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Arhitectura 1950-1989. Interstitial Spaces of Communist Romanian Architecture

Popovici, Ioana Cristina

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University of Plymouth

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**UNIVERSITY OF
PLYMOUTH**
School of Art, Design and
Architecture

ARHITECTURA 1950-1989

INTERSTITIAL SPACES OF COMMUNIST ROMANIAN ARCHITECTURE

by

IOANA-CRISTINA POPOVICI

A thesis submitted to the University of Plymouth
in partial fulfilment for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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My thanks also extend to the Union of Romanian Architects, and in particular to Dr Viorica Iuga-Curea, who has kindly approved on behalf of the URA my use of archival material from *Arhitectura* towards the completion of this research project and connected published papers.

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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

At no time during the registration for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy has the author been registered for any other University award without prior agreement of the Doctoral College Quality Sub-Committee.

Work submitted for this research degree at the University of Plymouth has not formed part of any other degree either at the University of Plymouth or at another establishment.

This study was financed in its entirety by myself, alongside a generous financial contribution from my mother.

A programme of advanced study was undertaken, which included a taught module at Plymouth University - Research Skills in the Arts & Humanities (MARE 525), completed successfully in May 2015. During the course of this postgraduate degree, I have also attended the Rhetoric as Theory and Method in the Study of Politics Workshop (University of East Anglia, 2013).

Although I had completed the majority of the archival research required by this thesis prior to relocating to Plymouth, I have continued to visit the following institutions based in Bucharest for supplemental data: The National Archives of Romania, the Archives of the Union of Romanian Architects, the Archives of the Ion Mincu University of Architecture and Urbanism, the Bucharest City Hall Archives, the Archives of *Arhitectura* magazine, the Romanian Academy Library, and the National Library of Romania.

During the course of this project, several of the research strategies and findings contributing to this thesis have been presented for academic peer-review through the following publications (included in full at the end of this thesis):

Ioana C. Popovici, 'Star-Topped Spires and Cardboard Heroes. Soviet Socialist Realism in *Arhitectura R.P.R.*', *studies in History & Theory of Architecture*, 1 (2013), pp. 60–77.

Ioana C. Popovici 'Architecture competitions – a space for political contention. Socialist Romania, 1950–1956', *Journal of Architecture and Urbanism*, vol. 38, 1 (2014), pp. 24–38.

Ioana C. Popovici, ' "... the city as a part of nature, and concrete as a kind of earth". Japanese Architecture Meets 1960s-1980s Romanian Modernism', *studies in History & Theory of Architecture*, 2 (2014), pp. 116–39.

Ioana C. Popovici, 'Two Churches and A Hat: The National Bucharest Theatre or the Mythology of Post-War Romanian Architecture', *PARSE Journal*, 3 (2017), pp. 109-128.

These findings have also been presented at the following conferences and talks:

Plymouth University - Postgraduate Society Conference series, Plymouth University, 10th March 2014.

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Arhitectura 1950-1989. Interstitial Spaces of Communist Romanian Architecture

Ioana-Cristina Popovici

ABSTRACT:

This thesis examines the relationship between communist Romanian architecture as a politicised field of cultural production, and power embodied in the state's institutions. While it is generally acknowledged that the cultural production in socialist Romania was undeniably impacted upon by politics, this sense of the extensive inter-conditioning between the paths of architecture and politics seems to disappear with Romania's 1990s transition to democracy and capitalism. By adding to the nascent critical history of communist Romanian architecture, this thesis seeks to highlight the tacit transference of interaction patterns between the spheres of architecture and that of politics into contemporary practice, thereby contributing to a growing sense of professional self-criticality, impeded thus far by the logic of past erasure.

Looking through the lens of socialist Romania's only architecture magazine, *Arhitectura* - a unique post-war microcosm of architectural thought and practice - reveals interstitial, unexplored spaces of praxis, indicating subtle interactions between architecture and other segments of the social, cultural and economic spheres of the socialist system. Building on current scholarship on the subject, the methodology of this thesis filters archival research through a combination of analytical lenses focused on ideology, socio-cultural dynamics and hegemony, underpinned by the works of Antonio Gramsci, Louis Althusser, Jadwiga Staniszkis, Michel Foucault, Katherine Verdery and Alexei Yurchak, among others. Unfolding across several narrative threads, the discussion is framed by an understanding of the ontology of socialism, adapted to reflect the particularities of the Romanian case. The thesis calls into question the constitution of architecture's locus of power, as well as its endurance across shifts in political regime. It also investigates the negotiation between the profession's drive towards synchronicity with the Western scene, and political impetus towards insular cultural uniqueness and specificity. Finally, it reflects on the implications of these dynamics for contemporary architecture praxis.

Communist architecture heritage in Romania is not limited to the built environment. The indissoluble link between recent past and current practice also comprises extensive networks of state apparatuses, channels of command, assessment and resource distribution, alongside official and professional mentalities that have reshaped architecture - as a system of knowledge, a concrete practice, and an area of cultural production. Most of these networks have been transferred tacitly into the post-socialist era, continuing to exert considerable influence and to bind (and politicise) the field of architectural production. Understanding the constitution and metamorphosis of these links across the threshold of Romania's liberalisation represents an original contribution to the growing academic understanding of the recent architectural past, and provides relevant insights for the transformation of contemporary Romanian architecture praxis.

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○ 'Architecture competitions – a space for political contention. Socialist Romania, 1950–1956', <i>Journal of Architecture and Urbanism</i> , vol. 38, 1 (2014), pp. 24-38.	
○ ' "... the city as a part of nature, and concrete as a kind of earth". Japanese Architecture Meets 1960s-1980s Romanian Modernism', <i>studies in History & Theory of Architecture</i> , 2 (2014), pp. 116–39.	
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Fig. 1. A condensed visual history of Romanian architecture, assembled by the Order of Romanian Architects. From bottom to top, the Kisseleff Roadside Buffet, Bucharest (1892); Belona Hotel, Eforie Nord (1933); and Europe House, Bucharest (2002).

*What makes commonplace history in other countries is repressed history in ours. Nobody – not Romanian researchers, and least of all foreign researchers – is willing to tackle the investigation of the still nebulous or less imposing areas of history, let alone in the peripheral quarters of a 'major' history, like the history of architecture. Political theorists have yet to explain the mechanisms of the communist regime, its stages and background actors (given that many are still alive, some politically active, others in key state positions); therefore, why would the history of architecture feel more responsible for these uncharted waters of post-war Romanian history?*¹

Augustin Ioan, 2009

¹ Augustin Ioan, 'Cum se cercetează arhitectura perioadei comuniste?' [How is research done on the architecture of the communist period?] <<http://atelier.liternet.ro/articol/7726/Augustin-ioan/Cum-se-cerceteaza-arhitectura-perioadei-comuniste.html>> [accessed 8 January 2017]

1.1. Patterns of erasure

The header of the official site of the Order of Romanian Architects (Fig. 1)² delivers a condensed visual history of Romanian architecture curated by the country's main professional body for architects, legally and organisationally in charge of all aspects of architecture education and practice.³ In the absence of an exposition of the Order of Romanian Architects (ORA) principles and policies outside the legal and administrative realm,⁴ it also doubles as an implicit affirmation of the ethos, identity and core values of the profession. Although it spans more than a century, this visual history is incomplete and distorted. Approximately fifty years of post-war communist

² Ordinul Arhitecților din România, <<http://www.oar.org.ro/>> [accessed 30 May 2015; last accessed 21 May 2018] The image has since been replaced with a page detailing the organisation's mission, vision, a brief history, as well as a news feed of professional relevance. However, the current visual and textual narrative of the OAR website is still dismissive of Romanian architecture's communist period: the unreferenced image currently heading the brief section on the ORA's history has even more chronologically remote connotations, despite being an illustration of contemporary work. A close-up of brickwork arches from Ene + Ene Arhitectura's holiday retreat in Poienarii-Rali is reminiscent of the Brâncovenesc style of 17th and 18th century palaces of the Romanian principality of Wallachia, while also merging two local ideals of habitation and architectural practice: the idyllic countryside retreat, and contemporary design imbued with traditional archetypes.

Ordinul Arhitecților din România, <<https://www.oar.archi/despre-oar/istoric>> [accessed 21 May 2018]

³ According to the official ORA presentation, documenting the organisation's legal status and attributions. Ordinul Arhitecților din România, 'Cadru legislativ și normativ' [Legal and normative frameworks]

<<http://www.oar.archi/despre-oar/cadru-legislativ-si-normativ>> [accessed 15 January 2017; last accessed 21 May 2018]

⁴ Towards the end of 2016, the ORA website underwent significant changes under new leadership, and began to distance itself from a predominantly historicist, conservative image and attitude, striving towards organisational transparency and efficacy. Under the current administration led by architect and theorist Șerban Țigănaș, and featuring notable architecture theorists and researchers such as Ana Maria Zahariade on the board of directors, the ORA has taken great strides – visible through the transformation of its website – to increase public awareness of architecture praxis and education. Several studies underpinning an extensive pilot project for a policy for Romanian architecture (2010-2015) have already been published on the website. Since 2008, the ORA has made several attempts to kick-start, in partnership with the authorities, a definite strategy for the current development of architecture in Romania.

Ordinul Arhitecților din România, 'Misiune, viziune și politici OAR' [OAR Mission, vision, and policies] <<http://www.oar.archi/despre-oar/misiune-viziune-si-politici-oar>> [accessed 14 January 2017; last accessed 21 May 2018]

architecture are excised from this historical narrative, which – quite significantly – has direct bearing on the hierarchy of architectural values underpinning contemporary professional identity and praxis.

From bottom to top, the three images signpost the evolution of Romanian architecture from the late 19th century to the early 2000s, tacitly epitomising the profession's idealised self-perception: liberal, autonomous, culturally and economically influential, Bucharest-centric, and nationally-specific. The Roadside Buffet⁵ belongs to the neo-Romanian style, widely regarded as the watershed moment whereby Romanian architecture became original and significant on a European level by interpreting tradition in a modern slant. Belona Hotel⁶ hails from the interbellum, a time of modernist maturity, successfully adapting an imported architectural paradigm to the local socio-cultural context. Europe House⁷ condenses contemporary

⁵ Designed by architect Ion Mincu (1852-1912). A gifted polymath, Mincu added engineering, politics, and the teaching of architecture to his professional repertoire. His work was the first to blend elements of traditional Romanian architecture with the spatial specifics of modern, large-scale programmes, in line with Arts and Crafts movements across Europe. Mincu's innovative projects and writings paved the way for one of the dominant paradigms of the early 20th century Romanian architecture, whose discursive and formal diversity is poorly served by the umbrella-term of neo-Romanian style. Mincu's activity as an architect, founding member of the Society of Romanian Architects, and principal pedagogical figure of the first instances of the Romanian school of architecture in Bucharest have secured his place as a central founding figure of modern Romanian architecture. The Ion Mincu University of Architecture and Urbanism in Bucharest has borne his name since 1953.

Short biographies of the main architects and theorists relevant to the study will feature in footnote form throughout the text.

⁶ Brainchild of architect, painter and writer George Matei Cantacuzino (1899-1960), whose significant contributions to Romanian architecture through theoretical writings, academic and journalistic activity, as well as stylistically versatile designs, represent the ideal of interwar practice. Due to the political detention and hardship endured during communism, Cantacuzino has become an icon of pre-war professional and intellectual values, further entrenching the morality-based severance of the communist period from both interbellum and contemporary architecture.

