușescu as well, had not yet become a major concern.¹⁷² The head of the state preferred to focus on architectural and urban design aspects. In 1971, at the Conference of the Architects’ Union, he formulated two requirements that would guide urban design in the following two decades: national specificity, and the “return to the street.”¹⁷³ In a paradoxical way, although Ceaușescu’s vision of the ideal urban form was inspired by foreign examples, he advocated it as an expression of national values.¹⁷⁴

Listed among the characteristics that would be enhanced through systematization, the concept of “local specificity” in particular was promoted by Ceaușescu. Incidentally, the notion was central to the postmodernist discourse, opposing the universalism and homogenizing tendencies of the modernist movement.¹⁷⁵ Due to this coincidence, scholars have been tempted to consider Ceaușescu a postmodernist “avant-la-lettre,”¹⁷⁶ connecting it to his nationalistic turn. I argue, however, that the contextualization of the concept in the

¹⁷¹ Gheorghe Chepeș, “Reflecții ale unui sociolog pe marginea sistematizării ca disciplină și acțiune” [The thoughts of a Sociologist on Systematization as Discipline and Action], *Arhitectura* 22.1 (1971): 57-59. The criticism expressed by Chepeș was more broadly directed towards the consequences of ignoring sociology from urban planning studies. He contested quite openly the claims for scientific rationality made by economic planners.

¹⁷² “Cuvântarea tovarășului Nicolae Ceaușescu” [Comrade Nicolae Ceaușescu’s Speech], *Arhitectura* 22.2 (1971): 3, 6.

¹⁷³ See, for example, Ceaușescu’s speech regarding urban planning activity in *Scînteia*, January 28, 1967, and the one delivered at the Third Conference of the Architects’ Union in March 1971, published in *Arhitectura* 20.2 (1971): 3-7.

¹⁷⁴ The idea was further promoted in the architectural discourse as an expression of local traditions: “In our urban tradition, the street represented an element of spatial order – yet this was lost in many cases.” Lăzărescu, ed., *Urbanismul în România*, 5.

¹⁷⁵ See Charles Jencks, *The Language of Postmodern Architecture* (New York: Rizzoli, 1977).

¹⁷⁶ Zahariade, *Arhitectura în proiectul comunist*, 61. Zahariade connects Ceaușescu’s emphasis on local specificity with his “national obsession.”

Romanian case, so closely connected to economic planning, should be understood along different lines. As early as 1953, the State Committee for Architecture had been criticized for prioritizing aesthetic concerns over functionality. It was argued that the elaboration of the systematization plan was a scientific activity that should not be concerned with a particular historical context, but with establishing the economic and socio-cultural profile of every locality.¹⁷⁷ Thus, the 1970s legislation simply restated this basic principle: rather than references to local history, monuments, and a “spirit of the place,” the concept of “local specificity” should be understood in terms of “objective,” functional characteristics, such as the place occupied by the respective locality in the plan of national systematization, the rate of demographic growth, and natural resources.¹⁷⁸ In other words, local specificity was perceived as a function of economic development, which reflected the inequality in investment distribution.

Although built heritage became increasingly part of the systematization discourse, the references were often repetitive, general, and ambiguous. The president of the Architects’ Union until 1971, Pompiliu Macovei, argued for “the importance of protecting, restoring, and valorizing historic monuments, old centers, or districts with a specific character,”¹⁷⁹ while Ceaușescu talked about the need to “revitalize and modernize the built fabric, making realistic proposals [...], which will valorize everything that has to be preserved as historical, cultural, and artistic heritage.”¹⁸⁰ Furthermore, modernist architect

¹⁷⁷ Mărginean, *Ferestre spre furnalul roșu*, 106.

¹⁷⁸ Cornel Bălan, “Estetica arhitecturii contemporane românești și sarcinile privind amprenta proprie, varietatea și specificul local al arhitecturii” [The Aesthetics of Romanian Contemporary Architecture and the Tasks regarding Local Touch, Variety, and Local Architectural Specificity], *Arhitectura* 18.2 (1967): 9.

¹⁷⁹ Pompiliu Macovei, “Raportul Comitetului de conducere al Uniunii Arhitecților” [The Report of the Architects’ Union’ Committee], *Arhitectura* 22.2 (1971): 18.

¹⁸⁰ “Probleme actuale ale arhitecturii și sistematizării” [Current Problems in Architecture and Systematization], *Arhitectura* 20.1 (1971): 6.

Cezar Lăzărescu defined “urban modernization” as “a concentrated action, organized on areas, including monument renovation, sanitation, and new building construction.”¹⁸¹ While speakers agreed that the old should still play a role in the process of building socialist cities, both politicians and practitioners avoided making more specific clarifications. Moreover, no definition of “value” was provided, nor was it specified which actors were entitled to make value judgments and decide on which options would be appropriate in a given context.

Ceaușescu’s feedback to the systematization plans presented to him for evaluation in the summer of 1973 can be characterized as conservative rather than radical, revolving around a coherent set of principles: cohesion and compactness of the built space, preservation of the existing street network, and the saving of resources, including buildings in a good state of preservation.¹⁸² Occasionally, he made suggestions for restoring representative monuments or streets. Far from supporting the razing of the existing built environment, the head of the state actually criticized “unjustified demolition,”¹⁸³ condemning the practice of knocking down buildings without legal approval. He usually recommended the preservation of the existing street network and demanded that the

¹⁸¹ Lăzărescu, ed., *Urbanismul în România*, 5.

¹⁸² Ceaușescu had expressed dissatisfaction with unjustified demolition on other occasions, as well. In one meeting in 1966 with local political leaders, he became enraged with the scale of demolition in Galați, a port on the Danube where a large metallurgical kombinat was under construction: “Why are you demolishing so much? All the existing dwellings here [on the map] should be maintained. Haven’t we already discussed that you would not demolish in this area? These houses are inhabited by people, to whom we have to distribute new accommodation in case of demolition. [...] The city center has all been demolished; you cannot tell me that it has to be reconstructed again. These are individual dwellings, and people can live there very well.” quoted in Stroe, *Locuirea între proiect și decizie politică*, 112.

¹⁸³ ANIC, Fond CPCP- DSPC, 2720/1975, f. 61. The planners in Iași were criticized for the practice of creating protection areas around the main monuments, implying the demolition of surrounding structures: “the proposals of creating parks around every historic monument will be eliminated, with the goal of preserving the existing built environment and avoiding demolition of buildings. In case of necessity, on the exact location of old buildings new constructions will be raised, with the full use of the existing space for building. The existing street network will be maintained.”

buildings be analyzed “one by one” in the area subject to demolition,¹⁸⁴ agreed on restoration of historic building fronts in central areas,¹⁸⁵ and recommended that the compactly built street fronts such as the one in the medieval core of Sibiu be extended to the entire town.¹⁸⁶ Still, it was nowhere suggested that the old should prevail – he rather promoted the integration of new and old architecture (e.g., he recommended infillings in the historic center of Cluj¹⁸⁷), while insisting that the main boulevards should be framed by “high-quality architecture.”¹⁸⁸

Further urban planning regulations were imposed through Law 37/1975,¹⁸⁹ commonly known as “Streets’ Law.” Based on the same principles – saving on land and preservation of (economically) valuable built fabric¹⁹⁰ – the law stated that all new construction would be placed at the limit of the sidewalks, and should be organized around interior courtyards. It also referred to the preservation of monuments that “reflect the historic past of the people.”¹⁹¹ The works of the commission in charge of elaborating the law reveal Ceaușescu’s very strict and narrow views regarding this issue: not only did he insist that the existing street network would be preserved in its entirety, but he imposed

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., f. 2-3, 53. The need to preserve the character of the city and “to demolish only when strictly necessary, and with legal approvals” was emphasized in the case of Brașov. In Târgu-Jiu, demolition should be more carefully considered: “The central area will be analyzed with particular attention, checking on the place house by house in order to preserve and valorize good constructions and integrate them into the new [...] ensembles, avoiding unjustified demolition”.

¹⁸⁵ The restoration of historic buildings in the central area was approved for Brăila (Ibid., f. 17), while in Botoșani “the old town” would be preserved and “harmoniously framed by new constructions with architecture specific to the area” (Ibid., f. 78).

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., f. 63.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., f. 45.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., f. 2-3.

¹⁸⁹ <http://www.lexex.ro/Legea-37-1975-593.aspx> (last accessed January 26, 2016).

¹⁹⁰ Concerns for cost-effectiveness must have played an essential role in this political decision. A similar principle was adopted during postwar reconstruction, since “it was politically easier, and less expensive, to rebuild along existing street and utility lines.” Michele Lamprakos, “The Idea of Historic City,” *Change over Time* 4.1 (2014): 23.

¹⁹¹ ANIC, Fond CPCP-DSPC, 7449/1975, f. 1-40.

drastic restrictions on the development of the road infrastructure. For example, he demanded that cities be crossed by a maximum of one national road, and made the construction of ring roads and new boulevards conditional on a special approval by presidential decree.

Ceașescu's traditionalism breaks out in statements such as "[...] the world did not start or does not end with us. Let's take all that has been done, because in the last 300 years many beautiful construction had been erected and now we want to turn everything upside down." Or: "Nowhere have I seen a different way of thinking than the old one." He clearly expressed his inspiration for the model-city in contrasting the compact and dense fabric of Rome with the "disorganized" appearance of Brasilia.

I have visited lots of cities; I flew twice over Rome with the helicopter. They are building, but not differently from the old system; they are building in a very dense street system, with interior courtyards, which are the most appropriate ones. They would be also good for us. Only the new city of Brasilia appeared as if it would have just been thrown there [de parcă era aruncat], it had no systematization at all.¹⁹²

Although the statement could leave one perplexed, as Brasilia was considered one of the embodiments of modernist planning, it clearly emphasizes Ceașescu's urban visions: he rejected modernist planning and promoted a compactly built urban model, close to Western European (medieval) towns. He arguably had little understanding of the role of urban planning and the evolution of the city, perceiving urban forms as a static rather than dynamic. His insistence on maintaining a street system which was in many cases of premodern origin, while rejecting alternative ideas such as ring roads (probably on economic grounds) raised eyebrows among practitioners – architects and engineers – and arguably prevented the implementation of projects that would have made the cities more

¹⁹² Ibid., f. 2-6v.

efficient.¹⁹³ Faced with such bold statements, few specialists among those invited for consultation dared to voice criticism openly. One exception was the president of the Architects' Union, Cezar Lăzărescu, who argued that it was illogical to preserve at any cost the premodern street network in rapidly developing cities. Also, he cautiously suggested that buildings should be aligned to the street only in central areas, where such a tradition had existed.¹⁹⁴ Most of the officials taking part at these meetings, however, listened to Ceaușescu's "recommendations" and nodded in approval. "We understood why we have been brought in front of you," stated the adjunct of the Minister of Transportation and Telecommunication, Marin Marinoiu. "We understand the tasks we have in front of us. We all agreed before coming here that we will address these tasks in an appropriate way; your indications makes our work much easier."¹⁹⁵

According to Ceaușescu's vision, urban space was not homogeneous. On the contrary, its coherence was given by the multiplicity of visual hierarchies expressed in the differentiated quality of the architecture. The main boulevards and squares were privileged in terms of budget allocation, being entitled to receive architectural brush-up.¹⁹⁶ Not surprisingly then, in last two decades of communist rule the civic center became a high-profile urban design project, invested with strong symbolical meanings. And yet, despite enjoying the firm endorsement of the central power, the implementation of such projects

¹⁹³ Architect Gheorghe Hereș emphasized that, generally, implementing road infrastructure projects was problematic due to the high costs and substantial technological input. However, the promulgation of the law significantly complicated the approval process. In reference to Iași, he mentioned that the third phase of the Union Square project, implying projects of road infrastructure, could not be implemented given the economic restrictions. Interview with architect Gheorghe Hereș, Iași, May 20, 2013.

¹⁹⁴ ANIC, Fond CPCP-DSPC, 7449/1975, f. 41.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., f. 2-6v.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., f. 2. Decree 68/1975 of the State Council regarding the improvement of housing construction.

turned highly problematic.¹⁹⁷ The architectural program in itself seemed relatively uncomplicated, comprising several representative political-administrative and socio-cultural buildings. Nevertheless, probably given their symbolical load, many design projects were surrounded by controversies and debates. In 1973, Ceaușescu expressed dissatisfaction with some of the proposals (e.g., Brașov, Cluj, Sighișoara, Iași, Botoșani) and asked for resubmissions.¹⁹⁸ Architect Alexadru Răuță, who wrote extensively on the topic, emphasized the lack of consensus between politicians and architects, which he interpreted as indicating the weaknesses of the system. Given these disagreements, and the austerity measures of the 1980s, the majority of civic center projects – including the one in Bucharest – were left unfinished.¹⁹⁹

The approach of the 1970s was characterized by a politically prescribed requirement to “return to the street” and design more compact urban forms. Modernist districts, so much praised one decade before, were now considered isolated from the city due to their peripheral location, while the inhabitants preserved an emotional attachment to the old town, which was more adequately provided with places of public sociability. The street was rediscovered as an element of urbanity, in contrast to the modernist blocks surrounded by greenery, which would supposedly give one the sensation of “living on the fields.” Articles published in *Arhitectura* insisted on the role of the street as a structural element of the urban space, creating coherence and favoring social contacts.²⁰⁰ However, the focus on the street did not imply pedestrianization and the creation of a more human-

¹⁹⁷ Alexander Răuță, “The State of Ambiguity of the Communist Civic Center in Three Romanian Secondary Cities: Brăila, Pitești, and Sibiu,” *Journal of Urban History* 39.2 (2013): 235-254.

¹⁹⁸ ANIC, Fond CPCP-DSPC, 4948/1975, f. 39.

¹⁹⁹ Răuță, “The State of Ambiguity of the Communist Civic Center”, 236-252.

²⁰⁰ Essays, sketches and photos regarding the revalorization of the street as a social space were presented as part of a larger article “Strada” [The Street], *Arhitectura* 24.2 (1973): 34-44.

friendly urban environment, but rather the enlargement of existing streets in order to adapt them for car traffic. The five-year plan (1976-1980) established the redevelopment of central areas and the creation of magistrale (avenues) as the main focus of urban planning activities.²⁰¹

In line with the nationalist ideology promoted during Ceaușescu's regime, in 1975 the Architects' Union was required to impose a new direction on the design of housing and socio-cultural buildings, i.e., to find specific ways for creating an "original, specifically Romanian architecture." The new direction was discussed in special meetings with chief architects and members of planning institutes, promoted in architecture institutes and faculties, and in the media.²⁰² Architects experienced difficulties, however, in translating the concept into practice, as the definitions remained vague and inconsistent.²⁰³ Arguably, one solution was to decorate façades with motives of traditional extraction, yet even this simplistic solution was often constrained by the scarcity of available construction materials.²⁰⁴

Although the urban planning legislative framework of the 1970s aimed at limiting demolition,²⁰⁵ the scale of built environment destruction during the decade actually increased.²⁰⁶ The development of the city and the construction of new housing clearly

²⁰¹ Constantin Jugurică, "Mari artere bucureștene" [Large Boulevards in Bucharest], *Arhitectura* 28.6 (1977): 5-7. The reconstruction of the great boulevards was justified using the same slum clearance rhetoric as in the 1950s.

²⁰² ANIC, Fond CPCP- DSPC, 4948/1975, f. 12-16.

²⁰³ Architect Ana-Maria Zahariade stated that the concept was not connected with a critical interpretation of local or regional architectural traditions, but rather with Ceaușescu's "national obsession". Zahariade, *Arhitectura în proiectul comunist*, 61. I argue that it is rather a question of how different architects interpreted the concept, given its ambiguity.

²⁰⁴ Interview with architect Gheorghe Hereș, Iași, May 20, 2013.

²⁰⁵ The percent of demolition for urban localities should have been maintained under 3%. Lăzărescu, ed., *Urbanismul în România*, 34.

²⁰⁶ Preservationist complaint letters and memoirs reported on the alarming scale of the destructions. Dinu Giurescu captured most dramatically the proportions of demolition, writing in 1989: "At this writing the architectural urban fabric of at least 29 Romanian towns has been 85-90 percent demolished and replaced

followed the demands of industry. In 1978, it was estimated that more than 70% of the housing units built during the socialist period had been located in the close proximity of industrial areas or on the main streets leading to them.²⁰⁷

Despite appeals for a more thoughtful approach to building maintenance, local decision-makers saw little benefits in investing in old housing stock. Although central authorities complained about cases of “unjustified demolition,” and observed that “in some new housing ensembles there was no interest for the valorization and integration of existing buildings in a good state,”²⁰⁸ there were few incentives for a different approach. They considered demolition of old buildings as legitimate and let time and neglect do their work – preferring to maintain old buildings in a precarious state of exploitation until they could finally be demolished. The number of trained specialists at the local level remained insufficient throughout the period, with two thirds of the architects remaining concentrated in Bucharest at the beginning of the 1970s.²⁰⁹ In addition, access to basic information was frustrated by the lack of funding – even acquisition of *Architectura* seemed a burden for the Regional Institutes for Urban Design.²¹⁰

1.8. Conclusion

This chapter has documented the shifts in urban visions and policies that characterized the postwar decades in socialist Romania. The vision of radical urban change

by apartment buildings with a completely different urban character. Large scale demolition is underway in an additional 37 towns.” Dinu C. Giurescu, “Foreword” to *The Razing of Romania’s Past*.

²⁰⁷ ANIC, Fond CPCP-DSPC, 4948/1975, f. 18

²⁰⁸ Ibid., f. 43.

²⁰⁹ In 1971, 67% of the total number of architects was still concentrated in Bucharest. Macovei, “Raportul Comitetului de conducere al UA,” 19.

²¹⁰ Interview with Ioan Eugen Man, April 30, 2012 in Târgu-Mureş. The architect confessed that only recently he has read the issues of *Arhitectura* as part of his own research, since previously the Institute had no money for purchasing the journal. Architects worked with what they had in hand.

prescribed by the propaganda in the 1950s was implemented differently in the following three decades, shaped by economic considerations, political decisions, and changing aesthetic visions. While rejecting the interwar anti-modernist urban visions that had proposed low-rise urban settlements as appropriate for the Romanian national character, and criticizing the spatial inequalities of the capitalist city, the communists aimed to restructure the urban fabric through comprehensive planning. Throughout the period, the political view took a more prominent role in prescribing types of interventions in the urban fabric, not only by imposing aesthetic visions, but also by correlating urban and economic planning, and establishing quantifiable indicators for urban redevelopment that had to be followed nation-wide, regardless of the local conditions.

The period can be divided according to two strategies of industrialization and urbanization. The first, lasting until the mid-1960s, was characterized by concentration of investment towards key industrial sites, and a moderate intervention in the transformation of the built fabric. While the micro-raion became the expression of socialist promises for improved living standards, many interventions also occurred in central areas based on the advantages of existing utilities.

During the second period, the beginnings of which coincided with Ceaușescu's coming to power, investment was more evenly distributed throughout the country. This shift of economic policy paralleled Romania's administrative reorganization, and was followed by the rearranging of the institutional infrastructure. In terms of urban development, modernism and the concept of micro-raion fell under waves of political criticism emphasizing the waste of resources arguably produced by the horizontal expansion of the city. The promotion of a different urban model – more compact and with

higher human and built densities – was encouraged as an expression of urbanity. However, many of the urban redevelopment solutions proposed from the center largely disregarded expert opinion, being the expression of a “rudimentary pragmatism” that privileged savings and ignored elementary rules of urban design.

Throughout these decades, the scarcity of resources determined authorities to adopt a type of “preservationist” attitude that officially discouraged demolition and argued for maintaining structural elements of the built fabric, such as the street system. However, as I have argued in this chapter, many of the official recommendations contained contradictions and ambiguities which could be exploited by local authorities interested in devising and implementing their own visions of urban transformation. The difficulty of bringing together ambitious visions and everyday realities implied constant compromises with the ideological goal of comprehensive planning, resulting in fragmented urban landscapes incorporating parts of the old fabric.

The shifts of urban visions and policies are significant for understanding the different approaches to the reshaping of central areas. In the 1950s and the 1960s, interventions in the urban fabric tended to remain modest in scale and contextually integrated within, or at least connected with, existing ensembles. After the administrative reform from 1968 and the beginning of a new wave of industrialization in the early 1970s, municipalities were provided with the financial means for modernizing the inherited fabric and creating new representative ensembles. This vision was personally promoted by Ceaușescu, who emphasized in his speeches the hierarchical organization of urban space, and privileged the center over the periphery.

The rhetoric of urban modernization that considered the inherited urban environment inadequate for the socialist city remained constant, despite opinions that promoted a more sensitive approach. The preservationists tried to exploit the critique of modernism to the benefit of their agenda, while sociologists questioned the scientific basis of demographic prognosis, as well as the static view on urban planning. Nonetheless, the official approach continued to push for redevelopment. Even postmodernist ideas, such as the one promoting “the return to the street” were ultimately interpreted as favorable to radical interventions. In this chapter, I argue that a number of factors determined the approach to urban transformation: the view on urban planning (privileging the needs of industry), the quality and quantity of the human factor (e.g., the scarcity of expertise, inefficient bureaucrats), as well as the numerous (economic) constraints, ranging from scarcity of construction materials, to the absence of incentives for maintenance of old buildings and poor access to specialized technical information. While central directives created a general framework of action, it is fair to assume that the actual implementations of plans ultimately depended on the capacity of decision-makers to balance between different types of pressures, and manipulate the centrally-imposed requirements in order to respond to various local agendas.

CHAPTER TWO. MONUMENTS OF CULTURE: ORGANIZING THE HERITAGE FIELD IN THE 1950s

In 1948, the Commission for Historic Monuments in Romania was disbanded in the process of administrative reorganization of cultural institutions. Apparently, the role of the Commission founded in 1892 was simply overlooked by the new power structures.¹ The situation seemed dramatic for the small, but dedicated body of preservationists who constituted its nucleus, as many of them had worked for decades in the field of monument protection. The dissolution of the Commission also produced significant damage to the body of scientific materials owned by the institution: the library was deprived of its most important volumes, which had been transferred to the Institute of Arts; the specialized publications were divided between the Academy and the Orthodox Patriarchate; the rich collection of images was taken into custody first by the Museum of Traditional Art, and later by the Institute of Arts; the archive was relocated fifteen times in three years, having been poorly preserved in inadequate storage spaces such as basements – and as a consequence, was damaged and partially lost. Additionally, the workforce – both heritage experts and craftsmen specialized in restoration works – had to look for employment elsewhere.²

This chapter analyses the reorganization of monument protection in Romania following the dissolution of the Commission for Historic Monuments in 1948. It shows

¹ Eugenia Greceanu, “Reluarea activității de protecție a monumentelor istorice din România după desființarea în 1949 a Comisiunii Monumentelor Istorice” [Restarting the Activity of Monument Protection in Romania after the Dissolution of the Commission for Historic Monuments in 1949], *Buletinul Comisiei Monumentelor Istorice* 6. 1-2 (1995): 87.

² INP-Academia RPR, Comisia Științifică. Acte și corespondență I, f. 239-40.

that the 1950s were marked by two complementary processes: first, an attempt to re-conceptualize heritage in the postwar context, given both the changes in property regimes and the ideological requirements of the communists, and second, the efforts to institutionalize monument protection as part of the state-building process. In this chapter, I explore the disputes among various expert groups (i.e., historians, architects, architectural historians, archaeologists) for controlling the meaning and management of heritage, as well as the ways in which technical expertise intersected with state and Party bureaucracies in a period when professionals trained in the pre-war period found themselves working alongside the “new men” of the regime. I argue that at the end of the 1950s, the organization of the heritage field within a proper socialist framework failed both institutionally and conceptually, having been undermined by perpetual reconfigurations of power hierarchies, as well as by strong lines of continuity with the activity of the pre-war Commission. The numerous frictions between areas of expertise prevented the establishment of a centralized, unified commission directly subordinated to the Council of Ministers, while the ideological (socialist) connotations of heritage were dropped in favor of a more traditional understanding of the historic monument.

The existing literature on heritage policies in socialist Romania discusses to a very little extent the 1950.³ The decade is usually connected to the legislation passed in 1955, and to the divided institutional landscape. In a relatively recent book, Rodica Antonescu puts the period under the negative sign of “sovietization,” although she initially (and paradoxically) stated the continuity between the activity of the pre-war Commission and the heritage policies of the postwar years. Unfortunately, this argument is dropped in the

³ Cezara Mucenic, “Legislația privind monumentele istorice din România” [The Legislation Regarding Historic Monuments in Romania], *Revista Monumentelor Istorice* 2 (1992): 14.

actual analysis of the topic.⁴ In her doctoral thesis, Emanuela Grama made a first critical attempt of investigating the period. While her analysis largely focused on the case of the Old Court (Curtea Veche) in Bucharest, Grama opens her chapter with a discussion of the role of the Committee for Cultural Establishments in promoting a new vision of state heritage in the early 1950s.⁵ Although Grama nicely captures some of the main characteristics of the period, such as the “blurry institutional landscape” and the conflicts between various areas of expertise, her analysis of the general policies stops in 1952, to focus then on the case study dedicated to the Old Court area.

2.1. Post-war Heritage Policies

The 1950s are usually referred to in literature as the years of “post-war reconstruction”, describing a variety of state policies aimed at recovering after the war. Large scale destructions of the urban fabric were visible in many major cities across Europe, requiring urgent intervention. Depending on local traditions and visions, reconstruction plans varied from the return to a pre-war urban image, through the rebuilding and restoration of historic monuments or townscapes that have been severely damaged, to the tabula rasa approach, meaning the complete erasure of material traces and construction of new buildings following modernist principles of urban planning.⁶

⁴ Rodica Antonescu, *Locuri, ziduri și odore. Concepțiile cu privire la conservarea patrimoniului cultural în România* [Places, Buildings and Religious Objects. Concepts regarding Cultural Heritage Conservation in Romania] (București: Editura Oscar Print, 2010), 246-257.

⁵ Emanuela Grama, *Searching for Heritage, Building Politics: Architecture, Archaeology, and Imageries of Social Order in Romania (1947-2007)* (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2010), 70-78.

⁶ Jeffry M. Diefendorf, *In the Wake of War. The Reconstruction of German Cities after World War II* (Oxford University Press, 1993); Miles Glendinning, *The Conservation Movement. A History of Architectural Preservation. Antiquity to Modern* (London and New-York: Routledge, 2013), 262-284.

Local policy-makers and planners carried to a large extent the responsibility to decide which of these solutions would be adopted. Sometimes, the process involved conflicts over the form of reconstruction, the opinions being divided between modernists and preservationists, or visions from the center and from the periphery. In the case of Sevastopol, local officials rejected a centrally-formulated proposal for a monumental urban design mirroring the 1935 plan of Moscow. Instead, they advocated the return to the architectural forms and the toponymy characteristic to the prewar city.⁷ A classic example of the opposite approach – Rotterdam – was reconstructed along explicitly modernist lines.⁸ In most cases, however, preservationist attitudes and modernizing visions were complementary rather than opposite. The rebuilding of historical structures typically implied use of modern materials, simplified architectural forms and new functions, while the street layout was usually retained for practical reasons, in areas where the sewage systems underneath remained intact.⁹

War destructions played an important role in the reconsideration of built heritage, as part of a discourse about the state and the nation. In Poland, the reconstruction of the Old Town according to a monumentalized and purified mid-eighteenth century city image stood as a symbol for the recovery of a “martyr nation”.¹⁰ Dennis Rodwell identifies two models of “conservative reconstruction” – the Polish one, which focused on replicating prewar structures, and the German one, which sought rather at restoring the major

⁷ Karl D. Qualls, *From Ruins to reconstruction: urban identity in Soviet Sevastopol after World War II* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009).

⁸ Paul van de Laar, “Modernism in European Reconstruction- Policy and its Public Perception: The Image of Rebuilding Rotterdam, 1945-2000”, in Georg Wagner-Kyora, ed., *Wiederaufbau europäischer Städte. Rekonstruktionen, die Moderne und die lokale Identitätspolitik seit 1945/ Rebuilding European Cities. Reconstructions, Modernity and the Local Politics of Identity Construction since 1945* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2014), 202-231.

⁹ Diefendorf, *In the Wake of War*, ch. 4, “The Face of Reconstruction: the Role of Historic Preservation”.

¹⁰ Glendinning, *The Conservation Movement*, 364-367.

monuments, while reconstructing the vernacular in a contextually-sensitive manner.¹¹ In the Soviet Union, new legislation promulgated in 1948 defined historic monuments as “emblems of national identity,”¹² clearly connecting preservationist policies with Soviet patriotism¹³. Significantly, the interest in architectural monuments moved beyond freestanding buildings, to incorporate “monumental groups: cities and settlements or portions thereof that have preserved their historical form or a considerable number of buildings or structures of artistic value”.¹⁴

Spared from bombings and major war destruction, Czechoslovakia stood at the forefront of preservationist efforts in the Eastern Bloc. Experts in Prague not only developed a historical-materialist theory of heritage, drawing on the dialectic of tradition and innovation,¹⁵ but also insisted on the importance of integrating historic districts in the reconstruction of cities during socialism. Architects declared having secured endorsement from the government for establishing “urban historical reserves” in areas which had preserved to a large extent their medieval layout. Modernization of infrastructure and facilities would make such areas attractive living quarters for the masses: “The citizens have to enjoy the historical interiors and the old streets, in which their ancestors have lived.”¹⁶

¹¹ Dennis Rodwell, “Urban Conservation in the 1960s and 1970s: A European Overview,” *Architectural Heritage* 21 (2010): 10.

¹² Jean-Louis Cohen, “Soviet Legal Documents on the Preservation of Monuments,” *Future Anterior* 5 (2008): 63.

¹³ Steven Maddox, *Saving Stalin's Imperial City. Historic Preservation in Leningrad, 1930-1950* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015).

¹⁴ Richard Anderson, “The USSR’s 1948 Instructions for the Identification, Registration, Maintenance, and Restoration of Historical Monuments under State Protection,” *Future Anterior* 5 (2008): 64.

¹⁵ Glendinning, *The Conservation Movement*, 360.

¹⁶ “Cinci ani de restaurare a oraşelor istorice cehoslovace” [Five Years of Historic Town Restoration in Czechoslovakia], *Monumente si muzee* [Monuments and Museums] 1 (1958): 280-283.

Romanian specialists were certainly familiar with these developments; even though international exchanges were to a large extent limited to the countries of the Eastern Bloc. Such activities involved organizing architecture exhibitions abroad,¹⁷ professional exchanges (especially with specialists from Poland and Czechoslovakia),¹⁸ participation in international congresses,¹⁹ and exchange of legislation in the field²⁰. However, while fostering cooperation, these contexts emphasized some of the shortcomings of heritage policies in Romania. A visit of the Czech architect Jaroslav Wagner from September 1957 is significant in this regard. The sample of monuments he visited can be seen as characteristic for what Romanian specialists considered worth of showing off: the former royal castle Peleş, the towns from southern Transylvania (Sibiu, Braşov), the Moldavian monasteries and various examples of traditional peasant architecture. Although impressed by the beauty of the monuments, the Czech guest expressed disappointment towards the lack of interest for monument protection in Romania and the backwardness of the restoration methods used by the Romanian specialists.²¹ The participation in one UNESCO event in the same year showed that Romanian preservationists had remained attached to already consecrated types of heritage, such as the monasteries in Bukovina and eighteenth century Brancovan architecture.²²

¹⁷ INP-Academia, Comisia. Acte şi corespondenţă I, f. 127. Letter from March 29, 1952 from ARLUS – the Romanian Society for the Friendship with the Soviet Union – regarding the organization of the exhibition “The Architecture in the RPR” in Moscow, 1952. The exhibition included a section dedicated to historic monuments.

¹⁸ INP-Academia, Comisia. Rapoarte activitate, Acte şi corespondenţă II, 1955-1959, f. 98 (Poland); INP-Academia, Comisia Rapoarte activitate II, f. 117 (Czechoslovakia).

¹⁹ INP-Academia, Comisia Rapoarte activitate II, f. 144-145.

²⁰ Ibid., f. 330.

²¹ Ibid., f. 156-158.

²² INP-DMI, Procese verbale V, f. 29, 34.

As I will show further, in contrast to this renewed interest in built heritage, and its connection to urban planning, Romanian heritage policies in the 1950s remained still very much attached to processes of nation and state-building. The approach focused on elaborating inventories and legislation for the protection of monuments in order to prevent their further degradation and destruction. By comparison, other states – including some of those from the Eastern Bloc –, had compiled inventories and passed legislations since the late nineteenth century. Not surprisingly, in the absence of a strong tradition in the field, Romanian specialists' efforts remained frustrated by the lack of awareness from state authorities and population at large.

2.2. The Legacy

The institutionalization of preservationist efforts in Romania can be traced back to the mid-nineteenth century. The first law “for the conservation and restoration of public monuments”, crafted after the Italian model, was promulgated in 1892²³. While influenced by European-wide phenomena in which heritage and history were seen as essential elements of self-representation,²⁴ this process naturally reflected the particular conditions of the Romanian state- and nation- building processes. The attempts to define architectural heritage and inscribe it into the national strategy of self-representation became more consistent in the last decade of the nineteenth century, with the foundation of the National

²³ Oliver Velescu, “Preliminariile legii din 1892” [The Preliminaries of the 1892 Legislation], *Revista Monumentelor Istorice* 2 (1992): 7-12. The law was promulgated despite the opposition of the Orthodox Church, who feared that the activity of creating a national patrimony through scientific inventories would spoil churches from their worship objects. ANIC, Fond Academia de Științe Sociale și Politice a RSR, Secția de istorie și arheologie, 1/1964, f. 24, f. 49-50.

²⁴ On the rise of heritage in connection with state- and nation-building in nineteenth century Europe, see Françoise Choay, *The Invention of the Historic Monument* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), Cp. 3 and 4, 82-116; Astrid Swenson, *The Rise of Heritage: Preserving the Past in France, Germany and England* (Cambridge University Press, 2013).

School for Architecture and the emergence of the Romanian national style. For the Romanian architects trained in the West – particularly in France – exploring the sources of national architecture involved the study of medieval monuments and peasant architecture.²⁵

In addition, the emergence of the first institutional structures and piece of legislation was stimulated by the local elites' reaction against the infringement of foreign specialists in imagining Romanian national heritage.²⁶ Substantial criticism addressed the restoration works performed by foreign architects according to the theories of Viollet-le-Duc, as they had largely involved the demolition of existing structures and reconstruction according to an "ideal type". Arguably, such actions have led to the "mutilation" of the nation's most important monuments.²⁷ The debate over the proper principles for monument restoration escalated into a political issue of national importance, having been discussed including in the Deputies' Chamber in 1890.²⁸

The legislation promulgated in 1892 and 1913²⁹ was extended after 1919 to the new territories incorporated at the end of the First World War. Despite the absence of a comprehensive inventory, monuments were defined as all structures of historical and artistic interest built before 1834 – laic, religious and archaeological, in state or private property. The law acknowledged the existence of an expert commission, initially founded

²⁵ Carmen Popescu, *Le style national roumain: construire une nation à travers l'architecture, 1881-1945* (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes; [Bucarest] : Simetria, [2004]), 27-38.

²⁶ Gheorghe Curinschi-Vorona, *Arhitectura, Urbanism, Restaurare* [Architecture, Urbanism, Restoration] (București: Editura Tehnică, 1996), 162-168. Popescu, *Le Style National Roumain*, 68-77. Carmen Popescu emphasized the catalyzing role of architect André Lecomte du Noüy, student of Viollet-le-Duc, in the creation of the Romanian national style. The contested results of his restoration methods fueled debates among local elites regarding the artistic and heritage values of the nation. In her work, Popescu attempted to rehabilitate the figure of Lecomte du Noüy, emphasizing for example the extensive research that constituted the basis of his work.

²⁷ INP- Academia, Comisia. Acte și corespondență I, f. 237. The list included the Old Metropolitan Church in Târgoviște, the church Sf. Dumitru in Craiova, the church Sf. Nicolae Domnesc, the Gothic Room and Trei Ierarhi Monastery in Iași, and the Monastery of Curtea de Argeș.

²⁸ Velescu, "Preliminariile legii din 1892," 11.

²⁹ Grama, *Searching for Heritage*, 63-64.

in 1874, which reunited mainly architects, historians, and archaeologists, appointed either by the Romanian Academy or the Ministry of Religious Cults. The Commission was responsible for approving restoration works and archaeological excavations, compiling lists of historic monuments and publishing studies in the field. In order to increase the professional level of the expert body, scholarships abroad were awarded – especially to Italy – and international exchanges were encouraged. However, the number of members remained modest throughout the period, varying between five and nine. At the local level, the activity was by supported local correspondents.³⁰ Despite the limited resources and capacity of action, this dedicated body of experts spared no effort to gradually create the instruments necessary for a professional approach: a specialized library, an archive, a small museum, a photographic laboratory and a workshop for restoration of old heritage objects.³¹ It is worth mentioning that while subordinated to the Ministry of Cults and Arts, beginning with 1903 the Commission for Historic Monuments in Romania worked in close cooperation with the Orthodox Church (Casa Bisericii)³². This connection was perceived as functionally legitimate, given that the largest share of national built heritage consisted of medieval religious architecture. The Commission's activity focused on research and restoration works, as the institution did not have the institutional and financial capacity to properly insure the management of monuments.³³

During the interwar period, the institutional organization in the field remained sensitive to regional differences. Along the central commission based in Bucharest,

³⁰ Mucenic, "Legislația privind monumentele istorice," 15.

³¹ INP-Academia, Comisia. Acte și corespondență I, f. 238.

³² ANIC, Fond Academia de Științe Sociale și Politice a RSR, Secția de istorie și arheologie, 1/1964, f. 51-52.

³³ Liviu Ștefănescu, "Nicolae Iorga și monumentele istorice" [Nicolae Iorga and Historic Monuments], *Revista Monumentelor Istorice* 2 (1970): 17.

regional committees were founded for each of the territories incorporated at the end of the First World War. This solution facilitated important lines of continuity with the previously existing imperial framework. The members of the Transylvanian section, for example, regardless of nationality, had been trained in Vienna and Budapest, and continued to work with inventories and instruments elaborated during the Austro-Hungarian period.³⁴

Beyond these organizational efforts, the impact of the Commission's activity was constrained by the chronic lack of funding and institutional autonomy, the small number of architects and qualified workers,³⁵ as well as the differences in the understanding of heritage between experts on the one hand, and owners or local communities on the other. The struggles for heritage carried by preservationists in the interwar period reflected the structural characteristics of the Romanian society, still largely rural, and the specific manifestations of the conflicts between tradition and modernity. For example, conflicts arose around the preservation of old wooden churches in rural areas, which the parishes wanted to demolish and replace by new, larger churches to accommodate the entire community.³⁶ This conflict reflected different understandings of heritage: for the villagers, heritage did not necessarily take a tangible form – the functional continuity through the performance of ritual mattered more than the survival of the physical structures, including church buildings. In contrast, the architects' view reflected the Western understanding of heritage in its materiality, and thus advocated the maintenance of the churches themselves as an expression of local past and culture.

³⁴ For an overview of the activity of the Transylvanian Commission, see Ioan Opreș, *Protejarea mărturiilor cultural-artistice din Transilvania și Banat după Marea Unire* [The Protection of Cultural and Artistic Heritage in Transylvania and Banat after the Great Union] (București: Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1988).

³⁵ Ștefănescu, "Nicolae Iorga și monumentele istorice," 16.

³⁶ Ioan Opreș, *Comisiunea Monumentelor Istorice* [The Commission for Historic Monuments] (București: Editura Enciclopedică, 1994), 12-17.

The Commission's focus on religious architecture left comparatively little space for civil architecture. This was not only a question of quantity and quality (i.e., the smaller number of built structures dated before 1834), but also of property regimes. Castles and boyar mansions, potential "candidates" to receive heritage status, were private property. Apparently, the owners' "care" for their properties went as far as denying the access of preservationists, even in the case of buildings considered monuments of national importance. A famous case, recalled by a member of the Commission, concerned Martha Bibescu's refusal to allow interference in the restoration of the eighteenth century Mogoșoaia and Potlogi Palace.³⁷

Preservationists seem to have enjoyed even less authority in towns, as urban regulations were constrained by powerful private interests and property rights. Although the Commission for Historic Monuments pressured municipalities into freeing the area around major monuments from small scale structures, the question was ultimately dropped given the lack of financial means. When asked to expropriate the land around the Cuza Palace in Iași, the municipality had to admit its incapacity to take action, declaring that

taking into account the numerous civil works that have to be done, and which are of urgent necessity for the health of the population, as well as the poverty and shortages we are struggling with, it is impossible for us to pay for the land mentioned above.³⁸

Since municipalities had simply no financial to compensate property owners, the preservationists tried to secure support from more powerful institutions, such as the Orthodox Church.³⁹ Not surprisingly, this lack of authority continued to manifest itself in the immediate post-war period, when requests for stopping demolition of damaged

³⁷ Interview with architect Eugenia Greceanu, Bucharest, October 20, 2012.

³⁸ DJIAN, *Fond Primăria Municipiului Iași 1929-1939*, 281/1939, f. 5.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, f. 15.

buildings without the consultation of the Commission were met with lack of consideration.⁴⁰

2.3. Institutional (dis-)Organization and Areas of Expertise

The instauration of the new political regime was accompanied by processes of institutional reorganization, reflecting power struggles within the Party. As shown by Cristian Vasile, these actions were aimed at infusing a proper ideological line into the cultural field.⁴¹ The void left by the dissolution of the prewar Commission for Historic Monuments was soon to be filled through the establishment of three smaller commissions: one along the Academy, another one part of the State Committee for Architecture and Construction, and a third one as part of the Committee for Culture and Arts.

The Committee for Cultural Establishments⁴² started its activity in 1950, being in charge with cultural propaganda among the masses. Together with libraries and cultural houses, museums occupied an important role in this activity, justifying the connection with the heritage field.⁴³ Already in 1950, the Committee sent circular notes across the country,

⁴⁰ Opreș, *Comisiunea Monumentelor Istorice*, 20.

⁴¹ Cristian Vasile, *Literatura și artele în România comunistă (1948-1953)* [Literature and Arts in Communist Romania (1948-1953)] (București: Humanitas, 2010); idem, *Politicile culturale comuniste în timpul regimului Gheorghiu-Dej* [The Communist Cultural Policies during the Regime of Gheorghiu-Dej] (București: Humanitas, 2011).

⁴² The range of institutions coordinated by Committee for Cultural Establishments included libraries, museums, cultural houses, and reading houses. Interestingly, the Committee was also responsible for the security of ancient and medieval citadels, such as Histria, Dinogetia, Emisala, Troesmis, Capidava, Adamclisi etc. Its organization was regulated through the Decree 501/1950. INP-Academia. Comisia Științifică, *Acte și corespondență I*, f. 118-119.

⁴³ Cristina Diac, "Comitetul pentru Așezăminte Culturale" [The Committee for Cultural Establishments], in Dan Cătănuș, ed., *România, 1945-1989. Enciclopedia regimului comunist* [Romania, 1945-1989. The Encyclopedia of the Communist Regime] (București: Institutul Național pentru Studiul Totalitarismului, 2006), 142-147. The Committee for Cultural Establishments was founded in 1950 through the reorganization of the Department for Cultural Establishments. The change of denomination reflects a different institutional subordination: the Department (Ro: Direcție) was part of a ministry (for Arts), whereas the Commission was an autonomous institution functioning alongside the Council of Ministers. The Committee for Cultural Establishments had under its subordination mass culture institutions, such as libraries and houses of culture. ANIC, Fond CC al PCR, Secția Propagandă și Agitație, 90/1950, f. 1.

reminding the local administrations that the 1919 legislation for monument protection was still valid, and urging for more responsibility in preventing destruction and neglect. In addition, it encouraged the creation of local committees for historic monuments subordinated to local museums, or integrated within the institutional framework of the Cultural Sections of People's Councils.⁴⁴

The Scientific Commission for Museums, Historic and Artistic Monument was established in 1951, following the reorganization of the Romanian Academy. The Scientific Commission was envisioned as a forum reuniting representatives of numerous state institutions with interest and responsibility in the field of heritage, such as the Romanian Academy, the Ministry of Public Education, the Committee for Art, the State Committee for Architecture and Construction, the Committee for Cultural Establishments, and the Department for Religious Cults. It was headed by a president appointed directly by the Council of Ministers, while the members were nominated by each of the institutions mentioned above.⁴⁵

The impact of the Soviet model of institutional organization was obvious in the denomination and structure of the Scientific Commission. An element of novelty in the Romanian context was the creation of a network of museums, which contributed to the development of heritage discourses and practices.⁴⁶ By creating such an umbrella institution reuniting key experts of the heritage field, the government aimed to enforce centralized control over the creation and diffusion of meaning in this domain. The ways in

⁴⁴ Grama, *Searching for Heritage*, 78-79.

⁴⁵ INP-Academia, Comisia Științifică, Acte și corespondență I, f. 88.

⁴⁶ "Regulament de funcționare a Comisiei Științifice a muzeelor și monumentelor istorice și artistice" [The Statute of the Scientific Commission of Museums, Historic and Artistic Monuments], *Monumente si muzee* 1(1958): 283-284.

which heritage objects were managed – surveyed, recorded, collected, conserved, and displayed – represented an integral part in the state’s strategies of self-representation of the state. The task of defining the meaning and creating norms was seen as a specific scientific activity, legitimized through the direct connection with the Academy. In the same time, a division of labor at institutional level was perceived as legitimate – the technical part, consisting in works of conservation and restoration, was entrusted to a specialized workshop within the State Committee for Architecture and Construction.⁴⁷

Despite a formal institutional framework of Soviet extraction, the Scientific Commission functioned around the same nucleus of specialists and promoted an agenda in many ways similar with the one of the interwar commission. Claiming institutional continuity in a period of political repression and infusion of ideological content into every aspect of cultural life appeared as obviously inadequate. However, at least in terms of denomination, using the old name seemed pragmatically more convenient, especially since the president of the Commission gave his blessing: “[...] our commission, which is called the Scientific Commission of Museums, Historic and Artistic Monuments [...] in short, the Commission of Historic Monuments, because the official denomination is longer and more difficult.”⁴⁸

Although the scientific prestige of the commission rested on the technical expertise of its members, the figure of the president – Petre Constantinescu-Iași – represented a guarantee of political allegiance. A historian who had been an active member of the Communist Party since the interwar period,⁴⁹ Constantinescu-Iași was a very

⁴⁷ INP-Academia. Comisia. Rapoarte activitate, Acte și corespondență II, f. 18-19.

⁴⁸ INP-Academia. Comisia. Procese verbale II, f. 5.

⁴⁹ Born in 1892 in Iași, Constantinescu-Iași studied History and taught Theology at the University of Chișinău. He first joined the Social-Democrat Party in 1910, to switch in 1921 to the Romanian Communist

influential personality in the 1950s, occupying numerous key positions in the political and cultural hierarchies of the new regime: he was a member of the Academy, vice-president of the Great National Assembly, vice-president for the Permanent Committee for the Defense of Peace, and, most importantly, president of the Institute for Romanian-Soviet Studies.⁵⁰ Probably because of the many commitments, he performed his presidential duties poorly, and rarely found time to attend the meetings. However, whenever he could be present, he proclaimed his honest commitment for the cause and seemed willing to use his personal connections in order to improve the functioning of the Commission.⁵¹ Well aware that his name alone signified authority, he signed for example a note “of almost two pages long”, which was sent to the People’s Councils as a reminder of the legal obligations in what regards monument protection.⁵² In many interventions, however, Petre Constantinescu-Iași displayed a naïve attitude, although he seemed full of good intentions and yet totally dedicated to the Party. In the middle of a discussion on improving the protection for highly endangered monuments, he claimed the floor for an intervention unrelated to the topic, yet essential in his view:

We have very diverse and unclear problems. One example is the house where comrade Gheorghiu-Dej was born. It was established first, but then comrade Gheorghiu-Dej declared he recalled another house situated on the shores of Bârlad. We still do not know to which house he referred. So this is one problem.⁵³

In practice, the role of president was taken over by dedicated professionals, such as architectural historian Grigore Ionescu,⁵⁴ who even replaced Constantinescu-Iași from

Party. He was several times imprisoned on political grounds starting with 1936. Arhiva CC a PCR, colecția nr. 53, Dosar Petre Constantinescu-Iași, f. 3-5. I thank Grig Moldovan for this reference.

⁵⁰ INP-Academia, Comisia. Acte și corespondență I, f. 107.

⁵¹ INP-Academia, Comisia. Procese verbale II, f. 14.

⁵² Ibid., f. 12.

⁵³ Ibid., f. 36.

⁵⁴ Grigore Ionescu (1904-1993) studied at the Architecture School of Bucharest (1924-29), and was a fellow of the Romanian Academy in Rome (1931-33). Professor of architectural history at the Institute in

1956 until 1958, and Emil Condurachi, the director of the Museum of Antiquities⁵⁵. Grigore Ionescu represented a nucleus of specialists that insured the professional and functional continuity with the former Commission. This group also included architects Horia Teodoru⁵⁶ and Stefan Balș⁵⁷. Both Teodoru and Ionescu were in fact employed by the State Committee for Architecture and Construction, providing a personal connection between the two institutions.⁵⁸ Petre Constantinescu-Iași publicly praised their commitment, emphasizing that they have “carried on voluntary work in the service of monument protection for years, working in difficult conditions, almost without institutional support”.⁵⁹ In fact, the statement could have been probably extrapolated to other members of the Scientific Commission, who also worked on a voluntary basis. The only employees

Bucharest, he is best known authoring *Arhitectura in Romania (1944-69)* [Architecture in Romania (1944-1969)], and *Istoria arhitecturii in Romania* [The History of Architecture in Romania] (2 vol, București: Ed. Academiei RPR, 1963-65)- see Juliana Maxim, *The New, the Old, The Modern- Architecture and its Representation in Socialist Romania (1955-1965)* (PhD diss., MIT, 2006), 105-108. Ionescu started his career as a promising modernist architect and continued to remain faithful to the style as late as 1953 e.g., the Hospital Emilia Irza, Bucharest. His professional reorientation towards architectural history and preservation was interpreted by Juliana Maxim as a form of “retreat”, after modernism was condemned on ideological grounds. Ibid., 108.

⁵⁵ INP-Academia, Comisia. Procese verbale II, f.1-2.

⁵⁶ Architect Horia Teodoru (1894-1976) studied in Paris (École Nationale des Beaux-Arts) and Rome. He was employed by the Technical Service of the Commission for Historic Monuments since 1927. For his biography and professional activity, see <http://horia-teodoru.ro/>, accessed May 11, 2015.

⁵⁷ Stefan Balș (1902-1994) was one of the architects who suffered political detention, being imprisoned in 1955 for hiding in his house one of his cousins, who was searched by the secret police. Balș studied Architecture in Bucharest, followed a two-year training course in monument restoration in Rome, and was employed since 1929 by the Commission for Historic Monuments. INP-Academia, Comisia. Rapoarte activitate, Acte si corespondenta II, f. 33; Vlad Mitric-Ciupe, *Arhitecții români și detenția politică 1944-1964. Între destin concentrațional și vocație profesională* [Romanian Architects and Political Imprisonment 1944-1964. Between Their Destiny in Prison and Professional Vocation] (București: Institutul Național pentru Studiul Totalitarismului, 2013), 369. The archives of the National Institute for Patrimony preserve one letter addressed by his mother, in which she asks for the Commission’s support in clarifying the situation. In reply, C. Moisin, at that time president of the Commission, signed a letter in which he praised Balș for his exceptional work in the service of monument protection and diplomatically demanded his release. “Given the small number of specialists in problems of monument preservation and restoration, his presence has been missed in the activity of our Commission.” INP-Academia, Comisia. Rapoarte activitate, Acte și corespondență II, f. 34.

⁵⁸ INP-Academia, Comisia. Acte și corespondență I, f. 212, 219.

⁵⁹ INP-Academia, Comisia. Procese verbale II, f. 4.

remunerated financially were the secretary Dan Bădăraș,⁶⁰ one typist, and one part-time researcher.⁶¹

A list of the members in 1959 included Petre Constatinescu-Iași, archaeologists Emil Condurachi, M. Petrescu-Dâmbovița, and Constantin Daicoviciu, architect Duiliu Marcu, art historian George Oprescu – all members of the Academy –; Alice Săvulescu (museum curator), Horia Teodoru and Grigore Ionescu (architects, specialists in the history of architecture), Ladislau Bányai (historian), Valer Popovici (historian), Virgil Vătășianu (art historian), Olga Necrasov (anthropologist), Ștefan Balș (architect), and comrade M.C. Bujor (“expert in problems regarding the history of Romanian Workers’ Party”).⁶² The local branches of the Academy in Iași and Cluj occasionally sent representatives to the common meetings in Bucharest.⁶³

The activity of the Commission focused on diminishing the negative impact of building nationalization. Following the decree in 1950, dozens of letters reached the Scientific Commission, reporting on massive destruction of built heritage across the country. Major concerns were raised regarding the former aristocratic residences in rural areas, which had been expropriated and transferred under the administration of the People’s Councils. Left without owners and protection after their expropriation through the Decree

⁶⁰ Dan Bădăraș studied law at the University of Iași (1917), and letters in Paris (1921). He obtained a doctoral degree in Letters and Philosophy from Sorbonne (1925). Starting with 1926 he was lecturer in Logics at the University of Iași, then Professor of Ancient Philosophy until February 21, 1949, when the Faculty was dissolved. Bădăraș was further employed as researcher by the History Institute in Bucharest until 1952. From October 1955, he was appointed as part-time scientific secretary at the Commission. INP-Academia, Comisia. Rapoarte activitate, Acte și corespondență II, f.188-189.

⁶¹ INP-Academia, Comisia. Rapoarte activitate, Acte și corespondență II, f. 3.

⁶² INP-Academia, Comisia. Procese verbale II, doc. fn. p. 44.

⁶³ INP-Academia. Comisia. Acte si corespondență I, f. 36.

92/1950⁶⁴, they became a main target for the villagers in search for available construction materials. Architect Grigore Ionescu was among the few who openly raised this topic, signaling the dimensions of destruction: “The beautiful castles of the great Hungarians landlords – very interesting, with beautiful furniture, of which only the walls have remained – no windows, no floors, no roofs. We have their list. We are complaining [...]”⁶⁵ Taking the example of Mănăstirea, a Transylvanian village situated in the vicinity of Cluj, Ionescu showed that seven houses had been built with stone stolen from the castle. Local administration claimed to have no knowledge of this situation, while justice refused to interfere. Such examples raised considerable outrage among the members of the Commission: “How is it possible”, asked art historian George Oprescu, “that in a civilized country such things occur with no consequences?”⁶⁶

And yet, former aristocratic mansions were no exception. In Braşov, it was reported that the Spreghel Citadel, containing the oldest traces of urban life in the area was being used as a source for construction materials. In this case, the perpetrators were not the local population, but employees of the Ministry of Construction. Unfortunately, in such situations, institutions entitled to defend heritage, such as local museums, remained passive. In spite of the Commission’s protests, the People’s Council did not order the termination of the exploitation works. As a last resort, architect Duiliu Marcu, head of the monument committee within the State Committee for Architecture, made a personal intervention at the General Department for the Affairs of the Council of Ministers, and

⁶⁴ For housing nationalization, see Liviu Chelcea, “Ancestors, Domestic Groups, and the Socialist State: Housing Nationalization and Restitution in Romania,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 45.4 (2003): 714-740.

⁶⁵ INP-Academia, Comisia. Procese verbale II, f. 22.

⁶⁶ Ibid., f. 22-24.

travelled to Braşov, only to acknowledge that “almost nothing could be found left standing”(!!!).⁶⁷ The preservationists expressed outrage towards this utilitarian approach, stating once again that the value of monuments stayed in their historical and cultural importance: “These monuments represent [...] our entire civilization, our culture for several hundred years.”⁶⁸

In order to fight against the destructive effects of the building nationalization law, part of the Commission’s activity focused on creating a minimum of legal instruments to support conservation and restoration. For example, in 1956 Grigore Ionescu initiated a legislative measure meant to provide state credits for the restoration of buildings that had remained in private hands, as owners could not finance conservation and restoration works. He argued that the Bank for Investment was financing new housing construction,⁶⁹ while no similar decree supported building restoration. However, the proposal was declined by the Legal Office of the Academy, who refused to propose the formulation of a Decision of the Council of Ministers (HCM).⁷⁰

Although many members – the most vociferous was art historian George Oprescu – declared their frustration regarding the lack of impact of the Commission’s activity,⁷¹ not many instruments seemed available in order to ensure at least to a minimal degree protection for endangered monuments at the local level. In the absence of funding for qualified personnel, great emphasis was put on recruiting voluntary correspondents,⁷²

⁶⁷ INP-Academia, Comisia. Procese verbale II, f. 29-31.

⁶⁸ Ibid., handwritten letter addressed to Bădărău; f. 5.

⁶⁹ According to the Decision of the Council of Ministers HCM 4015/1953.

⁷⁰ INP-Academia, Comisia. Procese verbale II, f. 1-2.

⁷¹ Oprescu was by far the most critical voice within the Commission. His complaints referred also to the need of quoting Soviet authors, which he found sometimes unjustified, or the low education level of the employees of the Ministry of Culture. INP-Academia, Comisia. Procese verbale II, f. 4-23.

⁷² Ibid., f. 4.

either specialists or amateurs – historians, architects, priests, directors of museums, history teachers, or simply locals with an interest in local history.⁷³ Voluntary correspondents were to act as the Commission’s watchdogs at the local level, signaling cases of monuments at risk.⁷⁴

In addition to officially-appointed correspondents, ordinary people also addressed the Commission, expressing their commitment, interest and expertise in matters related to local history and culture.⁷⁵ Some explained they found out about the Commission from the Party’s daily newspaper *Scântea* [The Sparkle], others intended to publish popularization books on topics regarding local history and monuments, while the majority simply wanted to inform the specialist forum about specific buildings worth of their attention.⁷⁶

While the Scientific Commission was as a forum for theoretical debate and legal action, the technical aspects regarding conservation and restoration were entrusted to the Committee for Historic Monuments within the State Committee for Architecture and Construction.⁷⁷ The creation of an advisory committee for historic monuments within the

⁷³ INP-Academia, Comisia. Rapoarte activitate, Acte și corespondență II, f. 108. Voluntary correspondents are mentioned in 1956 for the following towns: Piatra-Neamt, Cluj, Craiova, Galați, Brăila, Deva, Iași, Câmpulung, Râmnicu-Vâlcea, Târgoviște, Oradea, Arad, Sighișoara, Timișoara. INP- Academia, Comisia. Procese verbale II, f. 1-4.

⁷⁴ Ibid., f. 18. See also Interview with Eugenia Greceanu, Bucharest, October 20, 2012.

⁷⁵ As part of the 1980s heritage debates in Britain, Raphael Samuel argued for the importance of “heritage from below”. He criticized the argument stressing the elitist “invention” of heritage, showing instead the extent to which this field is actually part of popular culture. Raphael Samuel, *Theatres of Memory: Past and Present in Contemporary Culture* (Verso, 1994). The letters received by the Scientific Commission demonstrate a similar engagement with heritage issues from the part of average citizens.

⁷⁶ Walter Horvath from Orașul Stalin (the name under which Brașov was known until 1960), a former engineer, volunteered for the monuments in southern Transylvania, as he was well familiar with “all the fortified churches and ruins of citadels, which I personally measured and surveyed. They were published before the War under the title “Die Dörfer des Burzenlandes” and “Siebenburgisches Sach. Kirchenburger”. INP-Academia, Comisia. Acte și corespondență, vol I, f. 1. Other citizens who addressed the Commission and offered their support were Ioan A. Popescu from Constanța, a former history and geography teacher (Ibid., f. 66), Andrei Verbovsky from Bucharest (INP- Academia, Comisia. Rapoarte activitate, Acte și corespondență II, f. 76), while Aurel I. Gheorghiu, C. Nitzescu-Zlatian and Elena H. Mihăilescu expressed their intention to publish a popularization book about Târgoviște titled *Târgoviște în lumina istoriei* [Târgoviște in the light of history]. INP-Academia, Comisia. Rapoarte activitate II, f. 214.

⁷⁷ For an analysis of the activity of the State Committee for Architecture, see Chapter 1.4.

State Committee for Architecture was legitimized by the importance of built heritage for the architectural profession. The small committee constituted mostly of architects would act as a consulting body in problems of monument conservation and restoration. The list of members included Horia Teodoru, Grigore Ionescu, Ștefan Balș and Duiliu Marcu, who were also members of the Scientific Commission, as well as Richard Lieblich, Gheorghe Curinschi, Ferdinand Fischer, T. Socolescu,⁷⁸ Ion Ghika-Budești, G.M. Cantacuzino and Nicolae Diaconu.⁷⁹

The committee collaborated closely with a workshop specialized in restoration projects, led by architect Ștefan Balș and engineer Radu Udroi. The workshop functioned as part of the Central Institute for Systematization of Towns and Regions –known under the abbreviated from ICSOR in Romanian – an institution part of the State Committee for Architecture. Although one workshop of modest dimensions was insufficient for covering the needs for monument restoration at national level, the Ministry of Construction resisted the proposal to de-centralize its activity and organize regional-level units.⁸⁰ Continuing the pre-war tradition, the Orthodox Church remained one of the main beneficiaries of restoration projects. Despite its ambiguous role within the new regime, the Church could still financially support such projects.⁸¹ Given the workshop's modest number of employees, it appears that the demand surpassed the capacity for project design. During

⁷⁸ PV nr. 35, July 20, 1953, published in *Buletinul Comisiei Monumentelor Istorice* 8. 1-4 (1997): 99.

⁷⁹ INP-DMI, Procese Verbale V, f. 1, 13, 17.

⁸⁰ Eugenia Greceanu, "Procese verbale ale ședințelor de avizare organizate de DGMI din CSAC cu începere din 1952" [Minutes of the Advisory Board Meetings organized by the General Department for Historic Monuments within the State Committee for Architecture and Constructions starting with 1952], *Buletinul Comisiei Monumentelor Istorice* 9. 1-4 (2000): 191.

⁸¹ PV-Protocol, August 14, 1953, published in *Buletinul Comisiei Monumentelor Istorice* 8. 1-4 (1997): 108-110.

the meetings, architect Ștefan Balș even complained that the Department for Religious Cults kept on pressuring for projects which were not included in the plan.⁸²

Although the focus on religious monuments remained constant on the committee's working agenda, the analysis of the meetings shows an increasing interest in civil architecture and the vernacular. However, this interest was sabotaged by disagreements regarding definition of heritage value among professionals and responsible institutions. During discussions for a restoration project at the house of Iancu Jianu in Caracal,⁸³ the Committee for Cultural Establishment argued that the house lacked any memorial or architectural value,

[...] being an architectural monument reconstructed in 1880-1900, out of which only two walls of the cellars are still standing. It was considered historic monument because it had supposedly belonged to Iancu Jianu, without any documents to prove it, only based on information provided by locals, who make such statements also in reference to other buildings from Caracal.”⁸⁴

While agreeing that there was little evidence supporting the hypothesis that the house had indeed belonged to Iancu Jianu, the preservationists within the State Committee for Architecture dismissed the claims regarding lack of architectural value. Instead, they stressed that this house represented *the typical example of Romanian old house in this region* and recommended the initiation of immediate restoration works. Similar restorations projects of “old houses” were carried on in Herești and Pribești,⁸⁵ while requests to demolish old houses in Bucharest were rejected based on similar motivations.⁸⁶

The scarcity of representative examples of non-religious architecture was used as argument also in the case of prominent monuments, such as the Old University in Iași, and

⁸² INP-DMI, Procese verbale V, f. 142.

⁸³ Iancu Jianu (1787-1842) was a Wallachian hajduk born in Caracal.

⁸⁴ PV nr. 37, August 1, 1953, published in *Buletinul Comisiei Monumentelor Istorice* 8: 1-4 (1997): 103.

⁸⁵ PV nr. 38, August 5, 1953, published in *ibid.*, 103-104.

⁸⁶ PV nr. 40, August 12, 1953, published in *ibid.*, 107, house on str. Maria Rosetti no. 9.

the eighteenth-century Habsburg citadel in Timișoara. In both cases, the beneficiaries invoked advanced building dilapidation as reason for demolition. In response, the committee explained that the state of disrepair was due to the lack of maintenance, and argued that both buildings were exceptional examples of civil architecture, and rare examples of their typologies. Instead of spending money on demolition, the committee proposed that the beneficiaries should rather invest the available funding in works of maintenance and restoration.⁸⁷ To be sure, the lack of financial means represented one of the main problems frustrating the activity of the committee. Because of its reduced budget, it could support a small number of restoration projects; in most cases, all that the preservationists could provide was technical advice.

2.4. Definitions, Inventories, and Legislation

Politically-engaged supporters of the preservationist cause, such as the president of the Scientific Commission, Petre Constatinescu-Iași, insisted that the concept of “historic monument” had to be redefined in the new political context. Following the conceptualization used in the Soviet Union building on the theory of historical materialism,⁸⁸ monuments were defined as the material embodiments of culture. In this context, the adjective “historic”, traditionally used in Romania, was perceived as outdated and even restrictive, as it suggested a remote age. The new definition not only shifted the focus from historicity to materiality, but also reflected the need to incorporate within this

⁸⁷ INP- DMI, *Procese verbale* VI, f. 205-207 (Iași) and 225-226 (Timișoara).

⁸⁸ For the Soviet definitions and categorization of monuments, see Anderson, “The USSR’s 1948 Instructions,” 64-72.

category memorial places belonging to recent history – that of the Romanian Communist Party.⁸⁹

Constantinescu-Iași took upon himself the task of redefining heritage in the new ideological framework and signed a programmatic article published in the introduction of the only issue of *Monumente și Muze* [Monuments and Museums], the journal of the Scientific Commission.⁹⁰ The article introduced important ideologically-motivated shifts in the definition of heritage, in that it moved the focus from individual to collective actors, and from beneficiary to producer. These changes of emphasis allowed the appropriation of traditional forms of built heritage, such as churches, palaces and castles. As a result of the nationalization of property, it was argued, heritage objects had been transferred from private into socialist i.e., public property, thus becoming goods belonging to the entire people. In addition, in the socialist society, heritage objects were no longer considered as commodities, as arguably they could no longer be sold. Equally significant was the change of emphasis from beneficiary to producers. In other words, it was no longer important who had owned and used certain objects, but rather who had created them. For example, churches could be deprived of religious connotations, yet still be retained as valuable monuments, as their authorship would be attributed to the broadly defined professional category of “popular masters/ craftsmen”. According to Constantinescu-Iași, the Soviets were setting an example in this regard by restoring the churches built by the tsars. The focus on the producer of heritage objects presents some commonalities with William Morris, who famously argued in the 1880s that the value of old monuments was reflected

⁸⁹ INP-Academia, Comisia. Procese verbale II, f. 3.

⁹⁰ Petre Constantinescu-Iași, “Respect față de monumentele istorice” [Respect Towards Historic Monuments], *Monumente și Muze* 1 (1958): 13-21.

in the labor invested into their creation- a unique craftsmanship which cannot be replicated by modern restoration techniques.⁹¹ Still, unlike Morris, here the focus stayed not on the quality of the craftsmanship produced by the old masters, but on their supposed connection with the masses.

Besides the production of meaning, the Scientific Commission was also entrusted with the task of recording heritage objects. No comprehensive unitary inventory had existed in Romania previously, though surveys had been made at regional level. Although previous inventories in the Kingdom of Romania had focused mostly on religious architecture and church objects, yet the results were now judged as fragmentary and even unscientific.⁹² The situation was substantially different in the territories which had belonged to the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Here, inventories had been already completed before the First World War, and were still in use during the interwar period.⁹³ In addition, in the early 1950s, some local committees for monument protection compiled their own inventories for internal use.⁹⁴

Through the Decision of the Council of Ministers from April 4, 1953, the Scientific Commission was entrusted with the organization of a nation-level inventory.⁹⁵ The rhetoric justifying the necessity of such an endeavor reproduced Soviet heritage

⁹¹ William Morris, *Westminster Abbey*, online at

<https://www.marxists.org/archive/morris/works/1893/west.htm>, accessed March 24, 2015.

⁹² Among the inventories carried on in the Romanian Principalities, the most important were the “statistic description” from 1832, the inventories of monasteries following the secularization measures in the mid-1860s, as well as two lists produced in 1894 and 1904 respectively, which recorded over 600 monuments. The end date took into consideration by the last two inventories, which also included civil architecture, was the end of the eighteenth century. Oliver Velescu, “Evidența monumentelor istorice în țara noastră” [Historic Monuments Recordings in Our Country], in *Sesiunea Științifică a Direcției Monumentelor Istorice, ianuarie 1963* [The Scientific Session of the Department for Historic Monuments, January 1963] (București: Direcția Monumentelor Istorice, 1963), 62-63.

⁹³ Ibid., 63-64.

⁹⁴ INP-Academia, Comisia. Procese verbale II, f. 2.

⁹⁵ INP-Academia, Comisia. Acte si corespondență I, f. 186.

discourses emphasizing both a universalist ethos – in this sense, monuments were defined as the material evidence reflecting the development of human society – and socialist patriotism⁹⁶. Conveniently, it was argued that the socialist state would offer a better framework for monument protection as compared to the “bourgeois regime”. This was due not so much to the ideology, but to the stronger character of the centralized socialist state, owning more mechanisms to control and coordinate policy-making at different administrative levels.⁹⁷ Far from glorifying the socialist state, I argue, these statements actually reflect the preservationists’ strategy of appropriating elements of the official rhetoric in order to serve their own agenda. The context was favorable for initiating a national-level inventory, especially since the Soviet Union had passed legislation in the field in 1948.⁹⁸

The central committee in Bucharest aimed to organize the inventory at various administrative levels. For this purpose, it established a hierarchy of regional and local level committees, and distributed brochures with instructions explaining the methodology of organization. At the local level, the process of monument recording consisted of two steps: the collection of data, performed by experts, followed by a first selection of relevant items by regional-level committees⁹⁹. This strategy was probably motivated not only by the need to organize the inventory more efficiently, but also to involve local authorities in the

⁹⁶ Glendinning, *The Conservation Movement*, 359.

⁹⁷ Academia RPR, Comisia Științifică a Muzeelor, Monumentelor Istorice și Artistice, *Instrucțiuni pentru inventarierea monumentelor culturii materiale din R.P.R.* [Instructions for the Recording of Monuments of Material Culture in the Popular Republic of Romania] (București, 1953), 3-4.

⁹⁸ Anderson, “The USSR’s 1948 Instructions,” 64-72.

⁹⁹ The composition of the regional committees would ideally include the president of the Regional People’s Council, members of the Section for Culture and Arts, a representative of the Department for Statistics, the director of the Regional Museum, delegates of the Academy, historians, teachers, engineers, or architects working for the People’s Council, artists, and delegates of the regional committee for historic monuments.

process and stimulate their responsibility regarding a field they largely ignored. The inventory was scheduled for the month of June 1953.¹⁰⁰

Architect Grigore Ionescu headed the committee that insured the coordination of the project from Bucharest.¹⁰¹ Approximately 20,000 brochures and 150,000 forms were printed and distributed across the country, having been translated into Hungarian for the Hungarian Autonomous Region. The forms for every monument proposed for classification included the name, category, a comprehensive description (dimensions, history, construction materials, state of preservation),¹⁰² but also information regarding use and maintenance.¹⁰³ Monuments were to be classified into five categories: architectural, archaeological, historic, artistic, and historic regarding the illegal activity of the Romanian Communist Party.

The inventory was conducted at the local level between May and June 1953. In order to legitimize the project and inscribe it into the broader strategies of state building, the Party was presented as initiator and promoter of the process. The organizers stated that “the surveys made known to the remotest corner of the country an aspect of the Party’s policy for the valorization of historic monuments”.¹⁰⁴ As the last stage of the process, the lists compiled at the local level were centralized in Bucharest, where the organizing committee selected the monuments that would be listed. Particularly significant is the main criterion that informed the preservationists’ choice. In this regard, the perceived historical and aesthetic importance of the proposals mattered less than the quality of the

¹⁰⁰ Academia RPR, Comisia Științifică, *Instrucțiuni pentru inventarierea monumentelor*, 9-12.

