Bucharest: Towards a Rethinking of the Urban Heritage

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Abstract
Bucharest is an 'exotic' city at the juxtaposition of the Oriental world and the Central-Eastern influences. Its fascinating urban tissue is composed out of palimpsest-like layers that reveal an almost organic evolution of the city. From Byzantine sediments to Modernist compositions, from Postmodern interventions to contemporary 'small gestures' on urban heritage, Bucharest can be read in many keys. Its views continuously reveal hidden 'heritage treasures' and mysterious points of view in the urban composition. This five-senses journey has been described in the writings of many foreign visitors of the city along its history. One of the most fascinating though, is through the words and croquis of Le Corbusier (then Charles Jeanneret) in his '*Voyage vers l'Orient*' of 1911. Bucharest's diversity inspired him in his future Modernist compositions. The urban heritage of Bucharest has always been challenged by politics. It has been the bourgeois identity that needed to be hidden by the Communist ideology through urban operations. It is at the same time the forgotten 19th Century and inter-war monument, caught in a 'collection of litigious situations'. It is exposed to the debates between those who try to save and reactivate it and those who see it as an obstacle for the Modern City development. Therefore, Bucharest has a vital need to envision a long-term scenario to harmonise the Urban Heritage and the Modern City. This article's hypothesis proposes the integration of Bucharest heritage as an asset in a dynamic future network by rethinking Urban Policies.

Keywords: palimpsest, Orient, Occident, heritage, permeable limits, modern network, dynamic city

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01. Modern Bucharest's key traits of urban heritage in one image: a coexistence of contrasts, collisions, palimpsest like tissue. "*Bukarest: Straße Rosetti, Lincoln Laden und Bauer / 1937*", photography by Willy Pragher, *Staatsarchiv Freiburg* W 134 Nr. 012238, *Landesarchiv Baden-Württemberg*

Rethinking the urban heritage - to reassess, to reconsider from an adapted perspective to the times, changes and challenges ahead, a refreshed view, a matter of human geography understanding and its new values, while guarding the essence.

Modern - according to Webster's Dictionary: new, contemporary, present-day, up-to-date, modernised, modernistic, 20th Century, streamlined, of our time; recent, current, contemporaneous, in vogue, modish, fashionable, in contrast with antique.

Modern Bucharest - characterised by times of synchronisation and desynchronisation with the Western and the Eastern Europe. It refers to four stages in the Modern evolution of the city -1831 to 1906, 1906 to 1930's, 1947 to 1989s and 1989 to present time. Each stage has either a certain amount of modernisation through urban regulations, Modernist language import or interpretation, as well as modern symptoms.

Introduction

Why should one consider the **urban heritage** an asset for the future city ?

Because it is a mark of cultural **identity**. Because it contains **archetypes** of architecture, an 'archive' of its civilisation history, as well as stories of *vies privees*. Therefore it has not only a cognitive role, but an educational one. Urbanity and atmosphere can be best read within these heritage protected areas that are genuine 'immersive experiences'. Because over time, it becomes the **image of the city** in the collective mind of its inhabitants and visitors.

Urban Heritage and the Modern City: possible relationships

By defining the notion of **urban heritage** throughout time we can understand its key importance in the future of a capital city: the case of Bucharest.

A form of heritage preservation dates back to the Roman Empire age, when *Augustus, Hadrian* or *Maioranus* were concerned with the protection of Greek architectural **archetypes**, evolving towards the idea of 'monument as model' in Renaissance and the importance of its research and 'archeological' understanding. The 17th Century introduces the term 'historic monument' and the French Revolution the educational and cognitive role of heritage buildings.

A theoretical approach though starts in the 19th Century, through the writings of John Ruskin, Camillo Sitte, Patrick Geddes or Gustavo Giovannoni, continuing with the "Athens Charter for the Restoration of Historic Monuments" and later the UNESCO and ICOMOS recommendations (1956 - present time).

The first significant relationship between the "**Urban Heritage** and the **Modern City**" is marked by discontinuity of heritage doctrine power during the **Modernist** age. Giovannoni stated in his 1913 "*Vecchie città ed edilizia nuova*" article, that there is a conflict between 'Life and History' in a city's evolution beginning in the 19th Century, due to the **Modernists**. The **Modern** life introduced by the Industrial Revolution challenge the old cities (and especially the capital cities) in many ways:

crisis of dwellings, circulations, hygiene, density, ideology, etc. Therefore, the principles of 1931 "Athens Charter for the Restoration of Historic Monuments" based on Giovannoni's ideas to integrate the urban heritage into the urban planning and design, were rejected by the **Modernists** through CIAM[1] principles and project proposals, such as Le Corbusier's *Plan Voisin* of 1925. Urban operations and the architectural **modern** language is therefore a statement for new values and the **modern** society of the future.