⁷ Office building designed by architect Vladimir Arsene, whose aptly-named studio, Westfourth Architecture (founded 1991) has wrought the image of corporate Romania after the 1989 Revolution, and developed into a successful international practice.

professional desiderata: international relevance and representation in the current neo-capitalist logic.

The big absentee from this timeline is post-war communist architecture, which is the most significant moment in the recent history of the profession, not only for being the most consistently socially-oriented, but also through the immensity of its built output. After the instatement of the communist regime towards the end of the 1940s, Romania underwent a dramatic demographic transformation, addressing the stark imbalance between the rural and urban population,⁸ supported by fast-track urbanisation and the development of regional infrastructure networks.⁹ Despite the relative unreliability of reported percental increases from one five-year plan to the next, investments in housing stock, public amenities and socio-cultural infrastructure formed a central concern of the communist planned economy, outstripping pre-war production in

⁸ The 1941 national census undertaken by the Central Institute for Statistics operating under the aegis of the Council of Ministers estimated a stable population of 20,058,378 inhabitants based on 16,769,584 census respondents, with a 78.3% rural versus 21.7% urban distribution.

Gheorghe Birăescu, Gh. Iorgulescu, and Cezara Agopșă, *Indicatorul localităților din România. Datele recensământului general din 6 Aprilie 1941*, ed. by Sabin Manuila (Bucharest: Imprimeria Institutului Statistic, 1943).

A scanned copy of the original bound volume can be found at <www.cimec.ro/pdf/dl.asp?filename=indicatorul-localitatilor-din-Romania-1941.pdf> [accessed 21 May 2018]

⁹ Data collected at the very beginning of the communist period and corroborated by contemporary scholarship (see reference to Zahariade below) estimated that even in Bucharest, Romania's capital and most developed city, 45% of the housing stock consisted of precarious self-builds, 52% lacked access to electricity, 72% to running water, and 80% to sewage. On a national level, only 6% of the population was able to access and benefit from electricity. By comparison, towards the end of the 1970s over half of Romania's population was concentrated in 239 urban areas, the percentage of agricultural labourers had decreased to approximately 29%, with the remainder equally distributed between industry and other sectors. For additional details, see:

Grigore Ionescu, with Petre Derer and Dinu Theodorescu, *Arhitectura în perioada anilor 1944-1969* [Architecture between 1944-1969] (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Republicii Socialiste România, 1969), p. 43.

Ana Maria Zahariade, *Arhitectura în proiectul comunist. România 1944-1989* [Architecture in the communist project. Romania 1944-1989], trans. by Ana Maria Zahariade with Diana Lupu, ed. by Alistair Ian Blyth and Eugenia Petre (Bucharest: Simetria, 2011) p. 24.

Ronald D. Bachman, *Romania: A Country Study* (Washington: Federal Research Division of the Library of Congress, 1991), pp. 70-77, 156-61.

A digital version of Romania: A Country Study can be consulted online at <<https://www.loc.gov/item/90006449/>> [accessed 21 May 2018]

these areas by considerable margins. While the key architectural moments depicted above mostly produced unique, high-end works circumscribed to the upper socio-economic strata, communist architecture was responsible for the vast majority of Romania's built urban environment, framing the lives of millions of city dwellers. In this context, the quote featured as the motto¹⁰ of this introductory thesis chapter poignantly stresses the urgent need for Romanian architecture to confront and understand its own recent past. I would argue that the reluctance to do so is systematic, normalised in the architectural milieu, and symptomatic of the nexus of social, political, economic and professional relations impinging on contemporary architecture as a field of cultural production. Forged under communism and tacitly perpetuated after its collapse, this cluster of interdependent phenomena has significantly impacted Romanian architecture's maladjusted transition through post-socialism, triggering cascading crises whose causes are difficult to discern.

Romanian theorists and practitioners decry and seek to address the predicament of contemporary architecture, but with few exceptions, almost exclusively by questioning present-day dynamics and factors external to the profession. The Order of Romanian Architects defines architecture as a liberal art, guided by a cohesive professional community and a code of ethical practice, produced and updated by the ORA with the contribution of its members. The 1990 re-liberalisation of the profession represented a much-desired and welcome return to professional normalcy in the eyes

¹⁰ Sourced from the work of professor Augustin Ioan, a well-known Romanian architect and theorist based at the Ion Mincu University of Architecture and Urbanism in Bucharest, whose work deals primarily with power, sacred spaces and memory in relation to architecture.

of the architectural milieu, whose status and self-perception are intrinsically linked, especially in the Western world, to the ability to practise freely in a free-market environment. In *The Favored Circle: The Social Foundations of Architectural Distinction*, Garry Stevens unpacks the resilience of architecture's self-perceived autonomy, which blinds even its members to architecture's subjection to the dominant order.¹¹ Romanian architecture has amply decried, during and after communism, the severing of this liberal tradition through the instatement of socialist nationalised practice, and has generally strived towards reconnection with the Western architectural tradition understood as *autonomous* practice. Moreover, the ORA is generally quick to act and rally the professional milieu into action against initiatives to curtail this autonomy.

Despite these steps towards the architecture milieu's ideal of praxis, post-communist Romanian architecture seems to abide in a perpetual state of anxiously confused yet lethargic transition to cultural relevance, re-integration into the global architecture scene, and greater socio-economic and political responsibility, documented and analysed with lucidity and insight by researchers such as Ana Maria Zahariade and Șerban Țigănaș. In *Simptome de tranziție. Eseuri de arhitectură*, Zahariade renders a sobering sketch of the discrepancies between post-communist expectations and a chaotic reality where the architectural milieu, caught between the attribution of

¹¹ Garry Stevens, *The Favored Circle: The Social Foundations of Architectural Distinction* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998).

problems to factors external to the profession and a reluctance for self-analysis, laments its own social dismissal whilst passively allowing it to happen.¹²

Șerban Țigănaș has reflected extensively in *Arhitecți, Arhitectură și Orașe*¹³ on the post-communist growing pains of Romanian architecture (deeply unsatisfactory, on par with the evolution of culture in general, prone to the uncritical assimilation of trends, real-estate profiteering, and the shock of globalisation and fast-paced technological development) and on possible ways of jumpstarting a more critical and active professional culture. He has also produced, in collaboration with the Faculty of Sociology and Social Work of Babeș-Bolyai University, a pioneering, in-depth sociological study of the architectural milieu,¹⁴ probing into Romanian architects' perceptions of the nature and goals of architecture and the contemporary profession's rapport with, and place within, society. His interviews with practising architects from generations active before and after the 1989 Revolution confirm a general perception of architecture in a state of seemingly irresolvable crisis, compounded mainly by inadequate legislation, their clients' lack of architectural culture, corrupt bureaucracy, and the absence of clear political strategy and direction.

¹² Ana Maria Zahariade, 'După 5 ani: Arhitectura românească, încotro? [5 Years After: Where is Romanian Architecture Going?]' in *Simptome de tranziție. Eseuri de arhitectură* [Symptoms of transition. Architecture essays] (Bucharest: Editura Fundației Arhitect Design, 2009), pp. 67–84.

¹³ Șerban Țigănaș, *Arhitecți, arhitectură și orașe. Despre profesia de arhitect și cum se construiește în România Recentă* [Architects, architecture, and cities. On the architecture profession and modes of construction in contemporary Romania] (Bucharest: Simetria, 2014).

¹⁴ Șerban Țigănaș, Dan Chiribucă, and Călin Moldovan-Teseliș, *Arhitect în România. Studiu de fundamentare a politicilor naționale pentru arhitectură* [Architect in Romania. Preliminary foundational study for national policies for architecture] (Cluj-Napoca: Eikon, 2010).

Architecture theorist Augustin Ioan has also called attention to the vitriolic condemnation and 'symbolic punishment' of communism, endemic to the 1990s.¹⁵ According to Ioan, silence is still widespread in architecture even in the 2000s: with few exceptions, the rapidly aging (and dwindling) number of architects active during communism refuse to open up, and probably never will. For Ioan, the new generation of researchers attempting to assemble a critical history of the recent past are blessed with the advantage of fresh perspectives and solid multidisciplinary methodological approaches, but will be eventually deprived of the ethical dimension of investigating this period: 'Communism is becoming a story, just like all the others.'¹⁶

It is my contention that, far from insignificant, the recent past, and its relegation from critical remembrance and theoretical enquiry, are one of the contributing factors to the current state of professional crisis. Learning to study the recent past with clarity and lack of prejudice is crucial to the profession's emerging self-criticality, as well as the accurate perception of present reality and architecture's place and potential within it. Contributions to the budding scholarship on Romania's communist architecture can illuminate – and call into question – present-day patterns of interaction between the architectural milieu and other social spheres. Furthermore, significant areas of professional mentality and practice, nuclei of authority, relationships with political and economic entities are grounded on – or have been shaped by – their pre-revolution

¹⁵ Augustin Ioan, 'Cum se cercetează arhitectura perioadei comuniste?' [How is research done on the architecture of the communist period?] <<http://atelier.liternet.ro/articol/7726/Augustin-Ioan/Cum-se-cerceteaza-arhitectura-perioadei-comuniste.html>> [accessed 8 January 2017; last accessed 22 May 2018]

¹⁶ Ibid., 3rd paragraph.

counterparts. Between the rejection of the immediate past, the cryptic silence surrounding sensitive topics,¹⁷ and a dearth of reliable, organised information, post-communist architecture has developed in a self-imposed historical vacuum, relying on disparate logics, artificially spliced into the post-1989 reconfiguration of the discourse. The current theoretical framework of post-socialist Romanian architecture seems to be one of temporal and geographical displacement, reinforced by: the idealised tradition of neo-Romanian and interbellum architecture; an eager, but uncritical assimilation of pervasive Western trends; and wishful projection into an unsustainable high-tech practice. Their confluence directs contemporary praxis towards the realm of aesthetics, philosophy, and sustainability, the latter narrowly understood as technical progress and green architecture.

¹⁷ Historian Lucian Boia supports this point through his analysis of post-communist Romanian society: 'Contemporary Romania descends directly and massively from communism, in a far greater measure, in any case, than from the interwar years'. This is compounded by the paradox of Romania's slow and reluctant post-communist transition, belied by the culture of vehement condemnation of the regime.

Lucian Boia, *Strania istorie a comunismului românesc (și nefericitele ei consecințe)* [The strange history of Romanian communism (and its tragic consequences)] (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2016), pp. 37-41.

1.2. A dissonant academic and professional background

During my six years of training as an architect at the Ion Mincu University of Architecture and Urbanism in Bucharest,¹⁸ I had little knowledge of the problematic discussed above. It was only through synchronous exposure to practice as a junior architect in two major Bucharest studios,¹⁹ and to teaching as a seminar assistant at IMUAU, that I came to question the inner workings of my professional and cultural milieu, which also comprises my family and immediate social circle. Daughter of two architects, I grew up in an intellectual, culture-oriented, middle-class environment.²⁰ Through this immersion, various strands of architectural discourse, interconnected values, beliefs and assessments of the profession's relationship with society were both familiar to me prior to enrolling at IMUAU, *and* normalised – hence, difficult to approach critically – by the familial atmosphere in which they were shared.