¹⁰¹ INP-Academia. Comisia. Acte și corespondență I, f. 183

¹⁰² Academia RPR, Comisia Științifică, *Instrucțiuni pentru inventarierea monumentelor*, 21.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 22.

¹⁰⁴ Velescu, “Evidența monumentelor,” 65.

documentation provided. In other words, the better prepared the local committee, the higher the chance for their work to be validated by the Bucharest-based experts. As a result, this strategy privileged those areas which already enjoyed a strong tradition and interest in local history. Given the short period left for the documentation, it would have been impossible to start a research from scratch; one had to be already equipped with a bibliography in order to assemble an adequate description.

The ideological argument was invoked as to justify the appeal to local expertise: “For the first time, such lists were compiled by calling the support of the locals and the popular masses.”¹⁰⁵ Later analyses, however, emphasized numerous shortcomings in the entire process. Bucharest-based experts complained that the inventory had largely been the work of school teachers, thus of people with no particular expertise in the heritage field. This conclusion could be easily inferred, since the filled-in forms were full of evident mistakes or blank spaces, while the inventory seemed to focus on quantity rather than quality. The lack of familiarity with basic notions of art history was obvious in that the respondents introduced non-existing architectural styles. For example, a report mentioned the “Gothic-Byzantine style” or “franconian” in reference to buildings which belonged in reality to Baroque. Also, the descriptions were judged as vague or incomplete, as they were using adjectives such as “fair” (Ro: *mediocru*) in reference to the state of conservation, without providing further details.¹⁰⁶

It took one year until the final list was compiled, during which the commission met in weekly sessions to review about 13,000 proposed items. Only one third of the total number were considered backed-up by a solid documentation, so the final list contained a

¹⁰⁵ INP-Academia, Comisia. Rapoarte activitate, Acte și corespondență II, f. 19.

¹⁰⁶ Velescu, “Evidența monumentelor,” 65-66.

number of 4,360 monuments of culture. The largest share (77%) was represented by architectural monuments, the rest being divided between historic (memorials, mausoleums), artistic, archaeological and regarding the history of the Party (0.6%). In addition, the items were divided into two categories according to their relevance for the national, or local history. In this case as well, the quantity and quality of documentation played a significant role in deciding upon categorization.¹⁰⁷

The committee felt compelled to work under constant time pressure, confident that transforming the list into a law was essential in order to insure a legal basis for enforcing the task of monument protection upon the People's Councils. Otherwise, the preservationists considered that the list had only a provisional character, which would be updated to the extent to which more proposed monuments would be adequately documented.¹⁰⁸ In the end, three legal documents were elaborated and promulgated as legislation: a decision regarding the preservation and use of monuments of culture, the statute of the Commission, and the list of monuments of culture.¹⁰⁹

As architect Duiliu Marcu emphasized, an additional motivation for the relatively small number of items included on the official list was that a higher number could have been considered an excessive burden for the government. Given the austerity of the 1950s, it was fair to admit that the available resources had to be directed towards the protection the most representative examples. Expert debates regarding the establishment of heritage value hierarchies turned particularly tense, being sometimes accompanied by a sense of emergency, and even despair. Architect Ștefan Balș claimed that, given the very limited

¹⁰⁷ INP-Academia, Comisia. Acte și corespondență I, f. 311, 320.

¹⁰⁸ INP-Academia, Comisia. Rapoarte activitate, Acte și corespondență II, f. 150-151.

¹⁰⁹ INP-Academia, Comisia. Acte și corespondență I, f. 330-331.

funding available, the focus should be on those monuments which are “unique in the world”, such as the Bukovina monasteries.¹¹⁰ In contrast, Horia Teodoru considered classification as such a discriminatory practice, as it indirectly condemned large number of monuments to total neglect.

The promulgation of new legislation in the field was perceived as an essential step for enforcing institutional responsibility for monument protection. While all monuments of culture were placed under state protection, the People’s Councils and the private owners were made responsible for their safeguarding, preservation, and restoration. The law specified that not only individual structures would be protected, but also a specific area surrounding them.¹¹¹

The inventory reflected the regional differences in the perception of what constitutes a historic monument. Despite its large surface and share of urban population, the list for Bucharest included as little as 126 architectural monuments. In comparison, the city of Cluj in Transylvania had 172 items, most of which were situated within the area of the former medieval fortifications. This implied a house by house listing of entire streets in the city center, showing a clear geographical definition of what constituted the historic center. In the case of Iași, former capital of Moldavia, the list included almost an equal number of churches and monasteries, and major examples of civil architecture such as former aristocratic residences – in total 68 buildings.¹¹²

¹¹⁰ INP-Academia, Comisia. Procese verbale II, f. 2.

¹¹¹ “Hotărâre privind păstrarea și folosirea monumentelor de cultură” [Decision regarding the Preservation and Usage of Monuments of Culture], *Lista Monumentelor de Cultură de pe Teritoriul RPR* [The List of Monuments of Culture on the Territory of the Popular Republic of Romania] (București: Editura Academiei RPR, 1956), v-viii.

¹¹² *Lista Monumentelor de Cultură*, 15-20 (Bucharest), 35-40 (Cluj) and 69-72 (Iași).

2.5. Mismanagement at the Local Level

In spite of the centralization efforts of the 1950s, preservationists in Romania were well aware that implementing monument protection policies depended to a large extent on the benevolence and collaboration of local authorities. Unfortunately, this aspect seemed to represent the key deficiency of the entire heritage management process. Regardless of institutional affiliation, preservationists typically enjoyed very limited authority at the local level. In most cases, their requests were simply ignored or treated with little consideration, although the delegates of the Scientific Commission claimed to represent the most prestigious academic institution of the country, the Academy.¹¹³

Article 7 in the law for the protection of monuments of culture clearly placed the safeguarding, preservation, and restoration of monuments in the responsibility of the People's Councils. This provision was a consequence of building nationalization legislation, which had transferred many historical buildings into state property. Nonetheless, the law itself proved an insufficient instrument, requiring further action for persuading and mobilizing local administration (Ro: "muncă de lămurire").¹¹⁴ Several methods seemed available for raising the awareness of local administration in matters regarding monument protection. On the one hand, the preservationists could appeal to the hierarchical influence of the central institution supervising the activity of the People's Councils, namely the Department for the Affairs of the Council of Ministers.¹¹⁵ On the other hand, they could require the collaboration of local expertise – members of specialized committees for monument protection, museum specialists, history teachers, intellectuals, or amateurs with interest in

¹¹³ INP-Academia, Comisia. Rapoarte activitate, Acte și corespondență II, f. 301 (for Craiova); f. 337-338, 347 (for Oradea).

¹¹⁴ Ibid., f. 20.

¹¹⁵ INP-Academia, Comisia. Acte și corespondență I, f. 229.

the field – in order to penetrate power networks at micro level.¹¹⁶ The Commission also addressed local administrations directly, providing information regarding the different categories of monuments to be protected.¹¹⁷ In addition, in order to reach the masses, the preservationists envisaged the publication of brochures explaining “to every teacher, [and] every worker” the ABC of heritage protection.¹¹⁸

A report from 1955 recorded numerous instances of neglect and destruction, demonstrating the lack of impact of the recently promulgated law for monuments protection on the activity of People’s Councils. Local administrations continued to allocate few financial resources for restoration, favoring monuments of exceptional importance. Even when approved, restoration works would constantly be postponed as other problems seemed more urgent. In many cases, municipalities refused all together to take any responsibility for monument protection and restoration, leaving historical buildings to degradation and ruin. In order to make a case for heritage protection, the Commission sometimes emphasized potential economic advantages, pointing towards the savings that could be obtained through building restoration and repairs.¹¹⁹ However, as Cristian Vasile argued, during the 1950s cultural policies were generally disregarded at the local level, as the employees of Cultural Sections within local administrative structures were being sent to perform more urgent economic tasks, such as propaganda for collectivization.¹²⁰

The protection of major monuments was sometimes at odds with the power structures and the priorities of the new regime. A case in point was the Gothic castle in

¹¹⁶ Ibid., f. 33-34

¹¹⁷ Ibid., f. 43-44.

¹¹⁸ INP-Academia, Comisia. Procese verbale II, f. 16.

¹¹⁹ INP-Academia, Comisia. Rapoarte activitate, Acte si corespondență II, f. 64-66.

¹²⁰ Vasile, *Politicile culturale comuniste*, 48, 93.

Hunedoara, the restoration of which was proposed in the context of the 500 anniversary since the death of Iancu de Hunedoara/ János Hunyádi.¹²¹ The communists had transformed Hunedoara into one of the poles of economic growth in Romania, through the expansion of its existing capacities for heavy industry.¹²² At the question on who would finance such an initiative, the central institute for urban design ICSOR pointed simply towards the Ministry for Metallurgy and Machine Construction, which was the most important administrative and financial institution in Hunedoara. The proposal was resisted by the Ministry of Culture, who argued that the castle should remain under the supervision of the Cultural Section of the People's Council. The issue remained unsolved, in the context in which the deadline for the submission of a new systematization plan for the town was January 1 of the following year. New consultations with all the actors involved, including the Department for Historic Monuments, were ultimately suggested.¹²³ The castle ultimately benefitted from extensive restoration works that lasted over one decade (1956-1965).¹²⁴

Summing up the problems in dealing with local administrations and their unwillingness to support monument preservation, art historian George Oprescu argued that the core of the issue revolved around the central's commission lack of authority: The People's Councils are doing whatever they want. [...] they are the basis of our

¹²¹ Historian Oliver Velescu, a dedicated preservationist and member of the Commission for Historic Monuments, published a monograph of the castle. Oliver Velescu, "Castelul de la Hunedoara" [The Hunedoara Castle] (București: Meridiane, 1961).

¹²² Mara Mărginean, *Ferestre spre furnalul roșu. Urbanism și cotidian în Hunedoara și Călan (1945-1968)* [Windows Towards the Red Furnace. Urban Planning and Everyday Life in Hunedoara and Călan] (Iași: Polirom, 2015).

¹²³ INP-DMI, *Procese verbale V*, f. 52-53.

¹²⁴ "Principalele lucrări de restaurare a monumentelor istorice din Republica Socialistă România" [The Main Historic Monuments Restoration Works in the Socialist Republic of Romania], *Revista Monumentelor Istorice* 1 (1970): 75.

administration. However, the People's Councils are competent in some fields, and absolutely incompetent in others. We talk about art, and art is very delicate.” In his opinion, the lack of authority at the local level could be only counterbalanced through a stronger organization of the central institution: “If we were a serious commission, we would be respected by the People's Councils as well.”¹²⁵

2.6. Proposals of Institutional Reorganization

Despite the commitment of dedicated individuals, the institutional organization in the field of heritage during the 1950s remained highly problematic. While the committee for monuments within the State Committee for Architecture and Construction worked within a stable framework, approving projects and restoring monuments at risk, the functioning of the Scientific Commission was marked by numerous inconveniences. To begin with, despite its prestige, this institution lacked even the most basic tools for its proper functioning, from a permanent office and phone number to paid personnel.¹²⁶ Even the most devoted among the preservationists started to question the results of their efforts. On the back of a paper recording the minutes of one meeting in November 1956, one member wrote: “Nothing has been achieved – although I have reached an agreement with the others. [...] The activity of the [Orthodox] Patriarchate. The People's Councils show us no respect. Is 661¹²⁷ good? One year. A phantom commission.”¹²⁸

¹²⁵ INP-Academia, Comisia. Procese verbale II, f. 10.

¹²⁶ INP-Academia, Comisia. Acte și corespondență I, f. 29, 31.

¹²⁷ Reference to the Decision of the Council of Ministers (HCM) 661/1955, regarding the protection and use of historic monuments.

¹²⁸ INP-Academia, Comisia. Rapoarte activitate, Acte și corespondență II, f. 116.

The disputes for authority between the two institutions – one representing the Academy, the other the State Committee for Architecture and Construction – paradoxically intensified while the legislation was in the process of being promulgated. The division of responsibility among the two institutions meant not only lack of unity in decision-making, but also mutual distrust. The committee within the State Committee for Architecture portrayed itself as the embodiment of expertise and suspected the Academy of authorizing restoration works without consulting the architects.¹²⁹ Fearing a loss in influence, the architects formulated a number of objections regarding the content of the legislative measures to the General Department for the Affairs of the Council of Ministers. Moreover, they even prepared an alternative project. The representatives of the Scientific Commission felt that the architects were being unappreciative for the efforts made, given all the financial and organizational difficulties. After some discussions, the State Committee for Architecture was persuaded to withdraw the project, yet new objections were formulated towards the end of the process. Joint meetings were necessary in order to reach a compromise.¹³⁰

As George Oprescu put it in a meeting of the Scientific Commission, the paradox was that although architects fought so hard to remain the most influential group in deciding about monument protection, they also refused to take full responsibility for the whole group of monuments of culture. If monuments were to be fully entrusted to the State Committee for Architecture, an institution in charge with the whole construction activity, fears were expressed that monuments would represented a negligible quantity and their cultural significance would be disregarded. “I am not sure whether [if the percent of monuments in

¹²⁹ INP-Academia, Comisia. Acte și corespondență I, f. 263.

¹³⁰ Ibid., f. 328-329.

the general category of construction] is 1%, yet this 1% represents our culture. [...] We are a civilized country and we can only demonstrate our civilization in this way.”¹³¹

In order to overcome competing professional ambitions, the solution was to create a unified, stronger institution, following the model of the one that had been dissolved in late 1940s. As archival evidence shows, this idea was discussed several times in the mid-1950s within the Commission¹³²:

As a delegate of the Ministry of Culture, I [Marin Mihalache] made a proposal that I submitted also in a written form to my superiors; I considered that a mistake has been made when the Commission was dissolved in 1949 – the journal stopped being published, the tasks of the Commission were divided among 3-4 departments – which has led to a lack of concern toward our monuments.¹³³

In a diplomatic manner, other preservationists also expressed their wish to establish a continuity with the dissolved commission. According to Grigore Ionescu, Petre Constantinescu-Iași himself had made a proposal in this regard, yet without any visible result. “Nevertheless”, he continued “the government and the institutions above us are well aware of the disastrous situation of monuments. There are many complaints, some of them formulated in written form of even 20 pages long, which show what the former commission was and what happened since there are three commissions.”¹³⁴

The alternative proposal argued for the creation of a unified commission, directly subordinated to the Council of Ministers. The project was compiled at the end of 1957, requiring the creation of a State Committee for Historic Monuments alongside the Council of Ministers. The authors of the project trusted that such a direct subordination would

¹³¹ INP-Academia, Comisia. Procese verbale II, PV nr. 7/ November 12, 1956, f. 6-7. Oprescu was critical towards the involvement of the Orthodox Church “We are a scientific commission and these things should be judged from a scientific perspective.” In contrast, architect Duiliu Marcu supported the cooperation with the Church. INP- Academia, Comisia. Procese verbale II, f. 8.

¹³² INP-Academia, Comisia. Acte și corespondență I, f. 267.

¹³³ INP-Academia, Comisia. Procese verbale II, PV November 12, 1956, f. 2.

¹³⁴ Ibid., f. 14.

insure the necessary authority for the commission, on the model of other state committees, such as the one for architecture and construction. Perhaps surprisingly, this initiative seemed to have benefited from substantial political support. On November 27, 1957, the first secretary of the Political Bureau of the Romanian Workers' Party's Central Committee signed the document agreeing on the replacement of the Scientific Commission by a State Committee that would be part of the Council of Ministers.¹³⁵ Unfortunately, to the despair of Grigore Ionescu, who authored the proposal, the Ministry of Culture sabotaged the project with a contestation.¹³⁶

An improved version of the project was handed in for the Academy's approval on July 22, 1958. It stressed a more efficient organization of the future Commission through the creation of different departments and services: for design, scientific research, control, restoration, as well as specialized library, laboratories and collections.¹³⁷ The project put great emphasis on the division of work between different departments, and specified the necessary number of specialists. For example, the Workshop for the Design of Restoration Projects would employ 16 architects, 6 engineers, 2 archaeologists, and 3 urban planners. It also described methods for raising awareness for monument protection among the People's Councils, and the population at large.¹³⁸

The re-organization of the Scientific Commission was discussed in February 1959 during a meeting at the Council of Ministers. The main disagreement concerned the institutional affiliation of the new commission. Two options were put forward. The first one concerned the creation of a State Committee along the Council of Ministers, as it was

¹³⁵ INP-Academia, Comisia. Procese verbale II, PV November 27, 1957, f. 3.

¹³⁶ Ibid., PV March 22, 1958, f. 1-2.

¹³⁷ Ibid., doc. 166/ July 22, 1958.

¹³⁸ Ibid., doc. fn, P. 37, f. 1-4.

initially suggested. The second one, supported by architect Nicolae Bădescu, proposed an autonomous unit within the Department of Architecture (DAU, the name of the State Committee for Architecture and Construction between 1957 and 1959). Petre Constantinescu-Iași defended the first option, arguing that heritage was a complex field that could not be properly managed by architects alone:

I understand [that] he [Bădescu] defends his own interests, but they do not entirely represent the general interest. [...] it is necessary to create a central, unified committee. [...] The architects of comrade Bădescu are necessary, but they cannot deal with problems of art, archaeology, history, Party history, art history, and even history of architecture.¹³⁹

He also added that a new commission with the necessary authority and expertise could be created without great spending.¹⁴⁰

Architect Bădescu advanced his counter-proposal in the context of the re-organization of the Department for Architecture as State Committee for Construction, Architecture, and Systematization. Bădescu agreed that scientific research in the heritage field required an interdisciplinary approach of historians, archaeologists, art historians, architects and other specialists. Still, he insisted that practical and technical knowledge were more important than research, which could be done by architects as well. Bădescu's argument stressed quantity, as architectural monuments represented the greatest bulk of protected structures listed as monuments of culture. Furthermore, he added that international congresses on restoration were attended mostly by architects. Bădescu did not exclude the possibility of having an interdisciplinary consultative forum, or even a specialist research institute employing historians, art historians, and archaeologists; however, this had to remain part of the institution he was leading. More importantly, he

¹³⁹ INP- Academia, Comisia. Rapoarte activitate, Acte și corespondență II, f. 288-289.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., f. 290.

emphasized the economic and practical advantages of this solution: the committee for architecture was already a functioning institution, which could insure all the necessary services (e.g., accounting, legal), enjoyed good working relationships with local administration, while a new institution would have had to create all these instruments and struggle for authority.¹⁴¹

Despite the efforts of Constantinescu-Iași, Bădescu's solution was accepted as more convenient and eventually implemented. On August 21, 1959, the Presidium of the Academy informed that the tasks of the Scientific Commission have passed entirely to the State Committee for Architecture, Construction and Systematization.¹⁴²

2.7. Conclusion

This chapter has shown that heritage policies in 1950s Romania were marked by important institutional and conceptual continuities with the previous period, as well as by new challenges brought by the post-war political context. After the dissolution of the interwar Commission in a blurry political context, dedicated preservationists aimed to reactivate the institution by inscribing it into the framework of the socialist state. To this purpose, monument preservation was conveniently presented as emulating the Soviet model, both in terms of conceptualization and institutional organization. However, the efforts to reorganize the heritage field within the new state building framework were frustrated by institutional divisions, conflicts between professionals and areas of expertise, the never-ending scarcity, as well as lack of awareness from the part of local administration and population at large. The scale of neglect and destruction caused by nationalization of

¹⁴¹ INP- Academia, Comisia. Procese verbale II, doc. fn. p. 42, f. 1-3.

¹⁴² INP- Academia, Comisia. Rapoarte activitate, Acte si corespondenta II, f. 350.

property forced professionals to leave their “ivory tower” and face the realities on the ground. Architectural heritage was no longer conceptualized only in terms of the most representative examples of ancient and medieval architecture testifying about the history of the nation, shifting instead towards incorporating vernacular architecture and urban heritage. More importantly, heritage specialists understood that monument protection was dependent upon the support provided by local administration and ordinary citizens.

Unfortunately, the practical instruments for a change of approach seem to be lacking for the time being. Arguably, the legislation, inventories and a centralized commission could represent the proper tools facilitating the implementation of state preservation policies. As this chapter has shown, the project of creating a unified commission failed despite the political support it enjoyed, while the recording of heritage objects could be considered only a partial success given the deficient expertise at the local level. Overall, the impact of heritage policies in 1950s Romania remained questionable. The connection with the people, so much emphasized in the propagandistic texts of Constantinescu-Iași, was promoted out of necessity rather than choice, while the specialists relied on their expertise and political connections in the struggle for protecting heritage objects from the masses that had theoretically produced them, and the local administrations that were supposed to insure their safeguarding.

CHAPTER THREE. HISTORIC TOWNS: RE-CONCEPTUALIZING URBAN AND ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE IN THE 1960s AND 1970s

In October 1966, the Architects' Union organized a debate regarding the systematization of historic centers, based on a series of recently-drawn studies elaborated for a number of towns in Romania. The meeting was probably initiated by architect Virgil Bilciurescu, former head of the Department for Historic Monuments and co-author of the plans, with the purpose of inserting the historic center question on the national urban planning agenda. In order to emphasize the connection between preservation and planning, the event was hosted by the Union's Urban Planning Section, headed by modernist architect Cezar Lăzărescu.¹ A broader context made the discussion of this topic imperative. On the one hand, the echo of the Venice Charter and other similar international developments had brought into attention the heritage value of historic towns, along with the contestation of post-war modernism. On the other hand, the rapid pace of industrialization in Romania, with its implied population growth, posed increasing pressures on the redevelopment of the inherited built fabric, questioning the survival of historic districts within growing industrial cities. As it will be showed further in this chapter, the meeting was essential for the conceptualization of the historic town in Romania. While it restated traditional regional differentiations in terms of urban heritage, it also signaled the potential of research for redefining the value of old districts. Still,

¹ Virgil Bilciurescu, "În dezbateri: sistematizarea și reconstrucția zonei centrale ale orașelor," [Under Debate: The Systematization and Reconstruction of Urban Central Areas], *Arhitectura* 17.6 (1966): 46-48.

modernist architects saw little benefit in preservation, and questioned the economic logic behind the idea of re-functionalizing old buildings.

The ideas advanced in the 1966 debate represented the main contentious topics in discussions over preservation and planning during the following decade. This chapter will trace the story of the “historic town” in the Romanian context during the 1960s and 1970s, and address the following questions: How was the concept “adapted” to the specificities of the Romanian urban landscape? To what extent were projects and policies regarding the historic town influenced by legislative measures and changing institutional structures? Which strategies did the preservationists adopt in order to engage in urban redevelopment projects for historic districts? Drawing in particular on sources documenting the activity of the Department for Historic Monuments (hereinafter the DHM), I argue that the struggles over the historic city in socialist Romania were shaped by the entanglement of two types of factors. In terms of conceptualization, the tension between the value of the individual building and that of the ensemble was never quite solved. Arguments regarding the lack of architectural unity, poor quality construction materials and low scale could always be invoked in order to contest the preservation of the whole fabric. More importantly, in terms of devising and implementing policies, the preservationists’ commitment was hindered by the failure to develop the legislative and institutional framework allowing them to express with more authority the need of integrating planning and preservation.

3.1. Historic Towns and Historical Legacies

In the debate organized by the Architects' Union in 1966, the contextualization of historic town concept in the Romanian case brought to light the persistence of regional legacies of urban development, reflected in a differentiation between two typological categories.



Fig. 3.1. The central area of Braşov
Source: *Arhitectura* 17.6 (1966): 53.

The first one included the “towns with very valuable monuments in an established architectural style, and a housing stock in a relatively good state of maintenance”. This category basically referred to the exclusivist group of Transylvanian towns founded by the Saxon colonists in the thirteenth century, including examples such as Braşov (Kronstadt/Brassó²), Mediaş (Mediasch/ Megyes), Sighişoara (Schäßburg/ Segesvár), Bistriţa (Bistritz/ Beszterce). Enclosed by fortifications, these towns had developed according to the geometrical logic of the plan and had retained, along the centuries, a consistent part of their medieval structures. The second category regarded “towns in which

² For Transylvanian towns, I added between parentheses the German and Hungarian names.

historic monuments, very valuable in themselves, are enclosed into a more recently constituted built environment, which does not display any particular interest from the point of view of architecture or built value. These structures do not fulfill adequately to the necessities of contemporary life.” Examples from this category included Târgoviște, Iași, Suceava, ironically some of the oldest towns from Moldavia and Wallachia, former capitals of the corresponding medieval states.³



Fig. 3.2. The central area of Pitești.
Source: *Arhitectura* 17.6 (1966): 51.

This perception had been shared by numerous members of the intellectual milieu in interwar Romania. The long-time president of the Commission for Historic Monuments, historian Nicolae Iorga wrote that “Between Bucharest [on the one hand] and Brașov, and especially Sibiu (Hermannstadt/ Nagyszeben) and Sighișoara [on the other hand], there is an essential distinction that we will never be able to remove.”⁴ A similar typological differentiation had been formulated by Cincinat Sfîntescu,⁵ one of the few experts of

³ Bilciurescu, “În dezbatere: sistematizarea și reconstrucția zonei centrale ale orașelor”.

⁴ Nicolae Iorga, “Cum au fost și cum trebuie să fie Bucureștii” [How Bucharest Was and How It Should Be], in Andrei Pippidi, ed., *București. Istorie și urbanism* [Bucharest. History and Urbanism] (Iași: Domino, 2002), 45.

⁵ Trained in Bucharest as an engineer, Cincinat Sfîntescu (1887-1955) followed specialization courses in urban planning in Berlin before the First World War, and took particular interest in the garden town movement. During the interwar period, his professional activity was divided between the Municipality of Bucharest, where he served as head of the Planning Service, then director of the Public Works Department, and his teaching career at the Superior School of Architecture, where he was in charge with the course on Urbanism and Public Works. He published extensively on urban planning and participated in numerous

urbanism in interwar Romania. Interested in promoting the virtues of urban planning in a country which had little traditions in the field,⁶ Sfințescu argued that urban monuments should not be approached as individual architectural objects, but integrated into the general goals of urban systematization. Certainly, the Romanian context presented many problematic aspects. Apart from the poor development of both fields – preservation⁷ and urban planning – , additional difficulties were posed by property rights over historic buildings, as well as the inability of poorly-funded municipalities to finance expropriation for public utility. In suggesting solutions for reconciling the structure of historic towns with the imperatives of the modern city in the case of Romania, Sfințescu differentiated between two main typologies: “compact towns enclosed within defensive walls, currently constituting the central part of the contemporary city” (e.g., Brașov, Sibiu, Timișoara), and somewhat ambiguously defined “towns with an irregular and diffuse development up to the present” (with no examples provided).⁸ Sfințescu’s categorization implied that historical legacies mattered, and that the value of the old town was directly connected to its visibility, historicity, and monumentality. For the first group of towns, he recommended the separation of the old town from the more recent outlying districts by a ring road, which would not only improve traffic, but also signal the concentration of particular historic,

international congresses in the field. A recent project initiated by Andreea Udrea at the University of Architecture in Bucharest aims to recuperate Sfințescu legacy, largely ignored after the Second World War. <http://www.sfintescu.ro/en/cincinat-sfintescu/> (accessed August 27, 2016).

⁶ Until 1926, no legal provisions made compulsory for towns in Romania to have a master plan. Previous legislation had concerned only streets alignment. The laws for the organization of local administration (1926, 1929) required the elaboration of master plans, yet had a limited impact given the lack of expertise, the weakness of municipalities and scarce financial resources. Cincinat Sfințescu, *Urbanistica generală* [General Notions of Urban Planning] (București, 1933), 733-747.

⁷ He mentioned in particular the exclusive focus on restoration works of major monuments and the absence of an inventory of historic monuments.

⁸ See Cincinat Sfințescu, “Congresul Internațional pentru Locuințe și Amenajarea Orașelor” [The International Congress for Housing and Urban Design], *Monitorul Uniunea Orașelor din România* [The Journal of the Cities’ Union in Romania] 6. 10-12 (1929): 3-28.

artistic and architectural values. The fabric of the inner town would be then sanitized through the demolition of decrepit buildings lacking historical and architectural value. In what concerns the second group, traffic could be rationalized through the opening of new streets, cutting on land with lower construction densities.⁹ This approach, he argued, would have spared from demolition potentially valuable buildings situated on the old streets, while also being more cost-effective, as it implied the expropriation of poorer and less densely built areas.¹⁰ As a concession to preservation, Sfințescu suggested maintaining some of the streets characteristic for their picturesque qualities.¹¹

This perception shared throughout the decades by different generations of architects, planners and intellectuals reflected a differentiation in the value of the urban and architectural heritage in Romania, largely following the regional divisions existing until 1918. Romania was a state incorporating regions with different urban traditions, as Moldavia and Wallachia had long been under Ottoman control, while Transylvania had been part of the Habsburg Empire.¹² Unlike Transylvanian towns, the historical core of

⁹ This solution was adopted in late nineteenth century Bucharest. See Nicolae Lascu, *Bulevarde bucureștene până la al doilea război mondial* [Bucharest's Boulevards until the Second World War] (București: Simetria, 2011). This approach was the opposite of the type of intervention proposed by Ceaușescu through "The Streets' Law" (1975), which focused on widening existing streets and thus condemned to demolition the buildings bordering them.

¹⁰ The poor financial resources for expropriation at the disposal of Bucharest Municipality influenced the drawing of the plan for street alignment. "Knowing that any piece of land which is out of the alignment must be paid by the Municipality, the streets' width and the corrections of the routes have been reduced to minimum [...]." This 'pragmatic reasoning' would explain why most streets were never quite straightened, preserving instead their pre-modern pattern. T. A. Rădulescu, "Despre aplicarea serviciilor de retragere la sistematizarea orașelor" [On Applying Concepts of Street Alignment in Urban Systematization], *Monitorul Uniunii Orașelor* 6. 3-6 (1929): 16.

¹¹ See also Nicolae Lascu, "Urbanistica și valoarea patrimoniului construit în primele decenii ale secolului 20" [Urban Planning and the Value of Built Heritage in the First Decades of the Twentieth Century], *Arhitectura* 34.3 (1983): 41-46. Lascu argued that Sfințescu's approach to the preservation of old towns did not fully exclude the heritage value of old districts in towns in Moldova and Wallachia.

¹² Jiri Musil, "Notes on Central Europe from a Sociological Perspective," *Central European Journal of Public Policy* 1.1 (2007): 17. The existence of a single legal and institutional framework within the Austro-Hungarian Empire favored the construction of public buildings similar in style. In what concerns the Ottoman Empire, a critical analysis is complicated by the Western perceptions. To European travelers, Balkan cities appeared as messy and dirty, ugly and incoherent, with a deficient infrastructure and

which had been planned and delimited by medieval walls,¹³ the towns in Moldavia and Wallachia – called “târguri” (market towns) – had developed organically without the constraints of fortifications, specifically forbidden by the Ottomans.¹⁴ Their historical core consisted mainly of churches, palaces, houses in a style mixing the local vernacular with neo-classicist influences, as well as low-rise late nineteenth century buildings with commercial ground floor displayed in an irregular street network. The historicity of the old town was obscured not only by the relative newness of the build fabric, but also by the scarcity of visual and written sources documenting the appearance of the pre-modern town. Moreover, stereotypical views describing these towns as “large villages” with a chaotic development were still present in the historiography of the 1960s.¹⁵ According to the

anachronistic functions. See Bozidar Jezernik, “Western Perception of Turkish Towns in the Balkans,” *Urban History* 25. 2 (1998): 211-230; Vilma Hastalouglu-Martinidis, “City Form and National Identity: Urban Designs in 19th Century Greece,” *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 13.1 (1995):103. The towns in Wallachia and Moldavia were situated at the periphery of this space and constituted a slightly different case, since no mosques or other specific Ottoman buildings had been constructed on their territory. However, similar stereotypes circulated in their case, as well.

¹³ See Irina Băldescu, *Transylvania medievală. Topografie și norme juridice ale cetăților. Sibiu, Bistrița, Brașov, Cluj* [Medieval Transylvania. Topography and Legal Norms of the Citadels Sibiu, Bistrița, Brașov, Cluj] (București: Simetria, 2012). The appreciation of Transylvanian medieval cities combines the vision of Marxist historians, for whom feudalism was essential in the historical development towards the socialist society, with the traditional views on heritage, who treasured medieval monuments in particular. For the connection between feudalism and heritage in 1960s Romania, see Emanuela Grama, “Letters, Plans and Walls: Architects and Archaeologists in 1960s Bucharest,” *Anthropology of East Europe Review* 27. 2 (2009): 56-67.

¹⁴ Laurențiu Rădvan discussed the differences between the traditional definitions of medieval towns and the specificity of the “târg” type, which lacked privileges, a clear-cut layout, and fortification walls. A similar typology of market-towns can also be found in Serbia and Hungary. For the specificity of medieval urbanization in Moldavia and Wallachia, see the excellent comparative analysis provided in Laurențiu Rădvan, *At Europe's Borders. Medieval Towns in the Romanian Principalities* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 1-6, 132-161 (for Wallachia), and 361-381 (for Moldavia).

¹⁵ Critical observations regarding this aspect have been formulated already in the early 1980s by Eugenia Greceanu. Eugenia Greceanu, *Ansamblul urban medieval Botoșani* [The Urban Medieval Ensemble in Botoșani] (Muzeul Național de Istorie București, 1981), 118-119, fn. 7. One quotation referring to the early 19th century is perhaps relevant: “The chaos and caprice that determined the configuration of our towns was the expression of the arbitrary decisions of the ruling class, inconsiderate towards the citizens.” Andrei Oțetea, David Prodan, M. Berza, *Istoria României* [The History of Romania], vol. 3 (București: Ed. Academiei RSR, 1964), 679. The main problem with this argument was, besides oversimplification, the fact that it overlapped the critique of urban inequality and underdevelopment, with an assumed lack of historical value of the built fabric.

perception of politicians and planners alike, such cityscapes embodied “the difficult legacy of the past” and had to be reshaped, since the relatively low housing densities, the “ill-regulated” street network, as well as the precarious condition of most of the housing stock were seen as incongruent with the modernizing goals of the regime.¹⁶

In the mid-1960s as well, the first category of historic towns was regarded as embodying a kind of local specificity worth preserving.¹⁷ Although the housing stock was considered substandard by modern criteria, the living conditions could be improved through the introduction of amenities, combined with other measures of sanitation and restoration of valuable architectural elements. Significantly, the preservationists argued that such measures would not only improve the image of the city and attract tourists, but would be also cost-effective. Contrary to what was argued at the time in the GDR, namely that the construction of prefabricated blocks would cost less than the restoration of old tenements,¹⁸ Bilciurescu’s calculations indicated the rehabilitation of the built stock as being two to three times less expensive.¹⁹ The towns in the second category, however,

¹⁶ A series of articles published in *Arhitectura* discussed this topic in reference to various case studies across the country. For a summary of the main theoretical arguments, see Marcel Locar and Titu Evolveanu, “Reconstrucția socialistă a orașelor din Republica Populară Română” [The Socialist Reconstruction of Cities in the People’s Republic of Romania], *Arhitectura* 10.2 (1959): 5-7. Criticism of the exiting built environment framed in the “heavy legacy of the past” rhetoric was a leitmotiv in every socialist country. Florian Urban notes that in the case of East Berlin, this was identified with the 19th century “narrow, dark tenement quarters”. The author is making a valid point by emphasizing that cultural resentments against the old regime were presented under a functionalist form. Florian Urban, *Neo-historical East Berlin: Architecture and Urban Design in the German Democratic Republic 1970-1990* (Farnham, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2009), 39-40.

¹⁷ Interview with architect Eugenia Greceanu, Bucharest, October 20, 2012. The Department for Historic Monuments’ approach to historic cities was based on regional traditions. The towns in Transylvania were considered worthy of preservation given their structure - fortified walls, solid build environment and “a logic” of their layout.

¹⁸ Point of view expressed by architect Richard Paulick. Miles Glendinning, *The Conservation Movement: A History of Architectural Preservation; Antiquity to Modern* (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), 379.

¹⁹ Although one can assume the existence of significant differences between the construction industry in Romania and the GDR, as well as in the qualities of the old built stock, I would argue that simply stating such an argument is in this case important.

demanded a firm intervention from planners, largely aimed at creating a clear urban composition and emphasizing valuable monuments. While the largest part of the existing built fabric would be gradually replaced, the preservationists recommended saving “characteristic” segments of old streets for the picturesque qualities.²⁰

Modernist architects fully disregarded such compromise solutions. Cezar Lăzărescu’s proposal for the city center of Pitești in southern Romania implied the erasure of all existing buildings, with the exception of one church. The radicalism of the reconstruction plans did not rely on a theoretical articulation of the city center, but was rather motivated by the pragmatic need of constructing two representative buildings i.e., the new headquarters for the Regional Committee of the Romanian Communist Party, and the House of Culture, framed within an adequate architectural space consisting of office and commercial spaces.²¹ As Lăzărescu explained, the old town character could be suggested by the low scale of the new buildings.²²

As a footnote to the discussion clearly cutting between regions and urban typologies, Bilciurescu presented a project for the Old Court area in Târgoviște, former medieval capital of Wallachia. Contrary to the view ascribing little value to the built fabric of the market-towns, he stated that, following on-site examination, other areas apart from the medieval ruins would be worth of preserving, as well, i.e., the nineteenth century commercial center (târg), and a residential district remarkable through its “garden-town” character. More generally, Bilciurescu implied that research opened the possibility to

²⁰ Bilciurescu, “Sistematizarea centrelor istorice,” 46-49.

²¹ By contrast, the studies made by Bilciurescu’s team proposed the construction of the new city center at a certain distance from the old one, which would remain essentially a touristic attraction.

²² Cezar Lăzărescu, “Studiu pentru sistematizarea zonei centrale a orașului Pitești” [Study for the Systematization of the Central Area of Pitești], *Arhitectura* 17.6 (1966): 50-51.

reconsider the value of historic areas. Furthermore, he declared, “not rare were the moments when we were surprised by unimagined beauties hidden in buildings that at the first sight looked totally uninteresting and even displeasing.”²³ Nevertheless, further discussions showed that architects in the audience were caught somewhere between functionalist concerns and lack of directions, questioning for example whether old buildings were still adequate for modern living²⁴ and complaining that the concept of the city center itself had hardly been addressed in specialized debates.²⁵

The contexts described above suggest the persistence of an intellectual tradition inspired by Western models, which perceived the historic town as having a compact form delimited by medieval walls, a well-articulated street network with continuous built fronts, and monumental or at least steady buildings ideally displaying a coherent architectural style. The towns fitting this description could be conveniently preserved, while the others, although containing some elements of the picturesque, could not be considered as truly “historical”.²⁶ At the same time, the focus on the historic city offered the opportunity to reconsider long-held stereotypes. The project on Târgoviște showed that changing values, combined with the attentive examination of the built fabric could offer alternative

²³ Virgil Bilciurescu, “Studii pentru sistematizarea centrelor istorice ale orașelor Brașov, Sibiu, Sebeș-Alba, Târgoviște” [Studies for the Systematization of the Central Areas in Brașov, Sibiu, Sebeș-Alba and Târgoviște], *Arhitectura* 17.6 (1966): 52-63.

²⁴ P.H. Ionescu, “Putem reda unor construcții vechi funcțiunea de locuire?” [Can We Return the Housing Function for Old Buildings?], *Arhitectura* 17.6 (1966): 68.

²⁵ Dinu Vernescu, “Centrul să cuprindă în primul rând dotări” [The City Center Should Include Public Facilities], *Arhitectura* 17.6 (1966): 70-71. He criticized the tendency of using centrally-located areas for housing rather than services and office space.

²⁶ The same typological differentiation was promoted including by Grigore Ionescu in an article arguing for the revitalization of historic towns. As he clearly stated, the towns in Moldavia and Wallachia were characterized by spontaneous development, low densities, and a higher density of constructions limited to central areas, whereas in Transylvania urban centers are similar to a Western model, having a compact form, unitary architecture and clearly delimited by fortifications. Grigore Ionescu, “Necesitatea sistematizării și restaurării centrelor istorice” [The Necessity of Systematizing and Civilizing Historic Centers], *Buletinul Monumentelor Istorice* 1 (1970), 37-40.

arguments for preservation. Nonetheless, as Lăzărescu's proposal seemed to indicate, there was more at stake than just arguing for the value of the old town. The civic center,²⁷ a strongly politically-endorsed project, was also competing for centrality. Although at that point still vaguely defined in terms of functionality and structure, the civic center was envisaged as a representative space for the regime, providing the planners with a legitimate argument for the reshaping of the old urban fabric.

3.2. Organizing Experts and Expertise

3.2.1. The Institutional Organization of the DHM

In 1959, in the context of the reorganization of the State Committee for Construction, Architecture and Systematization, the Department for Historic Monuments was reconfigured under the leadership of Bilciurescu, the same architect who later initiated the 1966 debate.²⁸ Still preserving its traditional focus on the restoration of high-profile monuments, the department was divided into three sections: research, project design and project execution.²⁹ In its new formula, the institution brought together architects which had been promoters of interwar modernism such as Paul Emil Miclescu, Grigore Ionescu, Horia Teodoru, and Richard Bordenache³⁰ and young professionals (e.g., Eugenia Greceanu, Ioana Grigorescu).

²⁷ On the development of the civic center concept in Romania, see Alexandru Rauță, "Civic Centers under Ceaușescu's Rule. The Failure to Articulate a Professional Discourse," *Printed in Red. Architectural Writings during Communism* 1 (2013):105-119.

²⁸ From the point of view of the institutional hierarchy, a Department (Ro: Direcție) was a subordinate organism, part of a State Committee.

²⁹ INP-DMI, Procese verbale VIII, f. 262. Of great importance for the efficient organization and quality of restoration works was the integration within the institutional framework of DHM of a specialized workshop for execution, led by engineers Victor Munteanu, which had formerly functioned as part of ICSOR.

³⁰ Grama, *Impenetrable Plans and Porous Expertise: Building a Socialist Bucharest, Reconstructing its Past (1953-1968)* (EUI Working Papers, Max Weber Programme 2012/23), 8.

The advisory board of the DHM played an essential role in the institution's activity, as it was in charge with discussing and approving restoration or urban design projects involving listed monuments. Initially designed for discussing methodological aspects connected to restoration projects, the scope of the advisory board broadened as operations of urban systematization started to focus on the reshaping of historical areas. With a composition that varied along the years, it included mainly architects (e.g., Ion Balș, Stefan Balș, Paul Emil Miculescu, Ioana Grigorescu, Nicolae Diaconu, Bordenache, Laurențiu Vasilescu, Grigore Ionescu, Horia Teodoru), art historians (e.g., Emil Lăzărescu from the Institute for Art History), and archaeologists (e.g., Nicolae Pușcasu).³¹ Between 1959 and 1971, the institution was headed by architects: Bilciurescu (until 1964)³², Ionescu³³ and Bordenache (1967-1971)³⁴.

Until the dissolution of the State Committee for Architecture in 1969, the DHM remained an integral part of the institution, employing mainly architects. The practitioners who worked for the DHM during this decade describe it as a period of professional engagement and stability, partially overlapping the years of political liberalization.³⁵ On the one hand, the State Committee for Architecture was a technocratic institution providing a favorable work environment for architects. The preservationists could cooperate with the

³¹ INP-DMI, Procese verbale XI, PV nr. 1/ January 23, 1968, f. 1; INP-DMI, Procese verbale IX, PV nr. 6/ July 18, 1966, Decizia 2; INP-DMI, Procese verbale XII, PV nr. 1/ January 23, 1970, f. 1; INP-DMI, Procese verbale XIV, PV nr. 1/ February 24, 1971, f. 1.

³² INP-DMI, Procese verbale VIII, f. 262. Bilciurescu was transferred at ICSOR, the Central Institute for the Design of Cities and Regions.

³³ Although reluctant, Ionescu accepted in the end a half-position at Bădescu's request. INP-DMI, Procese verbale VII, f. 261.

³⁴ INP-DMI, Procese verbale X, PV nr. 1/ January 4, 1967, f. 1.

³⁵ Eugenia Greceanu, "Anii '60, 'epoca de aur' a activității Direcției Monumentelor Istorice sub tutela Comitetului de Stat pentru Construcții, Arhitectură și Sistemizare" [The 1960s, the 'Golden Age' in the Activity of the Department for Historic Monuments, under the Supervision of the State Committee for Constructions, Architecture and Systematization], *Arhitect Design* 9-10 (1998): 38-43.

Committee's institutional apparatus, and make use of the influence it enjoyed at central and local level. Since all urban design projects had to receive the approval of the State Committee for Architecture, potential conflicts between preservation and modernization could be more easily managed as "internal" issues. The strong support provided by architect Nicolae Bădescu,³⁶ the head of the institution, was also crucial, as he used his personal influence to back up the DHM initiatives in many instances.³⁷

In order to supervise local policies and counter-balance the institution's centralized character, the heads of the DHM appointed some of its employees as regional delegates. This compromise solution functioned only to a limited extent, depending on the local context and the delegate's individual engagement. However, the low number of specialists and their unequal distribution throughout the country weakened the efficiency of the approach. For example, there was just one person responsible for the entire Moldavia region, whereas in Transylvania there was one delegate per each three administrative units (regions).³⁸ According to Eugenia Greceanu, who also served as a DHM delegate in the 1960s, this division reflected the appreciation enjoyed by the region within the State Committee for Architecture, as it contained the largest share of monuments at national level.³⁹ While the DHM expected to be informed of the problems encountered at the local level, it offered no guidelines or consistent institutional support; every delegate was given the freedom to design his/ her own strategy for interacting with local authorities. In addition, the expertise networks supposedly facilitating the work of DHM delegates were

³⁶ See chapter 1.4.

³⁷ Interview with Eugenia Greceanu, Bucharest, October 20, 2012. Case studies discussed in this thesis, such as Casa Dosoftei in Iași, confirm this involvement. See Chapter 5.6.

³⁸ Greceanu, "Anii '60, "epoca de aur" a activității Direcției Monumentelor Istorice," 43, fn. 7.

³⁹ Interview with architect Eugenia Greceanu, Bucharest, October 20, 2012

sometimes dysfunctional. The collaboration with specialized institutions such as museums, or even with the research institutes of the Academy was hindered either by conflicts over expertise⁴⁰, or the absence of trained experts at the local level.⁴¹ In the end, success or failure depended on a mix of power and expertise, and the capacity to build a network of actors that would facilitate the negotiation process with local decision-makers.

3.2.2. Complaints, Shortcomings, and Failed Proposals of Institutional Reorganization

Despite the stability of the institutional framework, or perhaps precisely due to it, the question of reorganizing the DHM as a distinct expert body still stood on the table during the 1960s. The proposals were advanced and negotiated in particular by the representatives of the State Committee for Architecture and those of the Romanian Academy. As archival documents reveal, while the main actors agreed on the necessity of strengthening the authority of the proposed new institution, their opinions diverged over questions of division of power and influence. In other words, rather than designing the new institution as an autonomous body of expertise, the heads of the two above-mentioned institutions tried to subordinate it to their own ends. A discussion from the first half of the 1960s between the president of the Academy, Ilie Murgulescu and a representative of the State Committee for Architecture (perhaps Bădescu), suggests that two versions were taken into consideration: either a Commission for Historic Monuments under the subordination of the State Committee for Architecture, with one of the two vice-presidents being

⁴⁰ There were constant conflicts with the Institute for Archaeology in what regards the situation of archaeologists. Should the DHM hire its own specialists or collaborate with the Institute? To any extent, the director of the Institute insisted to clarify questions of institutional subordination, insisting that the archaeologists would be responsible in front of him and not the DHM. The director Radu Vulpe was reluctant accept a collaboration in the first place, stating that “the Institute of Archaeology does not make research for other institutions.” INP-DMI, Proceșe verbale VII, f. 90.

⁴¹ Eugenia Greceanu mentions the example of the museum in Brașov. Interview with architect Eugenia Greceanu, Bucharest, October 20, 2012.

appointed by the Academy, or alternatively, a commission within the Academy, with a restoration works unit coordinated by architects. While competing for power and influence, the actors involved in the design process faced difficulties in bringing under one roof two aspects which were actually complementary to the heritage field: research and management. While the Academy claimed the monopoly over scientific knowledge production, the architects presented themselves as the only professional body mastering the technical expertise necessary for the conservation and restoration of monuments.⁴²

Power contestation was entangled with questions of expertise. Other expert groups excluded from the discussion, such as art historians, voiced their dissatisfactions. One unsigned report produced probably by an art historian (perhaps Corina Nicolescu)⁴³ openly contested the architects' monopoly on the field. While focusing exclusively on questions of expertise and institutional organization, and avoiding any ideological references- either to the nation, or to Marxism, the main argument of the report stated that heritage was a complex field requiring an interdisciplinary approach rather than the exclusive input of the architects. Restoration works often included the treatment of paintings or other forms of decoration, which required the collaboration of other areas of expertise. In terms of institutional organization, the report contested the subordination of the DHM to a "technical" organism such as the State Committee for Architecture, arguing instead that questions of monument protection should be supervised by the Ministry of Culture. Such an institutional subordination, the report stressed, was arguably commonplace not only in countries with a strong tradition in the field, such as Italy, but

⁴² Arhivele Naționale Istorice Centrale București (hereinafter ANIC), Fond Academia de Științe Sociale și Politice a RSR, Secția de Istorie și arheologie, 1/1964, f. 6-7 (handwritten note)

⁴³ Ibid., f. 85-152.

also in the socialist states such as Czechoslovakia and Poland. In addition, the architects' work was criticized for an almost exclusive focus on building restoration, leaving aside questions of conservation, and research. Heritage-preservation and management should be seen as a cultural rather than technical activity, closely integrated with museums, the report concluded.

In order to address these problems, the author of the report advocated the creation of a new institution, tentatively called the Council of Monuments and Museums, functioning as part of the State Committee for Culture and Arts (the closest equivalent of the Ministry of Culture⁴⁴). The Council would represent an interdisciplinary forum approaching heritage as a complex field, thus dealing with the identification, research, conservation, restoration, display and management of heritage objects. Many other aspects were identified as essential for strengthening the field and bringing it closer to the masses: raising public awareness on monuments through visual propaganda (e.g., documentary films) or publications, training museum specialists, facilitating access to specialized foreign publications, popularize Romanian monuments abroad through exhibitions and similar cultural events. Last, but not least, it stressed the need of compiling a new monument inventory made on scientific basis by trained specialists i.e., architects, museum specialists, with the support of photographers and visual artists. The Polish, Czech and Hungarian cases were mentioned as positive examples to be followed, suggesting that

⁴⁴ The Ministry for Arts and Information was divided in the early 1950s, according to the Soviet institutional model, into various committees. They were reunited as a Ministry of Culture in 1953 and reorganized as Ministry of Education and Culture in 1957. In 1962, it was again divided among the Ministry of Education, and the State Committee for Culture and Arts. Cristian Vasile, *Politicile culturale comuniste în timpul regimului Gheorghiu-Dej* [The Communist Cultural Policies during the Regime of Gheorghiu-Dej] (București: Humanitas, 2011), 37-45.

Romanian specialists looked into this direction for inspiration rather than the Soviet Union or the West.

A concrete proposal for the organization of an autonomous, unified commission was advanced again in 1965, under the form of a National Commission for Historic Monuments along the Council of Ministers.⁴⁵ The direct subordination to the most important decision-making body in the state's institutional hierarchy would have offered not only the prospects of increased authority, but would have made this institution into the equivalent of a ministry. According to a document elaborated by the Section for Art and Science of the Central Committee of the Romanian Workers' Party, the project enjoyed political support, being based on a proposal that had already received the approval of the Political Bureau in 1957. The models proposed by the Romanian specialists – Czechoslovakia and Poland – were meant to indicate that new, complex and culturally-sensitive heritage policies could be successfully accommodated by socialist states.

The proposal restated many previously-voiced drawbacks: the division of the heritage field between different bureaucratic agencies,⁴⁶ little concern for research, and the focus on prestigious monuments, combined with the comparative neglect of other complementary aspects (e.g., painting and applied arts). An institution with central authority and prestige was necessary in order to coordinate different levels of research, restoration, popularization and use of historic monuments. The restoration activity of the DHM should not be discontinued, but rather completed by the creation of similar

⁴⁵ Vasile, "Proiecte de reorganizare a Direcției Monumentelor Istorice în 1960" [Reorganization Projects of the Department of Historic Monuments in the 1960s], *Studii și Cercetări de istoria artei. Artă plastică* [Studies and Research in Art History. Visual Arts] 3 (2013): 151-155.

⁴⁶ Among the ones enumerated: The Academy, the Department of Religious Cults, the People's Councils and even the Ministry of Armed Forces.

workshops specialized in the conservation and restoration of various types of artifacts such as paintings, textiles, silverware, and ceramics. The Commission would also be in charge with the completion of the inventory, as well as the revision of the legislative framework adopted in the mid-1950s.

However, merging expertise and political power seemed pragmatically challenging. In order to increase authority and institutional responsibility at different (central, regional and local) levels, the initiators of the project aimed at bringing together as many influential actors as possible. As a result, they imagined the Commission as a heterogeneous mixture of political decision-makers and experts, reuniting the representatives of central institutions such as the Academy, the Central Committee for Architecture and that for Culture and Arts, as well as the presidents of People's Councils.⁴⁷ The latter were probably included in order to make sure that the decisions are properly transmitted and implemented at the local level. The extent to which such a commission would have worked in practice is highly questionable, simply because it would have been difficult to reunite all these persons for the meetings.⁴⁸

Although it never came close to being implemented, the proposal is significant for at least two reasons. First, it shows that despite the consensus over the necessity of institutionally reorganizing the heritage field, the permanent disputes between various

⁴⁷ The heterogeneous composition of the Commission would include three vice-presidents i.e. the president of the Academy, of the State Committee for Architecture and the State Committee for Culture and Arts, and 24-26 members: the presidents of the People's Councils from different regions (e.g., Dobrogea, Hunedoara, Cluj), representatives of the Institutes within the Academy (Archaeology, Art History, History), the head of the Institute for Architecture, delegates of the National Office for Tourism, Department of Religious Cults, the Superior Political Council of the Army, the Writers' Union, the Artists' Union, the Union of Communist Youth. The "executive" part would be insured by a small organism reuniting trained specialists, while local committees would be organized along the People's Councils.

⁴⁸ Vasile, "Proiecte de reorganizare a DMI", 153-155. Extras din ANIC, Fond CC al PCR, Secția Secția Propagandă și Agitație, 7/ 1965, f. 29-33.

expert groups seriously complicated the issue. Second, the division of power was contested at various levels: political versus expertise, centralization versus de-centralization. Although the proposed institutional form suggested a centralized state apparatus, it would also rely on the support of the local leaders. The appeal to the highest bureaucratic structures (e.g., the Council of Ministers, the presidents of the People's Councils) also suggests distrust that lower-level bureaucratic structures would be just as efficient. Finally, the organizational structure reinforced the idea of experts as privileged advisors of political leaders. The experts trusted that they could make their voices heard if only they could get close enough to the political power.⁴⁹

3.2.3. The DHM after the Dissolution of the State Committee for Architecture

The dissolution of the State Committee for Architecture in 1969 had strong repercussions upon the organization of the DHM. According to the new bureaucratic scheme, the DHM was transferred to the State Committee for Culture and Arts, led by architect Pompiliu Macovei.⁵⁰ Although this transfer could be interpreted as fulfilling a previously-expressed aspiration, that of “returning” monument protection under the subordination of a cultural agency, the choice was motivated precisely by the architects’ wish to remain under the leadership of an architect. Moreover, Macovei⁵¹ himself declared

⁴⁹ The same argument emerged from the research of Maria Raluca Popa on 1980s Bucharest. As she writes, “from the beginning until the end of the socialist period, many architects clung to the conviction that as long as the arguments were sound and the specialists convincing, party officials would listen.” Maria Raluca Popa, “Understanding the urban past: the transformation of Bucharest in the late socialist period”, in Richard Rodger and Joanna Herbert, eds., *Testimonies of the City. Identity, Community and Change in a Contemporary Urban World* (Aldershot, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007), 168.

⁵⁰ Decree 674/ 1969 (art.5) of the State Council regarding the establishment of measures for supervision, coordination and control in the field of constructions, architecture and systematization. It became the Law no. 54/1969. <http://www.lege-online.ro/lr-DECRET-674-1969-%2827649%29.html> (last accessed on August 27, 2016).

⁵¹ Pompiliu Macovei (1911-2008) was trained at the Architecture Institute in Bucharest. A Party member since 1945, Macovei was chief-architect of Bucharest (1952), and president of the State Committee for Culture and Arts (1965-1971). He also had a diplomatic career. Florica Dobre, ed., *Membrii CC ai PCR (1945-1989). Dicționar*. [Members of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party (1945-

his commitment to the need of expanding the role of the DHM, for the creation of a Commission for Historic Monuments as part of the institution he was leading.⁵² The alternative would have been the integration into the State Committee for Local Administration and Economy, with a profile seen as too distant from the heritage field.⁵³

The institutional reorganization did take place just several months later, yet under a different form than the one envisioned by Macovei. In September 1971, the State Committee for Culture and Art was transformed into the Council of Socialist Culture and Education, a denomination emphasizing a clear ideological direction in the management of cultural activity, strictly subordinated to Party directives. Macovei and his collaborators were removed, following criticism for having led the institution as a purely bureaucratic organism, without adequate attention being paid to infusing sufficient ideological and political content into the cultural and artistic life.⁵⁴ As part of this newly-created structure, the denomination of the DHM was slightly modified, becoming the Department for Historic and Artistic Monuments. The change was symbolic for the growing importance of art historians as an expert group within the heritage field, clearly marked through the

1989). A Dictionary] (București: Editura Enciclopedică, 2004), 369. In 1945, Macovei was part of the pro-communist group of students in the Architecture Institute, who was involved in the persecution of fellow students and professors labelled as “class enemies”. Architect Mihai Enescu recalled how Macovei had personally evacuated his family from their house. Vlad Mitric-Ciupe, *Arhitecți români și detenția politică. Între destin concentraționar și vocație profesională* [Romanian Architects and Political Detention. Between Their Destiny in Prison and Professional Vocation] (București: Institutul Național pentru Studiul Totalitarismului, 2013), 24.

⁵² INP-DMI, Procese verbale XIV, PV nr. 4/ April 22, 1971, f. 1.

⁵³ Eugenia Greceanu, “Reluarea activității de protecție a monumentelor istorice din România după desființarea în 1949 a Comisiunii Monumentelor Istorice” [Restarting the Monument Protection Activity in Romania after the Dissolution of the Commission for Historic Monuments in 1949], *Buletinul Comisiei Monumentelor Istorice* 6. 1-2 (1995): 88, fn. 7.

⁵⁴ The emergence of the Committee for Culture and Socialist Education followed the so-called “July theses”, in fact a speech held by Ceaușescu on July 6, 1971, through which he required a stricter political and ideological control over the cultural and scientific activity. For an analysis of the institution, see Adelina Ștefan, “Consiliul Culturii și Educației Socialiste” [The Council for Socialist Culture and Education], in Dan Cătănuș, ed., *România (1945-1989)* (București, Institutul pentru Studiul Totalitarismului, 2012), 155-160.

nomination of art historian Vasile Drăguț⁵⁵ as the head of the reorganized institution. Already in 1970, in the page of the newly published *Revista Monumentelor Istorice* [The Historic Monuments Review], Drăguț had personally voiced a number of criticisms against the two decades during which architects “had hold the monopoly on monuments”. He complained that “in an uninspired manner the question of architectural monuments has been separated from its normal cultural and artistic context, and left to *constructors and urban planners*” (my emphasis)⁵⁶ Given theses permanent tensions, it is perhaps not surprising that instead of the long-expected inter-disciplinarity, the change resulted in conflicts between various professional groups competing for influence. The architects in particular perceived the change as subverting not only their power, but also as harmful to the professional level and prestige of the institution itself.⁵⁷

3.3. The Book: Gheorghe Curinschi on *Historic City Centers* (1967)⁵⁸

Attempts to conceptualize the historic town reflected divergent positions expressed by Romanian preservationists. Although several experts published articles on the topic, the only one who undertook the task of providing a comprehensive picture on the Romanian context was architect Gheorghe Curinschi. Born in Bessarabia and educated in Bucharest, since his graduation in 1949 Curinschi started to teach architectural history alongside Grigore Ionescu. In parallel with his academic career within the Institute for

⁵⁵ INP-DMI, Procese verbale XIV, PV nr. 1/ February 24, 1971, f. 1.

⁵⁶ The word “architect” is purposefully replaced with “constructor”, suggesting at most some technical expertise. Vasile Drăguț, “Muzeele și monumentele” [Museums and Monuments], *Revista Monumentelor Istorice* [The Historic Monuments Review] 2 (1970): 51.

⁵⁷ Interview with architect Eugenia Greceanu, Bucharest, October 19, 2013.

⁵⁸ Gheorghe Curinschi, *Centrele istorice ale orașelor* [Historic City Centers] (București: Ed. Tehnică, 1967).

Architecture, he was also employed by the DHM, serving as technical director of the institution between 1963 and 1968.⁵⁹ Curinschi established a reputation of politically-engaged professional after he published a series of articles on monument protection in the 1950s, in which he emphasized the Russian influence on the development of Romanian architecture.⁶⁰ Always in the shadow of architectural historian Grigore Ionescu,⁶¹ he attended in 1964 the signing of the Venice Charter, together with his mentor and Richard Bordenache.⁶² Probably under the influence of the discussions in Venice, Curinschi published a book in which addressed one of the key aspects discussed during the conference, namely the historic center.

Richly illustrated with drawings and plans, the volume summarizes the Romanian experience quite thoroughly, by addressing a variety of case studies across the country.⁶³ Although not particularly remarkable in terms of originality, the volume is nevertheless relevant precisely because it captures the pragmatism of the period. Despite being an

⁵⁹ In his biography, Curinschi wrote that he was the first doctoral student of the Institute, defending his thesis titled “The Renaissance Architecture in Transylvania” in 1958. He followed a training in Italy (1961) and travelled extensively in Italy, the Balkans, Western Europe, but also in Asia and China. Biography signed by Curinschi and dated July 1977, published by Iurie Coslenic, “Gheorghe Curinschi-Vorona- un mare istoric al arhitecturii” [Gheorghe Curinschi-Vorona- a Great Historian of Architecture], *Basarabeni în lume* (Chişinău, 2007), vol III, 12-31.

⁶⁰ G. Kurinski, “Lupta poporului pentru independență împotriva robiei turcești, oglindită în arhitectura epocii lui Ștefan cel Mare și Petru Rareș” [The People’s Fight for Independence against the Turkish Domination, Reflected in the Architecture of the Ștefan cel Mare and Petru Rareș Period], *Arhitectura și urbanism* 3.4-5 (1952): 37-43; Gh. Curinschi, “Cu privire la originile arhitecturii monumentale românești” [Regarding the Origins of Romanian Monumental Architecture], *Arhitectura* 7.9 (1956): 28-34. He was also involved in the reorganization of the Institute for Architecture, criticizing its previous “bourgeois” structures. Yura Kurinski, “Un an de muncă pe tărâmul reformei învățământului arhitecturii” [One Year of Work for Reforming the Teaching of Architecture], *Revistele Tehnice AGIR. S. Arhitectură și Construcții civile* 3.4 (1949): 208.

⁶¹ Interview with architect Eugenia Greceanu, Bucharest, October 19, 2013.

⁶² A picture representing the three architects in Venice was published in Gheorghe Curinschi-Vorona, *Arhitectură, urbanism, restaurare* [Architecture, Urbanism, Restoration] (București, Editura Tehnică, 1996), 4.

⁶³ Eugenia Greceanu suggested that many of the case studies were actually projects of his students. Although this information is difficult to be checked in the absence of the original studies, the author rarely makes references to his sources. Occasionally, the authors of specific urban design projects are mentioned in the text.

architectural historian working for the Department of Historic Monuments, Curinschi defended in many cases contemporary radical interventions in the historic built fabric, and argued for a careful selection of old structures worthy of preservation.

Curinschi imagined his book as a methodological guide for approaching the ‘preservation versus modernization’ dilemma in the Romanian towns subjected to a rapid process of industrialization. While acknowledging the imperative of change, Curinschi was also careful to mention that destruction of heritage can result from a poor understanding of the complex problems involved.⁶⁴ At the moment when the book was published, radical interventions in centrally-located historical districts were under way in a number of towns (e.g., Suceava, Craiova, Pitești), without particular concern for the potential loss of heritage value of these areas. As the chief architect of Craiova Teodor Coheci stated elsewhere, such reconstruction projects had been pursued without preliminary professional discussions regarding the conceptualization of the city center.⁶⁵ Areas for redevelopment had been rather chosen pragmatically, based on the advantages of existing infrastructure. In this context, Curinschi’s book could potentially serve as an attempt to address this deficiency by emphasizing the potential of preservation for the enhancement of the city center’s value. However, instead of questioning the very validity of these interventions, the author assumed the demolition have been legitimate, sharing a functionalist view according to which “the gradual replacement of housing without special historical and architectural value [was] rational and necessary.”⁶⁶ The opposite of a preservationist view, this justification reflected a commonly shared perception among socialist planners regarding

⁶⁴ Curinschi, *Centrele istorice*, 6.

⁶⁵ Teodor Coheci, “Problemele sistematizării oraşului Craiova” [Issues regarding the Systematization of Craiova], *Arhitectura* 16.1 (1965): 43.

⁶⁶ Curinschi, *Centrele istorice*, 7.

the obsolescence of old buildings and the need of their replacement.⁶⁷ Curinschi's dissatisfaction was in particular directed towards the small-scale buildings with commercial and residential functions, which represented the bulk of constructions in the historic area of Romanian towns, seen as aesthetically irrelevant and detrimental to a positive urban image. He made it quite clear that major historic monuments would be better valorized when surrounded by new architecture rather than “swimming in a sea of decrepit buildings”.⁶⁸

According to the author, the revitalization of historic districts should be approached through a process of ‘dialectical negation’ consisting in the removal of the negative traits, the selection of the positive ones, and the introduction of the new elements without significantly altering the identified historical value.⁶⁹ The concept of “reconstruction” was considered as fairly adequate for the Romanian context, since “the largest part of the built fabric has a reduced economic, functional, constructive and aesthetic value.”⁷⁰ However, in order to soften the terminological radicalism, he suggested the concept of “socialist transformation of cities”, implying the selective replacement of the existing built fabric instead of its complete erasure.⁷¹

⁶⁷ Urban, *Neo-historical East Berlin*, 40.

⁶⁸ Curinschi, *Centrale istorice*, 7, 136. Constructing higher buildings in order to meet the proper “urban” densities would obstruct the focus on the old monuments; therefore, it was argued, one should find the “right” relations between the scale of new and old buildings.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 26.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Reconstruction refers to an action of replacing the old constructions with new ones. The language of preservation is, however, rich in terms describing different types of interventions that might appear quite similar. For example, “re-structuring” regards the modification of the street network and the organization of the built volumes, and “remodeling” refers to moderate interventions in the built structure, while preserving the street network and most part of the built fabric. Ibid., 26-28.

Curinschi's focus remained on architectural and historical values, leaving aside other motivations for preservation. Cultural aspects were rarely mentioned,⁷² while social issues were simply ignored. However, history itself was not a sufficient argument. According to Curinschi, not all old centers could be considered as equally valuable on the basis of their historicity alone.⁷³ The concept of "selectivity" was central to his approach. The theory of restoration offered a perfect parallel: "The approach of the restorer does not have to be the one of an archivist, who is obliged to equally preserve the tiniest piece of paper and a valuable document [...]."⁷⁴ In this sense, his book was mainly intended at proving a series of guidelines facilitating the selection between valuable and invaluable historical structures and built environments.

In the attempts to create urban typologies and classifications, the seven Transylvanian towns founded by German colonists were always discussed as a separate category, as true embodiments of feudalism.⁷⁵ Their compact form organized around a central square represents "the classical type of feudal town developed in Western and Central Europe, as well as in the Baltic countries. The largest part of the specialized literature is referring to this type of towns."⁷⁶ His appreciation of medieval towns was therefore based not only on their relevance as part of an international canon of architectural

⁷² Taken from different sources, which are not always specified, some of the statements are contradicting Curinschi's basic functionalist views. A good example is the cultural importance of the historic town. The author refers to the historic center as the element which gives specificity and originality to the city, insuring the continuity of urban culture and traditions. (Ibid., 19). Elsewhere, he notes that "familiar images that are part of the emotional attachment of the inhabitants".

⁷³ Ibid., 8.

⁷⁴ Curinschi, "Restaurarea monumentelor în pas cu progresul arhitecturii" [Monument Restoration Should Be Correlated with the Progress of Architecture], *Arhitectura* 19.6 (1968): 12.

⁷⁵ Curinschi, *Centrele istorice*, 44-47.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 51.

and urban heritage values, but was also based on the importance of feudalism from the perspective of historical materialism.⁷⁷

While the “feudal” historic towns were to be preserved in their entirety, with “all the components of the urban space”, the value of historic centers of more recent date should not “be understood in a territorial sense”, but rather referring to “some valuable urban characteristics”.⁷⁸ However, instead of providing clear categories or practical examples, his suggestions remained ambiguous. For example, he argued that the “positive characteristics of the street network” should be maintained, without clearly defining the meaning of “positive” or “negative”.⁷⁹ The same is valid for the suggestion of finding the “right” relations between the old and the new.⁸⁰ The question was fairly simple in the case of fortified towns, where the international experience provided consistent evidence regarding the appropriate interventions: the maintenance of the street structure, sanitation of housing areas, demolition of invaluable buildings and their replacement with infillings, restoration of major monuments [...], maintaining the skyline of the historic center and the proportion of built volumes.⁸¹ Problematic was precisely providing solutions for the towns developed in the absence of fortifications, which were predominant in Romania. As the last remnant of the ‘feudal past’, the street system is identified as the only element of undisputed value.⁸² Towards the end of his book, Curinschi stated quite clearly that the status of historic monument should be given to fortified towns alone, whereas the protected

⁷⁷ Based on the same ideological arguments, Curinschi denied that Transylvanian medieval towns had been founded by colonists, insisting instead that they have evolved from villages, stimulated by commercial activities. *Ibid.*, 31-35.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 55.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 57.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 74.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² *Ibid.*, 65.

status of the remaining towns should be limited to specific, designated areas around the main monuments.⁸³ Following this argument, it was only logical to situate the new civic center on the place of the old town of “reduced architectural value”. Curinschi insisted, however, that the replacement of the old building stock should be made gradually,⁸⁴ while a case for preservation could be made for selected portions of the old town on the basis of their “picturesque qualities”.⁸⁵

While the book’s theoretical part is relatively well informed by contemporary ideas regarding the preservation and revitalization of historic districts, Curinschi avoided addressing the practical aspects regarding decision-making and planning. Who had the power and the competence of making these value judgments, to define what is to be preserved or erased and when? How could one create consensus among agents arguing for preservation and those for demolition, and whose opinion should prevail in case of disagreement? Who should mediate between various interests? Even if the book is addressed to a specialized audience, the purely theoretical approach chosen by the author was problematic, as one is left only with vague criteria subjected to the interpretation of decision-makers, thereby making practical application nearly impossible.

The physical and functional building obsolescence of the city center were seen by Curinschi as strongly connected. The new, functionalist vision of the city center focused instead on the construction of buildings that would “tick the right boxes” i.e., fulfill desired functions: socio-cultural, administrative, and political (public) building, as well as open

⁸³ Ibid., 195.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 94-95.

