

THE POST-COMMUNIST URBAN LANDSCAPE OF BUCHAREST, ROMANIA

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Nadine Oliver

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THE POST - COMMUNIST URBAN LANDSCAPE OF BUCHAREST, ROMANIA

Thesis Supervisor:

Richard Earl, PhD
Department of Geography

Approved:

Heather C. Galloway, PhD
Dean, Honors College

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the formation of the post-communist urban landscape in Bucharest, Romania, with particular emphasis on the consequences of its transition from a centrally planned, communist economic and political structure to that of a free market system. The lasting legacy of failed communism and a painful, tumultuous transition to a free enterprise economy has left Bucharest in a deteriorating state, despite its comparative wealth within the country. As a national capital, it is especially crucial that the urban landscape, inundated with outdated totalitarian ideology, be developed such that it expresses and encourages post-communist national identity. However, without efficient, centralized urban planning framework, the effects of post-communist economic liberalism and privatization have contributed to the creation of a chaotic and inefficient built urban landscape. This study traces the geographical dynamics of post-communist urban development in Bucharest through case studies, independent field research, and academic literature related to public infrastructure maintenance. The influences of failed public project initiatives, free market real estate development, and the socio-economic conditions of the city are examined. Theoretical and structural changes experienced by the city during and after its transition from communism and the current conditions and challenges of Bucharest are discussed in order to demonstrate the necessity of comprehensive, enforced urban planning policy in post-communist cities.

INTRODUCTION

During the era of communism in Romania, only the state had the authority and economic capital necessary to make sweeping changes to the urban landscape of its national capital, Bucharest. However, when the communist political structure imploded in 1989, the greatest driver of urban development switched from that of a totalitarian, ideologically driven state to the present, where deregulated market forces have the greatest influence in determining the morphology and urban processes of the city.

I begin this study by a theoretical discussion on the importance of national capitals and their built political elements in developing and reflecting national identity. This section establishes how decision makers, either the political and economic elite or the general consensus of the people, choose to represent their nation to the general public and the role of capital cities to “act as national symbols for global audiences” (Smith and Eberjer 2012: 137). This provides an opportunity to examine the urban area of Bucharest with a conceptual approach to the social and political value of place, the historical development of the city under communist rule. This section explains the basis of communist urban planning principles in Romania and reveals the psychological and cultural character of the landscape in question.

In order to explain the general policies and attitudes towards urban development during the last stages of communism, the second section of the study examines the physical changes of infrastructure to Bucharest under Ceausescu and the significance of the ideological underpinnings of his “systemization” efforts. In accordance with his Lenin-Marxist ideals, Ceausescu extensively remodeled much of Bucharest in order to materialize the grandiosity and strength of the communist party through architecture and

urban planning. In this section we use case studies to explore the strategies and implementation of Soviet-style planning practices and architecture in Bucharest and establish that many of these decisions were a result of Ceausescu's objective to erect a "material and symbolic proclamation of [his] cult of personality (Oțoiu 2009: 520). As I will demonstrate, the legacy of these decisions has created numerous challenges for the contemporary government, many of which have no clear solutions.

The remainder of this study explores several major challenges facing Bucharest as a municipality and illustrate instances where the city administrators were unable to properly plan, manage, and implement meaningful change in a post-communist environment. This final section traces the dynamics of post-communist urban development in Bucharest through case studies, independent field work, and academic literature related to the post-communist legacy of the city: failed public development initiatives, the evolving practices of the real estate market, the legacy of institutional class segregation, and the presence of corruption. I further argue that these phenomena pose a significant problem to successful future development of the city and further demonstrate Bucharest's dire need to develop comprehensive, enforced urban planning strategies that fit the unique conditions of a post-communist city. This involves the implementation of economic development policy emphasizing public-private partnerships which encourage civic engagement and seek to develop the built environment for the mutual benefit of the urban landscape and Bucharest's citizenry.

