

THE POLITICS AND ITS ROLE IN THE CONFIGURATION OF ARCHITECTURAL LAYERS. A CASE-STUDY: BUCHAREST

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La politique et son rôle dans la création de couches architecturales. Etude de cas: Bucarest. Le développement de l'espace bâti et de l'infrastructure de la ville est la conséquence de l'évolution de la puissance financière de la ville. En Roumanie, l'industrialisation et l'importation de modèles architecturaux influencés par des décisions politiques sont les plus importantes caractéristiques des villes contemporaines. C'est pourquoi, la présence de nombreux couches architecturales (nord-américaine d'entre les deux guerres mondiales, architecture de la période staliniste soviétique, de la Corée du Nord et de la nouvelle architecture américaine) est considérée étroitement liée avec la politique de ce pays pendant le 20-ème siècle.

CONCEPTUAL FRAME

The urban layout is the result of a complex of factors that act simultaneously and whose intensity varies depending on the political and ideological context. These impact factors can be distributed into two categories:

– natural factors (seismicity, relief, climate etc.), that act in a constant manner, granting the urban layout certain particularities in terms of the adaptation of constructions to the natural environment. These particularities refer to the height regime, main building material, shape of roof tops, colour etc.;

– anthropic factors, through by the political and ideological decisions, grants the urban layout a *volunteering aspect*. The intensity of the action they undertake varies depending on the political and ideological circumstances from a given period of time, thus giving the urban layout a *historical aspect*. Thus, the borrowing of political and ideological models results in assuming the cultural patterns as well, and they reflect in literature, music, theatre, but also in the manner of dressing, gastronomy and, last but not least, in architecture.

Assuming a particular architectural style is tributary to a particular political and ideological pattern, which has characterized a certain historical period. At the same time, it is also the result of the dynamics of the ethnic make-up of the urban population which is, in turn, subordinated to political and ideological factors as well. A society based on a centralized political model, subscribed from an ideological point of view will favour certain immigration culturally imported vectors to the detriment of others. This is the case of Eastern-European societies after World War II which subscribe to the Soviet cultural model, or it is the case of fundamentalist Islamic states which reject the cultural Western model. At the other end of the spectrum there are the democratic states which favour immigration and the surging of global affluxes from all directions which reflect both on an economic as well as on a cultural and on an ethnical level by modifying the ethnic structure as a result of immigration and of the surging of ethnic neo-minorities. This results in a segregation of the urban

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space by locating according to preference in certain quarters of portions of the urban matrix, thus granting them distinct architectural characteristics¹.

As a consequence, we define the term “architectural layer” as being an ensemble of buildings with a residential or industrial purpose built in a particular historic period, in a particular political and ideological context. These are testimonies of the urban history, of the development stages the city has been through and of the different influences which have acted in time on them.

The volunteering factor has manifested itself through the building of architectural edifices and influencing their physiognomy, as well as the other way around through the ordered wrecking of a political and ideological nature which have marked, alongside natural disasters, the overall urban history. Known throughout the world are the wrecking of the Buddhist statues from the Bamiyan river valley (Afghanistan) following the orders given by the Taliban fundamentalist-Islamic authorities or of numerous places of worship in Bucharest, especially in the 1980s as part of the “urban systematization” politics promoted by Nicolae Ceaușescu (Tab. 1 and Fig. 1)

Table 1

Places of worship in Bucharest demolished and relocated between 1950–1989
as a consequence of political and ideological decisions

Name	Documentary attestation	Year of demolition / relocation	Placement
Places of worship in Bucharest demolished			
“Stejarul” Church	1717	1955	Behind the Royal Palace (National Art Museum)
“Brezoianu” Church	1710	1958	Brezoianu Street
“St. Nicolae” Church	1564	1968	“Crângași” Cemetery
“Enei” Church	1724	1977	4, Biserica Enei Street (Universității Square area)
“Buna Vestire” Chapel	1946	1981	Rahova District
“Izvorul Tămăduirii” Chapel	1943	1982	Crângași District
“Gherghiceanu” Church	1939	1984	5, Apahida Street
“Albă-Postăvari” Church	1568	1984	The western part of the city, near “Antim” Church
“Cotroceni” Monastery	1589 1679–1681	1984	Inside Cotroceni Palace courtyard Rebuilt after 1990 and dedicated in 2009
“Spirea Veche” Church	1765	1984	The western part of the city, near “Albă-Postăvari” Church
“Izvorul Tămăduirii” Church	1785	1984	72, Puțul cu apă rece Street
“St. Nicolae Sârbi” Church	17 th century	1985	Pitagora Street crossing with Văcărești Road
“St. Mina” Chapel	1892	1985	Institute of Forensic Medicine “Dr. Mina Minovici”
“St. Nicolae-Jitnița” Church	18 th century	1986	Văcărești Road
“St. Pantelimon” Monastery	1750	1986	“St. Pantelimon” Hospital
“Doamna Oltea” Church	1947	1986	Barbu Văcărescu and Lacul Tei Bvd. Crossroad
“Olteni” Church	1696	1987	Olteni Street
“Văcărești Monastery” Ensemble	1716–1722	1984–1985	On Dealul Văcărești in the southern part of the capital; representative for the 18 th century Romanian architecture
“Bradul Staicu” Church	1740	1987	30, Bradului Street
“St. Treime-Dudești” Church	1804	1987	Dudești District
“St. Vineri-Herasca” Church	1645	1987	Unirii Square area