¹⁸ Romania's main, oldest, and most prestigious architecture university, established in 1892. For the sake of brevity and clarity, I will refer to the University throughout the thesis with the initialism IMUAU. Despite going through four name changes (Institute of Architecture – 1948, Faculty of Architecture within the Institute of Constructions – 1949, Ion Mincu Institute of Architecture – 1952, Ion Mincu University of Architecture and Urbanism - 2000), this denomination is justified, as it refers to quintessentially the same educational organisation.

Universitatea de Arhitectură și Urbanism 'Ion Mincu' <<http://www.uauim.ro/>> [accessed 15 January 2017; last accessed 21 May 2018]

¹⁹ 2010-2012, ZIP&BDX and TAD Architecture Studio.

²⁰ In late communist and post-communist Romania, this did not equate financial privilege. As is often the case in post-socialist countries of the former Eastern bloc, the financial levelling policies deployed during communism result in the significant reduction of profession-dependent wage gaps towards the lowest common denominator. Consequently, perceptions of class differentiation in my own social circle tend to be centred on education and participation in cultural production. I make this observation in order to stress the fact that, for many architects, especially those employed before and after the 1989 revolution in state design institutes, blindness to stringent social problems falling within the remit of architecture is most likely due to in-field discourse characteristics (subconscious duplicity, self-deception, etc.), rather than the privilege derived from their socio-economic status.

Architecture education added little in terms of criticality. While students were equipped with the knowledge and critical apparatus to carry out complex analyses of the design process and its outputs, architecture styles, schools of thought and their representatives, this critical capacity was seldom applied to the system into which we were training. IMUAU was based on, and still functions (albeit implicitly) according to the Beaux-Arts model of higher education, with apprenticeship and competitive master-pupil chains at the core of architecture education. Along with the skills required by practice, a false sense of the profession's autonomy and social significance are also impressed upon students. The importance of factors extraneous to talent (such as studio mentor lineage) in becoming a successful practitioner is obscured. Most damagingly, perhaps, creative momentum in both theory and design focuses on areas of interest to the self-contained, hermetical discourse of architecture, but of limited social impact.

After such training, the transition to practice was sobering. Not in terms of the complex workload, but of the sheer disparity between the idealised image of architecture acquired through education, and the harsh realities of actual praxis. This sense of dissonance grew to almost unbearable acuity during my time in practice, which prompted my interest in examining the profession in search of answers. As an insider – member of the Romanian architecture milieu, subject to enculturation through processes formed prior to my education – I was a perfect collection of symptoms indicating problems yet undiscovered. Gradually, through reflection and involvement with an IMUAU-based research group focused on Romania's recent architectural past

and its contemporary reverberations, I started questioning some of the more dissonant characteristics of architecture under the light of their possible filiation with professional milieu dynamics pre-dating the 1989 Revolution. Being a temporal outsider to the era in which I seek my answers (I was five years old when the regime collapsed) represents an advantage, offsetting some of the biases inherited through architectural education.

Therefore, this thesis was sparked partly by a personal quest to examine my own formation as an architect to better understand the professional dissonance outlined above, and partly from a desire to contribute to the still nascent critical history of communist Romanian architecture. Investigations on this topic by the IMUAU research group²¹ have lately gathered momentum, but the profession is still far from assembling enough heterogeneous perspectives to promote recovery from recent professional trauma – collective and individual. Recent insights into individual and collective existence under the communist regime are mostly concerned with the mechanisms of totalitarian oppression and undercurrents of social resistance. But in many cultural production fields, voluntary amnesia and pervasive silence still weigh heavily on our fractured relationship with the recent past.

²¹ For a list of members and research output, see section 1.3. of this chapter.

1.3. Communist Romanian architecture – mapping the field

This section represents only a brief mapping of the research field specifically addressing communist Romanian architecture. It introduces the main coordinates of knowledge and debate on the subject, pinpointing the scarcity of critical insight into areas in need of investigation, picked up and addressed by my thesis. Considering that the archival material and the vast majority of subject-relevant scholarship are in Romanian,²² the necessity to provide sufficient local and historical context, and triangulate the problematic through complementary Romanian, Eastern and Western perspectives, Chapter 2 of this thesis is dedicated to an extensive literature review.

While progress in terms of disclosure is undeniable, with the National Archives of Romania and several research institutes providing access to collections released from state secrecy, the material available is still scarce. Research projects cluster, understandably, around unmasking the abuses of power and human rights violations perpetrated by the regime. Individual and collective traumas require closure. Therefore, information disclosure prioritises archival sources conducive to understanding communism as a system generating (or, eventually, de-generating

²² Requiring extensive translation work to integrate with the rest of the thesis' theoretical apparatus, which comprises works in English and French, by authors of Western and Eastern academic origins.

Similarly, the titles of the majority of works by Romanian authors featured in this thesis are accompanied in the footnotes by my own English translations, featured between square brackets after the original Romanian. Likewise, the quotes and excerpts from these sources featured in the main body of text appear in my own translation. For sources written by Romanian authors in English, or published in bilingual, Romanian-English editions, the names of the translators will be listed in the footnotes, and the quotes selected for discussion will appear in the English translation provided or approved by their respective authors.

into) oppression. For the myriad affected, this is the most important type of historical research, delivering a post-factum sense of justice.

For cultural production, however, data is more fragmented and less accessible. In addition to archival material sourced from socialist periodicals, the majority of the data pertains to legislation and transcriptions of meetings or discussions held within various state institutions or cultural bodies with various degrees of autonomy, rounded off by the actual products of cultural activity in the arts and other cultural fields. Consequently, the data is held within the private archives of these cultural bodies, given ownership after 1989 over their own cultural output and internal bureaucratic practices (cum associated paperwork), or scattered across many state libraries and archives, in collections organised not by subject, but by the former socialist state commission or institution which produced them. As an example, data pertinent for my research subject has been sourced from the private collections of architects, the archives of *Arhitectura*, the Union of Romanian Architects, and the Order of Romanian Architects, from the National State Archives, the National Library, the IMUAU library, etc. Architecture is particularly difficult to investigate during this period. On one hand, it had the most significant contribution: as *metaphor of*, and *concrete means towards*, the ideal built environment of total societal transformation. On the other, this fast-paced transformation, focused mostly on industrialisation, infrastructure and housing, overemphasised architecture's technical aspects. Thus, most of the archival material available pertains to institutional decision chains impinging on *construction* activities. The mentality of the professional milieu, the circulation of knowledge, the dynamics

of contending or coalescing theoretical discourses, and international connections are still waiting to be traced across a daunting variety (but not abundance) of media and resources. Still, the main factor contributing to the scarcity of critical appraisals of architecture during communism remains the profession's refusal to acknowledge their necessity. Consequently, even twenty-nine years after the 1989 Revolution, the recent history of communist architecture is still an emerging critical research field, lagging behind political science, history and sociology.

The most notable researchers in this field are based at IMUAU: professors Ana Maria Zahariade, Nicolae Lascu, and Augustin Ioan have authored roughly five individual and three collaborative studies on the subject. In the next section of this chapter – Significance and Limitations – I will situate my thesis within the context of the scholarly literature which, apart from this IMUAU research nucleus, is still rather scarce in terms of volume and criticality. Zahariade's book *Arhitectura în proiectul comunist. România 1944-1989* (2011)²³ is one of the most significant critical assessments of Romanian communist architecture to date, as it calls into question the prejudices and silence surrounding the subject by examining the profession from a non-memorialistic, critical point of view, unpacking the evolution of professional and ideological thought towards an explanation of the curious apathy, silence and lack of critical engagement pervasive in contemporary architecture. Assessments of the architecture system's

²³ Ana Maria Zahariade, *Arhitectura în proiectul comunist. România. 1944-1989* [Architecture in the communist project. Romania 1944-1989], trans. by Ana Maria Zahariade with Diana Lupu, ed. by Alistair Ian Blyth, and Eugenia Petre (Bucharest: Simetria, 2011).

transformation throughout the period and its complex rapport with international architecture shed light on some of the central areas of communist architecture.

Augustin Ioan writes extensively on communist and pre-war architecture: *Architecture and Power* (1992);²⁴ *Power, Play and National Identity* (1999);²⁵ 'A Postmodern Critic's Kit to Interpreting Socialist Realism' (1999).²⁶ He focuses, in particular, on architecture's relationship with power²⁷ and its reflection in the design of sacred Orthodox spaces. Another theme prevalent in his writing is national identity in architecture, demystified through analyses of trans-national regional influences, and of the odd phenomenon of isolated architectural instances gaining ubiquitous national dimensions in the social imaginary. *Modern Architecture and the Totalitarian Project* (2009)²⁸ epitomises Ioan's research, which aims to challenge pre-conceived notions about Romanian architecture taught as absolute facts; to re-evaluate erroneous perspectives grounded on extra-aesthetic reasons; and to reclaim the study of recent history as an instrument vital to the understanding and betterment of contemporary architecture.

²⁴ *Architecture and Power*, dir. by Augustin Ioan (Agerfilm, 1992).

The film is now available on Youtube at <https://youtu.be/9v_wlXyG_I> [accessed 21 May 2018]

²⁵ Augustin Ioan, *Power, Play, and National Identity: Politics of Modernization in Central and East-European Architecture. The Romanian file*, trans. by Stela Tinney (Bucharest: The Romanian Cultural Foundation Publishing House, 1999).

²⁶ Augustin Ioan, 'A Postmodern Critic's Kit for Interpreting Socialist Realism' in *Architecture and Revolution. Contemporary Perspectives on Central and Eastern Europe*, ed. by Neil Leach (N. p.: Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2004), pp. 62–66.

²⁷ Augustin Ioan, 'The Peculiar History of (post)communist Public Places and Spaces: Bucharest as a Case Study' in *The Post-socialist City. Urban Form and Space Transformations in Central and Eastern Europe*, ed. by Kiril Stanilov (Dordrecht: Springer, 2007), pp. 301–12.

²⁸ Augustin Ioan, *Modern Architecture and the Totalitarian Project: a Romanian Case Study*, trans. by Alina Cârâc. (Bucharest: Institutul Cultural Român, 2009).

Collaborative studies include: *Themes of Romanian Architecture of the XXth Century* (2003),²⁹ *Post-war Romanian Architecture. Repressed Histories* (2001),³⁰ and *Built Environment During the Stalinist Age 1953-1968* (1996).³¹ The first examines the diversity, oddity, and sometimes contradiction inherent to the recurring themes of modern Romanian architecture, including the syncretic assimilation of foreign architectural influences and the quest for national specificity, as complex and problematic as discussions of collective/national identity. Zahariade and Ioan also offer insights into some of the paradoxes characterizing Romanian communist architecture, akin but also alien to others within the Eastern Bloc. *Repressed Histories* investigates the evolution of *Arhitectura* magazine, while the latter study tracks changes in urban planning during early Romanian socialism.

From the 376 doctoral theses defended at IMUAU between 2007 and 2018,³² only eight have joined this small repertoire: they address broader issues, like architecture and urban planning during specific timeframes,³³ or focus on particular problems like

²⁹ Ana Maria Zahariade et al., *Teme ale arhitecturii din România în secolul XX* [Themes of 20th century Romanian architecture] (Bucharest: Editura Institutului Cultural Român, 2003).

³⁰ Ana Maria Zahariade, Augustin Ioan, and Nicolae Lascu, 'Privire generală asupra evoluției revistei "Arhitectura"' [An Overview of the Evolution of "Arhitectura" Magazine], in *Istorie reprimată* [Repressed Histories], (unpublished CNCSIS research project, Ion Mincu University of Architecture and Urbanism, 2001).