THEORETICAL DISCUSSION ON THE POLITICAL ELEMENTS OF CAPITALS

Urban landscapes are not simply comprised of a handful of buildings and some streets. City landscapes are both the facilitators and results of the constantly occurring flows of money, labor, ideas, media, and interpersonal relationships. The urban environment is not to be understood as a static dot on the map, but a dynamic arena of public, economic, and governmental interest whose interactions form and affect peoples' lived experiences. Looking at the urban landscape provides a narrative of how these interactions form and produce the built environment that we operate within. It is important to note that viewers of the urban landscape create individual perceptions of the city. This perception, whether accurate or fabricated, affects how people experience the city by influencing their expectations and consequently, their behavior. Urban planners and geographers are aware of this perception and it is closely associated with the study of place theory. This perception, or image, can be purposefully manipulated by decision makers for a particular purpose.

The image that capital cities project through their built environment has two target audiences: the international community and the domestic citizenry. At the top of the urban hierarchy in terms of political importance, national capitals must address how their image is displayed for the larger, global public while still attentive to how that projection affects or manipulates the domestic population. Because capital cities typically function as emblematic displays of the nation's real or constructed sense of identity, the role of the capital city is a special interest in political geography. Understanding the relationships between the symbolic power of landscapes and the political influence that has on populations is fairly well explored topic in academic literature.

In his book on cultural geography, Mitchell (2000: 6) states that “Landscape[s]... are incorporations of power... They are made to actively represent who has power... but also to reinforce that power by creating a constant and unrelenting symbol of it”. The built landscape not only suggest unquestioningly what institutions or persons have political prestige, but we can learn from the design and placement of the infrastructure their underlying intentions. Particularly in authoritarian regimes, as Levinson (1998:6) notes, “those with political power within society organize public space to convey (and thus teach the public) desired political lessons”. By analyzing civic infrastructure as an interface between the general public and decision making elite, we can begin to understand the symbolic significance of public works projects. This perspective prompts the inquiry of, “how the symbolic meanings of both physical and represented landscapes are deliberately manipulated to advance political interest, and how one may interpret landscapes as a reflection of those interests” (Forest 2002: 526). While this viewpoint could seem like an overestimation of the ability for the politically powerful to imprint their values onto the urban landscape, for Eastern European societies, who are especially accustomed to the top-down administration of societal affairs, such a pessimistic analysis is not baseless. Political institutions understand the administrative value of materializing their beliefs through infrastructure, particularly through the construction or renaming of public squares, monuments, and large civil works projects. As Verdery (1999: 39) puts it, “these [projects] provide contour to landscapes, socializing them, and saturating them with specific political values”.

The importance of capital cities’ built landscapes in expressing and developing national identity is especially significant during times of rapid political change (Light and

Young 2013). New regimes will seek to influence public opinion by changing the urban morphology to better reflect their ideologies and to provide a dynamic contrast with past political orders. This helps to establish their legitimacy as well as to serve as a nation-building exercise. Capital cities, designed to host major political rituals and ceremonies, are ideal locations to erect emblematic monuments, public spaces, and governmental buildings. Throughout history autocratic regimes, such as Ceausescu, strategically use capital cities as tools of ‘monumental propaganda’ to impress upon spectators the prestige and power of the ruling party (Light and Young 2013).

While governmental institutions will impose their own intentions into the urban realm, it is impossible to completely dispose of the past infrastructure without the wholesale rebuilding of the city. While many rulers would aspire to such total redesign, such as Hitler’s Berlin and Stalin’s Moscow, it is rarely achieved because of the economic and logistical infeasibility of such an endeavor (Cavalcanti 1997). This layering of historical developments gives cities individualistic personalities and creates interesting juxtapositions of political and social commentaries. As Smith contends,

“Most capital cities will contain a mix of styles that continue to demonstrate the values of previous rulers. Contemporary regimes assert their own version of statehood by removing, resemanticizing, and adapting existing buildings, as well as imposing styles, statements, and statues to make their own ideologies visible” (Smith 2010: 64).

These statements are often normative expressions designed to “project a sense of purpose and confidence” (Light and Young 2010: 518). When initiating large scale redevelopment plans in an urban setting, individual autocratic rulers often align themselves with the intervention in a way that portrays them personally as “the

incarnation of the country's moral virtues, power, discipline, and authority as well as the embodiment of the country's political achievements" (Cavalcanti 1997: 81). This image is promoted through official propaganda campaigns and serves to commemorate the ideological elements of urban landscape while also associating the monumentalism and grandeur of the project to the political accomplishments of the ruling party.

But, however powerful of a gesture the process of renaming, redesigning, and repurposing elements of the urban environment can be, we must not overestimate its effect on the daily lives of the citizens, whose personal meaning of place and space cannot be so easily supplanted.