Le Corbusier's "Towards and Architecture" book of 1923 - the **Modern** architectural treatise - speaks of the architect-engineer, of competitive architectural market analogue to the car production one, of an entire 'mechanical menagerie'[2] to be used as metaphor in the architectural discourse: the car, the airplane, the transatlantic, the train. Even the wide spreading of his ideas is possible through the means of new technologies and devices - the print, radio, mass-media, international exhibitions[3] and conferences both in the European cultural space as well as in the USA and South America. These ideas are echoed[4] in Norman Bel Geddes's book entitled "Horizons", 1932, as well as in his project for General Motors at the New York World Fair - "Futurama - I Have Seen the Future", 1939.

Even the 'daring' photographic analogy of the car with the Parthenon, in the pages of "Toward and Architecture" can be read not only as a safe reference for the new language, a need for engineering precision and competition, but simultaneously as a manifesto for rethinking the relationship with heritage. To learn from its model, yet to create something new.
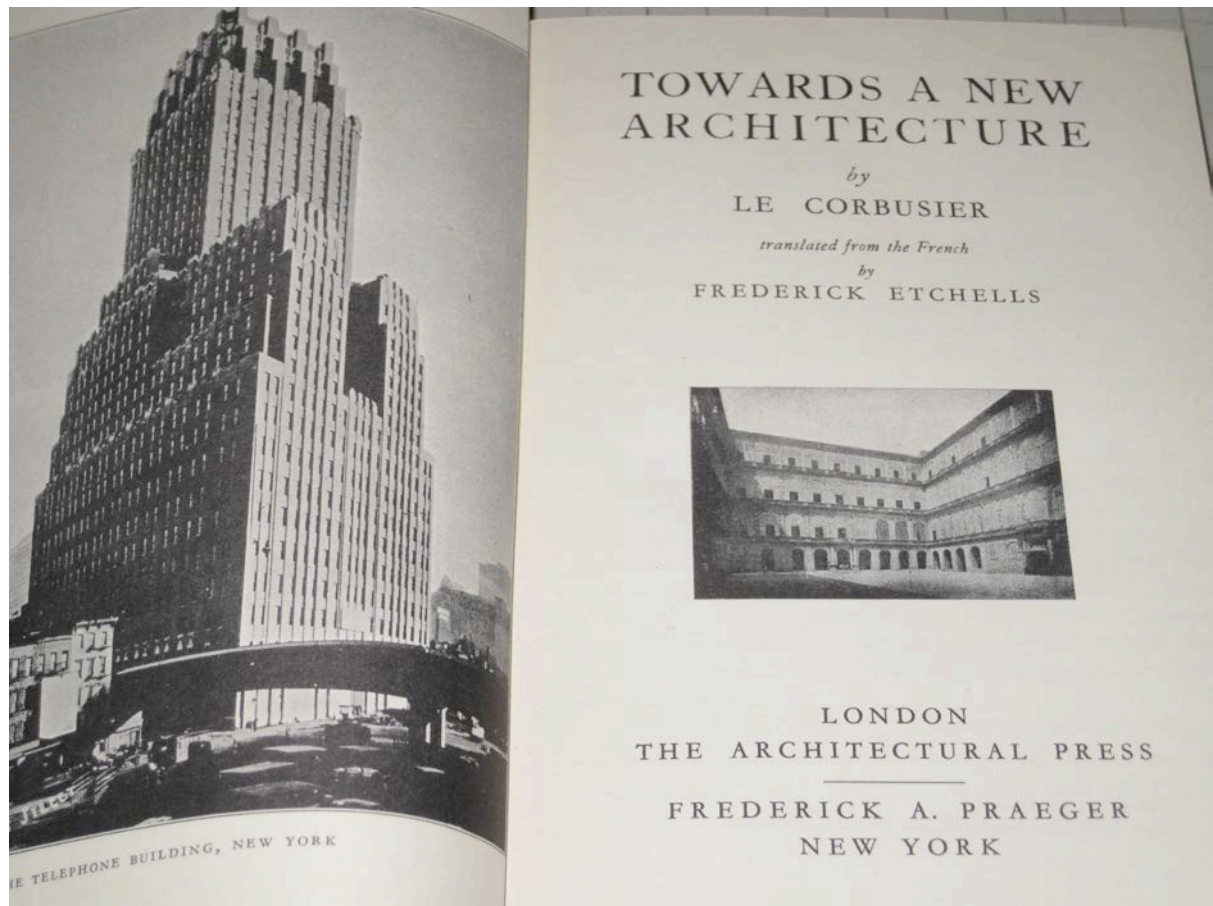
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[1] International Congresses of Modern Architecture, 1928-1959.
[2] Zacharias Vultur, I., *"The Machine Metaphor in Modern Architectural Discourse. Le Corbusier and Norman Bel Geddes", PhD Thesis, 2012*an imagery that might be inspired by Jules Verne's literature.
[3] The Art Deco Exhibition 1925 , Modern Architecture International Exhibition, 1932.
[4]Zacharias Vultur, I., *Idem.*

"**Modern** life demands, and is waiting for, a new kind of plan, both for the house and for the city."[5]

02. An intriguing discovery: 'Towards a New Architecture", Le Corbusier, 1931. On the left inner-cover of the American edition, an image of The Telephone Company Building, New York. The same Telephone Company from New York builds Bucharest's first skyscraper 1931-1933.