³¹ Augustin Ioan and Marius Marcu-Lapadat, *Man-Made Environment in the Post-Stalinist Europe* (Budapest: Open Society Institute, 1999).

³² A PDF document listing doctoral theses submitted and approved for a Viva Voce examination can be found on the Doctoral Research Centre pages of the IMUAU website at <<https://www.uauim.ro/doctorat/sustineri/>> [accessed 7 January 2017; last accessed 21 May 2018]

³³ Irina Tulbure, 'Arhitectură și urbanism în România anilor 1944-1960: constrângere și experiment' [Architecture and urban planning in Romania 1944-1960. Constraint and experimentation] (unpublished doctoral thesis, Ion Mincu University of Architecture and Urbanism, Bucharest, 2011).

collective³⁴ or individual housing,³⁵ the development of the Black Sea coastline,³⁶ or the repercussions of political detention on the architectural milieu.³⁷ Just four theses assess contemporary strategies for the built communist heritage³⁸ or its deserted ruins,³⁹ with another thesis examining diploma projects developed at IMUAU over the same period.⁴⁰ One thesis in particular examines the design of public squares in the communist period from a predominantly conservative perspective, lacking criticality in its perception of political power as an exclusively coercive force reflected in the formal aspects of public space, and contrasted with the professional liberalism of contemporary public space design.⁴¹ This suggests that some of the profession's attitudes towards architectural production during communism are not exclusive to older generations of practitioners, but also permeate more recent research.

³⁴ Miruna Stroe, 'Locuirea – între proiect și decizie politică' [Housing – between design and political decision. Romania, 1954-1966] (unpublished doctoral thesis, Ion Mincu University of Architecture and Urbanism, Bucharest, 2012).

³⁵ Dragoș Dordea, 'Mutații în arhitectura locuinței individuale în România, 1947 – 1989' [Mutations in the architecture of the individual dwelling in Romania, 1947 – 1989] (unpublished doctoral thesis, Ion Mincu University of Architecture and Urbanism, Bucharest, 2014).

³⁶ Irina Băncescu, 'Problematika frontului la apă. Aspecte ale evoluției litoralului românesc în perioada comunistă' [The problematic of the waterfront. The evolution of the Romanian littoral in the communist period] (unpublished doctoral thesis, Ion Mincu University of Architecture and Urbanism, Bucharest, 2012).

³⁷ Vlad Mitric-Ciupe, 'Arhitecții români și detenția politică 1944-1964. Între destin concentrațional și activitate profesională' [Romanian architects and political detention 1944-1964. Between concentrational destiny and professional activity] (unpublished doctoral thesis, Ion Mincu University of Architecture and Urbanism, Bucharest, 2013).

³⁸ Alexandru Robitu, 'Dezvoltarea urbană în perioada 1947-1989 în România: premise actuale de valorificare' [Urban development between 1947 and 1989 in Romania: premises for contemporary valorification], (unpublished doctoral thesis, Ion Mincu University of Architecture and Urbanism, Bucharest, 2013).

³⁹ Cosmina Nidelea, 'Ruine moderne. Studiu de caz: Ruinele comunismului' [Modern ruins. Case study: The ruins of communism] (unpublished doctoral thesis, Ion Mincu University of Architecture and Urbanism, Bucharest, 2017).

⁴⁰ Ana-Maria Dobre, 'Școala românească de arhitectură (1944 – 1989). Proiectele de diplomă – dinamică și relevanță' [The Romanian architecture school, 1944-1989. Diploma Projects – dynamics and relevance] (unpublished doctoral thesis, Ion Mincu University of Architecture and Urbanism, Bucharest, 2013).

⁴¹ Sorin Vasile Manea, 'Piața urbană ca spațiu public: perioada 1968-prezent' [The urban square as public space: from 1968 to the present] (unpublished doctoral thesis, Ion Mincu University of Architecture and Urbanism, Bucharest, 2016).

Additional scholarship by young Romanian researchers has also emerged abroad, but has yet to reach a sufficiently wide specialist or public audience. These include historian Mara Mărginean's master's⁴² and doctoral⁴³ theses on industry-driven urban development during early communism, Juliana Maxim's doctoral thesis on the problematic of representation through architecture,⁴⁴ and Ioana Iosa's studies of the creation of Bucharest's 'civic centre' under Ceaușescu⁴⁵ and its grounding in insular nationalism exacerbated during the communist period.⁴⁶ Finally, the most recent, international and trans-generational research initiative is the academic journal *studies in History and Theory of Architecture* (sHTA), launched in 2013 by the Department of History & Theory of Architecture and Heritage Conservation at IMUAU.⁴⁷

The works detailed above, delivered from different researcher positions, represent the current critical dimension of the field. While the senior researcher group trained as

⁴² Mara Mărginean, 'Aesthetic Mechanisms of Stalinization in Romanian Architecture. The Case of Hunedoara, 1947-1954' (unpublished master's thesis, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, 2008).

⁴³ Mara Mărginean, 'The Urbanisation Process of the Industrial Centres of Hunedoara and Călan' (unpublished doctoral thesis, George Barițiu Institute of Contemporary History, Cluj-Napoca, 2013).

⁴⁴ Juliana Maxim, 'The New, the Old, the Modern. Architecture and its Representation in Socialist Romania, 1955-1965' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, MA, 2006).

⁴⁵ Ioana Iosa *L'Heritage Urbain de Ceausescu: Fardeau Ou Saut En Avant? Le Centre Civique de Bucarest* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2006).

⁴⁶ Ioana Iosa, '*Nationalisme roumain et monumentalité. Le Centre civique comme affirmation de réussite nationale*' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Université Paris-Est, 2009).

⁴⁷ Excerpts from my thesis, focusing on Socialist Realism and international exchanges between Romanian and Japanese architecture during late communism, have been published in volume 1, *Printed in Red. Architectural Writings During Communism*, and volume 2, *Indigenous Aliens. Mediators of Architectural Modernity*. Both papers are attached in the Published Work section of this thesis, starting at p. 528.

Ioana C. Popovici, 'Star-Topped Spires and Cardboard Heroes. Soviet Socialist Realism in Arhitectura R.P.R.', *studies in History & Theory of Architecture*, 1 (2013), pp. 60–77.

Ioana C. Popovici, ' "... the city as a part of nature, and concrete as a kind of earth". Japanese Architecture Meets 1960s-1980s Romanian Modernism', *studies in History & Theory of Architecture*, 2 (2014), pp. 116–39.

Both papers are also available in digital format on the sHTA website at:

<https://sita.uauim.ro/f/sita/art/4_sITA_Popovici.pdf/> and <https://sita.uauim.ro/f/sita/art/06_Popovici.pdf/> [accessed 21 May 2018]

architects, practiced, and taught before 1989, and can thus produce comprehensive studies of the inner workings of communist Romanian architecture, the junior group had little personal, and no professional experience with the regime. While their studies are more narrowly-focused, they are examined with fresh eyes, often from interdisciplinary angles. Additionally, autobiographies,⁴⁸ group memoirs⁴⁹ and journals⁵⁰ by Romanian architects provide valuable, first-hand accounts of practising architecture during communism, delivering content for analysis through triangulation with other sources, but also the occasional critical glimpse into the past.

1.4. Significance and limitations

While I have touched upon the significance of my study for extant scholarship and contemporary architecture praxis on several occasions in the sections above, it is also necessary to highlight the ways in which this thesis differs in approach from the studies above, addressing some of the lacunae identified in the research field. Extant scholarship understandably focuses on architecture's relationship with power as the main catalyst of significant changes during communism. However, this aspect tends to be overemphasised, with changes attributed mainly to the dialogue between ideology and architectural discourse. Furthermore, power is most often understood in

⁴⁸ Ion Mircea Enescu, *Arhitect sub comunism* [Architect under communism] (Bucharest: Paideia, 2006).

⁴⁹ *Arhitecți în timpul dictaturii: amintiri* [Architects during the dictatorship: memories], ed. by Viorica Iuga-Curea (Bucharest: Simetria, 2005).

⁵⁰ Gheorghe Leahu, *Arhitect în 'Epoca de Aur'* [Architect in the 'Golden Age'] (Bucharest: Fundația Academia Civică, 2004).

a monolithic, exclusively political fashion. Although the existence of other factors impinging on the power/architecture rapport is acknowledged, there is still some way to go in fully understanding their articulation with other social spheres under the specific conditions of Romanian socialism.

My thesis unpacks power from the perspective of an ontology of socialism – intrinsically linked with economy, production, and the ideological remodelling of society. Institutional logic, in particular, has never been used to scrutinise the evolution of communist Romanian architecture, though the links between the gargantuan state design institutes and construction enterprises impinged heavily on praxis, sometimes more so than the power/profession dialogue, or in-field architectural disputes. Power is also understood, based on Gramsci, as negotiable through cultural hegemony, dimming the focus on Party ideology to highlight the contribution of cultural production politics. I also treat architecture not as an autonomous liberal profession – but, with Althusser, as a state ideological apparatus, complicit in ensuring mass subjection to the dominant order, while also providing a site for its subversion. Finally, my analysis probes – with no pretence of being a sociological or anthropological study – into the dynamics of architecture as a cultural milieu, a position little examined thus far.

In terms of limitations, although my thesis incorporates more of a social dynamics element than most similar research, it is not construed as an anthropological or ethnographic study of the profession. That endeavour – which I imagine as a social analysis similar to *The Favored Circle. The Social Foundations of Architectural*

Distinction,⁵¹ Dana Cuff's *Architecture: The Story of Practice*,⁵² or Thomas Dutton's theory of architecture practice as critical pedagogy⁵³ – would be a necessary future step, facilitated by my investigation of the recent past lineage of some of contemporary architecture's most frustrating patterns. Their effects on broader society (and the reaction of architectural discourse to feedback from social strata) do feature in the thesis, though not extensively, as my focus is revealing the past *why* and *how* of architecture's current self-deception and hermeticism.

Given the prevalent reluctance to converse on these delicate topics, field research was strategically limited to email correspondence with a small, critically selected sample of architects, focusing on the obscure mechanics of communist architecture praxis, rather than their current professional perception. Nevertheless, the diversity of amassed sources – evidencing variations of the same architects' or institutions' positions with regard to diverse topics – develops these data clusters into 'a nexus of relations among producers of texts – who are also readers for one another – and the institutions they inhabit'.⁵⁴ Thus highlighted, this nexus of relations among producers of architecture in all its dimensions – from thought to project, from concrete objects to critiques and methodologies – reveals a genealogy rooted in the obscured recent

⁵¹ Garry Stevens, *The Favored Circle: The Social Foundations of Architectural Distinction* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998).

⁵² Dana Cuff, *Architecture: The Story of Practice* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992).

⁵³ *Reconstructing Architecture: Critical Discourses and Social Practices*, ed. by Thomas A. Dutton and Lian Hurst Mann (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

Voices in Architectural Education: Cultural Politics and Pedagogy, ed. by Thomas A. Dutton (New York: Bergin & Garvey, 1991).

⁵⁴ Katherine Verdery, *National Ideology Under Socialism: Identity and Cultural Politics in Ceaușescu's Romania* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), p. 20.

past, yet subtly impinging on contemporary practice. Its examination might foster a growing sense of professional self-awareness, leading in turn to increased social and political accountability in contemporary Romanian architecture.