SYSTEMIZATION UNDER CEAUSESCU

In order to understand the motives for Nicolae Ceausescu's large-scale urban redevelopment project in Bucharest, Romania, we must first establish the goals and intentions of his political ambitions that led to these massive landscape changes. A fundamental characteristic of Ceausescu's regime was his adherence to Marxist-Leninist principles that focused on the importance of rapid industrialization and the centralization of political and economic processes (Light and Young 2013). A major characterization of Ceausescu's leadership style was his Stalinist population control measures and limited freedoms of the press. Because of his concentration of political power and the development of a cult of personality, Ceausescu was able to personally control decisions made by the Communist Party and Romanian government. In order to maintain this position, he employed a secret police force, the *Securitate*, which was responsible for the rigorous censorship of the media and professional institutions (Cavalcanti 1997).

One of the most extensive attempts by Ceausescu to dictate societal progress was the “systemization” of towns and cities from 1968-1989 (Light and Young 2012). This development plan was part of a larger political maneuver to modernize Romania as promoted by the slogan, “Systemization, Modernization, Civilization” (Behr 1991: 221). The goal of systemization was to create a more unified Romanian state by spreading the benefits of urbanism throughout the country (Danta 1993). Systemization was intended to produce “standardized and uniform cityscapes that were material expressions of new forms of sociality, modernity, and progress” (Light and Young 2013: 519). After the rise of communism in Romania, a centralist settlement strategy became an integral component of the party platform by attempting to reduce regional social inequalities. This centralist planning scheme included the integration of rural and urban populations by diffusing the civilized qualities of town life to rural communities (Danta 1993).

Officially implemented in 1974, systemization provided a schematic for developing and rearranging each population settlement in the country and featured an organizational structure for National Socialist development (Sampson 1979). This systemization process took a multi-scale approach, but the greatest amount of change was seen at the local level. Some 300 - 400 traditional agricultural villages experienced an increase in mass residential housing construction, while others were demolished, or to use party terms, “consolidated” (Danta 1993). One such consolidated locality to the north of Bucharest that features prominently in this study is Otopeni, which is now the location and namesake of Bucharest’s international airport. For the urban areas that did survive, their redevelopment frequently began with the demolition of the historic city centers, which were redesigned to feature “rectilinear axes and monumental buildings that

invariably housed the key centers of administrative and political power” (Light and Young 2013). Ceausescu felt that this massive redevelopment was necessary to express the accomplishments of the new period of Romanian history, Ceausescu’s golden era. It was expected to provide contrast to the “backward legacy” of past regimes that was regarded as “unrepresentative of the glorious era society was allegedly experiencing under his rule” (Cavalcanti 1997: 84).

The massive redevelopment of Bucharest’s urban center occurred fairly late in the systemization process, during a second phase of urban transformation. Initially under communist rule, changes to Bucharest’s urban environment transpired along the periphery of the city, where the construction of uniform block residential housing structures dominated the landscape. These residential suburbs were created to accommodate the inflow of workers, replace substandard housing, and to demonstrate Socialist egalitarian philosophies (Sampson 1979). Larger examples of these residential areas include Drumul Taberei, Berceni, and Titel Balta Alba, which present a startling discontinuity of urban design (Fig. 1). As one Romanian commented, “to see what they are like, it is sufficient to visit one district: they all look the same, and none of them is particularly attractive!” (Boia 2001: 289). This increase in residential capacity, however, was necessary to serve the growing population of Bucharest which rose from 1,018,817 in 1948 to 1,366,684 in 1966 as a result of forced industrialization (Danta 1993; Boia 2001).



Fig. 1: Examples of socialist-style block residential housing such as Sector 6 (above) and Drumul Taberei (lower) can be seen from an aerial perspective in west-central Bucharest.

Other developments that took place during this initial phase included a boundary change of the administrative districts within Bucharest. This redistricting process reduced the number of administrative districts from eight to six and renamed them with Roman numerals, replacing their former Socialist names (Danta 1993). This change came at a time where Ceausescu had also diminished the role of Bucharest in administering surrounding villages and towns in an attempt to further centralize decision making power. Another political end that materialized during this initial phase of development was the widening of boulevards that led to the center of Bucharest with new housing units constructed along them, designed to function as impressive entryways into the city (Danta 1993). While these changes furthered Ceausescu's objectives, no development initiative was so ambitious, destructive, and persistently problematic as the *Centru Civic*.