¹ Thus, in the capital of Romania there are mosques, a Lutheran Church (who was founded in 1574), a Church for the Armenian community (its first documentation dates from 1685), an Orthodox-Bulgarian Church (1841), a Greek Church (1900), an Italian Church (1913), an Anglican Church (1920), as well as a Temple for the Jewish community documented ever since 1866.

Table 1 (continued)

“St. Spiridon Vechi” Church	17 th century	1987	Națiunilor Unite Square. Rebuilt after 1990
“Olari” Church	1758	1986	180, Moșilor Avenue
“St. Treime-Dudești” Church	1804	1987	Dudești District
7 th day Adventist Church		1986	
Synagogue		1986	Unirii area
Places of worship in Bucharest relocated			
“Schitul Maicilor” Ensemble	1726–31	1982	Spirii Hill. The Church has been moved and restored
“Mihai Vodă” Ensemble	1589	1984	Uranus District. The church has been relocated behind the blocks of flats on Splaiul Independenței Street
“St. Ion-Moși” Church	1808	1982–1983	305, Moșilor Avenue
“St. Ilie-Rahova” Church	1747	1984	21, Rahova Avenue
“St. Gheorghe Nou-Capra” Church	20 th century	1986	159, Pantelimon Avenue
“Cuibul cu Barză” Church	1860	1987	97, Știrbei Vodă Avenue
“St. Ion-Piatră” Church	1756	1986–1987	I. C. Brătianu Bvd.

Updated source: Simionescu, C. (1995), Bucharest. Churches, Monasteries, and Holy Places, pp. 138–151.

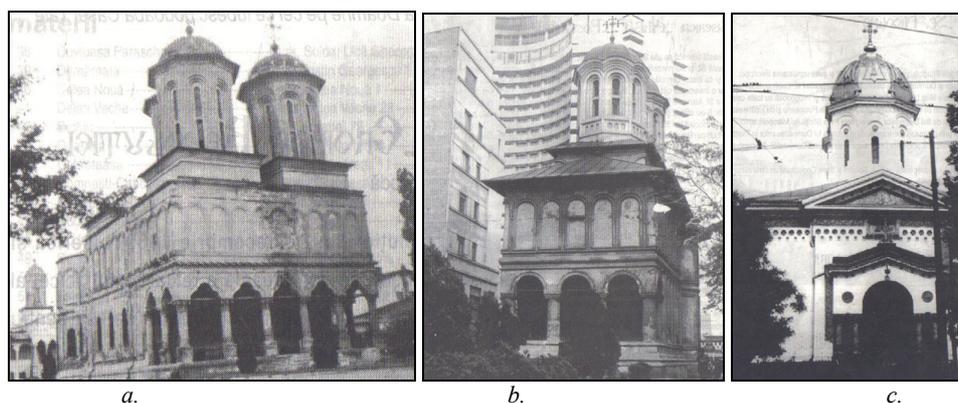


Fig. 1 – Historic buildings (monasteries and churches) demolished by political decision:
a. Văcărești Monastery, b. Enei Church, c. Sfânta Vineri–Herasca Church.

Source: Simionescu, C. (1995), Bucharest. Churches, Monasteries, and Places of Cult, p. 142, 143, 151

In the following we will try to emphasize the impact political and ideological decisions have had on the urban layout and on the capital city of Romania in relation to certain historic periods seen as characteristic when related to the aim of the present study.

THE APPEARANCE AND DEVELOPMENT OF BUCHAREST IN THE MIDDLE AGES

Romania’s Capital city – Bucharest reflects the country’s main characteristics: situated in the south – south-eastern part of the country and having an ethnically compact Romanian population, it has led to a particular managing of the territory, mainly visible through the configuration of communication networks and through the layout of the other metropolises of regional importance.