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[5] Le Corbusier, "Toward an Architecture" ("Towards a New Architecture"), 'Plan", edition, Dover Publications, Mineola, New York, edition of 1986 reprinted after the 1931, p.3.

PAESTUM, 600-550 B.C.

When once a standard is established, competition comes at once and violently into play. It is a fight; in order to win you must do better than your rival *in every minute point*, in
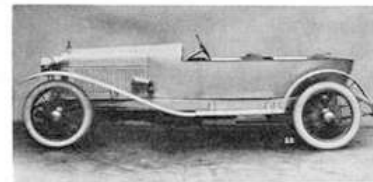
THE PARTHENON, 447-434 B.C.

the run of the whole thing and in all the details. Thus we get the study of minute points pushed to its limits. Progress. A standard is necessary for order in human effort.

HUMBER, 1907

DELAGE, "GRAND-SPORT," 1921

03. "Towards a New Architecture", Le Corbusier, 1931 (1923). The 'daring' of the car with the Parthenon.

One can therefore observe how **disruptive technology** and new transportation devices can model a city's design and its relationship with heritage, in fact, its past. The *flaneur* spirit of Walter Benjamin is replaced with new dynamic ways of 'reading the city': from the speed of the car, from the perspective of the transatlantic or the train, from the aerial view of the airplane. By increasing the 'reading' speed, the cityscape should use clean shapes, without ornament.

Nevertheless, Le Corbusier himself during the early years of formation and extensive travel - one could say - approached heritage sites of the world with an investigative and archeological eye, learning from the vernacular[6] or historic models, sketching and writing, in the manner of Beaux-Arts spirit and even the preservation doctrines. Later, in his treatise he states that 'historic styles' are a 'lie' and that geometric pure forms and spatial order are key for the new society. From an anthropological point of view, it is valid that man can (eventually) adapt and that the city has power into modelling human behaviour.

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[6] Le Corbusier, *Voyage d'Orient, Carnets, Fondation Le Corbusier*, 2002.

04. The Telephone Company Building in Bucharest, the first skyscraper of the city, in Art Deco style, with steel structure. Designed by the American architect Louis Weeks and the Romanian (of Dutch origin) architect Edmond Van Saanen Algi, built between 1931-1933. *'Bukarest: Calea Victoriei mit Telefonhaus vom Schlossplatz, vom Auto aus, mit Autoverkehr'* / 1941, (left) and *'Bukarest: Calea Victoriei mit Telefonhaus vom Schlossplatz' /* 1941 (right), W 134 No.030232, photographies by Willy Pragher, *Staatsarchiv Freiburg*, *Landesarchiv Baden-Württemberg.*

It is somehow using the idea of P. Geddes, about the organic link between a city and its society, but by seeing the **Modern** metropolis as a generator tool for a new society (machinic) order.

For Bucharest as well, **Modernist** architecture and urban planning meant new aspirations, manifested through two distinct key phases: the synchronised and moderated one between 1906-1930s and the Soviet source one during the Communist regime of 1947-1989, under the political decision that turned it into a sterile architectural language and a real disconnection with heritage. Le Corbusier - by then still named Charles Jeanneret - visited Bucharest in an eight days tour described in his five months "*Voyage vers l'Orient*" of 1911, when he visits also the Parthenon (later used as reference in "Toward and Architecture", 1923). One can decode on his hand drawn itinerary the interest elements by initials: C (culture), F (folklore) and I (industry).

Le Corbusier's influence on Bucharest's architecture and some studio teaching in the Architecture School is in the first phase (1920's-1930's) perfectly synchronised with the French trend and publications[7]. During the Communist regime it is mainly filtered by the Soviet building typologies, then in 70's by a nationalist approach.

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[7] Zacharias Vultur, I. , "Ion Mincu University Press", (2013), The Journal of Sciences and Travel. A review of the 1947-1949 editions*, sITA - Studies in History & Theory of Architecture*, p. 198: https://sita.uauim.ro/f/sita/art/12_sITA_Vultur.pdf

05. The Modernist Boulevard in Bucharest, built between 1928-1930s. "*Bukarest: Boulevard Bratianu, von oben auf Scala, höher gehalten*/ 1937", photography by Willy Pragher, *Staatsarchiv Freiburg* W 134 Nr. 012234a, *Landesarchiv Baden-Württemberg*

By that time, Europe is already in a return towards the heritage, monument, ecology and a Giovannoni like method of city design. Therefore, since 1960's and Postmodernism, the urban development policies of cities integrate heritage. Both books - Aldo Rossi's "Architecture of the City" (1966) for the European cultural space and Robert Venturi's "Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture" (1966) for the American cultural space - express this new concern with monuments, the urban artefact or duality in architecture.