⁸⁵ The picturesque implies a nostalgic view. In the case of Iași, he notes that some buildings and streets (such as Costache Negri Street, considered the oldest in the city) can be preserved “as a witness of old Iași.” Ibid., 103.

public spaces for mass gatherings etc. Conversely, the spaces of sociability and leisure (e.g., restaurants, pubs, coffeehouses, small cinemas and theatres, parks), which had made the city center into an attractive place in the past, were largely disregarded by the new planning schemes. Rather than adhering to specific ‘socialist values’ or agenda, in which consumption, it was believed, would play a marginal role in the future, this narrow understanding of functionalist principles could be more correctly related to the modernization ethos. The cases of Brasilia, Belgrade and Toulouse are similarly illustrating the rejection of old forms of production, sociability, leisure, and consumption associated with the street life, the small store and workshop.⁸⁶

Quite naturally, Curinschi felt that questions of ideology also needed to be addressed: “Should buildings be erased based on their inadequate ideological content i.e., religious or feudal?”⁸⁷ In this regard, Curinschi shared a “classical” socialist position, according to which the value of historical buildings stayed in their aesthetic qualities reflecting the craftsmanship of artisans,⁸⁸ rather than an obsolescent ideological content

⁸⁶ In the case of Toulouse, Rosemary Wakeman observed that “the process of construction a modern city and a modern economy necessitated a rupture with the city’s older urban communities- the shopkeeper and the artisan world of the old red-brick Toulouse.” Rosemary Wakeman, *Modernizing the Provincial City. Toulouse 1945-1975* (Harvard University Press, 1998), 8. In the case of Brazil, James Holston identified the downtown street and the square as traditional spaces of sociability, also characterized by mixed uses for commerce, residence and work. James Holston, *The Modernist City. An Anthropological Critique of Brasilia*. (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1989), Cp. 4 The Death of the Street. Furthermore, in Belgrade, the critique of modernism was connected to the rediscovering of “intimate public spaces”, such as modest terraces known as kafana. Brigitte le Normand, *Designing Tito’s Capital. Urban Planning, Modernism and Socialism in Belgrade* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2014), 200-210. By contrast, the projects made in the 1970s focused precisely on restoring the functionality of the old town, with a focus on the street and the places of sociability. See subchapter 3.8.

⁸⁷ Curinschi, *Centrale istorice*, 158-60.

⁸⁸ William Morris famously argued in the 1880s that the value of old monuments was given by the work invested into their creation – a unique craftsmanship which cannot be replicated by modern restoration techniques. William Morris, *Westminster Abbey*, accessed online at <https://www.marxists.org/archive/morris/works/1893/west.htm> (August 27, 2016). See also Chris Miele, “The first conservation militants. William Morris and the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings”, in Michael Hunter, ed., *Preserving the Past. The Rise of Heritage in Modern Britain* (Alan Sutton Publishing Ltd., 1996), 17-37.

supposedly neutralized during socialism. However, just to be on the safe side, he recommended that historical buildings would be appropriated and ascribed a new function. This solution offered an extra-benefit for preservation in solving the contradiction between old and new: the new should not be understood only as a new material form, but also as re-functionalization of the old.⁸⁹ Although throughout the book Curinschi seemed to bow in front of the imperatives of modernization, stating that “the new has to express itself and become dominant”,⁹⁰ he also tried to find a back exit by suggesting that it was mostly a question of interpreting the “new”.

Beyond the endorsement of urban modernization that constitutes the unexpected element in a book discussing preservation, Curinschi’s ideas are characterized by a certain lack of coherence. This is perhaps due to the diverse (and unquoted) sources from which the author took inspiration. More significant, I argue, are the emerging struggles between enduring old stereotypes and new theoretical positions which seemed to challenge them. However, the book also certifies that the realities of Romanian towns were judged “scientifically” in the absence of proper research or clear formulation of theoretical positions, relying on vaguely-formulated principles, while avoiding complicated discussions regarding institutional responsibility.

3.4. Claiming Heritage

3.4.1. Architectural Reserves

The idea of establishing protected urban areas that included a high density of buildings of architectural and historical value appeared more clearly on the preservationist

⁸⁹ Curinschi, *Centrale istorice*, 163.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 162.

agenda in Romania starting with the mid-1960s. The list of historic monuments adopted in 1955 reveals that the concept of historic town was acknowledged in practice, despite the fact it has not been properly conceptualized as conservation-based area. In a number of Transylvanian towns, the buildings on the main streets were listed almost one by one, which demonstrated awareness regarding urban areas of historical and artistic value. The only town with the historic core listed as a unit was Sighișoara (Schäßburg / Segesvár), one of the seventh medieval Saxon towns, probably since it was the only one which had preserved the fortification system in its entirety. However, Sighișoara was listed not as a town, but as a citadel⁹¹ “[...] with the surrounding walls, towers, and bastions, including all civil and religious buildings,”⁹² which suggests that it was perceived as a medieval relic rather than a contemporary, inhabited town.

Opinions expressed by preservationists suggested, however, that a change of perception was under way. In 1964, Grigore Ionescu wrote about the preoccupation of the DHM with “the delimitation of areas, ensembles of civil architecture, which would be put under legal protection, with the purpose of preserving the integrity and specificity of historic city centers.”⁹³

Rather than being an institutional initiative, the actual implementation of the concept depended on the effective engagement of the practitioners. Architect Eugenia

⁹¹ A comprehensive monograph of the town was published in 1957. Erich Dobowy, *Sighișoara. Un oraș medieval* [Sighișoara. A Medieval Town] (București: Ed. Tehnică, 1957). The systematization plan was drawn by architects working or collaborating with the DHM i.e. Richard Lieblich. Adrian Gheorghiu and E. Rosenblum (Ibid., 180)

⁹² *Lista Monumentelor de Cultură de pe Teritoriul RPR* [The List of Monuments of Culture on the Territory of the People’s Republic of Romania] (București: Editura Academiei RPR, 1956), 121.

⁹³ Grigore Ionescu, “Restaurarea monumentelor de arhitectură în România în anii puterii populare” [The Restoration of Architectural Monuments in Romania in the Years of the People’s Republic], in *Monumente istorice. Studii și lucrări de restaurare* [Historic Monuments. Studies and Restoration Works] (București: Direcția Monumentelor Istorice, 1964), 9.

Greceanu initiated such actions in the early 1960s, when she worked as the DHM delegate for three regions in south-eastern Transylvania.⁹⁴ The initiative was not so much an exercise of expertise, as it was an effort of fostering collaborative relations with local authorities and promoting monument protection on the local agenda. As Greceanu recalled, of great support for the success of this initiative were local architects, who mediated the relation with the political authorities. In Romania, the term was known under the denomination of “architectural reserve”, arguably by analogy with archaeological reserve. It included historic centers (the historic nucleus), and architectural ensembles characterized by stylistic unity and artistic merit, which could be also of more recent date (e.g., nineteenth century).⁹⁵ The “architectural reserve” status was basically an agreement established at the local level between the DHM delegate and local authorities, without any legal provisions, or the endorsement of any higher authority. However, it implied the same obligations as the ones stipulated by the 1955 law for individual monuments, thereby restricting the authorities’ capacity of intervention in the redevelopment of historical areas. Projects regarding these areas required permission of the DHM for demolition, new construction, as well as modification of façades, street network, street furniture, green spaces, and lights. Working in cooperation with local architects, Greceanu established six conservation areas in the regions she was responsible for: the medieval cores of Braşov, Sighişoara, Sibiu, and Mediaş, the central square of Târgu Secuiesc/ Kézdivásárhely, as well as the “Romanian”

⁹⁴ The Autonomous Hungarian Region, Braşov, and Hunedoara.

⁹⁵ Eugenia Greceanu, “Realizări privind protecția unor centre istorice din sudul Transilvaniei (1960-1972)” [Accomplishments Regarding the Protection of some Historic Centers in Southern Transylvania (1960-1972)], *Buletinul Monumentelor Istorice* 1 (1973): 41. Similar denominations were used in Bulgarian i.e., “architectural reserve” according to Dennis Rodwell, *Conservation and Sustainability in Historic Cities* (Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 19-20, and the USSR i.e., “reserve zone”, Timothy J. Colton, *Moscow: governing the socialist metropolis* (Harvard University Press, 1995), 558.

district of Braşov, Şchei.⁹⁶ In the absence of a legal instrument supporting this initiative, persuading local authorities was often a challenging undertaking: the protected status was perceived not only as an unwelcomed involvement into local businesses, but also as an obstacle preventing redevelopment projects. Although the idea of architectural reserves enjoyed support from the DHM leadership, its implementation depended exclusively of the individual commitment of the institution's local delegates, and their willingness to engage in potential conflicts with the local administration. Greceanu argued that local authorities resisted such requests not necessarily because they would disregard monument protection as such, but because they cherished their autonomy and generally resisted control from the center.⁹⁷

Greceanu's project was presented during one of the advisory board meetings in 1968, with a proposal to establish a methodology that could be extended at national level. As she explained, in legal terms the concept should be interpreted as an extension of the "protected perimeter" around major monuments.⁹⁸ In urban areas, she argued, the great concentration of monuments would result in the overlapping of protected areas, which would be more efficiently managed as a unified area with protected status. In the case of cities such as Braşov, the medieval fortifications represented a convenient demarcation line.⁹⁹

The guidelines were enthusiastically received by the members of the advisory board of the DHM, who suggested that the project should be re-written in a style accessible to local bureaucrats, with clear definitions and criteria, and a greater emphasis on

⁹⁶ Eugenia Greceanu, "Delimitarea zonelor protejate urbane în România în timpul regimului comunist", [The Delimitation of Protected Urban Areas in Romania during the Communist Regime], *Arhitext Design* 5 (1998): 28.

⁹⁷ Interview with architect Eugenia Greceanu, Bucharest, October 20, 2012.

⁹⁸ Until 1969, protection areas had been established for 155 monuments, yet most of them could be considered emergency cases. INP-DMI, Procese verbale XI, PV nr. 7/ May 5, 1969, f. 5-6.

⁹⁹ Interview with architect Eugenia Greceanu, Bucharest, October 20, 2012.

functionality. Greceanu believed that the aesthetic argument could counterbalance the authorities' negative perception of old buildings based on their functional obsolescence. Although her engagement was opposed to Curinschi's comfortable pragmatism, at that point both shared the opinion that the minor architecture did not represent any substantial value in itself, yet it could be considered worthy of preservation based on its "picturesque" qualities.¹⁰⁰

A new version of the material, titled "Instructions regarding the establishment of protected areas", was presented in 1972.¹⁰¹ Until that point, working in collaboration with ISCAS, the DHM experts had prepared written and visual documentation for protection areas in thirty cities, one third of which received the agreement of local administrations and were included on a new list for historical monuments prepared in 1975: sixteen of them in Transylvania, six in Wallachia, three in Moldavia, two in Banat.¹⁰² The visibility and monumentality of Transylvanian examples, as well as the local traditions facilitated the endorsement of proposals by local political leaders.¹⁰³ Initiatives have been made also for delimiting the historic center in Bucharest.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ INP-DMI, Procese verbale XI, PV nr 6 / March 21, 1968, f. 2-5.

¹⁰¹ INP-DMI, Procese verbale XIV, PV nr. 9/ May 5, 1972, f. 9.

¹⁰² Greceanu, "Delimitarea zonelor protejate urbane în România," 28-29. She enumerated in fn. 14 the following: Bucharest (the old center and Bvd. Ana Ipătescu), Alba-Iulia (the citadel Alba Carolina), Sebeș (the historic center), Pitești (str. Teiuleanu and Târgu din Vale), Bistrița (the historic center), Brașov (the citadel), Șchei-Brașov, Băile Herculane, Cluj (the citadel), Gherla (the Baroque centre), Dej (the Bobâlna Square), Târgu-Secuiesc (the main square), Târgoviște (the historic centre), Craiova (the Old Square and str. România Muncitoare), Iași (the historic centre), Sighișoara (the citadel), Târgu-Mureș (the Roses Square), Roman (Ștefan cel Mare Street), Satu Mare (The Liberty Square), Sibiu (the citadel), Mediaș (the citadel), Cîlnădie (the historic center), Suceava (the Old Court, Ștefan cel Mare Street, Ulița Armenească), Timișoara (the citadel). Greceanu also specifies that the architectural reserves from Curtea de Argeș and Câmpulung Muscel were removed from the list at the specific request of the political leadership of Argeș County.

¹⁰³ Greceanu, "Delimitarea zonelor protejate urbane," 31, fn. 16.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 28.

3.4.2. Listing Monuments

A permanent concern for the DHM's research activity remained expanding the 1955 list of historic monuments. Since the personnel of the Department was insufficient to cover the entire national territory, further steps in this direction were undertaken in collaboration with local architects i.e., employees of the regional Departments for Architecture, Urban Planning and Construction.¹⁰⁵ By 1963, the DHM already centralized new data sheets regarding collected as part of this effort. The new list was estimated to include 8,000 items, each of them accompanied by adequate written and visual descriptions.¹⁰⁶ Discussions regarding the new list revealed that the Council of Ministers insisted on being provided with a separate category containing monuments of "republican interest", for which the government's approval was required in case of demolition or intervention. Since it could be assumed that the government would take under its protection only a small number of listed monuments, many members of the Department protested this division, fearing that the remaining ones would be perceived as less valuable. Furthermore, they argued that in case such a differentiation was to be made, it would be unclear which criteria should be prioritized: aesthetic, or rather historical ones. An interesting point was raised by Bilciurescu, who questioned the authority of a homogenized national history, arguing instead that the historical value of monuments should be more adequately "measured" in relation to the regional or local context. In addition, it was specifically required that the list would include not only individual monuments, but also "urban

¹⁰⁵ Greceanu, "Anii '60, "epoca de aur" a activității Direcției Monumentelor Istorice," 40. The delegates sometimes checked the lists, yet for this activity they had to be provided with means of transportation, which represented a problem.

¹⁰⁶ INP-DMI, Procese verbale VII, f. 29-36. The process of checking every item on the list required considerable amount of time. In order to speed up the process, the lists were divided among the DHM employees and various specialists working for the Academy's institutes. Responsibility for this process was shared by architect Eugenia Greceanu and historian Oliver Velescu.

ensembles”, the survival of which was jeopardized by urban planning schemes aimed at redesigning central areas. In the end, opinions converged towards compiling only one list, on which monuments of major importance would be particularly emphasized.¹⁰⁷

The list was then subjected to a long set of approvals by various state agencies, requiring in the first place the endorsement of local authorities. A process that initially appeared quite straight-forward was unexpectedly delayed. The lists compiled at the local level were centralized and redistributed at regional level in 1966. However, the administrative reorganization from 1968 turned the process obsolete, as the list had now to be approved by district-level committees. Years passed without any concrete results in this regard, probably due to the shifts of power and continuous institutional reorganizations occurring between 1968 and 1972. According to the records of the DHM, the list was discussed again in 1972, incorporating reviews formulated by the Departments of Culture and the State Committee for Local Economy and Administration. At this point, the project eventually seemed to have taken a final form, which was to be forwarded to the Legal Office of the Committee for Socialist Culture and Education.¹⁰⁸ It is unclear what happened with the list later on while new legislation for heritage protection was being passed in 1974. Since the law from 1974 shifted the focus from immovable to movable heritage,¹⁰⁹ it is possible that the list was simply overlooked, or its approval postponed until the inventory of movable heritage objects could be compiled as well. In 1975, after the reorganization of the institution as Central State Commission for National Cultural Patrimony, the list appeared again on the agenda of the advisory board.¹¹⁰ Up to that point it had been

¹⁰⁷ INP-DMI, Procese verbale X, PV nr. 3/ January 28, 1966, f. 1-5.

¹⁰⁸ INP-DMI, Procese verbale XIV, PV nr. 25/ October 24, 1972, f. 3.

¹⁰⁹ For a discussion of the legislation passed in 1974, see subchapter 3.9.

¹¹⁰ INP-DMI, Procese verbale XV, PV nr. 9/ November 21, 1975, f. 1-2.

expanded from 4,300 to 9,100 objects.¹¹¹ Despite the long-lasting process, it appears, however, that in some cases the lists were used at the local level as if they already had been approved.¹¹² In the 1980s, preservationists continued to expand the list, hoping that its approval by the Council of Ministers was just a matter of (short) time. Still, until 1989, the permanently updated list never made into a new law.

3.5. The Historic City in Urban Design Projects

In parallel with the efforts of establishing a new legal framework for monument protection, the concept of historic town started to be translated into design projects for urban revitalization in the 1960s. In this case, as well, the initiative belonged to a professional rather than an institution. As a result of internal conflicts within the DHM, Bilciurescu was removed in 1964 as head of the institution¹¹³ and offered a different position, within the central institute for design and urban planning (ISCAS). Here, he was allowed to develop his own projects focusing on historic towns, which would have been virtually impossible for the DHM, given the institution's focus on the restoration of individual monuments.

3.5.1. Transylvania

Probably given its protected status, the first case approached by Bilciurescu's team was Sighișoara, the medieval citadel which had already been listed as an architectural ensemble in 1955. The project presented in December 1964 aimed to map the artistic and

¹¹¹ ANIC, Fond CC al PCR, Secția Propagandă și Agitație, 45/1976, f. 125.

¹¹² Discussion with architect Virgil Pop, Cluj-Napoca, June 17, 2015.

¹¹³ According to Eugenia Greceanu, Bilciurescu lost his position after opposing the demolition of Slobozia Church in Bucharest, which generated a conflict with the leadership of the State Committee for Architecture. Greceanu, "Anii '60, "epoca de aur" a activității Direcției Monumentelor Istorice," 41.

historical values of the medieval town, and made proposals for improving living standards in the housing quarters, as well as increasing the town's touristic potential. In terms of restoration methods, a 'unity of style' approach emphasizing the medieval character of the historic town and the elimination of later additions was recommended. Because a large portion of the houses in the medieval core of Sighișoara had remained in private property, expropriation represented an obstacle for advancing with the plan.¹¹⁴ In order to recreate the atmosphere of the medieval city, the architects insisted on the revival of traditional craftsmanship and artisan shops. In terms of urban design, various elements, such as street furniture and lights, would contribute to the creation of a specific atmosphere. In-fillings should be context-sensitive and keep with the "medieval proportions", and be one to maximum two stories high.¹¹⁵

In the following years, similar projects were drawn for the medieval cores of other Transylvanian towns. Brașov, incidentally Bilciurescu's home town, was perhaps the most privileged in this regard, benefitting from quite detailed projects, which included such diverse aspects as architecture and systematization, water, and energy provision, as well as traffic and roads.¹¹⁶ The project was introduced by a well-documented historical study, and completed by a significant amount of visual documentation. Concentrating on the area delimited by the medieval fortifications, the project focused on the sanitation aspects, the preservation of the street network, as well as the revitalization of the economic function through the reorganization of the commercial network. Particular emphasis was put on the

¹¹⁴ The expropriation demanded by Bilciurescu had nothing in common with the communist nationalization of property, being related to a usual request formulated by preservationists in order to facilitate the implementation of a coherent restoration program. The provision is, however, illustrative for contradicting the stereotype view that most of the building stock was under state property during socialism.

¹¹⁵ INP-DMI, Proceșe verbale VII, f. 209-213.

¹¹⁶ The project was discussed with heritage specialists responsible for Brașov Region: Mioara Scârnci (DSAPC Brașov), architect Mariana Angelescu and Eugenia Greceanu, the DHM delegate for the region.

notion of local specificity, identified with the characteristic townscape, in particular the sinuous character of the streets, the façades and the medieval walls.¹¹⁷ The perimeter was divided into quarters,¹¹⁸ facilitating the elaboration of detailed plans for sanitation and the improvement of living standards.¹¹⁹

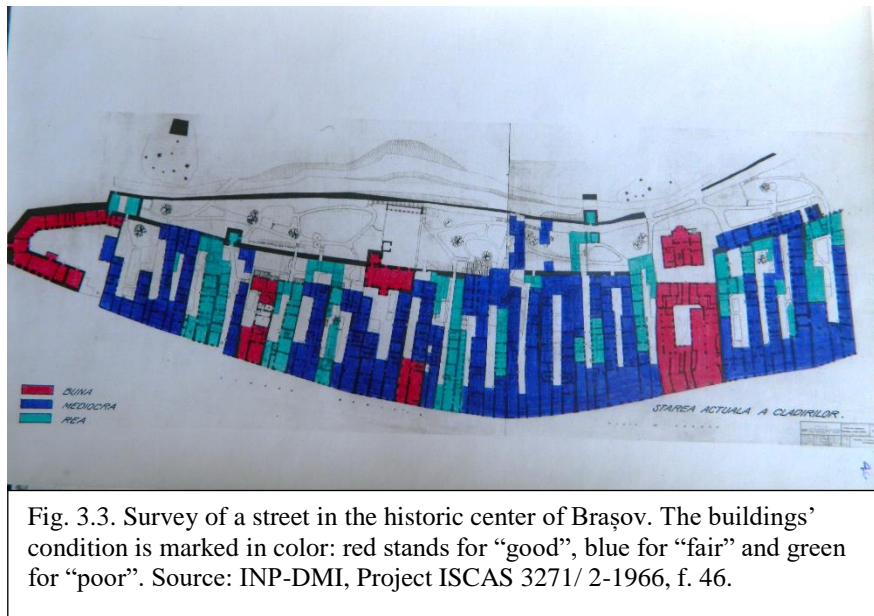


Fig. 3.3. Survey of a street in the historic center of Braşov. The buildings' condition is marked in color: red stands for "good", blue for "fair" and green for "poor". Source: INP-DMI, Project ISCAS 3271/ 2-1966, f. 46.

Interventions would be preceded by surveys investigating the different layers of the built structures, aimed to identify particularly valuable architectural elements that could be highlighted during restoration works. The authors of the project hoped that the elaboration of detailed projects demonstrating the advantages of housing rehabilitation would "prevent local authorities from taking inappropriate measures in what regards the buildings belonging to the old center."¹²⁰ The studies for Braşov were compiled into a comprehensive

¹¹⁷ INP-DMI, Procese verbale X, PV nr. 6/ April 13, 1966, f. 1-4.

¹¹⁸ INP-DMI, Procese verbale XI, PV nr. 12/ September 30, 1969; INP-DMI, Procese verbale XI, PV nr. 20/ December 8, 1969.

¹¹⁹ The project ISCAS nr. 3271/ 2-1966 was presented in the presence of the delegate of DSAPC Braşov, architect Ion Pinciu. For the Romanian context, the project was considered a pioneering one, as it established a methodology for the sanitation of historic districts that could be later applied nation-wide. The cost of works was estimated at almost 10 million lei, the equivalent of the DHM budget for one year. INP-DMI, Procese verbale X, PV nr. 9/ May 17, 1967, f. 2-3.

¹²⁰ INP-DMI, Procese verbale XI, PV nr. 20/ December 8, 1969, f. 1.

volume discussed during the advisory board meetings in 1971. Although the experts praised the practical solutions it offered in terms of adapting historical buildings to contemporary needs, it was unrealistic to believe that local administrations would financially endorse such proposals. Taking note of the well-documented project, the People's Council of Braşov agreed to finance the restoration of only ten buildings that it considered "interesting from a historical and architectural point of view" until 1975.¹²¹ Most restorations financed from the local budget concerned in fact the medieval towers, and occasionally buildings that could be given public use.¹²²

Faced with this attitude, preservationists became well-aware that consistent political support had to be secured to translate the concept into policy. This could be done either through a top-down approach i.e., a law for the sanitation of historic centers,¹²³ or by continuing the same strategy of directly approaching People's Councils. Although preservationists typically refrained from referring to international examples, it is rather obvious that their vision was informed by similar approaches abroad.¹²⁴ For example, Bilciurescu referred to the cases of French towns of Senlis and Chartres, which he had personally visited, emphasizing that France had promulgated legislation in this regard.¹²⁵ The future director of the DHM, art historian Vasile Drăguţ, took a particularly pragmatic stance on the topic. He argued that a draft project should be passed to the local and central

¹²¹ INP-DMI, Procese verbale XIV, PV nr. 7/ July 7, 1971, f. 1-2.

¹²² The medieval towers were restored in Braşov, Mediaş, Sighişoara and Sibiu, and the fortification walls were conserved. Greceanu, "Realizări privind protecţia unor centre istorice din sudul Transilvaniei," 41-43.

¹²³ INP-DMI, Procese verbale XI, PV nr. 20/ December 8, 1969.

¹²⁴ In published articles, references were made especially in relation to events organized in socialist countries. For example, Eugenia Greceanu mentioned a conference on the regeneration of historic urban sites conference organized in Prague in 1966 in Greceanu, "Realizări privind protecţia unor centre istorice din sudul Transilvaniei," 44, fn. 24, while architect Herman Fabini referred to the ICOMOS symposium organized in Budapest in 1972. Herman Fabini, "Un studiu de istorie şi urbanism" [A Study of History and Urbanism], *Buletinul Monumentelor Istorice* 1 (1973): 48.

¹²⁵ INP-DMI, Procese verbale XI, PV nr. 20/ December 8, 1969, f. 2.

authorities, explaining that the savings could be obtained through the rehabilitation of existing housing space. In addition, historic towns were important touristic attractions and generated revenues. He strongly suggested using the media to attract public support for the preservationist cause.¹²⁶

Further projects for other Saxon towns, such as Sebeș (1966)¹²⁷ and Bistrița (1970) were made in response to demolition threats arguably justified by functional obsolescence. It appeared, however, that preservationist initiatives were obstructed by property rights, as many buildings situated in historic centers had not been nationalized and remained in private ownership. In addition, preservationists struggled to find adequate uses for buildings proposed for restoration, as functionalist needs had to be merged with the conservation of historical elements.¹²⁸

The projects gained in complexity and could be efficiently implemented when local specialists were directly involved, and benefitted from the endorsement of the local council.¹²⁹ A particularly active group was the one in Sibiu, which included architects of German origin.¹³⁰ One project completed in 1970¹³¹ paid special attention to the architectural qualities of the buildings, emphasizing for example the overlapping and juxtaposition of styles, from Gothic to Baroque. Furthermore, the surveys took into account not only the structures above the ground, but also the vaulted basements, facilitating the

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ INP-DMI, Proceșe verbale X, PV nr. 2/ January 25, 1967, f. 3; PV nr. 5/ March 1, 1967, f. 4.

¹²⁸ INP-DMI, Proceșe verbale XII, meeting from March 20, 1970 (PV nr. 3/ 1970), f. 2-3.

¹²⁹ Ibid., PV nr. 8/ June 5, 1970, f. 3-4.

¹³⁰ The group included chief architect Otto Czekelius, Paul Niedermeyer, and Herman Fabini.

¹³¹ Designed according to the requirements of a sanitation project, it was aimed to restoring the former functional division between commercial ground floor and residential upper floor, to modernize apartments in order to increase their comfort, as well as to remove later additions (such as workshops) from the backyards. Representative buildings would accommodate clubs and institutions. Most buildings were either state property or belonged to the Evangelic Church. INP-DMI, Proceșe verbale XII, PV nr. 11 bis/ July 16, 1970.

reconstruction of the building's history and its transformation along the centuries. Given the support of local administration and the commitment of local architects, the proposals made in Sibiu were among the few that were actually implemented. The restoration works began in the same year at the Small Square (Piața Mică/ Kleiner Ring), where the façades were restored to their late-medieval (sixteenth century) appearance.¹³² The works continued in 1973 at the Large Square (Piața Mare/ Größer Ring), even if marked by financial difficulties.¹³³

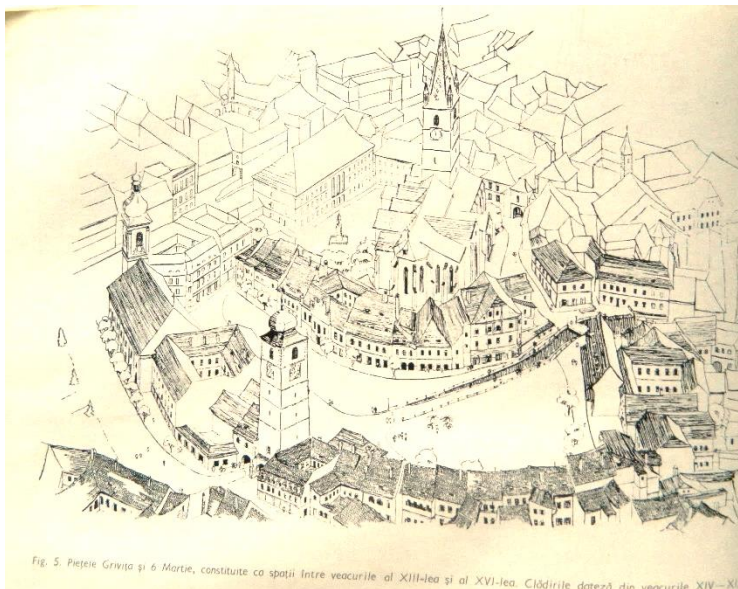


Fig. 3.4. Sketch representing the Large and the Small Square in Sibiu, with the Evangelic Church

Source: *Buletinul Monumentelor Istorice* 1 (1970): 40.

Looking at these projects retrospectively, Greceanu admitted that in most cases, the chances for implementation were small. The most practical function of urban design projects for the restoration of historic centers was to serve representative purposes during international events organized by specialist institutions such as ICOMOS and to demonstrate to the international expert community that the Romanian preservationist

¹³² INP-DMI, Procese verbale XIII, PV nr. 5/ April 25, 1971, f. 1.

¹³³ INP-DMI, Procese verbale XIV, PV nr. 9/ May 16, 1973, f. 4-5. It was suggested for example that the beneficiaries of the commercial spaces could also contribute to the costs. Fabini, "Un studiu de istorie si urbanism," 48-52.

movement was up-to-date.¹³⁴ Despite the preservationists' attempts to formulate functionalist arguments and emphasize the economic advantages of urban revitalization, their arguments did not seem to resonate with the agendas of local decision-makers. While most local politicians saw little political advantages in investing in the regeneration of old districts, these well-documented projects might still have served as a reminder about the heritage value of the towns, and signaled the existence of an alternative.

3.5.2. Wallachia and Moldavia

If projects regarding Transylvanian historic towns relied on local traditions and the international expertise in urban revitalization, designing an appropriate approach was considerably more challenging for the towns across the mountains, as their fabric was perceived of questionable historic and architectural value. However, precisely because of such unpromising premises, the evolution of the concept was more spectacular.

In these cases, as well, research initially focused on the medieval core. A project for the town of Târgoviște, former capital of the medieval principality of Wallachia, analyzed the area of the Old Court, aimed to be integrated into an archaeological park enclosed by a ring road. The concept was discussed in 1957¹³⁵ and 1962¹³⁶. Despite the modest scope of the original project, the discussions around it opened interesting perspectives on alternative views on what could constitute valuable built heritage. The local vernacular in particular was brought into discussion. For example, architect Horia Teodoru identified the specificity of the town in the “picturesque houses surrounded by gardens”,

¹³⁴ Interview with Eugenia Greceanu, Bucharest, October 20, 2012.

¹³⁵ INP-DMI, Procese verbale V, f. 55, 73, 85. A park for culture would be established around the Old Court and Chindia Tower. Project by the Department of Urban Systematization (arch. Schrager) within ICSOR.

¹³⁶ INP-DMI, Procese verbale VIII, f. 101-102.

and argued for their preservation. The idea was supported by other members of the advisory board,¹³⁷ who suggested that the entire area north of the Old Court should be declared a reserve preserving the specificity of the “garden town”.¹³⁸ The preservationists also argued for the relocation of the civic center outside the area of historical interest,¹³⁹ and asked to reduce the number of new buildings in the perimeter of historical interest. The case of Târgoviște was the first one that challenged the preservationists to re-think the concept of “historical area/ district” even for towns that were not associated with Western models of urban development, and did not have a historicity easily legible in the urban tissue.

In Suceava, the capital of medieval Moldavia, an urban redevelopment scheme in the city center applied in 1961-64 focused on the construction of low-rise housing blocks. The local authorities intended to expand the initiative and planned further demolition in the area around the sixteenth century Saint Dumitru Church, claiming that the insalubrious state of the buildings made the tenants’ immediate evacuation imperative. Although compelled to endorse these plans, local architects such as Eusebiu Lațis started to acknowledge the potential heritage value contained by this area:

Taken individually, these buildings do not represent a special value, yet when taken together they represent the image of the old Moldavian târg, with interesting courtyards and an entire system of inns, which, when rehabilitated [...], could be used for touristic purposes. This is perhaps the only area which should be preserved from Suceava of two-three hundred years ago.¹⁴⁰

In the tense climate of proposed demolition, local architects were challenged to re-evaluate the qualities of inherited fabric and make a case for preservation, contesting the local authorities’ straightforward position that described these areas as ‘slums’.

¹³⁷ In particular archaeologist Emil Lăzărescu, and architects Richard Bordenache and Paul Emil Miculescu.

¹³⁸ INP-DMI, Procese verbale VII, f. 310-312.

¹³⁹ It was considered that the civic center should include a museum, a hotel and the house of culture.

¹⁴⁰ Eusebiu Lațis, “Suceava,” *Arhitectura* 17.6 (1966): 64-65.

Unfortunately, all that the DHM could recommend at that point was merely to reconsider these issues in the framework of meetings organized by the local branch of the Architects' Union.

In the context in which all urban localities were in 1973 required to prepare systematization plans to be presented to Ceaușescu's personal approval, demolition proposals stimulated the production of a growing number of preservation projects in the early 1970s.¹⁴¹ The analysis of these projects reveals the ways in which the concept of 'historic town' was progressively adapted to the specificities of the Romanian context. An essential step in this direction was simply to back up the argument for preservation with a well-documented historical study. For example, a revised version of the project for Târgoviște, drafted by Bilciurescu's team, discussed in the presence of the chief architect of the county, emphasized the idea of the 'layered town', revealing important traces of its past under the appearance of a modest provincial town. As the Târgoviște study argued, although the buildings in the area of historic town were of relatively recent date (late nineteenth century), significant traces of its pre-modern fabric had survived, such as the street network and a number of completely or partially-preserved built structures. Apart from the Old Court, two areas were identified of specific architectural interest: the old market-town, and a residential district probably containing the "picturesque" houses previously mentioned by Horia Teodoru. The study called for the preservation of the traditional character of these areas, and specifically for the restoration of the buildings in the commercial area. As the preservationists' definition of the local character included low-

¹⁴¹ For a discussion of these systematization plans and Ceaușescu's feedback, see Chapter 1.7.

rise construction, a strong objection was formulated against the planners' initiative of constructing ten-story blocks in the vicinity of the historic area.¹⁴²

The projects of Bilciurescu's team were mirrored by similar initiatives of local architects, more modestly aiming at the "protection and enhancement of historical monuments". Interestingly, such projects targeted in particular smaller towns, such as Curtea de Argeș,¹⁴³ Caracal and Turnu Severin¹⁴⁴. A comprehensive study was prepared in 1973 for Câmpulung Muscel, a town in northern Wallachia, with a historic fabric that shared many commonalities with the Transylvanian towns across the mountains. The authors of the study identified old buildings and streets embodying the 'local character' and proposed measures of sanitation, building restoration and adaptive reuse. The historic perimeter would be ideally enclosed by a ring road, and the inner streets pedestrianized. The study advised either the relocation of the civic center further away towards the north, or the construction of a smaller number of public buildings (i.e., the political-administrative center) within the historic area.¹⁴⁵

Although the projects differed in complexity, they all argued for the delimitation of a protected historic area preserving its street network and architectural character, as well as the relocation of the civic center away from the historic core. While the commercial center that consisted of nineteenth-century low-rise buildings was increasingly regarded as historically valuable, the DHM also insisted on identifying adequate uses for the buildings that were to be preserved and potentially restored. More importantly, it encouraged local

¹⁴² INP-DMI, Procece verbale XIV, PV nr. 11/ May 30, 1973, f. 4-5.

¹⁴³ Ibid., PV nr. 1/ February 24, 1971, f. 5.

¹⁴⁴ Turnu Severin had been rebuilt in 1839 on a geometric plan. The proposed plan for preservation focused on a large part of the nineteenth century town, emphasizing the architectural coherence of the ensemble. INP-DMI, Procece verbale XIV, PV nr. 2/ January 30, 1973, f. 6.

¹⁴⁵ Victor Popa, "Zona centrală a oraşului Câmpulung Muscel," [The Central Area of Câmpulung Muscel] *Arhitectura* 14.2 (1973): 7-8.

practitioners to foster further research, which would enable to expand the limits of the protected area.¹⁴⁶

Such closer analysis of the existing built fabric brought a growing sense of appreciation for the local vernacular, defined as a mixture of “traditional” or “village” architecture and elements inspired by the styles of the official architectural canon.¹⁴⁷ A strong case for the promotion – and often the reinvention – of local vernacular was made by architect Constantin Joja, who in 1968 designed a restoration project for the Old Court area in Bucharest. Joja proposed returning to the “Balkan” image of eighteenth century Bucharest, characterized by civil architecture of inner courtyards and houses with closed or open verandahs and argued that this style should be regarded as the expression of “Romanian urban architecture”.



Fig. 3.5. Infilling in a style replicating the 18th century buildings with closed verandahs, Bucharest, str. Șelari.

Source: *Revista Monumentelor și Muzeelor. Monumente istorice și de artă* 2 (1975): 8, fig. 8.

¹⁴⁶ INP-DMI, Procese verbale XIV, PV nr. 2/ January 30, 1973, f. 1-4; PV nr. 7/ April 24, 1973, f. 2-4.

¹⁴⁷ The project for Câmpulung emphasized the heritage value of local vernacular and demanded a maximum of three story-high for the new buildings in the area, with no typified architecture. Probably a concession to local planners, the project included proposals for inserting a few high-rise blocks into the historic center, which the DHM strongly opposed. More than that, the DHM refused to approve even the proposal for the new political-administrative headquarters, since it implied the demolition of buildings in a good state of conservation. INP-DMI, Procese verbale XIV, PV nr. 20/ November 12, 1973, f. 2-3.

He insisted that such a restoration project would enhance the heritage value of the Old Court area, and implied that the DHM's approach of being highly selective towards the value of monuments was in reality harmful to the overall purpose of the preservationist agenda. The architect stated that "Bucharest is not Athens or Rome to have lots of monuments", and therefore those that still existed should be better valorized.¹⁴⁸ Bucharest's new urban design became the source of strong debates within the DHM, with most preservationists contesting Joja's solution for its lack of authenticity. Apparently, only Curinschi endorsed the project, and not because he believed in its historical accuracy, but rather because he considered it as a viable expression of the contemporary interpretation of traditional architecture.¹⁴⁹ More importantly, the debates revealed that the lack of consensus among preservationists concerned, aside questions of restoration methods (i.e. the rejection of the pastiche)¹⁵⁰, what should constitute the "appropriate" image of the old town. While Joja's project was rightfully rejected given the contested historical accuracy of his design, the preservationists seemed to have missed an opportunity to make a stronger case for the historic city, in the context in which, as Emanuela Grama shows, the People's Council approved the 'architectural conservation area' status.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁸ INP-DMI, Procese verbale XI, PV nr. 8/ May 19, 1969, f. 6.

¹⁴⁹ Grama, *Impenetrable Plans and Porous Expertise*, 1-16. Although Grama offers a sharp analysis of the debate within the preservationist camp, she argues that the positions expressed by various actors reiterated the interwar debate between tradition and modernity, and the proper architectural expression of the Romanian national style. The analysis fails to consider, however, that the architects were in the first-place employees of the Department of Historic Monuments, and their main concern in this case regarded questions of restoration methodology. Therefore, their reluctance to support the project can be motivated by the wish to maintain the authenticity of this area.

¹⁵⁰ Previous discussions within the advisory body emphasized that in-fillings in historic areas should avoid a very modern appearance, as well as the pastiche. INP-DMI, Procese verbale VII, f. 1.

¹⁵¹ Grama, *Impenetrable Plans*, 14. Selected buildings in the area benefitted restoration, among which the most famous was the Manuc Inn, which regained its eighteenth-century appearance. Vasile Drăguț, "Monumentele și centrele istorice din România" [Monuments and Historic Centers in Romania], *Revista monumentelor și muzeelor. Monumente istorice și de artă* 2 (1975): 11.

Despite this initial support, the systematization draft prepared by local planners a few years later fully disregarded preservationist concerns. In 1973, the advisory board of the DHM was appalled to receive for approval a systematization detail for the central area of Bucharest that lacked any references to the historical and architectural value of the area. The DHM experts stated that it was imperative to initiate a study examining the street network, and surveying the houses in order to identify those worthy for preservation. More broadly, it reasoned, it was unthinkable that a capital city such as Bucharest would lack a consistent documentation regarding the city's history and urban evolution, including its architecturally-valuable buildings.

The heads of the urban planning institute in Bucharest resisted the proposal to initiate a collaboration with ISART for the elaboration of a historical study. Instead, they re-submitted a plan vaguely titled "Synthesis on Solving some Urban Problems" (Ro: Sinteza rezolvării unor probleme orășenești) in August 1973, which proposed radical reconstruction of many centrally located areas in the framework of the following Five-year Plan (1975-80), with the cost of major demolition.¹⁵² Faced with such a direct refusal from the part of Bucharest urban planners, the DHM experts invoked the authority of UNESCO and the Venice Charter's recommendation that the redevelopment and revitalization of "ensembles with historical character" should be preceded by thorough historical and sociological studies. Disregarding such ideas, the planners maintained their position and refused any infringement from the preservationist side. The DHM was left only with the possibility of transmitting its last diplomatic warning, emphasizing that "irreparable

¹⁵² Plans for the radical reconstruction of Bucharest's central area existed therefore before Ceaușescu's endorsement of the Civic Center project.

mistakes” would result from the authorities’ unwillingness to take into consideration the necessity of historical studies.¹⁵³

In the end, the DHM managed to find a compromise solution, requiring the support of the Institute of Architecture.¹⁵⁴ The resulting “Study for the scientific delimitation of the central area of Bucharest, comprising built structures with historical and architectural value” was thoroughly documented and followed a methodology that differentiated among four types of heritage value: functional, environmental, architectural and memorial. The availability of qualified, yet unpaid workforce i.e., the students from the Architecture Institute¹⁵⁵ allowed to considerably enlarge the scope of the study and survey approximately 5,000 buildings¹⁵⁶ on a surface of 1,600 hectares. Two concentric areas of significance were delimited: the “historic area”, representing approximately 4.8% of the surface of the city, and the “historic center”, measuring 400 ha and 1.9% of the surface. The initiative seemed to have been a success for the preservationist side: even Mircea Dima, chief architect of Bucharest, declared that the study would inform future plans and help “prevent errors”.¹⁵⁷ Later discussions about the modernization of several centrally-located boulevards in Bucharest (e.g., Calea Moșilor, Calea Călărașilor, Splaiul Unirii) focused on the maintenance and restoration a considerable number of buildings, now with the explicit support of the People’s Council.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵³ INP-DMI, Procese verbale XIV, PV nr. 16/ September 21, 1973, f. 1-3.

¹⁵⁴ The project resulted from the collaboration of the Department of History and Architectural Theory and the Department of Urban Planning

¹⁵⁵ Headed by Gheorghe Curinschi, the team included young architects e.g., Sanda Voiculescu, Doina Cristea, Serban Popescu Criveanu, Alexandru Sandu.

¹⁵⁶ The temporal limit was the year 1890.

¹⁵⁷ INP-DMI, Procese verbale XV, PV nr. 16/ December 10, 1976, f. 2-4. The study was praised as exceptional, and the authors encouraged to make proposals for delimiting the historic center and architectural reserves.

¹⁵⁸ INP-DMI, Procese verbale XV, PV nr. 5/ May 20, 1976, f. 1-5.

3.6. Researching Urban and Architectural Heritage

The centrality of research for re-thinking the historicity of Romanian towns is best represented by Greceanu's studies from the 1970s. Born and educated in Bucharest, she started her career at the workshop for monument restoration within ICSOR-ISCAS in 1954. Previously she had spent two years in the workshop for territorial planning within the Ministry of Local Administration and Industry, where she worked alongside some of the great names of interwar academic life, such as sociologist Henri Stahl and geographers Vintilă Mihăilescu and Victor Tufescu.¹⁵⁹ After several years of designing restoration projects,¹⁶⁰ Greceanu was appointed in 1960 as the DHM delegate in south-eastern Transylvania.¹⁶¹ In the 1970s, she was head of the advisory board (1972-1974), and participated in two ICOMOS general meetings, organized in Hungary (1971) and the GDR (1974).¹⁶²

Although most of Greceanu's career as a preservationist focused on Transylvanian towns and monuments,¹⁶³ her most notable research contributions focused on towns outside this region. In 1974, she was entrusted with a number of research projects documenting the heritage value of historic centers following requests formulated by local bureaucrats concerned with the prospects of announced demolition. Although initially she

¹⁵⁹ Victoria Dragu Dimitriu, *Povestea unei familii din București. Greceii* [The Story of a Family in Bucharest: Greceii] (București: Vremea, 2012), 109-110.

¹⁶⁰ Radu Greceanu, "Casa de piatră din Herești. Istoric" [The History of the Stone House in Herești], Eugenia Greceanu "Casa de piatră din Herești [The Stone House in Herești], *Monumente și muzee* 1 (1958): 119-148; Oliver Velescu, "Restaurarea halei vechi din Brașov" [The Restoration of the Old Hall in Brașov], *Monumente istorice. Studii și lucrări de restaurare*, 115-154.

¹⁶¹ Interview with architect Eugenia Greceanu, October 20, 2012.

¹⁶² A short biography of the architect in Eugenia Greceanu. *Botoșanii care s-au dus. Ansamblul urban medieval Botoșani*. [The Botoșani We Have Lost. The Urban Medieval Ensemble in Botoșani] (Iași: Casa Editorială Demiurg, 2009), 7-8.

¹⁶³ Interview with architect Eugenia Greceanu, Bucharest, October 19, 2013: "The extra-Carpathian towns (i.e., from Wallachia and Moldavia) were totally discredited. I was in love with Transylvanian towns and I shared the same opinion. I was born in Bucharest, yet I had no interest in researching it."

regarded these projects as distant from her professional interests, they eventually became her most important contribution to the development of the preservationist movement in socialist Romania.¹⁶⁴ The studies were published in the early 1980s by the National History Museum in Bucharest.¹⁶⁵

Greceanu's first case study regarded the town of Roman in central Moldavia, which had played a strategic role in the construction of the medieval Moldavian state and also functioned as bishopric seat, defense fortress and princely residence during the fourteenth century. The study focused on the evolution of the town's built structure, and was based on the data provided by building surveys and the analysis of historic maps. Rather than referring to international studies informing her approach, Greceanu pointed towards similar research undertaken by Romanian geographers during the interwar period, some of whom she had met personally during the years spent at the workshop for territorial planning.¹⁶⁶ Regardless the source of inspiration, applying this methodological approach was particularly challenging given the extreme scarcity of both primary and secondary sources on the chosen towns. Researchers such as Greceanu were trying to connect disparate pieces of information and "read" the historical transformation of the townscape in the absence of such basic tools as old plans, visual representations, or archaeological excavations. As she noted in an article summarizing her methodological approach,

¹⁶⁴ On the impact of Greceanu's studies and methodological approach on the Romanian historiography regarding market-towns in Moldavia and Wallachia, see Teodor Octavian Gheorghiu, "Două republicări mult așteptate: Eugenia Greceanu - Ansamblul urban medieval Pitești și Ansamblul urban medieval Botoșani." [Two Long-Awaited Republications: Eugenia Greceanu- 'The Urban Medieval Ensemble Pitești' and 'The Urban Medieval Ensemble Botoșani'], *Historia Urbana* 21 (2011): 229-232.

¹⁶⁵ Interview with Eugenia Greceanu, Bucharest, October 19, 2013. The director of the National History Museum, Florian Georgescu, relied on the authority of positive reviews made by acknowledged specialists and accepted to have the books published, although the arguments openly contradicted the demolition fervor of the 1980s.

¹⁶⁶ Interview with Eugenia Greceanu, Bucharest, October 20, 2012.

in delimiting the historic center, the architect is permanently confronted with new cases. For Transylvania and Banat, the operation is usually simple, taking into consideration the existence – from the sixteenth century onwards – of numerous plans, and eighteenth century topographic surveys. For Moldavia and Wallachia, discovering an eighteenth-century sketch is a stroke of luck. The first known topographic survey for Roman is dated 1818.¹⁶⁷

Moving beyond ‘objects of historical and architectural value’ that usually constituted the preservationists’ focus, Greceanu argued that elements of medieval urbanism were present in the urban tissue to a higher extent than was previously thought.¹⁶⁸ The street network, as well vaulted stone basements dating back to the seventeenth century represented distinguishable elements of the pre-modern urban structures. The study was highly praised by the members of the advisory committee of the DHM and recommended for publication¹⁶⁹ as a model methodological approach.¹⁷⁰

Greceanu’s further projects on Pitești¹⁷¹ and Botoșani¹⁷² paid particular attention to analyzing the development of the built fabric in connection with the functions of the

¹⁶⁷ Eugenia Greceanu, “Elemente de metodică în cercetarea centrelor istorice ale orașelor” [Elements of Methodology in the Research of Historic City Centers], *Arhitectura* 27.4 (1976): 28-29. For Pitești, the earliest available sketch was dated 1885. She tried to supplement the scarcity of written and visual sources through a careful survey of individual buildings.

¹⁶⁸ Greceanu insisted on the importance of basements as the oldest remain of a construction. When buildings were demolished for redevelopment projects, the basements – often much older than the structure above the ground – were simply removed, without any interest for scientific investigation. Interview with Eugenia Greceanu, Bucharest, October 20, 2012.

¹⁶⁹ INP-DMI, Procese verbale XV, PV nr. 17/ December 20, 1974, f. 1-3. The results of the research were surprising even for the head of the Department, Vasile Drăguț, who praised the studies as “remarkable”, stating that “a historical research made with the critical eye of an architect can lead to recovery of lost values, [and] offer the defining elements for the personality of a city”. Vasile Drăguț, “Centrele istorice și monumentele de arhitectură. Documente complexe ale societății umane” [Historic Centers and Architectural Monuments. Complex Documents of the Human Society], *Arhitectura* 27.4 (1976): 10.

¹⁷⁰ Eugenia Greceanu, “Structura urbană a orașului Roman, mărturie a trecutului istoric” [The Urban Structure of the Town of Roman, Witness of the Historic Past], *Revista Monumentelor Istorice. Monumente istorice și de artă* 44.2 (1975): 30-40; republished as Eugenia Greceanu, „La structure urbaine médiévale de la ville de Roman,” *Revue Roumaine d’Histoire* 15.1 (1976): 39-56. Similar arguments were made in Eugenia Greceanu, “Un problème actuel: l’urbanisme médiéval en Roumanie,” *Revue Roumaine d’Histoire* 18.1 (1979): 133-153.

¹⁷¹ Situated in southern Romania, about 120 kilometers north from Bucharest, the town had been already the subject of an unimplemented reconstruction project authored by Romania’s leading modernist architect Cezar Lăzărescu, to which I referred in the first pages of this chapter.

¹⁷² Greceanu, *Ansamblul urban medieval Botoșani* (București, Muzeul Național de Istorie, 1982). The research was initiated in 1976, at the request of the first vice-president of the People’s Council, Octavian Cratchi.

town and the social classes that had played an active part in the process of urban development. In Pitești, Greceanu insisted on the maintenance of the street network and the parceling in areas of historical interest, and proposed the listing of 75 individual buildings and the establishment of four architectural conservation areas. The presentation of the study on Pitești within the advisory board meetings raised even greater enthusiasm. Not only was the study appreciated as “exceptional”, but the members of the advisory board also spontaneously planned a fieldtrip to Pitești in order to observe themselves the conclusions presented by the architect. Furthermore, the local history museum promised to initiate archaeological excavations in the area of the princely court, and to organize an exhibition on the history of the town.¹⁷³

The studies authored by Greceanu offered a different perspective precisely because they were so well-grounded into historical research that demonstrated that long-held stereotypes were based on the lack of scientific investigations rather value.¹⁷⁴ Previous studies for towns in Moldavia and Wallachia, including those produced by Bilciurescu’s team, had been only superficially anchored into local history. Greceanu strongly contested the stereotype describing the development of these towns as “chaotic”, arguably due to the combined effects of the absence of medieval fortifications and the speculative capitalist development disregarding the public interest.¹⁷⁵ Analyzing the functional organization of the town, she showed how the urban territory was divided among different ethnic and social groups, and how their districts were organized around the places

¹⁷³ INP-DMI, Procece verbale XV, PV nr. 2/ January 21, 1976, f. 1-2.

¹⁷⁴ Given the scarcity of locally-produced primary sources, the accounts of “foreign travelers” were often taken for granted. Greceanu argued that these narratives should not be taken as historically-accurate, demonstrating for example that the descriptions minimized the number of houses, and disregarded stone architecture which existed with certitude before the nineteenth century. Greceanu, *Ansamblul urban medieval Botoșani*, 102.

¹⁷⁵ See footnote 15.

of worship.¹⁷⁶ Greceanu emphasized the organic development of the street network, following the contours of the landscape. Among the elements constituting local specificity she enumerated the numerous green spaces, elements of late-medieval architecture that could be detected especially in basements, as well as the combination of the local vernacular with elements of different architectural styles (in particular neo-classicism).¹⁷⁷ These studies emphasized the coherence of the historic ensemble and its organic evolution, stating that its ‘logic’ went beyond visual formality.

Significant to Greceanu’s endeavor was also the attention paid to fieldwork. She invested a considerable amount of time going from house to house, making drawings, taking notes, and discussing with the owners and tenants. As she recalled, the atmosphere was tense, since the districts were already due to demolition, while her footsteps were closely supervised by Securitate agents. Accustomed to visits from municipal surveyors inspecting the material qualities of their homes, the residents hoped that Greceanu’s report would halt the destructive plans of local authorities.¹⁷⁸

Greceanu’s fieldwork experience also showed that even within the local administration there were voices sensitive to local heritage, which tried to find alternatives to the radical projects aiming at the complete erasure of the old town. Local architects or bureaucrats asked for the Department’s support in their pursuit to identify a strategy for preservation. It was clear, however, that powerful interests within the People’s Council

¹⁷⁶ In the case of Botoșani, she analyzed the functions of the medieval târg, emphasizing the contribution of different ethnic (e.g., Armenians, Greeks, Jews, Romanians) and social groups to the development of economic life of the town. This piece of social and economic history benefitted probably from the input of her husband Radu Greceanu, a historian by training.

¹⁷⁷ She argued for the value of local vernacular and condemned demolition of old architecture without the slightest analysis. Greceanu, *Ansamblul urban medieval Botoșani*, 102-106.

¹⁷⁸ Details on the research in Pitești and Botoșani are narrated in Liliana Iuga, “Cu un pas înaintea demolărilor. Interviu cu Eugenia Greceanu” [One Step in Front of the Demolition. An Interview with Eugenia Greceanu], *Arhitectura* 6 (2014): 42-45.

pushed for demolition and redevelopment. The DHM delegates were thus challenged to identify local actors that would support the preservationist agenda. In Pitești, knowing that she could not count on the endorsement of the People's Council's vice-president in charge with the construction activity, Greceanu insisted that her study should be sent to the first vice-president, Ion Dincă.¹⁷⁹ The head of local administration was eventually persuaded by the accuracy of the study and agreed on the preservation of a few centrally-located streets. However, Dincă's recollections ("I was told that all buildings are nothing but worthless hovels")¹⁸⁰ indicate that the disregard towards the inherited built fabric was strongly institutionalized. In the eyes of planners and politicians alike, the city was simply a slum, and large-scale reconstruction the only alternative.

Despite her success, Greceanu was aware that her authority had limits. After all, the DHM delegates were no activists; they acted to a large extent within the institutional state framework and sought to gain the support of political and administrative hierarchy. Working for decades within the system, Greceanu developed a sense of self-censorship; once the top of the local power hierarchy had been informed on the result of her work, there was little more she could do to influence the planning decisions.

In Botoșani, Greceanu made similar proposals for the listing of individual monuments¹⁸¹ and architectural reserves,¹⁸² insisting on the value of the local vernacular. Suggestions for preserving the old town character included the protection of old trees and

¹⁷⁹ The biography of Ion Dincă (1928-2007) is perhaps indicative for the kind of persons who were leading the local administration during the 1970s. First-secretary of the Party Committee of the Argeș County (1973-1976), Dincă had followed a military career, being employed also in the structures of the Securitate. In 1976, he was transferred on the similar position in Bucharest, becoming de facto the mayor of Bucharest. ANIC, Fond Fond CC al PCR, Secția Cămară, 57/1976, f. 3.

¹⁸⁰ Interview with architect Eugenia Greceanu, Bucharest, October 19, 2013.

¹⁸¹ 160 buildings were proposed to be declared historic monuments on individual basis.

¹⁸² The list included a number of craftsmen districts, but also the Armenian cemetery.

the return to the old street names.¹⁸³ In contrast to Pitești, here the report was simply disregarded by planners, who proposed instead a densely-built fabric with ten story-high blocks. It was decided that only a few architectural objects of ‘special’ value would be preserved. Local authorities in peripheral towns such as Botoșani, which had not benefitted from investment before the 1968 administrative reform, seemed committed to make the best of use of the financial resources made available to them and create an urban image adequate to the new legal status of the town.¹⁸⁴ When Greceanu’s books were published a few years later, many of the buildings she had listed were already torn down.

Besides making the case for preservation, Greceanu emphasized the importance of methodology, proposing an alternative to the traditional way of writing history that focused on the great narratives and outstanding personalities, and to look instead at collective actors (i.e., urban communities) and the material culture they created.¹⁸⁵ The methodological approach analyzing architecture and urban change as products of social and economic factors was in many ways similar to the kind of urban history produced in the 1960s for Transylvanian towns,¹⁸⁶ yet in total contradiction with the nationalist focus of the mainstream Romanian historiography of the 1980s. In the end, Greceanu’s approach contains an inherent paradox: even though she actually disregarded the ideological claims

¹⁸³ Greceanu, *Botoșanii ce se duc*, 113.

¹⁸⁴ See Per Ronnas, *Urbanization in Romania. A Geography of Social and Economic Change since Independence* (Stockholm: Economic Research Institute, Stockholm School of Economics, 1984), 68-71. Botoșani became the center of a newly-created district. The redevelopment plans were elaborated under the direction of Nicolae (Gipsy) Porumbescu, considered one of Romania’s top architects. Interview with architect Eugenia Greceanu, October 29, 2013.

¹⁸⁵ Florian Georgescu, “Cuvânt înainte” [Foreword], in Greceanu, *Ansamblul urban medieval Botoșani*, v. The Foreword, which in fact summarizes the main arguments and findings advanced by Greceanu, was also translated into French and English. See also Greceanu, “Elemente de metodică în cercetarea centrelor istorice.”

¹⁸⁶ Ștefan Pascu and Viorica Marica. *Clujul medieval* [Medieval Cluj] (București: Meridiane, 1969).

of the regime,¹⁸⁷ her methodology was closer to a Marxist approach than the one used by specialists such as Curinschi, who purposefully sought to emulate ideological statements in their works.

Greceanu's representation of the old town resonates with what Dennis Rodwell calls

the archetypal historic city" (i.e., the pre-industrial city) which "possessed strong identity, harmony and sense of place. It functioned to a human scale, with mixed uses in close proximity, and its architectural homogeneity was underscored by the use of construction materials and craft skills that were predominantly sourced locally- whilst subject to periodic external influences.¹⁸⁸

Although Greceanu's vision could be seen as one that looked nostalgically towards a town which no longer existed, her analysis showed great sensitivity towards the built fabric and a willingness to understand the local which was often absent from the modernizing view of the administration.

3.7. Tight Budgets and Monuments at Risk

The examination of the minutes of the DHM advisory board meetings¹⁸⁹ since the late 1950s reveals the increasing presence of historic towns on the agenda. The rise of preservationist concerns paralleled the second wave of industrialization, following the administrative reform in 1968 and the national systematization program of the 1970s, which aimed at distributing investment more evenly throughout the country. Suddenly,

¹⁸⁷ In the discussions, Eugenia Greceanu made clear her disregard towards the official ideology, which started since university. In addition, her husband could not continue his career as a historian since he originated from an aristocratic family, and had spent five years in the Soviet Union as war prisoner.

¹⁸⁸ Dennis Rodwell, "Urban Conservation in the 1960s and 1970s: A European Overview," *Architectural Heritage* 21 (2010): 4.

¹⁸⁹ Advisory board meetings typically included a number of experienced architects and historians employed by the DHM, as well as guest experts working for the Academy's institutes (History, Art History and Archaeology) or representatives of the State Committee for Art and Culture. INP-DMI, Procese verbale X, PV nr. 8/ May 9, 1967, f. 2.

provincial towns previously ignored by the national-level schemes received a push for economic development. Moreover, a new political elite, usually trained in the Party's superior schools, was prepared to bring such plans to completion.¹⁹⁰ In addition, Ceaușescu's vision on urban development privileged the city center over the periphery, insisting on the upgrading of centrally-located areas through the construction of civic centers.¹⁹¹ Given the increasing pressure put on the inherited built fabric, the preservationists had to acknowledge that the traditional focus on individual monuments was outdated, and re-think the conceptual and institutional limits of their approach.¹⁹²

Long-held perceptions on the value of old towns was reflected in the differentiated manner of treating the inherited urban fabric within urban planning schemes. Whereas in Transylvania, partially due to the efforts of the DHM, the systematization plans for former Saxon towns (Brașov, Sibiu, Sighișoara) incorporated provisions respectful towards the historic built environment, in Moldavia and Wallachia architects and planners saw little value in the inherited urban fabric. Preservationists openly criticized such as attitude that seemed unwilling to make the effort to harmonize new and old architecture

¹⁹⁰ There is still little analysis on center-periphery relations in socialist Romania. A number of welcomed analyses are provided by Transylvanian Hungarian scholars, who are compelled to look at the local- unlike their Romanian counterparts, who tend to focus on central policies. See the essays published in Ágoston Olti and Gidó Attila, eds., *Minoritatea maghiară în perioada comunistă* [The Hungarian Minority during the Communist Period] (Cluj-Napoca, Editura Institutului pentru Studierea Problemelor Minorităților Naționale, Kriterion, 2009), in particular József Gagyí, "Constucția mecanismelor relaționale centru-periferie în România primilor ani ai epocii comuniste" [The Construction of the Center-Periphery Relations in Romania during the First Years of the Communist Era], in *ibid.*, 227-257; Zoltán Csaba Novák, "Impactul reformei administrative din 1968 asupra politicii PCR față de minoritatea maghiară" [The Impact of the 1968 Administrative Reform on the RCP Politics towards the Hungarian Minority], in *ibid.*, 291-322; József Gagyí, "Începuturile modernizării într-o regiune înapoiată din România. Putere, profesionalism, transformare" [The Beginnings of Modernization in a Backward Region of Romania. Power, Professionalism, Transformation], in *ibid.*, 323- 359.

¹⁹¹ See Chapter 1.7.

¹⁹² INP-DMI, *Procese verbale VII*, f. 198. In December 1964, architect Bilciurescu stated that "It is not enough to save a number of monuments in these towns; one has to think about ensembles which have to be restored."

and was guided rather by “personal concepts”, as well as economic principles of cost-effectiveness and the rhetoric of functionality. As Grigore Ionescu argued, instead of properly addressing the difficulty of these cases, local planners preferred “simplified solutions”.¹⁹³

The DHM’s interference in policies regarding historic towns was complicated in the absence of an adequate legislative framework. In an attempt to increase responsibility at the local level, the law from 1955 clearly made beneficiaries – in particular the People’s Councils – liable for monument preservation and restoration, while the DHM was to act more like an expert institution whose consultation was mandatory for interventions to listed monuments.¹⁹⁴ This provision represented in practice the preservationists’ only open door into the systematization of historic centers, as local administrations were required to submit for approval urban design plans that included officially-listed historic monuments. As centrally-located areas typically contained a significant number of listed monuments, the “systematization details” for central areas in particular required the DHM approval by extension. The advisory board made use of such opportunities in order to invite local decision-makers to Bucharest in the attempt to negotiate solutions more sensitive to heritage.

The increased frequency in the meetings with local administrations did not bring a significant improvement in the working relations between the two parts. As previous attempts to establish a fruitful dialogue had often resulted in ignorance or conflicts, the preservationists found it easier to rely on a top-down approach, asking the support of the

¹⁹³ Ionescu, “Necesitatea sistematizării și restaurării centrelor istorice,”38.

¹⁹⁴ INP-DMI, Procese verbale VII, f. 200-201.

State Committee for Architecture or even the Council of Ministers.¹⁹⁵ This solution was probably seen as more efficient also given the lack of personnel and the practical inability to discuss individually the same issues with dozens of different local leaders. It was comparatively easier for the DHM to establish contacts with a smaller number of influential central-level bureaucrats, often building on the personal contacts.

Traditionally, the institution had directed its tight budget towards supporting restoration works for high-profile cases. As the restrictive legislative framework prevented the DHM to execute restoration works from funds other than its own,¹⁹⁶ the scarce financial and human resources had to be carefully stretched, allowing for the opening of a couple of dozens restoration sites every year.¹⁹⁷ In 1963 for example, the DHM specialists worked on twenty restoration sites throughout the country, and planned to open twenty-two more during the following year. The budget of 10 million lei largely came from the State Committee for Architecture, with a supplementary contribution of one million lei from the Department of Religious Cults,¹⁹⁸ which was one of the main beneficiaries of restoration projects. Although the DHM struggled to stretch tight resources to cover its needs, the entire process seemed a never-ending chain of painful decisions. Sometimes, restoration works in progress had to be stopped in order to re-direct resources towards newly “discovered” emergency cases. Notifications were sometimes send by concerned locals, among which teachers represented a particularly active category. Aware that the concept of heritage value was expanding, the Department tried to do its best in addressing the

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., f. 4.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., f. 88, 90.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., f. 200-201.

¹⁹⁸ The Department of Religious Cults expressed its own preferences regarding the churches that should be restored, giving priority to the Orthodox ones. For example, it refused to support the restoration of Bărăția church in Câmpulung, the former Franciscan Monastery and the Calvaria Church in Cluj, motivating that the respective religious communities should finance the restoration works by themselves. Ibid., f. 196.

requests: “Mistakes from the past should not be repeated when valuable monuments have been demolished because at that point they were not considered valuable.”¹⁹⁹

The list of restorations from 1964 demonstrates the preference given to the restoration of medieval buildings considered of national importance i.e., churches and princely courts, evenly distributed throughout the country: the monasteries Dragomirna and Sucevița, the Saint Michael church in Cluj, the Evangelic church in Sebeș, the princely court in Târgoviște, the Galata Monastery Iași, the princely citadel Suceava. The same typology of monuments occupied most of the agenda in advisory board meetings.²⁰⁰

The scarcity of human resources added to the financial constraints. Even when local administrations did support restoration works, they typically experienced problems with recruiting specialized workers, from whom they had to compete with major construction sites and investment projects, as the work force was generally in short supply everywhere. Reluctant to engage with such complicated issues, local administrations preferred simply to abandon the project and redirect funding toward other purposes. The Department, however, understood the value of skilled work and invested resources into training workers and employing technical specialists that would work alongside architects, engineers and historians.²⁰¹

Frustrated with its own inability to address even the most urgent cases, the DHM found it problematic that the financial resources theoretically available for monument restoration at the local level were not necessarily directed towards high-priority cases. The

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., f. 118.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., f. 75-77; INP-DMI, Procese verbale X, PV nr 1 / January 20, 1966. “Principalele lucrări de restaurare a monumentelor istorice din Republica Socialistă România” [The Main Restoration Works of Historic Monuments in the Socialist Republic of Romania], *Revista Monumentelor Istorice* 1 (1970): 73-78.

²⁰¹ INP-DMI, Procese verbale VII, f. 135-138. At that point, the DHM employed 21 architects, 9 engineers, 7 archaeologists, 4 historians, 17 technicians and around 100 specialized workers.

“beneficiaries” accommodated under the umbrella of the state – various ministries, companies, and a myriad of bigger and smaller institutions – could channel their budgets as they thought appropriate. It was obvious then that the selection of monuments for restoration was not made on the criterion of necessity or value, but rather on the availability of funding and the willingness of such “beneficiaries” to invest in maintenance or restoration works.²⁰²

With few financial resources and authority at its disposal, the DHM tried to promote its agenda while maneuvering through institutional layers, and trying to design strategies through which it could influence decision-making at the local level. In order to counterbalance its incapacity for direct action limited by insufficient funding, the DHM attempted to negotiate with local authorities during the process of project approval. For example, the agreement to erect a new building was conditioned by financing the restoration of an old one.²⁰³

As urban redevelopment projects for central areas started to be subjected for the approval of the advisory board in the mid-1960s, the DHM experts understood that a pragmatically-oriented strategy was needed. As a result, they slowly moved beyond their “ivory tower” approach claiming uncontested authority for the expert opinion, and engaged in pragmatic debates regarding the management of urban space. The urban policies promoted by the regime thus unwillingly produced a shift in the purpose of the preservationist activity. More than saving monuments valuable for the great national

²⁰² Ibid., f. 197.

²⁰³ “I would receive a phone call from the vice-president responsible with the construction activity in Sibiu. ‘Madam, we would like to build a three-story block across the Franciscan Monastery in Mediaș.’ And I would reply: ‘Three-story? And the monastery street is across the street? Why don’t you leave it at two-story, and for this approval repair the monastery wall, as well.’” Interview with architect Eugenia Greceanu, October 20, 2012.

narratives, the preservationists were now required to engage in a very clear manner in disputes regarding the transformation of the urban fabric, and interact with local decision-makers – either political leaders or architect-planners. In the 1965-70 plan, the Department acknowledged that emergency cases were not related only a building's state of physical degradation, but also from threats posed by urban reconstruction plans.²⁰⁴

The list of historic monuments – precisely the instrument that preservationists had considered as essential to their work – proved of little use in arguing for the heritage value of areas proposed for demolition. Since many towns had in fact only few buildings listed, architect-planners implied that unlisted buildings were simply unworthy of preservation.²⁰⁵

Aware of its own structural weaknesses, the DHM tried to find the right constellation of actors that would support the preservationist agenda. As they were more inclined to collaborate with central-level institutions, the transfer of decision-making power towards local authorities, a policy promoted by the state since the late 1950s, was detrimental to its activity. The People's Councils' interest in restoration works would typically be limited to representative buildings with cultural functions, such as theatres or

²⁰⁴ INP-DMI, *Procese verbale VII*, f. 201.

²⁰⁵ Eugenia Greceanu recalled a conflict involving the DHM delegate for Moldova, Titu Elian, and architect Nicolae (Gypsy) Porumbescu over demolition planned in the city center of Suceava. Arguably, Porumbescu asked that Elian would provide him with a list of the protected buildings in the area subjected to a redevelopment plan, stating that those who are not on the list can be legitimately demolished." What was I supposed to do, said Elian; if an established architect talks to me in this way... I gave up." Interview with architect Eugenia Greceanu, Bucharest, October 20, 2012.

palaces of culture.²⁰⁶ While improving cooperation with local authorities was a matter of necessity,²⁰⁷ the preservationists felt short of ideas on how to actually address this issue.²⁰⁸

Practitioners who tried to foster more effective working relations with local decision-makers recall the numerous conflicts with officials and Party leaders, even in cases when they had managed to secure the support of local architects. Among the few instruments that resonated with the politicians' agenda, legislation was definitely one argument that mattered. As Greceanu recalls, local leaders might have cared little about monuments, yet they were certainly sensitive when hearing about the law approved by the Council of Ministers.²⁰⁹

The analysis of the minutes of the advisory board meetings offer numerous case studies for observing the DHM's strategies of negotiations with different actors involved in redevelopment projects of historical areas. A good example was the construction of a new theatre in Târgu-Mureș/ Marosvásárhely. Since some historical building had to be sacrificed in order to obtain the necessary space in this densely-built area adjacent to the main square, the choice fell upon the Baroque Franciscan Monastery. As the construction of the theatre was presented by the local authorities as a high-priority project,²¹⁰ no effort was spared to clear the land necessary for the construction. Approval for demolition was obtained not only from the Council of Ministers,²¹¹ but also from the Roman-Catholic Bishopric and the Vatican, under the motivation that the building was no longer in use by

²⁰⁶ INP-DMI, *Procese verbale VII*, f. 84. In Iași, the buildings of the Palace of Culture and the National Theatre were restored.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, f. 199.

²⁰⁸ Horia Teodoru suggests in 1966 to write appreciation letters to those People's Councils which restored historic monuments INP-DMI, *Procese verbale X*, nr. 1/ January 20, 1966.

²⁰⁹ Interview with architect Eugenia Greceanu, Bucharest, October 20, 2012.