Although the first written references as a small settlement date back to Prince Vlad Țepeș’s reign (1459), and the first recordings as a city from 1533, Bucharest has had its ups and downs in terms of evolution up until the first half of the 19th century, having been subject to numerous natural and man-inflicted disasters: sacked and burnt by the Turks (1554 and 1595), by the Tartars (1596, 1659 and 1738),

plague epidemics (1706, 1718, 1738, 1792, 1812–1813), cholera (1831), famine (1660, 1718), fires (1658, 1719, 1804, 1847), tremors (1793, 1802, 1838, 1892, 1940 and 1977), floods (1839) or wars (1769–1774, 1787–1791, 1806–1812, 1916 and 1944). So, despite the fact of having been proclaimed as the perpetual Capital city of Walachia in 1659, the city's population had dropped significantly from circa 100,000 inhabitants in 1640 (Bakšić, quoted by Ghinea, 1996) to merely half in the late 1600s (Anton Maria del Chiaro, quoted by Ghinea, 1996), and in 1831 the city's population was estimated at 58.794 inhabitants (Giurescu, 1979). Bringing down the Turkish-Phanariot regime in 1821, and crowning the first prince of local lineage in Walachia (Grigore Ghica the 4th, 1822–1828) has marked the invigoration of Bucharest's political and administrative role and had a major impact on the city's urban development. It is in this period that streets are being paved with stone, numerous palaces are being built (Ghica, Suțu, Știrbei), *Eforia Spitalelor* (1831) is being set up alongside *Filantropia Hospital* (1839), a modern water supply system is being built for the town through metallic pipes (1844), so in less than three decades the city's population is doubled, reaching 121,734 inhabitants in 1859.

The unification of the Romanian Principalities as well as the naming of Bucharest as their common Capital in 1862 has played a determining role in the detaching of Bucharest at the top of the urban hierarchy, since its demographic evolution had registered a constant soaring rhythm: 177,646 inhabitants at the time of the War of Independence (1878), 184,488 inhabitants in 1889, 282,078 in 1899 (estimation made by Ghinea, 1996), reaching 341,321 inhabitants according to the census conducted on the 30th of December 1912. At the same time, the hypertrophy index related to the second largest city (Iași) is registering a phenomenal rise from 1.21 (1831) to 4.27 (1912). The increase in population associated with the urban development has led to the compiling, at that time, of the first topographic plan (Fig. 2).

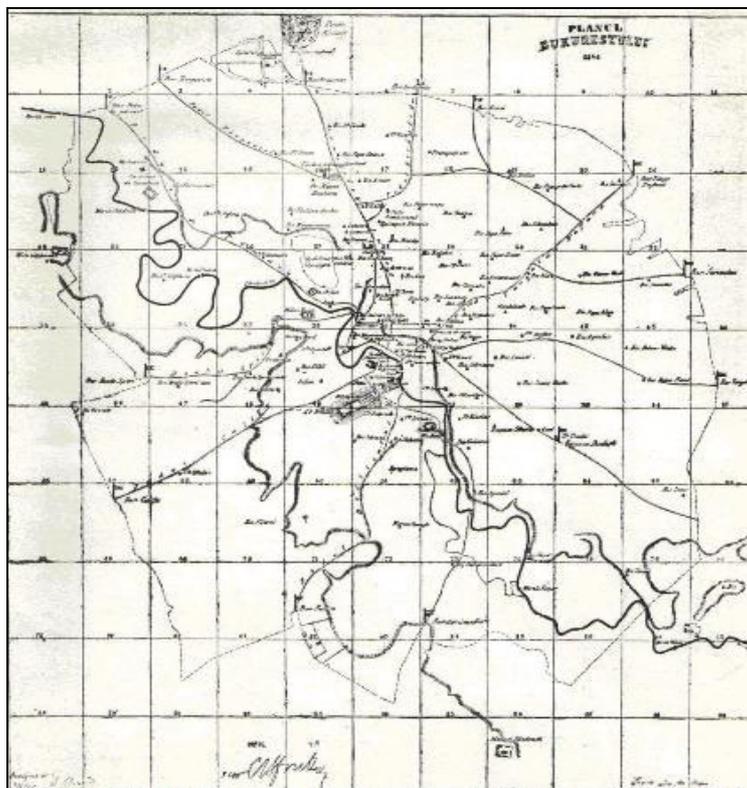


Fig. 2 – The First Topographic Plan of Bucharest (1846)

Source: Directory plan for the systematization of Bucharest Municipality (1939), p. 135

If until the 7th and 8th decades of the 19th century the city still bore a rural appearance, and cattle still roamed the city streets in what seemed a casual way (Fig. 3) the city's new status as a Capital and the independence gained in 1877 have reflected themselves in every way, bringing about not only significant demographic increase, but also a sustainable development in terms of urban planning, fit for its new role as the Capital City of an independent European state.