CASE STUDY 1: *CENTRU CIVIC*

While Bucharest's historic center was spared the initial wave of redevelopment, a series of events occurred in the late 1970s that would lead to its complete transformation. Since 1965, Ceausescu had been imagining a massive, singular monument to commemorate the Socialist Party and in particular, himself (Danta 1993). During a state visit to North Korea, Ceausescu was inspired by their success in social engineering and by the monumental buildings, huge ceremonial squares, and extensive boulevards that dominated the cityscape of P'yongyang. Seeing the highly regimented shows of dedication North Koreans provided their ruler had a profound impact on Ceausescu, who returned to Romania intent on replicating this style of governance (Light and Young 2010).

In March 1977, an earthquake in the area caused considerable damage to Bucharest and Ceausescu was given an opportunity to pursue this dream of redevelopment (Behr 1991). The plan for a new Socialist Civic Center was announced immediately after the earthquake and concentrated on the radical spatial restructuring of the city center, rather than efforts to restore the more damaged areas of the city (Cavalcanti 1993). This development was a massively ambitious undertaking for the city. It required five square kilometers in the historic center of the city to be demolished, as well as forcibly removing approximately 40,000 people from their homes, usually with little forewarning (Light and Young 2013).

The purpose of the district was to provide governmental offices and apartment residences for the Communist Party elite. According to one academic source, the approach Ceausescu took in creating this district featured three primary motivations. First, he wanted to solidify aspects of Socialist ideology in the architecture with the

monumental scale of the state-imposed landscape. Second, he wanted to rewrite the history of the nation by demolishing the visual past of pre-Socialist Romania. And third, he sought to replicate the artificial, totalitarian landscape he had seen in Pyongyang (Danta 1993).

The predominance of Ceausescu's individual personality in the construction of the Civic Center cannot be understated. Although in a document he wrote that these projects served as:

“grand and bright landmarks of this age of deep-going renewing transformations, monumental constructions that will defy centuries, as an impressive testimony of the will of Bucharest's inhabitants, of the entire Romanian people, to bestow dignity and grandeur on the country's capital, on our socialist homeland” (Cucu and Sandru 1987: 93).

This statement speaks to the spirit of the project while the planning process demonstrates the level of influence Ceausescu's narcissism had on the design. According to Cavalcanti (1993: 86), the decision to wholesale reconstruct Bucharest's urban center resulted, “from Ceausescu's individual will, rather than a compromise between the Romanian state leadership and planning institutions”. Through coercive strategies, official decrees, and declarations, Ceausescu was able to control every step of the planning process. According to an official declaration by the state:

“The historical decision for building a new centre belongs to Comrade Nicolae Ceausescu.... Architects, town-planners, engineers, and constructors benefit from the permanent and precise instruction of Comrade Nicolae Ceausescu, who dedicates great part of his precious time to personally direct the activity of construction, architecture, and systemization of Bucharest” (Cavalcanti 1993: 86).

Ceausescu's personal level of involvement within the planning process was so intense that every detail of the proposed plan had to be submitted to him for judgment prior to its approval. His influence and control of professional institutions extended to the Union of Architects of Romania, where free speech was, for all intents, non-existent and architects operated in an environment of fear of retribution should they express their views on matters relating to the city center project (Cavalcanti 1993). This highly centralized decision-making process meant that Ceausescu had absolute control over the project, regardless of existing institutional practices or the advice of planning specialists. This did prove problematic, however, as he had trouble reading and comprehending the plans and drawings. According to Dr. Alexandru Budisteanu, the chief architect for the municipality of Bucharest,

“Ceausescu was unable to read plans and we had to make models to make him understand the proposals....In history there has been Louis XIV in France, Hitler in Germany, and Mussolini in Italy [who] were able to understand town planning and architecture. They were all dictators, but at least, they entered into a genuine dialogue with the specialists. With Ceausescu this was impossible” (Cavalcanti 1993: 87).

Budisteanu's statement further explains that in order to appease Ceausescu, architects had to constantly resort to creating life size models to convey their ideas to such “an uneducated person” (Cavalcanti 1993: 87). Clearly, the egotism involved outweighed specialist practicality. Below are two photos taken of this district, showing the formidable impact of the design (Figures 2 and 3).



