

# eurau18 ALICANTE 18

EUROPEAN RESEARCH IN ARCHITECTURE AND URBANISM  
9TH CONGRESS



**retroactiverearch**

ARCHITECTURE'S CAPACITY TO CHALLENGE AND  
EXTEND THE LIMITS OF OTHER DISCIPLINES

ALICANTE \* 19/20/21/22 SEPTEMBER 2018

**CONGRESS PROCEEDINGS**

EURAU18 alicante  
RETROACTIVE RESEARCH  
**CONGRESS PROCEEDINGS**

ISBN: 978-84-1302-003-7  
DOI: 10.14198/EURAU18alicante

Editor: Javier Sánchez Merina  
Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0)



**Titulación de Arquitectura**

**ESCUELA POLITÉCNICA SUPERIOR Alicante University**

Carretera San Vicente del Raspeig s/n 03690 San Vicente del Raspeig. Alicante (SPAIN)

[eurau@ua.es](mailto:eurau@ua.es)

# Urban serendipity or ruling chaos

---

Bucharest's urban hotspot: Kaleidoscopic chaos

**Butnariu, Simona Marilena<sup>1</sup>; Eftime, Andrada<sup>2</sup>**

1. "Ion Mincu" University of Architecture and Urbanism, Urban and Landscape Design Department, Bucharest, Romania, butnariu\_simona2000@yahoo.com

2. "Ion Mincu" University of Architecture and Urbanism, Urban and Landscape Design Department, Bucharest, Romania, eftimeandrada@gmail.com

## Synopsis

More and more contemporary architects, urban planners and landscapers experiment and transform our cities in urban laboratories to innovate formulas for intelligent densities, sustainable mobility and greater efficiency. More they design different layouts, more they discover that those areas generated by greater serendipity foster a sense of flow; an urban life defined by chaotic diversity inexorably draw us in. In contrast with our parents, we seek disorder as a means to liberate us from control, routine, homogeneity.

Bucharest is one of the most interesting case studies for urban serendipity, or in another words, understanding an urban planning process that is actually ruling chaos. A city of contrasts, illustrates in a creative way urban serendipity as assembling in kaleidoscopic pattern independent urban projects without a global city scale coherent strategy. These areas become urban hotspot polarizing multifunctional urban spaces and architecture in attractive innovation hubs planned for the unexpected.

**Key words:** Serendipity, multifunctional, chaos, diversity, kaleidoscope.

## 1. Introduction. About Bucharest's urban context

Bucharest is one of the cities from the east communist bloc countries that have one of the highest polarization's rates in the current moment. After the economic crisis that started in 2008 and put the real estate development to a sudden hold, the city currently found its new way to grow. The emerging transformation of the north area of the city is, at such speed that exceeds the ability of its inhabitants to self-orientate by generating mental picture of the external physical world, using Kevin Lynch's mental map. Pipera - Barbu Vacarescu - Calea Floreasca area become a fascinating and surprisingly abundant in opportunities part of the city. This urban hotspot polarizes on a physically delimited area (around 10 hectares) one billion Euros in investments and grows into unique urbanscape in Bucharest. Urbanscape shaped from the juxtaposition of objects inserted in context without larger guidelines, without apparent rules and order, still dynamic thru perspective surprises; flourish in places that facilitate cross-overs. Cross-overs between citizens and governments, investors and entrepreneurs, students and corporate, working and retail, living and leisure.

### 1.1. Bucharest particularities

First, we must understand the historical context.

Sir Sitwell in his memories once defined Bucharest as a city of contrasts with a strong personality embedded most in its atmosphere, not in its monuments. Walk several times on "Calea Victoriei" Street; you began to understand the distinct features of Bucharest and, in extenso, of our nation. Walk several times on Pipera, Barbu Vacarescu, Calea Floreasca area and you feel the current vibe and the new trend of the economical and social life of the Bucharest. Life shapes landscape, this sensitive mechanism of strong interrelation is marvellous illustrated by our case study.

The urban structure followed the rules carefully controlled by regulations plans over the periods of intense building of the city, from the beginning of the century before communism and after. Situated on a confluence of cultures, the city somehow found an original mode to play in a vague area around the rules. This constant attitude to exceed the general or to try to obtain an advantage over the average, created one of the particularities of the city, diversity in styles and heights of the buildings among the same frontage of the street in the traditional urban fabric areas. The same attitude remained until the present, shaping and modelling the new areas of urban development. Bucharest has a valid master plan elaborated in 2000. After 18 years, the city grows and develops mostly thru insertions in or extensions of the existing fabric. Independent projects initiate by the private investors regulates these, without being centralized in a master plan of the entire city.

The decay of large communist industrial complexes that became obsolete with technological advancements during the 20th century had urban consequences affecting the economy and quality of life of entire neighborhoods as many factories closed. Some of these complexes were demolished and targeted of urban renewal projects, while others remained vacant and



abandoned. One of these areas that burst up in the present is the north area of Bucharest, Pipera- Barbu Vacarescu.

Some of these complexes have been brought back to life precisely to accommodate the new economic activities and some of them erased to make place for the new head quarters or offices of companies such as IBM, Oracle, Skanska, Globalworth.

## 1.2. Social perspective

Second, we must understand the social context.