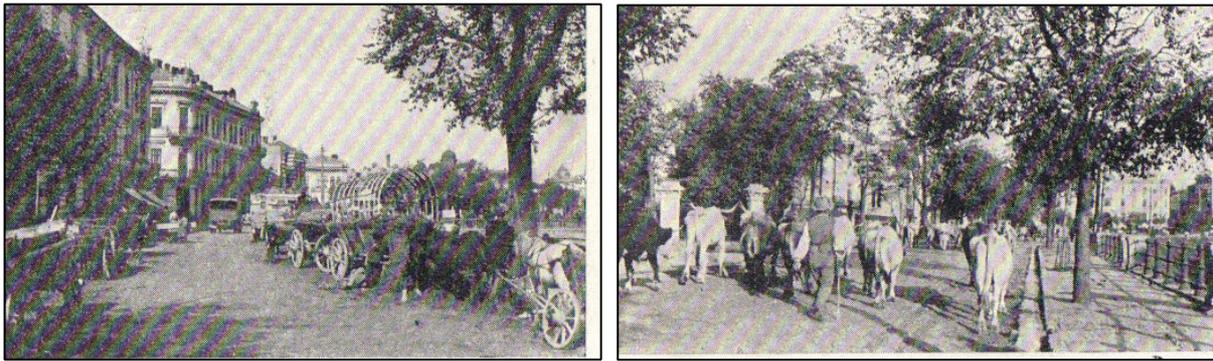


Fig. 3 – Traffic in the central area of Bucharest along Dâmbovița River in 1877.
Source: Directory plan for the systematization of Bucharest Municipality (1939), p. 159

New streets were being built and paved, emphasis was being laid on brick building and imposing edifices were being erected (The University of Bucharest – 1869, Filaret Railway Station – 1869, Northern Station – 1872, Foișorul de Foc – 1890, Romanian Athenaeum – 1888, The Palace of Justice and the Carol I Foundation (Central University Library) – 1893, The Palace of Agricultural Office – 1898, The Romanian Savings Bank Palace, The Mail Palace (today the “National History Museum” of Romania) and Cantacuzino Palace (today “George Enescu” Museum) – 1900, City Hall Palace – 1910 etc. new squares and public gardens are being opened, public gas (1871), as well as electrical lighting (1882), public transportation was introduced (the horse tram in 1894), and in 1880–1882 complex works of straightening, modernizing and deepening of the Dâmbovița River have been carried out by building a vast network of bridges and canals, thus preventing floods and epidemics effects from taking their toll.

THE INFLUENCE OF WESTERN CULTURAL PATTERN

Between the 1912 and the 1930 census there is a doubling of the population, reaching the number of 639,040 inhabitants, and the degree of hypertrophy opposed to the second largest city increases from 4.27 to 6.21 at the same time the building site are grows from 6,706 acres in 1894 to 9,244 acres in 1935, especially due to migrations into the Capital during the Great War. It is at this same time that the first laws are passed in order to limit chaotic development within the city limits (the Law of Bucharest Delimitation – 1895 and the Law for the Organization of the Communal Administration of the City of Bucharest – 1926) (tab. 2).

Hereby, the build-up area was characterized by a chaotic layout, the building spaces stretching in a tentacle-like pattern in the border perimeters of the core area and alternating with large spaces meant for agricultural use (Fig. 4).

Table 2

The increase in the build-up area of Bucharest Municipality (1894–1935).

Period	Initial Area (ha)	Final Area (ha)	Increase (ha)	Growth Rate (ha/year)	Causes
1894–1911 (17 years)	2,714	2,802	88	5.2	Reduced increase due to the implementing of the maintaining city's boundaries (1865)
1911–1926 (16 years)	2,802	3,741	933	58.3	Accentuated increase as a result of the Great War which has led to migrating flows into the Capital.
1927–1935 (8 years)	3,741	3,860	119	17	Reduced increase due to the implementing of the Law for Organization of the Communal Administration of the City of Bucharest (1926)