Fig. 2: View of the *Centru Civic* development and the *Palatul Parlamentului* in the background.



Fig. 3: Apartment buildings in the *Centru Civic*

Needless to say, unchecked, ideological motivation for urban development can have disastrous consequences on the urban fabric, the economy, and the morale of society. The combined cost of construction for the *Centru Civic* and the *Palatul*

Parlamentului (the primary federal administration building constructed at the same time and the center piece of the district) was that of a staggering € 4.8 billion (Light and Young, 2013). Despite the exorbitant cost of the project, many parts of both the *Centru Civic* and the *Palatul Parlamentului* remained unfinished at the fall of communism. Nevertheless, these “costs occurred at a time when Romanians were experiencing unprecedented austerity and hardship as a result of Ceausescu’s policy of exporting food and rationing energy” (Light and Young 2013: 523). To those Romanians in Bucharest, these structures are symbolic of one of the most agonizing and oppressive periods in their history. These monumental, preposterous structures serve as a constant, overbearing reminder to citizens and planners alike of the egregious failures of communism, as well as the challenges its legacy creates for adapting to a free market economy.

CENTRU CIVIC AFTER COMMUNISM

It was not only during communism that the political decision makers compromised the progress of urban improvements. Post-communist development, as I will demonstrate, faces numerous challenges: corruption, incomplete legal framework and development policy, insufficient budgets. Although in the case of the *Centru Civic*, it was federal political maneuvering that compromised the development project and caused the administration to ultimately reject its own attempts at progressing the area’s potential.

In 1995, the Romanian government called for an International Planning Competition entitled *București 2000*, primarily to generate solutions to the unfinished construction in the area of the *Centru Civic* (Light and Young 2013). The winning project proposal, produced by a German architecture team headed by Meinhard von Gerkan,

proposed the development of a high - rise business district that would create new space and show Romania's commitment to a market economy (Light and Young 2013). The design was intended to have neutralized some of the raw force of the totalitarian landscape and to further the aspirations and developing identity of the Romanian nation. However, it wasn't until 2000, well after the competition concluded, that the government gave the matter attention. The neoliberal administration at the time secured funding through a private force (as it was unlikely they were able to afford it publically) and established an urban development agency to implement the project plan. Regrettably, later that year that administration was replaced at the election cycle by the Social Democratic Party, headed by President Ion Iliescu, who suspended the project two days into office with Emergency Ordinance 295 (Light and Young 2013). Although it is speculated that this fits the standing political tradition in Romania that new administrations revert decisions made by the outgoing leadership, the precise reasons this project was rescinded remains unknown (Ioan 2009). Regardless, the clear lack of political support prevented this district from experiencing a rejuvenation that could have benefitted the city tremendously.

Fourteen years later, the state has done little to advance the area of *Centru Civic* or negate some of its totalitarian remnants. Although, the area has seen a small number of businesses and banks emerge from uncoordinated private initiatives. It was, due to a lack of coherent, efficient development strategy on the part of the federal or municipal governments, the private market that has done the most to create change in the district (Light and Young 2013). This represents a larger systematic shift in the control of the

urban environment, from the deregulated, inefficient state to the forces of the private market.

PUBLIC PARKING SHORTAGES

While some areas of Bucharest have witnessed private enterprise filling the role of the state, this has not been the case for one very important urban service: public parking. One arguable success of the Communist regime was the implementation of extensive public transportation systems. Car ownership was limited during communism accordingly, but since 1989, the ability to import and purchase an automobile has increased drastically. Although a radical notion thirty years ago, some fortunate Romanians are now driving Opels, Volkswagens, and Dacias (many of which are made in Romania). However, the municipality of Bucharest has failed to provide adequate public parking infrastructure. The inability to accommodate the increased number of cars wishing to park, particularly downtown, has made public parking a subjective and non-enforceable activity. The chaotic and ambiguous parking system in Bucharest complicates transportation planning and disrupts the traffic flow of sidewalks and bike lanes. Below are several photos of the anarchic nature of public parking in central Bucharest (Figures 4, 5 and 6).



Fig. 4: A typical parking job in Bucharest.



Fig. 5: The uncoordinated, deregulated parking complicates pedestrian and bike traffic.