UNESCO then, in 1976 proposes the "Recommendation Concerning the Safeguarding and Contemporary Role of Historic Areas". In October 1987, ICOMOS General Assembly adopts the "Washington Charter for the Conservation of Historic Monuments and Sites and Urban Areas"[8], followed by the Valetta Principles of ICOMOS and HUL (Historic Urban Landscape) regulations of UNESCO, in 2011.

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[8] https://www.icomos.org/charters/towns_e.pdf
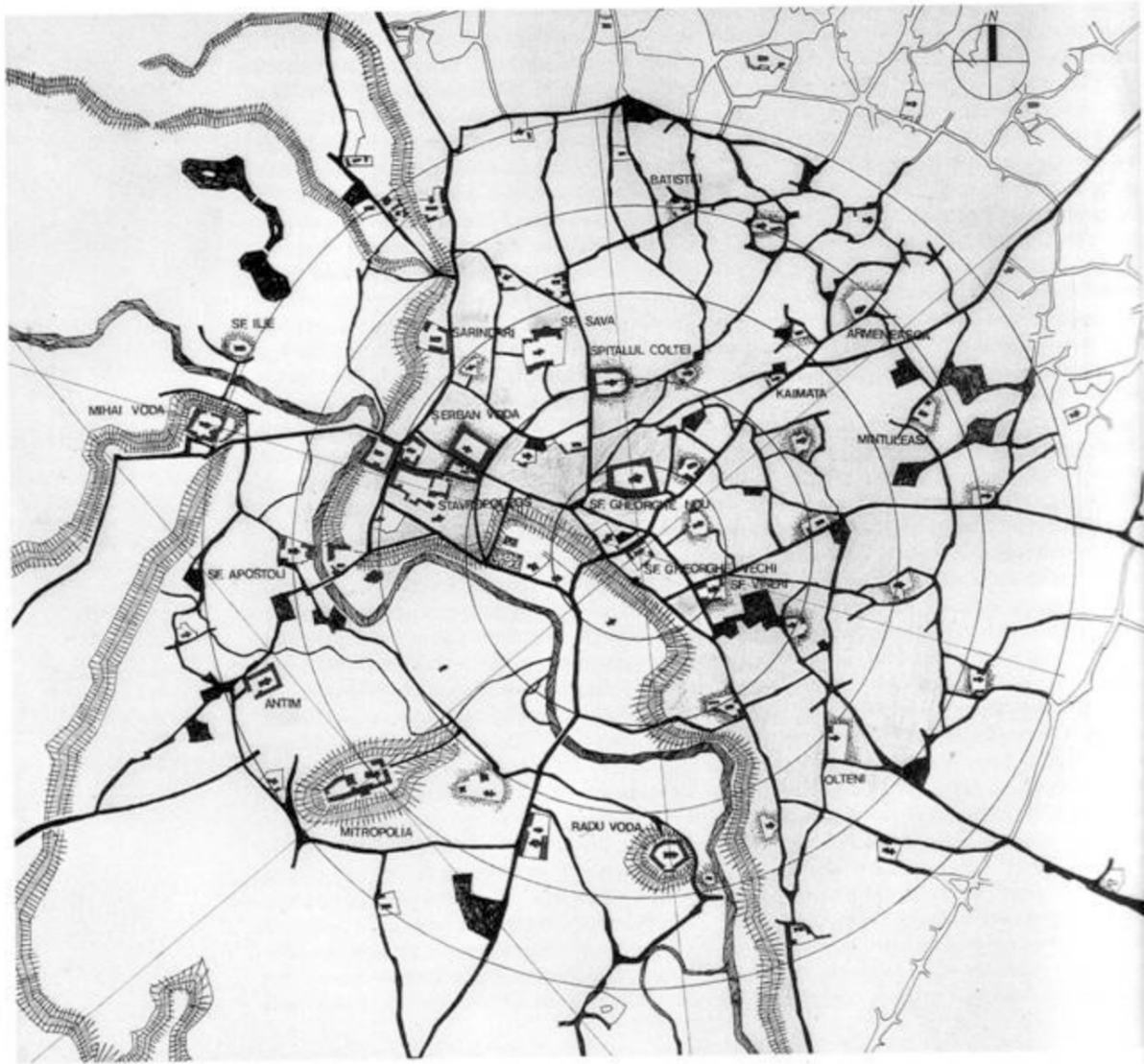
Bucharest's Urban Heritage layers

Bucharest's Urban Heritage is continuously to be deciphered and revealed, as a four dimensional collage of time and space. The city is perceived since the beginning of the 20th Century as a blending cultural space between the Orient and the Occident[9], synchronised and desynchronised with the Western Architectural discourse[10] and urban planning.