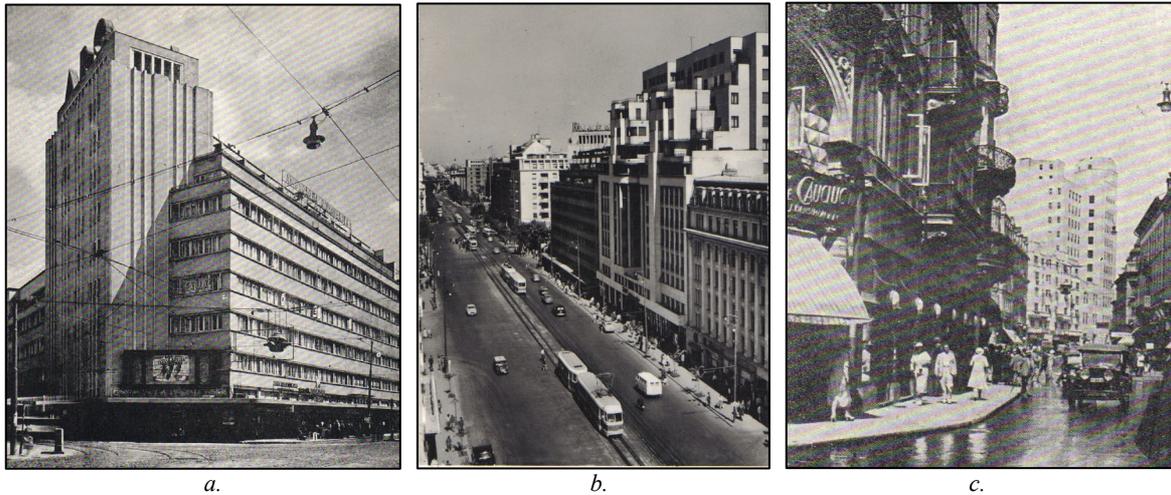
Updated source: Directory plan for the systemization of Bucharest Municipality (1939).



Fig. 4 – The build-up area in Bucharest in 1930.

Source: Directory plan for the systemization of Bucharest Municipality (1939), Annex 1.

The industrial development associated with the investment of Western-European and North-American capital typical for the inter-war period, has favoured the import of the North-American architectural pattern which, given the circumstances of a powerful industrial development that has characterized the U.S.A. in the early 1900s, has been adopted by large European cities. At Bucharest's urban level this architectural model has come to mean the flanking of great streets and boulevards in the City centre (Calea Victoriei, Magheru Boulevard) with high bloc-like (generally P+10) buildings (Fig. 5). A representative building for this architectural model, in Bucharest, is Palatul Telefoanelor (The Telephone Palace), built between 1932 and 1933.



Figs. 5 – Main buildings illustrating the North-American architectural pattern in the first decades of the 20th century (a., b. Magheru Boulevard, c. Calea Victoriei – background: The Telephone Palace).

Source: Directory plan for the systematization of Bucharest Municipality (1939), p. 160.

THE SOVIET-STALINIST CULTURAL PATTERN AND ITS REFLECTION IN THE URBAN PHYSIOGNOMY

The ideological and political discontinuity brought about by the end of World War II which was reflected in all aspects of the economical and social existence, is best noticed in the building area field by the imposing, in an almost violent manner, of a new foreign architectural pattern: the Soviet one. The process has been also favoured by the damages caused by the 10th of November 1940 earthquake as well as by the bombings conducted by the Anglo-American Air forces in April and July 1944 and by the German Air forces on the 24th of August 1944.

The planned development overpowered by the political factor, the control imposed by the state over production and exchange means, the orientation towards an egalitarian development of all the administrative and territorial units, without keeping in mind their different potential and the specific, the stop of the metropolis expansion by way of migration limitation, agricultural development underlined by collectivisation, the close correlation of these states' production rate with the economical and military needs of the "Big Brother", the autarchy and the break with the Western world, as well as the ambitious programmes for the economical and social development and modernization that have underlined an original geopolitical context which, has individualized and brought forward the East European Countries.