Fig. 6: Parking laws, if they do exist, are completely unenforceable.

VACANT PUBLIC BUILDINGS

Regardless of how visionary or determined urban planners and municipal decision makers may or may not be, they must operate within the existing conditions and limitations of their city. Many enduring remnants of the communist vision no longer serve a purpose and throughout the city, one can witness grand, crumbling structures. Once constructed to serve the Party and the large number of public agencies, since the fall of communism and the subsequent consolidation of bureaucratic entities, many of these buildings have been simply abandoned. Unattractive for private investment and unable to be supported by the minimal government, they lie vacant as a chilling reminder of a former time. Some, however, are occupied by the sizeable homeless population in Bucharest (Figures 7 and 8).



Fig. 7: An incomplete structure in the vicinity of the *Centru Civic*.



Fig. 8: Unfinished structures east of *Cara de Nord*.

A catastrophic waste of resources, these buildings now sit uselessly idle and pose a serious dilemma for urban planners. Unsightly and dilapidated, these areas create a sense of urban decay that discourages investment in the area and suggests an air of inhospitality. Development initiatives of these areas are not likely to be produced by the public sector and likely will have to wait for the private market to find an economically viable use for them. Finding ways to utilize or somehow mend the scars they create on the urban fabric will be one of the great challenges for post-communist planners.

CASE STUDY 2: SAINT JOSEPH'S CATHEDRAL

The problems inherent in a post-communist system are widespread, but the prevalence of corruption among bureaucrats and city officials is a pervasive and wicked problem. The serious and damaging consequences of corruption have stunted the development of Bucharest and this case study of the Saint Joseph's Cathedral scandal is a prime example of the negligence and unscrupulousness that can occur when urban expansion occurred without any clear vision or enforced, concise regulation.

Only about 25 feet separate the historic Saint Joseph's Cathedral from a recently constructed 19 - story skyscraper called "Cathedral Plaza" (NCRegister: "Skyscraper Scandal")(Figure 9). Despite the visual and spiritual inconsideration this development caused, the deeply troubling aspect of these adjacent buildings is the manner of the tower's construction and the systemic corruption that made it possible. Although the empty adjacent property lot was initially supposed to be occupied by the Catholic Archbishop, it was sold to the Millennium Building Group, a local holding of American and Israeli investors, who began construction of the building in late 1990s (NCRegister: "Skyscraper Scandal"). It was reported that "despite stop work orders from Romanian courts, protests from the Vatican, the European Parliament, the Romanian Senate, and the country's two million faithful Roman Catholics, the tower neared completion" (Romanian Insider: "City Hall Lacks Budget to Demolish"). The city's current mayor, Sorin Oprescu, found by reviewing documents that since the land was publicly owned, it ought to have been auctioned to the general public and issued court action against the Millennium Group, as well as the corrupt involved officials (NCRegister: "Skyscraper Scandal"). The courts found numerous building code violations, in addition to the illegal issuing of the initial building permits. It further ordered the building to be disassembled, but did not say what group was responsible for paying the €18 million cost of demolition (Romanian Insider: "Bucharest City Hall Lacks Budget"). The dilemma caused by the investment group's unwillingness to pay and the city's inability to fund the demolition means that this enormous high rise remains vacant.

This sort of intrigue is more than embarrassing for the city- it points to a deeply unsettling system of bureaucratic misconduct and has created a wasted high-rise whose

presence offends the church and mocks the citizenry. Transparent operations, in which various stakeholders are involved in large-scale decisions, such as the Cathedral Plaza, are necessary to combat the prevalence of such gross criminal malpractices. This developing city cannot afford such scandals and after the authoritarian reign of communism, citizens must step up to act as a check and balance against the actions of the existing bureaucracy.



Fig. 9: The Saint Joseph's Catholic Church (right) and Cathedral Plaza (left).



Fig.10: A banner for an anti-corruption campaign.

POST-COMMUNIST REAL ESTATE

While many post-communist buildings lie in disrepair, one of the greatest changes to the urban morphology of Bucharest was the emergence of suburban residential development, which flourished after the establishment of a private real estate market. In this section I explain that in a post-communist context, where housing selection is now driven by an individual's aspirations and resources, limited only by the options of the market place, unregulated private investment has converted previously agricultural land proximate to the city into "discontinuous, dispersed, low-density" residential developments, known as suburban sprawl (Suditu 2009: 83). Unregulated land uses, such as sprawl, pose a challenge for successful development and efficient management of the municipality.