²¹⁰ INP-DMI, *Procese verbale VII*, f. 313.

²¹¹ Eugenia Greceanu, "Delimitarea zonelor protejate urbane in Romania," 28.

the religious order.²¹² In short, the project enjoyed the full support of many actors, from the local administration and the urban planning office²¹³ to the Council of Ministers and the highest ranks of church hierarchy. Even the usual supporter of the preservationists, the State Committee for Architecture, switched sides this time and agreed on the construction of the theatre. The DHM alone resisted the plans. Frustrated that local authorities had fully disregarded its authority, it appealed directly to the highest levels of the power hierarchy. The preservationists feared that a dangerous precedent was created, and similar cases would follow.

At the same time, the case brought to the preservationists' attention the necessity of elaborating a methodology for the systematization of historic centers. The question was no longer about listing and restoring, but about making local authorities acknowledge their responsibilities stipulated in the 1955 legislation. Nevertheless, the suggestions for taking action were again top-down, requiring the endorsement support of the DHM's closest collaborators, the State Committee for Culture and the Arts and the State Committee for Economy and Local Administration. Since the case referred to Târgu-Mureș, with a compact Hungarian population, it was suggested an appeal to the Council of Nationalities and directly to János Fazekas, a high-rank politician of Hungarian origin. Proposals to expose the issue to public scrutiny were regarded with lack of confidence; some voices feared that such an action would have the opposite result, namely speeding up demolition instead of increasing awareness on heritage. Most opinions converged, however, towards

²¹² Interview with architect Ioan Eugen Man, Târgu-Mureș, April 30, 2012. In compensation, a new Catholic church was built elsewhere in the city.

²¹³ The project was promoted by the local Party leader Nicolae Vereș, who proposed even a larger building than the one approved. Man minimized the impact of the demolition, stating that the only losses were the Franciscan Monastery and "a couple of houses". He was also dissatisfied with the opposition of Eugenia Greceanu, restating that the project was of major importance for the city. Interview with architect Ioan Eugen Man, Târgu-Mureș, April 30, 2012.

the urgency of adopting new legislation in the field, that would include specific protection measures for urban ensembles.²¹⁴

Finding an appropriate use for historical structures represented an additional problem, as tourism seemed to have played only a small role in re-imagining their utility. For example, the eighteenth-century Habsburg citadels in Arad, Oradea and Alba-Iulia were still under the administration of the Ministry of Defense, who complained of the unsanitary conditions in these citadels damaging the soldiers' health. The DHM proposed their restoration, together with the reconsideration of their function as a touristic or socio-cultural resource.²¹⁵

Even local museums were sometimes unreliable partners, especially when high-profile projects were at stake. For example, in 1968 the Archaeological Museum in Turnu Severin supported the construction of housing blocks on the area around the Roman theme, on the shore of the Danube, even though the perimeter enjoyed protected status. Although not specified, the project was probably designed for high-profile local bureaucrats and Party leaders. While local authorities could not offer any reasonable argument justifying this particular location, the local Archaeological Museum claimed, despite all contrary evidence, that the area lacked archaeological value.²¹⁶ This conflict questioned the efficiency of designating protection areas in the absence of a stronger legal mechanism for their implementation and management, since the implementation of this measure entirely depended upon the benevolence of local decision-makers.²¹⁷

²¹⁴ INP-DMI, Proceșe verbale XII, PV nr. 3/ February 20, 1970, f. 1-4.

²¹⁵ Ibid., PV nr. 19/ September 29, 1970, f. 1-3.

²¹⁶ According to the members of the DHM Bordenache and Diaconu, similar situations occurred in Constanța and Iași, where excavations had been performed in an unscientific manner just to undermine claims of heritage value. INP-DMI, Proceșe verbale XI, PV nr. 2/ February 6, 1970, f. 1-3.

²¹⁷ INP-DMI, Proceșe verbale XI, PV nr. 2/ February 6, 1970, f. 1-3. A similar situation was encountered in 1976 in Alba-Iulia, where planners proposed to build blocks in the close vicinity of the 18th century

Many cases discussed within advisory board meetings reveal the difficulties experienced by the DHM delegates in resisting proposal advanced by the local authorities. While local bureaucrats displayed a remarkable consistency in playing one card only – the functionalist argument emphasizing the poor living conditions provided by old housing, wrapped in a broader discourse on social utility –, the preservationists struggled to broaden their arguments and negotiation tactics in the context in which the redevelopment of central areas had increasingly turned into a battle field. Any small concession appeared opening the way for a larger-scale destruction potentially leading to considerable loss of historical built fabric. This was the case of the former Hotel Langer in Suceava, proposed for removal from the list and subsequent demolition in 1971 due to street enlargement. One architect observed that this type of requests had become particularly frequent in towns of Moldavia and Wallachia, typically prefiguring large-scale destruction. Such bitter acknowledgement was combined with the observation that monuments represented a scarce resource and therefore “what [was] left need[ed] to be preserved”.²¹⁸ However, the proportions of the loss could not be clearly quantified in the absence of studies documenting the historic and architectural values of these towns. More than the disappearance of individual aesthetic values, demolition was perceived as foreshadowing the loss of “town character”.²¹⁹ In the case of the Langer Hotel in Suceava, the DHM successfully managed to prevent demolition. Moreover, by 1973, local architects in Suceava drew an urban project design

Habsburg citadel. Arguably, the project was of major importance, since the DHM was provided with five different proposals. The arguments of the preservationists insisted on the international heritage value of the citadel. When planners stressed the official requirements to increase densities, the DHM’s official position stated that “the indications received from the superior leadership were wrongly understood and applied”, recommending instead to follow the provisions of the already approved systematization plan. INP-DMI, *Procese verbale* XV, PV nr. 2/ January 21, 1976, f. 3-4.

²¹⁸ INP-DMI, *Procese verbale* XII, PV nr. 2/ March 6, 1971, f. 3-4.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, PV nr. 2/ March 6, 1971, f. 3-4.

project aimed the rehabilitation of the historical quarter around the former Langer Hotel, arguing that this action would improve the town's image through a "return to its nineteenth century appearance". Instead of enlarging the street, as it originally envisioned, the project argued for completely freeing the area from car traffic.²²⁰

Contested cases continued to accumulate on the advisory board's agenda. A lively dispute from 1975 regarding the town of Târgu-Jiu is particularly relevant for demonstrating the claims advanced by different actors involved in such conflicts. The case is exceptional in that the monumental ensemble threatened by a modernization project was not composed of old buildings. It was the war memorial designed by artist Constantin Brâncuși in the 1930s that included the famous Endless Column and two other sculptural ensembles displayed along an axis.²²¹ Preservationists were particularly frustrated because the study they had ordered for the enhancement and integration of the entire sculptural ensemble into the urban landscape had been ignored in the urban redevelopment project drafted by the local architects. Instead of emphasizing the monumentality of the sculptures, the architects proposed to expand the axis to the dimensions of a broad boulevard and to surround it by continuous façades of ten-story high blocks. As it turned out, the solution was adopted following Ceaușescu's visit in Târgu-Jiu, followed by a letter from the Central Committee in which the planners were purposefully required to significantly increase the densities in the central area and enlarge the major boulevards (Rom: *magistrale*) to a width of 40 meters. As the chief-architect of Târgu-Jiu explained, the town's population was expected to reach 100,000 inhabitants within a few years, which required the construction

²²⁰ INP-DMI, *Procese verbale XIV*, PV nr. 1/ January 9, 1973, f. 5.

²²¹ The ensemble, consisting of *Masa Tăcerii* (The Table of Silence), *Poarta Sărutului* (The Gate of the Kiss) and *Coloana Infinitului* (The Endless Column) had been commissioned in 1935 to the artist residing then in Paris, and completed in 1938 as part of a memorial dedicated to the First World War dead.

of 17,000 new apartments. Such an enormous task had to be completed within the shortest time, and not too many locations for the new housing ensembles seemed available. “We are *obliged* to build in the central area.”, he stated quite clearly. Faced with such a bold proposal, the preservationists could barely hide their outrage: the planners fully disregarded the character of the town and the immense value of the Brâncuși ensemble, and secondly, they presented themselves as merely obedient towards the requests formulated by politicians. Even if the goal to build a large number of apartments in a relatively short time-span was legitimate, preservationists argued that the role of planners was to provide political leaders with several alternative designs, taking into account the complexity of the local context. They insisted that the axis needed to be maintained in the spirit imagined by Brancuși: a pedestrian axis surrounded by small-scale houses, allowing the column to stand out and dominate the landscape. To surround it by high-rise blocks would mean to totally annihilate the column’s imposing presence. As art critic Ion Frunzetti put it:

When deciding where to locate his column, Brancuși did not have Detroit in mind, but a Romanian town which is semi-rural, and the human proportion of such a town. Târgu Jiu is a town which needs to develop; it is normal that a political leader will think about this. But the political leader also thinks about the past of its country, and its spiritual value; he must keep in mind that here we are talking about a small sacrifice to the general norm of density and accept this situation.²²²

Although all the actors involved in the debate knew that Ceaușescu’s direct recommendation was the ultimate guideline to which it was difficult to object, the preservationists continued to look for ways to go around it. Barbu Brezeanu, an art critic who had witnessed Ceaușescu’s visit in Târgu-Jiu, declared that the situation should not be interpreted in such rigid terms. As the visit was brief, the systematization project had been presented very schematically and in haste, as well. He argued that a proper presentation

²²² INP-DMI, Procese verbale XV, PV nr. 2/ February 2, 1975, 6.

emphasizing the importance of the axis could be convincing also for the head of the state. Vasile Drăguț mentioned the national legislation protecting the Column, and suggested the preservation of the old town character as an alternative to the monotony of the typical new socialist urban landscape routinely criticized by Ceaușescu. The preservationists insisted their suggestions were not against the general goal of urban systematization, and that solutions that would meet also the “technical” requirements could be found. Discussions with local political leaders, as well as securing the support of other “partner” institutions such the Artists’ Union were considered essential for finding a more appropriate solution for the case.

The representatives of the Artists’ Union emphasized the internationally-acknowledged value of Brâncuși’s ensemble, labelling it as “sublime heritage” (Ro: moștenire sublimă). “Any discussion regarding the systematization of the town appears secondary compared to this [aspect].”, stated art critic Dan Haulică. He continued:

The column owes its grandeur precisely to the context of the city: a small church, the houses, all the surrounding townscape. Our intervention must be delicate, it has to exist without being obvious. This proposal — a continuous building front — is a serious disloyalty to the spirit of the place, the value of the monument, and the uniqueness of the Târgu-Jiu ensemble.²²³

According to Haulică, neither should the axis be transformed into a pedestrian alley for Sunday walks, since the entire space had been conceived with a memorial function in mind, and not a recreational one. Importantly, even the employees of the local Committee for Socialist Culture and Education called the architects’ proposal “a sacrilege”. As Haulică reminded, people who had worked with Brâncuși in the 1930s were still alive and could be consulted for a proper integration of the ensemble into the urban design

²²³ Ibid., PV nr. 2/ February 2, 1975, 9.

proposal for the reshaping of the city center. Other voices within the DHM argued, rather unconvincingly, that the letters from the Central Committee should not be taken ad literam, but rather as indications subject to interpretations. Similar cases that resulted in outcomes advantageous for preservation agenda provided them with confidence that a convenient compromise could be reached, if only the actors involved were open to negotiation.²²⁴

No compromise seemed immediately available in Târgu-Jiu, however. The authors of the redevelopment project insisted that economic indicators were the sole criterion to be taken into consideration by the authorities: “Within this perimeter we cannot discuss any other densities than those recommended. [...] we have to demonstrate that we can build [here] 4,000-6,000 apartments.”²²⁵ At the same, Grigore Ionescu, the most authoritative voice among the preservationists, made it also clear that the dispute was far from over: “Do not make such statements that it cannot be done; we must reach an acceptable solution.”²²⁶ The architects’ lack of flexibility just increased the degree of frustration on the side of preservationists. Sculptor Ovidiu Maitec concluded that “hundreds of years’ were needed “to solve practical problems, but we will never be able to get another monument as the one left by Brâncuși.”²²⁷

The preservationists’ efforts bore fruit, at least in the short run. New consultations with Voia’s superior, architect Teodor Cocheci from the Institute for Urban Design in Craiova took place in January 1976. Both parties agreed on a new solution, in which the axis would remain pedestrian, the valuable buildings would be preserved, and the

²²⁴ Architect Cristian Moiescu, member of the DHM, mentioned for example that the intention to construct twelve-story blocks in the historic center of Târgoviște was dropped following “uninterrupted discussions with local authorities”. Ibid., PV nr. 2/ February 2, 1975, 12.

²²⁵ Ibid., 14.

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ Ibid., f. 15.

boulevard would be completed with infillings incorporating decorative elements inspired by the local vernacular. The architect promised that the entire area would be conserved as an open-air museum with protected character.²²⁸

Such cases are illustrative for the ways in which the DHM strategies of negotiation transformed along the years, being sharpened by the radicalism of reconstruction projects proposed by local authorities. The members of the advisory board were not only able to successfully oppose projects, but also attracted local architects on the preservationist side, convincing them to elaborate alternative urban design proposals that would be respectful towards the heritage value of the local built environment. Although the institution's capacity of action was limited on the practical level, its specialists found ways to expand their influence in decision-making and persuade those actors which were in the position to model the plans. While many initiatives failed, the DHM experts remained positively motivated by successful ones, but also by the sense of urgency.

3.8. The Historic City Center in Focus

The professional interest in the preservation of historic centers reached a peak in the mid-1970s. In 1976, the journal *Arhitectura* edited an entire issue titled *Historic Centers. Urban Restoration*, which featured comprehensive projects for the restoration and revitalization of historic city centers such as Brăila, a port on the Danube and Sfântu Gheorghe/ Sepsiszentgyörgy in the Szekler region in Transylvania. More than arguing for the preservation of old buildings, these projects called for the functional revitalization of public spaces and the recreation of old town atmosphere, with renovated buildings and

²²⁸ Ibid., PV nr. 1/ January 8, 1976, f. 3-4.

street furniture designed according to historic models, as well as the resuscitation of traditional spaces of sociability such as coffeehouses and restaurants.²²⁹

The design of such projects was certainly informed by the reconceptualization of old districts as spaces for economic growth at the international level, through the selective rehabilitation of built structures and functional revitalization.²³⁰ Still, for local decision-makers in Romania, such an argument seemed irrelevant. More convincing was perhaps the suggestion that the preservationist agenda met the support of Ceaușescu himself, since, during the discussions around the 1975 systematization plan for Bucharest, the head of the state had arguably criticized unjustified demolition, asking to preserve “everything that is good and valuable”.²³¹

Divergences regarding the value of historic centers and the appropriate interventions for their revitalization continued to divide the preservationist camp. Well into the mid-1970s, Curinschi kept on writing on the Polish and German post-war reconstruction, as if this was the most up-to-date trend in urban preservation. Certainly, such examples served well the principle of selective reconstruction that he passionately promoted.²³² Other preservationists, however, increasingly advocated the heritage value of urban ensembles. Drăguț, removed as head of the DHM in 1975, emphasized that the focus of heritage preservation was moving beyond “exceptional monuments”, to include “those

²²⁹ The studies were published as part of the issues of *Arhitectura* 27.4 (1976), entitled “Centre istorice. Renovare urbană” [Historic Centers. Urban Rehabilitation].

²³⁰ Steven Tiesdell, Taner Oc, Tim Heath, *Revitalizing Historic Urban Quarters* (Architctural Press, 1996), vii, 4-6.

²³¹ Drăguț, “Centrele istorice și monumentele de arhitectură,” 9.

²³² Gheorghe Curinschi, “Restaurarea urbanistică. Geneza unei discipline de graniță între restaurarea monumentelor și sistematizare” [Urban Restoration. The Genesis of a Border Discipline between Monuments Restoration and Systematization], *Arhitectura* 24.4 (1976): 10-14. Using the examples of Warsaw and Gdansk, Curinschi explained that much of the housing stock has been replaced with modern buildings, which reproduce the volumes and the façades of the previous structures.

structures of mediocre value” that, despite their aesthetic banality, create a specific urban image.²³³

Professionals such as Curinschi remained, nevertheless, influential. For example, Curinschi coordinated the project of delimitating areas of historic and artistic interest in Bucharest, initiated in 1974. As an element of novelty, sociologists and psychologists were invited as part of the research team consisting mostly of students at the Institute of Architecture. The articles published in *Arhitectura*, reporting on the results of the project, reflect the contradictions in the opinions of different researchers. From the architects’ side, Curinschi’s voice was recognizable in describing Bucharest as “a city whose historical urban structure presents aspects which are contradictory and difficult to understand,”²³⁴ since the town had developed (at least until 1850) in the absence of fortifications and urban regulations. Also, he believed that old building situated in peripheral districts could be disconsidered by the surveys, despite their potential historical or artistic value. According to Curinschi’s formulation “not all old buildings can constitute a historic area”.²³⁵

²³³ Drăguț, “Centrele istorice și monumentele de arhitectură,” 9.

²³⁴ Serban Popescu-Criveanu, Sanda Voiculescu and Liviu Damian, “Unele aspecte metodologice, istorice și social-psihologice legate de studiul centrului orașului București (I)” [Some Methodological, Historical and Socio-psychological Aspects connected to the center of Bucharest (I)], *Arhitectura* 24.4 (1976): 19-23.

²³⁵ Cristea, Sandu, Popescu-Criveanu, Voiculescu, “Studiul de delimitare a zonei istorice a orașului București” [Study for the Delimitation of the Historic Area of Bucharest], *Arhitectura* 25.6 (1977): 38

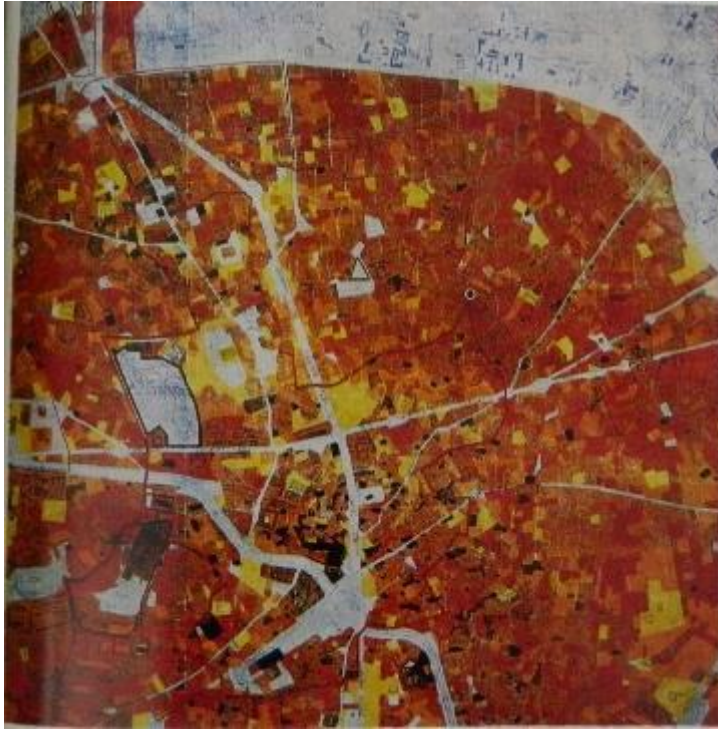


Fig. 3.6. The age of buildings in the historic area of Bucharest, according to the 1976 survey. Buildings before 1880 are marked in black, and those after 1945 in yellow. The different shades of orange demonstrate that most constructions had actually been built between the two specified dates.

Source: *Arhitectura* 28.6 (1977): 41.

The buildings surveyed were situated on a surface of 1600 hectares, corresponding to Bucharest's extension in 1800. Four criteria were taken into consideration: historical, functional evolution, urbanistic and architectural, and memorial. Richly illustrated with maps and other visual documentation, the results of the surveys represented a scientific basis that the preservationists aimed to use for demanding the protection of Bucharest's historic areas through clearly formulated construction regulations. In addition, they also hoped to stimulate a professional debate on the integration of heritage values in plans for the functional modernization of the city center.²³⁶ However, urban redevelopment projects for central areas continued to be elaborated and implemented in the absence of appropriate conceptual and legislative framework, being shaped by short-term needs, individual initiatives and different instances of material scarcity rather than long-term visions and considerations towards what was expected from the city center. By demanding a discussion

²³⁶ Ibid., 38-47.

on this topic, the young architects also questioned the limits of urban planning, and the larger goals behind this activity.

Sociologists and psychologists used Kevin Lynch's methods and investigated the residents' perceptions and experience of the city center.²³⁷ Contrary to what was commonly stated by architects and policy-makers alike, namely that the city center had to be better integrated into the socialist city, the study clearly asserted that "the center is a subsystem with a certain degree of independence towards the urban system, a sub-system which functions according to its own rules." Also, contrary to the static model of the city promoted by architects, sociologists pointed to the fluidity of space, and the dynamic processes shaping people's spatial experiences.²³⁸

In the mid-1970s, urban revitalization projects drawn for various towns across the country increasingly took into consideration social aspects, as well. Architects began to acknowledge the residents' emotional attachment to the old center, and the sense of civic pride it generated. They argued that restoration and rehabilitation of old buildings and public spaces would animate the social life of the center, helping to recover functions that had made the center into a lively and attractive place for the local community. Although the dilapidation of the building stock created a desolate impression, the negative effects of poor maintenance were not irreversible.

A good example of this approach is a project designed by Jeni Brandt and Georgeta Nicolae, two architects from Craiova, the largest city in south-western Romania.

²³⁷ Popescu-Criveanu, Voiculescu and Damian, "Unele aspect metodologice, istorice si social-psihologice," 19- 23.

²³⁸ Liviu Damian, Șerban Popescu-Criveanu, Luminița Panciu, Sanda Voiculescu, "Unele aspecte metodologice, istorice și social-psihologice legate de studiul centrului orașului București (II)" [Some Methodological, Historic, Social and Psychological Aspects regarding the Study of the Center of Bucharest], *Arhitectura* 25.6 (1977): 47-52.

The two architects documented not only the historic and artistic values displayed by the buildings in the commercial center, but emphasized also that the densely-built streets contributed to the charm of the old town, reinforced the feeling of local belonging, and provided a visual identity for the city.²³⁹

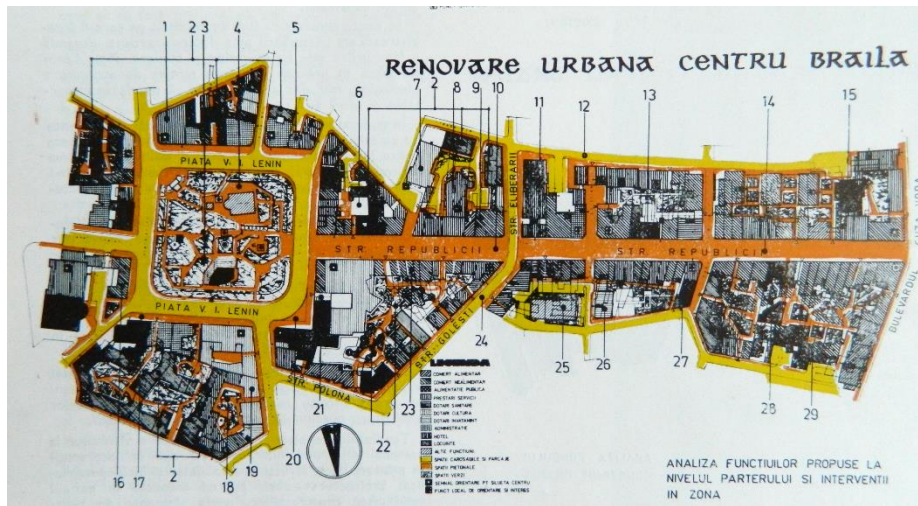


Fig. 3.7.
Revitalization
proposal for the
city center of
Brăila.

Source:
Arhitectura

Two similar projects were prepared in 1974-75 by Bilciurescu's team. One project regarded the town of Brăila, a port on the Danube rebuilt in the mid-nineteenth century on a plan with concentric rings, and the second one, the town of Sfântu Gheorghe, situated in the Szekler region. The studies investigated the spatial morphology of streets and squares, arguing that "monuments [...] cannot be perceived [...] isolated, since they belong to an urban system that makes one appreciate the local urban specificity."²⁴⁰ The value of local built heritage, they argued, could be found not only in the quality of the architectural design, but also in the small decorative details produced by local craftsmen, such as iron fittings and carpentry. Brăila's architecture reflected an intense commercial activity,

²³⁹ Jeni Brandt, Georgeta Nicolae, "Municipiul Craiova. Aspecte ale integrării centrului istoric în remodelarea zonei centrale" [The City of Craiova. Aspects of Integrating the Historic City Center in the Remodeling of the Central Area], *Arhitectura* 24.4 (1976): 30-31.

²⁴⁰ Viorel Oproescu, "Zona centrală Brăila" [The Central Area of Brăila], *Arhitectura* 27.4 (1976): 38-39.

displaying a variety of architectural styles and influences (e.g., neo-Classicism, neo-Baroque, Secession). However, most of the building stock was in a precarious state due to inappropriate use and lack of proper maintenance in the postwar period. The survey of individual apartments revealed that the simplified parameters used by local authorities to measure living standards were far from reflecting the reality correctly. The surveyed area was inhabited by 545 families of 1,462 persons in total, resulting in a medium value of 11.4 square meters per person. Still, most apartments lacked modern amenities, which made living conditions difficult: among the 545 housing units, 165 had no service area (i.e., bathroom, kitchen, toilet), only 93 had bathrooms and 370 were provided with kitchens.²⁴¹ The installation of modern utilities was thus imperative, as part of the buildings' functional re-valorization. In their designs, architects used strategies such as building on the top of low-rise structures and the pastiche to increase the district's urban appearance and boost its aesthetic appeal, especially since the ground-floors of late nineteenth century buildings had been deprived of original ornaments for the practical needs of the commerce. New housing space could be provided in low-rise blocks built behind the main streets,²⁴² while the commercial and leisure functions would be revitalized and connected to tourism. A wide range of street furniture and design elements such signs, kiosks, and lamps in a historic style would be installed in order to recreate the turn of the century atmosphere and revive local memory. With an eye to the financial aspects, Bilciurescu claimed that savings could be made if the rehabilitation and restoration works would be conducted in a coordinated manner. Discussions with tenants and owners constituted part of the research: "Generally we had the opportunity to get to know in detail the everyday life in the area,

²⁴¹ Ibid.

²⁴² About 800 apartments. Ibid., 40.

and [understand] how it fit within the overall activity of the city.”²⁴³ The inclusion of the human element into the picture brought new arguments for preservation. The architects argued that the rehabilitation of the central district would bring back a sense of lost civic pride and dignity, creating an urban image that would make its residents proud. They declared enthusiasm towards the implementation of the project, since it enjoyed the support of local authorities, as well.²⁴⁴

Although more modest in terms of architectural monumentality, the buildings in the central area of Sfântu Gheorghe presented similar structural problems. More than in Brăila, architects insisted on inserting infillings in order to increase building and population densities. However, the new architecture was designed with consideration of the local context, by reinterpreting structural and decorative elements such as roof framings, using the pastiche and adding street furniture.²⁴⁵ In these projects, architects paid particular attention to meeting the density indicators imposed through the systematization law, and aimed to show that a preservationist approach could accommodate the officially established criteria for urban redevelopment.²⁴⁶ Moreover, it was argued that the projects met the provisions inscribed in state and party documents, which required architects to “combine in a harmonious manner” modern and traditional architecture. Blurry terms such as “tradition” and “local specificity” were interpreted in the sense of preserving the old town

²⁴³ Ibid.

²⁴⁴ Virgil Bilciurescu, “Renovarea urbană. Metodologie aplicată” [Urban Renovation. Applied Methodology], *Arhitectura* 27.4 (1976): 36-37.

²⁴⁵ Viorel Oproescu, “Zona centrală Sfântu Gheorghe” [The Central Area of Sfântu Gheorghe], *Arhitectura* 27.4 (1976): 38-39.

²⁴⁶ Oproescu, “Renovare urbană zona centrală a oraşului Târgu Secuiesc” [Urban Renovation of the Central Area of Târgu Secuiesc], *Arhitectura* 28.6 (1977): 56-64. The project aimed at maintaining the street system specific to the town, as well as the valuable old buildings, while inserting a considerable number of low-rise blocks in an architecture resonating with the local context. This compromise solution between old and new would also meet the density parameters required through the systematization law.

character, while instigating contextually-sensitive neo-historicist buildings.²⁴⁷ In fact, the two projects for Brăila and Sfântu Gheorghe were approved by the Party leadership²⁴⁸ which raised hopes that such initiatives could be also implemented.

Although the preservationists advertised such designs as models to be followed, the majority of urban redevelopment projects submitted to the DHM's approval either fully disregarded the heritage aspect, or provided a poor documentation restricted to major monuments.²⁴⁹ Projects for urban revitalization along preservationist lines were perceived as a burden by the local authorities, since they required additional funding and complicated unnecessarily the urban design proposals. Building surveys produced by local planners conveniently took into account only functional aspects (e.g., wear of the building, quality of construction materials, number of inhabitants and living surface) and disregarded heritage value. Preservationists repeatedly insisted that such aspects should be also documented,²⁵⁰ and reminded about the state and party directives on the preservation and valorization of monuments and urban ensembles. Even when introduced in the systematization plan, preservationist measures could be easily disregarded in situ.²⁵¹ As a last resort, the DHM required municipalities to prepare and submit basic documentation consisting of photographs and surveys in case of demolition.²⁵²

²⁴⁷ INP-DMI, Procese verbale XV, PV nr. 7/ July 13, 1976, f. 4. The case of Buzău (1976).

²⁴⁸ Traian Chițulescu, "Renovarea urbană. Prime abordări" [Urban Renovation. First Approaches], *Arhitectura* 27.4 (1976): 36.

²⁴⁹ INP-DMI, Procese verbale XV, PV nr. 1/ January 30, 1974, f. 2.

²⁵⁰ For example, the systematization project for Târgoviște was rejected since it lacked any documentation regarding architectural and historical values. Ibid., PV nr. 7/ July 13, 1976, f. 4.

²⁵¹ As architect Oteteleşanu, a DHM delegate, observed, the systematization plans from the mid-1960s tended to be more considerate towards the inherited built fabric, while the interventions proposed in the mid-1970s disregarded the initial urban planning schemes. Ibid., PV nr. 5/ May 20, 1976, f. 1-2.

²⁵² Ibid., PV nr. 6/ April 17, 1974, f. 2; PV nr.8/ June 6, 1974, f. 2.

Despite efforts to design revitalization project and influence policy-making at the local level, preservationists were less successful in implementing the new concepts of urban and architectural heritage. Their activity focused on the restoration of outstanding examples of vernacular architecture, such Casa Melic (Melic House) in Bucharest or Hanul Dumbrava (The Dumbrava Inn) in Sibiu, which anyway had to be justified by finding an appropriate functionality for the restored buildings.²⁵³ These operations were presented as “rehabilitation (Ro: amenajarea) of a building in an advanced state of wear and tear”²⁵⁴, which illustrated the exclusive emphasis on functional obsolescence. The strategy of borrowing the planners’ functionalist language and presenting restoration as a solution for reconverting old houses into usable spaces indirectly downplayed the heritage value of such buildings.

The exhibition organized in October 1975 as part of the European Year of Architectural Heritage showed that the activity of Romanian preservationists still focused on the restoration of individual monuments of national significance (e.g., the Roman mosaic from Constanța, Neamț Citadel, Comana Monastery). Although projects for the revitalization of old towns were included in the exhibition, as well, they did not stay in focus. Organized by the Romanian National Committee for UNESCO at the headquarters of the Romanian Institute for Foreign Cultural Relations, the event was clearly staged to demonstrate to the international audience the state’s commitment to monument protection.

²⁵³ Eugen Chefneux, “Restaurarea Casei Melic” [The Restoration of the Melic House]; Reinhard Fleischer, “Sibiu-Hanul Dumbrava” [Sibiu- the Dumbrava Inn], *Arhitectura* 24.3 (1973): 46.

²⁵⁴ Tiberiu Gyenes, “Restaurant cu specific într-o clădire cu uzură avansată” [Restaurant in a Buildings in Advanced State of Wear], *Arhitectura* 24.2 (1973): 19.

Although heritage remained part of Romania's strategy of self-representation, the heritage concepts used were to a certain extent outdated.²⁵⁵

3.9. Heritage Reframed- From Buildings to Artworks

Although the historic town started to occupy a prominent place on the preservationist agenda, a series of institutional and legislative changes implemented in the 1970s significantly weakened the authority of the DHM. In 1974, the Central Committee of the RCP discussed the institutional organization of monument protection in Romania. The context was quite ordinary: the high political leadership was required to approve the composition of the national ICOMOS committee.²⁵⁶ On this occasion, Ceaușescu complained about the fragmented institutional landscape of the heritage field, and argued for the creation of a “unified institution for the preservation of historic, artistic goods”. Although the head of the Committee for Socialist Culture and Education pointed out that the Department for Historic Monuments was already in charge with such issues, the answer did not seem to satisfy Ceaușescu, who demanded “a governmental agency promoting a unified policy”.²⁵⁷

²⁵⁵ “Expoziția monumente istorice din România” [The Exhibition Historic Monuments in Romania], *Arhitectura* 27.1(1976): 4.

²⁵⁶ The ICOMOS committee was constituted in 1970, the year when Romania joined the organization. Consisting of seven members, the committee initially functioned as part of the DHM, being constituted of architects (Richard Bordenache, Grigore Ionescu, Virgil Bilciurescu and Ștefan Balș), art historians (Vasile Drăguț, Emil Lăzărescu), and one historian (Constantin Bălan). In 1974, its composition became more heterogeneous, with only two of the members (i.e., Ionescu and Drăguț) maintaining their positions. Otherwise, the interdisciplinarity of the institution during the 1970s, as well as the exchange of generation brought in other figures (e.g., art historian Răzvan Theodorescu, archaeologist Radu Popa). ANIC, Fond CC al PCR, Secția Cămară, 67/1974, f. 119-120.

²⁵⁷ Ibid., f. 23-24. Ceaușescu also voiced his dissatisfaction regarding the involvement of Department for Religious for Cults in heritage problems.

Further on, a new law for national cultural heritage was elaborated and passed in 1974. The document brought a significant shift in the conceptualization of heritage, putting movable cultural goods at the center of political interest. In a period when the global oil crisis had started, political leaders in Romania understood that cultural goods represented an economic value that could, and should have been exploited by the state. The concept “national cultural heritage” (Ro: patrimoniu cultural național), referring in particular to the movable heritage, started to be used in an almost standardized manner. As a result, the entire heritage field was reorganized around the need of identifying, recording and preserving artworks or similar artifacts with historic or artistic value.

The institutional reorganization that followed the promulgation of the law reflected a new emphasis on identifying objects belonging to the national cultural heritage, as well as the political importance of this activity. The responsibility was to be shared between a decision-making body (the Central Commission), and a specialized institution (the Department), the latter with ramifications at the local level (district-level Offices for Heritage). The Central Commission coordinated the national-level activity of recording, protecting, and conservating cultural goods and decided, on the basis of documentation provided by the Department, which objects would be selected as part of the national cultural heritage. While its members included several specialists,²⁵⁸ the key presence of delegates of the Ministry of the Interior and Finance was indicative of the institution’s main purpose.

²⁵⁸ Proposed members: art historian Vasile Drăguț, director of the Department for National Cultural Heritage, art historian Emil Condurache from the Academy, archaeologist Radu Florescu, architect Cristian Moisescu from Department for National Cultural Heritage, art historians Ion Frunzetti, Razvan Theodorescu, architect Grigore Ionescu, historians Dinu Giurescu and Florian Georgescu (director of the National History Museum). Ibid., f. 23.

The new Department was initially envisioned as continuing the activity of the former DHM,²⁵⁹ since it was organized around the same nucleus of specialists. However, although historic monuments were not fully disregarded, the focus of the institutional activity was re-directed towards movable heritage. The Department preserved its traditional tasks i.e., remained responsible for monument restoration, and was consulted in matters regarding listed monuments. However, in the new organizational structure, the role of museums as institutions managing large quantities of heritage goods became more significant.

At the local level, heritage offices and restoration laboratories were organized in museums. The offices were put in charge with identifying and recording the goods belonging to the national cultural heritage, theoretically on the basis of declarations submitted by organizations and private owners. Historic monuments, on the other hand, were considered as representing a different category. Their management fell under the responsibility of People's Councils and their subordinated units, which were required to finance maintenance and restoration works. The tasks of local Offices for Heritage regarded only supervision of such operations.

A common perception regarding the 1974 legislation states that it was only aimed to confiscate art objects from individual owners, in particular from those Romanian citizens leaving the country.²⁶⁰ However, archival documents show that the Party leadership was perfectly aware that many such objects had been appropriated by Party activists or different state organizations along the years. A note sent to all Party, state and mass organizations

²⁵⁹ ANIC, Fond CC al PCR, Secția Propagandă și Agitație, 43/1974, f. 12-26.

²⁶⁰ Radu Ciuceanu, Daniel Barbu, Octavian Roske, "Condiția monumentului sub regimul communist, I" [The Approach to Monuments under the Communist Regime], *Arhivele Totalitarismului* 8. 1-2 (2000): 234.

specifically required them to declare if they were in possession of such goods; failure to comply would result in legal action.²⁶¹

In 1976, the Central Committee evaluated the first results of the 1974 legislation. In the two years following the adoption of the law, over 9 million heritage objects were recorded, among which 8 million became part of museum collections. An additional number of 400,000 objects belonged to the Department of Religious Cults, while 700,000 were identified as still in private property. This last category in particular was to be appropriated by museums, since their preservation and safety could arguably be more efficiently provided in an institutionalized form.²⁶² According to a report presented by the Minister of the Interior, a number of 30,000 citizens, owners of valuable artefacts, had been already checked. These actions lead to the confiscation of 61,000 “interesting works [of art]”.²⁶³ Another 5600 persons were identified as having received “in custody” such goods. The discussion provided Ceaușescu with a new opportunity to voice criticism against the appropriation of heritage objects previously belonging to the ruling classes by members of the Party and state apparatus.

We have treated the issue in quite a barbarian way. It is a national good, it belongs to the people and it must be treated accordingly [i.e. to be appropriated by the state], even if it had previously belonged to the monarchy. They [members of the Party and state apparatus] said: let’s take the carpets, and the paintings, but let *us* take them, so the traces of the monarchy would disappear.²⁶⁴

²⁶¹ ANIC, Fond CC al PCR, Secția Propagandă și Agitație, 45/1976, f. 4.

²⁶² The operations of identification were conducted by the employees of the Ministry of Interior, who used denunciations in order to identify as many cases as possible. It was forbidden that works of art would be taken out of the country- the old ones, under the pretext they could suffer deteriorations, and the ones belonging to contemporary artists- since they were suspected of “poor artistic value [that could] damage the prestige of Romanian art.” ANIC, Fond CC al PCR, Secția Propagandă și Agitație, 45/1976, f. 123.

²⁶³ 4500 works of art were confiscated at the border; checks were made including at foreign ambassadors leaving Romania.

²⁶⁴ ANIC, Fond CC al PCR, Secția Cancelarie, 84/1976, f. 71-73.

Although built heritage was not central to this legislation, the question of monument restoration remained on the political agenda. Preservation was essentially motivated by the need to provide material evidence supporting the great narratives of national history. The discussions within the Central Committee suggested that decisions regarding which architectural heritage should be restored would no longer belong to architects, but to politicians, and to those historians in charge with elaborating the historical narratives in national-socialist key. From the politicians' perspective, restoration works undertaken during the socialist period were aimed at illuminating aspects regarding the great themes of the national history, such as state-building and national unity.²⁶⁵ The medieval monuments which have been privileged also by preservationists in view of their age and aesthetic qualities could be all subsumed to this category: the monasteries founded by Moldavian princes Stephen the Great and Petru Rareș, the medieval citadels and fortresses (e.g., Târgoviște, Curtea de Argeș), and the Romanian monuments in Transylvania (e.g., the churches in Vad, Strei). Worthy of consideration were also the monuments "belonging" to the national minorities, such as the citadel in Târgu-Mureș, and traditional architecture of outstanding quality. It was established that Transylvania would constitute a priority for restoration works in the 1980s, with a focus on the Dacian citadels, and other monuments that could demonstrate the Romanian presence in the province throughout the centuries. Needless to say, the function of built heritage as understood by Romanian politicians, namely to support the process of state and nation-building, was

²⁶⁵ In his analysis of Romanian nation-building during state socialism, Dragoș Petrescu argues that "a decisive stage in creating the Romanian nation was achieved only in the early 1980s." (p. 524) Dragoș Petrescu, "Building the Nation, Instrumentalizing Nationalism: Revisiting Romanian National-Communism, 1956-1989", *Nationalities Papers* 37:4 (2009), 523-544. See also Katherine Verdery, *National ideology under socialism: identity and cultural politics in Ceaușescu's Romania* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).

rather reminiscent of the 1880s than the 1980s. Moreover, the selection of monuments for restoration largely disregarded local needs and priorities. The decision was taken from the hands of specialists, and received purely political connotations. The report signed by the Minister of Interior and the head of Committee for Socialist Culture and Education concluded in an absurd, self-congratulatory tone that, by adopting the new legislation, “Romania is among the most advanced countries in the field, its experience being studied and followed by a series of [unidentified] states”.²⁶⁶

The reorganization of the Department for National Cultural Heritage (former Department for Historic Monuments) in December 1977 remains controversial. Given its radical form and the strong political subordination of the new institution, many specialists considered this decision to be the equivalent of a dissolution. However, no adequate explanation has been yet provided. Many specialists recall an anecdote, which refers to the dissatisfaction of the presidential couple following a visit to a monastery in Moldavia. Since the Ceaușescu couple arguably associated the preservationist movement with monasteries, the lack of hospitality during this visit had direct repercussions on the decision to halt funding for restoration.²⁶⁷ While one might be inclined to look at this anecdote with skepticism, the discussions taking place within the Central Committee seem to indicate that there might be a grain of truth to this story. Monasteries occupied a prominent place in Ceaușescu’s definition of (built) heritage. He insisted, for example, that monasteries should be taken away from the use of monastic orders, restored and transformed into museums.

²⁶⁶ ANIC, Fond CC al PCR, Secția Cancelarie, 84/1976, f. 118-129.

²⁶⁷ Interviews with Eugenia Greceanu (October 20, 2012, Bucharest), Géza Starmüller (November 29, 2012, Cluj-Napoca), and the article of Gheorghe Mândrescu, “Desființarea Comisiei Monumentelor Istorice din Romania la 1 decembrie 1977” [The Dissolution of the Commission for Historic Monuments in Romania on December 1st, 1977], *Studia UBB Historia Artium* 55.1 (2010): 142.

However, not all of them should enjoy such treatment; preserving a few examples for museological purposes would be sufficient; the rest were considered simply redundant.²⁶⁸ Given his disregard for heritage (possibly based on the lack of familiarity with the topic), it is possible that the decision to dissolve the Department for National Cultural Heritage had been taken already before that fateful visit. Although the final decision was more likely the result of a combination of factors, Ceaușescu's word might have played a decisive role.

Another event which arguably had a major impact on the Department's dissolution was the earthquake of March 1977, which resulted in major destructions in Bucharest and other main cities such as Iași. While the large scale of destruction reinforced perceptions regarding the fragility of old buildings, it is questionable whether any heritage value had actually been attached to historic towns by the high political circles in the first place. The discussions within the CC seem to indicate the definition of heritage as actually very narrow, and the old buildings constituted disposable quantity within it.

According to Greceanu, the disintegration of the DHM was also due to internal structural problems, such as the mismanagement of restoration sites and financial irregularities that became more serious in mid-1970s. The situation was complicated by the failure to appoint a new director after Drăguț left the DHM in 1975.²⁶⁹ These structural problems were speculated by the political side and, in January 1977, state preservation was put under the direct supervision of Tamara Dobrin, vice-president of the Committee for Socialist Culture and Education.²⁷⁰ Greceanu recalls that rumors regarding the dissolution of the DHM emerged in the summer of 1977. In her opinion, equally harmful for the DHM

²⁶⁸ ANIC, Fond CC al PCR, Secția Cancelarie, 84/1976, f. 73.

²⁶⁹ Eugenia Greceanu, "Anii '60, "epoca de aur" a activitatii Direcției Monumentelor Istorice," 40. Interview with architect Eugenia Greceanu, Bucharest, October 19, 2013.

²⁷⁰ INP-DMI, Procese verbale XV, meeting January 6, 1977, f. 1.

was not only the dismissal of its expert body, but also the dispersal of the teams of skilled workers. Restoration sites could be theoretically managed by other state agencies; however, there was little hope to find the necessary skilled workforce elsewhere. Officially, the institutional disintegration was presented as a reorganization: five heritage experts were transferred to the Economic Department of the Ministry of Culture, which was renamed the Economic Department for National Cultural Heritage in 1977.²⁷¹

A closer look into the activity of the Department for National Cultural Heritage in 1977, now headed by Dobrin, shows a significant shift in the nature of proceedings as compared with the early years of the decade. The meetings neither took the form of expert debates any longer, nor did they focus on specific issues regarding policies and interventions into the built fabric. Rather, they became a dialogue among experts who adhered to a variety of theoretical positions and politicians who demonstrated poor understanding of heritage problems.²⁷² For example, after historian Dinu Giurescu raised the issue of (the inadequacy of) legislation that supported private owners in the restoration of their houses,²⁷³ Dobrin asked a question so irrelevant that it was probably never heard during the DHM meetings before: “What are the implications of the great industrial objectives of the five-year plan for the activity of the Department for National Cultural Heritage?” Dobrin’s further statements indicate that she considered restoration only when

²⁷¹ Interview with architect Eugenia Greceanu, Bucharest, October 19, 2013.

²⁷² Politicians seemed to follow the line discussed in the CC meetings, focusing on the political use of monuments in illustrating the great narratives of national history. In this sense, the Department was required to focus less on restoration of churches and more on monuments “showing the continuity [of the Romanian nation]”. Wooden churches, for example, serve to make territorial claims. As Vasile Drăguț pointed out, in “1918 they were milestones for delimiting the state borders.”

²⁷³ The issue was further addressed by Grigore Ionescu and Vasile Drăguț, who emphasized that all socialist states have solved this problem, offering credits repayable in 25 years and construction materials at convenient prices to the owners in view of restoration (Hungary, USSR, Poland, and even Albania). INP-DMI, Procese verbale XV, PV nr.9/ November 21, 1975, f. 1-2

it was coupled with museification, and was keen to make sure the use of buildings proposed for restoration corresponded this goal.²⁷⁴

The meetings following the earthquake in March 1977 demonstrate equally the growing concerns expressed by preservationists regarding demolition, and the authorities' disregard of expert opinion. The Enei Church in Bucharest was demolished without consultation with the commission, and despite objections formulated individually by some of its members. The preservationists insisted in vain that they should be consulted before the elaboration of systematization plans "to prevent irreparable mistakes."²⁷⁵ This position was repeated in a letter to the Propaganda Section of the Central Committee, similarly without any effect.²⁷⁶

In the documents of the Department for National Cultural Heritage, the dissolution of the institution was marked by a note signed "comrade Tamara Dobrin" explaining that the institution had been replaced with the one she was "personally in charge". From this point onwards, the focus of advisory board meetings would increasingly shift towards art objects: either church mural paintings to be restored, or artefacts confiscated from private owners to be evaluated.²⁷⁷

The activity of the institution continued during the 1980s, though the meetings became less regular. In 1982, the members of the Department²⁷⁸ met seven times,²⁷⁹ always under the supervision of one of the heads of the Committee for Socialist Culture and

²⁷⁴ Ibid., January 6, 1977, f. 1-7.

²⁷⁵ INP-DMI, Procese verbale XV, PV nr. 6, May 18, 1977, f. 1-2.

²⁷⁶ Ibid., doc. 5506/May 25, 1977.

²⁷⁷ INP-DMI, Procese verbale XVI, meeting from May 29, 1978, f. 1. Similar discussions: September 14, 1979.

²⁷⁸ Among them, historian Florian Georgescu, art historian Răzvan Theodorescu, architect Aurelian Trișcu, art historian Vasile Drăguț, architectural historian Grigore Ionescu etc.

²⁷⁹ INP-DMI, Procese verbale XVI, meeting from January 25, 1982.

Education: either Suzana Gâdea or Dobrin. Although restoration projects continued to be discussed, very limited funding was available to support them.²⁸⁰ Numerous complains referred to historic monuments in an advanced state of deterioration or subjected to destruction, some of them as a consequence of restoration works suddenly interrupted in 1977,²⁸¹ others because of poor maintenance and inappropriate use.²⁸² Furthermore, local authorities seemed even more reluctant than previously to engage with questions of monument protection.²⁸³

While in 1985 new additional lists for monuments of culture were analyzed and validated by CC of the RCP,²⁸⁴ reports presenting the local-level activity of Heritage Offices offered a superficial picture.²⁸⁵ And yet, despite all odds, even as late as November 1989, some local architects continued to prepare studies for the preservation of historic centers.²⁸⁶

3.10. Conclusion

This chapter has documented the rise of the historic city on the preservationist agenda in the 1960s and 1970s Romania, focusing on questions of conceptualization, institutional organization, legislation, and policy.

²⁸⁰ Preservationists tried to suggest using some restored buildings as museums illustrating the favorite themes of the officially-promoted historical narratives. For example, a medieval building in central Bistrița, known as Sugălete, could be transformed into a museum documenting the relations between Transylvania and Moldavia. Ibid., meeting from May 24, 1983, f. 3.

²⁸¹ Theoretically, the People's Councils were entrusted with the continuation of restoration works. In most cases, however, the sites were simply abandoned.

²⁸² INP-DMI, Procese verbale XVI, doc. November 31, 1984.

²⁸³ Ibid., doc fn- regarding circulara CCES nr 4373/1984.

²⁸⁴ Ibid., doc. Propuneri pt planul de munca al compartimentului de avizare din DEPCN pe anul 1985.

²⁸⁵ Ibid., doc fn.

²⁸⁶ Ibid., meeting from November 24, 1989. Proposal for Baia Mare prepared by local architects.

Informed by local legacies and perceptions on the historic city, as well as international approaches to the topic, the articulation of the professional discourse was speeded up by the pressures on the inherited built environment in rapidly-industrializing cities. While the Transylvanian towns benefited from a well-deserved interest, the evolution of the concept was more spectacular in reference to the towns in the former provinces Moldavia and Wallachia. In just ten years, from 1966 until 1976, studies with various degrees of complexity were undertaken in order to document the historical and architectural values of towns previously labelled as “large villages”, demonstrating the survival of pre-modern traces in the urban fabric, and arguing for the value of local vernacular. Framed from an urban design perspective, the architects’ proposals for the old districts shifted their focus from questions of hygiene and housing comfort, characteristic to the 1960s, to the revitalization of traditional functions and public spaces in the 1970s.

The projects were, however, mostly the result of individual initiatives rather than being coordinated by an adequate institutional structure. Despite plans for designing an interdisciplinary organism benefiting from stronger political support, the activity of the Department for Historic Monuments remained throughout the period restricted to its traditional role, namely that of restoring the major monuments of national importance. The dominance of the architects during the 1960s was contested by other expert groups. In the 1970s, politically-motivated reorganizations increased internal conflicts and led in the end to the fragmentation of its expert body. Following the 1974 legislation, the Department was put under firm political control, and nearly disintegrated in 1977.

Updated lists of historic monuments remained trapped in the drawers of various bureaucratic agencies, and never made it into a new law. Area-based conservation was

introduced in the mid-1960s, yet it took the form of agreements with local leaders, and were similarly never incorporated into a piece of national-level legislation. In this context, the only legal instrument at the preservationists' disposal remained the much-criticized list promulgated in 1955. Finally, although new legislation was indeed passed in 1974, it proved of little help, since it shifted the focus from immovable to movable heritage, and institutionalized the politicization of the heritage field.

Until 1977, the preservation of built environment seemed to have been gaining a firmer ground in Romania in terms of conceptualization, steps towards the listing of a growing number of buildings and ensembles, and promises for a more sensitive heritage policy. Despite the shortage of institutional and legal instruments at their disposal, preservationists attempted to influence decision-making regarding the redevelopment of historic districts and towns: While their projects for urban revitalization had little chance to be implemented, the preservationist efforts took rather the form of negative action. In some cases, the destruction of areas of architectural and historical value was indeed prevented. The members of the DHM often engaged in exhausting negotiations with local architects, planners, and politicians, trying to expand the limits of their institutional power. As an alternative strategy, they invoked "partner institutions" with more authority over local administration, international institutions such as UNESCO, or even tried to reinterpret the words of president Ceaușescu to their advantage. However, it has to be re-stated that officially, the DHM had no word in questions of urban redevelopment; the field was under the exclusive control of the local administration. And yet, throughout the period, despite internal divisions and personal conflicts, the preservationists continued to struggle, and

used the little influence conferred to them by the problematic 1955 legislation to make a case for preservation in front of local leaders.

The structural problems which accumulated along the years, together with internal disagreements among specialists, I would argue, contributed to a fragmented approach, which was the result of individual, rather than institutional initiatives. When looking at the DHM's activity, one is left with a sense that, along the way, some opportunities to reinforce the authority of the institution have been missed. Despite their enthusiasm and dedication, preservationists were poorly equipped to deal with powerful and resourceful local administrations. One observation made by art historian George Oprescu within one 1956 meeting, remained, perhaps, valid throughout the whole period of three decades: "If we were a serious²⁸⁷ commission, we would enjoy the respect of People's Councils as well."²⁸⁸

²⁸⁷ The adjective should be understood in the sense of well-organized.

²⁸⁸ INP-DMI, Academia RPR. Comisia, Procese verbale II, f.10.

CHAPTER FOUR. THE TRANSYLVANIAN (MEDIEVAL) TOWN: CONTEXTUAL CONFORMITY AND MODERNIZATION IN CLUJ

In the two last decades, Cluj (currently Cluj-Napoca, previously Kolozsvár/Klausenburg) has become an appealing case study for scholars interested in exploring competing narratives over urban public space and how they are entangled with questions of ethnicity and nationalism.¹ In particular, Rogers Brubaker's *Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town* has made Cluj into one of the representative cases for East-Central Europe. As shown by Brubaker and Feischmidt, among others, the conflicts over public space in 1990s Cluj had heritage claims at their core. Hungarian minority groups responded to the Romanian mayor's nationalist discourse by occupying the city's main square and the Saint Michael Church, while the mayor initiated archaeological excavations in the same square in order to unveil traces of the Roman town, presented as indicative of Romanians' primordial presence in Transylvania.²

Both sides used built heritage, situated either above or under the ground, as a concrete material and visual support for their claims on the city. In the light of recent history, heritage questions are deeply imbedded into nationalist discourses and practices in Cluj. Although these studies are not framed from this perspective, they would fit perfectly

¹ Rogers Brubaker et al., *Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006); Margit Feischmidt, *Ethnizität als Konstruktion und Erfahrung: Symbolstreit und Alltagskultur im siebenbürgischen Cluj* (Hamburg: LIT Verlag, 2002); Holly Case, *Between States: The Transylvanian Question and the European Idea during World War II* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009).

² Feischmidt, *Ethnizität als Konstruktion*, 45-61; Brubaker et al., *Nationalist Politics*, 136-146.

into one of the major research directions in heritage studies – that addressing the question “Whose heritage?”³

Although applying this methodological focus would be somehow justified and even expected in the light of the recent literature, my study largely dissociates itself from this approach. I will summarize my motivations, aware that ethnicity is one of the subjective factors shaping one’s research. Although the historiography on Cluj is heavily embedded into nationalist disputes, recent years have witnessed the welcomed emergence of studies pursuing a more neutral agenda. The work mostly of architects, this body of research focused on exploring the production and transformation of the city’s built environment,⁴ particularly the materiality and management of the urban space rather than the associations and symbolic meanings constructed by various groups. My methodological approach goes in this direction, by focusing on actors that shaped the agendas of urban modernization at the local level. Architects, art historians, visual artists, on the one hand, and politicians and bureaucrats on the other one, of Romanian or Hungarian origin, usually demonstrated an understanding of local conditions and considered historical legacies when thinking about the city’s path of development during the socialist period. The sources I collected during my research, including the oral history interviews, made only occasional reference to conflicting claims over the built heritage, and, moreover, framed them from a critical point of view. The heritage value of the city

³ J.E. Tunbridge and Gregory John Ashworth, *Dissonant Heritage: The Management of the Past as a Resource in Conflict* (Chichester; New York: J. Wiley, 1996).

⁴ Irina Băldescu, *Transilvania medievală. Topografie și norme juridice ale cetăților. Sibiu, Bistrița, Brașov, Cluj* [Medieval Transylvania. Topography and Legal Norms of the Citadels Sibiu, Bistrița, Brașov, Cluj] (București: Simetria, 2012); Ioana Mihaela Agachi, *Clujul modern: aspecte urbanistice* [Modern Cluj. An Urban Planning Approach] (Cluj-Napoca: UT Press, 2009); Vlad Sebastian Rusu, *Evoluția urbanistică a Clujului interbelic* [The Urban Transformation of Interwar Cluj] (Cluj-Napoca, 2015); Gheorghe Vais, *Clujul eclectic: programe de arhitectură în perioada dualistă (1867-1918)* [Eclectic Cluj. Architectural Programs of the Dualist Period (1867-1918)] (Cluj-Napoca: UT Press, 2009).

and its architecture was a matter of consensus rather than conflict, shared by professionals regardless of ethnicity or place of origin (most architects who worked for decades in Cluj originated from other regions of Romania). The locally-produced Romanian historiography of the period sought to “appropriate” the past through a Marxist approach that focused on material culture and socio-economic history, leaving aside the traditional narratives centered on questions of ethnicity.⁵ The change of paradigm, however, was relatively short lived. In the 1970s, Ceaușescu’s policies turned overtly nationalistic, resulting also in the gradual suppression of references to the Hungarian heritage and culture. The clearest reflection of this turn was the renaming of Cluj in 1974, by adding the Dacian/Roman “Napoca” to the official Romanian name already in use.⁶ I found it significant, however, that the changes in the official policy did not alter the perception of professionals of either ethnicity on the value of the built heritage. Therefore, while acknowledging that Romanian-Hungarian dissensions did remain a highly sensitive topic throughout the period, this chapter will engage only sporadically with questions of contested heritage as embedded in nationalist agendas.

This chapter will explore the larger topic of this thesis – the place of the historical built environment in the plans for socialist urban reconstruction – and its concrete manifestation in the case of Cluj. The specificity of this case study can be considered to a certain extent representative for the formerly fortified towns in Transylvania. As previously mentioned, it can be argued that professionals – planners and preservationists – shared a

⁵ Ștefan Pascu and Viorica Marica, *Clujul medieval* [Medieval Cluj] (București: Meridiane, 1969).

⁶ The example of Cluj was not unique in the initiative to rename places; Turnu Severin, a town at the Danube border with Serbia also had its Roman name ‘Drobeta’ added. See Gabriel Moisa, *Istoria Transilvaniei în istoriografia românească, 1965-1989* [The History of Transylvania in the Romanian Historiography, 1965-1989] (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2003), 69. For an analysis of the public manifestations accompanying the change name of Cluj, see Feischmidt, *Ethnizität als Konstruktion*, 83-88.

consensus not only regarding the value of the old town, but also regarding the appropriate types of intervention. Of course, this did not exclude disagreements or different value judgments about particular buildings or urban areas. This chapter challenges the assumption that the historic center has been “spared” from redevelopment projects destroying the inherited built fabric, showing instead that interventions have been based, in most cases, on certain legacies that have informed the transformation of the city through the decades. The planners’ approach to the historical built environment in the case of Cluj favored contextual conformity and (at least at a theoretical level) sanitation measures – actions that were considered appropriate for a historical town with tradition. The interventions in the historic center, however, were influenced by other local views regarding the transformation of the city, which threatened the survival of the entire built fabric, e.g., increasing the height of buildings in order to create a “more urban” landscape, or privileging monumentality and functional qualities over age when selecting the buildings to be maintained.

This chapter will attempt to draw a broader picture of the major directions that affected the transformation of the city’s built fabric during the socialist period, while focusing on smaller case studies illuminating particular aspects of the policies towards the historic center. A number of questions will be addressed: What principles did architects follow in systematizing the urban space, and how were they informed by economic policies? How the city’s architectural heritage conceptualized, and how did these concepts relate to actual policies? Which factors articulated the officials’ approach towards the historic center and how were they modeled by shifts in central policies and local conditions? How did actors involved in processes of heritage-making negotiate their

agenda within the broader modernizing goals of the regime, and how did they use the available opportunities and limitations in order to promote preservationist agendas?

4.1. Introducing Cluj

During the socialist period, the historical built environment of Cluj constituted an integral part of the city's strategies of self-representation. Accounts on contemporary achievements were often introduced with references to a local past presented with pride. Usually framed from a "Romanian perspective", the official narrative would typically start with the Roman times,⁷ continue by enumerating overlapping layers of history reflected in various elements of the townscape – the regular street network of the Roman *castrum*, the fortification system and division of plots from medieval times, the Gothic towers, the architectural forms of Baroque and classicism expressed in the city's most representative buildings.⁸ Even if the fortifications had been demolished during the nineteenth century, the image of the medieval town surrounded by walls, towers, and bastions remained strongly imprinted in the public memory, as one of the more important examples of built heritage in Cluj and the symbols of its development in accordance with a "European model."⁹ The construction of this urban image was strongly anchored in a well-documented historiography, which built largely on the monograph authored by Jakab Elek and published in the 1870s-1880s.¹⁰

⁷ Although the Roman period was also part of the Hungarian narratives, in the Romanian discourse the issue was central to claims of historical continuity. Brubaker et al., *Nationalist politics*, 89.

⁸ "Realizări clujene" [Achievements in Cluj], *Arhitectura* 24.2 (1973): 38.

⁹ Ștefan Pascu, ed., *1850: Clujul istorico-artistic* [1850: Historic and Artistic Cluj] (Consiliul Popular al Municipiului Cluj, 1974), 7-8.

¹⁰ Jakab Elek, *Kolozsvár története* [The History of Cluj] (Buda, 1870-1888), 5 vol. Further volumes on the city's history made good use of his work; even Ștefan Pascu quotes Elek extensively in his *Istoria Clujului* (1974). Ștefan Pascu, ed., *Istoria Clujului* [The History of Cluj] (Cluj-Napoca, 1974).

Founded in the thirteenth century by German colonists,¹¹ the medieval town largely overlapped the area of the Roman *municipium* Napoca, the ruins of which were probably used by the first inhabitants as a valuable source of stone. Presenting many similarities with towns founded in the same period in Bohemia and Moravia, medieval Cluj had a regular plan in a chessboard scheme, with some of the streets overlapping the Roman ones. Surrounded by fortifications starting from the early fifteenth century, the town was divided into five districts, with two of the central islands being occupied by the church and the cemetery. The town's prosperity in this period was reflected in the monumentality of the new constructions, in particular the Gothic churches, two of which were raised by mendicant orders. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the German character of the town started to be overshadowed by a growing Hungarian presence,¹² and the town turned progressively into a stronghold of Hungarian culture. The late-medieval townscape apparently produced a positive impression on travelers, contemporary accounts stating that: "The entire city is built out of stone, with the most beautiful houses and streets."¹³

The transfer of Transylvania's capital from Sibiu to Cluj at the end of the eighteenth century led to significant alterations of the medieval built fabric, especially through the construction of monumental aristocratic palaces and representative cultural institutions.¹⁴ The gradual demolition of the fortifications during the nineteenth century perhaps best embodied the moment of rupture with the medieval city image. Following

¹¹ A settlement had existed before the coming of the German colonists, who were invited to settle in Transylvania by the Hungarian king Stephen V, after the Mongol invasion in 1241.

¹² Băldescu, *Transilvania medievală*, 278-317.

¹³ Samuel Goldenberg, *Clujul în secolul XVI* [Cluj in the Sixteenth Century] (București: Editura Academiei RPR, 1958), 39.

¹⁴ Agachi, *Clujul modern*, 102-103.

more prominent examples such as Vienna,¹⁵ the area formerly occupied by the city walls was redeveloped as a succession of squares and green spaces making the transition from the medieval core to the suburbs.¹⁶ Turned functionally obsolete, the medieval walls were considered a burden due to the high maintenance costs, impediments to traffic and urban expansion.¹⁷ Despite protests from the Society of Historians, whose members suggested that the towers should be preserved and adapted to new uses, pragmatic reasoning prevailed.¹⁸ Following a practice also used in Vienna,¹⁹ the image of the last surviving towers was thoroughly documented in pictures and surveys captured by local photographer Ferenc Veress and architect Lajos Pákei.²⁰

Towards the mid-nineteenth century, the modernization of the urban fabric started to be coordinated by a specialized Commission for Construction (from 1838) and Beautification (beginning with 1842).²¹ The rise of experts and expertise translated into the production of surveys investigating the built fabric, followed by the elaboration of a set of coherent and periodically renewed construction regulations aiming to control development.²² Surveys carried out in the mid-nineteenth century focused not only on

¹⁵ Carl Schorske, *Fin-de-siècle Vienna: politics and culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 24-115.

¹⁶ Agachi, *Clujul modern*, 166-167.

¹⁷ Gheorghe Vais, "Urban Planning in Cluj in the Age of Dualism (1867-1918)," *Philobiblon* 14 (2009): 451-52.

¹⁸ I thank Katalin Pataki for this reference.

¹⁹ [http://adtplus.arcanum.hu/hu/view/ARCHERT_1870_003/?pg=13&layout=s&query=SZO%3D\(kolozsv%C3%A1r\)](http://adtplus.arcanum.hu/hu/view/ARCHERT_1870_003/?pg=13&layout=s&query=SZO%3D(kolozsv%C3%A1r),), accessed May 21, 2016.

²⁰ Harald Robert Stühlinger, "The Visual Revival of 'Old Vienna.' The Photographs of the City Wall of Vienna in 1858," presentation at the 6th AISU Congress (Assoziacione Italiana di Storia Urbana), "Visible and Invisible," Catania, September 12-14, 2013.

²¹ Ioana Rus, *Conservarea monumentelor în Transilvania în perioada 1945-1977* [Monument Preservation in Transylvania, 1945-1977] (PhD diss., Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, 2012), 162. Lajos Pákei was the only local architect with formal training, having studied in Budapest, München, and Vienna. A representative of late eclecticism, Pákei compiled at the end of his career an album with architectural monuments from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, unfortunately lost after his death. Guttman Szabolcs, "Pákei Lajos," *Pavilion* 8 (1993): 49-52, quoted in Vais, *Clujul eclectic*, 131-133.

²² Rusu, *Evoluția urbanistică a Clujului interbelic*, 38.

²³ *Ibid.*, 69.

keeping records of all constructions, but also investigated, under Viennese influence, the most emblematic architectural monuments.²³ Focusing equally on questions of sanitation and aesthetics,²⁴ urban regulations at the end of the nineteenth century clearly stated that construction projects could only be designed and executed by trained specialists.²⁵



Fig. 4.1. The Palace of Justice in 1925. One of the representative public buildings constructed in an eclectic style at the turn of the twentieth century.

Source: The Digital Library, BCU Cluj-Napoca

Although it had only 18, 000 inhabitants in 1828, the town grew considerably during the Austro-Hungarian period, its development being facilitated by the construction of the railway in 1870.²⁶ Cluj developed to a lesser extent as an industrial center,²⁷ , however preserving its traditional cultural (i.e., scientific and artistic) and administrative functions.²⁸ While infrastructure (e.g., sewer, a water supply, public baths, street lighting)

²³ Agachi, *Clujul modern*, 49.

²⁴ Aimed to promote public over private interest, construction regulations concerned mostly street alignments and building height standards. Ibid., 71.

²⁵ Ibid., 63-65.

²⁶ Ibid., 24-36.

²⁷ The city's industrial activity in the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century was based on the Railway Workshops (founded at the opening of the railway in 1871), the beer factory, and the production of shoes and tobacco. Most factories had under 500 workers. The largest industrial unit in 1948 was the Shoe Factory (Uzinele Dermata, later re-baptized Clujana), which employed at that time 3,700 workers. A significant part of the workforce was employed in small workshops. Artur Lakatos, "Industria orașului Cluj în ajunul naționalizării" [The Industry of Cluj before Nationalization], *Historia Urbana* 19 (2011): 204-222.

²⁸ Agachi, *Clujul modern*, 127.

represented the backbone of urban modernization,²⁹ architectural projects focused on targeted areas rather than following a grand urban planning scheme. As it was generally the case in the region, the state's role remained essential in fostering urban modernization in the absence of a strong bourgeoisie pushing for economic growth.³⁰ Architect Gheorghe Vais has shown in his work that the government in Budapest made a significant contribution to the creation of a modern city image, by providing both financial support and professional expertise for constructing monumental public buildings such as the university, the university clinics, and the national theatre. State investments were doubled by private developers, who financed the construction of several centrally located luxury apartment buildings. However, given the state's major contribution, the architectural style of the new buildings remained rather conservative, with historicism and eclecticism being predominant in the architects' choices.³¹

During the interwar period, following the promulgation of the agrarian law under the Romanian administration, the city expanded horizontally through the construction of suburbs of single-family houses.³² Parceling for the construction of individual homes with gardens was made for the benefit of both clerks and workers.³³

²⁹ Ibid., 56.

³⁰ Jan C. Behrends and Martin Kohlrausch, "Introduction," in Jan C. Behrends and Martin Kohlrausch, eds., *Races to Modernity: Metropolitan Aspirations in Eastern Europe, 1890-1940* (Budapest; New-York: Central European University Press, 2014), 7.

³¹ Vais, *Clujul eclectic*; Vais, "Urban Planning in Cluj in the Age of Dualism," 457.

³² Diana Mihnea, *Orașele Transilvaniei în perioada interbelică. Implicații ale legislației de împrumut* [Transylvanian Towns during the Interwar Period. The Consequences of the Agrarian Law] (PhD diss., Universitatea de Arhitectură și Urbanism "Ion Mincu", București, 2015); for the extension of the city's built area, see Octavian Buzea, *Clujul: 1919-1939* [Cluj 1919-1939] (Cluj: Ardealul, 1939), 274.

³³ The working-class districts were situated in the vicinity of the industrial area developed along the railway lines, north of the city. Vlad Rusu, *Evoluția urbanistică*, 29.



Fig. 4.2. Panorama view of Kolozsvár/ Cluj, circa 1910.

Source: The Digital Library, BCU Cluj-Napoca

Given the availability of garden plots, a significant number of the inhabitants living in the suburbs maintained agriculture as their main occupation, reinforcing the image of a semi-rural periphery.³⁴

Although the historic center clearly differentiated itself from the peripheries through the higher density of constructions, the quality of infrastructure, and wider streets,³⁵ it still lacked a coherent image. In the words of Vlad Rusu, the central area could rather be described as a hybrid, “collage-town,” displaying a specific juxtaposition of monumental edifices and modest houses. Church towers continued to dominate the cityscape, as most structures remained low-rise, usually with one story above the ground floor.³⁶ In the absence of a master plan, the construction regulations elaborated by a professional body consisting mostly of engineers³⁷ remained the main instrument for

³⁴ As late as 1930, approximately 6,000 persons living in Cluj declared having agriculture as a main occupation. Ibid., 50.

³⁵ The streets in the central area had been enlarged to a width of 20-30 meters, while at the periphery the standard was around 10 meters. DJCAN, Fond Primăria Municipiului Cluj-Napoca (hereinafter PMCN), Serviciul tehnic, dosar 16 (Inventarul străzilor și piețelor municipiului Cluj) [The Inventory of Streets and Squares in Cluj].

³⁶ Rusu, *Evoluția urbanistică*, 43. At the turn of the century, the city had over 500 houses with one floor, situated especially in the city center. Ștefan Pascu, ed., *1850: Clujul istorico-artistic*, 8.