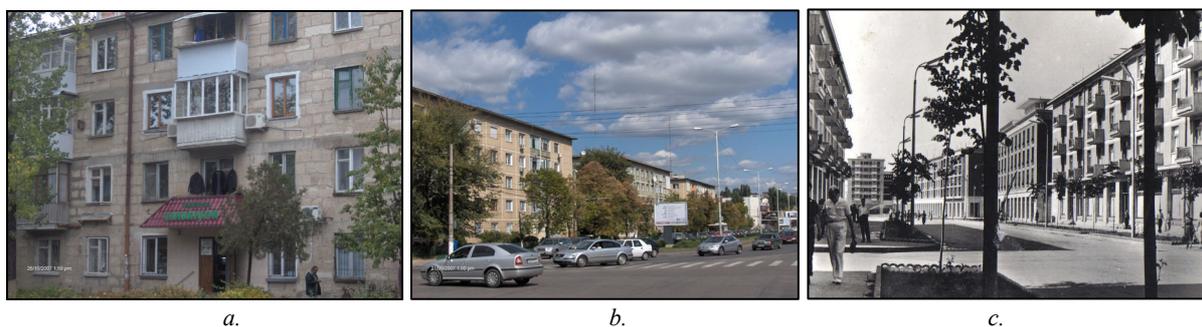
The „export in ideologies” has been reflected on a political, as well as on an ideological, social, institutional, cultural, psychological and architectural level. The cities in this entire area tend towards a uniform physiognomy equally determined by the uniformity of the outskirts, made up of large, prefabricated buildings, following the model of soviet cities, and by the implantation of soviet-style monumental buildings. “Casa Scânteii” (today “Free Press House”) built between 1952 and 1957 and destined to house the publishing of “state press” especially “Scânteia” Newspaper under the patronage of the Central Committee of the Romanian Labour Party is a hallmark for this type of architectural model (Figs. 6).



Figs. 6 – Main buildings illustrating the Soviet architectural pattern (a. „Lomonosov” University in Moscow, b. „Casa Scânteii” in Bucharest, c. The Palace for Culture in Warsaw).

Photo: Radu Săgeată

The consistency of this architectural layer is, however, far more evident on a residential level, for it is in this time that the great residential area of Bucharest is outlined, and was to be made up of block-like buildings, starting with labour-style blocs in Ferentari Quarter, and the standard housing in Bucureștii Noi Quarter, and moving on to the new dormitory-like quarters of Titan, Drumul Taberei, Berceni, Colentina, Pantelimon, Militari, or the living areas alongside the great streets and boulevards: Mihai Bravu, Ștefan cel Mare, Grivița, Rahova, Giurgiului, etc. (Figs. 7).



Figs. 7 – Soviet-style apartment blocks (built between 1950 and 1960) (a. Chișinău, b. Bucharest, c. Galați).

Photo: Radu Săgeată

At the same time, the population is increasingly growing from 992,536 inhabitants in 1941 and 1,041,807 in 1948 to over 2 million inhabitants in the 1980s, but the degree of hypertrophy between Bucharest and the second largest city, which had reached a maximum value (8.83) at the end of the Second World War, is starting to drop (Tab. 3).

The tendencies to reform the Communist political system that have marked the 8th decade of the past century have led to a political openness of Bucharest to the *North-Korean – like Communism*, the only compatible form with the vernacular one. Once extrapolated in an architectural sphere, this tendency has come to mean the introduction into Bucharest’s architecture of North-Korean elements, strongly visible in the entire architectural perimeter stretching between Unirii and Libertății Boulevards and Alba Iulia Square.

Table 3

The demographic evolution of Bucharest Municipality (1831–2006).

Year of reference	Population	Growth rate (inhabitants/year)	Hypertrophy index
1831	58,794		1.21 – Iași
1859	121,734	2,247.8	1.85 – Iași
1878	177,646	2,942.7	
1889	184,488	622	
1899	282,078	9,759	
1912	341,321	4,557.1	4.27 – Iași
1918	382,853	6,922	
1930	639,040	21,348.9	6.21 – Iași
1941	992,539	32,136	
1948	1,041,807	7,038.7	8.83 – Cluj Napoca
1956	1,236,608	24,350.1	7.61 – Cluj Napoca
1966	1,451,942	21,553.4	7.36 – Cluj Napoca
1978	1,858,418	33,873	6.67 – Iași
1984	1,978,654	24,515.7	
1986	1,989,823	5,584.5	5.7 – Brașov
1989	2,036,894	15,690.3	5.8 – Brașov
1992	2,067,545	10,217	5.89 – Constanța
1995	2,054,079	– 4,488.7	5.89 – Constanța
1998	2,016,131	– 12,649.3	5.79 – Iași
2002	1,926,334	– 22,449.25	6.00 – Iași
2007	1,931,838	1,100.8	6.1 – Iași

Source: Processing data based on Censuses and Statistic Yearbooks

THE NORTH-KOREAN ARCHITECTURAL PATTERN

The focal point of this great architectural ensemble is the Parliament Palace (Fig. 8), whose building began in 1983, but has not been finished even to this day. The build-up surface (300,000 m²) ranks it second in the Guinness World Record Book after the Pentagon Building when talking about administrative buildings. In terms of volume, its 2,550,000 m³ rank it third after the building for space spacecrafts assembling in Cape Canaveral, Florida, and after Quetzalcoatl pyramid in Mexico. The building has approximately 1,000 different rooms, of which 440 are offices, over 30 halls and salons, restaurants, the rest being common rooms.