Finishing this section, I also explore the socio-economic dynamics of the post-communist real estate market, beginning with the inequitable allocation of housing during communism that ironically established classist segregation of the city. The liberalization of the economy, combined with the decentralized administrative position of Bucharest, actually exacerbated these urban inequalities demonstrated by the socio-economic disparities between the northern and southerly sectors of the city.

SUBURBAN SPRAWL

With the legalization of the land market and the diminished role of the state in providing housing, the residential patterns under communism were replaced by a new

dynamic, dependent upon the financial capacity and preferences of the individuals in question.

The dissolution of mobility restrictions after the fall of communism gave agency to those families and individuals with sufficient resources to choose their preferred housing options. It also created a market for previously unavailable agricultural land for residential use. “The pressure of the city and the lack of comfortable alternative dwellings at accessible prices led to the research of solutions in the rural areas around” and instigated a push for peripheral development (Subitu 2009:87). This rapid land use conversion from agricultural to residential left little room to consider factors such as: environmental controls, coordinated transportation planning, or public services such as schools, roadways, and other infrastructure needed to ensure quality of life.

The immediate deregulation in 1990 eliminated “any plans and legal instruments concerning urban planning and land management for over a decade” (Subitu 2009: 84). Consequently, “in the absence of urban planning and strategic documents concerning residential development around the capital, the new residential developments correspond, according to the sustainable development criteria, to an anarchic way of occupying the space” (Subitu 2009: 83). Also, due to the void of development policy, neither the owners of the land nor the local authorities were obligated to provide technical services for these newly repurposed plots, such as paved roads, water, and sewage, creating a disorganized and inefficient infrastructure network. The negative effects of the reduced density of sprawl has been well documented such as: intense agricultural land consumption, energy cost of individualized dwellings, the cost of connections to public services, and the increased transportation cost to the city proper (Subitu 2009). Large scale green-field

development, such as this requires “important investments, as well as an efficient correlation of the involved public authorities, including cooperation between Bucharest and the localities around” (Suditu 2009: 92).

The unorganized sprawl of low-density suburban development that occurred as a result of post-communist deregulation has fragmented and scattered the previously stable delineations of the city limits. Urban sprawl in Bucharest was the result of individual private enterprises operating without public coordination and exemplifies the need for land use regulatory systems and guiding development documents in a free market economy.

SOCIAL SEGREGATION

In Romania, as well as other communist states, the objective for controlling the production, ownership, and allocation of housing was to eliminate the occurrence of capitalist class - based segregation (Ruoppila 2004). Social equality was the stated goal of residential policy making and the basis for the state’s responsibility to provide and allocate housing.

However, it is argued by Hungarian academic Iván Szelényi, that this system of state-controlled real estate created a new dynamic of discrimination.

“Scarce goods such as new or better housing were more likely to be given to certain groups of people, particularly those working in ‘important’ jobs... therefore, administrative allocation did not reverse, but simply replaced the capitalist market method of allocation as a source of urban inequalities” (Ruoppila 2004: 3).

The given value of a person’s labor served as a criterion in the allocation of housing resources, leading to a split in the distribution of resources between Party

members and the workers (Ruoppila 2004). Less skilled laborers were housed in more southerly areas such as the previously mentioned Drumul Taberei, Berceni, and Tital Balta Alba, while more valued workers of the state were selected for more desirable areas, such as the *Centru Civic* or farther north towards Otopeni in Sector 1. “The northern area of Bucharest, in addition to a high accessibility rate and a good social image, benefits from the presence of attractive natural elements”, creating a highly sought after location and making it the elite sector of the city (Subitu 2009: 84). This geographical inequality remains very much present today, since after the collapse of communism, “the majority of the occupants of the apartments built with state funds were able to buy the apartments they were occupying inside the city” (Subitu 2009: 84). This solidified the uneven distribution of labor value in the city and created a distinct difference in development patterns between the north and south of the city, ultimately establishing class segregation in a post-communist society.