1.5. Research aims

This thesis examines the relationship between communist Romanian architecture as a politicised field of cultural production, and power embodied in the state's institutions. Beyond a contribution to academic knowledge, a better understanding of past dynamics would illuminate patterns of interaction between architects, the state, and society at large – some bound legally, economically and institutionally – which tacitly affect current practice from the obscuring cover of a reneged socialist past. It is vital, therefore, that contemporary Romanian architecture starts exercising a measure of critical self-scrutiny in order to become more actively involved in the betterment of Romanian society in significant, durable ways.

Therefore, my thesis attends to the subtler connections and interactions between architecture and particular social, cultural and economic facets of a socialist system, often misattributed to the more visible (and better documented) dialogue between architecture and power. Mapping these interactions underpins a deeper understanding of the problematic, offsetting two extreme and equally damaging

paradigms: professional agency and political primacy.⁵⁵ Architecture's autobiographical retelling of the recent past indicates more discursive cohesion and unity of thought and action than the archival material suggests, leading to a minimisation of in-field contention for professional authority. Similarly, the narrative of hard-line political oppression traversing the majority of Western and Eastern scholarship on socialist art and architecture diminishes the richness of the formal, representational and symbolic variety stemming from the recalibration of professional agency to a new political and economic system. With Juliana Maxim, I argue that it is on the creative, tension-fraught continuum between the two that communist architecture is best understood. During communism, the cumulative effect of these tensions has reshaped architecture – as a system of knowledge, a concrete practice, and an area of cultural production – in significant, enduring ways, best understood through the lens of an ontology of socialism informed by notable scholarship on the subject,⁵⁶ adapted to reflect the particularities of the Romanian case.

My thesis challenges the opinion that these issues are of minimal relevance for contemporary architecture. Simply considering the radical alteration of the structure and urban landscapes of most Romanian cities during communism highlights the indissoluble link between recent past and current practice. Moreover, the communist

⁵⁵ Juliana Maxim remarks on the prevalence of these two paradigms of historical research among younger researchers from the former Soviet satellite states (professional agency) and older academics writing from a Western perspective (political primacy).

Maxim, 'The New, the Old, the Modern', pp. 16-18.

⁵⁶ The scholarship selected for this understanding of socialism is a triangulation between the Romanian understanding of the regime (historians and political theorists Vladimir Tismăneanu and Lucian Boia), readings from the former Eastern bloc (Jadwiga Staniszkis, Alexei Yurchak) and works by Western scholars (Johann Arnason, David Priestland, Katherine Verdery).

heritage of architecture includes extensive networks of state apparatuses and institutions, channels of command, assessment and resource distribution, as well as official and professional mentalities. Transferred through systemic inertia into the post-socialist era, they continue to exert considerable influence, belying the clear-cut oppression/resistance narrative mirrored between circles of political and professional authority.⁵⁷

Delving into this problematic through the lens of the archival material, and with these networks in mind, further illuminates the gaps in current knowledge on the subject, which this thesis seeks to address through the following cluster of questions. Through what mechanisms is architecture's discursive hermeticism perpetuated across political regime changes? What lies behind the periodic reoccurrence of national specificity as the cornerstone of architectural originality and value? To what degree did the

⁵⁷ Frustration with the narrative of oppression/resistance prevalent in the contemporary professional perspective on the recent past has been expressed by some of the field's most critically astute scholars, and is based on their observations of architects' reluctance to speak on the subject, or their tendency to depict the narrative in extremely stark contrasts. For details, see:

Zahariade, *Arhitectura în proiectul comunist*, pp. 6-7.

Ioan, *Modern Architecture and the Totalitarian Project*, pp. 9-11.

Țigănaș, *Arhitecți, Arhitectură și Orașe*, p. 23.

The same perspective can also be seen in the writings of architects who practised during communism, such as Ion Mircea Enescu. In a series of articles, reviews and public addresses written and given after 1990, the architect often expounds on the distance between state-led oppression and the stifling of creativity characterising the communist period, and the freedom afforded by post-1989 architecture as a (re)liberalised profession.

Enescu, *Arhitect sub comunism*, pp. 353-69.

Even the Order of Romanian Architects espouses this dichotomic view in the brief historical synopsis published on its website, in a document detailing the organisation's architecture policy project: 'The communist regime was discretionarily imposed on the entirety of [Romania's] socio-political life. During the communist period, civil society was *completely annihilated*, economic activities were nationalised (through the rescindment of private property over land and private initiative in real-estate and construction), not to mention *the complete control over culture*.' [translation and emphasis mine]

OAR, 'Politica pentru Arhitectură în România 2010-2015' [A policy for architecture in Romania 2010-2015] <http://www.oar.archi/download/public/oar_politica_pentru_arhitectura_2010_2015_pdf_1448318160.pdf> [accessed 21 May 2018]

architectural and political visions about the built environment of a socialist society correspond, and to what extent was the joint vision implemented? How did architecture negotiate between the need for synchronicity with the Western scene and local, politically-driven desiderata for insular cultural uniqueness and specificity? Finally, what are the implications of these dynamics on contemporary architecture praxis?

The thesis' main aim is to chart these interrelated patterns by investigating the dynamics between communist Romanian architecture and power, reflected onto practice, and assessed through the medium of *Arhitectura* magazine, a microcosm of architectural thought and practice. The resulting narrative seeks to subvert prevalent, dichotomist over-simplifications of political oppression versus architectural resistance, looking at architecture practice in the broader context of the Romanian socialist system, correlated with the profession's altered, but far from suppressed network of international connections. This approach directs the investigation along three main coordinates, which also form the central themes of the three, interrelated content chapters: the ideology-focused negotiation of hegemony between state and architecture during the infancy of the regime; the cultural and political construction of *national identity* and *architectural specificity*, polarised by regime legitimation within, and representation outside Romania's borders; and the role of institutional logic, professional social networks and planned economy in the flexible transference of decisional power over the main direction of architecture praxis between state and profession.

While architectural form does have a bearing on the first two themes, it will be approached not from the perspective of aesthetics, but as a carrier, translator, modifier and, last but not least, potential creator of ideological shifts. Recent scholarship has begun assessing socialist cultural production afresh, as more than just the unadulterated result of political context, or the political distortion of an otherwise autonomous practice (in the Western, capitalist sense).⁵⁸ My thesis also expands on this position, using concrete instances of communist architectural production⁵⁹ to unpack it as a sui generis, transformative cultural practice whose pre-war discursive lineage is as relevant to contemporary Romanian architecture as its diffuse tactics of power negotiation, wrought in collaboration with, rather than in opposition or submission to, the political system.⁶⁰ The resulting narrative includes moments of unsuspected agency and cleverly disguised powerlessness, superb manipulation, feints and counter-feints, productive collaboration towards mutual goals and, surprisingly, opportunities lost not to political oppression, but to the professional milieu's own utopian and sometimes isolating desiderata.

⁵⁸ Maxim, pp. 16-17.

⁵⁹ Buildings, key texts, conversations between architects, competitions, legislation, political speeches, projects and plans, etc.

⁶⁰ Few contemporary readings consider the transformative effect of the diverse architecture factions in constant competition for recognition and authority, whose often-conflicting in-field images introduced a significant level of discursive distortion inconsistent with the prevalent 'monolithic' image of communist architecture.

1.6. Methodology

Similarly to the overview of extant literature outlined above, this section touches upon the main aspects of my research strategy, while the full extent of the methodology is developed at length in a dedicated chapter. Given the linguistic remoteness of the source material⁶¹ and the tailor-made approach to the theoretical lenses developed for investigation, it is relevant to include these two brief summaries in the introduction to better situate my research and provide a clear outline of its process. Throughout the study, a strategy combining quantitative archival methods of data collection and qualitative methods of selection and analysis has informed the construction of an alternative narrative of Romanian architecture's recent past as a politically contextualised discursive field. Since my study aims to provide explanations for certain key aspects of our recent architectural past which impinge on contemporary practice – issues often interlinked in ways not immediately apparent – data acquisition, selection and analysis coalesce into narrative clusters, rather than a chronologically linear progression. The investigation of in-field rifts, silences, absences and sudden shifts in direction, contrasted with continuities and enduring themes is a critical research approach suited to the complexity of the topic. Linked into an alternative narrative of communist architecture, these anomalies reveal a more nuanced, empowering re-interpretation of a heavily distorted past.

⁶¹ To make the subject of this research project and the archival material brought into discussion more accessible to a broader, English-speaking academic audience, I have included English translations of the titles of all *Arhitectura* articles referenced in the footnotes throughout this thesis.

Before moving forward, I must clarify the research position from which the analysis was carried out, as well as choices made with regard to the terminology of concepts used in the analytical strategy of this thesis. Like anthropologist and social theorist Katherine Verdery, to whose study of national ideology under Romanian socialism I owe my understanding of politicised cultural production, I base my analysis on the *situatedness* of cultural production, including architecture. Architecture's situatedness entails a complex relation with power; it 'does not emanate from a neutral zone of ideas floating freely above and indifferent to social conflict, order and interest', but is instrumental, among other factors, to their realisation.⁶² This position was specifically selected in order to analyse socialist Romanian architecture outside its own genealogy.

Where terminology is concerned, perhaps the most salient distinction is that between socialism and communism. The title of this thesis uses the term *communist* Romanian architecture to encompass the entirety of praxis – from specialist discourse to political directive and their mutual mediation through built output – for the duration of the Romanian communist period (1948-1989).⁶³ There are several reasons behind this terminological decision, grounded in the ontological distinction between communism and socialism present in Marxist-Leninist discourse, the historical evolution of their application as systems of socio-political governance, and the nuancing of these terms,

⁶² Verdery, *National Ideology Under Socialism*, p. 4.

⁶³ Communism was officially instated in Romania in 1948, after two years of the Party's gradual climb to exclusive political power through the manipulation of local elections (1946) and manoeuvring towards single-party governance. The focus of the late 1940s fell on post-war reconstruction, but also the beginnings of violent societal restructuring under communism. However, the starting point for the chronology of this thesis is 1950, when *Arhitectura* magazine resumed publication after a lengthy, war-imposed hiatus as an explicitly *socialist* specialist publication.

developed through academic dialogue between Eastern and Western scholars. I will use Romanian historian Lucian Boia's discussion of these terms to anchor this distinction, as this perspective is prevalent across Romanian scholarship in a variety of disciplines. For Boia, the sole usable term is simply *communism*: conferring the term *socialism* to repressive totalitarian regimes renders a disservice to the genuine social democracies of the West, while at the same time masking the degree of violence deployed in the maintenance of governance. Moreover, since Boia considers the Marxist-Leninist ideal of a truly equalitarian communist society as an unattainable milleniarist utopia (inevitably corruptible through application), the concept of transitional stages towards communism (such as a socialist stage bridging the gap between capitalism and communism) is equally misleading, especially since this gradual transition took the form of violent revolution in most cases.⁶⁴

Katherine Verdery, however, links this type of historiographical positioning to the development of dissident intellectual activity during the communist period, through intersection and direct feedback with the American-led conceptual construction of 'Communism' during the Cold War as a threatening, expansionist imperial force – acceptance with some enduring traction in the Western academic sphere.⁶⁵ Conversely, she uses the terms socialism, socialist countries, socialist leaders, when discussing the ontological traits of socialism itself, and its many European iterations,

⁶⁴ Lucian Boia, *Strania istorie a comunismului românesc (și nefericitele ei consecințe)* [The strange history of Romanian communism (and its tragic consequences)] (Bucharest: Humanitas 2016), pp. 9-12.