Fig. 8 – The Parliament Palace, illustrative building for the North-Korean architectural model.

Photo: Radu Săgeată

BREAKING DOWN IDEOLOGICAL BARRIERS. GENERALISATION OF GLOBALISING STREAMS AND ETHNICAL-SOCIAL SEGREGATION OF THE URBAN SPACE

The political and ideological fault line that has marked the collapse of the communist political system in 1989 has reflected itself in a natural way on an architectural level, by abandoning the North-Korean model and reorienting itself towards the North-American contemporary architecture. In other words, the last decade of the past century is characterized by the globalization of the North-American architectural model as a natural consequence of the disappearance of ideological borders; Romania is a part of this whole process. Concrete and glass buildings have been built, having a mainly services-oriented function (bank headquarters, offices, hotels etc.), similar to those in the great North-American, European and Asian metropolises but lower in height, adapted to the seismic risk to which the Romanian Capital is subjected (Fig. 9).

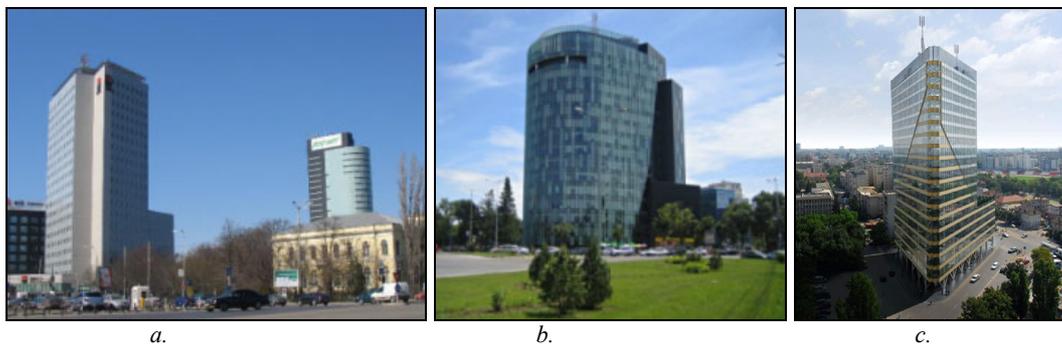


Fig. 9 – The North-American contemporary architectural model in Bucharest (a. BRD Tower and Bucharest Tower Centre on behind, b. Charles de Gaulle Tower, c. Euro Tower – the first “green” office building in Bucharest).

Photo: Ines Grigorescu

At the same time as the building area is developing as a consequence of globalization and localization of direct foreign investments, a phenomenon of urban space segregation manifest itself. This phenomenon appears to have at least two distinct components: an *ethnic* and a *social* component.

The *ethnic* component is the result of the manifestation, on an urban landscape level of ethnic neo-minorities which undertake commercial and business activities in Bucharest. Around 20,000 foreigners live in Bucharest at present, and they have grouped themselves, depending on race, in different quarters, leading to a social and spatial segregation of the urban tissue. The Chinese have not chosen randomly the area of Obor – Colentina – Voluntari, just as the Arabs have not chosen randomly the area of Crângași – Militari – Drumul Taberei, since the activities they undertake are linked to the business unfolded in Europa Shopping Centre, as well as in the Grozăvești – Regie Campus. The Chinese Dragon, the Islam specific colour green, the Indian yellow, or the cedar of Lebanon are but a few of the symbols that have penetrated the Bucharest urban landscape, just as words such as *tavern*, *paprika*, *shaorma*, *croissant*, *hot dog* or *hamburger* have already become a part of Romanian vocabulary. The veils so emblematic for Islam, as well as elements of the Indian or Japanese traditional clothing are present and no longer raise eyebrows in urban Bucharest. To this, one may add traditional architectural elements of different cultures that have a great visual impact in the building area and that have an important contribution to the outlining, in Bucharest, of that certain “cosmopolitan landscape” so specific to the great European metropolises.

Most of the foreigners in Bucharest live in the 2nd sector and especially in the area of Colentina – Voluntari. Chinese people can be seen anywhere, but large numbers of them are being found in the areas that host the huge shopping centres of “Dragonul Roșu”, “Europa” and “Niro”, which have known a great degree of development in the past years.