Let's read this 'exotic' interlayering within the urban heritage as well as in the Bucharest's society lifestyle according to Willy Pragher's photographs, such as the one in the beginning of the article, entitled "*Bukarest: Straße Rosetti, Lincoln Laden und Bauer,* 1937". The title of the photography points out the coexistence of a variety of urban heritage languages - Byzantine, Classical and **Modernist** - the contrasting social layers of the metropolitan citizens and the peasant; the luxury car and the rural, the real and the reflection in the window, the old and the new. All these compose an urban scenography that is still alive in contemporary Bucharest.

The capital city's destiny is by definition particular, as it usually becomes a first 'space' for political, economic and cultural experiments. It usually represents a geographical and geopolitical landmark and Bucharest has always been at the crossroads of distinct powers. In this context, diplomacy, tolerance and sometimes political obedience have been key to survival and peace.

[9] Harhoiu, D., *Simetria* Publishing House, Union of Architects in Romania and ARCUB, *Bucharest. A city between Orient and Occident,* Bucharest, 1997.
[10] Zahariade, A.M., *Introduction in Contemporary Architecture, Ist year course,* UAUIM: https://www.uauim.ro/en/departments/itcp/courses/it-1/

06. The initial Constantinople-like religious organic model of the city, with 300 concentric churches, *mahala* neighbourhoods and *maidane* spaces, in *Bucharest. A city between Orient and Occident* book, Dana Harhoiu.

One can see Bucharest's urban heritage as a direct representation of its people's personality and the absorbed influences over time: Ottoman, Greek, Austrian, Russian, French and to some degree since interwar times, American. These cultural influences blended both in the city's Architectural language, as in its urbanity.

Through layering over time, coexistence and collision[11], the initial Constantinople-like religious organic model of the city, with 300 concentric churches, *mahala* neighbourhoods and *maidane* spaces added new sediments and urban operations. The city's Wallachian - Oriental 'skyline' looked more like a rural settlement with 300 church towers and only ground-floor and one storey buildings, until the 19th Century.

To this layer, **Modern** interventions appeared: institutional **modernisation** brings the first institution buildings that generally use the Academist architectural language, then the Organic Regulation of 1831 - a law imposed by the Russian Empire to

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[11] Ghenciulescu, St., Ion Mincu University Press, (2017), Porosity and Collisions. About Bucharest and its Limits, *sITA - Studies in History & Theory of Architecture:* https://sita.uauim.ro/5/a/56/

Westernalize the country - brings many basic urban planning rules and the first *embellissment* of the city principles, as well as public parks and civil engineering works.
This is the beginning of **Modern Bucharest**.

The Architectural Language of the 1830's in Bucharest townscape was essentially the Classical one, arrived in the beginning with projects designed by the foreign architects that graduated Beaux-Arts in Paris, Vienna or Berlin or Rome, as well as some Romanians. The first and best-known Romanian architect that graduated Beaux-Arts was the creator of the nowadays University of Architecture and Urbanism: Ion Mincu.
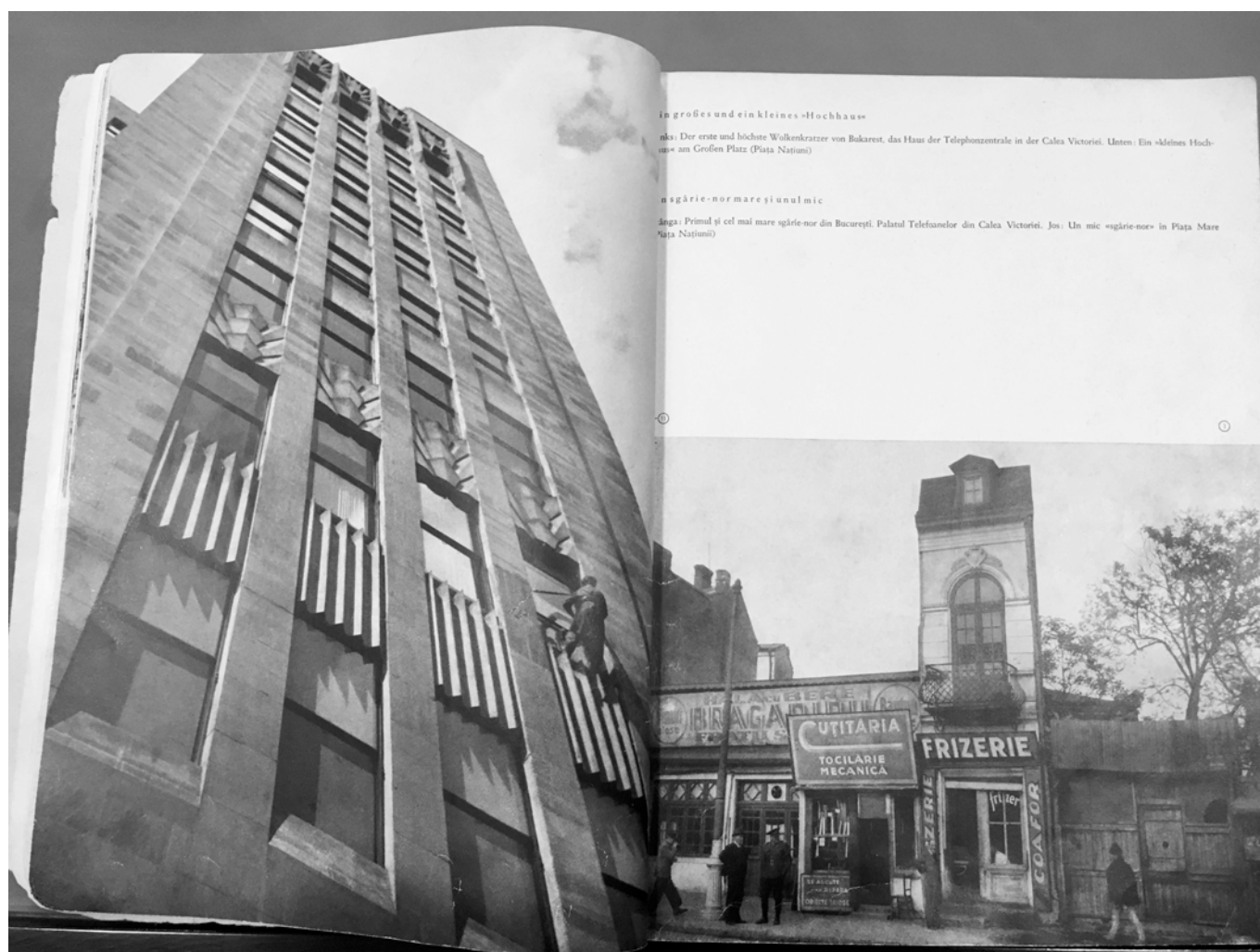
The first form of Architectural education was established in Bucharest in 1864 as part of the School of Bridges and Roads, Mines and Architecture and the first Architecture diplomats appeared in 1891. The profession of architect was therefore a **Modern** one.