⁶⁵ Katherine Verdery, *What was Socialism, and What Comes Next?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), pp. 3, 8.

including Romania. This terminology is also espoused by Jadwiga Staniszkis, whose theory of an ontology of socialism forms one of the analytical layers of this thesis.⁶⁶ Staniszkis' discussion supports Boia's point (if not his terminology) on the non-transformational dimension of socialism: as an ontological system, it is characterised by a set of fundamental contradictions stemming from the mode of economical production coupled with the prerogative nature of power, which preclude genuine systemic transformations (such as the Marxist-Leninist transition from socialism to communism) in favour of cycles of 'regulation by crisis'.⁶⁷ Additionally, Staniszkis is in agreement with F. G. Casals⁶⁸ on the Stalinist nature of early socialist regimes, due to the constant need for political intervention in the anarchy-prone restructuring of both economy and society.⁶⁹ In *The Red Flag*, David Priestland opts for the term 'Communism' to discuss this phenomenon's ideological core, the variety of its geo-cultural iterations, and their subsequent historical transmutations.⁷⁰ His introductory discussion of the particular branch of Marxism that 'adapted Communism to the old patriarchal values of the past, whilst using versions of nationalism to mobilize the population' – essentially, 1930s Stalinism and all neo-Stalinist regimes that followed, including Romania – highlights the paradoxical return to the rigidly hierarchical, almost

⁶⁶ Jadwiga Staniszkis, *The Ontology of Socialism*, ed. by Peggy Watson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992).

⁶⁷ Staniszkis, *The Ontology of Socialism*, pp. 140-41.

⁶⁸ F. G. Casals, *The Syncretic Society* (New York: Sharpe, 1980).

⁶⁹ Staniszkis, pp. 3-4.

⁷⁰ David Priestland, *The Red Flag. Communism and the Making of the Modern World* (London: Penguin Books, 2009).

feudal modes of governance and societal structuring against which communism had been formulated.⁷¹

According to Priestland's distinction between scholarly narratives of communism, the academic stance adopted by Boia (and the vast majority of Romanian scholarship on communism) would fall staunchly within the 'repression narrative [...] Communism was a dark horror story of extreme violence, followed by continuing repression, inflicted by an unrepresentative minority on a cowed majority'.⁷² The alternative narrative, that of communist leaders as 'rational, technically minded modernizers, committed to developing their poor and backward countries'⁷³ also feeds into my decision to use the socialism / communism distinction in the context of architecture to tease out the differences between systemic, ontological traits, the progressive, rational dimension of the socialist project, and their adaptation to the local context. With this in mind, I will use *socialism* to denote the overarching, ontological characteristics of this mode of governance and economic production, as well as to refer to the social-minded, progress-oriented dimension of its ideology, channelled through architecture. Conversely, I agree with Boia that the Romanian regime was essentially *communist*, particularly through its core of nationalistic neo-Stalinism. Therefore, the architectural production of the period – comprising institutional structures and pathways for the negotiation between professional knowledge and political direction – will also be referred to as *communist*.

⁷¹ Priestland, *The Red Flag*, pp. xxiv-xxv.

⁷² Ibid., p. xx.

⁷³ Ibid., p. xx.

The lack of capitalisation adopted for socialism, communism and capitalism is also intentional, as my thesis approaches the subject with the intent to question and dilute the antithetic division into systemic camps that is coded into the capitalised terms. Conversely, art and architecture movements of considerable historical and geo-cultural span – such as Modernism – will be capitalised, not due to a presupposition of internal cohesion and lack of contending directions, but to signal the spheres of architectural discourse from outside Romania's borders with which the local professional milieu engaged in fruitful dialogue. Another necessary terminology clarification pertains to my use of *modern*, *modernising*, *modernist* and *rationalist*. Where these terms are used without the capitalisation linking them to the corresponding Western spheres of artistic and architectural discourse, they denote aims and goals formulated for the Romanian architecture praxis by the political centre, based on Marxist-Leninist notions of socialist progress, or Soviet-derived guidelines for economicity and rationality. To discuss the effects of the architectural, socio-cultural and political dynamics formulated during communism on the present development of praxis, I will use the term *contemporary*. Finally, I will use italics to emphasise certain terms, such as *national specificity*, to differentiate between their conceptualisation in the source material (by architects practising under communism, who believed in the possibility of articulating a cohesive, uniquely and recognisably Romanian direction of praxis), and my own understanding of national discourses as politically-constructed, homogenising narratives.

In Romania, the idea of developing an architecture discourse representative of local culture and history – that is, specific – coincided with key moments in the 19th and 20th century political construction of the Romanian nation state. Beginning with Ion Mincu’s generation on the cusp of the 20th century, the search for specificity in local architecture has always been entwined with traditional patterns of building and habitation - particularly useful in subverting the homogenising paradigms of neoclassicism that gave architectural shape to Western-centric, capitalist state structures and institutions. Thus, the differentiation made above between architecture that critically responds to regional context, and architecture that selectively employs, with considerable distortion, isolated instances from the historical and geographic breadth of local architecture history in the exercise of legitimising the Romanian state in a variety of political iterations, is based on Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger’s reading of tradition.⁷⁴ From their perspective, recourse to tradition is a response mechanism to novel, potentially disruptive situations, whereby order (and the ability to define and impose it) is found through fabricated references to a legitimising past.⁷⁵ For Hobsbawm, these fabrications are particularly effective in structuring and consolidating not only the abstract political body of the nation through the manipulation of past symbols and imagery, but more importantly, the consciousness of ‘man as a political being’ within that national framework.⁷⁶ This is vital not only

⁷⁴ *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

⁷⁵ Eric Hobsbawm, ‘Introduction: Inventing Traditions’, in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 1-14.

⁷⁶ Hobsbawm, ‘Introduction: Inventing Traditions’, p. 13-14.

during moments of revolutionary upheaval and new regime consolidation, but also during moments of systemic crisis within established political orders.

As Benedict Anderson notes in *Imagined Communities*,⁷⁷ the spectrum of constructs pertaining to the nation are cultural artefacts resulting from the intersection of distinct historical forces, possessing a high degree of social context transferability, and sparking deep emotional attachment.⁷⁸ As I will discuss in Chapter 6, this transferability has created, in the Romanian context, *political* and *professional imagined communities*, connected by the thread of *national specificity* in architecture. On one hand, the Romanian post-war regime has inherited, to paraphrase Anderson, the symbolic legacies of local nationalism,⁷⁹ made operative in the adaptation of Marxism-Leninism, and subsequently in the maverick formulation of neo-Stalinist, but anti-Kremlin Romanian communism. On the other, architects engaged in the search for specificity provided valuable visual symbolism for the political legitimization effort, while concomitantly eroding the monolithic construct of national specificity through projects and critical dialogue with international architecture directions in the spirit of critical regionalism. In the scope of this thesis, national specificity is therefore understood as a political and professional ideological construct with fluctuating parameters, but more importantly, as an operative channel for dialogue and negotiation between the field

⁷⁷ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2016).

⁷⁸ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, pp. 4-5.

⁷⁹ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, pp. 159-61.

of architecture and the sphere of politics over the hegemonic potential of cultural production.

For the analysis, I have developed an investigative lens focused on *ideology, hegemony, socio-cultural dynamics, and power and the state*, brought into sharper focus by my own trajectory through Romanian architecture as a student, practitioner and researcher. Each of these lens layers informs the core arguments of a thesis chapter, as detailed below in the Thesis Structure section. In addition to the three main texts informing the analysis' key concepts – the works of Antonio Gramsci, amended with insights from Louis Althusser's *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*,⁸⁰ and Jadwiga Staniszkis' *The Ontology of Socialism*,⁸¹ – each chapter brings in further supporting theories to illuminate their central themes. For instance, the analysis draws on Michel Foucault's discussion of power-dependent systems of knowledge,⁸² Seyla Benhabib's reading of cultural dynamics and their potential hijacking within frameworks of power,⁸³ Katherine Verdery's study of national ideology and cultural production in the Romanian socialist system,⁸⁴ Alexei Yurchak's analysis of the transformative power of social practices over authoritative

⁸⁰ Louis Althusser, *Essays on Ideology* (London: Verso Books, 1984).

⁸¹ Jadwiga Staniszkis, *The Ontology of Socialism*, ed. by Peggy Watson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992).

⁸² Michel Foucault, *The Foucault Reader*, ed. by Paul Rabinow (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1986).
Michel Foucault, *Power-Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*, ed. by Colin Gordon, 5th edn. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980).

⁸³ Seyla Benhabib, *The Claims of Culture: Equality and Diversity in the Global Era* (United States: Princeton University Press, 2002).

⁸⁴ Verdery, *National Ideology Under Socialism: Identity and Cultural Politics in Ceaușescu's Romania* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).

discourse,⁸⁵ and Susan Buck-Morss' construction of non-chronological and non-spatial data constellations which short-circuit historical linearity and the East/West dichotomy.⁸⁶

From a methodological point of view, the articulation of Gramsci and Althusser's work on the connection between the negotiation of hegemony and architecture praxis is perhaps unexpected. While Chapter 4, dedicated to the methodological framework of this thesis, explores this connection in more detail, two points must be briefly made here. First, by virtue of stemming from a Marxian paradigm, Gramsci and Althusser's texts help situate this thesis' critical consideration of communist Romanian architecture both *inside* the political and ideological paradigm which has generated it, and *outside* the field of contemporary Romanian scholarship on the subject, as well as architecture practice. With the default position of both equating liberalised practice in a neo-capitalist systemic framework with *professional normality*, critical retrospectives of communist architecture in Romania generally entail tacit assumptions of it as *abnormal, anomalous* – and therefore, undesirably *negative*. Through this dichotomy, the finer nuances of daily practice during the period become eroded. Second, examining the subject from a theoretical standpoint that highlights *unrealised potential* alongside flaws (or, rather, contextual distortions of intended effects) can better illuminate the architecture practice of the

⁸⁵ Alexei Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation* (United States: Princeton University Press, 2005).

⁸⁶ Susan Buck-Morss, *Dreamworld and Catastrophe: The Passing of Mass Utopia in East and West* (United Kingdom: MIT Press, 2000).

communist period as a dynamic social process, but also suggest a critical re-framing of the problematic of contemporary architecture in Romania.

Also encompassed in the thesis is the broad theoretical and practical spectrum of communist architecture, examining the ebb and flow of dominant ideas through their points of inflection, refraction or brusque disappearance – moments of crisis bearing the imprint of power and other societal mechanisms intertwined in subtle ways. Examining professional group dynamics and the mechanisms of politically and economically conditioned cultural production allows me to critically combine inside knowledge of my own professional milieu with an awareness of the biases transmitted through enculturation. Therefore, this project comprises an element of self-analysis, using the researcher's own background to expose patterns of imparting/acquiring knowledge, beliefs, values and attitudes rooted in pre-1989 professional mentality. A similar methodological approach has also been used by Dana Cuff in her study of the culture of architecture practice, stemming from the same sense of dissonance which has also sparked this thesis project: 'I felt as though I had awakened in a foreign culture with a coherent yet invisible system governing its behaviour, a system that seemed only vaguely familiar.'⁸⁷ Developed from the dual perspective of a professional insider and a methodological outsider reflecting onto architecture the critical frameworks of social studies, anthropology, and semantic ethnography, Cuff model for the analysis of practice hinges on the concept

⁸⁷ Cuff, *Architecture: The Story of Practice*, p. 1.

of 'workworld', a web of words, activities, beliefs, rituals, and structures of knowledge, through which the members of a profession make sense of the world, and reflect upon it for renewed action.⁸⁸ As I will discuss in greater detail in the Literature Review of this thesis, the researcher position represented by Cuff, and present in my own relationship to the research topic, has yet to take hold in current studies of the culture of architecture practice in Romania.