³⁷ Primăria Municipiului Cluj, *Regulament de construcții și alinieri pentru municipiul Cluj* [Building and Street Alignment Regulations for the City of Cluj] (Cluj, 1933?), 3-4. The structure of the Technical

monitoring urban development during the interwar period.³⁸ Regulations aimed to reverse this “archaic” urban image and increase the central area’s “urban character” by encouraging taller constructions, as well as by creating more unitary built fronts in order to increase the visual coherence of the city center.³⁹ However, except for the construction of the Orthodox Cathedral on the site of a small park at the historic center’s eastern margin,⁴⁰ no other major project came to modify the inherited townscape during the interwar years.

4.2. The Housing Crisis in the Postwar Years

The bombings during the Second World War targeted infrastructure and industry in particular, affecting mostly the area around the railroad station, where industrial units were conveniently grouped around the transportation lines.⁴¹ Housing and urban infrastructure were also not spared considerable destruction. Significant damages occurred during the June 1944 bombings, on the street connecting the station with the city center (at that point known as Horthy Miklós út, later renamed Calea Horea). According to data collected by the municipality, 385 buildings were destroyed (80% of which were single-

Service remained the same throughout the interwar period, despite political instability. Marian Lazăr, *Primarii Clujului 1919-2012* [The Mayors of Cluj 1919-2012] (Cluj-Napoca, GPO Graphics, 2013), 32.

³⁸ Although the master plan was work in progress during the interwar period, it appears that it never took a final form. The correspondence between the Technical Office of the Municipality and central authorities in Bucharest shows that various documentation was being collected for this purpose. DJCAN, Fond PMCN, Serviciul tehnic, 6/ 1934, f. 412. Architect Vasile Mitrea notes that significant steps in this direction were made in 1933, 1938, and 1940-44 – probably attempts towards having a final version completed. Mitrea, “Ocazii pierdute,” [Lost Opportunities], in Pănescu, ed., *Cluj-Napoca în proiecte*, 58.

³⁹ Rusu, *Evoluția urbanistică*, 70, 73.

⁴⁰ Liliana Iuga, “Building a Cathedral for the Nation. Power Hierarchies, Spatial Politics and the Practice of Multi-ethnicity in interwar Cluj, Romania (1919-1933),” in Eike-Christian Heine, ed., *Under Construction. Building the Material and the Imagined World* (Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2015), 95-108.

⁴¹ Pascu, *Istoria Clujului*, 451.

story) throughout the city, and approximately 850 suffered damages.⁴² In the years following the end of the war, the most stringent problems that had to be addressed by the municipality concerned the reconstruction of destroyed infrastructure (e.g., railways, water pipes, electricity lines, the bridges over the Someș River)⁴³ and the repair of damaged industrial units, as well as securing a food supply for the city.⁴⁴ In this context, the reconstruction of buildings ranked low on the officials' list of priorities; more substantial support for this purpose could be secured only in 1948.⁴⁵

With the coming to power of the communists, public discourse tended to shift focus from the historic center to the periphery. Interestingly, however, the targeted areas were not the semi-rural districts such as Mănăştur,⁴⁶ nor the working-class neighborhoods, but poor areas situated at the edges of the city center, publicly stigmatized as slums. As one article put it, when walking through the city center “every visitor is stuck by the unaesthetic contrast of the constructions. On Horea Street, buildings are beautiful and perfectly aligned to the street, whereas behind Hotel Astoria one sees small, irregularly displayed hovels, where dirt and promiscuity reign.”⁴⁷ More than a discursive device seeking ideological legitimacy by denouncing urban inequality, the slum became the focus of municipal intervention aimed at transforming the poor into respectable citizens by

⁴² Lajos Asztalos and Annamária Papp, 1944. június 2. - Kolozsvár bombázása [Second of June, 1944. The Bombing of Cluj], (Cluj-Napoca: Exit, 2014), 23, 35-55.

⁴³ *Lupta Ardealului*, December 25 and 31, 1948.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, July 26, 1948.

⁴⁵ A loan of 50 million lei was granted to support the reconstruction of severely damaged buildings, according to projects designed by the Technical Department within the municipality. Lazăr, *Primarii Clujului 1919-2012*, 186. However, more than ten years after the bombings many damaged houses had still not been repaired. DJCAN, Fond PMCN, 8/1953-56, f. 117.

⁴⁶ An article about Mănăştur refers to a district that had been incorporated into the urban perimeter in 1895 as “the village.” *Lupta Ardealului*, October 4, 1947.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, April 17, 1948.

improving their living conditions.⁴⁸ Such actions were an integral part of postwar modernization policies, which used state-supplied housing as a means for accommodating rapid urban growth and addressing the already existing housing shortages, while promoting “middle-class habits, mass consumption and moderate political behavior, especially among the poor.”⁴⁹ In Cluj, the Party’s paternalist attitude was manifested in the relocation of low class families from old, crowded houses with “small and moldy rooms” to working class districts equipped with public utilities. In their new homes, “the poor population would be taught to work honestly and live in a clean environment.”⁵⁰ Dirt, disease, and decrepit houses were seen as specific embodiments of inequality, which had to be physically eliminated in order to transform society:

Every family moving in the new houses is cleansed together with all the furniture. In this district, they will start a new life. [...] If the old neighborhood is a creation of the bourgeois-landlord regime, the new and healthy district is the beginning of an extensive action aimed at continuously improving the living standards for all working people [...].⁵¹

Although the scope of these actions was at this point very modest in scale, they are still indicative of the ways in which the Party made use of providing housing and the management of urban space as a means to excise power and transform society.⁵² While aiming at reversing the negative effects of capitalism on the city’s poorest inhabitants, local

⁴⁸ Maxim, *The New, the Old, and the Modern*, 26-40. I discuss Maxim’s argument in Chapter 1.3.

⁴⁹ Leandro Benmergui, “The Alliance for Progress and housing policy in Rio de Janeiro and Buenos Aires in the 1960s,” *Urban History* 36. 2 (2009): 305. For the scope of the postwar mass housing program, see also Florian Urban, *Tower and Slab: Histories of Global Mass Housing* (Abingdon, Routledge, 2012); Miles Glendinning and Stefan Muthesius, *Tower Block. Modern Public Housing in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland* (Hew Heaven and London, Yale University Press, 1994).

⁵⁰ *Lupta Ardealului*, September 11, 1948.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² David Crowley and Susan E. Reid, “Socialist Spaces: Sites of Everyday Life in the Eastern Bloc,” in David Crowley and Susan E. Reid, eds., *Socialist Spaces. Sites of Everyday Life in the Eastern Bloc* (Oxford, New-York: Berg, 2002), 1-22.

authorities engaged in actions which were in many ways similar to the slum clearance approach which became common practice in the postwar years.⁵³

Local newspapers provide significant evidence that housing occupied an important role in the propaganda from the beginning of communist rule. In practical terms, however, the construction of new homes in fact was poorly funded. Small accomplishments, such as the construction of seventy-two housing units in the working-class Iris district in the late 1940s, were covered extensively in the press,⁵⁴ turned into significant events for the city's public life. When the first two blocks in Iris were finished on August 23, 1948, they were inaugurated in the presence of the mayor and Party representatives. Emphasis was put not so much on the apartments themselves – rather modest, with one or two rooms – but on the utilities they had been provided with. Gas and electric light, true embodiments of modernity and technological progress, might have been lacking in many buildings in the city center, yet could be now found at the periphery.⁵⁵ Providing utilities filled a double purpose: on the one hand, it was a means of gaining popular support⁵⁶ based on the communists' agenda of progress through technology, on the other hand, it embodied a functionalist view according to which actions of urban improvement should be translated not only into designing beautiful buildings and public spaces, but also into providing superior living standards for the inhabitants. Equally

⁵³ For the US renewal program, see Peter Hall, *Cities of Tomorrow: an intellectual history of urban planning and design in the twentieth century* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996), 247-254.

⁵⁴ *Lupta Ardealului*, April 23, 1948.

⁵⁵ In a visual arrangement typical at the time, the articles were accompanied by photos contrasting the hovels, representative for the old district, to the new blocks. *Lupta Ardealului*, May 14, 1948.

⁵⁶ DJCAN, Fond PMCN, 7/1953, f. 81. Local Party members considered that the promises made to citizens had to be fulfilled in order not to jeopardize the “political prestige” of the People's Council.

promoted at the central and local level,⁵⁷ functionalist concerns dominated the authorities' discourse and policies.

The small scope of these solutions offered little relief to the actual housing crisis, which was accentuated at the beginning of socialist industrialization due to the increase in population⁵⁸ and the virtual absence of investment in this direction. The confiscation and redistribution of existing housing space, the only alternative in the absence of other resources, had a history that started during the war through the activity of the Commission for Requisitions.⁵⁹ After the nationalization decree, the institution was reorganized as the Office for Goods and Housing Space (1949)⁶⁰ and the Office for Housing Administration (Rom: Întreprinderea de Locuințe și Localuri) starting with 1950.⁶¹

However, similarly to other cases discussed in the literature,⁶² nationalization measures only ease the housing crisis to a small extent. The gravity of the situation was

⁵⁷ The functionalist argument was central to Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej's vision of urban improvement. He openly stressed concerns for functionality in urban planning at a meeting of the Council of Ministers in November 1953, one year before Khrushchev's criticism of socialist realism. See Emanuela Grama, *Impenetrable Plans and Porous Expertise: Building a Socialist Bucharest, Reconstructing Its Past (1953-1968)*, EUI Working Papers, Max Weber Programme 2012-2013, 4.

⁵⁸ *Lupta Ardealului*, May 14, 1948. At the end of the 1940s, the population had increased with approximately 10,000 inhabitants compared to the beginning of the decade, while the housing capacity remained almost the same (if it had not decreased as a result of the war). In addition, Cluj was a regional center for graduate education which had to accommodate every year about 20,000 students, who were also counted as tenants. An article pointing out to this problem even stated that "Students ask to close the pubs and transform them into student dormitories." *Lupta Ardealului*, January 14, 1947.

⁵⁹ The activity of the Office for Housing Requisitions was controversial and arguably not very effective, leading to many complaints. On the one hand, the clerks were supposedly disregarding the principle of class struggle by maintaining friendly relations with the people considered to be exploiters, while, on the other hand, the head of the office was accused of leading the institution with dictatorial powers.

⁶⁰ Lazăr, *Primarii Clujului*, 160.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 197. The buildings in state property administrated by the Office included, besides housing, also public spaces for consumption and sociability, such as restaurants, bars, hotels, shops. Since I could not find an appropriate equivalent in English, in this thesis I will use as official denomination "The Office for Housing Administration". Housing distribution belonged to a different municipal agency.

⁶² Liviu Chlecea, "The 'Housing Question' and the State-Socialist Answer: City, Class, and State Remaking in 1950s Bucharest," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 36.2 (2012): 281-296; Mihaela Șerban, "The Exceptionalism of Housing in the Ideology and Politics of Early Communist Romania (1945-1965)," *Europe-Asia Studies* 67.3 (2015): 443-467.

signaled by reports about people living on the premises of their workplaces. Medical facilities appear to have been especially preferred, since they consisted of rooms equipped with beds. While young male doctors were more likely to resort to this solution,⁶³ extreme cases were also recorded, such as that of a citizen who received accommodation at the Hospital for Contagious Diseases.⁶⁴

The Office for Housing Administration attempted to maximize the use of available resources by increasing the occupation rate of nationalized buildings, prescribing one room per family as the norm.⁶⁵ In order to cut through the number of applications, the housing redistribution process openly discriminated against unemployed persons, including pensioners, who were not entitled to receive housing space.⁶⁶

As shown by the documents of the People's Council, operations of restructuring the inner spaces of centrally located nationalized buildings continued well into the first half of the 1960s.⁶⁷ Three main types of interventions were usually made: producing new living space – including in basements – providing access to common facilities (bathroom or kitchen), as well as reconfiguring the inner structure of buildings in order to create “apartments” which would fit into the existing “minimal norms” – an operation unofficially known as “partitioning” (Ro: compartimentare).⁶⁸ It appears that the strategies of

⁶³ DJCAN, Fond Comitetul Regional al PMR, Arhiva de Partid, Secția Știință și Cultură, Fond 13, f. 88; DJCAN, Fond PMCN, 7/1953, f. 23-25. The solution suggested in these cases was not to find more appropriate accommodation, but to move more persons into one room in order to save space.

⁶⁴ DJCAN, Fond PMCN, 8/1953-56, f.45.

⁶⁵ In cases when rooms occupied by single people, it was suggested that they should be forced to accept a roommate.

⁶⁶ DJCAN, Fond PMCN, 7/1953, f. 111-112.

⁶⁷ The buildings listed for restructuring are situated in the city center, especially on Samuil Micu, P. Groza, Dozsa streets. Ibid., 35/1961, f. 52, 173, 300-301; and, 40/1962, f. 368.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 58/1964, f. 308; Interview with architect Vasile Mitrea, November 27, 2012, Cluj-Napoca.

reconfiguring housing space were met with grassroots resistance by some of the former owners (known as “main tenants”), usually still living in one of the rooms.⁶⁹

The process of housing redistribution was further complicated by the conversion of a part of the nationalized housing into office space, which implied similar interventions modifying the internal division of rooms, especially through construction of new doors and walls that would adapt existing spaces to the functional needs of the institution.⁷⁰ Apparently, such interventions pushed from below produced waves of dissatisfaction which reached the highest administrative levels, which perceived these actions as an abusive occupation of valuable residential space by bureaucratic agencies.⁷¹ In response to these practices, a resolution of the Central Committee of the Romanian Workers’ Party from 1953 required Office for Housing Administration across the country to discourage the process by confiscating office space from institutions and enterprises and reconverting it to its original use.⁷²

Bottom-up pressures permanently reminded the authorities of the urgency of the housing question. The issue ranked first in citizens’ petitions, equally targeting top-level authorities when the lower level ones failed to reply.⁷³ As providing housing was perceived as a duty and a means to gain legitimacy, local authorities declared that no effort should be spared in order to properly address the issue.⁷⁴ However, a line had been crossed when the

⁶⁹ Ibid., 9/1954, f. 264.

⁷⁰ DJCAN, Fond Comitetul Regional al PMR, Arhiva de Partid, Secția Știință și Cultură, Fond 13, f. 48.

⁷¹ DJCAN, Fond PMCN, 7/1953, f. 16-21. The invasion of residential space by institutions as a result of the bureaucratic expansion is also discussed in Chelcea, “The Housing Question,” 291-292.

⁷² DJCAN, Fond PMCN, 7/1953, f. 110.

⁷³ Ibid., 56/1963, f. 233.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 7/1953, f. 210.

president of the People's Council complained that the citizens' constant presence with housing requests at the door of his office paralyzed everyday activity.⁷⁵

Since housing continued to remain a scarce resource, the state promoted a preservationist attitude towards its management. Statements issued by the People's Council repeatedly insisted on the necessity of keeping existing housing in a good state of repair.⁷⁶ Similarly, a decision of the Council of Ministers from 1953 obliged tenants to make the necessary maintenance works for the good preservation of their apartments, such as painting the walls, and replacing broken windows, or plumbing.⁷⁷ Since nationalized housing was state property,⁷⁸ this maintenance ethos was subsumed to the effort of "using wisely" available resources (Ro: "principiul economiei chibzuite").⁷⁹ Any building demolition caused by poor maintenance was regarded as a matter of concern, as it implied loss of housing space.⁸⁰ The concern for preserving scarce resources was thus connected with the state's initiative to discipline and "civilize" its citizens, by teaching them the rules of proper behavior. Different agents, such as women's committees – preferred due to their traditional connection with the household⁸¹ – were used for this purpose.⁸²

⁷⁵ Ibid., 8/1953-56, f. 282.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 8/1953-56, f. 57; *Buletinul Oficial al Consiliului Popular al oraşului Cluj* 14.5 (1964): 4, 28.

⁷⁷ HCM 1508, art. 22; Ibid., 63/1965, f. 362.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 8/1953-56, f. 51.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 8/1953-56, f. 54.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 9/1954, f. 262, 276, 278.

⁸¹ On women's association with consumption and the management of the household during socialism, see Susan Reid, "Cold War in the Kitchen. Women and De-stalinization of Consumer Taste in the Soviet Union under Khrushchev," *Slavic Review* 61.2: 211-252; Greg Castillo, "Domesticating the Cold War: Household Consumption as Propaganda in Marshall Plan Germany," *Journal of Contemporary History* 40.2 (2005): 261-288.

⁸² *Buletinul Oficial al Consiliului Popular al oraşului Cluj* 13.5 (1963): 6.

Citizens and officials equally complained that housing distribution and management were intertwined with a flourishing second economy.⁸³ Housing was often distributed through connections rather than official avenues,⁸⁴ while building administrators were suspected of providing false information regarding potentially available housing space. Accusations of favoritism and bribes often transpired in official meetings,⁸⁵ as well-paid bureaucrats were seen to be a privileged category benefiting from repair works and similar services to the detriment of other social categories.⁸⁶ Overall, the heads of the Office for Housing Administration had to admit that the situation on the ground was unknown even to them, and that they were not in a position to provide any clear data on the housing stock under their administration.

In their turn, the head of the institution complained that their activity was seriously constrained by various forms of scarcity. In reports to the municipality, the Office often described difficulties in securing the necessary quantities of supplies, tools, and skilled labor,⁸⁷ arguing that the large number of requests coming from citizens surpassed the department's work capacity.⁸⁸ Above all, the poor quality of materials negatively impacted on repairs, leading to the inability to follow through design projects considered of high priority for actions of urban beautification:

⁸³ In Soviet Russia, as well, housing construction, maintenance, and distribution was one of the main domains of the secondary economy. Alena V. Ledeneva, *Russia's Economy of Favours: Blat, Networking and Informal Exchanges* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 30-31.

⁸⁴ DJCAN, Fond PMCN, 7/1953, f. 113

⁸⁵ Ibid., 8/1953-56, f. 43.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 9/1954, f. 148.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 7/1953, f. 16-21. The lack of trained professionals was a recurrent problem. The heads of the Office for Housing complained that given the availability of much better paid jobs in other sectors of the construction industry, the institution was confronted with a shortage of personnel—engineers, technicians, and skilled workers. Ibid., 9/1954, f. 32.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 51/1963, f. 58, 61. Because of the lack of funding and materials the Office for Housing could address only 30-40% of the requests. Ibid., 56/1963, f. 164.

we receive wall paintings: 40% are in bright colors, and 60% in dark colors. The bright ones are not sufficient, whereas the dark ones have no utility. [As a result] The color shades specified by architects cannot be obtained.⁸⁹

The poor work ethic and lack of discipline among the employees⁹⁰ added to the Office's lack of efficiency, the workers were often accused of making private repairs using materials pilfered from their workplace.⁹¹

Still, despite all criticism, the Office for Housing Administration seemed to have performed well, being awarded the first place at the national level for administration of housing space in 1962.⁹² At that point, the office was administrating 1,565 buildings, representing 50% of the total housing surface in Cluj.⁹³ Employing 368 skilled and unskilled workers,⁹⁴ the company performed repairs on approximately 100 buildings per year.⁹⁵

While struggling with scarce financial resources, the head of the Office for Housing Administration estimated that building repairs could have been conducted at a satisfactory level if an annual budget of 30 million lei were allocated at least for a five-year period, followed by an annual budget of 12-15 million lei. However, in 1965 the budget was only 10 million lei, which meant that the department had to prioritize emergency cases. Given its inability to cover all the needs, the office insisted that tenants themselves should

⁸⁹ Ibid., 43/1962, f. 252.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 7/1953, f. 128. In 1954, there were only three technicians for the whole city, a highly insufficient number given the high demand.

⁹¹ Ibid., 40/1962, f. 312-315. To the last accusation, the head of the office, Iuliu Bereczki, replied that 80% of their workers were honest and would refuse such arrangements.

⁹² Ibid., 40/1962, f. 377. When advised to improve their activity through exchanges with other cities, the heads of the Office for Housing declined the suggestion, arguing that every city was using a different system, which made such exchanges irrelevant. DJCAN, Fond PMCN, 63/1965, 329.

⁹³ Ibid., 40/1962, f. 377.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 40/1962, f. 356-58.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 51/1963, f. 71; 42/1962, f. 290.

be held responsible for the everyday maintenance of their apartments,⁹⁶ especially since they paid low rents.⁹⁷

Although theoretically never abandoned, the idea of maintenance gradually lost ground after the beginning of the mass housing construction program in the early 1960s. New apartments could be provided relatively fast through industrialized methods, which gave the housing question a completely different dimension. Moreover, as the efficiency of every institution was measured according to its production capacity, the small repairs performed by the Office for Housing Administration were seen as largely unproductive, and thus benefitted from less and less funding.⁹⁸

4.3. Care of Monuments

Although the local administration's interest in the building stock concerned housing rather than the architectural heritage, monuments were not fully disregarded. Despite early attempts to organize the activity along clearly established lines, however, the People's Council's initiatives in the field of monument protection were largely inconsistent. In 1952, the Cultural Section of the Regional People's Council sent a letter with guidelines aimed at encouraging the organization of committees for monument protection at different administrative levels. Ideally, every administrative unit would have its own "committee for monuments," including "comrades with love for historic monuments e.g., workers, progressive intellectuals, teachers for history, geography, and literature" that would function alongside local museums or the cultural sections of People's

⁹⁶ Ibid., 63/1965, f. 372.

⁹⁷ However, to what extent private persons could secure the necessary materials for maintenance and repairs was problematic, when even institutions faced difficulties.

⁹⁸ Interview with architect Vasile Mitrea, November 27, 2012, Cluj-Napoca.

Councils. The document redefined heritage along Soviet lines,⁹⁹ suggesting that the reconceptualization of heritage objects should constitute an impulse not only for mapping all monuments, but also for reorganizing monument protection within a new framework. Designation criteria set the year 1850 as the time limit: structures preceding this date would be indiscriminately listed, while the “candidates” after this year would be analyzed and selected according to individual value. In case of doubt, listing heritage objects was recommended rather than ignoring them, since every loss was irrecoverable. Along with individual monuments, called “old buildings” (e.g., citadels, palaces, houses, and churches), the document also required the listing of “larger architectural ensembles,” such as squares and streets “characteristic of the past in the locality.” It further specified that the insertion of new buildings into historically constituted ensembles should be done in a sensitive manner that would not alter their characteristics. In addition, local committees were required to take particular interest in providing security for monuments, as well as appropriate measures for their conservation, maintenance, and popularization.¹⁰⁰ Even though the elaboration of such a document by the Cultural Section can be seen as part of their institutional requirements, the initiative seems remarkable in a period when these institutions were required to engage in more pragmatic activities, such as collectivization, or at best, the organization of houses of culture.¹⁰¹

The idea of surveying and listing heritage objects was addressed again in 1953, although local authorities openly admitted that this project could not be funded from the

⁹⁹ The Soviet inspiration was reflected in the use of the concept of “monuments of culture,” the value of which was defined in connection with the development of human society (following historical materialism).

¹⁰⁰ *Buletinul Oficial al Sfatului Popular al Regiunii Cluj* 2.6 (1952): 10-14.

¹⁰¹ Cristian Vasile, *Politicile culturale comuniste, Politicile culturale comuniste în timpul regimului Gheorghiu-Dej* [The Communist Cultural Policies during the Regime of Gheorghiu-Dej] (București: Humanitas, 2011), 48.

local budget.¹⁰² A specialist commission established for this purpose was entrusted with submitting a study to the Executive Committee by October of that year, with the promise that “measures will be taken for the maintenance and preservation in good condition of existing historic monuments.”¹⁰³ Although not clearly specified, the action of surveying and recording monuments initiated in 1953 was probably connected to the inventory initiated by the Romanian Academy and the Department for Historic Monuments in Bucharest, which was then promulgated as a law in 1955. The final list approved from Bucharest included 174 items,¹⁰⁴ and was considerably more consistent than those of other cities in Romania. The largest bulk consisted of objects of civil architecture, while only 24 were churches. The concentration of listed buildings in a relatively small perimeter was characteristic, namely the area of the former medieval town surrounded by fortifications.¹⁰⁵ The buildings on the main streets and squares (e.g., Jokái, Kogălniceanu, Kossuth Lajos, Molotov/Dr. P. Groza, Piața Libertății) were listed house by house, many of them with the names of their former owners.¹⁰⁶ The historicity of the urban tissue within this perimeter was easily visible even for the non-specialist, due to the clear spatial delimitation, the regular street network and division of plots, as well as the monumentality of many

¹⁰² DJCAN, Fond PMCN, 7/1953, f. 158.

¹⁰³ Ibid., f. 163, 285.

¹⁰⁴ The surveyors had proposed for listing a number of 272 buildings, the bulk of which was situated within the inner city i.e., the limits of the medieval fortifications. The number was almost double in comparison with the one included on a previous list. László Debreczeni, “Az 1953. évi műemlék-összeírás építéstörténeti eredményei,” [The 1953 Inventory of Architectural and Historic Monuments] in *Emlékkönyv Kelemen Lajos születésének nyolcvanadik évfordulójára* [Memorial Volume on the Occasion of Kelemen Lajos’s Eightieth Birthday] (A Bolyai Tudományegyetem kiadványai, Kolozsvár, 1957., Tudományos Könyvkiadó, Bukarest), 221.

¹⁰⁵ Discussion with architect Virgil Pop, Cluj-Napoca, June 17, 2015.

¹⁰⁶ Academia RPR, Comisia Științifică a Muzeelor, Monumentelor Istorice și Artistice, *Lista Monumentelor de Cultură de pe Teritoriul RPR* [The List of Cultural Monuments on the Territory of the People’s Republic of Romania], (București: Editura Academiei RPR, 1956), 35-40.

buildings.¹⁰⁷ Beyond the historical and architectural value of the buildings proposed for listing, the approach reflected the extent to which the historic built environment was imprinted into the public memory. In any case, the proposals for listing were backed up by scientific research documenting every item, compiled with significant effort by local art historians and architects.¹⁰⁸ Age and style played an important role as listing criteria, with the premodern artifacts being privileged. The upper chronological limit usually reached the middle of the nineteenth century. The surveyors followed a strict methodology focusing on morphological analysis, to include every building in a defined architectural style.¹⁰⁹ The detailed descriptions of the buildings surveyed demonstrate not only the professional approach of the experts that compiled the list, but also their deep knowledge of the local built heritage, with all the “provincial” expressions of recognized architectural styles.¹¹⁰

The efforts to document architectural heritage were continued in the first half of the 1960s, through the fieldwork of interdisciplinary teams which included architects, historians, and visual artists. Although visual documentation was collected with the purpose of expanding the national-level list, the information could be used for internal purposes only.¹¹¹ Trapped between various levels of bureaucratic approval and never-

¹⁰⁷ Discussion with architect Virgil Pop, Cluj-Napoca, June 17, 2015. It was interesting to notice that some of the architects with whom I discussed made comparisons with the case of Iași, although I did not specify that I would myself compare them in this thesis. Virgil Pop mentioned, for example, that in the case of Iași the historicity of the old town is not easily noticeable in the built fabric.

¹⁰⁸ The documentation work was compiled, among others, by art historians Virgil Vătășianu, László Debreczeni, and Lajos Kelemen. Discussion with architect Virgil Pop, Cluj-Napoca, June 17, 2015.

¹⁰⁹ This was complicated since many buildings had been partially altered along the centuries, displaying layered architectural elements belonging to different styles.

¹¹⁰ Debreczeni, “Az 1953. évi műemlék-összeírás építéstörténeti eredményei,” 219-248. Still, the preservationists in Cluj expressed dissatisfaction regarding the short time available for the recoding of monuments, and acknowledged that the final documentation submitted to the Romanian Academy contained mistakes.

¹¹¹ Interview with Géza Starmüller, November 29, 2012, Cluj-Napoca. A visual artist, Starmüller was employed by Institute for Urban Design (DSAPC) and took particular interest in investigating the built heritage. As he explained, he worked for three years in the 1960s compiling a comprehensive documentation of listed monuments. Every item had its own envelope, containing surveys, photographs, a

ending institutional reorganizations, the constantly updated list failed to obtain the approval of all local and central institutions, and remained a work in progress throughout the socialist period.¹¹²

The local administration's interest in monuments was usually connected with actions of urban beautification, local pride, and the desire to promote a positive image of the city. For example, local deputies took notice when unwanted placards were displayed in the city's main square and asked for their immediate removal, since "the [main] city square is a historic monument."¹¹³ During most of the 1950s, however, such statements defending the city's built heritage were not backed up with adequate financial support, leading to a process of building degradation. Only beginning with the end of the decade were actions initiated to improve the state of repair: façades were repainted, entrances to inner courtyards were cleaned, and shop windows and stone frames were restored.¹¹⁴ During the following period, the approach to the maintenance of historical buildings could be characterized as rather superficial, consisting mainly of periodic repainting of the façades on the city's main streets.¹¹⁵

Nonetheless, a certain degree of awareness regarding the city's built heritage was reflected in the fact that heritage experts were included in the bureaucratic framework of

history of the monument, description, and observations. Similar statements were made by architect Vasile Mitrea in my interview with him, Cluj-Napoca, November 27, 2012. See also Vasile Mitrea, "Problema patrimoniului architectural" [The Architectural Heritage Question] in Pănescu, ed., *Cluj-Napoca în proiecte*, 193. Both Mitrea and Starmüller complained about the loss of this valuable archive. One copy was preserved at the Library of the Institute for Urban Design until 1990, while another one was submitted to the regional-level People's Council.

¹¹² For a discussion regarding the reasons that prevented the permanently-updated list of historic monuments to be approved as a law, see Chapter 3.4.2.

¹¹³ DJCAN, Fond PMCN, 7/1953, f. 417.

¹¹⁴ Lazăr, *Primarii Clujului*, 216.

¹¹⁵ DJCAN, Fond PMCN, 40/1962, f. 362; and 51/1963, f. 74. The documents refer to buildings on the streets Horea, Dr. Petru Groza, Gh. Doja, Pavlov, etc.

local administration. According to the municipality's records, the local scientific commission for museums and historic monuments, working alongside the Executive Committee of the People's Council started its activity on September 30, 1958. The expert commission included historians, art historians, architects, and visual artists of Hungarian or Romanian origin, such as Edgár Balogh (the president), Virgil Vătășianu, Constantin Daicoviciu, László Debreczeni, Aurel Ciupe, Zoltán Kovács, Virgil Fulicea, Eugen Gics, and Iordache Bărașcu.¹¹⁶ The topics discussed during the committee meetings ranged from broader issues such as the fate of monuments in the context of urban systematization to questions of detail, like the interior design of shops located in buildings with heritage status.¹¹⁷ The commission was envisioned as a consultative organism, advising the heads of the local administration in heritage-related matters. While the members met on a voluntary basis, however, they were also full-time employees of various institutions, such as the Institute for Urban Design, and thus able to use other institutional channels to promote the commission's decisions.

Apart from this interdisciplinary team of specialists, heritage protection was also supported by local architects holding key bureaucratic positions. The most important name recalled by former colleagues is that of Ștefan Gonosz, chief-architect of the city in the 1950s¹¹⁸ and technical director of the Regional Institute for Urban Design during the

¹¹⁶ Lazăr, *Primarii Clujului*, 22. In 1961, members of the local committee for historic monuments were university professor Edgár Balogh, art historian Virgil Vătășianu, sculptor Virgil Fulicea, and architects Iordache Bărașcu, Eugen Floriansics, Géza Starmüller, Cornelia Berindan. INP-DMI, Dosar 3599, Corespondență 1955-63, doc. SP oraș Cluj/CMI, March 11, 1961.

¹¹⁷ INP-DMI, Dosar 3599, doc. SP oraș Cluj/ CMI, March 11, 1961. In such cases, the committee insisted that adjustments necessary for the commercial activity would not alter the structure and character of the monument.

¹¹⁸ He was appointed head of the Regional Section for Architecture and Systematization in 1959. See DJCAN, Fond Sfatul Popular Regional Cluj (hereinafter SPRC), Secția Planificare, 67/1959, f. 539.

1960s.¹¹⁹ Gonosz was a local architect of Hungarian/Czech origin who had studied in Budapest and Prague. His colleagues recall him as a well-educated person, knowledgeable in many cultural fields, and fully dedicated to monument protection.¹²⁰ Apparently, Gonosz used his managerial and negotiation skills to find the right balance between meeting the economic indicators required by planners and promoting heritage, especially since the field was disregarded in the official calculations because of its “un-productive” character.¹²¹ Such cases indicate that questions of urban planning, heritage, and bureaucratic management were interconnected, and that the support of professionals who were well-positioned in the system was essential for placing heritage issues on the urban development agenda.¹²²

Independently from the institutionalization of monument protection at the local level, the Bucharest-based Department for Historic Monuments conducted restoration

¹¹⁹ Gonosz was the head of the Technical-Scientific Commission, the internal forum for the approval of urban design projects.

¹²⁰ Lazăr, *Primarii Clujului*, 206. Lazăr mentions Bratislava, probably a confusion with Prague. Biographical information on local architects comes mostly from oral sources. Interview with Géza Starmüller, Cluj-Napoca, November 29, 2012. Interview with architect Vasile Mitrea, Cluj-Napoca, November 27, 2012. Although not knowing of my interest in Iași, architect Vasile Mitrea stated during the interview: “If Iași have had a Gonosz, they would have not demolished Academia Mihăileană, nor would they have made other mistakes around there.” In a debate organized by the Architects’ Union in October 1966 on the topic of systematization of historic centers, Gonosz talked about the experience of showing the city to foreign guests (artists, intellectuals). Arguably, the guests declared having been impressed by the beauty of urban architecture in Cluj. Seeing the city through somebody else’s eyes was described by Gonosz as an experience of de-familiarization, during which the local architect discovered new aspects regarding the local built heritage. In order to address the problems of the city centers, Gonosz proposed quite innovative ideas, such as the creation of underground parking spaces. By stating that he would not express opinions regarding interventions in cities he was not familiar with, he suggested that decisions were taken without a profound analysis of the local context. Ștefan Gonosz, “Centrul trebuie analizat împreună cu întregul oraș” [The City Center Must Be Analyzed in the Context of the Entire City], *Arhitectura* 17.6 (1966): 69.

¹²¹ In the same discussion, Gonosz referred to the key role of the chief-architect in initiating projects and mediating between different institutional levels. *Ibid.*

¹²² Mitrea, “Problema patrimoniului architectural,” 156, 159. A later case was Nicolae Beuran, head of the Institute for Urban Design (at that point known as DSAPC) in the 1960s. Beuran became vice-president of the People’s Council at county level in the late 1970s. Gheorghe Elkan, “43 de ani, activitate post universitară în slujba Clujului” [43 Years of Activity in the Service of the City of Cluj], in Pănescu, ed., *Cluj-Napoca în proiecte*, 361-362.

works at some of the city's most important historical monuments in the late 1950s and the 1960s. The most prominent example was perhaps the Gothic Church Saint Michael, built between the fourteenth and fifteenth century¹²³ and situated in the city's main square.¹²⁴ In order to emphasize the monument's importance, documents demanding its restoration described it as "a jewel of historic monuments in Transylvania,"¹²⁵ and even as "the most representative Gothic monument in our country."¹²⁶ The first interventions at Saint Michael focused on the building's interior.¹²⁷ Particularly problematic were the existing vaults in the altar, constructed in the eighteenth century as imitations of Gothic arches, after the original ones had collapsed during an earthquake in 1763. Besides being stylistically inadequate, the existing vaulting system put additional pressure on the walls. The restoration therefore had a double purpose: to restore the monument's stylistic unity, and to release the support walls from the unnecessary pressure created by the poorly designed vaults. Since architects used some of the latest construction techniques, restoring the church's "unity of style" basically involved constructing new vaults made of brick on a skeleton of reinforced concrete, much lighter and yet stylistically adequate.¹²⁸ While the

¹²³ The construction works lasted for 150 years, incorporating various phases in the evolution of the Gothic style. The church is part of the Hallenkirche type, measuring 46 meters long plus 20 meters the apse. The Neo-Gothic tower constructed between 1837 and 1859 is 59 meters high. See "Lucrări de restaurare la biserica Sf. Mihail din Cluj," [Restoration Works at the Saint Michael Church in Cluj], *Arhitectura* 3 (1958): 20.

¹²⁴ Mitrea, "Problema patrimoniului architectural," 198.

¹²⁵ INP-DMI, Dosar 3881: Corespondență Biserica Catedrală Romano-Catolică Sf. Mihail din Cluj, 1958-1964, doc. 128/January 8, 1962.

¹²⁶ Ibid., doc. nedatat (1962) signed by Ludovic Bagyi (coordinator of the restoration works).

¹²⁷ The project was initially designed in 1953 by a local team, based on proposals previously made by local specialists, for example by using the observations of Jenő Rados, *A kolozsvári Szent Mihály-templom restaurálása* [The Restoration of the Saint Michael Church in Cluj] (Budapest: Technika, 1942). A new version of the project was prepared in 1955 and discussed in the meeting of the Section for Architecture and Systematization with the participation of Virgil Vătășianu (art historian), and architects Iordache Bărbășcu, Ștefan Gonosz, Mircea Balint, Virgil Salvanu, Virgil Salvanu II, and Mihai Ratz. INP-DMI, Dosar 3380, Biserica Catedrală Sf. Mihail, doc. 8702/June 21, 1955.

¹²⁸ INP-DMI, Dosar 3380, doc. 4249/1955; doc. April 15, 1955; doc. 9320/1955, Proiect nr. 8, f. 2; INP-DMI, Dosar 3881, doc. fn, Restaurarea bisericii Sf. Mihail din Cluj, meeting from February 12, 1962; "Lucrări de restaurare la biserica Sf. Mihail din Cluj," f.21-23.

restoration works were financially supported by the Department of Religious Cults and the DHM,¹²⁹ the preparation of the designs was complicated by a scarcity of expertise. The first project was prepared by local architects¹³⁰ with the support of the Workshop for Historic Monuments in Bucharest,¹³¹ ultimately taken over by the recently founded Regional Institute for Urban Design.¹³² The project was not devoid of controversies. Dissatisfied for not being consulted in the process, local specialists suggested that the restoration had been based on superficial research and unscientific principles,¹³³ accusations rejected by the DHM representative Ștefan Balș.¹³⁴ Eventually, the church was advertised in 1958 as a showcase of restoration activity in Romania during the International Congress of Architects and Technicians for Historic Monuments in Paris.¹³⁵ Work was resumed in 1962, focusing on the exterior (façades and the neo-Gothic tower),¹³⁶ and were concluded in 1964.¹³⁷

Although a consensus existed between Romanian and Hungarian specialists regarding the value of the built heritage, problems of heritage-making were occasionally

¹²⁹ INP-DMI, Dosar 3881, doc. 690/1958.

¹³⁰ Ibid., doc. 538/1959.

¹³¹ INP-DMI, Dosar 3380, doc. 9320/1955.

¹³² INP-DMI, Dosar 3881, doc. IRP 4220/1959.

¹³³ Art historian Virgil Vătășianu complained that the project was fully entrusted in the hands of ICSOR, an institution which was not specialized in restoration. Arguably, no art historian specialized in Gothic architecture was consulted, while the studies were done in haste, missing an excellent opportunity to acquire more information on the Gothic architecture in Transylvania. INP-DMI, Dosar 3881, doc. 643/1958; doc. 199/1958. Local architect Virgil Salvanu also complained that Baroque decorations were removed in an arbitrary manner, with the only purpose of achieving stylistic unity.

¹³⁴ INP-DMI, Dosar 3881, minutes of SAS Cluj meeting on May 18, 1955. The accusations were rejected by architect Ștefan Balș representing the DHM, who argued that both research and restoration works have been made in collaboration with local specialists. The conflict resembled more a personal dispute than a purely professional one.

¹³⁵ The other monuments included were monasteries Sucevița and Neamț and the mosque in Constanța. “Congresul internațional al arhitecților și tehnicienilor monumentelor istorice de la Paris” [The International Congress of Architects and Engineers Specialized in Historic Monuments in Paris], *Arhitectura* 8 (1957): 44-48.

¹³⁶ INP-DMI, Dosar 3881, doc. 1794/1961.

¹³⁷ Ibid., doc. 638/1964.

interlinked with contested historical narratives. A case in point was the restoration project for the only bastion left standing from the city's medieval fortifications, the so-called Bethlen or Tailors' Tower.¹³⁸ The tower had been constructed during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and was preserved together with a portion of the defensive wall, meanwhile bordered on both sides by poor-quality houses. Restoration work started in 1955, with the purpose of transforming the tower into a space accommodating the city's History Museum.¹³⁹ A bilingual plaque in Romanian and Hungarian, still to be seen today, informed the visitors about the intended use of the building. After some "emergency repairs," the operations were stopped, to be resumed during the 1970s. The idea of having a museum for local history was abandoned, however, supposedly because of the reluctance that it would promote a "Hungarian" historical narrative.¹⁴⁰ Instead, the project focused on something more neutral, a museum of medieval weaponry¹⁴¹, which was only completed in the 1980s, when the buildings surrounding the wall were demolished¹⁴² and new blocks were constructed in the vicinity. Urban redevelopment integrating heritage traces freed

¹³⁸ Lajos Asztalos, *Kolozsvár: helynév- és településtörténeti adattár* [Cluj: Documentation of Historical Topography] (Kolozsvár Társaság: Polis, 2004), 436-437.

¹³⁹ INP-DMI, Dosar 3628 Bastionul Croitorilor/Turnul Bethlen, aviz nr. 7 MI/1955; doc. CSCAS 12223/1955; DJCAN, Sfatul Popular Regional Cluj, Secția Învățământ și Cultură, 31/1959, f. 38. The interventions included repairs to the roof and walls, adding an interior staircase, as well as introducing utilities.

¹⁴⁰ Discussion with architect Virgil Pop, Cluj-Napoca, June 17, 2015. Despite the initial concessions made to minorities after his coming to power in 1965, Ceaușescu promoted the concept of "socialist nation" with Romanian nationalist undertones. The shift of perspective followed the need of securing popular support after his refusal of allowing Romanian troops to join the forces of the Warsaw Pact in the invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968. Zoltán Csaba Novák, *Politica națională a PCR la sfârșitul anilor '60 și începutul deceniului următor* [The National Politics of the Romanian Communist Party at the End of the 1960s and the Beginning of the 1970s], in Ágoston Olti and Attila Gidó, eds., *Minoritatea maghiară în perioada comunistă* [The Hungarian Minority during the Communist Period] (Cluj-Napoca: Editura Institutului pentru Studiarea Problemelor Minorităților Naționale, 2009), 189-225.

¹⁴¹ INP-DMI, Dosar 3628, doc. 12.948, November 10, 1972.

¹⁴² Mitrea, "Problema patrimoniului arhitectural," 197.

from “parasite constructions” was considered suitable for the proper valorization of the area.¹⁴³

Smaller scale restorations were done with the collaboration of local specialists, including a small group of specialized workers, the “service for monuments” within the Department for Municipal Services. An example in this regard was the Carolina Obelisk, a monument commemorating the visit of the Habsburg Emperor Francis I and his wife Carolina Augusta in 1817,¹⁴⁴ which was restored in 1958 with the support of local visual artists.¹⁴⁵

4.4. Integrating the New into the Old

Urban planning projects in the late 1950s and the early 1960s targeted the area of the city center and its vicinity. The choice was mostly pragmatic, motivated by the fact that centrally located areas were privileged in terms of infrastructure and providing utilities.¹⁴⁶ The elaboration of an urban development strategy was frustrated by the State Committee for Planning delaying in establishing the city’s economic profile, thus blocking investment projects.¹⁴⁷ The redevelopment of the suburbs in particular would have implied considerable investment, since previous actions of utility provision had been designed for low-rise housing only.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴³ Elkan, “43 de ani,” 363.

¹⁴⁴ <http://enciclopediavirtuala.ro/monument.php?id=250>, accessed June 23, 2016.

¹⁴⁵ DJCAN, Fond SPRC, Secția Învățământ și Cultură, 31/1959, f. 53. The project presupposed also the removal of the original reliefs and their preservation at the History Museum.

¹⁴⁶ The project of building approximately 200 apartments on Armata Roșie Street, across from Saint Peter Church, on plots occupied by gardens, proved problematic because the land lacked utilities. DJCAN, Fond SPRC, Secția Planificare, 67/1959, f. 182.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., f. 526-27.

¹⁴⁸ The project for water supply was made in 1890 for a period of 50 years and a population of 100,000 inhabitants. Naturally, it did not take into consideration the prospects of rapid industrialization and population growth. In 1959, the population had already reached 180,000 inhabitants, while in some

Given the significant number of monuments in the city center of Cluj, any urban planning initiative had to take into account questions of heritage preservation, as this was clearly stipulated in the 1955 legislation. The relatively slow pace of change during the 1950s gave the feeling that the requirements of modernization could be accommodated while preserving the character of the city, and that architects had the ability to negotiate these transformations without damaging the historical substance of the built fabric.

Projects on Paper

In this context, one of the first projects of the Regional Institute for Urban Design founded in 1957 targeted the quarter east of the main square, stretching up to the former edge of the medieval town, then occupied by the Victory Square. The perimeter was delimited by Dr. Petru Groza Street (south), Malinovschi/Victory Square (east), Kossuth Street (north), and Liberty Square (west).¹⁴⁹ The project had a twofold purpose; it aimed to improve the living conditions in this historic area, while preserving the main architectural and historical values of the ensemble. Questions of sanitation, central to the modernizing goal, focused not so much on individual buildings, but rather on the built environment in its entirety. The plans, following the concept of “Sanierung”, which implied the clearance of congested courtyards,¹⁵⁰ therefore proposed the demolition of insalubrious buildings, the clearance of inner courtyards, and the creation of additional green spaces. Although the design was based on building surveys which took into account architectural and historical value, it was not necessarily aimed at enhancing the values identified through

peripheral districts (e.g., Bulgaria, Someșeni) the water supply was poorly covering the needs of the existing households. DJCAN, Fond SPRC, Secția de Arhitectură și Sistemizare, 117/1959, f. 11. A similar situation concerned the sewerage system, virtually absent from the working-class districts. DJCAN, Fond SPRC, Secția Planificare, 67/1959, f. 182. The water provisioning problem was solved in 1964.

¹⁴⁹ DJCAN, Fond SPRC, Secția Planificare, 67/1959, f. 526-27.

¹⁵⁰ Miles Glendinning, *The Conservation Movement: A History of Architectural Preservation; Antiquity to Modern* (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), 262.

comprehensive preservationist measures. Many inner courtyards were partially occupied by L-shaped buildings with the main façade facing the street. The authors of the project intended to have these constructions removed, even in cases when they could be considered of historical value. In order to create visually homogeneous built fronts, low-rise buildings would have to be demolished and reconstructed, or their height increased through aggradation. Buildings perceived as aesthetically valuable would be thus preserved, while singles-story houses or shops would be demolished and replaced by apartment blocks. Most of the targeted buildings were situated on Kossuth¹⁵¹ and Dr. Petru Groza streets.¹⁵² In order to provide housing for the displaced population, it was suggested that new blocks could be constructed in the courtyards. As it could be assumed that archaeological remains would potentially be identified in the ground, the authors of the project even suggested having them preserved in the basements.¹⁵³

The project was first discussed together with local preservationists, to be afterwards submitted for the approval of the DHM in Bucharest. The members of the Cluj-based commission for historic monuments approached the issue in a pragmatic manner, by dividing listed monuments into three categories: those to be preserved under any circumstances in their current form, those which could be “adapted” – i.e., altered, or whose architectural elements could be preserved and integrated within other buildings – and those which could be erased from the list and demolished if necessary.¹⁵⁴ In Bucharest, the

¹⁵¹ The one-story buildings on Kossuth Street 13-15, 19, 27-29-31 and 38-40-42-44 were to be replaced with three-story buildings.

¹⁵² The situation on Dr. Petru Groza Street was more complex, as there were also buildings that had remained in private property. The solutions involved demolition and reconstruction or aggradation. Most buildings had shops on the ground floor. DJCAN, Fond SPRC, Secția Planificare, 67/1959, f. 180-81.

¹⁵³ Gheorghe Curinschi, *Centrele istorice ale orașelor* [Historic City Centers] (București: Editura Tehnică, 1967), 258.

¹⁵⁴ The methodology seems similar to the one used in Czechoslovakia, where urban monuments were divided into five groups: special value (dominant), historic and artistic value, local importance, neutral

project was discussed twice, in 1958 and 1960. The DHM archive records that this was one of the first instances when built heritage was discussed in connection with urban planning. Therefore, it is perhaps not surprising that the commission accepted the modernizing argument presented by the architect-planners in Cluj. The commission agreed on the insertion of new blocks “in a modern style,” with the condition that this would be done in a harmonious manner, respectful of the surrounding building heights and color shades of the façades. However, it naturally opposed the idea of demolishing listed historic monuments, arguing that such extreme cases should be thoroughly documented and any valuable pieces should be preserved in the local museum.¹⁵⁵

Projects with similar principles were also designed in the following period, such as the one produced by architect Gheorghe Săsărman for his diploma thesis. Although conceived only as theoretical studies, such projects are nevertheless relevant for the concepts in circulation during this the period. Săsărman’s project focused on the area around Museum Square (also known as Óvár/ the Old Citadel), incidentally the oldest part of the historic district. Although the study took into account the age and style of existing buildings, it disregarded to a large extent existing land use patterns and the shape of plots. The modernizing vision of the author focused on “dissonant buildings,” which were to be replaced by new ones, “subordinated in terms of scale and appearance” to the ensemble. Targeted particularly for demolition were one-story houses, to be replaced by blocks of two or three floors. The nineteenth- and twentieth-century buildings, taller and with a more monumental appearance, would be preserved as representative of the architectural

without historical value, and buildings which create unwanted contrasts. The example is discussed in Curinschi, *Centrele istorice ale oraşelor*, 194.

¹⁵⁵ INP-DMI, Proceş verbale VI, 1958-62, f. 84-85, 285-296.

ensemble, while the one-story ones would be either demolished or additional floors built on top. The project aimed to preserve the existing street network, as well as the general layout of the quadrants (Rom: *cvartale*), while rearranging buildings around inner courtyards cleared of constructions.¹⁵⁶ If implemented, such interventions would have destroyed not only the medieval plot pattern, but also the basements dating back to the fifteenth-sixteenth centuries. This vision relied on a simplified perception of architecturally valuable buildings, focusing on aesthetics rather than the complexity of historically constituted built layers. While seeking to remain sensitive to the character of the square, by designing the fill-ins in an austere and neutral modernist style, with moderate heights and pitched rooftops, the architectural concept ignored the full complexity of the built landscape.

Such projects seem to have closely followed the directives for urban systematization formulated by the Department for Architecture and Urban Planning¹⁵⁷ in 1958, which recommended contextual conformity as a solution for integrating new construction in a densely-built area. The buildings with significant aesthetic value would be preserved as landmarks, with the surrounding ones blending into the architectural character of the street, in terms of volume, silhouette, construction materials, and architectural appearance.¹⁵⁸

Implemented Projects

¹⁵⁶ Curinschi, *Centrele istorice ale oraşelor*, 248-251 (figs. 182-184), 261.

¹⁵⁷ The name under which the State Committee for Architecture and Constructions was known between 1957 and 1959.

¹⁵⁸ *Buletinul Oficial al Consiliului Popular al oraşului Cluj* 8.4 (1958): 19.

Several projects completed in the late 1950s and early 1960s focused either on reconstruction of areas damaged during the war, or on the systematization of squares situated at the edges of the historic center.

Designed by ICSOR Bucharest in the mid-1950s,¹⁵⁹ the first project consisted of the refurbishment of Horea Street, the boulevard connecting the city center with the railway station.¹⁶⁰ The street's reconstruction was pragmatically motivated, since the area had been one of the most damaged during the 1944 bombings.¹⁶¹ The buildings on the street were a heterogeneous mix of individual family houses and larger buildings accommodating up to fifteen apartments, some with workshops or shops on the ground floor. Since only some of the buildings had been nationalized, the property status was an additional challenge for planners, together with the need to provide housing for the displaced inhabitants.¹⁶² The documentation reveals that every plot was carefully analyzed in terms of the surface to be demolished and number of inhabitants, in order to find the most advantageous solution in each particular situation.¹⁶³

The proposal for reconstruction aimed at creating a unitary street image by bringing all construction to the same height.¹⁶⁴ This was to be done either by constructing three- or four-story-high apartment blocks¹⁶⁵ with a simple, functionalist architecture¹⁶⁶ on empty plots or instead of family-houses, or by adding to the height of buildings displaying

¹⁵⁹ L. Karczag, Fl. Triscu, "Bloc de locuințe la Cluj" [Apartment Blocks in Cluj], *Arhitectura* 9.6 (1958): 6.

¹⁶⁰ The street became one of the representative arteries of the city after the construction of the railway lines in 1870. It was enlarged and straightened in order to accommodate the expected high traffic, and connected to the city center through a modern iron bridge over the Someș River. Agachi, *Clujul modern*, 139.

¹⁶¹ Asztalos and Papp, 1944. *június 2. - Kolozsvár bombázása*, 35-55.

¹⁶² APMCN, Dosar 10/1956-59, Studiu de sistematizare str. Horea, 10/1956-59, vol. 2 Reveleu str. Horea, 1957, doc. SAS 11861.

¹⁶³ DJCAN, Fond SPRC, secția Planificare, 67/1959, f. 179.

¹⁶⁴ APMCN, Dosar 10/1956-59, doc. SAS 38993/5 from 1957.

¹⁶⁵ Most apartments would consist of two rooms (60-65%), and only 5-10% of three.

¹⁶⁶ APMCN, Dosar 10/1956-59, Tema de proiectare pentru construirea blocurilor de locuințe din str. Horea.

recognized aesthetic and historic values.¹⁶⁷ Rather than becoming the highlights of the street, the fill-ins were intended to blend in and create a more visually coherent streetscape. In contrast, the old, architecturally valuable buildings were to represent the elements which would “catch one’s eye.” This compromise solution allowed for the vertical expansion of the city, without significantly altering the historically constituted character of the area. Demolition of buildings of lower aesthetic and functional quality was also justified by the need to clear the space around buildings with “special architectural character” in order to valorize them. While it is unclear who pushed for this solution, the Section for Architecture and Systematization questioned whether the estimated costs were not unrealistically low. It is also significant that, given the low investment in housing construction, the blocks were built with the support of the Ministry of Armed Forces.¹⁶⁸

A second project was that at Piața Păcii (Peace Square),¹⁶⁹ situated at the western limit of the former fortified town perimeter. For military reasons, the space around the fortifications had remained unbuilt until the mid-nineteenth century. At the turn of the century, the municipality aimed to provide the square with a more monumental appearance, through the construction of the University Library and erecting a copy of the Saint George statue.¹⁷⁰

The architectural landmark around which the square would be redesigned in the late 1950s was the Students’ House of Culture, the construction of which was funded by the Council of Ministers as part of a larger project supporting the development of higher

¹⁶⁷ Karczag and Trișcu, “Bloc de locuințe la Cluj,” 6.

¹⁶⁸ APMCN, Dosar 10/1956-59, vol. 2, Reveleu str. Horea, 1957, doc. SAS 11861.

¹⁶⁹ Previously known as Szénapiac (mid-nineteenth century), Arany János, then Saint George Square. Asztalos, *Kolozsvár*, 468.

¹⁷⁰ Vais, *Clujul eclectic*, 342-343. Asztalos, *Kolozsvár*, 453-454. The 14th-century original, authored by brothers Martin and George from Cluj, is located in the inner courtyard of the royal palace in Prague. <http://www.enciclopediavirtuala.ro/monument.php?id=309> (accessed August 12, 2016).

education infrastructure.¹⁷¹ Significantly, however, the architects focused to a large extent on emphasizing the character of a place charged not only with historical significance, but also with “a charm which is specific to the city of Cluj.”¹⁷²



Fig. 4.3. Modernist apartment blocks situated across the House of Culture. The upper floor of the old building on the left was built on top in order to obtain more living area and contribute to the monumental character of the square. Postcard from the early 1960s

Source: The Digital Library, BCU Cluj-Napoca

The project took into account the listed monuments in the area, which were included in the documentation together with the usual surveys about living surface, construction materials, and ownership of buildings.¹⁷³ The architects tried to work as much as possible with the given location and avoid unnecessary demolition, by identifying buildings suitable for

¹⁷¹ Lazăr, *Primarii Clujului*, 239.

¹⁷² APMCN, Sfatul Popular al Regiunii Cluj, Institutul Regional de Proiectare (SPRC-IRP), 809/1959, *Memoriu privind sistematizarea Pieței Păcii*, f. 1-4.

¹⁷³ APMCN, SPRC-IRP, 809/1959, f.n.

adding additional stories.¹⁷⁴ The surveys revealed that the area was densely inhabited, with an average of four persons per apartment.¹⁷⁵ Given the economic constraints, even the demolition of one two-floor building was seen as problematic.¹⁷⁶

In order to maintain the existing street network, the square itself was to be only slightly enlarged and remodeled to accommodate green spaces and a small parking. Two



Fig. 4.4. The House of Culture, shortly after its completion in the early 1960s.

Source: The Digital Library, BCU Cluj-Napoca

modernist buildings were to be constructed, opposite each other: the Students' House of Culture on the south side, and a five-story apartment block on the opposite side. In addition, a three-floor residential building with a pitched roof was inserted on the corner with Jokai Street.¹⁷⁷ A moderate increase in the buildings' heights either through filling in or adding additional floors was perceived as necessary to create a coherent and monumental urban image. The required monumentality of this new architectural landmark was stylistically

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ The surveys covered a broader perimeter around the square. They registered 1,450 inhabitants in 410 apartments on the Jokai Street, 550 persons/135 apartments on Petru Maior Street and 120 persons/30 apartments on the Peace Square. Ibid., *Lucrări editare*, f. 2.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., copie SP al Regiunii Cluj/SAS/Consiliul Tehnico-Științific, raport de avizare 189/1959.

¹⁷⁷ Vasile Mitrea, "Spațiul public" [Public Space], in Pănescu, ed., *Cluj-Napoca în proiecte*, 93.

interpreted in the “modest,” “utilitarian” modernist language of the early 1960s, similarly to other projects implemented during this period across the country.¹⁷⁸



Fig. 4.5. The modernist design of the Mihai Viteazul Square in the 1960s

Source: The Digital Library, BCU Cluj-Napoca

A third and last project designed along these lines was the systematization of the Mihai Viteazul Square. Previously known as Széchenyi tér, the square had developed after the construction of the railway as the main commercial area of the city, located at the northern edge of the historic center.¹⁷⁹ In this case, the public space was articulated around a slightly curved-shaped seven-floor residential building constructed atop a modern cinema with 1,000 seats. The triangular-shaped area previously used as market place was arranged for a promenade, while the commercial functions were relocated at the edge of the

¹⁷⁸ Alexander Răuță, “The State of Ambiguity of the Communist Civic Center in Three Romanian Secondary Cities: Brăila, Pitești, and Sibiu,” *Journal of Urban History* 39.2 (2013): 236.

¹⁷⁹ Vais, *Clujul eclectic*, 293; Agachi, *Clujul modern*, 155.

square.¹⁸⁰ A similar contextualized approach was used for the buildings lining the streets delimiting the square: aesthetically valuable, medium-rise older buildings were preserved, the single-story houses were demolished and replaced with apartment blocks of a “unitary and sober architecture,” while some of the low-rise good quality constructions were built atop.¹⁸¹ As local architects later pointed out in a presentation of the square, “the height and location of the new built structures took into account the necessity of a harmonious and organic integration into the existing urban context.”¹⁸²

The projects came in response to the centrally formulated requests to increase the number of built apartments, while diminishing the costs of production.¹⁸³ Although the decision adopted at the Plenary of Central Committee of the Romanian Workers’ Party in November 1958 was met with reluctance by local architects, who considered the economic limitations too strict,¹⁸⁴ it did stimulate the construction of a larger number of apartments. The statistics for 1959 recorded, for example, 54 new blocks with 1,439 apartments.¹⁸⁵ However, the construction process was permanently frustrated by the scarcity of construction materials, the lack of a qualified workforce partially replaced with unpaid

¹⁸⁰ The pedestrian friendly public space was altered in the mid-1970s, when the authorities advanced the idea of placing a statue of Mihai Viteazul in front of the cinema. As architect Vasile Mitrea recalled, the sculptor working for the Ministry of Armed Forces who was commissioned insisted on having more figures around the main character, in order to increase his financial remuneration. Entrusted with the task of redesigning the square as to accommodate the statue, Mitrea recalled the conflicts with the sculptor, who “enjoyed Bucharest’s support.” Interview with architect Vasile Mitrea, Cluj-Napoca, November 27, 2012; Mitrea, “Spațiul public,” 81-82.

¹⁸¹ Al. Nemeș, “Sistematizarea Pieței Mihai Viteazul Cluj” [The Systematization of the Mihai Viteazul Cluj Square in Cluj], *Arhitectura* 11.3 (1960): 38.

¹⁸² Pascu, ed., *1850: Clujul cultural-artistic*, 222.

¹⁸³ The production price was calculated for a “standard” two-room apartment measuring 30 square meters.

¹⁸⁴ “IRP Cluj” [The Regional Institute for Urban Design Cluj], *Arhitectura* 3 (1959): 10-11.

¹⁸⁵ DJCAN, Fond SPRC, Secția Planificare, 67/1959, f. 171-175.

students and soldiers, as well as the delays in obtaining the required approvals, often blocked at some bureaucratic level.¹⁸⁶

As the examples presented above have shown, the solutions used by planners in remodeling centrally located areas used in-fillings and adding height as means of meeting modernization goals, while preserving the city's character. Infillings were considered as the most appropriate solution for the construction of apartment blocks in the city center, as they could benefit from existing utilities.¹⁸⁷ Significantly, design projects for individual blocks took into account the surrounding monumental buildings. For example, the architects designing a three-story residential building situated near the Baroque-style Teleki Palace aimed to create a moderate volume and eliminate unnecessary decoration since "the architecture of the façade should not compete with the existing ensemble."¹⁸⁸

In order to increase the amount of residential space in the city center, yet avoid demolition, the typical solution implemented in the second half of the 1950s was to add one or two floors above already existing single-story buildings. These affected several structures in the historic area and the immediate vicinity.¹⁸⁹ The additions were intended to harmonize with the existing building, by respecting the rhythm of the façade and using a neutral design for the extra floors. Interventions were performed including on a number of listed monuments, with preliminary approval of the DHM.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁶ Local planners often complained that bureaucratic centralization produces delays, since the process of sending all the documentation to Bucharest for approval always took longer than expected. *Ibid.*, f. 185, f. 190-91.

¹⁸⁷ DJCAN, Fond PMCN, Secția Secretariat, 48/1963, f. 9.

¹⁸⁸ Iordache Bărescu, "Activitatea de proiectare în regiunile țării. Regiunea Cluj," [The Urban Design Activity in the Country's Regions. Cluj Region] *Arhitectura* 11.3 (1960): 37.

¹⁸⁹ Lazăr, *Primarii Clujului*, 218. The buildings mentioned were situated on the following streets—Bethlen 20 (nowadays Baba Novac), Cuza Vodă 8, Moților 67, Cipariu 7, Armata Roșie 20, Dr. Petru Groza 1.

¹⁹⁰ INP-DMI, Procese verbale VI, f. 130, 152 The approval of the DHM was required also in case of repairs to listed buildings, performed by the Office for Housing Administration. The local advisory board, led by

Although not openly stated, the goals of urban planning activities in the late 1950s resonated with the previous construction regulations, focusing on creating a coherent urban image by homogenizing building heights and avoiding major stylistic contrasts. The focus on the city center and its edges can also be seen as continuing the process of systematizing the area of the former fortifications, initiated at the end of the nineteenth century. Although using the language of modernism for the new buildings, local architects chose a neutral, austere version, with the purpose of promoting “an architecture which would correspond to the city’s scale and character.”¹⁹¹ However, by eliminating houses and replacing them with apartment blocks, architects disregarded one important heritage value – the medieval parcel.¹⁹² While the projects focused on questions of functionality, beautification, and sanitation, they largely ignored the land use patterns. Ideologically, the approach focusing on contextual conformity was still essentially modernist, aiming to make the old city more efficient, comfortable, and easily legible. Another remarkable aspect in the case of Cluj is the homogeneity of projects – the architect-planners remained consistent with local legacies of urban development, managing at the same time to establish congruity between the goals of the regime and their own professional aspirations.

The industrialization drive starting in the 1960s rendered such strategies obsolete. The idea of adding additional stories was eventually dropped, partially due to technical difficulties, and partially to the comparatively small amount of housing space it produced. Such compromise ideas were considered suitable for a period when the construction of new

architect Gonosz, also insisted that repairs to buildings with heritage value should be performed with additional care. DJCAN, Fond PMCN, 40/1962, f. 372-373.

¹⁹¹ “IRP Cluj,” 10.

¹⁹² One solution applied by modernist architects was to mark the size of the original plot in the vertical division of the building. This was also the suggestion of Curinschi, *Centrele istorice ale oraşelor*, 261.

residential space was frustrated by the absence of utilities and investment. The following period marked a rupture in urban growth strategies, by focusing on the construction of high-rise modernist districts outside the historic center.

4.5. A Showcase of Heritage-Making: The Bánffy Palace

The opening of new museums was one of the main goals of the state's cultural policies after 1945. Official statistics proudly registered a tripling in the number of museums at the national level, from 65 in 1945 to over 200 at the end of the 1950s. More than places to preserve and display heritage objects, museums were seen as “instruments for the patriotic education of the masses,” as well as means to “fight against mysticism and obscurantism, against bourgeois ideology.”¹⁹³ Starting in the 1950s, the Committee for Cultural Establishments embarked on a national-level campaign of confiscating art objects from nationalized houses and former collectors, and distributing them to the network of museums set up at the same time.¹⁹⁴ According to Decree 111/1951, confiscated objects of scientific, artistic, or historical importance were to be sent directly to museums or other cultural institutions.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹³ DJCAN, Fond SPRC, Secția Învățământ și Cultură, 31/1959, f. 152.

¹⁹⁴ Emanuela Grama, *Searching for Heritage, Building Politics: Architecture, Archaeology, and Imaginaries of Social Order in Romania (1947-2007)* (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2010), 85. In the second chapter of her thesis, Grama discusses in more detail the reorganization of the heritage field in the “fuzzy institutional landscape” of the early 1950s, and the role of the museum network.

¹⁹⁵ DJCAN, Fond SPRC, Secția Învățământ și Cultură, 31/1959, 20. In the case of the Art Museum in Cluj, a specific collection is mentioned, which included paintings by Grigorescu, Gh. Pătrașcu, Th. Pallady, N. Tonitza – probably the one of Virgil Cioflec. The collection of the museum included also many objects previously owned by Erdélyi Múzeum [the Transylvanian Museum].



Fig. 4.6. The Bánffy Palace in the 19th century.

Source: The Digital Library, BCU Cluj-Napoca.

The Bánffy Palace,¹⁹⁶ located on the city's main square, was built in the last quarter of the eighteenth century as a representative building for Transylvania's governor György Bánffy, who also moved the capital of the province from Sibiu to Cluj. Composed of four wings surrounding a rectangular courtyard, the palace displayed a façade with a monumental loggia decorated with statues and the aristocratic family's coat of arms. However, the façade and inner structure had been modified over the years, as much of the inner space was rented either for either residential or commercial purposes.¹⁹⁷ In order to accommodate the practical needs of commerce in a building facing the main square, doors were cut into the walls, replacing the original stone-framed windows. During the interwar period, after losing most of its agricultural land following the agrarian reform, the family hoped to increase its source of income by exploiting the building's central location. A cinema was built in the courtyard in 1925, while the eastern wing transformed in order to

¹⁹⁶ B. Nagy Margit, "A kolozsvári Bánffy palota" [The Bánffy Palace in Cluj], in B. Nagy Margit, *Reneszánsz és barokk Erdélyben* [Renaissance and Baroque in Transylvania] (Bukarest: Kriterion. 1970), 203–210. See also Mircea Țoca, *Clujul baroc* [Baroque Cluj] (Cluj-Napoca: Dacia, 1983), 78-83.

¹⁹⁷ <http://enciclopediavirtuala.ro/monument.php?id=194>, accessed August 20, 2016.

accommodate the entrance hall.¹⁹⁸ In addition, the upper floor was divided into thirteen apartments to be rented out.¹⁹⁹

After the palace was transferred into state property in 1948, various parts of the building were appropriated by a heterogeneous mixture of enterprises and cultural institutions: Construction Enterprise no. 9 took over a large part of the upper floor; Vitadulci, a company producing sweets and pastry, used the large kitchen on the ground-floor, while the basement was transformed into storage space for Întreprinderea Poligrafică (The Printing Company). Other rooms were allocated to the regional library, C.E.C., and various shops, while a number of tenants were still living on the upper floor. The cinema, re-baptized Progresul (The Progress), continued to function in the courtyard. In order to adapt existing spaces to the needs of their activities, the companies made further changes to the building's inner structure. For example, the Printing Company installed an elevator in order to handle heavy paper bundles. The situation was criticized not only by the Department for Historic Monuments, but also by the local administration, who acknowledged that such interventions were detrimental to the building's conservation. To these complaints, the occupants simply replied that the space had been made available to them by the Office for Housing Administration, since no funding was available for the construction of adequate office and storage spaces.²⁰⁰ Initially, the People's Council seemed unable to find other solutions than to relocate some of the companies in similarly

¹⁹⁸ INP-DMI, Dosar 3603 Palat Bánffy, Memoriu general, f. 1.

¹⁹⁹ Ioana Rus, *Conservarea monumentelor în Transilvania în perioada 1945-1977* [Monument Preservation in Transylvania, 1945-1977] (PhD diss., Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, 2012), 145.

²⁰⁰ INP-DMI, Dosar 3599, doc. 13089/1677/21.09.55.

improvised spaces (e.g., by transferring the Construction Company into the building of the Puppet Theatre).²⁰¹

However, in 1951 the municipality took the decision to give a more appropriate destination to this representative building situated on the city's main square, namely to transform it into an Art Museum. The initiative was motivated by the fact that the city lacked permanent premises for an art museum despite its century-long cultural traditions.²⁰² Local decision-makers framed the issue also in terms of economic planning, however. Apparently, the city failed to meet the required national-level indicators for exhibition halls.²⁰³ As a result, in February 1951 the People's Council urged the Construction Enterprise to relocate, while allocating the amount of 1.5 million lei for the foundation of the museum.²⁰⁴ The decision was not applied immediately, since the enterprises could not find alternative locations, nor did the administration have the power to enforce it more strictly. Further archival sources suggest that, in fact, the situation remained unchanged for the entire decade, despite constant reminders from the local administration.²⁰⁵ In order to stress the need to settle the issue in favor of an Art Museum, a decision of the Central Department for the Problems of the Council of Ministers transferred the palace to the use of the Ministry of Culture.²⁰⁶

Given the multiple interventions on the building's structure over the decades, it became clear that establishing the museum had to be preceded by restoration works. Nonetheless, when the issue was finally considered, it was difficult to find a specialized

²⁰¹ DJCAN, Fond Comitetul Regional PMR, Arhiva de Partid, Secția Știință și Cultură, Fond 13, 101/1956, 101/1956, f. 44-45.

²⁰² INP-DMI, Dosar 3603 Palat Bánffy, Memoriu de arhitectură, f. 1.

²⁰³ DJCAN, Fond PMCN, 8/1953-56, f. 296.

²⁰⁴ Lazăr, *Primarii Clujului*, 197.

²⁰⁵ DJCAN, Fond PMCN, 7/1953, f. 38.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., 9/1954, f. 324.

institution qualified to produce the design project. When the People's Council addressed ICSOR, the central institute in charge with urban planning, the request was immediately declined because of the overwhelming workload. Somehow superficially, the vice-president Ladislau Adler replied that the building required only "repairs," and that the project could also be prepared by the local Section for Architecture and Systematization within the municipality,²⁰⁷ based on building surveys made previously by the students of the Institute of Architecture in 1955.²⁰⁸ Adler's reply suggests the low priority given to restoration projects in the context of strong imbalances between demands for producing architectural designs and available expertise. Even in cases when projects aiming at the restoration of high-profile buildings enjoyed the support of the local administration, substantial efforts still had to be invested in providing the necessary infrastructure and resources.