These Classical language insertions and urban compositions bring the first contrast in scale and urban aesthetics.

By analogy, this variety can be read also in the polarised social texture of the city: a coexistence of the very few wealthy and highly educated, with the large poor mass.

The lifestyle and **urbanity** of the 19th Century Bucharest are an 'exotic' and pictorial blending: Oriental fashion elements, habits and gastronomy (Turkish coffee, Narghiles, deserts, etc.), with French top hats, fashion accessories, language, salutations and expressions (such as *Bonjour, Mon Cher,* etc.), Cyrillic writing and Latin publications, and peasant popular outfits. Bucharest's society and city life is described by many foreign visitors in their writings as an unusual contrast of luxury and poverty.

Bucharest enters its "Little Paris" age.

07. Entitled "A big skyscraper and a small skyscraper" a slogan and two collated photographs by Willy Pragher - one is The Telephone Building, Bucharest (1931-1933) - in his book, *Bukarest: stadt der gegensatze, Wiking Verlag, Berlin, W 35,* 1941.

Later on, in 1911, Charles Jeanneret (Le Corbusier who was then 25) visited Bucharest in an eight days tour[12] of his famous long *Voyage vers l'Orient.* He describes Bucharest's architecture, urbanity and colours in a very pictorial manner, intrigued by the flavoured blending of the Oriental world with the Western one:

``*Bucharest is totally impregnated of Paris. Moreover: under a terrible light, the women are combed with care and are beautiful; they are adorned with exquisite outfits [...] With the same melancholy we recall the seducing visions of Paris chic. Here everything is perceived as fatally leading to the feminine cult, and it is said that the idol of this city, the great goddess, is the woman, because of her great beauty.*``[13]

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[12] CSAV Journal, Ion Mincu University Press, (2015), coord. since 2012 by the author of this paper: http://csav.ro/

[13] Caceide Daza R.E., Ion Mincu University Press, (2015), CSAV Journal, Arquia, Barcelona, *Le Corbusier's journey to Bucharest in 1911,* chapter from the doctoral thesis *Tras el viaje de Oriente. Charles-Edouard Jeanneret - Le Corbusier*, p.165.

The image of the city has its first authentic **Modernist** insertions of architecture and urban planning during the interwar time, arriving through professional and technical[14] publications and foreign architects, as well as by some of the University of Architecture and Urbanism teachers. A few boulevards are designed in **Modernist** style - such as the coherent Magheru Boulevard - richly photographed by Willy Pragher during its 'glamour' years. The *coule-de-sac* plan composition is also frequently used around shapes designed according to the automobile movements (ex. Dacia Boulevard). The French influence of **Modernist** architectural discourse[15] is accompanied by the Art Deco language buildings, some as coming from the American influence.