Arhitectura is my main instrument of investigation and archival research. As the only specialist publication in communist Romania, it most comprehensively reflects architecture praxis, from responsiveness to socio-cultural climate changes from within and beyond borders, to the complex negotiation between architectural thought and political directive in the turbulent waters of centralised economy. But despite being the only window onto a multi-faceted professional culture, *Arhitectura* was nevertheless object to censorship. Consequently, its content must be complemented with theme-specific information from other primary sources.

Of great use to discerning the subversive, compliant or astutely manipulative undertones in officially published material are theoretical and autobiographic texts published by the same authors featured in *Arhitectura*. Drawings, sketches, and photographs are equally – if not sometimes, more – relevant, providing a level of non-linguistic disagreement with the accompanying text, easily decipherable by specialists. Further corroboration can be found in political discourse (legislation/administrative

⁸⁸ Cuff, *Architecture: The Story of Practice*, pp. 5-6.

texts, vital for pinpointing the triggers of widely implemented changes), and IMUAU collections documenting the oscillation of architecture education between ideological compliance and subversion. Conversations with practising architects and academics further contextualise the evidence thus gathered, affording insights into how dynamics inherited from the recent past affect contemporary architecture. Finally, collected data is analysed and cross-referenced in correlation with key moments of international architecture, drawing on relevant research on socialist and post-socialist architecture. The apparent breadth of the data field is mediated by its fragmentary, incomplete, or inaccessible nature. Tracking anomalies and working around thematic clusters further narrows down the data pool, allowing me to track influences between discursive fields with relative ease.

1.7. Thesis structure

In addition to the Introduction, Literature Review, Methodology and Conclusion chapters, the main body of the thesis comprises three chapters dedicated to the themes identified as relevant in constructing an original narrative contributing to existing debates on scarcely investigated areas of communist Romanian architecture. The first content chapter is Chapter 4, *Socialist Realism – the Future That Did Not (Yet) Belong*, grounded on the negotiation of ideology between the spheres of architecture and power. It examines the mechanisms underpinning the reception and dissemination of Socialist Realism as an originally rich discourse

external in origin to the Romanian architecture system, implemented in a reductive, authoritative version through political impetus. Media representation is revealed to have impinged significantly on its reception: *Arhitectura's* extensive, though culturally un-filtered campaign helped destabilise, rather than reinforce Socialist Realism by generating and maintaining theoretical confusion, ably speculated by local practitioners in a dilution of hard-line ideological dictum. Underpinned by the double-flow negotiation of hegemony between state-embodied power and cultural production, the evolution of Romanian Socialist Realism demonstrates the subtly eroding effect of local practice and in-field dialogue on politically-driven authoritarian discourse, resulting in surprisingly creative architectural hybrids.

Paradigm shifts in Romanian architecture are strongly correlated with the dynamics of *the national* – a locally hegemonic form of discourse since the 19th century. By examining points of national identity suppression and/or (re)configuration, Chapter 5 – *Identity, National Specificity, the System*, investigates the profession's negotiations with the system over a common goal: the local specificity of the built environment and architectural production. During the 1960s and 1970s, Romania exported architectural design to socialist Middle-Eastern, African and South American countries, while access to specialist publications from abroad and *Arhitectura's* extensive features on foreign architecture fuelled local efforts to take part in international discourse. These fault-lines and merger points between *specific* Romanian architecture production within the borders, and that exported to

significantly different geo-cultural contexts, will provide fresh insights into the shaping of national identity through architecture.

Focusing on the sometimes symbiotic, sometimes parasitic relationship between the profession and the state, Chapter 6, *The Power of the State and the Power of the Profession*, analyses the internal dynamics of the professional milieu, and its discursive exchanges with institutional and state power. This approach reveals a more nuanced image of power exchanges between the two spheres, highlighting unexpected instances of collaboration, mutual support and congruence, but also the manipulative strategies deployed by both sides.

Chapter 7, the conclusion, critically analyses and synthesises findings on the processes internal to the architecture field, as well as the profession's rapport with power and other social spheres detailed in chapters 4 - 6, reflecting on the main insights of the thesis in the light of their relevance for contemporary Romanian architecture. Future directions of scholarly inquiry are also weighed against the implications of this research project for the emergent self-criticality of the profession, which stands to benefit from accruing scholarship on similar interstitial spaces of the recent past of Romanian architecture.

In addition to the new archival material, translated from Romanian and critically collated for this investigation, my thesis is ultimately concerned with highlighting the silence-obscured network whose stability originates during communism, and which frames contemporary Romanian architecture to a significant degree. By exploring, unpacking and questioning, the thesis delivers a critical basis from which

contemporary Romanian architecture may yet transgress the inhibiting logic of past erasure, stepping outside its narrow professional sphere into increased social and political engagement.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This chapter delivers a synthetic overview of extant scholarship on communist Romanian architecture. Given the relatively small size of this field intersecting architecture theory and practice, and the affiliation of most key researchers with the Ion Mincu University of Architecture and Urbanism, current research on the subject presents no major debates or antagonistic schools of thought. With the main point of contention among theorists and practitioners being the need to begin thinking, speaking, and writing about communist architecture, the research field is characterised by complementarity, rather than tension. In the preface of *Arhitectura în proiectul comunist. România 1944-1989*, one of the seminal texts on the subject, Zahariade endeavours 'to broach a subject that has otherwise been inexplicably avoided and to suggest a critical perspective on it, or at least to provide some reference points for a retrospective look'.⁸⁹

Therefore, the literature review operates on two levels. First, it presents a comprehensive, critical picture of contemporary research on the subject, highlighting key contributions, as well as signalling the gaps which informed this thesis' central question. Second, it assembles a theoretical framework using scholarship on socialism, its intersections with the politics of cultural production, and on the dynamics of professional milieus. This framework provides the building blocks for the thesis'

⁸⁹ Ana Maria Zahariade, *Arhitectura în proiectul comunist. România 1944-1989* [Architecture in the communist project. Romania 1944-1989], trans. by Ana Maria Zahariade with Diana Lupu, ed. by Alistair Ian Blyth, and Eugenia Petre (Bucharest: Simetria, 2011), p. 6.

investigation, examining the ontology (and local/chronological variations) of the political system Romanian architecture traversed between 1950 and 1989. It explores architecture as a system of knowledge, a professional and social circle, and a state apparatus involved in politicised cultural production. Finally, it looks at modes of dialogue within architecture and between architecture and power, weighed against the tangible results of practice. Consequently, the corpus of texts analysed below has been critically assembled with the double aim of contextualising the research problematic along the three coordinates discussed above, and of theoretically supporting its expansion into little explored territory.

2.1. Communist architecture theory – tentative critical beginnings

Before proceeding to the current scholarship on communist Romanian architecture, a quick sketch of the field during communism is necessary in order to trace the evolution of architectural discourse, especially in relation to power and the economy. While a certain degree of reticence towards critical self-reflection has always been a characteristic of the Romanian architecture milieu,⁹⁰ I would argue that this tendency became more entrenched during the communist period,⁹¹ and remains an enduring,

⁹⁰ Ana Maria Zahariade *Simptome de tranziție. Eseuri de arhitectură* [Symptoms of transition. Architecture essays] (Bucharest: Editura Fundației Arhitext Design, 2009), pp. 70-71.

⁹¹ Zahariade observes that these weaknesses of the architecture field were ably exploited during communism by the political centre through the disruption of the discipline's value-based genealogy to create compliant, 'conditioned' architects.

Zahariade, *Simptome de tranziție*, p. 71.

subterranean factor in the field's relationship with the recent past, marked by acts of erasure and rewriting.

Critical scholarship prior to 1989 counts only three comprehensive historical syntheses of Romanian architecture: Grigore Ionescu's *Istoria arhitecturii în România*⁹² (two volumes published in 1963 and 1965, analysing architecture from the Neolithic to the 1950s); *Arhitectura în România în perioada '44-'69*,⁹³ published by Ionescu in 1969, and later condensed into a chapter in his 1982 *Arhitectura pe teritoriul României de-a lungul veacurilor*,⁹⁴ and Gheorghe Curinschi-Vorona's *Istoria arhitecturii în România*.⁹⁵

I would also add that, despite the creative effervescence of the interwar scene, Romanian architecture was still in its infancy as a discipline and field of cultural production. The main frameworks of its institutional, economic, but also pedagogical and research processes were assembled in synchronicity with architecture's nationalisation, at an unprecedented scale and politically imposed speed making in-field critical adaptation very difficult, at least during the initial stages of socialist architecture.

⁹² Grigore Ionescu, *Istoria arhitecturii în România I. De la orînduirea comunei primitive pînă la sfârșitul veacului al XVI-lea* [The history of architecture in Romania I. From the organisation of primitive settlements to the end of the 16th century] (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Republicii Populare Romîne, 1963).

Grigore Ionescu, *Istoria arhitecturii în România II. De la sfârșitul veacului al XVI-lea pînă la începutul celui de al cincilea deceniu al veacului al XX-lea* [The history of architecture in Romania II. From the end of the 16th century to the fifth decade of the 20th century] (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Republicii Socialiste România, 1965).

The first volume of Ionescu's extensive history of Romanian architecture details the beginnings of human habitation and architecture in the geographical space of presumed Romanian ethnogenesis. It delivers an idealised image of Romanian nationhood through the ostensible unity and cohesion of architecture throughout the Romanian territories, predating the territorial and political unification of the country by several centuries. The second volume stops prudently at the beginning of the 1950s, with post-war architecture discussed in a short chapter, cautiously focused on reconstruction. Both volumes were written with a specialist (or highly educated) audience in mind, and quickly became a staple in courses of history and theory of architecture at IMUAU.

⁹³ Grigore Ionescu, *Arhitectura în România în perioada '44-'69* [Architecture in Romania between 1944 and 1969] (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Republicii Socialiste România, 1969).

⁹⁴ Grigore Ionescu, *Arhitectura pe teritoriul României de-a lungul veacurilor* [Architecture in Romania throughout the ages] (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Republicii Socialiste România, 1982).

This book delivers content from Ionescu's initial volumes of Romanian architecture history, edited for brevity and simplified in order to reach a wider, non-professional audience. As indicated in the preface, it is relevant to note that this is a condensed, layperson's handbook of Romanian architecture, avoiding 'overly technical, but most of all controversial discussions'. This allowed Ionescu the opportunity of oblique architectural criticism through the juxtaposition between text and visual material, but most importantly, between the omissions and modifications made in this volume in comparison to the extended, two-volume version.

⁹⁵ Gheorghe Curinschi-Vorona, *Istoria arhitecturii în România* [The history of architecture in Romania] (Bucharest: Editura Tehnică, 1981).

Although a number of specialist-authored books on various aspects communist architecture did see print during the period,⁹⁶ the works above are unique in their articulation of insights into past architectural discourse *and* their enduring influence over its contemporary perception. In 2015, Ionescu and Curinschi-Vorona still topped the recommended reading list for the Ion Mincu University of Architecture and Urbanism (IMUAU) history of Romanian architecture course,⁹⁷ offering the first – and, for the majority of students, only – point of theoretical contact with the world of communist architecture.