The differing development prospects between these two areas can be seen in the current real estate dynamics. In 2002, the central-northern areas of Bucharest became the most valuable real estate area, with property costs having “risen roughly 10 times in a decade” (Nae and Turnock 2011: 215). As of one year later, property costs in the north were €500 per sq. meter, as compared with €400 in central Bucharest and €250-300 farther south (Nae and Turnock 2011). Although a diversity of housing options is beneficial to any settlement, this polarized development threatens the city by increasingly distancing socio-economic groups and preventing some from experiencing equitable resources and opportunities.

The decentralized administrative system of Bucharest gives individual sectors a good deal of financial autonomy and places on them the responsibility for economic development and public services, such as water, electricity, gas and trash (Subitu 2009). This combined with the free market's tendency to follow the potential for profit and develop in areas with increasing wealth, led to economic development in the northern sector at a rate much higher than in the south (Figures 11, 12, 13, and 14). Sectors with groups that have higher earning power (such as the northern Sector I) will ultimately see more private development, and thus a greater tax base, than those sectors which do not (Figures 15, 16, and 17). I argue that the decentralized administrative position of Bucharest and the surrounding municipalities discourages the development of a joint vision plans and prevents the capital from holistically managing and regulating its city, leading to further economic and geographical discrimination between sectors.



Fig 11: Example of pollution and environmental degradation to the south of the city.



Fig. 12: Little maintenance has been done to these housing blocks since the fall of communism.



Fig. 13: An abandoned lot overlooks the Palace of the Parliament.



Fig. 14: The lack of public utilities exacerbates living conditions in poverty-ridden areas.



Fig. 15: New high rise office parks accommodate the quaternary sector of the economy in Sector I.



Fig. 16: International corporations, such as Oracle, favor the area's proximity to the international airport and many expatriate workers live in the area.



Fig. 17: Luxury malls feature popular Western brands and companies.

CONCLUSION

In an economically liberalized, post-communist situation, where the public sector no longer operates as the primary driver of urban change, there is a great need to develop planning framework and economic development policies that encourage and protect public-private partnerships to the mutual benefit of the urban landscape, its citizens, and the financial institutions that invested in them. Since the fall of communism in Romania, Bucharest has expanded and developed without clear vision plans or concise regulatory framework. Inefficiency, incapability, unpredictable political will, and other bureaucratic shortcomings threaten the public sector's ability to successfully initiate and monitor urban progress. While at the same time the uncoordinated private initiatives that the free market allows has created fragmented and unequitable development. The optimal solution for rectifying these two trends is the creation of concise, responsible urban planning and economic development policy that promotes and protects private-public partnerships through enforced regulatory and visionary documents. Additionally, such policy ought to simultaneously encourage civic participation and emphasize transparency of operations in order to mitigate corruption, engage the public in the planning process, and to create democratic experiences for the citizens.

Private-public joint initiatives with explicit, thoughtful policy can protect urban development from the pitfalls of having either sector be wholly responsible, while capitalizing on their respective strengths. The systemic shift towards capitalism in Romania can be utilized by the city to harness the capabilities and flexibility of a market economy, while steering it via policy towards responsible, equitable development.

Private industry can contribute the initiative, financial capital, and specialized talent needed to modernize and utilize much of the decaying infrastructure in Bucharest. In a successful partnership with municipal and federal powers, the enterprising spirit of business can produce creative solutions to many of the physical problems in the city, furthered by the investment security that enforced, concise development policy and vision documents can provide. Two examples of problems outlined in this study that could potentially solved through private enterprise are: the lack of public parking facilities in central Bucharest and the prevalence of underused and vacant buildings. Both issues could be addressed through the mechanisms of the private market with fair and proper incentives from the city.

While post-communist societies often have a lingering bad taste towards regulation and economic restrictions, such governmental oversight is often necessary in order to coordinate private sector initiatives for the betterment of the urban environment as a whole, as well as to temper the inequitable command of resources in a free market system. The creation of new public services encourages economic development in those areas and raises the overall standard of living. The relationship between the public and private actors need not be characterized only by conflicting interests or corrupted agreements, but should work in tandem to provide citizens the highest level of public services, as well as generating economic activity and growth.

The urban landscape of Bucharest is one which has witnessed great difficulties and strife. In order to create a city that exemplifies the prestige and modernity expected from a European capital, urban planners and the citizenry are going to have to unite to tackle the challenges and failures presented by post-communism.

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