During the 1931 - 1933 in "Little Paris" the first New York like 'skyscraper' in Art Deco style is inserted: The Palace of the Telephone Company, on 35 *Victoriei* Avenue. It is designed by the American architect Louis Weeks and the Romanian architect Edmond Van Saanen-Algi for the International Telephone and Telegraph Corporation, the New York company. It is "one of the rare structures with a rigid steel skeleton mounted with rivets and the second built by the American company […] in Europe"[16]. The elegant building remains the tallest one in Bucharest until 1970.

The aspiration towards a Western-like metropolis skyline is encouraged by a strong synchronisation with the trends and news coming from Europe and the United States: the latest news in the journals, the foreign *Calea Victoriei* Avenue shops (Lafayette, etc.), the first luxury automobile brands, the few foreign businessmen investing in industry and stock-exchange. The language of the car, train, transatlantic ships and streamline designed airplanes is discretely preparing Bucharest for new city aesthetics and lifestyle, yet the Great Depression followed by the Second World War change its destiny. During 1930-1940s the Monarchy of Charles the 2nd is characterised by economic growth and cultural development, though in an unstable political environment. The 1940's earthquake and the war bombing affects Bucharest's urban heritage in a relatively reduced manner (destroying the old National Theatre and partially the Atheneum, unlike the abdication of the King Charles the 2nd (1940), followed by the forced abdication of his son, King Michael the 1st in 1947 that bring the institution of the Communist regime.

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[14]Zacharias Vultur, I. , "Ion Mincu University Press", (2013), The Journal of Sciences and Travel. A review of the 1947-1949 editions, *sITA - Studies in History & Theory of Architecture*, p. 198: https://sita.uauim.ro/f/sita/art/12_sITA_Vultur.pdf

[15]Zacharias Vultur, I., *"The Machine Metaphor in Modern Architectural Discourse. Le Corbusier and Norman Bel Geddes", PhD Thesis, 2012.*

[16] Criticos, M., "B:MAD. Bucharest: Modernism Art Deco 1920-1945", p.29: https://artdecobucharest.ro/

08. Photographs by Willy Pragher, depicting the Modernist Boulevard of Bucharest and the urban heritage contrasts.

As the capital city and therefore the first architectural and political 'urban laboratory', Bucharest is marked during 1947-1989 by the Communist ideology and censorship. Of course, nuances can be traced in each stage, with moments of apparent creative freedom, extreme control or sterile visions. Principles of economy, equality, atheism, control of the masses, can be directly read in the urban planning and architecture. The directed **Modernism**, the censored and politically decided housing dimensions, the "Little Moscow" vision, the Institutes of Design (*Institut de Proiectare,* 1952*)* or the large Civic Centre operation (1978) are perhaps the strongest guiding marks of this 'Golden Age'.

The urban heritage 'disliked' by the Communist party is composed out of the sediments of the old bourgeois houses, the **modern** institutions built during the Monarchy and the churches (and monasteries). The most visible techniques used for 'hiding' or 'erasing' this **urban heritage** are: demolition - *tabula rasa* - (of some churches and 465 hectares of old city tissue for the Civic Centre), the building of 'citadel-like walls out of block of flats' bordering the main boulevards and translating some churches in blocks of flats inner-courtyards. This created a new contrast in the old variety of Bucharest: the scale contrast. The "Bucharest 2000" International architecture competition tried to mediate this scale and volume difference into the Civic Centre (House of the People) area through gradual relationships, yet the winning project was never implemented.

For the **Architectural profession**, the change in 1952 means the forced abandon of the free-market, freelancing and personal studio, the freedom of choice of projects (and clients), for the Soviet model of the Design Institute. This structure is during 1952-1989 the only place for an architect to design in Romania, entirely controlled from the centre and clearly subordinated to political decision. The moment is marked by the creation of The State Committee for Architecture and Constructions (CSAC), later The State Committee for Constructions, Architecture and Systematisation (CSCAS).

The genuine **Modernist** language of 1930's - 1940's Bucharest is now replaced with the 'realism socialist' style both in practice and in architectural education. The urban planning and architectural projects are established by the central political decision, the access to Western Architectural magazines is censored and ultimately eliminated so that the inspiration comes from the Soviet building standards, books and ideas. Very few lucky architects had the chance to have now and then a forbidden edition of the *Architecture d'Aujourd'hui,* which they secretly lended in to some colleagues. This institution is a complex structure, where aside from architectural design, the employees must attend political propaganda sessions, outdoor collective 'sports activities' and parade mobilisation when needed.

Despite the given context of the 1980's, Romanian architects and urban planners are still the ones to locally save the values of Bucharest's urban heritage from demolition, by small tricks in front of the political decision: falsely marking in plans unimportant buildings in order to save the valuable ones.

Today Bucharest has 98 Protected Areas (Z.C.P.)[17], some grouped in Historic Reference Subzones (S.I.R.)[18], 27 particular typology allotments designed between 1912-1944 and some 152 *couls-de-sac* built between 1831 - 1939[19] catalogued so far, out of which many in **Modernist** style.