Despite the complicated situation, small steps towards restoration were made in the mid-1950s, with the Ministry of Culture allocating 2.5 million lei for the necessary repairs.²⁰⁹ In 1957, the ministry also provided the required technical support for the elaboration of the design plans. The project aimed to return the building to its original appearance, envisaging a long list of interventions: removing the cinema from the courtyard, reconstructing the windows on the façade according to their original form, removing the intermediary walls which had been constructed on the first floor in order to create apartments, restoring the façade, repairing the roof and floors, reconstructing the

²⁰⁷ INP-DMI, Dosar 3599, doc. 11906/1476/25.08.56.

²⁰⁸ Ibid., doc. 11906/10.08.56.

²⁰⁹ DJCAN, Fond Comitetul Regional PMR, Arhiva de Partid, Secția Știință și Cultură, Fond 13, 101/1956, f. 44-45.

original vaulting system, and installing modern utilities in order to make the building fully functional.²¹⁰



Fig. 4.7. The Bánffy Palace in the early 1960s, before the restoration of the ground floor.

Source: The Digital Library, BCU Cluj-Napoca

The Art Museum finally moved into the building at the end of 1957, more than six years after the initial decision had been taken. The People's Council continued to pressure the Ministry of Culture in order to obtain funding for the necessary works, especially those considered of immediate emergency (e.g., installation of utilities). The purpose of the restoration was twofold: it would “valorize the building as a historic monument,”²¹¹ while also creating an adequate space for exhibitions and similar artistic events.²¹² In order to make a case for restoration, including the immediate removal of the cinema from the courtyard, the DHM combined cultural and ideological arguments. On the one hand, it stated that the Bánffy Palace represented one of the most beautiful Baroque monuments of the country, being a valuable resource contributing to the city's cultural and

²¹⁰ INP-DMI, Dosar 3599, doc. 2969/23910/25.01.57.

²¹¹ INP-DMI, Dosar 3603 Palat Bánffy, Memoriu general, f. 2-3.

²¹² DJCAN, Fond SPRC, Secția Învățământ și Cultură, 31/1959, f. 14.

touristic prestige. On the other hand, the cinema was conveniently presented as an expression of the capitalist exploitation of the building for specula, demonstrating disregard “towards one of the most representative examples of civil architecture of our past.”²¹³ While in the past the building’s appearance had been severely affected by the capitalist exploitation for profit, socialism would bring not only the return to its original form, but will also provide an appropriate cultural use. The selected use as a museum meant also that access to this architectural landmark would be granted to all citizens, not only to a privileged group. In this sense, restoration work was necessary in order to reverse the damaging effects of capitalism, which had altered its original beauty. Similar ideologically sensitive arguments focusing not only on the appropriation of heritage, but also on its conceptualization from a historical-materialist perspective, were made by experts from other socialist countries as well.²¹⁴

The restoration works started in 1958 with the upper floor. The existing apartments were dismantled, and the space was redesigned as a succession of rooms aimed to accommodate a permanent exhibition. In 1959, a new monumental iron gate was installed at the entrance to the courtyard.²¹⁵ Still, even at this point, the advance of the restoration work was frustrated by the impossibility of freeing the building from tenants and offices.²¹⁶

²¹³ INP-DMI, Dosar 3599, Corespondență 1955-63, doc. CSCAS DMI 4258/1963.

²¹⁴ Glendinning, *The Conservation Movement*, 360.

²¹⁵ INP-DMI, Dosar 3603 Palat Bánffy, Memoriu de arhitectură, f. 1. The committee for historic monuments in Cluj was occasionally consulted for questions of detail. For example, it rejected the idea that the iron gate of the palace would include the city’s medieval coat of arms, considering that such an intervention would be a forgery. INP-DMI, Dosar 3599, Corespondență 1955-63, doc. SP oraș Cluj/CMI, March 11, 1961.

²¹⁶ DJCAN, Fond SPRC, Secția Învățământ și Cultură, 31/1959, f. 95; DJCAN, Fond SPRC, Secția Planificare, 67/ 1959, f. 534.

The restoration work itself was problematic, since the local Office for Housing Administration initially entrusted with the task lacked the expertise for a high-profile project. For example, the façade was painted in a cheap-looking white color, to the outrage of the DHM.²¹⁷ Despite the protests of the Bucharest-based experts, the Office for Housing Administration could not be suspected of bad intentions, since the company clearly stated that the required work greatly surpassed its technical and financial capacities. It was rather the case that the solution applied was similar to those used for any other building under its administration.²¹⁸ The DHM dismissed the excuses, reminding the representatives of the Office for Housing Administration of their obligation to consult specialized institutions before performing interventions on historic monuments.²¹⁹

The restoration project entered a new phase after it was taken over by the regional-level Department for Systematization, Architecture, and Construction Design in 1962-63.²²⁰ The project met the approval of all administrative and specialized bodies: the People's Council, the Regional Committee of the Romanian Workers' Party, the DHM, and the local committee for historic monuments.²²¹

The most problematic issue during the entire process turned out to be the demolition of the cinema, which continued to occupy the courtyard, and the eastern wing of the ground-floor.²²² Although central to the restoration project, the State Committee for Planning opposed the demolition because the city failed to meet the required quota of

²¹⁷ INP-DMI, Dosar 3599, doc. 5757/1960.

²¹⁸ Ibid., doc. 6194/1960.

²¹⁹ Ibid., doc. 1981/1961.

²²⁰ Ibid., doc. SP regional Cluj/CTS 00112/XXI; proiect DSAPC 400/1961; doc. DMI 686/February 2, 1962.

²²¹ Ibid., doc. 1981/March 7, 1961.

²²² INP-DMI, Dosar 3603 Palat Bánffy, Memoriu de arhitectură, f. 1.

cinema places for the registered population.²²³ The DHM in particular insisted that the inner courtyard gave structural coherence to the entire architectural concept, while the cinema lacked any connection with the new function of the building.²²⁴ The State Committee for Planning's ultimate argument was naturally the financial one. No funding was made available for demolition works, since all investment should be directed towards the main purpose, namely insuring the good functioning of the museum.²²⁵ The final version of the project postponed the demolition of the cinema for an (undefined) second phase, focusing instead on restoring the ground-floor and the basement.²²⁶ The demolition of the cinema finally occurred in the early 1970s, completed by the restoration of the façade, and some interior works.²²⁷ This episode concluded a long process, which shows something significant about the making of socialist heritage. Despite the nationalization of the building and the political support for turning it into an Art Museum, the most difficult part was actually moving occupants out of the rooms and appropriating them for the use of the museum. Similarly to what Mark B. Smith has argued for the Soviet Union, the case of the Bánffy Palace in Cluj demonstrates that property and occupancy rights were still central for the management of the built environment during state socialism.²²⁸

Retrospectively, however, the restoration of the Bánffy Palace and its introduction into the “cultural circuit” was regarded as one of the major accomplishments of the period, both in terms of heritage management and cultural space, successfully mixing

²²³ INP-DMI, Dosar 3599, doc. SP regional Cluj/CE no. 6368/ XIV/ March 28, 1963.

²²⁴ Ibid., doc. CSCAS DMI, aviz nr. 8/ May 15, 1963.

²²⁵ Ibid., doc. CSCAS DMI 4258/July 1, 1963.

²²⁶ INP-DMI, Dosar 3603 Palat Bánffy, Memoriu de arhitectură, f. 2-3.

²²⁷ Lazăr, *Primarii Clujului*, 254-55. Mitrea, “Problema patrimoniului arhitectural,” 198.

²²⁸ Mark B. Smith, *Property of Communists: The Urban Housing Program from Stalin to Khrushchev* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2010), 5.

the need of providing the city with an art museum with the preservation of a major historic monument.²²⁹

4.6. Modernism, Mass Housing, and Urban Expansion at the Periphery

4.6.1. The Elaboration of Systematization Plans

The postwar urban planning activity was consistent in its efforts of establishing a coherent strategy for the city's development, while remaining considerate towards the city's historical evolution. The first steps in this direction were taken in 1946 by a specialized commission,²³⁰ and in 1951 a systematization plan was elaborated by a group of local engineers working for the Department for Municipal Services and Local Industry.²³¹ Rather than aiming for radical change, the plan was designed along the lines established by the interwar construction regulations, focusing on infrastructure works and improving the city's image. The authors of the plan assumed that the city would develop at a moderate pace, stating for example that building heights on the central streets should be above two floors.²³²

With its traditional focus on questions of urban beautification and improvement, the vision of local expertise was probably considered too parochial and limited after the beginning of the industrialization program. As a result, in 1954 the central institute for

²²⁹ Nicolae Lascu, Mihai Opreș, "Cluj-Napoca, repere urbanistice" [Cluj-Napoca, Urban Planning Landmarks], *Arhitectura* 20.1 (1979): 22.

²³⁰ DJCAN, Fond PMCN, 412/1946, f. 197.

²³¹ Lazăr, *Primarii Clujului*, 197.

²³² DJCAN, Fond PMCN, 41/1962, 21. Unfortunately, apart from some scarce information regarding these plans, it seems that the documentation produced in the early postwar years has been mysteriously lost at some point. The planners who elaborated the systematization plan from 1965 mentioned in the introduction to their project that "the locality has constituted previously the object of urban planning research. We have information that systematization plans have been drawn during the interwar period, as well as in the postwar years; yet no material traces could be found." APMCN, Sfătu! Popula! al Regiunii Cluj, DSAPC Cluj (SPRC-DSAPC), Contract nr. 1/ 65, Proiect schiță de sistematizare a orașului Cluj, f. 4.

urban design ICSOR received the task of elaborating a preliminary study for the systematization of Cluj.²³³ However, the vision remained rather conservative, maintaining the existing functions of the city (i.e., economic, cultural, and administrative), as well as its structural organization. It suggested preserving the historic center as a separate unit, surrounded by a ring road built on the place of the former medieval walls. Also, a second ring was supposed to be constructed some two kilometers further out, connecting the new sub-centers of the city.²³⁴ The study was still considered incomplete in the absence of the economic profile of the city, which was established by the State Committee for Planning only in 1960.²³⁵ These long-lasting bureaucratic procedures created distress at the local level, since they maintained a state of uncertainty over the availability of investment opportunities. Moreover, the heads of the local administration expressed concern that the delay would result in a loss of workforce, which would choose more industrially developed regions such as Hunedoara and Braşov.²³⁶ Local-level bureaucrats took upon themselves the task of pressuring central institutions on the elaboration of economic plans, as they shared a direct interest in providing the necessary resources for the city's development.²³⁷

The systematization plan designed by ISCAS was completed in 1960. Valid for a period of fifteen years, the project was grounded in a vision of moderate growth, estimating that the city would reach 230,000 inhabitants by 1975. The development strategy focused on increasing the production capacity of existing factories, while maintaining the city's

²³³ Lazăr, *Primarii Clujului*, 207.

²³⁴ APMCN, SPRC-DSAPC, Contract nr. 1/ 65, Proiect schiță de sistematizare a oraşului Cluj, f. 4.

²³⁵ DJCAN, Fond SPRC, Secția Planificare, 67/1959, f. 526-27.

²³⁶ APMCN, SPRC-DSAPC, Contract nr. 1/ 65, Proiect schiță de sistematizare a oraşului Cluj. In 1956, only 15.7% of the active population was employed in industry (f. 14-17).

²³⁷ DJCAN, Fond PMCN, 9/1954, f. 166.

role as cultural and administrative center.²³⁸ In any case, the project implied a considerable acceleration of the efforts to construct housing, with an estimated number of 32,500 apartments to be built by 1975.²³⁹ The pace of constructions would increase from 100 to 300 apartments in the period 1957-58²⁴⁰ to 2,600 in 1965, a growth rate which was regarded with deserved skepticism by local planners. Produced with industrialized methods, new housing space was necessary not only in order to provide accommodation for newcomers, but also to replace the “old, degraded building stock,” as well as increase the living area per inhabitant from 5.9 square meters to a value of 8.²⁴¹ The last provision is indicative of the overcrowded housing space in Cluj, falling significantly below the sanitary norms for minimum living space.²⁴² However, the situation was not that critical compared to the industrial towns which accommodated part of the workforce in barracks (e.g., Hunedoara), or those that had lost significant housing space during bombings (e.g., Iași).²⁴³

²³⁸ Project no. 3004/1960. APMCN, Sfatul Popular al Regiunii Cluj, DSAPC (SPRC-DSAPC), Sistemizare oraș Cluj, 48/1965, f. 30-31.

²³⁹ APMCN, SPRC-DSAPC, Sistemizare oraș Cluj, 48/1965, f. 30-31.

²⁴⁰ Lazăr, *Primarii Clujului*, 207. In the late 1950s, the number of constructed apartments was surpassed by that new individual houses (approximately 300-400/year).

²⁴¹ APMCN, SPRC-DSAPC, Sistemizare oraș Cluj, 48/1965, f. 30-31. The calculations showed that it was improbable to meet the norms for the required living space/inhabitant by 1975 (Ibid., f. 24). Besides the apartment blocks, planners always took into consideration also the necessary services for the new districts, which made the task even more challenging (Ibid., f. 27-28).

²⁴² In the Soviet Union, the average value was 6.45 square meters in 1923, while the ideal was established at 8.25. It was further increased to 9 in 1929 and 12 square meters in 1983. Steven Harris, *Communism on Tomorrow's Street. Mass Housing and Everyday Life after Stalin* (Washington, D.C: Woodrow Wilson Center Press; Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012), 50-51. The calculations of Romanian planners aimed at attaining similar values.

²⁴³ In both cases, the average value was calculated at 4 square meters/inh. Mara Mărginean, *Ferestre spre furnalul roșu. Urbanism și cotidian în Hunedoara și Călan (1945-1968)* [Windows Towards the Red Furnace. Urban Planning and Everyday Life in Hunedoara and Călan] (Iași: Polirom, 2015), 126.



Fig. 4.8. Fragment of the systematization plan (1965). The industrial area is marked with black, the residential one with yellow, while the square-shaped central area in violet is identified as “subzone with historic character”.

Source: Arhiva Primăriei Municipiului Cluj-Napoca, Dosar DSAPC Cluj, 1/1965, Schița de sistematizare a orașului Cluj (August 1965)

While the central area was preserved as a separate unit due to its historical importance, mixed uses, and high concentration of services,²⁴⁴ the residential perimeter would be reduced in size. The existing land-use pattern in residential districts, with single-family houses having a “semi-rural character,” was perceived as “unjustified.”²⁴⁵ The case of Cluj was therefore not significantly different from other Romanian cities condemned for

²⁴⁴ In the mid-1970s, 70% of the public services were concentrated in the central area. Pascu, *Istoria Clujului*, 449.

²⁴⁵ APMCN, SPRC-DSAPC, Sistematizare oraș Cluj, 48/1965, f. 31-33.

their “rural character,” because the residential districts beyond the city center similarly consisted of individual houses of various ages and quality.

The goals of the 1960 systematization plan were short lived. Just three years later, in 1963, central authorities decided that the city’s growth rate should accelerate faster than previously anticipated, in order to reach 300,000 inhabitants by 1980.²⁴⁶ The city’s economic profile shifted from one balancing administrative, cultural, and industrial functions, to one which strongly pushed in the direction of industrial expansion.²⁴⁷ In spatial terms, this would be reflected in the extension of the industrial area²⁴⁸ to the detriment of the residential districts.²⁴⁹ While new industrial units were to be located along the railway tracks on the north, the residential area would be organized in the opposite direction, towards south-west and south-east, with a further expansion expected around 1980.²⁵⁰ Since the systematization plan was oriented towards urban development and the geography of economic investment, no specific references were made in connection to the historic center, which remained largely untouched. The only note to this issue concerned traffic, namely the necessity of constructing a ring road that would keep heavy traffic away from an area rich in historic monuments and with a valuable inherited street network.²⁵¹

²⁴⁶ DJCAN, Fond SPRC, CTS, 18/1964, f.n. The demographic growth was calculated as to provide the workforce necessary for meeting the needs of the expanding industry. Tiberiu Nits, “Aspecte ale proiectării zonelor industriale în regiunea Cluj” [Aspects Regarding the Design of Industrial Areas in Cluj Region], *Arhitectura* 16.4 (1965): 26-27.

²⁴⁷ The main industrial branches became metallurgy and machine construction (Carbochim, Tehnofrig, Unirea, Armatura, 16 Februarie), as well as chemical industry (Terapia). The cultural and administrative functions would still occupy an important place in the city’s profile. *Schiță de sistematizare* 1965, f. 9-10.

²⁴⁸ APMCN, SPRC-DSAPC, *Sistematizare oraș Cluj*, 48/1965, f. 10. The industrial area was quite compact, concentrating 83% of the factories. It was situated on the north, along the railway lines, on a 12-kilometer stripe going parallel to the city.

²⁴⁹ DJCAN, Fond SPRC, CTS, 18/1964, f. 7.

²⁵⁰ APMCN, SPRC-DSAPC, *Sistematizare oraș Cluj*, 48/ 1965, f. 22.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*, Contract nr. 1/ 65, *Proiect schiță de sistematizare a orașului Cluj*, f. 67, 73. The idea of creating a ring road around the historic center remained as a goal, yet it was never put into practice. The only practical outcome of this plan was the demolition of several buildings, for example on Cuza Vodă Street no. 1 (performed in 1972). Lazăr, *Primarii Clujului*, 254.

According to the planners' calculations, the redevelopment of residential space was manageable within the existing city limits. The required number of apartments for the first five years could be built with "minimum demolition and on empty lands," to be followed by the restructuring of another low-density area by 1980 in order to reach the required living space value of 8 square meters per person. After 1980, the only solution for increasing the density within the established built perimeter was by redeveloping centrally located areas. At this point, however, the planners avoided making specific references to targeted areas. One mention seems to suggest nevertheless that the planners cleverly used the utilitarian argument in order to prevent more intrusive interventions in the historic district. They argued that the demolition and reconstruction of the city center itself would not be economically viable, since the area was already densely built and inhabited. According to the values provided by architect Mitrea, the densities in the central area were almost twice as high compared to the modernist districts of the 1960s.²⁵²

The process of planning the city's development was facilitated by the founding of the Regional Institute for Urban Design in 1957. The institute gradually grew in complexity, comprising architects and engineers of various specializations, as well as a department charged with economic planning. Although it took over the work for elaborating the new systematization plan in the mid-1960s, the project was approved only in 1969.²⁵³

²⁵² APMCN, SPRC-DSAPC, Sistematzare oraş Cluj, 48/1965, f. 32. Population densities in the central area were higher than in the modernist districts built in the 1960s. The modernist districts Grigorescu and Gheorgheni had 185, respectively 296 inhabitants/ha, while the central district displayed a value of 388. Higher values were registered only in Mănăştur (466). By comparison, the interwar villa district Andrei Mureşanu had a value of 65.3. Vasile Mitrea, "Locuirea. De la plombe la marile ansambluri," [Housing. From Infillings to the Great Ensembles], in Pănescu, ed., *Cluj-Napoca în proiecte*, 159.

²⁵³ Mitrea, "Spre o gândire globală a municipiului "[Towards a Comprehensive Idea of the City], in Pănescu (ed.), *Cluj-Napoca în proiecte*, 68.

All projects were to be double checked at the local level before being sent to Bucharest, a process which typically altered the original designs in order to meet indicators and fit into tight budgets.²⁵⁴ As architect Mitrea recalled, the heads of the Institute for Urban Design in Cluj insisted on closely following the indicators established by central-level planning institutions, as this would bring recognition and prestige at the national level. Among the requirements, demolition indicators were particularly restrictive, demonstrating the importance of built space as a valuable resource. Sometimes, the architects had to resort to tricks in order to square the circle and obtain the required values on paper.²⁵⁵ With their focus on quantity, demolition indicators represented the main reason why single-story houses were particularly targeted for being torn down, including in the city center.²⁵⁶ As Brigitte Le Normand argued in the case of Belgrade, such pragmatic calculations actually determined a “case-by-case” approach, leading to the preservation of more imposing structures.²⁵⁷

4.6.2. The Residential Districts of the 1960s and 1970s

The 1960s marked the beginning of the large-scale housing construction program using industrialized methods, with two new districts, Grigorescu and Gheorgheni, planned and built according to the principles of microraión.²⁵⁸ For the young architects entrusted

²⁵⁴ Interview with architect Vasile Mitrea, November 27, 2012, Cluj-Napoca.

²⁵⁵ Emanoil Tudose, “Bulevardul Nicolae Titulescu (fosta strada Pata),” [Boulevard Nicolae Titulescu (former Pata Street)] in Pănescu, ed., *Cluj-Napoca in proiecte*, 274. Tudose explained that demolition indicators were so strict because they implied the necessity of relocated displaced families. This aspect proved particularly problematic in the case of densely built areas, or even poor areas such as the Pata street. In this case, the solution adopted at the proposal of a local bureaucrat was to include the area retrospectively in the modernist district Gheorgheni, which had been built on empty land. In this way, the demolition indicators met the required value.

²⁵⁶ Interview with architect Vasile Mitrea, Cluj-Napoca, November 27, 2012.

²⁵⁷ Brigitte Le Normand, *Designing Tito's Capital: Urban Planning, Modernism and Socialism* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2014), 60-61.

²⁵⁸ Mitrea, “Locuirea, de la plombe la marile ansambluri,” 156.

with the projects, the experience was pioneering in many ways. The designs followed in a very direct manner the Soviet experience, mostly because the team was headed by Augustin Presecan, an architect who had studied in Moscow. In addition, documentation on other cases than the Soviet one was rather scarce.²⁵⁹

The Grigorescu district (1961-65) was designed for a population of 25,000 inhabitants, in an area already partially occupied by family houses. It consisted of apartment blocks arranged in parallel rows and surrounded by greenery.²⁶⁰ Although such an urban planning scheme presupposed constructing on an empty field, in reality the land was partially occupied by family houses. Since demolition meant additional costs and the relocation of inhabitants, the architects were asked to change the disposition of blocks slightly in order to allow for the preservation of some houses.²⁶¹ Photos from the period show the contrasting juxtaposition of the old and new buildings, testifying precisely about the limits of socialist urban planning in merging ambitious goals with the realities on the ground.

The Gheorgheni district, designed for a population of 30,000 inhabitants, perhaps followed the principles of microraiion the most closely, as it was built on virtually empty land.²⁶² Besides the apartment blocks, the design also included a minimum of services (i.e., two kindergartens, two schools, two commercial centers) and considerable green space.²⁶³

²⁵⁹ Interview with architect Vasile Mitrea, Cluj-Napoca, November 27, 2012.

²⁶⁰ The redevelopment of old districts was not always consistent with demolition indicators. Paradoxically, in Grigorescu the first sector demolished sector was containing in a large proportion good quality housing (28%). In other areas, some of the houses were still preserved for a period of time, alongside the new blocks. Mitrea, "Locuirea, de la plombe la marile ansambluri," 161-169.

²⁶¹ DJCAN, Fond SPRC, CTS, 18/1964, f. 38.

²⁶² Ibid., 2/1964, f. 1, 27.

²⁶³ Mitrea, "Locuirea, de la plombe la marile ansambluri," 173-180; Pascu, ed., 1850: *Clujul istorico-artistic*, 222.

Decades later, the design of the two districts was still praised for compositional clarity and coherence. Retrospectively, the architects considered the modernist districts of the early 1960s as the only instance when Romanian urban planning was aligned with international standards in terms of concept and design.²⁶⁴ The districts' internal coherence was partially altered through the policy of densification in the 1970s, an action openly condemned by local architects for its disregard of the natural and built environment.²⁶⁵

During the 1970s and 1980s, the principles of the microraion were to a large extent abandoned in the planning of other residential districts. Nonetheless, similarly to what Brigitte Le Normand argues for Yugoslavia, modernism was not abandoned because of a perceived failure in providing adequate living standards.²⁶⁶ The decision was due on the one hand to the centrally imposed restrictions on land use,²⁶⁷ and on the other hand, to architects' wish to move beyond the rigid compositional formulas of modernism.²⁶⁸ Still, projects awarded by the Architects' Union for successfully merging aesthetic, functional, and economic requirements ended up being significantly altered during the following stages – approval and construction. Therefore, from a carefully planned district,²⁶⁹

²⁶⁴ Interview with architect Vasile Mitrea, Cluj-Napoca, November 27, 2012.

²⁶⁵ Lascu and Opriș, "Cluj-Napoca, repere urbanistice," 22. In the same issue, quite bravely, Mitrea argued that increasing building density would have been possible without negating valid urban planning principles. He criticized the concept of "densification" for its lack of a scientific basis, arguing that it was nothing more than a simple-minded solution. Although he did not identify any actors responsible with this decision, he considered that the architects also shared part of the "guilt," since they accepted simplistic solutions imposed in haste.

²⁶⁶ Le Normand, *Designing Tito's Capital*, 10-11. Florian Urban engaged with the question of success and failure of modernist mass housing districts at global level. He argued that rather than looking at design alone, one should consider a "complex formula that includes not only form, but also social composition, location within a city, effective maintenance, and a variety of cultural, social, and political indicators." Florian Urban, *Tower and Slab: Histories of Global Mass Housing* (Abingdon, Routledge, 2012), 2.

²⁶⁷ Peter Derer, *Locuirea urbană: schiță pentru o abordare evolutivă* [Urban Housing: A Sketch on Its Evolution] (București: Editura Tehnică, 1985), 154.

²⁶⁸ Emanoil Tudose, "Cartierul Mănăștur," [The Mănăștur District] in Pănescu, ed., *Cluj-Napoca în proiecte*, 243-251.

²⁶⁹ The authors of the project sought to depart from the linearity of the urban planning schemes introduced through the Soviet school and bring more diversity in design, for example by arranging the blocks in the shape of S or by creating more variety in design.

Mănăştur²⁷⁰ came to best embody the “evils” associated with socialist urban planning, resulting in a monotonous cityscape of densely packed grey blocks made of poor quality prefabricated panels, with minimal services and public spaces.²⁷¹ Land-use restrictions and increased densities made the district significantly more compact, containing almost double the number of apartments in Gheorgheni.²⁷² The policy of densification, focusing exclusively on maximizing the number of apartment blocks, was applied on the original designs: twelve blocks were constructed instead of the four designed; blocks were also constructed on the sites of the planned kindergartens, schools, and collective garages.²⁷³ The scarcity of resources combined with the pressure to build an increasing number of apartments pressured decision-makers to minimize infrastructure costs while increasing building density.²⁷⁴

Sociological research on population distribution in Cluj revealed, similarly to what Iván Szelényi’s remarked on, that the redistribution of housing followed education and social class. The districts built in the 1960s Gheorgheni and Grigorescu – which incidentally offered a better-quality living space, became homes for the intelligentsia and

²⁷⁰ Situated along the road going west from the city center, in the direction of Oradea, the district was built on the place of the former Romanian village incorporated into the city perimeter in 1895.

²⁷¹ Mitrea, “Locuirea, de la plombe la marile ansambluri,” 156.

²⁷² Pascu, ed., *1850: Clujul istorico-artistic*, 222-3.

²⁷³ Tudose, “Cartierul Mănăştur,” 243-251. In an interview published in the local newspaper *Făclia* on November 13, 1973, Tudose openly criticized decision-makers for taking a superficial approach when approving urban planning projects: “I wish they would realize that a group of architects has worked for days in a row on a project which they are judging in a few minutes.” Mănăştur was indeed planned as a very compact district that would accommodate 70,000 inhabitants. However, the district was situated in the vicinity of green area traditionally used as a recreational place by the locals. Therefore, the planners aimed at counterbalancing the lack of green space within the district by designing a large variety of sport facilities as part of this generous green area, which did not have to be included within the built area. In order to avoid the demolition of existing housing and reach the required number of 5,000 built apartments per year, planners envisioned a significant increase of construction density, with apartment blocks of up to 17 floors. “Realizări clujene,” 39-40.

²⁷⁴ Norbert Petrovici, “Socialist Urbanization in the Ceauşescu Era: Power and Economic Relations in the Production of Habitational Space in Cluj,” *Studia Universitatis Babeş-Bolyai, Sociologia* 1 (2006): 101-102.

the workers who moved to Cluj in the first phase of industrialization. In contrast, the densely-packed districts built in the 1970, lacking amenities and green spaces, such as Mănăştur and Zorilor, were mostly inhabited by workers who moved to the city with the second wave of industrialization starting after 1968.²⁷⁵

4.7. Built Heritage and In-fillings in the Historic Center

Following the provisions of the systematization plans, until the late 1970s the city center was spared from major interventions. A book celebrating the city's architectural heritage published in 1974 stated, with a sense of self-congratulatory pride, that "systematization projects attempted to conserve and valorize the historic center and the old districts; interventions had been limited to places where the housing stock was thought to be inappropriate."²⁷⁶ The success of urban planning strategies was measured in quantitative terms, focusing clearly on the extent to which specific economic indicators were met. Heritage policies, which addressed questions of quality rather than quantity, somehow escaped these categories and thus entered the grey area of compromises and negotiations. It was rather the case that the "survival" of the historic center was due to a mixture of factors, among which the usual suspects – feelings of local pride in history and heritage – were combined not only with the influence of key individuals, but also with neglect and shortages. As local architects explained, the weaknesses of the system could sometimes be exploited in order to save buildings from demolition.²⁷⁷

²⁷⁵ Ibid., 106-107.

²⁷⁶ Pascu, ed., *1850: Clujul istorico-artistic*, 222.

²⁷⁷ Discussion with architect Virgil Pop, Cluj-Napoca, June 17, 2015.

In the case of Cluj, one critical aspect which insured the preservation of the historic center during the elaboration of systematization plans was simply its high visibility on maps. Systematization plans could not ignore the compact, square-shaped area with a regular street network and a high density of constructions, which seemed to dominate and subordinate the other parts of the city.²⁷⁸

The local administration displayed an ambivalent attitude towards a potential redevelopment scheme for the historic center. Although the representatives of the People's Council occasionally declared their commitment to the preservation of historic monuments²⁷⁹ as an expression of local pride, it would be difficult to argue that they also promoted a coherent policy in this regard. While a number of architects and preservationists were included in the Commission for Systematization,²⁸⁰ consultations with the members of the commission for historic monuments were an occasional rather than a regular practice.²⁸¹

The Bucharest-based Department for Historic Monuments maintained an influence over building development in the historic center, since its approval was legally required for urban design projects involving listed monuments. Especially during the 1960s, the DHM could oppose projects that required demolition, or was at least able to negotiate the terms of a compromise with sufficient authority. In January 1967, the DHM rejected the proposal to build new headquarters for the State Archives on the site of two

²⁷⁸ Elkan, "43 de ani," 363-364. A former chief-architect of the city, Elkan recalled the pressures to "replace the 'insignificant houses' with a city center that 'would represent us'". The architects' strategy, he argued, was to find a location for the civic center outside the historic area, as well as to have these plans always as "work in progress".

²⁷⁹ *Buletinul Oficial al Consiliului Popular al oraşului Cluj* 3.5 (1970): 5.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.4 (1970): 19-21. For example, in 1970, the district-level Commission for Systematization included, apart from the local political leadership and key bureaucrats, also several architects (e.g., Augustin Presecan, Virgil Salvanu, Mărioara Salvanu, Elkan), and art historian Virgil Vătăşianu.

²⁸¹ Interview with architect Vasile Mitrea, Cluj-Napoca, November 27, 2012.

listed houses on Kogălniceanu Street, some hundred meters away from the main university building. The street was considered one of the most beautiful in the city, with several neo-classical buildings, as well as the fifteenth-century Matthias Church, a former Franciscan monastery. The position expressed by the DHM clearly stated that inserting a new building would create an unpleasant visual contrast, distorting the harmony of the street. However, the utilitarian arguments of the architects in charge of the project were accepted only after they brought a letter of support signed by some of the leading historians from Cluj, such as Constantin Daicoviciu, David Prodan, and Ștefan Pascu. Eventually, the DHM agreed to approve the demolition of the listed houses, yet required that the design remain sensitive to the architectural context, with a simplified façade and a height equal to the surrounding buildings.²⁸² In cases where they had to approve fill-ins in the historic city, the DHM experts insisted on a contextual approach to urban design, in which the new building would be integrated in the surrounding built environment.²⁸³

In the late 1960s, protected urban areas were established with the collaboration of the DHM. However, in the case of Cluj this step had a more moderate impact compared to other cities such as Iași²⁸⁴, since the protected area basically coincided with the perimeter of the medieval town, which already had an acknowledged historical value.²⁸⁵ Therefore, rather than contesting existing perceptions on the value of the old town, the measure merely confirmed it.

Apart from the large choices weighting between preservation and demolition of listed monuments, other decisions of the People's Council had a more long-lasting impact

²⁸² INP-DMI, Procese verbale X, PV nr. 6/April 13, 1966, f. 1-4.

²⁸³ INP-DMI, Procese verbale XII, PV nr. 7/ May 5, 1970, f. 4-5.

²⁸⁴ See Chapter 5.7.3.

²⁸⁵ Interview with architect Eugenia Greceanu, Bucharest, October 20, 2012.

on the preservation of the historic built fabric. For example, the pressure to build new housing negatively affected the funding available for the maintenance of old buildings. A decision from 1973 drastically restricted the types of repairs to be financed by state funding to those considered “absolutely necessary,” such as roof repairs, utilities, or work to insure the stability of the structure. Other work, including restoration, was simply considered an expense that could not be covered from the local budget.²⁸⁶ Although such decisions did not eliminate old buildings physically, they did condemn them to neglect and slow degradation.

Since the largest part of the historic district was in fact maintained, the few cases of high-rise buildings inserted into the area were easily identifiable. One of them was the seven-floor tower of the Technical University, built on the north-west corner of the historic perimeter, near the university’s main building. The approval of the location was not devoid of controversy, and was accepted only following political pressures made from Bucharest.²⁸⁷ This example suggests that local planning authorities tended to discourage such an approach, considering these cases as something exceptional. In an article published at the end of the 1970s, the intervention was criticized for negatively competing with the historical verticals of the city: “the seven-story construction surpasses any building height in the city center – except for the towers and cupolas which define the image of the historic district – demonstrating a lack of interest towards the characteristics of the area.”²⁸⁸

²⁸⁶ APMCN, Sesiunile Sfatului Popular al municipiului Cluj, 3/1973, f. 80.

²⁸⁷ Discussion with architect Virgil Pop, Cluj-Napoca, June 17, 2015. Eugenia Greceanu also recalled about strong disagreements regarding the construction of the tower within the approval commission of the DHM. Interview with Eugenia Greceanu, Bucharest, October 20, 2012.

²⁸⁸ Lascu and Opriș, “Cluj-Napoca: repere urbanistice,” 22.

Another in-fill criticized for “blending” unsuccessfully into the streetscape was the Romanian Academy’s new library building on Kogălniceanu Street, constructed in the 1970s next to the State Archives.²⁸⁹ The design of the façade, consisting of frames from massive prefabricated elements stood in sharp contrast to the surrounding buildings with discrete decoration. Interestingly, along with criticism, another article from the late 1970s actually contrasted this approach with the façade of the Academic College, a modernist building of the interwar period, which arguably demonstrated a successful integration of contemporary architectural styles in a historical streetscape. Finally, a third “intrusive” presence was the Shopping Center “Central,” which was intended to have “a representative character [and serve especially] the needs of the tourists.”²⁹⁰ Built on the street leading to the railway station, the five-story shopping center was denounced for its massive volume compared to the small scale surrounding buildings.²⁹¹

Although infillings were promoted as an acceptable compromise solution, allowing the mixture of old and new architecture,²⁹² these interventions led to a substantial loss of the historical fabric. It not only concerned the demolished building per se, but also the division of plots, since more parcels usually had to be merged in order to obtain a construction surface necessary to accommodate a modern building. From an economic point of view, such interventions were costly and impractical, also requiring the unpleasant process of relocating the tenants. In addition, construction companies used to work with

²⁸⁹ DJCAN, Fond Comitetul Regional al PMR, Arhiva de Partid, Sectia Stiinta si Cultura, Fond 13, f. 155. For a description of the building, see Radu Spănu, “Biblioteca Academiei,” [The Academy Library], *Arhitectura* 30.2 (1979): 17-19.

²⁹⁰ APMCN, SPRC-DSAPC Cluj, Contract nr. 1/ 65, Proiect schiță de sistematizare a orașului Cluj, f. 44. All proposed locations (e.g., Gh. Doja Street, Mihai Viteazul Square, Cuza Voda Street) were situated in the historical area, since centrality was essential for a department store destined for tourists.

²⁹¹ Lascu and Opreș, “Cluj-Napoca: repere urbanistice,” 22.

²⁹² The concept was presented as a compromise between functional needs and maintaining the city character.

large scale, empty lands and industrialized methods, found it difficult to get used to small parcels. Fill-ins in areas with compact historical built fabric, however, were still promoted as theoretical solutions by architects, also part of students' training.²⁹³

Architectural heritage remained part of the public discourse, through publications by historians and art historians that brought legitimacy to the old town. The history of Cluj became the object of particular political and historiographic interest in 1974, in celebration of 1850 years since the Roman Napoca received the status of municipium. Along with the 700-page volume titled *Istoria Clujului* [The History of Cluj], the large-format illustrated album *1850: Clujul istorico-artistic*²⁹⁴ [1850: Historic and Artistic Cluj] dealt particularly with the city's built heritage. The book's most coherent part focused on the Renaissance period,²⁹⁵ which was in fact a summary of an earlier volume published by Viorica Marica and Ștefan Pascu.²⁹⁶ The chapter is a methodologically coherent piece of Marxist analysis focusing on the materiality of fifteenth and sixteenth century architecture, analyzed in relation to the social classes that produced and used it. This approach therefore avoided any nationalistic interpretation of the city's past, by focusing on material culture and social

²⁹³ Discussion with architect Virgil Pop, Cluj-Napoca, June 17, 2015. Precisely given these difficulties, local architects sometimes advanced radical solutions for the reconstruction of central streets, although it was quite clear that these designs would not be implemented. "Nobody was ashamed to produce something like that; they were included in the exhibition as accomplishments." According to Pop, the students' training would not focus on providing context-sensitive designs for infillings, opting instead for contrasting images. An exception was the block constructed at the eastern edge of the historic area, across from the Party's headquarters accommodated in a nineteenth century building. The apartment block, designed by Teodor Raiciu and Gheorghe Vais, was a contextualized interpretation of local built heritage. However, the demolition of the old building, housing the Office for Statistics was regarded by many as a "shock". Elkan, "43 de ani," 364.

²⁹⁴ Pascu, ed., *1850: Clujul istorico-artistic*. The volume was published in large format, with photos and explanations in five languages (Romanian, Hungarian, German, English, and Russian). It was authored by a group of local historians and art historians.

²⁹⁵ Ibid., 62-64. Although part of the fascination with the Renaissance was due to its perception as a progressive period, as well as the town's prosperity during this time, not much of its material traces had been preserved in the city's built fabric. Many artefacts featured in the book (e.g., stone carved door and window frames) were conserved in the History Museum.

²⁹⁶ Pascu and Marica, *Clujul medieval*.

groups. However, it did not blindly follow the ideological requirements of the regime, but rather a methodological approach promoted by art historian Virgil Vătășianu.²⁹⁷ In contrast, both in terms of methodology and coherence, the chapter analyzing “the capitalist period,”²⁹⁸ described a time of sharp social contrasts and horrific bad taste, most clearly represented by eclecticism.²⁹⁹ The approach of the volume as a whole remained anchored in the traditional art history canon. Historians and art historians in Romania delimited themselves from alternative, yet ideologically-consistent views, such as attempts to renovate and valorize the turn-of-the-century working class districts and culture, common in other socialist countries.³⁰⁰ The failure to confer any value on minor architecture and engage with different layers of the city’s history – including its working-class history – resulted either in the implementation of radical modernization projects, or the total neglect of districts which were not included in such plans.

During the 1970s, heritage initiatives were promoted rather through semi-official channels by professionals who used the opportunities offered by the institutional infrastructure they were already part of. Informal discussions touching upon heritage issues were organized by local newspapers, with the participation of architects, historians, and visual artists.³⁰¹ Local professionals interested in architectural heritage continued the efforts to document and expand the list of historic monuments, especially by including

²⁹⁷ The Marxist influence in Vătășianu’s research methods and writing was the result of his studies in Vienna during the interwar period. Nicolae Sabău, Corina Simion, and Vlad Toca, *Istoria artei la Universitatea din Cluj* [Art History at the Cluj University], vol. I, 1919-1987 (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2010), 501.

²⁹⁸ In contrast, the interwar period is presented in rather neutral terms, emphasizing for example the progress in the provision of infrastructure. Pascu, ed., *1850: Clujul istorico-artistic*, 193.

²⁹⁹ Eclecticism was criticized for its lack of originality, as it was a mixture of architectural references to other historical periods. Ibid., 155-57.

³⁰⁰ Florian Urban, *Neo-historical East Berlin: Architecture and Urban design in the German Democratic republic 1970-1990* (Farnham, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009), 161-170.

³⁰¹ Interview with architect Vasile Mitrea, Cluj-Napoca, November 27, 2012.

prominent examples of late-nineteenth-century architecture.³⁰² Updated lists circulated for the internal use of concerned institutions, with the approval of local authorities.³⁰³ Architect Adrian Giurgiu, employed at the Institute for Urban Design, initiated a project aimed at collecting documentation that would provide a comprehensive image on the listed monuments. Giurgiu produced detailed surveys which emphasized the layered architectural values in historic buildings, resulting from successive construction phases or alterations through the years. Moreover, the fieldwork resulting in substantial visual documentation was supplemented by archival research in Budapest.³⁰⁴ This project, called “Study for the Systematization and Valorization of the Architectural Reserve and Architectural Monuments in Cluj-Napoca”, was completed in 1981,³⁰⁵ yet had no practical impact.³⁰⁶

4.8. Integrating the Old into the New

In 1977, the city counted 262,000 inhabitants, approaching the prescribed target of 300,000 inhabitants by 1980. An analysis of the city’s development during the socialist period published in 1979 revealed that, despite the idea of comprehensive urban planning aimed at creating a unitary and functionally integrated organism, Cluj was still a city of many contrasts. Its historic core was described as “one of the most valuable in the country,” with a mixture of monuments ranging from Gothic to modern architecture. Its originality

³⁰² The re-evaluation of eclecticism and its incorporation into the official canon was reflected in articles published by architects from Cluj. See, for example, Undina Neamțu, “*Un important monument neo-gotic în Cluj-Napoca: Palatul Széky*,” [An Important Neo-Gothic Monument in Cluj-Napoca: the Széky Palace], *Revista muzeelor și monumentelor. Seria Monumente istorice și de artă* 49.2 (1980): 40-43.

³⁰³ Discussion with architect Virgil Pop, Cluj-Napoca, June 17, 2015.

³⁰⁴ The archival research undertaken by Giurgiu was made with the support of his wife, who was of Hungarian origin.

³⁰⁵ Mitrea, “Problema patrimoniului arhitectural,” 193.

³⁰⁶ Interview with architect Vasile Mitrea, November 27, 2012, Cluj-Napoca. The rich database he had assembled was unfortunately lost after his premature death.

resided not so much in the aesthetic value of individual buildings – it was even considered that many buildings represented no particular value in themselves – nor in the stylistic unity of the ensemble, but rather in the interesting juxtapositions of styles, periods, and architectural volumes. The historical cityscape embodied a particular “spirit of a place,” which made it attractive for locals and tourists alike. Nevertheless, although the center still met the most important socio-cultural functions, its building stock had not been fully provided with modern utilities. In terms of urban design and aesthetics, the new residential ensembles³⁰⁷ stood in sharp contrast to the inherited character of the city. The old town displayed an ordered street system consisting of straight streets and rectangular squares, while the blocks of the new modernist districts were disposed freely in space.³⁰⁸ While the new housing estates offered modern living standards for their residents, they often lacked amenities, cultural institutions, and spaces for a collective life, which remained concentrated in the old town. Moreover, urban improvement tended to be limited to areas which were the privileged object of socialist urban planning, leaving others untouched. As a result, some of the contrasting characteristics of the interwar period were maintained: both the well-off villa district Andrei Mureșanu and the turn-of-the-century working class neighborhoods (Gruia, Dâmbu Rotund, Iris) were still in place with few alterations, including in terms of supplying utilities.³⁰⁹

In order to soften these contrasts, the systematization plan elaborated in 1976³¹⁰ aimed to create a more balanced distribution of services throughout the city by

³⁰⁷ Grigorescu (north-west), Mănăștur (south-west), Gheorgheni (south-east), Mărăști (east, started in 1978).

³⁰⁸ Opinion expressed by architect Virgil Salvanu in *Arhitectura* 30.1 (1979): 31. In comparison, in the case of Iași the new districts were seen as a continuation of the “garden-city.” See Chapter 5.4.

³⁰⁹ See also Pascu, *Istoria Clujului*, 449-450. The districts not affected by radical systematization measures tended to be “forgotten” by planners.

³¹⁰ Mitrea, “Spre o gândire globală a municipiului”, 68.

decongesting the inner-city. The solution envisioned the development of two additional centers with amenities for 150,000 inhabitants, each situated at a distance of approximately two kilometers from the center to east and west.³¹¹ The new centers would polarize a variety of services (e.g., administrative, cultural, health care, commercial), as well as provide residential areas consisting of high-rise apartment blocks (over ten floors), arranged in long street corridors or in precincts “giving a strong urban character.”³¹² The last phase of the project would focus on the central nucleus, which would be “functionally and aesthetically restructured.”³¹³

While construction activity still focused on the housing districts at the periphery, the architects started to develop plans for the restructuring centrally located areas.³¹⁴ The most promoted architectural program at the time, the civic center, turned into a

³¹¹ Planners aimed to decongest the historic center by transferring some of its functions closer to the residential districts. In the initial project from the early 1970s, the new centers should include facilities for commerce, office buildings, various socio-cultural services (cinema, house of culture), a hotel, and even an amusement park for children. “Realizări clujene,” *Arhitectura* 24.2 (1973): 38.

³¹² Lascu and Opreș, “Cluj-Napoca, repere urbanistice,” 18-19.

³¹³ The further development of the city, for a population above 500,000 inhabitants, was envisioned through the development of surrounding satellite localities.

³¹⁴ Given the goal of creating a more coherent urban image, as well as of visually relating the historical architecture of the center with the modernist blocks at the periphery, one project focused on the two boulevards connecting the center with the residential areas from east and west. The redevelopment of the two boulevards was considered a manageable project not only given the functional and aesthetic importance, but also due to the low density and heritage value of the constructions. Many of the buildings lined along the street were ground floor, with a mixture of styles and uses that did not present specific interest for preservation. The two boulevards were envisioned as a transitional area mixing contemporary and historical architecture. Since height and density were used as main selection criteria, all low-rise buildings were basically condemned to demolition, regardless of any potential architectural or historical value. A number of taller buildings (usually with two-three floors) were to be preserved and caught between the unequal rhythm of comparatively higher new apartment blocks, all different in terms of volume, height, and design. The entire street would be basically bordered with massive, taller apartment blocks, leaving older buildings, such as the Calvinist church designed by Kós Károly “trapped” in between. According to the authors of the project, the design was intended to moderate a visual and stylistic transition between old and new, as well as to attempt a gradual insertion of contemporary architecture into the scale of the old town. However, the proportion between old and new was not a balanced one, weighting clearly in favor of the latter. The massive blocks, with dimensions probably motivated also by the need of meeting high density indicators, visually overwhelmed the old buildings. Even in this context, however, the percent of demolition was considered too high, and the project was never implemented. See the project in *Arhitectura* 30.1 (1979): 31-32.

controversial project. Its location and design were constantly reevaluated in the 1970s and 1980s,³¹⁵ as part of a strategy for “saving” the historic center from unwanted interventions. Quite conveniently, the “productivity” of architects’ work was measured in terms of designs, not built projects, allowing them to produce paperwork and drawings even when it was quite clear that the actual construction could not be funded.³¹⁶ As a result, the reshaping of the historic center of Cluj was (somehow intentionally) a permanent work in progress, while the civic center project remained an unfinished endeavor. The architects recall, however, the continuous political pressures requiring them to replace “insignificant houses” with “architecture that would represent us”,³¹⁷ suggesting that a certain discourse about the appropriate urban image had been internalized and was constantly reproduced by local decision-makers. The lack of funding also contributed to the permanent delay in implementing projects that would have implied destruction of built heritage.³¹⁸

After the reorganization of the DHM, protection of heritage was de-centralized through the creation of district-level Offices for National Cultural Heritage (Rom: Oficiul Județean pentru Patrimoniul Cultural Național). Although the institution was officially served by very few employees,³¹⁹ its organization along with the History Museum helped gather a number of specialists who contributed with projects at documenting the heritage values of Cluj. According to documents preserved at the National Institute for Patrimony, until the late 1980s the Office for Heritage was active in constantly opposing

³¹⁵ The locations adjacent to the historic perimeter were taken into consideration (e.g., Cipariu Square and Dorobanților Street). Mitrea, “Spațiul public,” 113.

³¹⁶ The same argument is made by Sergiu Novac regarding the civic center planned in the late 1980s in Brașov. Sergiu Novac, “The Civic Center: Failed Urbanity and Romanian Socialism in Its ‘Second Phase,’” *Community Spaces: Conception, Appropriation, Identity*, Graue Reihe ISR Impuls online 53 (2015): 38.

³¹⁷ Elkan, “43 de ani,” 363.

³¹⁸ Discussion with architect Virgil Pop, Cluj-Napoca, June 17, 2015.

³¹⁹ Ibid.

redevelopment projects in the historic center. The arguments featured in official replies sent to the People's Council reveal that the local heritage specialists had carefully mapped different layers of architectural value in the historic center, from medieval times to the early twentieth century. The concept of "architectural reserve" was widely used, while the poor maintenance was emphasized to counter claims of obsolescence. However, many buildings – especially the modern ones – were not listed, and the preservationists' only "weapon" was to remind the planners that the new list was still in the process of approval, and demolition would have to be approved by the State Council.³²⁰

Furthermore, nationalistic associations with the built heritage increasingly became a problem during the 1980s. Not only was the idea of creating a city museum abandoned given the "Hungarian" associations, but other initiatives to exhibit local heritage and history were similarly banned. As one architect recalls, a photo exhibition curated by architect Adrian Giurgiu aimed at documenting nineteenth-century Cluj was banned hours before its opening at the Library of the Academy since "there was nothing Romanian in it."³²¹ I would argue that this anecdote is indicative not so much of the nationalism of the Ceaușescu era and its implications for exhibiting the local past, which is well-known, but rather for the ways in which local architects (and they were not alone) disregarded them, and engaged in projects they found interesting and relevant. Regardless of ethnicity, many young professionals participated in the organization of the exhibition on

³²⁰ INP-DMI, Dosar 3644 Zona Sistemizare Cluj, doc. 670/XV from 22.04.1980; doc. 1555/XV from 02.10.1986, f. 2-3 (zona Barițiu - Piața Muzeului); doc. 504 from 20.05.1987 (zona Piața Muzeului); doc. 146/XV from 23.01.1987 (zona Avram Iancu - Napoca).

³²¹ Architect Virgil Pop recalled that the difficulties in organizing the exhibition were caused not so much by the lack of engagement or documentation, but by the scarcity of basic material resources, such as paper and glue. Discussion with architect Virgil Pop, Cluj-Napoca, June 17, 2015.

a voluntary basis, and used opportunities provided by semi-official settings to get familiar and engage with the local past and its architectural manifestations.

4.9. Conclusion

As the statistics regarding the increase in the number of housing units clearly indicate, the built environment of Cluj changed considerably during the socialist period. The interventions around the historic center from the 1950s and 1960s sought to remain considerate towards the character of the town, while the modernist districts were purposefully presented as an element of alterity. The industrialization drive in the 1970s was accompanied by pressures to increase building heights and densities, while in the 1980s interest was redirected towards centrally located areas. The policies pursued by local authorities were not only informed by centrally formulated requirements, but also incorporated local aspirations for fostering development, while competing with other urban centers for investment and resources. Industrialization changed the city's profile, favored migration from rural areas, and fueled housing shortages. It also produced other side-effects, stressing the obsolescence of the existing building stock and discouraging maintenance. Urban planning strategies were mainly guided by the growing role of industry in the city's life, which made it necessary to provide housing. As the ones who had to translate the visions developed at the political level into practice, the architect-planners resented the pressure to find appropriate urban design solutions in the context of restrictive economic measures and rigid legislation. Centrally established patterns of land use obliged them to reduce the areas allocated for housing districts, at the same time increasing densities and heights. While developing strategies to accommodate these requirements,

they also came to experience growing dissatisfaction with the results of their work, and questioned the logic of the construction industry.

Preservationist agendas in Cluj were relatively well anchored into local expertise, enjoying also (to some extent) the support of key bureaucrats. The care for monuments benefitted from strong local traditions, as well as the engagement of dedicated local professionals. In terms of research and documentation, preservationist activity enlarged its scope and scale over the years, although restoration works continued to privilege major monuments. However, in practical terms, the management of the built heritage faced numerous shortcomings: scarcity of materials, lack of expertise and a qualified workforce, as well as conflicting claims on space made on the basis of property and occupancy rights.

Planners and preservationists alike perceived the historic center of Cluj as an urban space with a strong personality, taking it into consideration as a unit given its visibility and historical significance. At a closer look, however, streetscapes lacked architectural unity and coherence of scale, consisting of buildings of different heights, styles, and qualities. Arguably, it was precisely this diversity that made it vulnerable to interventions, especially since the criteria for judging the value of old buildings and implicitly their “survival” tended to privilege monumentality and functional qualities over age. Functionalist arguments also presented advantages from a preservationist perspective, since the relatively high density of construction and population made demolition problematic. Paradoxically, while the arguments of preservationists became more diverse and pertinent from a scientific point of view, their ability to influence decision-making diminished. In the 1980s, austerity rather than support for preservation contributed to the failure to implement redevelopment projects in the central area.

This chapter has also tried to highlight the role played by individual agency: political decisions-makers attempted to accomodate pressures from above and from below, citizens used a official and unofficial channels in order to secure housing or maintenance works, local companies resisted orders from the municipality, administrators of state resources transferred goods and services into the second economy, architects struggled with the increasing pace of urban growth, and preservationists fought to push forward an agenda that was overlooked by the economic and political priorities of the regime. Overall, the factors that shaped the limits of consensus were just as much a product of mismanagement, lack of expertise, and widespread scarcity, as they were of active engagement by actors involved the form and scope of urban transformation.

CHAPTER FIVE. THE MOLDAVIAN TÂRG¹: ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE AND URBAN CENTRALITY IN IAȘI

*“În nici un oraș orânduirea populară n-a moștenit atâtea monumente ale trecutului,
Și [...] nici un oraș, [...] un număr atât de mare de locuințe insalubre...”²*

*[In no other city has the socialist order inherited so many monuments of the past/
And [...] in no other city, such a large number of unsanitary dwellings.]*

In postwar decades, city guides, press articles, and architecture books commonly referred to Iași as “the old capital of Moldavia,” a city proud of its past and architectural heritage. “The city of Iași is in itself a “national museum”, stated a city guide published in 1972. Its monuments, widespread mostly in the old center and on the dominant hills – Galata and Cetățuia – represent one of the most important monumental ensembles in our country.”³ With an urban history going back to the fourteenth century, the city displayed indeed a rich array of late medieval churches and monasteries, all of them listed as “monuments of culture” by the first postwar heritage legislation adopted in 1955.⁴

¹ Commercial town, developed in the absence of fortifications or privileges, characteristic to the urban network of Moldavia before the Second World War. Per Ronnas, *Urbanization in Romania. A Geography of Social and Economic Change since Independence* (Stockholm: Economic Research Institute, Stockholm School of Economics, 1984), 169. The terminology is discussed in Laurențiu Rădvan, *At Europe's Borders. Medieval Towns in the Romanian Principalities* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 371-381.

² A (subjective) comment formulated by Geo Bogza, quoted in *Flacăra Iașului* [The Flame of Iași], August 21, 1964.

³ I. Șandru, V. Băcăuanu, *Județul Iași* [Iași County] (București: Ed. Academiei RSR, 1972), 79. For other similar references, see *Monumente din municipiul și județul Iași – ghid bibliografic* [Monuments in the City and County of Iași] (Iași, 1969), 7-9; “Întinerești, bătrâne Iași” [You are Getting Younger, Old Iași], *Flacăra Iașului*, August 21, 1964.

⁴ Academia RPR, Comisia Științifică a Muzeelor, Monumentelor Istorice și Artistice, *Lista Monumentelor de Cultură de pe Teritoriul RPR* [The List of Monuments of Culture on the Territory of the People's Republic of Romania] (București: Editura Academiei RPR, 1955). For Iași, the list included 30 examples of religious architecture and 38 of civil architecture – mostly palaces and aristocratic residences from late eighteenth and early nineteenth century.



Fig. 5.1. Postcard from the 1970s, representing some of the most cherished architectural monuments of Iași. The predominance of religious architecture is easily noticeable.
Source: DJIAN, Colecția Stampe și Fotografii, 4765.

More than being just religious edifices, the numerous churches and monasteries of Iași had fulfilled an important defensive function in the Late Middle Ages, given the fact that, under Ottoman rule, Moldavian princes were forbidden to build more conventional types of fortifications (i.e., city walls).⁵ Such historical structures were unanimously treasured as “precious historic and architectural monuments” even by architects with modernist views, who considered that this built legacy was worth the retention in the framework of the contemporary, socialist city.⁶ Although the widespread consensus defining Iași as a city of individual, free-standing monuments, seems rather reminiscent of

⁵ Doina Mira Dascălu, “Paralelă între caracteristicile urbane ale Iașilor și cele ale ariilor europene din centru și sud-est, în veacurile XVII-XVIII,” [Parallel Between the Urban Characteristics of Iași and those of Towns from Central and Southeastern Europe during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries], *Historia Urbana* 14.1 (2006): 27. Several fortified monasteries were built during the Late Middle Ages within the city perimeter: Sfântul Nicolae Domnesc, Trei Ierarhi, the Metropolitan Church, Sfânta Vineri, Barnovschi, Sfântul Sava, Bărboi, Golia, Sfântul Spiridon, while other were situated in strategic points around the town: Galata, Balica (Frumoasa), Cetățuia, Socola and Bârnova. Most of them were built during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

⁶ Gheorghe Hussar, *Iași, arhitectură nouă* [Iași. New Architecture] (București: Meridiane, 1967), 5, 33; Titu Evolceanu, “Obiectivele principale ale reconstrucției orașului Iași” [The Main Goals in the Reconstruction of Iași], *Arhitectura* 14.3 (1963): 45.

a conservation vision characteristic to the nineteenth century,⁷ this conception was strongly embedded in the local cultural identity. Last, but not least, it appeared that the presence of such important urban landmarks attracted touristic attention, Iași being often visited by Romanian and foreign guests.⁸



Fig. 5.2. The cityscape of Iași as seen from the tower of the Golia Monastery in the interwar period. The low-rise vernacular contrasts with the towers of churches and monasteries. The view is dominated by the monumental Palace of Culture.

Source: Source: DJIAN, Colecția Stampe și Fotografii, 1283.

More than individual objects, the churches created a composition which became emblematic for the visualization of the historic city, situated on a high plateau. A century-long perception, shared by foreign visitors and local elites alike, stated that the value of

⁷ Michele Lamprakos, "The Idea of Historic City," *Change over Time* 4.1 (2014): 17.

⁸ "The churches Trei Ierarhi and Sfântul Nicolai Domesc, foundations of the Moldavian princes and historic monuments, are one of the most beautiful churches in our country. They are often visited by foreigners passing through our city." stated a document of the municipality in 1946. The same source mentioned that local authorities have taken special measures in order to protect these monuments against bombings during the Second World War. DJIAN, Fond Primăria Municipiului Iași 1942-1950 (hereinafter Fond PMI), 45/1946, f. 43. On another occasion, in the early 1960s, the local newspaper *Flacăra Iașului* reported the beginning of the restoration works of the city's first public fountain, dating back to the seventeenth century. It mentioned that "Every day dozens of foreign or Romanian tourists wander through the streets of our city." The article also described how a bus with tourists accompanied by a guide stopped in front of the Golia Monastery to admire the city's first public fountain, at that time under restoration. It is one of the very few instances when the local press mentioned the restoration works in the city. *Flacăra Iașului*, July 21, 1960.

Iași resided precisely in the visual impact of its characteristic skyline as seen from distance.⁹

For the postwar planners, however, the city's natural and built landscapes represented not only a reason of pride, but also a matter of concern. The translation to reality of blurry vision of radical urban transformation prescribed by political leaders appeared as particularly challenging given the local context:

The landscape, the presence of many historic and architectural monuments, the street network which no longer corresponds to the current needs, [...] the flow of the river, the heavy legacy of the past reflected in the city's low urbanization rate, to which one should add also the war destruction, – all represent a difficult starting point in the process of transforming the existing built fabric.¹⁰

argued a group of architects regarding the systematization of the city in the 1960s. The question of the city's urban and architectural heritage was therefore interconnected with larger phenomena – urbanization, housing, traffic, the physical setting –, which were to be addressed through the instruments of planning.

This chapter aims to look at the ways in which questions of planning and preservation intersected in postwar Iași. How was the inherited built fabric perceived and altered in the process of constructing the socialist city? What kind of urban design solutions were proposed and based on which arguments? To what extent was the built environment in the historical area re-conceptualized as heritage? In which ways did the different actors (Party leaders and state bureaucrats, urban planners, preservationists, and ordinary citizens) use the built environment as resource, and what were their strategies to carve out a space for their agendas within the broader goal of urban transformation?

⁹ N.A. Bogdan, *Orasul Iași. Monografie Istorică și Socială, Ilustrată* [The City of Iași: An Illustrated Historical and Social Monograph] (Tehnopress Iași), 50; Interview with architect Gheorghe Hereș, Iași, May 20, 2013.

¹⁰ Gustav Gusti, Gheorghe Hussar, “Un ansamblu arhitectural contemporan în vechea capitala a Moldovei” [A Contemporary Architectural Ensemble in the Old Capital of Moldavia], *Arhitectura* 14.4 (1963): 7-8.

5.1. Introducing Iași

The urban beginnings of Iași have been traced back to the second half of the fourteenth century. The town has developed from a rural settlement situated on a high plateau surrounded by hills. According to Laurențiu Rădvan, the beginnings of urbanization were connected with the establishment of the princely court, the development of trade, as well as with the presence of groups of colonists – Catholics (probably Germans), and Armenians – alongside the Romanian population. Churches and street names certify the establishment of these groups in the vicinity of the ruler's court. The topography of the town, initially composed of two perpendicular streets going towards north and east and intersecting in the square in front of the princely court, is seen as indicating an incipient form of planning.¹¹ Due to its further economic development and central position in medieval Moldova, Iași had become the capital of the principality in the mid-sixteenth century.¹²

From the eighteenth century onwards, the town expanded from its historical core situated around the princely court. The development followed the main commercial roads, incorporating a number of neighboring villages into its administrative territory. As a result, the urban settlement took an irregular star-like shape, with the districts developed around the roads being described as “tentacles”.¹³ North of the historical center, on the Copou Hill,

¹¹ Rădvan, *At Europe's Borders*, xxvii, map 7.

¹² Ibid., 501-506; Laurențiu Rădvan, “Categorii etnice în Iași (secolul al XV-lea- începutul secolului al XIX-lea)” [Ethnic Categories in Iași (15th century- beginning of the 19th century)], in Laurențiu Rădvan, ed., *Iași, oraș al diversității. Categorii etnice și minorități în secolele XV-XX: Aspecte sociale, economice și culturale* [Iași, City of Diversity. Ethnic Categories and Minorities in the 15th-20th Centuries. Social, Economic and Cultural Aspects] (Iași: Ars Longa, 2015), 1-6. On the history of Iași, and its monuments, see also Dan Bădărau, Dan, *Iașii vechilor zidiri: până la 1821*. [The Old Buildings of Iași: until 1821], (Iași: Junimea, 1974); Constantin Ciohodaru, Gheorghe Platon, eds., *Istoria orașului Iași* [The History of Iași] (Iași: Editura Junimea, 1980).

¹³ Șandru and Băcăuanu, *Județul Iași*, 72. The process began in the eighteenth century. See Dascălu, “Paralelă între caracteristicile urbane ale Iașilor și cele ale ariilor europene,” 26.

one could find the upper-class suburbia with neo-classicist villas surrounded by gardens. After the construction of the railway and its inauguration in 1871, an industrial area consisting mainly of textile workshops developed around the train station, at the city's south-eastern edge. Most of the built fabric consisted, however, of low-class districts with small family houses arranged along the main roads, offering a landscape not too different from rural areas.¹⁴ Nineteenth century town panoramas made from the periphery suggest precisely the image of a large village, with church towers as the only noticeable verticals.



Fig. 5.3. A lively commercial town. The Central Commercial Hall in the interwar period

Source: DJIAN, Colecția Stampe și Fotografii, 1304

The central area had administrative, commercial, and cultural functions. Its physical layout was consolidated in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries through the construction of commercial buildings along the main streets, on properties once owned by boyars and the monasteries.¹⁵ Given the frequent fires and earthquakes, the building stock

¹⁴ Șandru and Băcăuanu, *Județul Iași*, 73.

¹⁵ Dan Dumitru Iacob, "Măsuri de sistematizare a zonei centrale a orașului Iași în prima jumătate a secolului 19. Demolarea „băratcelor” [Systematization Measures in the Central Area of Iași in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century. The Demolition of the Barracks] *Monumentul* (Lucrările Simpozionului național "Monumentul – Tradiție și viitor", Ediția a X-a, Iași, 2008), 22, online at <http://www.monumentul.ro/pdfs/Dan%20Dumitru%20Iacob%2010.pdf>, accessed July 20, 2016. The structure of property in Moldavian towns was significantly different from the one in Western and Central Europe. In medieval times, the prince was the legal owner of all urban land, granting concession to boyars and monasteries. The plots were larger and usually accommodated the boyars' residence amidst greenery. However, houses were not situated directly at the street, which allowed the construction of commercial buildings as the main type of street architecture. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the boyars gradually resettled their residences on Copou Hill, thus leaving the densely-built historical area of Iași for

was permanently renewed, with few examples non-religious buildings older than the early nineteenth century surviving such disasters. Just like most towns in the region, large parts of the central area had been rebuilt at the turn of the twentieth century, and exhibited façades decorated with historicist elements. The church towers could create such a powerful visual impression upon visitors precisely because the mass of constructions remained low-rise. The buildings were typically one or two-story high, being arranged in an irregular network of relatively narrow streets, that had remained virtually unchanged since the pre-modern period.

The population of Iași grew from 65,000 inhabitants in the mid-nineteenth century, to over 100,000 in the interwar period.¹⁶ Until the Second World War, the city was home to a consistent Jewish population – counting about 50% of the total number of inhabitants – , which had brought a significant contribution to the process of urban modernization. The Jews coming to Iași in the eighteenth century settled at the eastern margins of the town, in an area later known as Târgul Cucului. As the town expanded, this compact Jewish district became more central, yet also poorer, with the rich Jews moving into the well-off residential districts.¹⁷ The Jewish population significantly decreased after 1940, due to war persecutions – notably the 1941 Iași pogrom¹⁸ –, and emigration.¹⁹

commercial activities. See Dascălu, “Paralelă între caracteristicile urbane ale Iașilor și cele ale ariilor europene,” 25-26.

¹⁶ Șandru and Băcăuanu, *Județul Iași*, 70, 73

¹⁷ Ion Mitican, *Din Târgul Cucului în Piața Unirii: itinerar sentimental* [From Târgul Cucului to the Union Square: a Sentimental Itinerary] (Iași: Technopress, 2000), 21-41, 78, 108.

¹⁸ Radu Ioanid, “The Holocaust in Romania: The Iași Pogrom of June 1941,” *Contemporary European History* 2.2 (1993): 119-148; Dorin Dobrinu, “Declinul diversității. Minorități etnice și religioase în Iași 1944-1989” [The Decline of Diversity. Ethnic and Religious Minorities in Iași, 1944-1989], in Rădvan, ed., *Iași, oraș al diversității*, 288-290, 295-299.

¹⁹ On the Jewish community in Iași, see Dan Dumitru Iacob, “Evreii din Iași în secolul al XIX-lea (aspecte sociale, demografice, culturale și urbanistice)” [The Jews in 19th Century Iași: Social, Demographic, Cultural and Urban Planning Aspects], in Rădvan, ed., *Iași, oraș al diversității*, 112-164, and Dobrinu, “Declinul diversității. Minorități etnice și religioase în Iași 1944-1989”, 307-311.

During state socialism, industry gradually gained preponderance over the commercial and administrative functions that had dominated local economy until the 1930s. In 1969, the city's industrial area already included thirty-five units, the most important of which were which the Mechanical Factory Nicolina, the Antibiotics Factory (1955), the Metallurgical Plant (1963), the Synthetic Fiber Plant (1969) etc. In this period, the city reached a population of 187,000 inhabitants, out of which one third were workers.²⁰ The increase was significant in comparison to the interwar period, when the working class counted approximately 10,000 persons.²¹

5.2. Plans for Postwar Reconstruction

Towards the middle of the twentieth century, the city experienced significant building damage due to a number of natural and man-made disasters. It was first affected by a flood in 1932 (especially the southern districts near the river Bahlui, the train station included), then an earthquake in 1940, and finally by war bombings in 1944, that had been particularly damaging for the central area. At the end of June 1944, the Municipality reported 1872 buildings completely destroyed or severely damaged as a result of bombings and fires.²²

As it was often the case in post-war Europe, the state responded by taking a more interventionist role in town planning. At municipal level, officials also perceived war

²⁰ Șandru and Băcăuanu, *Județul Iași*, 70-75.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 74

²² DJIAN, Fond PMI, 15/1944, f. 1, 3, 4. In terms of human losses, the bombings caused 389 deaths and 381 persons were wounded. Sixty-two public building and around six hundred private houses were reported as destroyed on June 8, 1944 alone.

damage and the necessity of reconstruction as an opportunity for urban improvement.²³ A similar approach was adopted in the case of Iași. Based on preliminary surveys already undertaken during the Second World War years, a systematization scheme was drawn in 1946 by two urban planning experts from Bucharest: engineer Th. Rădulescu, and architect J. Bedeus.²⁴ Furthermore, new construction regulations were adopted in 1947, at a time when the communists were still not in control of the local administration. The document aimed to impose a more strict control over the building activity, as previous regulations, dating back to 1889, had permitted “the unrestricted expansion of the city” and substantial “irrational building” activities.²⁵ Therefore, besides stipulating zoning as a major guiding principle and formulating measures to improve the quality and quantity of new constructions, the Municipality also used the building code as a means to create favorable legal conditions for expropriation in cases such as public works and enlargement of streets.

In postwar years, local authorities and planners envisaged a gradual transformation of the cityscape. The central area, considered a commercial zone,²⁶ was prescribed to reach a height of maximum four-story, while the outer districts, including the well-off Copou, would rise only in exceptional cases at two-story.²⁷ Significantly, the Municipality considered the protection of historic monuments worth of particular attention,

²³ Nigel Taylor, *Urban Planning Theory since 1945* (London: Sage Publications, 1998), 3-4. The literature on postwar reconstruction documents numerous instances of state interventionism. See for example the work of Jeffrey Diefendorf on German-speaking cities. Jeffrey M. Diefendorf, *In the Wake of War. The Reconstruction of German Cities after World War II*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993; Jeffrey M. Diefendorf, “Planning Postwar Vienna,” *Planning Perspectives* 8.1 (1993): 1-19.

²⁴ DJIAN Iași, Fond PMI, 62/1944, f. 4. In 1939, the Municipality had already declared its intention to proceed to the elaboration of a master plan, under the coordination of the national Superior Commission for Systematization Plans, Embellishment and Urban Development. In 1941, a photographic survey of the urban territory was undertaken, while in 1942 engineer Th. Rădulescu and architect J. Bedeus were assigned the task of drawing the plan.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 48/1947, f. 5.