Starting from these placement opportunities and from the high potential for absorption of Chinese products on the Romanian market, a China Town-like Chinese quarter has begun to be set up in the area around Dobroești commune, East of Bucharest. It is estimated that the Chinese community – the largest one in the world, was made up of approximately 35.4 million people at the end of 2004 (The Chinese Committee for Foreign Affairs, The State Committee of the People’s Republic of China, quoted by Cojocaru, 2007). Among the most famous China Town – like quarters in the world are those on the American continent, from San Francisco, New York, or Toronto, which have begun their ascension in the 18th–19th centuries. The project concerning Bucharest, initially estimated to cover around 30 hectares, would be organized in three distinct areas: a commercial one, already in use (“Dragonul Roșu” Trade Centre), a business area (“China Business Centre”), and a residential area, made up of twelve blocs of 600 flats. The quarter would enjoy the benefits of a kindergarten, parking lots, international and traditional restaurants, a hotel, a mall as well as an exhibition centre in “China Business Centre” of approximately 100.000 m², where Chinese and European economical missions, the bilateral Chamber of Commerce as well as several Chinese companies would unfold their activities (Cojocaru, 2007). Romania’s Capital thus reaches towards the status of an investment pole for China in the East-European space (Fig. 10).



Fig. 10 – Chinese architectural influences in Bucharest.

Source: www.chinatown-project.bucharest.ro

Although trade and the food industry rank at the top regarding favourite investment destinations for Arab investors, approximately 10% of real estate investments are initiated by Arab citizens. The trade and hotel group Sir, which has two branches in Bucharest (Lujerului and Orhideea) is a great example to illustrate the above said. It is also estimated that one in 10/15 major real estate investments in Romania is conducted by an Arab citizen.

The other component of the segregation, the *social* one, is based on financial segregation. Thus various communities which face serious social problems such as unemployment, deficient technical-edilitory infrastructure, high crime rate etc., emerge. At the opposite side, the high-income population displays a tendency to migrate towards the periurban spaces thus favouring the development of *gated communities* which belong to the elite, wealthy people that can afford to create urban areas of a high quality, and to cut themselves apart from the rest of the population. Although at first specific to areas in northern Bucharest (Filipescu, Pipera, Primăverii, Tei, Băneasa districts) (Fig. 11) due to an already existent infrastructure dating back to before 1990 (the high concentration rate of embassy headquarters and diplomatic missions, residential areas and services that have entailed the development of super-specialized services meant for a wealthy clientele), this type of communities have extended to other areas of Bucharest in the form of new real estate projects.



Fig. 11 – Gated communities in “Pipera” District.
 Photo: Ines Grigorescu, Radu Săgeată.

Having this configuration, the present-day urban landscape of Romania’s Capital is the result of multiple influences whose impact has cemented in time, with variable intensities and interaction periods. Within this complex process of interactions, the political factor is the most important one: it either acts in a direct manner by “importing” foreign architectural models, fashionable at a certain moment in history, as a part of an alternative for a politically controlled development with complex consequences on an economical and social level (the soviet architectural model, the North-Korean one etc.), or it acts in an indirect manner by way of communities made up of immigrants that have emigrated due to political causes (political refugees) or economical ones (in this case the economical factor is tributary to the political one since economical evolutions are a consequence of political circumstances). The phenomenon is not a new one, but it has its roots deeply implanted in the communist era, when the policy of “leftist globalization” meant an ample campaign of recruiting for the upper educational units of foreign students, especially Arabs, coming from areas newly influenced by the socialist doctrine or that embraced this political orientation (Palestine, Syria, Algeria, Libya etc.).

To this, other waves of refugees have added (Polish, at the beginning of World War II, later Greeks, during the Civil War in Greece; Koreans, during the Korean War; Chileans of Marxist orientation persecuted by the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet after the fall of Salvador Allende’s regime in the early 1970s; Kurdish members of the Kurdistan Worker’s Party who have found in Romania a fertile battlefields in order for them to assert their national identity on a Marxist basis etc.)

After the year 1990, the focal point of their business shifted towards commercial activities, leading to a multiplication of entrepreneurial businesses in the proximity of university campuses, which have undergone further on a process on centralization in trade centres such as “Sir” or “IDM”.

Future evolution tends to continue these tendencies. Romania’s integration into the European Union has turned out the country into an attractive destination for the emigrants coming from less developed countries in the space outside the EU. The fact that Romanian legislation still has very few restrictions concerning labour force outside the EU tends to transform Romania not only into a target destination for the immigrants, but especially into a gateway for their entrance in the Union’s space of influence.

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