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[17] As one can observe in the **98 Protected Zones of urban heritage in Bucharest, general map, below.**
[18] Reference to the Z.C.P. no.10 - *Dorobanti* area, Bucharest, Substantiating study of 2010, where I participated as team member.
[19] According to various studies of the History and Theory of Architecture & Heritage Conservation Department, UAUIM.

09. The 98 Protected Zones of urban heritage in Bucharest. General map.

Each is a coherent reservation of architectural style and urban particularities, that make Bucharest resemble a coexistence of smaller cities, therefore with an 'inter-urbanity' character as Prof. Jean-Louis Cohen describes it.

Monuments and protected areas are concentrated mainly in the heart of the city, which makes them accessible and visible, yet their status is uncertain, neglected or illicit. It is hiding in plain sight. The passing of the time and unknown owners make them ideal for the foreign cinematography: open-air urban and interior scenography, especially for American movies.

One 100 years later, the words of Patrick Geddes are very assorted with the case of Bucharest: "*I do not advocate the retention of things useless…I plead merely for fair trial before condemnation…and the open minded consideration of each survival of the past and of its value whether as an actual **asset** or as a possible one*".

When in debate about the urban heritage of Bucharest, voices of professionals, politicians and inhabitants, notwithstanding many regulations, overrule or misunderstand the manner in which a city could evolve. How to select, protect or demolish should be wisely mediated.

The historic and the **Modern** (future) cityscape should harmoniously coexist and highlight one another. The design of the city should be dynamic and adapted, without loosing its identity landmarks and 'charisma'.

 Conclusion

   Bucharest: Towards a Rethinking of the Urban Heritage
   "I Have Seen the Future!"[20]

09. The "Futurama" conveyor system view above the 1 acre city model of the future - for 1960. It is a Norman Bel Geddes project for General Motors, at New York World Fair, 1939. A subject of my PhD thesis, "The Machine Metaphor in Modern Architectural Discourse. Le Corbusier and Norman Bel Geddes".

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[20] New York World Fair, 1939, Norman Bel Geddes "Futurama" project for General Motors, the conveyor overflying a very large model of the city of the future - an immersive experience with the technology of the time.

Bucharest needs an **urban policy** regarding a continuous involvement of the administration and community in reactivating this common good, in dynamic relation with the challenges ahead - economic, social, technological. This **urban policy** should consider a **dynamic network** of sites to be constantly restored, activated, adapted and promoted not only at local or national level, but in a landscape and regional context. This could also become an **educational tool** and **heritage conservation live studio** for Architecture students, a live-learning tool for heritage 'lovers', a rebranding of the profession of Architect.

New methods of deciphering Bucharest's heritage could follow still the words of Patrick Geddes in "Cities in Evolution. An Introduction to the town planning movement and to the study of civics" published in 1915.

"*In short, then, to decipher the origins of cities in the past, and to unravel their life-processes in the present, are not only legitimate and attractive inquiries, but indispensable ones for every student of civics - whether he would visit and interpret world-cities, or sit quietly by his window at home. […] these very webs are themselves anew caught up to serve as threads again, within new and vaster combinations. Yet within this labyrinthine civicomplex there are no mere spectators. Blind or seeing, inventive or unthinking, joyous or unwilling - each has still to weave in, ill or well, and for worse if not for better, the whole thread of his life.*"[21]

P. Geddes is known for his **three dimensional** ability to envision things and concepts, which in the opinion of many scholars makes him a very contemporary thinker. The 'Observation Tower' metaphor is composed out of two superposing layers: the physical city and the digital one. The researchers at MIT Senseable City Lab introduce through their 2016 book "The City of Tomorrow: Sensors, Networks, Hackers, and the Future of Urban Life" a neologism: 'future-crafting', that is, designing interventions and experimental projects that explore what city life could be like this year or next if we made some adjustments"[22]. As in the beginning of the Industrial Revolution we find ourselves again challenged to adapt to **disruptive technologies**, that we could use as tools to generate more awareness, gather more data, archive an inventory of restoration proposals and promote urban heritage among its citizens and visitors. In such a manner, the urban heritage sites could be even 'digitally promoted' as '**assets**' with potential in the organism of the city.

Bucharest is a 'living laboratory' of **urban heritage** where augmented and immersive experiences of the city can be new forms of research and knowledge in architecture, urban planning, cinematography and virtual reality.

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[21] Geddes, P., (1915), *The Evolution of cities - Cities in evolution*, in *Cities in evolution: an introduction to the town planning movement and to the study of civics,* pp.4-5"

[22] https://www.newyorker.com/tech/annals-of-technology/augmented-urban-reality, http://news.mit.edu/2016/book-cities-tomorrow-urban-design-0705

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Resources

01. Photographs by Willy Pragher, published
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