²⁶ DJIAN, Fond PMI, 48/1947, f. 81.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, f. 49.

and stipulated the creation of a local committee collaborating closely with the national Commission based in Bucharest.²⁸

After the coming to power of the communists, efforts of urban systematization received a new impulse, this time as part of a nation-wide effort of examining and reshaping the landscape. New studies for the systematization of Iași were initiated in the late 1940s.²⁹ As part of this work, in the early 1950s local geographers were required to compile preliminary documentation necessary for the elaboration of a systematization scheme by ISPROR (National Institute for the Systematization of Cities and Regions).³⁰ Through local experts equipped with measurement instruments and blank forms, the state penetrated every house, inquiring on the size of properties, number of inhabitants and the physical characteristics of individual buildings³¹. The surveys revealed the unsatisfactory appearance and the poor living conditions offered by most of the housing stock in the city, and emphasized the low, rural-like densities at the periphery.³² Unlike later studies made with similar purposes, this particular research pointed out that the main source of the

²⁸ Ibid., f. 54. As a first task, the local committee for historic monuments was in charge with examining “all buildings of artistic and historical interest for the life of Iași and the evolution of its architecture.” These observations would be inserted into the Systematization Plan. I did not identify any further information on the activity of this committee in the following years.

²⁹ Hussar, *Iași, arhitectură nouă*, 6.

³⁰ The documentation included statistical data and maps showing the spatial distribution of buildings according to criteria such as function, height, construction materials, and sanitation. It also presented the spatial evolution of the city, as well as different aspects of physical geography: climate, water etc. I. Șandru, C. Martiniuc, Șt. Paunel, S. Chiriacescu, “O variantă a schiței-program de sistematizare a orașului Iași” [A Version of the Systematization Plan for the City of Iași], *Analele Universității Al. I. Cuza din Iași*, Secțiunea II, Științe Naturale, 1.1 (1956): 340. The study appears as an intermediate step between the interwar and postwar systems of knowledge production, as it combined local expertise, studies of urban geography carried on during the interwar period by scholars such as Victor Tufescu, and Soviet literature on urban planning.

³¹ Building inventories seem to have been a common practice in the aftermath of the war, given both war destructions and the changes of political regime. A similar experience was described by architect Eugenia Greceanu, who participated as a student to such surveys in 1948 Bucharest. The surveys were made with the purpose of accommodating more people in family houses located in the city’s outskirts. Victoria Dragu Dimitriu, *Povestea unei familii din București- Grecenii* [The Story of a Family in Bucharest: Grecenii] (București: Vremea, 2012), 81-84.

³² Șandru, “O variantă a schiței-program de sistematizare a orașului Iași,” 342.

widespread building degradation in Iași was not age, but dampness, identified in 50% of the dwellings made of bricks taken under investigation.³³ Similarly to the introduction of the 1947 building regulations, this report identified the sources of “chaotic development” in the absence of a master plan, and in the local authorities’ inefficiency in enforcing construction legislation. Last, but not least, it complained about the lack of a unitary architectural style even in the central area, the irregular texture of the street network, as well as the poor quality of the construction materials. All these aspects, concluded the authors, decreased considerably the urban quality of Iași.³⁴

The postwar reconstruction efforts in the 1950s altered to a small extent the existing urban fabric. In fact, it appeared almost like the People’s Council was actually following some of the provisions of the 1947 building code, despite the radical vision of urban transformation formulated by the new regime. Reconstruction was carried out on centrally-located parcels cleared from the rubble,³⁵ taking the form of two to four-story apartment blocks well-integrated into the scale of the city center.³⁶ However, giving the

³³ The authors of the study estimated that only in 20% of the cases investigated building degradation had been caused by age. Șandru, “O variantă a schiței-program de sistematizare a orașului Iași,” 347. However, the increasing level of groundwater seem to have been a constant problem for Iași during those decades, as it was pointed also by geographers. Architect Eugenia Greceanu noted that this aspect contributed in the 1970s at considerable building degradation and even at the collapse of buildings. Interview with architect Eugenia Greceanu, Bucharest, October 20, 2012. Moreover, the building of the National Theatre itself seems to have been endangered by the rising level of groundwater, requiring the urgent intervention of the Department for Historic Monuments in 1973. INP-DMI, Procese verbale XIV, Lista avizelor CTS (5 iulie-20 aug. 1973), nr. 290.

³⁴ Șandru, “O variantă a schiței-program de sistematizare a orașului Iași,” 344-45, 347.

³⁵ The blocks were built in the place of buildings destroyed during war bombings. It can be assumed that the (Jewish) owners of these plots have left Iași during the war or/ and lost their property rights as a result of the nationalization decree. For example, in the case of a number of buildings situated on Cuza Vodă Street (numbers 62 and 69-73), the owners were reportedly all living in Bucharest. DJIAN, Fond PMI, 20/1945, f. 45, 68.

³⁶ The completion of the construction works was carefully reported in the local newspaper. *Flacăra Iașului*, February 25 and 26, 1960 (new blocks on Cuza Vodă and Vasile Alecsandri streets), April 12, 1960 (Dimitrov street). Architect Gheorghe Hereș also observed that the apartment blocks constructed in the 1950s are well-integrated into the existing layout. They can even be considered as an element of continuity with the previous period. Interview with architect Gheorghe Hereș, Iași, May 20, 2013.

scarcity of resources and skilled labor force, these projects were finalized only in the late 1950s. Also, as a demonstration of the regime's urban planning ambitions, one cvartal-type of housing unit in the Socialist Realist style was constructed in the city's outskirts between 1952 and 1954 in another area that had suffered major destruction during the war.³⁷

Preservationist concerns had a limited scope in the postwar reconstruction of Iași.³⁸ On the one hand, new constructions of relatively modest proportions were raised with no intention to re-create the old appearance of the buildings, aiming instead to satisfy new comfort and sanitation standards. On the other hand, the specialists of the Department for Architectural Monuments showed interest mainly in assisting churches affected by war destructions.³⁹

Given their small number and modest scale of the new apartment blocks, postwar reconstruction arguably contributed to a limited extent at solving the housing crisis. In 1947, local authorities estimated that a number of 12,000 apartments had been necessary to house only the workers and public servants without a home.⁴⁰ Through housing nationalization, enforced in 1950,⁴¹ approximately 700 buildings – representing 26% of the living space – were transferred under the ownership of the state and practically, under the administration of the Municipality (i.e., the People's Council, Ro: Sfatul Popular). The increase in occupancy rates resulted in overcrowded apartments, offering an official value

³⁷ The so-called "Russian blocks", carrying the specific print of socialist realism, were built with Soviet support in the district of Păcurari in the 1950s. Hussar, *Iași, arhitectură nouă*, 10. Writing in the 1960s, after socialist realism had been officially criticized, Hussar also emphasized the shortcomings of the style.

³⁸ The palace of prince Alexadru Ioan Cuza situated on Lăpușneanu street was an exception, being restored and transformed into Museum of the Union. DJIAN, Sfatul Popular al Orașului Iași (hereinafter SPOI)-Secția de Arhitectură și Sistemătizare (hereinafter SAS), 21/1957, f. 33.

³⁹ DJIAN, Fond SPOI-SAS, 21/1957, f. 19. List with restoration works.

⁴⁰ DJIAN, Fond PMI, 49/1947, f.17.

⁴¹ Liviu Chelcea, 'The "Housing Question" and the State-Socialist Answer: City, Class and State Remaking in 1950s Bucharest,' *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 36.2 (2012): 286.

of 4.8 square meters of living space per inhabitant. Local authorities had few resources to invest in maintenance works, which lead to further building degradation. In 1959, it was estimated that 65% of these apartment houses required urgent repairs, while 10% should simply be simply, given their advanced state of degradation.⁴²

5.3. Moderate Modernism and Urban Growth in the 1960s

In response to the severe housing shortage, a different approach was adopted since the late 1950s, after the Party's endorsement of industrialization and standardization of housing construction, echoing Khrushchev's discourse in the Soviet Union.⁴³ Generously covered in the local press, the raising of new districts in the outskirts⁴⁴ became the most visible image of urban modernization. The visual representations of progress – stereotypical illustrations representing scenes from the Iași of yesterday and of today – insisted on the complete replacement of the existing houses, described as “hovels” with new, comfortable apartment blocks.⁴⁵ The focus on the improvement of the living standards in the outer districts reflected a major ideological commitment, namely the cancelling of the related differences between center and periphery.⁴⁶

In order to facilitate the process of urban reconstruction, central authorities made important steps towards de-centralizing urban planning, by establishing specialized regional institutes in 1957.⁴⁷ The first years were particularly difficult, given the scarce

⁴² DJIAN, Fond SPOI-SAS, 17/1959, f. 52-54.

⁴³ Ana-Maria Zahariade, *Arhitectura în proiectul comunist. România 1944-1989* [The Role of Architecture in the Communist Project: Romania 1944-1989] (București: Simetria, 2011), 55.

⁴⁴ Hussar, *Iași, arhitectură nouă*, 9.

⁴⁵ *Flacăra Iașului*, March 5, 1961.

⁴⁶ Zahariade, *Arhitectura în proiectul comunist*, 50-51. The difference between center and periphery was presented as the spatial illustration of social inequality.

⁴⁷ Two years later it was reorganized as Direcția pentru Sistemizare, Arhitectură și Proiectarea Construcțiilor, abbreviated DSAPC (Department for Systematization, Architecture and Construction)

human and material resources. Local architects were entrusted with the design of increasingly complex projects, ranging from industrial units and infrastructure works to representative buildings and housing ensembles. Moreover, their activity did not cover only the needs of the city, but the entire region, thus implying a consistent workload. Every project was to a certain extent challenging, not only because of the diversity of the architectural programs, but also because the majority of the architects were fresh graduates of the Institute in Bucharest, with little practical experience. Moreover, the skills required on the field, especially in urban planning and design, had been poorly trained during the study years.⁴⁸ At its foundation, the Regional Institute for Urban Design employed only one architect, yet until 1968, the number of specialists increased to twenty-two.⁴⁹ Although the institute developed as an interdisciplinary institution, comprising different departments integrating economic and spatial planning,⁵⁰ the proportion of architects was judged as insufficient in comparison to the needs. The proportion of urban design experts remained comparatively low even as late as the 1970s, when the Iași-based Institute reached six hundred employees, out of which only twenty-five were architects.⁵¹ In addition, it was

Design). Institutul Regional de Proiectare, abbreviated IRP (Regional Institute for Urban Design) was founded as an extension of the former Technical Service within the People's Council. The reorganization in 1959 implied merging within the Regional Institute for Urban Design the regional Section for Architecture and Systematization. *DSAPC Iași, 10 ani de activitate* [DSAPC Iași- Ten Years of Activity] (Iași, 1967), 10-11. The Institute was renamed several times during the socialist period, although it essentially performed the same tasks. For the sake of convenience, throughout the chapter I am going to use the name Institute for Urban Design.

⁴⁸ Interview with architect Gheorghe Hereș, Iași, 20 May 2013.

⁴⁹ DJIAN, Fond SPOI-Secția Secretariat (hereinafter SS), 36/1968, f. 15.

⁵⁰ The list included departments for civil constructions, roads and bridges, topography, and different works of urban infrastructure etc. *DSAPC Iași*, 12.

⁵¹ *Arhitectura* 24.3 (1973): 29. Presentation by Nicolae Vericeanu, head of Institute for Urban Design in Iași. The Institute employed 24 architects out of a staff of 324 persons in 1963 and 25 architects out of 602 employees in 1972. In the same year, 15 out of 25 architects working for the Institute were aged between 25 and 35. Architect Gheorghe Hereș, who began his activity in Iași in 1962 after graduating from the Architecture Institute in Bucharest also recalled the small number of employees. Interview with architect Gheorghe Hereș, Iași, May 20, 2013.

often the case that urban planning-related activities were entrusted to architects who did not necessarily specialize in this field.⁵² Thus, the distribution of professionals within the Institute suggests that in the construction of the socialist city, economic considerations weighted heavier than aesthetic or social ones.

According to the systematization sketch elaborated by ISCAS Bucharest in 1960, the population would reach 190,000 inhabitants by 1975, a significant increase from the number registered at that point, 123,500. Just three years later, central authorities established a new profile for the city, envisaging a considerable expansion of its industrial capacities. The working force necessary for serving the planned industrial development would have implied the increase of the total population to 300,000 inhabitants by 1980. As a result, the low-rise neighborhoods at the periphery would be gradually demolished and replaced by new housing estates, to be followed by the reconstruction of the city center after 1980.⁵³



Fig. 5.4. Model of the 1960 systematization plan, focusing on the areas that would be reconstructed. The river separates the industrial area from the northern residential districts. The plan envisaged the reconstruction of residential areas with blocks in parallel rows.
Source: DJIAN, Colecția Stampe și Fotografii, Album 7191, Orasul Iași în reconstrucție (1963).

The decision took the members of the Institute for Urban Design by surprise, as they were prepared to work around the provisions of the 1960 plan. Architect-planners were required to redesign the city's development strategy from scratch, identify new available land for urban extension and rethink the structure of the existing districts.⁵⁴ Proposing adequate locations for the new buildings was particularly challenging given the different kinds of pressure exerted and the sometimes-self-contradictory recommendations. On the one hand, given the housing crisis, central recommendations insisted on constructing new districts while keeping demolition to a minimum. On the other hand, the socialist reconstruction rhetoric implied the radical transformation of the old built fabric. A third, more important aspect, was the pragmatic preference for locating new housing in the vicinity of the workplace i.e., industrial units.⁵⁵ Architect-planners in Iași ticked two boxes out of three and proposed the plain around the meadow of the Bahlui River as adequate for constructing new housing ensembles. The chosen location was indeed situated near the industrial area under construction at the southern edge of the city. As opposed to the hilly landscape on the other side of the plateau, here the terrain allowed for large-scale use of industrialized construction methods.⁵⁶ Given the memory of the 1932 floods, when the entire area around the railway station had been under water, the proposal was considered by some voices as not only ambitious, but even inadequate. In previous planning schemes, the area had been simply considered unfit for housing construction.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ If in the early 1960s, architects assumed that urban expansion would be made on unbuilt land at the city's periphery, the centrally-imposed requirements in the mid-1960s established clear limits for the built area. These requirements basically forced architects to rethink the strategy of urban development in terms of reconstructing existing districts. Until 1980, architects estimated that the city center, as well as two large districts, Tătărași and Păcurari, would be radically restructured. DJIAN, Fond SPOI-SS, 33/1964, f. 504.

⁵⁵ Ibid., f. 508.

⁵⁶ Gh. Hussar, *Iași, arhitectură nouă*, 9.

⁵⁷ In the urban planning documents elaborated in 1954 by ISPROR, the development of Iași was envisioned on the hilly area of the north, while the flat area around the meadow of Bahlui river would be abandoned.

Architect-planners endorsed their proposal with the simple argument that no other alternatives seemed available; the river could be canalized and kept under control, even if this implied additional cost for infrastructure works.⁵⁸ In order to free even more land for housing construction, the relocation of the railway lines more to the south would have been necessary. However, planners estimated that the solution implied considerable expenses, that could not be secured from centralized funds.⁵⁹



Fig. 5.5. The modernist district Tudor Vladimirescu under construction. Some of the old houses of the neighborhood were temporarily preserved. Works were being simultaneously performed for channeling the river.

Source: DJIAN, Colecția Stampe și Fotografii, Album 7191, Orașul Iași în reconstrucție (1963)

T. Evolceanu, "Obiectivele principale ale reconstrucției orașului Iași," 47. The proposal for the city's reconstruction was designed in spirit of socialism realism, with emphasis on monumental vistas and architecture with an imposing presence. Architects showed particular concern toward the city's built heritage. They aimed to preserve the character of the historic area, suggesting that "on the territory of the old city, restructuring would be made with all the due attention. The height of the new constructions would reach a maximum three-story high, allowing the historic buildings to dominate." G. Filipeanu, "Studii pentru sistematizarea orașului Iași" [Studies for the Systematization of Iași], *Arhitectura* 6.9 (1955): 1-9.

⁵⁸ DJIAN, Fond SPOI-SS, 33/1964, f. 485.

⁵⁹ Ibid., f. 506; Fond SPOI-SS, 36/1968, f. 15. According to architect George Pohrib, the head of the Institute for Urban Design, this initiative implied high costs and complicated technical problems. Similar information was provided in the interview with architect Hereș.

Within the local administration, the enforcement of construction regulations and the approval of locations for new investments was entrusted to Secția pentru Arhitectură și Sistemizare [Section for Architecture and Systematization, abbreviated SAS] founded in 1952.⁶⁰ In practical terms, however, the decision was largely a political one. The SAS was typically requested to assemble the necessary technical documentation and provide specialized advice facilitating the decision-making process within the Executive Committee.⁶¹ The architects' attempts to increase their "share" in decision-making were usually constrained by local level politicians, who felt in their turn pressured by their superiors at county level.⁶² Although decisions regarding the location of new investment projects should have followed the provisions of the systematization plan, in practice the process proved to be a matter of pragmatic negotiation. Every construction project had to be subjected to the approval of relevant local and national level bureaucratic agencies, which would typically suggest modifications according to their own priorities, thus altering the planners' initial proposals.⁶³ Secondly, every beneficiary of a construction project i.e. representative of ministry or other state institutions, used a mix of formal and informal channels in order to pressure local authorities into allocating the desired plot, in case their vision did not correspond with the one advanced by local planners. The entire process would be accompanied by intense negotiations, in which the beneficiaries typically invoked the pressure of the plan, and the authority of higher bureaucratic agencies.

⁶⁰ Organized according to the Decision of the Central Committee of the RCP regarding the construction and reconstruction of cities, and the organization of architectural activity published in *Scînteia*, November 14 1952.

⁶¹ DJIAN, Fond SPOI-SS, 32/1968, f. 576; 43/1965, f. 47.

⁶² Ibid., 33/1964, f. 509.

⁶³ DJIAN, Fond SPOI-SS, 36/1968, f. 14. "In 1968, the [systematization] plan was still in process of being approved by the State Committee for Planning and the State Committee for Constructions, Architecture and Systematization. However, during this process, the State Committee for Planning demanded a new version, the third one."

Unsurprisingly, all beneficiaries actually advanced very similar requirements, all competing for central locations, well served by infrastructure, and where no demolition would be required.⁶⁴ Attempts to skip some steps in the approval process were also to be part of the story. For example, local authorities were sometimes provided with documentations compiled by unauthorized agencies.⁶⁵ The worst-case scenario happened, however, when construction works were simply initiated without even requiring the approval of the Municipality.⁶⁶ Although state-owned, every industrial unit or institution essentially represented an individual actor that promoted its own agenda. Legally entrusted with the administration of local economy, the People's Councils acted as mediators between different types of pressures and constraints.

Between 1959 and 1963, 6,270 apartments were built in Iași, most of which were situated in the southern districts along the river.⁶⁷ Indeed, from the planners' point of view, the construction of new housing units in the proximity of the industrial area had practical advantages. The blocks, in majority four-story high, were built using industrialized construction methods, on land freed from individual dwellings. The hills and terraces in the north of the city were reserved for individual housing.⁶⁸ Analyzing similar strategies of accommodating urban growth applied in the Soviet Union, R.A. French suggests that the solutions were essentially pragmatic, yet presented in the propaganda as fulfilling the prescriptions of the Marxist ideology. Given the acute housing shortage, he argues, local authorities could not afford large-scale demolition of existing buildings. Every square

⁶⁴ Ibid., 40/1965, f. 322.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 43/1965, f. 49.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 32/1968, f. 576, 580.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 41/1965, PV 11 iunie 1964, f. 59. 23 August, Piata Unirii, Tudor Vladimirescu, Splaiul Bahlui, Dimitrie Cantemir, Nicolina și Socola.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 36/1968, f. 42-43.

meter of housing was precious, regardless of its characteristics. In order to save resources and accommodate new dwellers, “[...] the new blocks of flats were put up on the edges of the built-up area, where space was immediately available, but directly adjacent to established networks of services—water mains, sewers, gas pipes, electricity and telephone cables—to which new housing could be quickly and cheaply hooked up.”⁶⁹

Besides praising the modernism and functionality of the new districts, local architects considered them as well integrated into the cityscape. Contradicting a basic ideological premise of modernism – the break with the past –, they described the new districts Nicolina and Socola, composed of blocks in parallel rows displayed in a generous green space, as a continuation of the “garden town” idea specific to Iași.⁷⁰ Paradoxically, while erasing the physical traces of the old neighborhoods, modernist architects claimed to have incorporated a certain spirit of the place into their designs.

Unsurprisingly perhaps, the users’ perspective on the living quality of the new districts was different. The spatial order that the architects sought to create through their designs appeared in fact illegible on the field. Though the voice of deputies in the People’s Council, citizens complained about the aesthetic monotony which created orientation problems within the undifferentiated space of the new districts, in a context in which the old parceling and streets had been canceled.⁷¹ One of them mentioned, without the slightest trace of irony: “We have all read [in the local newspaper] that a citizen who was going for

⁶⁹ French, *Plans, pragmatism and people*, 75.

⁷⁰ In the Romanian context, the concept of “garden city” is not the one known from Ebenezer Howard, referring simply to a low-rise town, rich in green space and consisting mainly of houses surrounded by gardens. The concept also does not imply any particular planning, being rather the result of spontaneous development. Luminița Machedon and Ernie Scoffham, *Romanian Modernism. The Architecture of Bucharest, 1920-1940* (MIT Press, 1999), 27.

⁷¹ Juliana Maxim, “Mass Housing and collective experience: on the notion of microraión in Romania in the 1950s and 1960s,” *The Journal of Architecture* 14.1 (2009): 17, 22.

a birthday party arrived with wilted flowers, as it took him so long to find the block B2.”⁷²

The issue was treated with serious concern. One artist even suggested to insert sculptures in the new quarters, not so much for reasons of beautification, but for facilitating orientation.⁷³

In practical terms, the provisioning of housing could not keep up with the pressure of industrial growth, forcing local authorities to agree on small compromises in order to cope with the persisting housing crisis. Despite the objections formulated by central institutions, local architects continued to agree on small improvements or extensions of existing housing, and tacitly approved the construction of self-made housing at the city’s periphery. Illegal builders would occasionally be fined, yet their houses would not be demolished to limit the numbers of petitioners applying for new housing.⁷⁴

At the end of the 1960s, modernism came under criticism. The citizens’ complaints regarding the monotony of the new architectural spaces were exploited by officials, who considered alternative ways of addressing the housing problem. The proposed solution was pragmatic, yet rudimentary. In short, it was suggested that the density of the recently-built districts should be increased by inserting new blocks on the green spaces in-between the existing buildings.⁷⁵ Although this centrally-imposed solution had to be implemented, the meetings of the People’s Council provided a space where different actors could voice their dissatisfaction. The first ones to complain were precisely

⁷² DJIAN, Fond SPOI-SS, 41/1965, PV 11 iunie 1964, f. 8.

⁷³ Ibid., 36/1968, f. 8.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 33/1964, f. 482, 485, 512. Apparently, another problem was that citizens could not be forced to demolish their own houses, while no institution was willing to cover demolition costs. The architects suggested that these illegal actions could be prevented simply by legalizing the activity and distributing more plots for individual housing construction. Ibid., 32/1968, f. 576-577.

⁷⁵ Miruna Stroe, “Relativitatea unui concept: densitatea urbană” [The Relativity of a Concept: Urban Density], *Arhitectura 1906* 3 (2015), online <http://arhitectura-1906.ro/2014/10/relativitatea-unui-concept-densitatea-urbana/>, accessed February 2, 2016.

the heads of the local administration, who stated that the decision had been taken at county level, without any consultations with the Municipality. Although they considered the proposed interventions as “exaggerated,”⁷⁶ local politicians took no further action other than passing the hot potato to the architects: “Nobody is against the central indications regarding densifications, but continuing to construct four-story buildings increases the monotony of urban ensembles. DSAPC [The Institute for Urban Design] should revise the design for densifications.”⁷⁷ The deputies seemed also perplexed, rightfully asking why a design solution with higher densities had not been implemented in the first place; inserting more blocks would just increase monotony.⁷⁸ As the ones who had to design this heavily-contested solution, architects felt the need to express public apologies. One of them described the garden-city as a “beautiful dream” they had to give up to, and did not refrain from emphasizing the constraints faced in their work: “our architects are trying to do beautiful things, but we do not always have freedom, nor sufficient funding.”⁷⁹

One engineer explained that the construction of new blocks had to be made at the expense of green spaces and playgrounds. He also stated that the entire project was inadequately planned, as documentations were missing, while significant difficulties in securing the necessary workforce and construction materials could be expected. In addition, he complained about the practical problems of organizing construction sites on the narrow spaces in-between the blocks, where industrialized construction methods could not be properly implemented. To conclude, the engineer argued that the construction of mass housing estates on empty land would have been much more rational and economic,

⁷⁶ DJIAN, Fond SPOI-SS, 32/1968, f. 570.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 36/1968, f. 50-51. The observations refer to the districts Socola-Nicolina and Tătărași II.

⁷⁸ Ibid., f. 4.

⁷⁹ Ibid., f. 16.

allowing for the proper organization of the work.⁸⁰ A deputy who took the word afterwards proclaimed the revolutionary ethos as the ultimate resort: “let us fight, against all densification [measures, and] maintain green spaces in between the blocks.”⁸¹ Once all criticism has been expressed, the president of the People’s Council could safely state the official conclusion:

For 1969, everything has to be prepared according to the indications of Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party. Construction enterprises should be ready to double the number of built apartments. This would not be done anyhow, but in better conditions, with increased comfort, and in the same time in a more cost-effective manner.⁸²

The densification process concluded a period when the architects were given relatively free hand in designing an urban form that would also meet political expectations. During the 1960s, the aesthetic formulas of postwar modernism seemed to offer valid solutions for addressing the housing crisis and creating images of social order. However, accommodating urban growth in the context of a rapid industrial expansion became increasingly challenging for both local planners and politicians, as they had to find solutions to the social consequences of industrialization, and accommodate the demands of powerful economic actors. The debate regarding densification presented in the previous paragraphs illustrates the local actors’ inability to oppose central decisions, despite a shared consensus regarding the absurdity of the proposed solution. Ultimately, increasing the building density emerged as a consequence of scarcity, as planners constantly sought to diminish investment costs. While the idea could be justified as somehow “rational” – based on raw economic calculations –, it fully disregarded questions of urban comfort and aesthetics. Although all the actors involved in the debate considered the proposal as

⁸⁰ Ibid., f. 20-21.

⁸¹ Ibid., f. 23.

⁸² DJIAN, Fond SPOI-SS, 32/1968, f. 286.

inadequate, they had to obey the political will expressed as “social order”. In the following years, the initial tendency to maintain a relatively low-rise scale for the new construction was abandoned, under the pressure of centrally-formulated requirements to increase urban densities.

5.4. Merging Modernist Design and Local Heritage

To a greater extent than the standardized housing districts in the outskirts, the project attracting most attention in the 1960s was the remodeling of the “heart of the city” – the Union Square (Ro: Piața Unirii).⁸³ During the Second World War, Iași had become an easy target due to its proximity to the Soviet border. Its central area suffered significant building destruction from bombings and subsequent fires (particularly in March 1944).⁸⁴ At the end of the war, the buildings around the Union Square were nothing more than standing walls in the middle of rubble, left without doors, windows, or floors.⁸⁵ Once the military conflict was over, the destructions were perceived by the liberal mayor and other

⁸³ Created at the cross-road of commercial roads traversing the city, the square had been gradually widened by the Municipality through expropriation and demolition of the surrounding buildings. The most important intervention of this type occurred in 1897, after the completion of a new master plan by engineer Bejeu. With its stores, restaurants and coffeehouses, the square functioned as a space of entertainment and leisure for the city’s middle and upper classes, as well as for the intellectuals. In their promenade from the residential district of Copou to the area of the Princely Palace, the upper classes would always cross the Union Square. Additionally, the city’s first tramway line installed in 1900, connected it with the railway station. See Doina Mira Dascălu, “Aspecte ale vieții cotidiene oglindite în evoluția Pieței Unirii din Iași” [Aspects of Everyday Life Reflected in the Evolution of the Union Square in Iași], *Historia Urbana* 20 (2012): 235-237.

⁸⁴ The front line lasted for five months in the vicinity of Iași, from March until August 1944. People and industry were partially evacuated, as the city remained without light and running water after its infrastructure had been seriously damaged. On August 20, 1944, the Red Army entered the city. At the end of the war, major tasks stood in front of the returning population: clearing large amount of rubble and reconstructing buildings, as well as roads, bridges and the railway, all seriously damaged during the war. The population suffered from typhus, drought, and hunger in 1946. A. Loghin, *Iașul contemporan* [Contemporary Iași] (Iași, 1969), 108-126; Mitican, *Din Târgul Cucului în Piața Unirii*, 237.

⁸⁵ DJIAN Iași, Fond PMI, 45/1945, f. 27- refers particularly to the palace of Prince Al. I. Cuza on the neighboring Lăpușneanu street. Contemporary pictures show a similar situation for the entire square.

members of the local administration as an exceptional opportunity for urban remodeling. Accordingly, the mayor rejected the requests for reconstructing damaged buildings in the city's main square, planning instead to expand its surface and construct here an Administrative Palace.⁸⁶ As preliminary steps, the remains of the several buildings bordering the square were demolished and the space cleared. A small park was arranged as a temporary solution.⁸⁷



Fig. 5.6. The Union Square, view towards the south. The statue of Prince Alexandru Ioan Cuza is visible on the right, as well as the nineteenth century Braunstein Palace, which was incorporated in the design of the square.

Source: DJIAN, Colecția Stampe și Fotografii, Album 7191, Orașul Iași în reconstrucție.

A very different project, carrying the specific print of modernist urban design, was implemented in the 1960s by a team of Bucharest-based architects led by Gheorghe Hussar. Abandoning the initial idea of transforming the place into a civic center, the new square

⁸⁶ Ibid., f. 66 The Municipality considered the Union Square a top priority that demanded immediate intervention, due to its commercial, traffic, and representative functions. In 1946, a conflict ending up in a trial emerged between the mayor and a group of 20 merchants who opposed demolition. Through the local Chamber of Commerce and Industry, they attempted to postpone pulling down the commercial buildings which they owned in the Union Square. Their intervention infuriated the mayor, who accused them of following small, personal interests. On the top of their carefully typed request, the mayor wrote, visibly exaggerating the proportions of the scandal: "Leaving our Iași in ruins would mean a too big sacrifice, for twenty impoverished and recalcitrant merchants." DJIAN, Fond PMI, 47/ 1946, f. 28, 39, 67, 69.

⁸⁷ Dascălu, "Aspecte ale vieții cotidiene," 240; Mitican, *Din Târgul Cucului în Piața Unirii*, 249.

emerged as a multi-functional urban complex. Its wide plaza delimited by linear apartment blocks could be used for Party-orchestrated mass ceremonies. Applying one of the main principles of modernist urban planning, the design solutions first took into consideration the traffic needs, since the square was a nodal point connecting most of the city districts to the railway station.⁸⁸ Furthermore, the residential function was prioritized in response to the housing shortage, increased by the city's industrialization drive.⁸⁹ The design of the square, as well as the industrialized construction methods used for the assembling of the standardized apartment blocks⁹⁰ strongly recommended the Union Square as a showcase for modernist architecture in Romania.

Despite the modernist design, the reshaping of the Union Square in Iași actually implied a negotiation of the relation between old and new. The existence of historical buildings in the area was certainly not disregarded by the team of architects led by Hussar. In the book published after the completion of the project, Hussar spent a few paragraphs discussing the options and constraints faced by his team in remodeling the square. Significantly, the first reference tackled the issue of the city's characteristic skyline – a plateau and a succession of high volumes – , which Hussar arguably tried to incorporate in the design of the square.⁹¹ In addition, the disposition of the three tower blocks on the south would still allow a perspective on the hills and monuments surrounding the city. Finally,

⁸⁸ Hussar, *Iași, arhitectură nouă*, 23, 27.

⁸⁹ INP-DMI, Dosar 5821/ ISCAS Iași. Studiu pentru stabilirea căilor de realizare a unei arhitecturi cu specific național la construcțiile social-culturale și de locuințe în condițiile industrializării execuției construcțiilor, f. 2; Hussar, *Iași, arhitectură nouă*, 8.

⁹⁰ Hussar, *Iași, arhitectură nouă*, 30.

⁹¹ Ibid., 27. Although towers displayed on a flat surface represent almost a stereotype modernist design, the reference in itself is telling for the way in which the image of the city was perceived.

placing of statue of Al. I. Cuza in the middle of the plaza also counted as a historical reference.⁹²

Still, the planners' main concern regarded traffic, which implied radical cuts into the inherited built fabric. Of all the existing buildings in the square, architects considered it was possible to preserve two nineteenth century examples, one accommodating a department store and the other one a hotel. The decision was not motivated by any particular architectural, historical or economic value associated with these buildings. It was rather the case that their size and position recommended them for preservation – their volumes were among the largest of the still standing buildings and their disposition could be inscribed into the new street layout.⁹³ All the other historical buildings in the square were pulled down to enlarge the street or clear the space for the new apartment blocks with stores at the ground floor. A report preserved by the Department for Historic Monuments is illustrative for the negative attitude towards the existing architectural layout in the Union Square. In a few words, the nineteenth century buildings were dismissed as lacking any aesthetic value, being categorically excluded from the category of historic monuments. Moreover, the choice to preserve the two built structures and incorporate them into the design of the square was criticized as a major shortcoming of the project.⁹⁴

As the square also carried significant emotional and memorial load, rumors about imminent demolition attracted criticism in the late 1950s. Two urban landmarks were mentioned in particular: the Bacalu Inn, in front of which Moldavia and Wallachia's Union

⁹² Ibid., 28- 29. This last decision seems to have been a concession made by the team of architects to the historical character of the square, since in 1961 the statue of Al. I. Cuza was moved to another location in the city. DJIAN, Fond SPOI- SAS, 16/1959, f. 71.

⁹³ Gh. Hussar, *Iași, arhitectură nouă*, 28.

⁹⁴ INP-DMI, Dosar 5821/ ISCAS Iași. Studiu pentru stabilirea căilor de realizare a unei arhitecturi cu specific național la construcțiile social-culturale și de locuințe în condițiile industrializării execuției construcțiilor, f. 15.

of 1859 had been publicly celebrated though a dance turned into tradition (Hora Unirii), and Academia Mihăileană, the first institution of higher education in Moldavia.⁹⁵ The Scientific Commission of Museums, Artistic and Historic Monuments, part of the Romanian Academy, reacted in the summer of 1959 against the prospective demolition of the former inn. The Commission blamed the Municipality for not listing the preservation of the building as a compulsory element to be included in the redesign of the square. The inn was not only a historic monument, it was argued, but also the only building having witnessed the events of 1859 still standing in the square. The local officials' lack of historical sensitivity was purposefully pointed out, as they approved the tearing down of a building which incorporated the very essence of the Union Square. In an exercise of authority, the Commission also reminded about the legal implications of this fact – historic monuments were protected though the law passed in 1955, and they could be erased from the official list only with the approval of the Council of Ministers.⁹⁶

The legal and historical arguments formulated by the members of the Commission failed to impress local authorities. Determined to implement the plan, the representatives of the Municipality claimed that the building had been a “passive witness” of the 1859 events, lacked any architectural value, and its volume, developed horizontally rather than vertically, would not fit into the design of this “socialist urban space”. In an internal note, local authorities promised to use their political influence in order to obtain the approval for demolition from the Council of Ministers.⁹⁷

⁹⁵ Gh. Hussar, *Iași, arhitectură nouă*, 27. The architect mentioned the two buildings- Bacalu Inn and Academia Mihăileană (at the point housing the local branch of the Romanian Academy), explaining that the enlargement of the street required for their demolition. The new architecture was intended close to the building volumes characteristic to the city, yet without aiming to copy decorative and constructive elements of existing buildings.

⁹⁶ DJIAN Iași, Fond SPOI-SAS, 16/1959, f. 51-52.

⁹⁷ Ibid., f. 54.

Arguments emphasizing the need of street widening were advanced also in the case of the building known as Academia Mihăileană. Situated at the western edge of the square, on the street going towards the railway station, the building was marked for demolition on the systematization plan drawn in 1961. Initially, the planners seemed to have been open to compromise, suggesting even that the structure could be relocated, or demolished and reconstructed somewhere else in the city.⁹⁸ As the building housed the local branch of the Romanian Academy, numerous intellectuals openly protested against the prospects of demolition. In an effort to settle the problem in an informal, yet direct manner, a group of concerned local intellectuals reportedly reached the head of the state, Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, in a private meeting.⁹⁹ Unfortunately, their endeavor met no positive answer, a sign that the project clearly enjoyed considerable political support. Although it is unclear why the local authorities refused the idea to relocate the building, it can be assumed that the planners' proposal was really based on technical considerations i.e. the need to facilitate the traffic flow between the Railway Station and the city's main square.

On the one hand, the reconstruction of the Union Square can be seen as a typical example of modernist urban design, as it clearly represented an element of discontinuity with the inherited urban fabric, disregarding traditional patterns of land use and eliminating much of the nineteenth century architecture. On the other hand, the architects did take into consideration the local, incorporating older buildings into the reshaped square and suggesting an interpretation of the townscape through the disposition of the built structures.

⁹⁸ INP-DMI, Dosar nr. 5605, Casa Dosoftei/ Casa cu Arcade Iași, 1955-1971, Sector Nord-Est, referat nr. 19, p. 11.

⁹⁹ Constantin Ostap, Ion Mitican, *Cu Iașii mână-n mână* [Walking Hand in Hand with Iași] (Iași: Editura Dosoftei, 1997), vol II, 175-176.

Overall, its appearance remained ascetic and the heights of the buildings – except for the hotel – were kept relatively low. Although unwilling to negotiate its self-imposed limitations, the modernist agenda of the 1960s proposed its own concessions.

Local architect-planners seemed to share a similar perspective regarding the relation between the new and the old fabric. In the early 1960s, the systematization plan for the central area was produced by ISCAS Bucharest¹⁰⁰ and submitted for approval to the Regional Institute for Urban Design in Iași. The Bucharest-based architects proposed a modernist design with parallel blocks orderly displayed either along or perpendicularly on the main streets. This claimed for the removal of most of the existent buildings, as well as significant modifications in the street network. For example, one of the main streets delimiting the historic area to the south, Anastasie Panu, was to be enlarged to 70 meters, and bordered by nine-story apartment blocks. Two structures with heritage status would be retained – the statue of Stephen the Great and the Saint Nicholas Church –, although on alternative locations. In Iași, the plan generated consternation. Local architects openly voiced their dissatisfaction regarding the indifference for the preservation of characteristic elements of the urban layout, such as the street system and the dominant buildings.¹⁰¹ The intention of erasing the oldest street of Iași, Costache Negri was particularly criticized. Moreover, it was pointed out that the central area of the city was “sprinkled with architectural monuments and valuable buildings that have to be preserved.” Criticism also regarded the prescribed high-rise development of the city, and clearly stated that no tall buildings should directly compete with the city’s traditional verticals i.e. monasteries and

¹⁰⁰ Project 4053/1960 by ISCAS București.

¹⁰¹ INP-DMI, Fond nr. 5605, Casa Dosoftei/ Casa cu Arcade Iași, 1955-1971, doc. SP al Regiunii Iași - DSAPC- CTS, Proiectul nr. 4053/1960, Sistematizare centru detaliu oraș Iași.

churches. Further complains referring to the neglect of individual monuments quoted examples of early nineteenth century civil architecture, such as Casa Zmeu and Casa Bașotă, and condemned the “unjustified demolition” of the other ones (e.g., Școala Asachi). Finally, the planning proposal was denounced as a simplistic interpretation of modernist design, which failed to take into consideration local climate conditions and the landscape.¹⁰² Although the preservationist arguments of the discourse referred to individual monuments rather than the historic core as a coherent ensemble, the positions expressed in the document were surprisingly considerate towards the historically-valuable characteristics of the city center, described as displaying “a specific atmosphere” worth of retention. More precisely, “preserving [characteristic] street paths and representative historic ensembles” was considered essential for emphasizing the personality of Iași, and enhancing its touristic potential.

Such an openly-expressed consideration for local built heritage might seem surprising when coming from local architect-planners, supposedly promoting the modernist vision of the postwar years. However, this approach shared many similarities to the one displayed by their counterparts in Cluj, when desinging the Peace Square and Horea Street.¹⁰³ These projects, together with many others presented in the pages of *Arhitectura*, suggest that the Romanian modernism of the 1960s was modest and austere rather than radical and intrusive, proposing solutions that were largely consistent with the local paths of urban development.¹⁰⁴ Local architects seemed inclined to understand and adapt to

¹⁰² It is very probable that the architects who drew the systematization plan had never actually visited Iași, and as a result did not realize the challenges posed by the natural landscape.

¹⁰³ See Chapter 4.4.

¹⁰⁴ Similar examples were discussed by Mariana Vereanu, “Sistematizarea unor orașe din regiunea Bacău,” [Urban Systematization in the Bacău Region], *Arhitectura* 16.1 (1965): 2-10. It is also the argument of Alexandru Răuță, who compared several civic center projects from the 1960s and 1980s. Alexander Răuță,

conditions of local specificity rather than blindly following some abstract urban design schemes of supposed universal relevance. Alternatively, the report can also be read as a form of protest against central planning authorities, which produced designs without any preliminary documentation or consultations at the local level.¹⁰⁵

As a footnote, it is perhaps worth mentioning that a strikingly similar criticism can be found in Gheorghe Curinschi's book on historic city centers published in 1967. Curinschi criticized the systematization project for considering the city center "as empty land to be occupied with housing with megalomaniac appearance", lacking sensitivity for the inherited urban scale and monuments.¹⁰⁶ Despite the sharp tone of his criticism, Curinschi did not seem particularly fond of the current urban landscape either, stating that the historic monuments were "caught" in a mass of buildings lacking historical, architectural and economic value.¹⁰⁷ Embracing a functionalist view, he recommended the replacement of such decrepit building with modern structures as being a "rational" choice. To any extent, his analysis "borrowed" almost point by point the criticism previously voiced by the architects in Iași, starting with the cancelation of the street network and finishing with the inadequacy of the urban design proposal to the local geographic context.¹⁰⁸

"The State of Ambiguity of the Communist Civic Center in Three Romanian Secondary Cities: Brăila, Pitești, and Sibiu," *Journal of Urban History* 39.2 (2013): 235-254.

¹⁰⁵ INP-DMI, Dosar nr. 5605, Casa Dosoftei/ Casa cu Arcade Iași, 1955-1971, doc. SP al Regiunii Iași - DSAPC- CTS, Proiectul nr. 4053/1960, Sistemăizare centru detaliu oraș Iași

¹⁰⁶ Curinschi, *Centrele istorice ale orașelor*, 43.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 96.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 211-224. A copy of the report authored by the architects in Iași was preserved in the archive of the Department for Historic Monuments, where I consulted it. As an employee of the Department, Curinschi certainly had access to it and possibly used it as "inspiration" for his book.

5.5. Dealing with Old Buildings: Maintenance and Neglect

The moderate attitude regarding planning and preservation in the historic area displayed by architect-planners was limited by functionalist concerns. Focusing on questions of hygiene, they often stressed the obsolescence of large parts of the building stock, arguing that the clearance and rebuilding of areas with substandard housing was crucial for “increasing the degree of urbanization”.¹⁰⁹ The replacement of the old built fabric reflected both a concern for functionality (providing better-quality housing or office space for different institutions) and beautification (creating an aesthetically-pleasing urban environment). However, whereas large-scale clearance was easier to be implemented in the peripheries consisting of detached houses, central areas displayed higher densities both in terms of population and number of buildings, requiring therefore significant costs for demolition and the subsequent relocation of dwellers.

After the war, the city was confronted with an acute housing crisis, amplified by the demographic pressure created by industrialization. Despite claiming scientific relevance based on the intensive use of quantitative data, the planning instruments proved disconnected from the realities on the field. In the 1960s, the attempts of collecting relevant demographic data were undermined by the messy recruitment strategies of the factories. The heads of the People’s Council could not be provided with precise numbers regarding population and housing space, since factory managers employed workers without legal forms. The fluctuation of the population could not be anticipated by economic prognosis,

¹⁰⁹ INP-DMI, Sintează privind amplasarea locuințelor în județul Iași în perioada 1969-1971, f. 7-8. In the planners’ reports, sanitation appears as the main reason justifying demolition. It was specified that many of these houses had suffered major damage during the 1940 earthquake and were in danger of collapse (called self-demolition).

especially since the workforce was in short supply, and the industrial area was continuously expanding.¹¹⁰

Although constantly complaining about the quality and quantity of the housing stock, local authorities considered it as an important resource. The buildings transferred into state property following nationalization or immigration of the Jewish population¹¹¹ were administrated by Întreprinderea de Locuințe și Localuri [Office for Housing Administration].¹¹² Besides collecting rents, the employees of this institution were theoretically in charge with constantly evaluating the buildings' state of maintenance and performing necessary repairs.

From the local authorities' perspective, the maintenance of old buildings appeared as a matter of necessity rather than a choice. Given the limited capacity of the housing construction industry, and the problematic aspect of relocating tenants, the local administration concluded that repairs had to be done in the absence of more consistent resources supporting demolition and reconstruction.¹¹³ Or, in the words of a local official: "we have to make repairs, as we will not be able to demolish them [the old buildings] so fast".¹¹⁴

Housing degradation was caused in Iași not only by age or by the poor quality of the construction materials, but also by the lack of control over the water sources in the

¹¹⁰ DJIAN, Fond SPOI-SS, 33/1964, f. 168, 173.

¹¹¹ The decree 111/1951 regarding nationalization of abandoned goods. Ibid., 9/1965, f. 1, 12, 18, 23. Many of the "abandoned goods" (in this case, buildings) were described to be in a poor state of maintenance.

¹¹² In 1965, the Office for Housing Administration owned 2048 buildings, and employed 620 persons (by comparison, in 1959, it had 1540 buildings and 228 employees). According to HCM 407/1965, its responsibilities included the administration of housing in state property, establishing and collecting rents, controlling once a year the buildings' state of maintenance, recording any necessary repairs. Ibid., 40/1965, f. 382-383.

¹¹³ M. Silianu, "Probleme actuale de urbanism din RSR" [Current Urban Planning Problems in the Socialist Republic of Romania], *Arhitectura* 13.2 (1962): 6.

¹¹⁴ DJIAN, Fond SPOI- SS, 32/1968, f. 441.

underground. Several complaint letters signaled that houses were in danger of collapse because of the long-term humidity of flooded basements.¹¹⁵ Even the building of the National Theatre was endangered by the rising level of groundwater, requiring the urgent intervention of the Department for Historic Monuments in 1973.¹¹⁶

Official commitment to building maintenance did not imply, however, a consistent strategy, nor the allocation of sufficient funding. Repair works implied partial, provisional, and often superficial interventions aimed at “prolonging the life span” of a building for a few more years. More, they were not performed based on preliminary examination by the Office for Housing Administration, as it was officially regulated, but in response to citizens’ requests. Therefore, even if all apartments in one building might have suffered from similar structural problems, interventions would only be performed in response to a specific request.¹¹⁷ Alternatively, urban beautification concerns justified investment in the repainting of façades or the repairing of broken roofs for the buildings on the main streets. Usually, the structural consolidation of buildings was generally disregarded. Furthermore, formulating a request alone would not guarantee a positive reply from the Office. Citizens complained they had petitioned the institution for years without any success.¹¹⁸ In their defense, the heads of the enterprise blamed the failures on the

¹¹⁵ DJIAN, Fond SPOI- SAS, 28/1968, f. 25, 27; Fond Flacăra Iaşului 4/1982, f. 128.

¹¹⁶ INP-DMI, Procese verbale XIV, Lista avizelor CTS (5 iulie-20 aug 1973), nr. 290.

¹¹⁷ DJIAN Iaşi, SPOI-SS, 32/1968, f. 460-461.

¹¹⁸ For example, in the first nine months of 1965, 60% of the complaint letters received by the People’s Council in Iaşi regarded questions of housing. Only 10% received a positive answer. However, citizens proved persistent, and re-sent their requests several times. DJIAN, Fond SPOI-SS, 40/1965, f. 238-243. The local press was sometimes used as an alternative channel for reaching local authorities. The newspapers would either make the issue public, or forward the letter to the Municipality. DJIAN, Fond Flacăra Iaşului 9/1977, f. 185-186. The importance of housing for the socialist city was emphasized in recent literature. Christine Varga-Harris argued that “the mutual preoccupation with housing comprised a terrain upon which state and populace endeavoured to construct a viable socialist society.” Christine Varga-Harris, *Stories of House and Home. Soviet Apartment Life during the Khrushchev Years* (Cornell University Press, 2015), 9.

shortage economy,¹¹⁹ arguing that the company was poorly provided with construction materials, and the existing ones were of inferior quality.¹²⁰ Another problem expressed during the meetings of the People's Council regarded the deficient work ethic: maintenance works were often performed poorly and with delays, since instead of fulfilling their tasks in the socialist sector, part of the workers would perform repairs for private individuals,¹²¹ as part of a widespread "economy of favors".¹²² As a result, the buildings in an advanced state of disrepair were neglected, as they were typically inhabited by tenants who did not have the necessary connections to be provided with a service they were legally entitled to. Mismanagement characterized the activity of the Office, who even failed to provide local authorities with precise data regarding the buildings under its administration.¹²³

Buildings in an advanced state of wear (estimated to over 60%) would be simply ignored by the Office for Housing Administration, a situation that the heads of the People's Council found problematic. Their concern regarded not the tenants, nor the built structures, but the broader tactics of housing redistribution policies. The collapse of poorly maintained houses would oblige local authorities to find alternative housing space for the displaced tenants.¹²⁴ This was problematic since citizens belonging to poor strata were considered unworthy of receiving new apartments.¹²⁵ As a result, it is argued that new housing should

¹¹⁹ Term coined by János Kornai, *The Socialist System: the political economy of communism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 233.

¹²⁰ DJIAN, Fond SPOI-SS, 32/1968, f. 157-158.

¹²¹ Ibid., f. 136, 150. Officially known as "interventions for increasing the comfort of housing."

¹²² DJIAN, Fond SPOI-SS, 40/1965, PV 18/1965, f. 72-89. Only 50% of the citizens' requests were solved; the quality of the works was considered satisfactory, yet not good. The heads of the Office were personally accused to use the company as part of "an economy of favours", in which they had special agreements with different individuals in order to reach personal benefits. Aleva Ledeneva described the emergence of the same approach to housing distribution and maintenance in the Soviet Union, arguing that the system of privileges was made at public expense. Alena V. Ledeneva, *Russia's Economy of Favors. Blat, Networking and Informal Exchanges* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 30-31, 37.

¹²³ DJIAN, Fond SPOI-SS, 32/1968, f. 441-444.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 40/1965, f. 209-210.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 32/1968, f. 145-146, 443.

be distributed to “workers with large families or good earnings, who know how to behave and maintain the apartments, and relocate in their homes those families whose houses are being demolished or collapse, and have poor financial means.”¹²⁶ The president of the People’s Council personally insisted that houses in an advanced state of disrepair should be also considered for maintenance, since they still represented an “exploitable” resource.¹²⁷

Furthermore, the problem was not only that old buildings needed repairs, but that the new ones needed that as well. All state-owned housing, regardless of age, was administrated by the same office. Given numerous construction deficiencies, the new apartments rarely met the quality standards and needed repairs even before the first tenants would move it. As a result, part of the maintenance funding was directed towards addressing these inconveniences. Already in 1968, 40% of the total building maintenance budget was used for repairs of the new building stock.¹²⁸ Moreover, the increasing emphasis put on the construction of new housing districts made all available financial capacities be directed towards this purpose, while funding for repairs was constantly reduced by the end of the 1960s.¹²⁹

In the official records, the construction of new apartments led to the increase of the percent of buildings in good state of maintenance. In 1958, half of the buildings in Iași were considered as insalubrious, and only one quarter in good state. Ten years later, through the construction of new apartments (and demolition), the percent of those in a good

¹²⁶ Ibid., 40/1965, f. 209-210.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 32/1968, f. 134.

¹²⁸ Ibid., f. 460-461.

¹²⁹ Ibid., f. 441-444, 463.

state increased to 68%, with only 13% being considered in an insalubrious state.¹³⁰ The living surface tripled in the same period (from 405,000 square meters in 1958 to 1,204,000 square meters in 1968), and the number of housing units doubled (10,479 apartments in 1958, compared to 21,524 in 1968).¹³¹ Still, as observed by historian Bogdan Murgescu, although the numbers indicate a significant improvement in the quantity and quality of the housing stock, the official statistics avoided making any references to living space lost through demolition, and in this sense, left one variable out of the calculations.¹³²

Given the scarcity of construction materials, part of the necessary amount was collected from demolition, since the process implied the mechanical deconstruction of built structures.¹³³ It appeared, however, that the employees of the Office for Housing Administration, who were responsible for this activity, appropriated most of the materials. Infuriated that the Office refused to submit any documentation regarding this issue, the president of the People's Council proposed in the late 1960s that the idea of recycling construction materials be dropped altogether and replaced by a more radical approach: "bring in the bulldozers to demolish, because we cannot expect to save any materials".¹³⁴

From the perspective of building maintenance policies, the end of the 1960s also seemed to mark a breaking point. Despite the shortcomings in the activity of the Office for Housing Administration, during the first two decades after the war investing in building maintenance was still considered a viable and necessary option. Nevertheless, the increased emphasis on mass housing constructed with industrialized methods rendered such

¹³⁰ Ibid., f. 155.

¹³¹ Ibid., f. 170.

¹³² Bogdan Murgescu, *România și Europa. Acumularea decalajelor economice 1500-2000* [Romania and Europe. The Cumulation of Economic Differences] (Iași: Ed. Polirom, 2010), 351-352.

¹³³ DJIAN, Fond SPOI-SS, 40/1965, f. 396.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 32/1968, f. 131, 148.

approaches obsolete. “Worthy” citizens would be gradually relocated into the new housing estates, leaving many old buildings to tenants who did not have the financial means, nor the necessary connections to insure their proper maintenance.

5.6. An “Interesting” Example of Heritage-Making: The Dosoftei House

A number of old structures in the historic core “caught” the experts’ attention given their potential heritage value. One such example was the building known as “The Salt Deposit” or “The House with Columns”, situated in the area of the former princely court, close to the fifteenth century Saint Nicholas Church. The stone building, consisting of an almost cubic volume with an arched front porch and pitched roof, had been dramatically altered along the years in order to accommodate the practical needs of various commercial activities. Although having preserved much of its structural integrity, in the interwar period the construction found itself in a poor state of repair. The arches had been walled with bricks, warehouse doors were opened at the ground-floor level, and the façade was plastered and painted in white. The inner space, originally consisting of two high rooms with vaults, was horizontally divided into two floors.¹³⁵ In 1939, its demolition was requested by the chief-architect Felix Schor, whose report listed, among others, a very pronounced crack from the roof to the foundation, rotten wooden elements, and a heavily-damaged roof. The building’s deterioration accentuated as a consequence of the earthquake in 1940 and the bombings in June 1941, which produced further cracks in the walls and destroyed the roof. Local authorities considered the building close to collapse and demanded again its demolition. However, the building legally belonged to Jewish owners,

¹³⁵ INP-DMI, Dosar 5610, Photo “Monument istoric ‘Depozit de sare’ Iași, vedere str. Anastasie Panu (1931)”.

whose lawyer stubbornly objected this decision. Interestingly, the motivation insisted on the construction's heritage value, as apparently, it had been declared historic monument in 1933. Irrespective of whatever architectural qualities, the listing seems to have been connected to church history, namely to the building's use as chapel during the restoration works to the Saint Nicholas Church in the last two decades of the nineteenth century.¹³⁶



Fig. 5.7. Casa Dosoftei in 1956.

Source: INP-DMI, Dosar 5610, f. 92.

In the post-war years, after surviving bombings, natural calamities and demolition threats, the house was in an advanced state of degradation, with the brick walls partially fallen down and the painted walls peeling. Starting with the mid-1950s, several institutional actors got involved into the process of saving the construction from demolition, restoring it and finding an appropriate use. Somehow surprising for a socialist state that had already

¹³⁶ INP-DMI, Dosar nr. 5605, study on the history of the building made by P. Nasturel, submitted on April 20, 1960. The restoration of Saint Nicholas Church had been made by the French architect Lecomte du Noüy, a student of Viollet-le-Duc. Although based on a careful documentation, the church was entirely demolished, to be reconstructed in a new, purified form. Carmen Popescu, *Le style national roumain. Construire une nation à travers l'architecture* (Presses Universitaires de Rennes & Simetria, 2004), 105-106.

nationalized buildings in private property,¹³⁷ a first step regarded precisely the question of expropriation. The initiative belonged to the Scientific Commission for Monuments within the Romanian Academy, or, more probably, to its secretary Dan Bădărau, who was originally from Iași. At that point, the building was still private property, being used as warehouse. The owner, a Jewish woman, was persuaded to accept a financial compensation, given the fact that the structure appeared unsuitable for residential functions.¹³⁸ In order to find an appropriate use for a building with heritage status, the Academy suggested that the Palace of Culture should take it under its administration.¹³⁹ The Department for Architectural Monuments within the State Committee for Architecture and Construction seemed initially reluctant to engage with this issue, motivating that its activity prioritized restoration projects of national importance.¹⁴⁰ The building's survival had been seriously questioned in 1957, when the local Section for Architecture and Systematization within the municipality wanted the house demolished since it overlapped with the plans for restructuring the street's profile.¹⁴¹ However, the intervention of architect Nicolae Bădescu, head of the State Committee for Architecture, ultimately proved crucial for persuading the responsible actors.¹⁴² The monument was immediately included in the restoration plan of the DHM,¹⁴³ as well as in the new systematization plan of the area.¹⁴⁴

Architectural surveys undertaken in 1957 described the building's originality in its almost square plan, the division of the interior, as well as the arched porch on columns.

¹³⁷ For the consequences and paradoxes of building nationalization, see Chelcea, "The 'Housing Question'," 281-296.

¹³⁸ INP-DMI, Dosar nr. 5605, doc. SP al orașului Iași / SAS 12535/1955.

¹³⁹ Ibid., doc. 119/1956.

¹⁴⁰ INP-DMI, Dosar nr. 5605, doc. 2297/1955.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., f. 44-46.

¹⁴² DJIAN, Fond SPOI- SAS, 16/1959, f. 10

¹⁴³ INP-DMI, Dosar nr. 5605, doc. 2123/ May 28, 1960.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., doc. 882/ April 14, 1961.

The architects dated its construction to the second half of the seventeenth century, hypothesis also supported by ambiguous archival reference connecting it to the Metropolitan Bishop Dosoftei (1624-1693), who supposedly had a new residence constructed for him close to the Saint Nicholas Church, in a style similar to the buildings in Istanbul.¹⁴⁵ The rarity of such an architectural example made it particularly valuable, raising interest in documenting the evolution of the old urban architecture in Romania, as the field had been almost unexplored previously.¹⁴⁶

However, the correspondence between different bureaucratic agencies suggests that the building's heritage value was not based on a clear, well-documented historical narrative. More than archival documents,¹⁴⁷ that offered insufficient information, an important reference to the building's original appearance was provided by a drawing of I. Rey from 1845. The building was depicted as part of a picturesque scene showing the overcrowded street during a fair day.¹⁴⁸ Given the construction's advanced state of disrepair in the 1950s, it can be assumed that this visual source in particular draw attention towards its potential heritage value. Despite the building's obvious aesthetic qualities, few investigations seem to have been made to identify further stylistic references. The report presented by architect Ioana Grigorescu, responsible for the restoration project, emphasized the ambiguity of existing historical references, suggesting that the house could have been initially used for printing purposes.¹⁴⁹ Not surprisingly then, the adjective

¹⁴⁵ INP-DMI, Dosar nr. 6508, aviz nr. 16/1967.

¹⁴⁶ INP-DMI, Dosar nr. 5605, doc. 431/ 1957.

¹⁴⁷ The oldest identified document was dated 1898, while the oldest reference was a city plan from 1769 on which the building was represented. INP-DMI, fond nr. 5605, study on the history of the building made by P. Năsturel, submitted on April 20, 1960.

¹⁴⁸ The image can be accessed at https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/M%C4%83n%C4%83stirea_Sf%C3%A2nta_Vineri_din_Ia%C8%99i#/media/File:AKauffmannJReyIașiFair.PNG, accessed June 20, 2016.

¹⁴⁹ INP-DMI, Dosar nr. 6508, report from May 17, 1967.

“interesting” dominated the experts’ justifications for preservation.¹⁵⁰ In their correspondence, the bureaucrats selectively appropriated pieces of information which appeared of greater impact. For example, local-level bureaucrats stated that the building was constructed in the “Byzantine style, [being] designed after the old shops of the bazar in Istanbul.”¹⁵¹ The limited expert knowledge, supplemented by vague references or presuppositions, was thus validated and reinforced through the proceedings of bureaucratic work, adding a second layer to the expert-led process of heritage-making.

The sources provide little information regarding the public reaction towards the case. Given its small size and poor state of maintenance, the monument would have neither caught the attention of the everyday passer-by, nor would it have represented a valuable candidate for conservation measures. In the local press, the neglected building was rather considered as distorting the image of the square. Disregarding any information regarding the architectural or historical value of the monument, the journalists expressed concern regarding the cleanness of the public space in the vicinity of the Palace of Culture, the city’s most important landmark.¹⁵² Criticism was specifically directed towards the DHM, which had taken responsibility for the building’s safeguarding. Fearing that an unoccupied building would suffer further damages,¹⁵³ the DHM used it as a provisional deposit for restoration materials, keeping one worker there as unofficial night guard. However, the measure did little to prevent locals from constantly stealing the wooden elements (the

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., approval no. 16/ May 22, 1967.

¹⁵¹ INP-DMI, Dosar nr. 5605, f. 60-99.

¹⁵² *Flacăra Iașilor*, May 7, 1965; INP-DMI, Dosar nr. 5605, doc. 4768/ 1965.

¹⁵³ Despite the legal provisions obliging local authorities to insure the safeguarding of monuments, the experience of the 1950s showed that many nationalized buildings, especially former mansions in rural areas, have been deconstructed by locals in need for construction materials. See Chapter 2.4.

fence, the panels covering the doors and windows), while the place generally looked unworthy of the city's representative square.¹⁵⁴

A set of favorable circumstances in the following years facilitated the initiation of restoration works. During the 1960s, a team of architects and specialized workers from the DHM were present in Iași for the restoration of two medieval monasteries, Trei Ierarhi and Galata.¹⁵⁵ In the same period, local architect-planners prepared a systematization project for the square in front of the Palace of Culture, involving the construction of a new building for the Party headquarters across the street. In this context, local authorities approved the restoration project for the Dosoftei House, being motivated not only by the listed status of the monument,¹⁵⁶ but also by its inclusion in this centrally-located urban planning project. The restoration project aimed to return the building's original appearance, paying particular attention to "freeing" the arched porch, cleaning the walls, reconstructing the vaults and replacing the roof with one from good quality "historical" tiles.¹⁵⁷

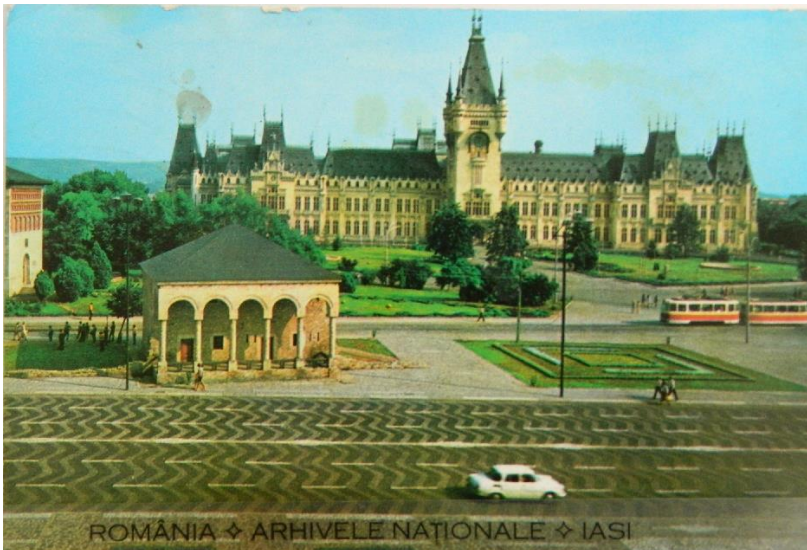


Fig. 5.8. Casa Dosoftei after restoration. In the background, the Palace of Culture. Postcard circulating in the 1970s.

Source: Source: DJIAN, Colecția Stampe și Fotografii, 5963.

¹⁵⁴ INP- DMI, Dosar nr. 5605, doc. 4768/ 1965.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., doc. 4965/ 1963.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., doc. 4310/1967, doc. 4022/ 1966.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., f. 30 (tema de proiectare).

The restoration was completed in 1970, after 26 months of work. The costs were double than initially envisioned, being increased by archaeological excavations, the demolition of the neighboring building,¹⁵⁸ as well as the expensive “rare construction materials”, such as special bricks and oak wood.¹⁵⁹ The History Museum of Moldavia, whose exhibition halls were accommodated in the premises of the monumental Palace of Culture, agreed to take the restored monument under its administration. The building was finally inaugurated in 1970, in the presence of personalities representing the institutional actors involved.¹⁶⁰ In the following decades, the Dosoftei House became one of the city’s landmarks, being featured in postcards surrounded by roses and greenery. Without exception, the rest of the buildings on the street were demolished in the 1980s to make place for the civic center project.¹⁶¹

5.7. Demolition and Reconstruction in the 1970s: the Case of Dimitrov Street

5.7.1. Preliminary Calculations

After 1960, most urban redevelopment projects were prepared by the Regional Institute for Urban Design, following economic plans devised after negotiations between central and local actors. The final decision regarding the allocation of state resources and the location of new districts stayed with the leaders of the local administration, reunited in a Systematization Committee. Projects then had to be approved by the State Committee for

¹⁵⁸ The demolition of the neighbouring house was unsuccessfully opposed by the DHM. Local authorities simply motivated that the building was not listed as historic monument. Ibid., doc. 9492/1968.

¹⁵⁹ INP-DMI, Dosar nr. 5605, approval 25 bis/1967.

¹⁶⁰ INP-DMI, Dosar nr. 6508, doc. fn.

¹⁶¹ In his nostalgic report titled “Ultima zi a străzii Sfânta Vineri” (The Last Day of the Street Sfânta Vineri) Ion Mitican also recalls various forms of protest and resistance from local intellectuals against the demolition of particular houses, especially those with a memorial value. <http://curierul-Iasi.ro/ultima-zi-a-strazii-sfanta-vineri-3533> (accessed June 1, 2016).

Planning, the State Committee for Architecture,¹⁶² as well as different ministries responsible for the provision of utilities (gas, water, electricity).¹⁶³

The projects elaborated by the Institute for Urban Design reveal the main factors architects had to take into account when considering planning a new district: the number of apartments which could be built in every location, the number of people to be relocated as a result of the demolition of the existing housing stock, and the amount of state resources to be invested.¹⁶⁴ In the planners' calculations, the investment necessary for the installation of utilities (associated investment: i.e. running water, sewer, electricity, heating, telephone lines) mattered to a far greater extent than any other considerations, as it implied negotiations with other ministries and the acquisition of funding from their respective budgets.¹⁶⁵ Managing people and land seemed much easier than dividing state resources and forging institutional cooperation.

After producing several design versions for every potential location, architects and planners would then discuss their comparative advantages and disadvantages in light of plans for economic development. In the case of Iași, peripheral areas had generally the advantage of the flat relief, thus allowing the use of industrialized construction methods. In addition, the low densities in these areas occupied by family houses generally implied a relatively smaller number of buildings to be demolished and people to be relocated.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶² After the Committee's dissolution in 1969, approval had to be granted by the corresponding organisms within CSEAL (The State Committee for Local Economy and Administration) and, from 1971, CPCP (Committee for the Problems of Popular Councils).

¹⁶³ An example is the list for approvals of the project for Dimitrov Street. INP-DMI, Dosar 5811 zona Tineretului- Sărăriei/ Sistemalizare, demolări 1969-71, construire blocuri, f. 4.

¹⁶⁴ INP-DMI, Dosar: Sinteză privind amplasarea locuințelor în județul Iași în perioada 1969-1971 și următorii ani. Memoriu de sinteză privind posibilitățile de amplasare de blocuri de locuințe în municipiul Iași etapa 1969-71 și 1971-75, f. 4.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., f. 5.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., f. 8-9. However, in the case of some densely-populated districts situated at the periphery (e.g., Păcurari) systematization was postponed as it was considered that it "cannot be supported in the current

In contrast, central areas displayed higher densities both in terms of population and number of buildings, requiring therefore significant costs for demolition and the subsequent relocation of the dwellers. Their advantage consisted precisely in the already existing utilities. Embracing the sanitation discourse, planners often stressed the obsolescence of the building stock in the city center, arguing that clearance and rebuilding of these areas would be crucial for “increasing the degree of urbanization”.¹⁶⁷ However, whereas large-scale demolition became a common practice in the peripheries given the lower densities, the reconstruction of the city center was to be made by infillings, which suggests punctual interventions.¹⁶⁸ The restructuring of an entire street was a comparatively ambitious endeavor.

The scarcity of land and construction materials, as well as the limitations imposed through building legislation influenced dramatically the solutions envisioned in the urban design projects.¹⁶⁹ Further restrictions were introduced in the 1970s, urging planners to save on urban land. The tendency to raise new housing districts on empty or poorly constructed fields situated at the periphery, prevalent in the 1960s¹⁷⁰ came under official

stage”. For the year 1971, the chosen locations at the periphery required the relocation of 63 families only. By comparison, the population of Păcurari district was estimated to 10,000 inhabitants.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., f. 7-8. In the planners’ reports, sanitation appears as the main reason justifying demolition.

Although not preserved in the archive, the documentation apparently included a photo album, too, presenting the decrepit state of houses. It was specified that many of these houses had suffered major damage during the earthquake in 1940 and were in danger of collapsing (called self-demolition).

¹⁶⁸ These observations are consistent with R.A. French’s remarks on similar urban interventions in the Soviet Union: “To renew old central areas by whole microregions at a time would have involved the effort, time and cost of clearing larger areas, with the consequent diminution of existing housing stock. Renewal in inner areas has consistently tended to be limited point-sites in any one development.”, French, *Plans, pragmatism and people*, 76.

¹⁶⁹ INP-DMI, Dosar: Sinteză privind amplasarea locuințelor în județul Iași în perioada 1969-1971, Scrisoare Corneliu Comărnescu, p. 11. In a response to a letter written by a worried citizen, one Iași-based architect patiently exemplified with the instructions of the State Committee for Architecture regarding the efficient use of the territory, the new instructions regarding the increasing of densities and imposed savings of some key construction materials such as steel, concrete and timber.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., f. 1. From 1961 to 1965: Socola-Nicolina, left bank Bahlui, Cartier Tătărași Sud; for the period 1966-70: Tătărași I and Socola I-V-Nicolina (through increasing the density) and microraión Tătărași III. Interestingly, the remodeling of larger areas in the city center had been scheduled for earlier dates, but

criticism, as it implied building on land otherwise meant for agricultural use.¹⁷¹ A similar argument was made in the Soviet Union, too, although availability of land was hardly a problem for such a large country. According to R.A. French, such measures rather sought to diminish the construction costs, in terms of length of infrastructure lines and transport routes.¹⁷² In the Romanian case, Ana-Maria Zahariade pointed at the underlying political justifications, as decision-makers started to grasp better the advantages of controlling territory and population through physical planning.¹⁷³ Whatever the motivations, as a result of political decisions, architects in Romania were constrained to limit the expansion of the city at a perimeter established through the systematization scheme and increasingly focusing their attention on the remodeling of centrally-located areas.

As observed by Liviu Chelcea in his work on 1950s Bucharest, state officials operated with simplified data on the social [and physical] reality of housing.¹⁷⁴ At the end of the 1960s, the language of the planning documents described the central area of Iași as containing a “significant number of dwellings in dilapidated buildings or which have been severely damaged as a result of the [1940] earthquake”. As previously mentioned, however, planners arguably favored the replacement of particularly damaged buildings which “cannot be repaired” with infillings instead of comprehensive demolition and urban renewal.¹⁷⁵ No other information on the dwellers except for their number was provided,

postponed. These included: the square in front of the Palace of Culture (str. Anastasie Panu south and north), str. Banu, Piața Tineretului (The Square of Youth).

¹⁷¹ Ibid., f. 6.