Most of the employees that go to work every day in this area are young generations with ages between 25 and 40 years old. While their parents experienced scarcity, they grew up surrounded by abundance. While their parents lives were never-ending routines with clear expectations, their lives were subjected to life-changing surprises. While their parents grew, up in the monotony of cookie-cutter, planned communities they were drawn to the chaotic diversity of urban life.

Sennett argues that those of us who grew up in suburbs and are now drawn to urban life are seeking serendipity. We are placing ourselves in circumstances that force us to interact with people who are different from us. We seek a different social and psychological development from our parents. We seek disorder as a means to liberate us from control, homogeneity and habit.

## 2. Methodology. Bucharest's urban hotspot

The idea of a master planner, imposing a grand urban order has always stood for virtue. It's a regular approach, a logical one, but also an utopia one. Cities are by nature messy. Bucharest's business district, the area between Pipera and Barbu Vacarescu has developed in a chaotic process. The area has experienced an urban growth based on private investments and competitive real-estate market highly speculative and restricted to a portion of population. (Fig. 1)



Figure 1.

Urban serendipity or ruling chaos  
Butnariu, Simona Marilena; Eftime, Andrada

Beneath the visible surface of chaotic urbanisation, there arose an invisible urban hotspot. Streets are throbbing with the excitement of economic growth (Fig. 2), the area is not just a business hotspot but also one of the exclusivist residential areas. (Fig. 3)



Figure 2.



Figure 3.

By night, Bucharest's business district is becoming a hub of fine restaurants, bars and clubs. Some of the most exclusive places are located on the shore of Floreasca Lake and Tei Lake. By night, there is a new urban scene; the rush of the movement experienced by day is replaced by a vibrant nightlife.

The nightlife of this area not only provides social opportunities for the residents, but also contributes to the uniqueness of this place, boosting the sense of identity so desperately sought by urban planners and citizens. (Fig. 4, Fig. 5)



Figure 4.



Figure 5.

### 3. Conclusions

Density, proximity and physical space for interactions are essential for the very existence of cross-overs.

So, is it urban serendipity a way to shape a city? Nan Ellin considers that the places in flow are not inexorable grids. However, they have a certain degree of unexpected, contrasts which vibes in an attractive and mysterious zigzag movement that assure us a bliss point between excitement and comfort area.

This area concentrates density of people, cars and interests that pulse into a vibrant rhythm of life. The next step into improving the quality of space and life will be the measures that facilitate the free flowing of the energy, people and information in between buildings. To erase any physical boundaries between different properties and create a various range of public spaces to connect and quickly transform this urban fragment into buzzing innovation hubs.

Given the range and nature of this chaotic development, with its complexity and confusions, designing a master plan to envision the future of this area would not be sufficient.

The approach should include bottom-up interventions, small-scale urban solutions experienced by people. Planning should rely on understanding the spirit and the intensity of this place. The area development is an example of how a city can thrive when they is driven by urban serendipity.

#### 4. Bibliography

IANOȘ, Ioan, 2004, Dinamica urbană. Aplicații la sistemul urban românesc, Edit. Tehnică, București. ISBN: 973-31-2139-8.

MIHĂILESCU, Vintilă, 2003, Evoluția unui oraș. București, Edit. Paideia, București. ISBN: 973-596-123-7.

CRISTEA, Doina, 2000, Bucureștii – o adevărată metropolă, „Arhitext Design”, nr. 1. ISSN 1224-886X.

CRISTEA, Doina, 2000, Implicații urbanistice ale obiectivelor strategice de dezvoltare a Municipiului București (II). Dosar București, „Arhitext Design”, nr. 7. ISSN 1224-886X.

CRISTEA, Doina, 2000, Planul Urbanistic General al Municipiului București. Unele probleme de dezvoltare strategică și teritorială. Dosar București, „Arhirext Design”, nr. 5. ISSN 1224-886X.

ELLIN, Nan, 2006, Integral Urbanism, New York, Routledge, ISBN D-415-95228-X

SIR SITWELL, Sacheverell, 2011, Călătorie în România, Bucharest, Humanitas, ISBN 978-973-50-2917-3



## Biography

**Simona Butnariu.** Lecturer at Faculty of Urban Planning, University of Architecture and Urbanism “Ion Mincu” (UAUIM), Bucharest.

She graduated in 2000 as architect at UAUIM, in Bucharest. She has a rich academic activity, teaching on urban planning, urban and landscape design and architecture topics since 2004.

From 2014, holds a PhD title in Urban Planning at UAUIM, Bucharest, with the thesis: THE CITY - HUMAN INTERACTION SPACE - The ambiance in contemporary streetscape.

She also is involved in a various and large professional activity from graduation as author or coauthor on many architecture, urban planning or urban design projects. Her architectural and urban planner portfolio contains various types of works, ranging from the scale of an object to a large scale of territory in strategies and projects.

In 2016, she founds her own company Urban Artgrid and she is involved in numerous urban infill projects and conversions of the brown fields, mainly in Bucharest urban tissue. She is also involved in research activity publishing articles and studies about urban and architectural projects.

**Andrada Eftime.** PhDc, teaching assistant at “Ion Mincu” University of Architecture and Urbanism. She graduated in 2004 at “Ion Mincu” University of Architecture and Urbanism with a degree in Urban Planning.

Her urban and landscape planner portfolio contains various types of works, ranging from urban and landscape design (private gardens, communal spaces, historic sites) to territorial strategies and projects for regulating different regions in the country.