¹⁷² French, *Plans, pragmatism and people*, 80.

¹⁷³ Zahariade, *Arhitectura în proiectul comunist*, 36.

¹⁷⁴ Chelcea, “Housing nationalization in 1950s Bucharest,” 287, based on James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State. How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 77.

¹⁷⁵ INP-DMI, Dosar: Sinteză privind amplasarea locuințelor în județul Iași în perioada 1969-1971, f. 8. The reconstruction of two of the main boulevards- Dimitrov and Anastasie Panu was discussed in 1968 in one of the Executive Committee’s meetings. The head of local administration, Ioan Manciu, insisted that the

since what ultimately mattered was the number of persons to be displaced and relocated. Nevertheless, this one piece of information proved to be essential, as it could postpone demolition for the “next stage”.¹⁷⁶

Rather than people and inadequate housing, traffic played as essential role in the drawing plans for urban modernization. Like in many Romanian cities, most streets in Iași were narrow and therefore increasingly crowded, being able to accommodate at best two circulation lanes. Their sinuous character added to their perceived inadequacy in the context of a modern city. As a complementary tool of the systematization scheme, a circulation study was ordered in the early 1960s at a specialized institute in Bucharest.¹⁷⁷

The national urban planning policy paid particular attention at the remodeling of the major boulevards, called *magistrale*, despite the relatively high number of persons to be displaced. The restructuring of these areas also implied significant demolition, as the street had to be widened and straightened at the expense of the buildings bordering it. At best, and only in very exceptional cases, one of the fronts could be partially spared if it contained some valuable structures.

systematization of this areas had to be initiated as soon as possible. The only impediment was the high volume of demolition – a sufficient reason for the rejection of the project in Bucharest. Therefore, he proposed to start the reconstruction of the street with empty plots, and continue with new constructions to the extent to which more land would be “emptied” from existing buildings. DJIAN, Fond SPOI-SS 32/1968, f. 582-583.

¹⁷⁶ For example, the plans for 1970 tackled areas with almost no relocations were required. INP-DMI, Dosar: Sinteză privind amplasarea locuințelor în județul Iași în perioada 1969-1971, f. 9.

¹⁷⁷ Project by IPGC București nr. 128/67. Despite this seemingly great interest for the modernization of infrastructure, not much was done apart from widening streets at the expense of the old houses bordering the street. In the case of Iași, many infrastructure projects which would have required more substantial founding and complex construction works (passages, bridges) were never implemented. Moreover, the widening of streets usually allowed heavy traffic to cross the city center, in the absence of a ring road. Interview with architect Gheorghe Hereș, May 20, 2013, Iași.

5.7.2. Plans and Surveys

Dimitrov Street (nowadays Bulevardul Independenței, previously known as Ulița de Sus and Brătianu Street)¹⁷⁸ bordered in the north the historical area and the Union Square. Although proposals for its restructuring had already been advanced starting with the early 1960s,¹⁷⁹ more concrete plans were devised in 1969.



Fig. 5.9. View of Dimitrov Street in the first half of the 20th century. On the left side, the Spiridoniei Tower

Source Source: DJIAN, Colecția Stampe și Fotografii, 1316.

When examining the quality of the existing building stock on Dimitrov Street, planners appreciated as valuable only a small number of buildings on the right-side front, most of which were listed as historic monuments- two churches, a monastery, the Natural History Museum, as well as a small number of post-1945 constructions.¹⁸⁰ Most of the existing fabric fell into the broadly defined category of “deplorable, and in many case in danger of collapsing” buildings.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁸ First mentioned in 1634 as Ulița Nouă (the New Street), also called Ulița Hagioaiei or Podul de Sus. The street developed as part of the commercial road connecting Iași with Lvov and Tighina. Doina Mira Dascălu, “Reconstituirea planului Iașilor din veacul XVIII” [Reconstructing the Eighteenth Century Plan of Iași], *Historia Urbana* 14.2 (2006): 317.

¹⁷⁹ INP-DMI, Dosar Sinteză privind amplasarea locuințelor, f. 1.

¹⁸⁰ INP-DMI, Dosar 5811 zona Tineretului-Sărării/ Sistemalizare demolări 1969-71, construire blocuri. Consiliul Popular al Județului Iași, Institutul de Proiectare, proiect nr. 3551/71, f. 12.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., f. 1.

The planning solution was primarily designed to meet traffic needs, by widening the street from two to five traffic lanes, including the tramway lines.¹⁸² As the city was going to expand vertically rather than horizontally, architects aimed to equip the new street with high-rise apartment blocks of eight to ten-story, a solution considered appropriate given the central location of the new the housing development. Also, they sought at the partial rendering of the old commercial street character, by creating a service area at the ground floor of the new buildings. The north front would be a continuously built, while ten-story tower blocks were considered functionally more appropriate for the south, allowing the penetration of sunlight. Significantly, the plan also aimed at preserving and restoring a number of historic buildings on the southern part of Dimitrov Street.

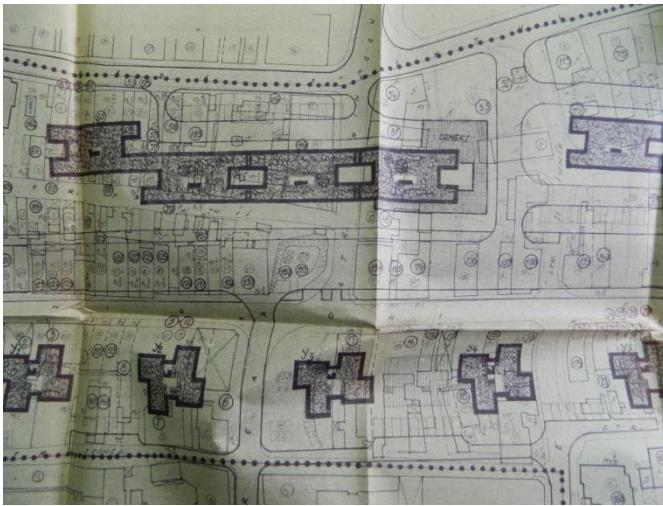


Fig. 5.10. Plans for the construction of apartment blocks on Dimitrov Street.

Source: INP-DMI, Proiect DSAPC Iași 3551/1971, A0

The re-design of the street was preceded by specific surveys and calculations, investigating the spatial divisions of properties, the quality of the construction materials, and the number of inhabitants to be relocated. According to these data, about half of the houses on the street were still privately owned, accommodating a significant number of

¹⁸² INP-DMI, Dosar Sinteză privind amplasarea locuințelor, f. 8-9.

Jewish tenants and even a synagogue.¹⁸³ The area necessary for the construction of the high-rise housing project was occupied by over 200 buildings. One fourth of the housing space was privately owned (inhabited by 140 families), while the rest was state property under the management of the Office for Housing Administration, housing around 1,500 persons.¹⁸⁴ Although no data regarding the internal division of the houses is provided, one can infer the degree of overcrowding from the number of families and the relatively small scale of the buildings.

Planners estimated that a number of 1745 new apartments would be completed instead, accommodating 60% more families than the existing housing stock.¹⁸⁵ However, no other services (e.g., places in kindergartens and schools, green space, sport fields) were included, under the motivation that the blocks did not constitute a separate housing estate i.e. microraion.¹⁸⁶ Contrary to the theory, investment in infrastructure was also necessary, as the sewerage and heating systems were too old or inadequate.¹⁸⁷

Private owners were expropriated, which meant that they received the estimated cost value of the construction materials, calculated to an amount of 1,033,700 lei for all buildings. The cost of expropriation, however, was diminished by the fact that land had almost no monetary value – 12,300 lei for the entire area, when the cost of one-room apartment was 42,000 lei.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸³ INP-DMI, Dosar 5811, Anexa A1-1, f. 3.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., Tabel cu cartări.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., f. 17.

¹⁸⁶ On the concept of micro-raion, see Juliana Maxim, “Mass Housing and collective experience: on the notion of microraion in Romania in the 1950s and 1960s,” *The Journal of Architecture* 14.1 (2009):7-26.

¹⁸⁷ INP-DMI, Dosar 5811, f. 25-39.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., Anexa A 1-1, f. 1-2.

5.7.3. Attempts to Heritage-Making

Every urban design project required the approval of a number of local and national-level institutions, such as the Technical-Scientific Council and Systematization Committee¹⁸⁹ within the People's Council of Iași District, and CSEAL [Comitetul de Stat pentru Economie și Administrație Locală/ State Committee for Local Economy and Administration]. In this case, the approval of the Department for Historic Monuments was also requested, as the area included four listed buildings: two churches, one clock-tower and the building of the Natural History Museum.¹⁹⁰

In 1969, following a first round of consultations, a compromise was reached between planners and preservationists, as shown by a document signed by the vice-presidents of the State Committee for Architecture, Gustav Gusti and the Department for Historic Monuments, Richard Bordenache. The agreement recognized the functional importance of Dimitrov Street and the advanced wear of many of its buildings. However, it also stated that the western edge of the street (between Lăpușneanu Street and Spiridoniei Hospital) should be preserved and restored given its heritage value, as it represented an old commercial street. The project was approved under two conditions: to begin the construction works on empty plots that did not require relocation of families and to prepare surveys¹⁹¹ for the buildings to be demolished.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁹ This institution, composed of political leaders, architects and planners discussed problems regarding urban planning and design, from location of new apartment blocks, to installation of utilities and decorations of the façades.

¹⁹⁰ *Lista Monumentelor de Cultură*, 70.

¹⁹¹ Unlike the surveys usually prepared by the Office for Housing Administration which focused on the structural characteristics of the buildings, and superficially judged their state of wear, these surveys would pay particular attention to architectural elements.

¹⁹² INP-DMI, Dosar 5630 Centru istoric Iași, Ședința CTS/ 12 septembrie 1973, f. 2.

The terms of the compromise reflected different visions and limitations for both preservationists and urban planners. The work of planners was guided by calculations and economic indicators imposed through legislation. Once an area entered in process of systematization, a certain density of the overall area had to be obtained, regardless of the design solutions. Therefore, in case planners agreed on preserving an existing building – in the case of historic monuments, it also included a protection area –, they had to increase the height of the new structures, in order to maintain the indicators constant. For preservationists, this approach was hardly acceptable, as it created a greater contrast between old and new in terms of style, age and scale. In the case of Dimitrov Street, the architects anticipated this aspect and tried to turn the argument in their favor, emphasizing that the construction of high-rise blocks would allow the preservation of protection areas around monuments,¹⁹³ which already meant a compromise from their part.

During the consultations for the systematization plan in 1971, the representatives of the Bucharest-based Department for Historic Monuments expressed a view still tributary to the concept of the monument as individual building, in the spirit of the 1955 legislation. They agreed that the project aimed at preserving existing monuments, yet criticized the lack of valorization, arguing that the volumes of the massive apartment blocks would appear as overwhelming in comparison to the neighboring churches and the nineteenth century building of the Natural History Museum.¹⁹⁴

In 1973, the project for the reconstruction of Dimitrov Street was still work in progress, since changes had to be made in response to observations formulated by local and national advisory bodies. When the project was subjected again to the approval of the

¹⁹³ INP-DMI, Dosar 5811, f. 19-21.

¹⁹⁴ INP-DMI, Dosar 5630, Centru istoric Iași/ 1973-1977, Ședința CTS 12 septembrie 1973, referat, f. 1-2.

DHM, in the same year, the architects from Iași had the surprise of being confronted with a shift in the conceptual approach of the preservationists. Meanwhile, the representatives of the DHM had initiated a collaboration with ISART (Institute for the Systematization of Cities and Regions) in the attempt to delimit areas of “historic and artistic interest” in various towns in Romania.¹⁹⁵ The broader purpose was to insure a legal framework for the protection and valorization of such areas threatened with comprehensive redevelopment, as well as to propose a “harmonious integration” of the new constructions in areas rich in old architecture.¹⁹⁶ The report sent by the Department of Historic Monuments featured a number of new notions, such as “historic center”, “architectural reserve”, and “old town atmosphere”. Besides buildings traditionally recognized as historic monuments, such as the Metropolitan Church or the Răznovanu Palace, it clearly specified that the city’s representative fabric should also include characteristic nineteenth century architecture and street patterns, such as those preserved on the Cuza Vodă and Ștefan cel Mare streets. The one-story buildings with commercial ground floors were presented as the typical urban landscape in the Moldavian târg therefore worth of preservation. Moreover, it argued for a reversed perspective as compared to the one of urban planners, by claiming that in historic areas, the new should be integrated into the old.

The representatives of the DHM had conducted their own survey of the existing housing stock in the historical area of the city. While urban planners inquired about the properties’ surface, number of inhabitants, construction materials, age of buildings and

¹⁹⁵ Project ISART nr. D 02-1 “Studiu pentru delimitarea zonelor istorice din 10 orașe ale țării, precum și cu propuneri de delimitare a acestor zone” [Study for delimiting historic areas in ten towns, with proposals to delimit these areas]. The project was sent to the Executive Committee of the People’s Council of Iași in July 1973. The area was limited by Dimitrov street in the east, Anastasie Panu and Piața Palatului (the Palace’s Square) in the south, Banu street on the west, and Piața Tineretului (the Youth Square) in the north. Ibid., f. 6.

¹⁹⁶ INP-DMI, Dosar 5630, doc. 6961 din 4 iulie 1973

existing utilities, preservationists showed interest mainly in the architectural characteristics of the buildings: e.g. style, decorations, and subsequent transformations. During the month of August 1973, representatives of the DHM surveyed approximately 100 buildings aimed to be included in the architectural reserve, for which they prepared historical documentations (i.e., files regarding their age, use, and transformations), structural descriptions and visual materials, such as photographs, surveying, and sketches.¹⁹⁷ In November, the Department submitted the documentation for the delimitation of the historical area of Iași to the approval of the local Systematization Commission.¹⁹⁸

Following long discussions,¹⁹⁹ the area delimited for preservation received the approval of the Technical-Economic Committee and of the Systematization Committee within the People's Council of Iași County.²⁰⁰ The “architectural reserve” status implied that the agreement of the DHM was necessary in case of interventions in the built fabric, i.e., demolition, new construction, changes in the street network, archaeological excavations, and installation of utilities. The architectural reserve was also included on the permanently updated, yet unofficial list of historic monuments compiled by the DHM.²⁰¹

In their work relationships with local authorities, the representatives of the DHM constructed their own strategy of negotiation, by generally agreeing with the urban design solution suggested by planners, yet conditioning the final agreement with points from their agenda. Usually, the Department tried to persuade local authorities to protect and restore

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., doc. 8888 din 20 august 1973, reply by engineer C. Mihăilescu, head of the Urban Design Institute, Iași.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., Doc/copie nr. 8675 din 19 noiembrie 1973- Consiliul Popular al Judetului Iași către DMI.

¹⁹⁹ Eugenia Greceanu, “Delimitarea zonelor protejate urbane din România în timpul regimului comunist,” [The Delimitation of Protected Urban Areas in Romania during the Communist Regime], *Arhitext Design* 6 (1998): 28.

²⁰⁰ INP-DMI, Dosar 5630, doc. copie emis de CP al jud Iași nr. 8675 din 19 nov. 1973.

²⁰¹ Ibid., doc. 6961 din 4 iulie 1973.

historical buildings in an area slightly larger than the one directly concerned by the project. For example, in the same period, the DHM agreed on the clearance of a densely-built area in front of the National Theatre, which the authorities intended to rearrange as a public square. However, in their report, the representatives of the Department clearly specified that no tower blocks should be constructed in the area, in order to avoid competition with the historical dominants of the city (i.e. the towers of the churches), and required “as a bonus” the restoration of an entire building front in the vicinity of the Theatre. In addition, the authors of the report aimed to push the boundary further by specifying that the empty plots on the respective street would be filled with buildings designed in the “style of the époque” (i.e. historicism), using decorative elements collected from buildings scheduled for demolition on Dimitrov Street. Finally, preservationists asked for the restoration of all buildings on another neighboring street (Cuza Vodă Street), which had preserved much of its nineteenth and early twentieth century architecture.²⁰²

The DHM report regarding the historic center of Iași shows the extent to which the preservationists attempted to insert their own visions in the negotiations on local spatial politics. The shift in the DHM’s own perspective was significant, not only because it initiated a process of heritage-making by incorporating compact areas of nineteenth century vernacular architecture, but also because it challenged dominant visions of urban redevelopment.

5.7.4. Re-building Dimitrov Street

Despite their best efforts, preservationists in socialist Romania could do little to prevent large scale demolition in the historical areas of cities like Iași. On the one hand,

²⁰² Ibid., aviz nr. 278/ 9 iulie 1973 cu privire la studiile de sistematizare pentru zona Teatrului Național.

political authorities and planners continued to favor the radical transformation of the cityscape through comprehensive demolition and the subsequent rebuilding of high-rise apartment blocks. Caught in a strictly delimited urban perimeter, under the permanent pressure of building an increasing number of apartments for the city's expanding population, planners were left with no other choice than to make intensive use of all available land, regardless of the quality and value attributed to the existing buildings. On the other hand, the re-conceptualization of heritage values in the city center of Iași came late, and only in response to a project of comprehensive redevelopment. The preservationist efforts were not endorsed by any stronger authority, as it had previously been the case with the president of the State Committee for Architecture, architect Bădescu. Moreover, the agreement established with local authorities did not benefit from legal support, which would have allowed the preservationists to enforce their demands.²⁰³

In several issues published in 1977, the local Party newspaper *Flacăra Iașului* featured pictures demonstrating the successful completion of the high-rise apartment blocks on Dimitrov Street.²⁰⁴ Further demolition has occurred in the aftermath of the earthquake in March 1977, when it became significantly easier to prove the dilapidated state of many old buildings. One local architect recalled that, in the morning following the earthquake, the mayor ordered the demolition of the damaged buildings on the street, without any evaluation of their state. After years of struggling to implement the project, the consequences of the earthquake represented an opportunity that could not be missed.²⁰⁵ A photo album documenting the consequences of the earthquake in Iași shows many

²⁰³ Interview with architect Eugenia Greceanu, București, October 20, 2012.

²⁰⁴ *Flacăra Iașului*, January 2; April 15, 1977.

²⁰⁵ Interview with architect Gheorghe Hereș, Iași, May 20, 2013.

buildings situated on Dimitrov Street. In most cases, only the walls were left standing, while the presence of bulldozers at work is easily noticeable. The high-rise blocks, the bulldozers, pieces of old buildings and the rubble altogether constitute the key elements of the reconstruction story.²⁰⁶



Fig. 5.11. Demolition of the buildings damaged by the earthquake in March 1977. The tower blocks were almost completed.

Source: Source: DJIAN, *Colecția Stampe și Fotografii*, 5981, f. 12.

In the same year, demolition was carried out in another part of the historical area, on Costache Negri Street, which had already been singled out in 1971 in the DHM documents as a perimeter worth of preservation due to its specificity. For 1977, the documents reveal no opposition of the preservationists regarding the razing of this historical area; the reports state in dry terms that “the demolition of old and unsanitary buildings [was] necessary for the construction of new blocks”.²⁰⁷ Ten-story apartment blocks were constructed during that year, however, without the complementary works for enlarging the street.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁶ DJIAN, *Colecția Stampe și Fotografii*, 5981, Documentar cu privire la urmările cutremurului din 4 martie 1977 la Iași [Documentation regarding the consequences of the earthquake from March 4, 1977 in Iași].

²⁰⁷ INP-DMI, Dosar 5630, Ședința CTS 12 septembrie 1973, referat, f. 4.

²⁰⁸ *Flacăra Iașului*, July 5, July 30, August 10, October 29, December 10, 1977.

The reactions of local intellectuals and architects towards the reconstruction of the old Iași were ambivalent. On the one hand, the demolition of many “decrepit” buildings in the historic area was perceived as legitimate. Ugliness, poor quality construction materials or a state of near collapse were enumerated as sufficient reasons for demolition. On the other hand, the disappearance of the old town generated nostalgic feelings. As a writer puts it: “When this world started to vanish, I must admit, I felt my heart heavy. A [part of our] history was gone with the disappearance of a universe that was picturesque, but also promiscuous.”²⁰⁹ Other opinions lamented the destruction of architectural landmarks such as Academia Mihăileană, as well as the disregard towards the local vernacular, seen as an embodiment of “the spirit of the place.”²¹⁰

The head of the Institute for Urban Design insisted, however, that the change was a positive one. In the framework of the following five-year plan (1981-1985), 40,000 apartments were to be built in Iași, among which 6,500 as part of the new civic center project on Anastasie Panu Street. In his opinion, nostalgic feelings were unnecessary given the functional obsolescence of the buildings subjected to demolition – arguably constructed from poor quality materials, and with a structure weakened during two earthquakes. Moreover, he concluded, the city still contained a significant number of monuments of architectural and historical value, which conferred a particular charm and prestige.²¹¹

²⁰⁹ Grigore Ilisei, “Iașii marilor zidiri,” [Great Buildings of Iași], *Arhitectura* 29. 2-3 (1981): 13.

²¹⁰ George Popa, “Spiritul urbei” [The Spirit of the City], *Arhitectura* 29. 2-3 (1981): 14.

²¹¹ Vasile Dascălu, “Iașul prezent și viitor” [Iași in the Present and in the Future], *Arhitectura* 29. 2-3 (1981): 14. Significantly, “the past” is missing from the title.

5. 8. Conclusion

The case of Iași discussed in this chapter contextualizes the process that led to the dramatic transformation of the inherited fabric of many Romanian cities and towns during the socialist period. As I have tried to demonstrate by focusing on smaller case studies, the pace of change was unequal, being determined by the politically-enforced decisions regarding economic planning. Several stages can be differentiated within this broader process.

The first step was the period of postwar reconstruction. During the Second World War, the state had already become more interventionist in matters of urban planning. In the Municipality's opinion, the destruction of buildings and infrastructure caused by the 1940 earthquake and war bombings represented an opportunity for remodeling the city center. However, given the difficult economic situation after the war, the only measures that the local officials could successfully enforce were to clear the land from rubble and adopt new building codes. During the 1950s, several low-rise infillings were inserted on the place of destroyed structures.

An increase in the construction activity started in the late 1950s, being supported by the creation of a Regional Institute for Urban Design. Contradicting an initial proposal of locating new housing districts on the hilly area at the north, the planners insisted that the only solution for the city's future development was to situate new industrial and residential areas in the opposite direction, on the flat land along the river. During the 1960s, urban development focused on the construction of the industrial area, and several mass housing districts. Also, the main square was remodeled as a showpiece of modernism. Surprisingly perhaps, the architectural discourse advertised a moderate version of postwar modernism,

which demonstrated a certain sensitivity towards the identified values of the inherited built environment. Rather than an element of rupture, local architects presented the residential districts as a continuation of the “garden-town” idea which had been specific to the city.

However, the constant push for industrialization rendered the existing built infrastructure obsolescent. In the city center, the contrast between valuable individual monuments and the mass of “insalubrious” buildings dating from the late nineteenth century was criticized including by architectural historians such as Gheorghe Curinschi. Although the pre-modern street system was considered to represent an element of local specificity and a visible trace of historicity, planners felt compelled to address the needs of traffic, too. In this regard, enlarging the main streets bordering the triangular-shaped historical area appeared as a matter of necessity. During the 1960s, these ideas could not be implemented as they presupposed the relocation of a substantial number of inhabitants. Given the economic constraints, local political leaders acknowledged the need of insuring at least a minimal degree of maintenance for the old building stock. However, the services provided by the Office for Housing Administration were strongly embedded into the local economy of favors, privileging well-connected citizens. In the socialist city, the system of housing distribution connected class and building quality, usually disregarding the needs of those placed lower in both categories.

A shift of policy can be detected starting with the late 1960s. While centrally-devised plans of economic development pushed for the constant increase of new apartment units, they also became more restrictive in the distribution and use of resources. Built areas were carefully delimited through systematization plans, and investment in utilities had to

be more thoroughly justified. A rudimentary solution – the densification of modernist districts – represented perhaps the most conspicuous expression of the new urban policies.

In the same years, the Department for Historic Monuments became actively involved in negotiated the reshaping of the historic area. In this chapter, I argued that it is important to observe not only the obvious conflicts between modernists and preservationists in debating the transformation of the built environment, but also the shifting conceptualizations behind their arguments. While political directives forced planners to locate new housing estates in the city center instead of the outskirts, preservationists were also pushed to re-evaluate their positions. Faced with the threat of large scale demolition, they re-conceptualized the value of previously despised examples of nineteenth century architecture and designated several areas in the city center as “architectural reserves.” However, the attempts to negotiate the survival of portions of the old town largely failed in the absence of adequate legal instruments supporting the preservationists’ position. As I have shown in the case of Dimitrov Street, the local authorities’ capacity of action was also constrained. Although with reconstruction plans on the table, the Municipality had to use the “opportunity” of a natural catastrophe – the 1977 earthquake – in order to proceed with demolition and complete the project.

The case of Iași is significant for the ambiguities and contradictions embedded in the reshaping of urban landscapes in Romania during socialism. On the one hand, one can detect a clearly-formulated discourse regarding local specificity, and pride in its culture, history and monuments. On the other hand, the city was in obvious need of modernization; as it was often stated during the 1960s, the old Iași had to become younger. The problem was precisely finding the appropriate strategies for merging these two processes –

modernizing the city, while preserving its historically-developed personality. Of course, the dilemma was of broad, even global relevance. The planners' urban design solutions were shaped not only by aesthetic visions, but mostly by legal and economic constraints. Beyond the politically- and ideologically-motivated push for development and urban reconstruction, it is important to observe the weaknesses of the preservationist agenda, too. Here I am referring in particular to two aspects. The first one is the "banality" of the inherited built environment – the widespread opinion regarding the lack of value of the commercial nineteenth century town. In Iași, the attempts to re-conceptualize built heritage coincided with the already approved plans for urban redevelopment. A shift of attitude at this point would have been highly improbable. Although a simplified view on the socialist city could suggest that adopting and implementing plans for urban redevelopment represented a facile endeavor,²¹² the projects analyzed in this chapter demonstrate that planners and local authorities had to invest considerable resources into designing plans, having them passed through the approval process, securing investment for their implementation and having the buildings constructed. Secondly, the preservationists lacked the institutional and legal support that would have allowed them to negotiate from a position of authority with the local decision-makers. Precisely given these structural constraints, the preservationists' initiatives can be considered remarkably audacious. And, despite the "failure" of imposing their concepts at that point, these ideas re-emerged and obtained widespread consensus after 1989.

The city center of Iași has been significantly reshaped during the socialist period. However, the resulting cityscape is highly fragmented. The three main streets bordering

²¹² Supposedly based on a strong state in full control of its material and human resources though centralized planning.

the historic area have all been widened – on the south, Anastasie Panu Street was fully redeveloped as civic center in the 1980s, while, as I have shown in the previous subchapter, Dimitrov Street on the north was bordered with high-rise blocks. Ștefan cel Mare Street, considered the most representative in terms of urban image, has partially retained its old fabric. By comparison, less interventions have occurred within the historic triangle, although the former Jewish district Târgul Cucului has been also demolished and reconstructed in the mid-1980s.²¹³ Various forms of protest and resistance, coming mostly from the part of local intellectuals, preceded and accompanied demolition. However, in the absence of institutional structures defending built heritage, the initiatives have been mostly the result of individual action.²¹⁴ The acknowledgment of the heritage value of the old town seemed to increase in direct proportion to the scale of destructions.²¹⁵

Overall, the story of the socialist transformation of Iași has been more complex and dramatic as compared to the one of Cluj. In this chapter, I tried to document and discuss several urban modernization projects pursued in the postwar decades, emphasizing the competing agendas and struggles embedded in this process. This case study is significant for the persistence of a discourse emphasizing pride in the local history and monuments,

²¹³ On the history, character and demolition of the neighborhood, see Ion Mitican, *Evreii din Târgul Cucului... de altădată: câteva aduceri aminte* [The Jews from the Old Târgul Cucului: Some Recollections] (Iași: Tehnopress, 2005).

²¹⁴ The best-known advocate of the old town was perhaps Ion Mitican, a retired engineer who passionately started to document the local past in the 1980s. He published articles in the local press in order to draw attention to the value of various buildings threatened by demolition, organized tours for popularizing pieces of local history, and gathered around him fellow preservationists. A local poet captured Mitican's dedication with sad irony: "Când descrie Mitican/ O clădire însemnată, / Nici nu se-mplinește-un an/ Și clădirea-i dărâmată!" [As soon as Mitican describes/ An important building/ In less than one year/ The building gets demolished.] Constantin Th. Botez, Constantin V. Ostap, *Cu Iașii mână-n mână* [Walking Hand in Hand with Iași] (Iași, Gaudeamus, 1996), vol I, 18-20.

²¹⁵ The great scope of destruction, as well as the struggles for preservation in the 1980s Iași would deserve a different chapter. Therefore, I did not attempt to summarize the decade in a different subchapter, as I did in the case of Cluj. Here the struggles have been more complex, and the losses should be carefully documented.

despite the implementation of urban redevelopment projects which purposefully erased the material traces of this past. Ultimately, the case of Iași is peculiar, yet also very common for the dilemmas of negotiating “valuable pasts”, modernization, and the materiality of the urban fabric in the context of (socialist) industrialization.

CONCLUSIONS

Romania's exceptionalism within the Eastern Bloc has often been acknowledged, given the attempts of the regime in Bucharest to pursue its own independent politics, juggling between the Soviet Bloc, the West, and the Third World. The narratives of the built heritage's large-scale destruction, culminating with Ceaușescu's megalomaniac plans for the rebuilding of central Bucharest, represent perhaps one of its best-known expressions.

In this thesis, I have attempted to approach the topic of urban reconstruction during socialism from a different perspective. Firstly, I advanced a methodological argument, stating that demolition should not be perceived as a goal in itself, but analyzed as part of policies of planning and preservation, paying attention to the changing conceptual, institutional and legal frameworks. Secondly, I argued that a top-down approach framed from the perspective of a "great modernization project" obstructs a deeper understanding of these policies and their fragmented character. Therefore, I proposed to zoom in and contextualize at the level of individual cases, as to observe how urban redevelopment projects were modeled at the intersection of local and central agendas of urban change.

In order to address the question of built heritage, the thesis focused on the rise of the historic town on the preservationist agenda in Romania, and the attempts of negotiating its integration into the modernizing agenda of the socialist state. My analysis focused on the institutional actors involved in this process – architect-planners and politicians on the one hand, and preservationists on the other – emphasizing the entanglement of power dynamics with different forms of scarcity: economic (financial constraints, land), human resources (from experts to skilled workers), built fabric (housing, but also heritage as a

scarce resource). I argued that, more than an ideologically-motivated struggle against a despised past reflected in radical schemes of urban redevelopment, the policies regarding the inherited built environment have been modeled by more complex factors. On the one hand, I considered the entanglement of specific economic and urban growth strategies, the reconfiguration of power hierarchies, and the creation of new regimes of social order. On the other hand, I argued that it is also a question of local legacies and policies, reflected in the ways in which decision-makers manipulated (sometimes ambiguously-formulated) official requirements in the context of rapidly industrializing cities, exploring the opportunities of a system that was simultaneously rigid and porous.

Architectural theorists in socialist Romania based the vision of radical urban transformation promoted by the Party on the claims of historical materialism, stating that the socialist mode of production would bring about a different type of urban environment. Arguably, this change would not imply additions to the inherited structure, but rather a process of radical reconstruction resulting in the rise of a qualitatively-different type of city. However, although radical urban change was presented as an ideological imperative, politicians and architects experienced difficulties in defining in more specific terms the form of the ‘new-type city’ [Ro: orașul de tip nou].¹ In propagandistic materials on urban transformation, such as the ones published in the Party’s newspapers, they rather resorted to a modernization rhetoric condemning urban inequality as a reflection of “the heavy legacy of the past”. The main lines of argumentation identified the backwardness of

¹ Here I second Heather DeHaan’s conclusions regarding city planning in provincial Stalinist Russia: “[...] neither the plan, nor the city planners had the power to bring socialism into being, not as an object or fixed thing. They could not offer a convincing vision of what socialism might be.” Heather D. DeHaan, *Stalinist City Planning. Professionals, Performance, and Power* (Toronto- Buffalo- London: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 163.

peripheral districts as an expression of class exploitation, and criticized the chaotic development seemingly caused by deficient planning. While such rhetoric devices were used in public discourses for justifying the need for radical reconstruction, the face-to-face encounters between professionals and the political elite were much more pragmatically-oriented. During joint meetings, politicians insisted on the fulfillment of economic planning indicators, and reiterated that functionalism and cost-effectiveness should be the main concerns guiding the architects' work. For example, in the field of housing construction, politicians enforced successive cuts in the production cost of a "conventional apartment" measuring about 30 square meters. Similarly, increasing restrictions were imposed upon road infrastructure development, the costs of which were considered an unnecessary spending.

The theory of (re)building socialist cities framed the modernization ethos within the ideological claims of Marxism-Leninism. While interiorizing the necessity of change as a dogma, the communists presented themselves as its agents and aimed bringing about a different type of society. However, they used the instruments of the old one, and put industrialization and urbanization at the center of this endeavor, investing these processes with powerful ideological connotations. As Per Ronnas proposed,

urbanization is not merely a consequence of the development of the non-agricultural industries, but is considered by the regime to have important intrinsic values. It is perceived to play a major role in the creation of a socialist society, based on the 'new socialist man', and the development of manufacturing is often seen as a mean to achieve these social transformations.²

Subordinated to the goals of industrialization, regional and urban planning were perceived as instruments to control and reorder people and territory. Many elements

² Per Ronnas, *Urbanization in Romania A Geography of Social and Economic Change since Independence* (Stockholm: Economic Research Institute, Stockholm School of Economics, 1984), 12.

identified by James Scott as defining the “high-modernist ideology” are common to the communists’ vision of social and spatial order: the optimistic belief in the power of science and technology to bring about material progress, the aim of reshaping society as more homogeneous and uniform, the goal of creating and controlling the “micro-order” of the local – all enforced by the authoritarian leadership with the joint contribution of state officials and experts. The claimed rationality of the plan, translated into economic indicators and precise geometric forms, was envisioned as enforcing top-down legibility upon the built messiness of the old city.³

While Marxism-Leninism was naturally invoked as the ideological basis of the new regime, in practice the theory was often diluted or distorted. The principle of social equality was turned into social utility, which was ultimately interpreted in terms of political relevance for the Party-state and its bureaucratic machinery. The construction of an increasing number of industrial units that employed thousands of workers put an immense pressure on the urban infrastructure and inevitably rendered existing towns obsolescent. In order to accommodate new industries and residents, the inherited built fabric had to be subjected to a gradual process of demolition and reconstruction. Nevertheless, the rhetoric of the welfare state, aimed at providing modern living standards for all its citizens, had its own ideological underpins. By controlling housing construction and distribution, the state held the instruments through which it could forge new social hierarchies and reorder the city. As previously argued,⁴ residents were located and relocated based on their position

³ James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 4-6, and Cp. 4 “The High-Modernist City: An Experiment and a Critique”.

⁴ Iván Szélenyi, *Urban Inequalities under State Socialism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983); Brigitte Le Normand, “The House that Socialism Built: Reform, Consumption, and Inequality in Postwar Yugoslavia,” in Paulina Bren and Mary Neuberger, eds., *Communism Unwrapped: Consumption in Cold War Eastern Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 351-373.

within the social hierarchies of the socialist state. As I have shown in this thesis, buildings were similarly divided into simplified categories – good, fair, or poor quality – according to which planners judged the opportunity of preservation, without considering other factors. By means of “pairing” people and housing, local administrations generated new spatial configurations of power hierarchies.

Economic efficiency was also essential to the decision-makers’ mindset. An expression of good planning, it was defined as the necessity to take “well-thought decisions”, weighting between available resources and existing constraints. Since available resources were always in short supply, economic efficiency tended to be interpreted as finding ways of managing between different forms of scarcity. Moreover, changes in architectural style and urban design were informed not only by aesthetic visions, but also by considering the savings that could be obtained in terms of land, infrastructure, or construction materials.

Urban development in socialist Romania can be divided into two large periods, largely coinciding with the two phases of industrial expansion. The temporal boundary can be traced at the end of the 1960s and early 1970s, a period of major institutional reorganizations. The first phase focused on the development of the existing key industrial sites and on capital accumulation through land collectivization. In order to support its transformative agenda, the state invested resources into creating bureaucratic infrastructure and networks of expert knowledge to a scale that had not existed previously. The regional Institutes for Urban Design founded in the late 1950s represented a concrete manifestation of these efforts. However important for the implementation of the socialist modernization project, the technical adviser was nevertheless envisioned not as an ally of the political

power, but as its subordinate. In the field of architecture and urban planning, the traditional models based on the family house and individual parcel initially proposed by architects in the 1950s were rejected in favor of mass housing estates designed according to the formulas of postwar modernism. The detached house was associated with the country's rurality that the Party regarded as a sign of backwardness and aimed at leaving behind. Given the limited resources invested in urban redevelopment, until the mid-1960s interventions tended to be punctual. Depending on the existing utilities, or alternatively, on the People's Councils' capacity of financing the extension of urban facilities, new housing ensembles were located either in the city center, or at the periphery. However, most projects remained relatively low-rise and usually consisted of four-story blocks. Moderation was the key word of the period, both in terms of urban growth and visual expression. Although a decisively modernist style was used for the new buildings, most structures were not envisioned as architectural landmarks, but rather as contextual additions to the built fabric. Even in the case of high-profile projects, such as the remodeling of central squares, the approach tended to remain austere and respectful towards the scale of the city.

Romania's urban development entered a different stage with the beginning of the second phase of industrialization, which followed the administrative reform in 1968 and the beginnings of the systematization program. Ceaușescu's coming to power in 1965 was accompanied by the reordering of power hierarchies at central and local level, further translated into a series of institutional changes implemented between 1969 and 1972. Experienced Party members were criticized for their "bureaucratic" approach devoid of ideological content and removed, while the bureaucratic apparatus was put under stronger political control. Urban planning, previously coordinated by a technocratic institution –

the State Committee for Construction, Architecture and Systematization – was reorganized as part of the local economy. Modernism fell under criticism emphasizing aesthetic monotony and the waste of resources. The new vision of urban development, promoted by Ceaușescu personally, insisted on vertical urban expansion, translated into an increase of building height, population density and occupation of urban land. Additionally, Ceaușescu's vision privileged the city center over the periphery, and imposed the civic center as the emblematic project of the period.

The two phases of urban development contain a paradox. The Romanian version of socialist modernism did not fully disregard the local, despite an official rhetoric that constantly complained about “the heavy legacy of the past”. In contrast, although the official rhetoric of the 1970s advocated a return to local traditions, its effects proved highly disruptive, producing discontinuities in the cityscapes and the considerable destruction of the built fabric. Beyond architectural visions and Ceaușescu's aesthetic prescriptions, the difference between the two stages can be better explained in terms of investment allocation. After two decades of capital accumulation through collectivization and the development of key industries, more capital supporting local development was made available starting with the early 1970s. This enabled local decision-makers to promote urban redevelopment schemes that responded more adequately to the ambitious goals of the regime, yet in turn produced major ruptures in terms of scale and style with the inherited cityscapes.

The more evenly distribution of economic investment throughout the country was paralleled by the administrative reform that expanded the number of major administrative units from 16 to 40, and upgraded the status of a significant number of towns. The new representative function had to be supported through investment in the construction of

industrial facilities and representative architectural ensembles. However, the challenge of accommodating accelerated urban growth was approached through politically-enforced rudimentary urban planning solutions: e.g., forbidding urban expansion in order to save on agricultural land, inserting new blocks on the green spaces of freshly-constructed modernist buildings, or restricting the expansion of the street network. While local policies followed certain common patterns, the specific form taken by urban redevelopment projects depended on the ways in which local leaders mediated between different types of pressure coming from the central or local actors.

Alongside ideology, centralized planning has been regarded as essentially differentiating Soviet-style socialist regimes from other modernizing projects. Through its central governmental agencies, the state formulated not only the legal and institutional frameworks that regulated urban development, but also established budgets, imposed economic indicators, decided upon rates of urban growth, and granted approval for urban redevelopment projects. Moreover, the all-knowledgeable high-political leadership aimed to impose its visions down to the slightest details, and formulated very concrete indications regarding the implementation of policies. During its meetings, the Party's Central Committee approached various aspects regarding urban development, from the form of cities, questions of architectural style, population density, and prefabrication, to such minor details as whether the windows of the new apartments should be decorated by default with curtains, or this issue should be left to the choice of citizens.⁵ Approaching such topics in political meetings at the highest hierarchical level was certainly envisioned as a form of

⁵ The question of whether the new apartments would be provided with curtains was asked by Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej at the Plenary of the Romanian Workers' Party in 1959. Miruna Stroe, *Locuirea între proiect și decizie politică. România 1954-1966* [Housing between Design Project and Political Decision. Romania 1954-1966] (București: Simetria, 2015), 85

penetrating control. For my argument, the criticism directed towards policy implementation at the local level, questioning the efficiency of centrally-formulated directives, is significant. Overall, the tone of the discussions suggests a state of conflict rather than consensus. The architects' status as experts was often disregarded, or perceived with distrust. As Ceaușescu clearly indicated soon after his arrival to power in 1965, the Soviet Union represented an outdated model; Romanian architects had to learn instead from the Western experience.⁶ Even during the 1970s, when “national architecture” was officially promoted, the most “progressive” international trends had to be taken into considerations. This vision had a stronger impact on urban planning strategies, as the low-rise development of Romanian towns was dismissed in favor of a decisively high-rise “Western model”. The requirement to “catch up” the developed economies and their urban standards implied, on the one hand, the disregard of the local conditions of urban development, and, on the other hand, a highly-simplified perception of the “Western city” development referring mainly at higher building densities and occupation of urban land, enforced through compulsory economic indicators. Rudimentary pragmatism emerged in response to the need of implementing ambitious goals in conditions of material scarcity and disregard of expert opinion.

By contrast, during the 1950s-1960s the main governmental agency coordinating urban development – the State Committee for Construction, Architecture and Systematization – clearly promoted a technocratic agenda. The Committee has been

⁶ At a meeting of the Central Committee of the RCP in 1966, Ceaușescu stated: “Let’s have a look at other cities in the world, as well. We cannot compare ourselves with the Soviet Union, because there the problem of land is irrelevant. For the countries where land matters, every square meter is important. We have to admit that we do not have a serious documentation. We’ve read two magazines- one from the Soviet Union, and one from France, and that’s all. [...] *We will only reach the level of Switzerland, the United States, or Sweden in 20-50 years. Let’s see how they are building.* We can have concepts, but we still need to be aware of our economic power.” (my emphasis) Ibid., 142-143.

instrumental not only in insuring that the design projects would fulfill the required technical standards, but also kept an eye on the local strategies of urban development. The head of the institution, architect Nicolae Bădescu, showed his support of the preservationist agenda, and often took personal initiative in endorsing monument protection at the local level. Actually, the collaboration was facilitated by the fact that the Department for Historic Monuments itself was part of the Committee. The state was therefore not a monolith, but a sum of agencies promoting sometimes considerably divergent agendas.

One of the main arguments I propose in this thesis is that, given the lack of resources made available for urban development, the state also promoted “preservationist” measures, for example by discouraging demolition and supporting, at least at rhetorical level, building maintenance. In this regard as well, the 1970s marked a breaking moment, as the focus of the state “preservationist” concerns shifted from buildings towards land. More precisely, the construction of modernist districts at the periphery, following the “towers in the park” principle, was considered as generating a waste of land. By means of legislative measures constraining horizontal urban expansion, central authorities implied that the new built structures of the socialist city should physically replace the old ones.

At the local level, the picture appeared as highly fragmented. Evidence from the People’s Councils’ archives reveals the small struggles, negotiations and compromises embedded into the local actors’ everyday interactions. Despite the existence of an officially-approved systematization plan regulating the transformation of the built environment, its provisions conflicted sometimes with the interests of central and local actors. Industrial enterprises with different profiles competed for land and workforce, factory managers took initiative in providing accommodation for their workers without

consulting the local administration, local architects contested plans made in Bucharest, while the implementation of certain centrally-formulated policies, such as densification, was met with widespread disagreement. In their everyday activity, the municipal authorities attempted making the local legible, yet this legibility had little to do with the use of quantitative data and scientific planning methods. It is not by surprise that in both Cluj and Iași, the heads of the local administration could not be provided with detailed statistics regarding the number of inhabitants and buildings. Instead, the offices within the People's Councils developed their own work strategies aimed at implementing centrally-devised policies while creating local regimes of urban order. In establishing goals for urban development, central authorities attempted at simultaneously achieving control and efficiency. However, describing expectations in terms of quantitative indicators (*what, how much*) left enough room for maneuvering the *how* at the local level. Depending on their agendas, local planners and central bodies in charge with the approval of projects attempted to manipulate the indicators, as well as the concepts attached to them. For example, the architects had to identify creative ways of meeting the restrictive demolition parameters in order to have their projects approved, or interpret the concept of 'apartment' by proposing a variety of designs differing in size and quality. Virtually all the actors involved in the design, approval and production process attempted at manipulating the elasticity and rigidity of the system in order to adjust the project to their own work agendas. In the 1970s, when systematization plans had to be approved by Ceaușescu personally, the practice of implementation through interpretation seemed to have been used with regularity – different actors attempted to redefine Ceaușescu's official and unofficial recommendations in ways that would suit their own purposes. Although these goals could display significant

similarities with the ones formulated by the high political leadership, they were however more pragmatically anchored in local realities.

A comparative perspective with postwar urban redevelopment policies in the West indicates significant diachronic developments. The 1950s and part of the 1960s have been characterized by economic growth, the rise of modernism and confidence in technological progress. It was also a period of urban renewal, major investment in the development of infrastructure, and the modernization of city centers to fit commercial and business interests. This timeframe coincided with slow and moderate urban growth in Romania, where most economic resources were directed towards the development of key industrial sites. In the 1970s, when in the West de-industrialization started to affect local economies and preservation was perceived as an alternative strategy stimulating urban growth, the Romanian state was finally able to channel more investment towards urban redevelopment. Relying on a “Western model” defined mostly in terms of high urban densities, the approach proved highly disruptive towards the existing fabric, leading to extensive demolition. While the historic city gained more prominence on the Western urban planning agenda as an alternative solution aimed at fostering growth through the promotion of consumption, this solution did not seem attractive for countries such as Romania, where industrialization was perceived as the only economically-viable option for development.

Nevertheless, dismissing the historic city as a failure in the context of Romanian socialist planning would disregard the efforts of preservationists who attempted to carve out a space for their agenda within the broader goal of urban modernization. The understanding of built heritage in Romania was also redefined through the ideological lenses of the new regime. In the 1950s, a couple of politically-engaged preservationists,

such as Petre Constantinescu-Iași and Gheorghe Curinschi, published articles in which they restated the main arguments of the socialist heritage discourse. They emphasized that the change of property regimes had brought many monuments under socialist ownership, granting access for the masses to architectural landmarks previously belonging to high classes. In addition, the discursive appropriation of monuments under the new political regime was facilitated by shifting the focus from beneficiaries to producers of heritage. The authors of great artworks, including major architectural landmarks such as medieval churches or castles, were no longer identified as great masters, but rather as unknown craftsmen emerging from the masses. Last, but not least, it was argued that monument protection would benefit from better conditions under socialism, since the centralized state owned the human and financial resources necessary to insure a proper management of heritage objects. Overall, the socialist heritage discourse avoided revolutionary tones requiring the destruction of materialities produced by the ancient regime. Instead, it proposed that old buildings would be appropriated and re-functionalized, thus receiving the necessary “socialist content”.

Despite this ideologically-coherent program, preservationists employed by the Department for Historic Monuments tended to work with categories used in the international practice, maintaining a technical approach to the field. Sometimes, they purposefully framed their arguments from an ideological perspective and attempted to “speak Bolshevik” as to support their point of view in conflicting situations. However, for most of the 1950s and 1960s, the heritage field managed to maintain a certain autonomy from political interference. Only in the mid-1970s did the higher political leadership express direct interest in defining heritage categories, under the sudden realization that

moveable heritage objects represented in fact commodities with monetary value – although such a definition would not be expressed officially. As a side effect, considerable less political interest was directed towards the preservation of built heritage, the value of which was defined only in relation to its capacity to illustrate the great national narratives. The official promotion of such a narrow definition justified a highly selective approach privileging medieval monuments, while ignoring built structures of more recent date, considered unworthy of interest from a political point of view.

Comparisons to other socialist countries would only emphasize the poverty of the Romanian experience. In Poland, surveys of historic cities had already been undertaken during the interwar period, while in Czechoslovakia an institute for the restoration of old towns existed since the 1950s. By contrast, the preservationist movement in Romania lacked a consistent tradition, was less organized and less visible on the public agenda. Well into the interwar period, the activity of the specialized commission prioritized (medieval) religious architecture, considered the most representative embodiment of national heritage. Moreover, poorly-funded municipalities owned little resources to invest in monument protection, especially when such an action would involve expropriation.

During state socialism, a better-organized and more technically-oriented Department for Historic Monuments was dominated by architects. Although its activity still focused to a large extent on the restoration of traditional (medieval) monuments, the interest in civil architecture and the heritage value of old towns became more prominent in response to radical projects of urban modernization promoted by the communist leadership. Beginning with the mid-1960s, the Romanian preservationists started to approach more systematically the concept of historic city, and define its meaning in relation to different

urban typologies. The shift was inspired by the redefinition of historic monument following the Venice Charter in 1964, and the consequent emphasis on the heritage value of urban ensembles. From 1964 to 1977, projects of urban preservation were drawn for approximately thirty cities and towns, while a similar number of conservation areas were delimited following negotiations with local administrations. The projects focused initially on Transylvanian towns- more precisely on the medieval core of towns founded by German colonists in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, such as Braşov and Sibiu in the south of the region. The historicity of these towns was clearly visible in their compact form, regular street network and buildings with recognized architectural styles, and could be relatively easily documented. Although the concept of historic town was not legally defined as a separate category of built heritage, the value of these examples was recognized in that a great portion of the local vernacular was listed in 1955 together with the major monuments.

The real challenge for the Romanian experts were the towns in Wallachia and Moldova regions, lacking visible markers of historicity, except for the rather obvious examples of religious architecture. In these cases, the area of the historic center consisted of an irregular street network of pre-modern origin and a building stock of relatively low scale and recent date (late nineteenth century). Unlike Transylvanian towns, the historical core of which had been planned and delimited by medieval walls, the towns in Moldova and Wallachia, called “târguri” (market-towns) had developed organically without the constraints of fortifications. Specialized publications demonstrate that the preservationists’ vision was informed by references to the Western art history canon – in particular Italy, Germany and France – which constituted the lenses through which the expert opinion regarded historic monuments in Romania. Therefore, the strongest preservationist agenda

in Transylvania would be motivated not only by regional legacies, but also by an expert view that identified the medieval fabric of Transylvanian old towns as something worth of preservation given its similarity with examples of internationally-recognized value.

Initially, the preservationists themselves expressed reluctance towards engaging with forms of ‘banal heritage’, such as the nineteenth century vernacular, which they did not consider of significant historical or aesthetic relevance. However, the stylistic extension of the concept of monument, meant to include local vernacular and previously-despised styles such as eclecticism allowed Romanian preservationists to claim heritage value for larger portions of the inherited built fabric. It is important to mention that these initiatives were not coordinated at national level, rather resulting from the fragmented efforts of individual experts. Therefore, in many cases the arguments in favor of preservation were formulated with delay, and only in response to announced demolition.

The existing institutional and legislative framework constrained the involvement of the Department for Historic Monuments in problems of urban redevelopment. The first piece of legislation regulating monument protection in socialist Romania was promulgated only in 1955, in response to the destructions that followed the nationalization of private property. The data for the first national-level inventory was collected in rush, mostly with the support of individuals which did not qualify as heritage experts. Therefore, the Bucharest-based commission compiling the final list left aside about two thirds of the proposals, as their historical and/or artistic value was insufficiently documented. In the context of the 1950s, characterized by institutional fragmentation, political repression, and economic austerity, the initiators of the project perceived the promulgation of the heritage legislation as a success, and hoped that it would ensure at least a minimum degree of

protection for monuments. Local administration was made responsible for the safeguarding, preservation, and restoration of historic monuments, while the Bucharest-based Department would act as an advisory body supervising this activity. Initiatives of reorganizing the institution by coopting political decision-makers alongside experts failed, while the new list of historic monuments completed in the 1960s remained trapped between levels of bureaucratic approval and was never promulgated. In the end, a re-organization did occur following the dissolution of the State Committee for Architecture, yet it diminished the institutional authority of the Department by subordinating it to a heavily politicized Committee for Socialist Culture and Education. In 1969, the preservationists had resisted the proposal to integrate their Department within the committee for local economy, fearing perhaps that their expertise would not be seriously considered given the lack of political influence. Two shortcomings in the preservationists' activity can be identified in this particular historical context: firstly, the ambiguous definition of the built heritage between cultural and economic value, and secondly, the difficulty of reaching down to local administrations and influencing their policies in the absence of any stronger legal or institutional basis.

The planners' perspective remained anchored in a very narrow understanding of economic value, which also privileged the superiority of the new over the old. In practice, plans for the revitalization and restoration of centrally-located old districts rarely met the support of local administrators. Economic considerations played a significant role. As one UNESCO report noted,

Conservation takes a disproportionate amount of time, money, and administrative and political negotiation as compared with that normally demanded by administration, planning and building. It is quicker, politically more dramatic, and often cheaper to bulldoze, or build on open fields. Very clear justification is necessary, *particularly in developing countries*

where available resources are usually scarcer [my emphasis], and the scramble for development on almost any terms tends to sweep all other considerations aside.⁷

In my opinion, the idea of urban restoration seemed unappealing not just because of the costs, but mostly because it would not bring any considerable benefits in terms of urban image or political capital. The ‘banality’ of the nineteenth century vernacular in particular was of little use for the representative purposes of the regime. At best, pieces of a sanitized and adequately shaped historical landscape could be tolerated as long as they could either contribute to the regime’s sense of pride and legitimacy, or function as an element of urban beautification. In contrast, demolition allowed for the relocation of people and the creation of new social hierarchies, alongside the creation of a modern urban image. Investing in restoration of old buildings just for the sake of improving the tenants’ living standards made little sense in a system where most resources were scarce and distributed according to a hierarchy of privileges.

Although the historic city was never turned into an area protected through national-level legislation, the Department for Historic Monuments’ approval was necessary for projects involving individual monuments. Especially in the 1970s, when pressures for redevelopment brought numerous projects on the table of the Department’s advisory board, the preservationists used this opportunity and became particularly active in redefining and defending urban and architectural heritage. The members of the Department often engaged in exhausting negotiations with local architects, planners, and politicians, trying to expand the limits of their institutional power. In other words, the preservationists attempted to make the bureaucratic machinery of the socialist state work in their favor and articulate a

⁷ UNESCO, *The Conservation of Cities* (Croom Helm London: The UNESCO Press Paris, 1975), 29.

discourse that would guarantee political support for the projects they passionately promoted.

However, these efforts were frustrated by the insufficient human, financial and institutional resources at the Department's disposal. During the 1970s, its structure was weakened through successive reorganizations and internal conflicts. The legislation for national cultural heritage promulgated in 1974 contributed to the further disregard of built heritage by putting moveable cultural goods at the center of political interest. Finally, the DHM's reorganization enforced at the end of 1977 led to the dismissal of most experts and specialized workers.

The unfolding of the events contradicts one of the main assumption of politically-engaged preservationists, which claimed that the centralized character of the state would offer a better perspective for monument protection in comparison to capitalist countries, while also appropriating major architectural landmarks for the benefit of the masses. The state was not a unitary actor, but consisted out of a myriad institutions and agencies who managed their own budgets, and tended to have other priorities rather than protecting monuments, especially when this implied financial investment. Secondly, private property did not disappear altogether. As some case studies discussed in this thesis show, many listed buildings remained in fact into private hands, and had to be expropriated before being turned into heritage objects. Alternatively, nationalized buildings could still be occupied by different state agencies or rented to tenants, which made their management equally complicated. While it is true, however, that many major monuments were nationalized and given a cultural destination that made them more accessible to the public, the extent to which the occupants also insured a proper maintenance remains questionable.

The comparative analysis of the two case studies reveals surprisingly similar stories for the 1950s and the 1960s, a period when modernism and heritage coexisted, if not always peacefully, then at least harmoniously. The design of centrally-located projects was modern in form, yet also austere and well-integrated within the scale of the city. When reconstructing Horea Street in Cluj, the architects proceeded to a house-by-house examination, opting for the demolition of individual dwellings and the preservation of more solid structures. In 1960 Iași, local architects contested a Bucharest-produced systematization plan that aimed at restructuring the pre-modern street network, and disregarded major monuments. Even more, they perceived the “towers in the park” modernist districts of the 1960s as continuing a type of development specific to the city, consisting of built structures displayed in generous green spaces. Archival documents demonstrate that local architects tended to favor urban development at moderate pace, and expressed distress when confronted with top-down political pressures for radical increases in the number of apartments units. The decision from 1962, establishing that regional capital cities such as Cluj and Iași would double their population within 15-20 years to reach 300,000 inhabitants, was resented as a real shock. Professionals questioned the sustainability of the approach, and became frustrated with the increasing infringement of the political into their work. The new urban model promoted in the 1970 – the compact city – left little place for low-rise buildings and contextual conformity. In Cluj, several high-rise infillings were inserted into the historic center, while in Iași the municipality initiated the reconstruction of two of the main boulevards in the historic area.

A specific interest for monument protection can be detected in both cities. Major monuments – mostly churches or other examples of medieval architecture – were restored

with the support of the Department for Historic Monuments. In Cluj, this interest was facilitated by the activity of a local committee of specialists, continuing a local preservationist tradition. Moreover, the heritage value of the area formerly delimited by fortifications was emphasized in the systematization plan as ‘historic center’. By contrast, the planners in Iași regarded the historic area simply in terms of urban geography, identifying it as ‘central area’.

The maintenance of the old building stock, which still represented a concern of the municipality until the late 1960s, was complicated by overcrowded apartments, scarce resources, and the entanglement with the secondary economy. State-funded building maintenance, in theory a right, became one privilege enjoyed by well-connected citizens. Municipal authorities continued to divide buildings into simplified categories, and paired them with corresponding social categories. The buildings in an advanced state of degradation tended to be ignored by the Office for Housing Administration not just because they were considered “helpless cases” that would consume substantial resources for renovation, but also because they were inhabited by citizens positioned lower in the social hierarchies.

In early 1970s Iași, the Department for Historic Monuments’ initiatives to reconsider the value of local vernacular and establish conservation areas have proved successful only to a limited extent. Despite the agreements initially established by preservationists and the local authorities, the effects of the earthquake in March 1977 offered the opportunity for large scale clearance of grounds of claimed irreparable damages.

The two case studies analyzed in the Chapters 4 and 5, but also the smaller examples discussed in Chapter 3, reveal that in socialist Romania the preservation of the old town was not pursued as a coherent state policy. Alternatively, the urban redevelopment of central areas took the form of piecemeal projects rather than comprehensive actions of reconstruction. The survival of old areas and buildings was due to a multiplicity of factors. Firstly, preservationist efforts definitely played a role in this process. Even though the projects for urban revitalization compiled between 1966 and 1977 were implemented only to a little extent, they constituted a basis that allowed preservationists to contest plans for the clearance of historic areas. However, the rapid pace of development, combined with the fragmented preservationist actions did not result in a significant change of attitude in the perception of the old town. Secondly, the politics of scarcity determined specific state-promoted ‘preservationist’ measures. Demolition indicators, which considered not only the built surface, but also the number of people to be relocated, made the erasure of buildings higher than ground floor problematic. In many cases, the constraints posed by economic indicators had a stronger impact than any considerations regarding cultural or aesthetic value. Nevertheless, the People’s Councils showed interest towards the city’s built heritage as long as it contributed to urban beautification. Typically, the façades of centrally-located buildings would be brushed up in preparation of official holidays or visits. However, more substantial actions of building consolidation were rarely performed. Moreover, neglect and failure to implement redevelopment plans also played a role in the survival of old built structures.

My research has also pointed out that visions of urban transformation were informed by the persistence of mental images defining the valuable elements of the

cityscape. In Cluj, local architects got actively engaged in documenting the built values of the old town, while in the 1980s, they arguably responded to the pressures of constructing a centrally-located civic center by providing central authorities with designs of an unsatisfying quality. Despite demolition works and the reconstruction of its central boulevards in the 1980s, Iași was still considered a “city of monuments”. One architect I interviewed clearly stated no major monuments have been demolished in Iași. Certainly, he added, many buildings in the central area have been erased, yet they did not display any historical or aesthetic value. At conceptual level, the preservationist agenda sketched in the 1960s and the 1970s was further developed during the 1980s, despite (or perhaps due to) the major scale of demolition. Ultimately, after the re-institutionalization of preservation in the 1990s, the value of centrally-located historic districts was re-stated as self-evident, while demolition works were publicly denounced as one of the many abuses of the communist regime.

Despite the relatively broad scope of this thesis, in which I combined central and local perspectives on preservation and planning, many aspects still remain to be clarified by future research. I would indicate two main directions: one focusing on the local, and the other one aiming towards the global. Municipal policies represent a fruitful research field, which has not been adequately explored in Romania’s case, as the writing of urban history is still in its incipient phase. National narratives, serving the needs of a centralized state in search of historical legitimacy, have paid little attention to the rich diversity of the local. More than a parochial intellectual effort, the investigation of the local policies, I suggest, would offer considerable evidence for better understanding center-periphery relations, as well as Romania’s experience of modernization. Although a relatively small portion of

archival funds on the socialist period have been made available for research, their study offers insightful evidence for mapping the local agencies of state power. These sources offer the complementary bottom-up perspective for analyzing the efforts of building socialism by exploring the intersections of state-promoted mobilization efforts with local legacies. In what concerns preservation, several aspects I could not approach in my research would deserve further attention. I am referring in particular to questions of identity and heritage, as well as to preservationist initiatives outside the state framework- the engagement of local intellectuals, the formulation of alternative preservationist agendas, as well as actions of resistance and protest against demolition. Beyond the city center, it would be useful to document the strategies applied in the demolition and reconstruction of the city's traditional neighborhoods, the reactions of local communities, and the extent to which these actions were accompanied by forms of resistance and protest.⁸

Alternatively, further research should be directed towards the global, in order to map international transfers and exchanges. Although there has been some interest in documenting Romanian architects' work in Third World countries,⁹ the experience of "borrowing from the West" has been investigated to a lesser extent. Despite the constraints in participating in international exchange programs, professionals in Romania occasionally enjoyed the opportunity to travel abroad, or receive the visit of foreign delegations. In the

⁸ Instances of local resistance against construction projects aimed at transforming the village of Feldioara, next to Braşov, into a small town were documented in the 1980s by Steven L. Sampson, *National Integration through Socialist Planning. An Anthropological Study of a Romanian New Town* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1984). An example of research documenting the history of Cluj's 'semi-rural' neighborhoods published in the 1980s: László Pillich, László Vetesi, Zoltán Vincze, "A kolozsvári magyar hóstáti közösség népesedési és szerkezeti alakulása (1899–1980) [The Demographic and Structural Evolution of the Hungarian Hóstát Community in Cluj (1899-1980)]", in Péter Egyed (ed), *Változó valóság* [Changing Reality] (Bukarest: Kriterion, 1984), 54-111.

⁹ Dana Vais, "Exporting Hard Modernity: Construction Projects from Ceauşescu's Romania in the 'Third World,'" *The Journal of Architecture* 17.3 (2012): 433-451.

field of monument preservation, several ICOMOS meetings were organized in socialist countries, thus facilitating professional contacts across Cold War divisions.¹⁰ Also, as some of my interviewees clearly indicated, observations made by foreign guests visiting cities in Romania have influenced their perception regarding the value of urban heritage.¹¹ The participation of Romanian experts in transnational networks of knowledge production, and their impact on national and local-level policies are still to be investigated.

A period I purposefully left aside because of the different economic and institutional context – the 1980s – would also deserve further consideration, especially in cases other than Bucharest. The decade is generally known for the heavy economic austerity and the country's increasing isolation from the international community. In terms of planning and preservation, the year 1977 was seen by many as the crucial moment determining the type of radical redevelopment pursued by the regime in the following decade. The earthquake in March 1977, followed by the radical reorganization of the DHM in December had a strong impact on the preservationist activity. Following plans established already in the 1960s, urban reconstruction focused more specifically on central areas, implying the demolition of historic districts. Unlike the previous decades, when the preservationist activity was centralized and thus coordinated by the Bucharest-based experts, during the 1980s the cause was taken over by local offices for national cultural

¹⁰ ICOMOS was founded in 1965 in Warsaw. Miles Glenneding, *The Conservation Movement. A History of Architectural Preservation; Antiquity to Modern* (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), 282. The fifth Assembly was organized in Moscow in 1978, and the seventh in Rostock (GDR). <http://www.icomos.org/en/about-icomos/governance/general-information-about-the-general-assembly/list-of-general-assemblies>, last accessed September 27, 2016.

¹¹ To give just an example, Eugenia Greceanu mentioned how her disregard for the nineteenth century architecture was challenged by a German architect who visited Bucharest in the 1970s. Arguably, Greceanu was embarrassed that she could not show her guest truly “historical” architecture. However, her guest was arguably impressed by the compact character of Bucharest's late nineteenth century districts, and suggested that the preservationists in Romania should pay more attention to their study and valorization. Interview with architect Eugenia Greceanu, București, October 20, 2012.

heritage and activists- some of them, former employees of the Department. In spite of the scale of demolition, architects working for the local-level offices continued to document heritage values, propose buildings for listing, and even delimit protected areas for conservation.

The space of these concluding remarks is too short for properly addressing the legacy of socialist planning for contemporary Romanian cities.¹² The considerable impact of the socialist policies of industrialization and urbanization on the built fabric of towns in Romania cannot be overlooked. The rate of urbanization increased from 20% in the interwar period to 50% in 1989, bringing a total increase of 5.68 million inhabitants.¹³ As Giurescu pointed out, extensive parts of the existing cities have been reconstructed in a comprehensive manner in the form of relatively compact and unitary “communist districts”. The shortcomings of the socialist urban planning policies of building “more, cheaper and faster” are also rather obvious: utilitarian architecture of questionable aesthetic and environmental value, the cold dominance of the concrete, the lack of green areas and public spaces, as well as the poor infrastructure. Many urban planning issues, such as the provision of community spaces or traffic problems, have been treated in a superficial manner, as planners were constrained to focus on the fulfillment of quantitative economic indicators rather than improving the quality of life. City centers were either radically reconstructed, or altered through the implementation of fragmentary projects. To any

¹² Such analyses have been made especially regarding housing, as the socialist housing estates represent in quantitative terms the most peculiar legacy of urban planning before 1989. In nowadays Cluj, 80% of the population lives in such apartments. See Dana Vais, “On the Margins of Urban Europe: Housing Policies in a Secondary City (Cluj, Romania),” *Urban Research and Practice* 2.1 (2009): 94-96.

¹³ Ronnas, *Urbanization in Romania*, 192-194.

extent, the inconsistent policies resulted in a mixture of equally poorly maintained old and new architecture.

At a different level, the rapid pace of change combined with the shock of large-scale demolition had a strong impact on the local memory. As a reaction to the gradual erasure of the material traces of the old town, both amateur and professional historians have engaged in a more systematic documentation of the local past.¹⁴ In recent years, numerous civic initiatives try to recuperate local memory by promoting heritage from below. Using the social media, these initiatives focus on collecting and displaying images from official and private collections, which portray the city before, during, and after the socialist transformation.¹⁵ The inhabitants are invited to share their memories and associations with different places and buildings in an exercise of unstructured exploration of the lived past. More than nostalgia, this gesture documents the strong attachment ties of the inhabitants towards their city, and shows how they gradually appropriated its fragmented landscapes, making both the old and the new be “theirs”.

Meanwhile, the official approach to heritage policies has been dramatically reversed. Given the devastating effects of de-industrialization, municipalities in Romania

¹⁴ Constantin Th. Botez, Constantin Ostap, Ion Mitican, *Cu Iașii mână-n mână* [Walking Hand in Hand with Iași] (Iași: Gaudeamus, 1996-1997), 2 vol.; Ion Mitican, *Din Târgul Cucului în Piața Unirii: itinerar sentimental* [From Târgul Cucului to the Union Square: a Sentimental Itinerary] (Iași: Tehnopress, 2000), Ion Mitican, *Evreii din Târgul Cucului... de altădată: câteva aduceri aminte* [The Jews from the Old Târgul Cucului: Some Recollections] (Iași: Tehnopress, 2005). A retired engineer, Ion Mitican started since the 1980s to collect documentation on the local history, while also organizing guided tours. He published extensively in the local press, and made documentary films for the local television channel. Professional historians also engaged in a careful examination of the local past. Dan Bădărau and Ioan Caproșu, *Iașii vechilor zidiri: până la 1821* [The Old Buildings of Iași: until 1821] (Iași: Junimea, 1974). More recently: Ioan Caproșu, Petronel Zahariuc, *Documente privitoare la istoria orașului Iași* [Documents regarding the History of Iași] (Iași: Dosoftei, 1999-2001), 5 vol.

¹⁵ Relevant examples are Facebook groups such as “Iași, fotografii vechi” [Iași, Old Photos], “Cartierul Uranus” [The Uranus District], “Vechiul Cluj” [The Old Cluj], “Vasluiul comunist” [Communist Vaslui]. These pages are administrated by architects, visual artists and historians, and usually provide accurate historical information.

also started to promote built heritage as a resource for economic growth, hoping that it would contribute to the creation of an urban image making the city more appealing for investors. However, the policies in this direction tended to remain inconsistent. The management of built heritage was further complicated by the restitutions laws and the uncertain property status of many historical buildings.¹⁶ Restoration works performed with the financial support of municipalities tend to be rather superficial, while the heritage initiatives from above and below rarely seem to find a common denominator. The lack of administrative vision, combined with uncertainties regarding the property status of many buildings and poor maintenance, led to the continuous degradation of much of the historical built environment. Despite some examples of good practice, the combined effect of real estate market, material scarcity and lack of control over building construction continue impacting negatively the survival of the built heritage in Romania.

Going back to the question of Romania's exceptionalism formulated in the opening of these concluding remarks, I argue that it should be more properly addressed in terms overlapping frameworks, that created forms of specificity. It is a story about industrialization, modernization, the functionalist city, and overcoming urban backwardness. It is also a story about the power of ideology to mobilize people and resources in order to forge material development. In many regards, the narratives I described in this thesis resonate with arguments that have been previously advanced in relation to the socialist city: the fragmentation of power among various governmental agencies, the shortcomings of the local administration in controlling urban development,

¹⁶ Architect Vasile Mitrea claimed that more historic buildings have been altered or demolished in Cluj since 1990, than during the period 1945-1989. Interview with architect Vasile Mitrea, November 27, 2012, Cluj-Napoca.

the reproduction of spatial and social inequality, the persistence of local legacies, the pragmatism in decision-making. In short, great visions were matched by great constraints. However, as any project of modernization, it has its own specificities, resulting from the ways in which the broadly-formulated goals overlapped with local conditions and historical legacies. Romania's specific approach to urban development has been influenced by its two-phased industrialization policy and the disregard of consumption, the regional distribution of investment, as well as the rejection of technocratic pragmatism in favor of more rudimentary methods. It was also marked by a specific understanding of ideology and political control, culminating with Ceaușescu's personality cult. The approach to heritage policies was determined, on the one hand, by particular legacies (e.g., the regional-based urban typologies, local traditions, and the complexities of the heritage field), and on the other hand, by particular configurations of power. To be sure, I argued that one should not refer mainly to a "fragile heritage mentality", but rather to a fragile institutional and legal organization in the field, complicating the integration of the historic city into urban planning agendas. For the planners, the fragmented nature of the inherited urban landscapes did not offer compelling arguments either for a cultural interpretation i.e. the integration of built heritage within nation- and state-building narratives, nor for its exploitation as an economic resource. Ultimately, even if the state attempted to centrally-coordinate industrialization and urbanization, the approaches to urban redevelopment were local and contextual, depending on priorities, opportunities, and constraints.

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INTERVIEWS

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