Despite forming the main coordinates of an official historiography of Romanian architecture during communism, these books have yet to be examined in depth,⁹⁸ particularly in counterpoint to *Arhitectura's* multi-voiced discursive universe. Ionescu's book, in particular, will feature throughout my thesis, serving as a politically-sanctioned ideological mainline against which to track the diversity of thought and practice

⁹⁶ These books ranged from technical urban design manuals to carefully curated presentations of post-war Romanian architecture for foreign audiences, presented with full-colour illustrations and quality hardback binding. Some examples include:

Octav Doicescu, *Despre arhitectură: scrieri, cuvântări* [On architecture: writings, lectures] (Bucharest: Editura Tehnică, 1983) - dealing with conceptual, theoretical and some practical issues for the specialist audience.

Urbanismul în România [Urbanism in Romania] ed. by Cezar Lăzărescu (Bucharest: Editura Tehnică, 1977) - an urban planning manual combining theoretical models of urban growth and more technical, coefficient-dependent urban design elements.

Cezar Lăzărescu, and others, *Arhitectura românească contemporană* [L'architecture roumaine contemporaine] (Bucharest: Editura Meridiane, 1972) – bilingual Romanian – French edition aimed at foreign audiences, slightly propagandistic in tone.

⁹⁷ According to the 2014-2015 bibliography for the Modern and Contemporary Architecture in Romania course <<http://www.uauim.ro/departamente/itcp/discipline/AMCR/>> [accessed 6 July 2015; last accessed 24 May 2018]

⁹⁸ Two critical assessments of these sources in recent scholarship on communist Romanian architecture belong to Ana Maria Zahariade and Juliana Maxim.

Zahariade, *Arhitectura în proiectul comunist*, pp. 15-21.

Juliana Maxim, 'The New, the Old, the Modern. Architecture and its Representation in Socialist Romania, 1955-1965' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2006), pp. 105-40.

emerging from *Arhitectura*. Writing from an art historian's perspective, Juliana Maxim highlights Ionescu's crucial contribution to the professionalisation of architecture history under communism, marking the end of 'operational' architecture history and theory – researched and written by architects to inform their own practice on an instrumental level – and leaving both aspects of praxis more susceptible to ideological control.⁹⁹ However, Maxim argues that Ionescu's critical rejection of capitalist interwar modernism on the dual grounds of socialist ideology and deviance from the path of 'true Romanian architecture' served in fact to reboot modernism's principles on an unprecedented scale, but most importantly, ascribe them to the revolutionary narrative of a completely original communist architecture.¹⁰⁰ She detects in Ionescu's writing the theoretical core of realism, a subtly enduring discursive legacy of the most short-lived period in communist Romanian architecture – Socialist Realism.¹⁰¹ This endurance is noteworthy, as it hints at the considerable impact and chronological inertia of discursive changes generally considered insignificant,¹⁰² as well as the reverberations of the split between the 'pedagogical' and 'performative' aspects of architecture practice.

⁹⁹ Maxim, 'The New, the Old, the Modern', p. 114.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 127-28.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 139.

¹⁰² Zahariade considers the post-war reconstruction effort of the late 1940s as the last moment of conceptual synchronicity with European architecture before the socialist restructuring of the Romanian architecture system. In the longer narrative of the entire communist period, she also ascribes minimal discursive and material impact to local Socialist Realism, while Augustin Ioan notes that the switch from the latter to a rationalist architectural direction following Khrushchev's 1954 speech preserved the same conceptual rigidity of praxis, cast into a simpler, prefabricated aesthetic.

Ana Maria Zahariade et al., *Teme ale arhitecturii din România în secolul XX* [Themes of 20th century Romanian architecture] (Bucharest: Editura Institutului Cultural Român, 2003), pp. 21, 139-41.

For Ana Maria Zahariade, however, Ionescu and Curinschi-Vorona's writings appear more nuanced. As an architect, theorist and educator whose professional youth spanned the latter decades of communism, she chronicles her own scholarly journey through collective professional trauma with a lucid yet empathetic understanding of the 'silence beneath which guilt complexes (whether motivated or not, like any complex), indifference, and hypocrisy still smouldered'.¹⁰³ With Zahariade, I hold that readings of Ionescu and Curinschi-Vorona can reveal some of the 'unspoken truths' of post-war architecture praxis,¹⁰⁴ revealing a counter-narrative to the official historiographical development of communist architecture. Zahariade finds Ionescu's dispassionate, objectivist tone, and sparse critical comments as relevant as his evolution towards 'evidently self-imposed neutrality' with regard to the political context, or his choice to derive the book's architectural chronology from the major stages of planned economy.¹⁰⁵

Unlike Maxim's reading of Ionescu's work as the historiographic channel for the political transformation of architecture praxis in line with Marxist-Leninist ideology, Zahariade identifies a level of discursive dissonance between structure and content, and an almost critical shift in Ionescu's attitude towards communist architecture, palpable in the rewritten chapter of his 1982 book. Similarly, she likens Curinschi-Vorona's work to a propagandistic news-reel, creating 'a distressing and uncomfortable feeling of uninterrupted linearity', to which discrepancies between text,

¹⁰³ Zahariade, *Arhitectura în proiectul comunist*, p. 8.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 19-20.

illustrations and captions add a 'troubling, schizophrenic feeling'.¹⁰⁶ While acknowledging, with Maxim, the impact of Ionescu's work on the alteration of architectural discourse on a broader professional level, I would argue, with Zahariade, that these writings can also illuminate some of the shifting, undocumented dynamics of the architectural milieu (often operating on the small-scale level of personal practice), raising interesting questions about variations in architectural discourse masquerading as textual duplicity.

If Ionescu's hermetically a-contextual and historically linear account of Romanian architecture has, at its core, the unquestioned idea of unity and constant historical development towards a truly *national* architecture,¹⁰⁷ Mircea Lupu's *Școli naționale în arhitectură*¹⁰⁸ – a seminal 1970s work of comparative architectural theory – is concerned with identifying and cultivating the kernel of *national specificity* polarising architecture praxis during the 1970s and 1980s. As a hegemonic form of discourse in Romanian art and architecture since the 19th century, national specificity was also central to the evolution of communist Romanian architecture, representing an area of congruence and collaboration between state and profession, examined at length in

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 21.

¹⁰⁷ In her doctoral thesis, Juliana Maxim unpicks Ionescu's painstaking efforts to reconcile, from a theoretical point of view, the narratives of a historically linear, almost hermetic development of the nation, and that of social class struggle, analysed in a Marxist-Leninist key. Ionescu's solution is to perform a complete scission between high architecture – a constantly morphing product of international cultural and political interferences, representative of the exploitative ruling class – and folk architecture, geographically and chronologically homogeneous, and therefore embodying, for Ionescu, the 'true' essence of local architectural specificity. It is interesting to note that Ionescu goes to great lengths to erase the formal and temporal diversity and difference of vernacular architecture by performing a dizzying historical and geographical bricolage with his case studies, at odds with the linear determinism of the book's main narrative.

Maxim, 'The New, the Old, the Modern', pp. 116-19.

¹⁰⁸ Mircea Lupu, *Școli naționale în arhitectură* [National schools of architecture] (Bucharest: Editura Tehnică, 1977).

Chapter 5 of this thesis. Mircea Lupu's theoretical impact has been insufficiently explored and connected to current discursive concerns, despite being the main source of reference at IMUAU for the study of local variants of modernist discourse.¹⁰⁹ Unlike Ionescu's, however, Lupu's writing considered the international emergence, ascendancy and fragmentation of modern architecture through discursive offshoots concerned with identity, local specificity and sociological critique, delivered through interdisciplinary arguments drawing from prominent Western and Romanian scholars on philosophy, sociology, art and architecture.¹¹⁰ He was also concerned with establishing international theoretical links by drawing parallels between the evolution of Romanian architecture and that of two powerhouses of the international scene – Great Britain (innovation-friendly continuity) and Japan (internationally relevant, modern transfigurations of traditional architecture).

In contrast to Ionescu, Lupu's astute account of modern architecture was made with surprising clarity for the time (and especially place) of publication: all alternative discursive trends challenging the limitations of the functionalist architecture of post-

¹⁰⁹ Mircea Lupu contributed 22 articles to *Arhitectura*, from 4 (1960) to 4-5 (1981). He served on the magazine's editorial board from 1971 to 1976, and as editor-in-chief from 1976 until his emigration to Switzerland in 1981. Lupu's research interests focused on architecture history and theory, pedagogy, and research methodologies. Since issue 4 (1970), he published material that would later feature in his 1977 book *Școli naționale în arhitectură*, contributing to the 1970s debate on national specificity. As editor, Lupu focused on opening the magazine's discursive space to conceptual influences from abroad. See issue 2 (1979), reporting on FACT '79 Lausanne (Forum Architecture Communication Territoire). With the support of UNESCO and UIA, it discussed collective architectural identities and autonomy, and hosted the first international meeting of chief editors of architecture journals (led by *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* and its chief editor, Marc Emery).

¹¹⁰ In a single chapter, Lupu references Otto Wagner, Philip Johnson, Le Corbusier, Walter Gropius, Eero Saarinen, Mies van der Rohe, Bruno Zevi, Wolfgang Pehnt, Sigfried Giedion, Sibyl Moholy-Nagy, Elie Faure, Maurice Besset, Jean-Jacques Goblot, René Huyghe, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Conrad Fiedler, and Paul Souriau. Romanian architects, theorists and philosophers are also featured: Ascanio Damian, Marcel Melicson, Mirea Dordea-Voitec, Nicolae Porumbescu, Lucian Blaga, Nicolae Iorga.

Lupu, *Școli naționale în arhitectură*, pp. 11-41.

war reconstruction¹¹¹ were just as much a part of the discourse as the prescriptively narrow instance they sought to address. Moreover, he contended that local specificity and modern ethos were not mutually exclusive, quoting Gropius and Saarinen in support of the idea that modernism generated valuable forms of architectural expression, derived from adaptation to the geo-cultural context.¹¹² Although Lupu advised caution in tracing the socio-economic and political lineage of cultural interferences, he maintained that national artistic creation was underpinned by the 'spiritual profile' of a people – a collective psyche whose major structural traits also informed architecture, generating, in combination with other factors, specific spatial archetypes and forms of expression.¹¹³

Although advising against monolithic readings of cultural settings and artistic movements (a tendency of architecture schools pursuing innovation through the link between 'collective psyche' and built environment, resulting in formalism and provincialism), Lupu himself abandoned caution in his approach to the chapter on the Romanian school of architecture.¹¹⁴ Explicitly linking the relevance of architecture to societal progress to innovation centred on national discourse,¹¹⁵ Lupu argues for local

¹¹¹ Brutalism, 'social technologism', anthropology-based structuralism, Japanese Metabolism, Archigram, etc. For a complete list of the architectural influences of interest to Romanian architects in the 1970s, see Lupu, *Școli naționale în arhitectură*, p. 41.

¹¹² Ibid., pp. 22-23, 27.

¹¹³ Ibid., pp. 34-35. This is based on a branch of Romanian philosophical discourse concerned with national cultural specificity - see Lucian Blaga, *Trilogy of Culture* (Bucharest: Editura pentru Literatură Universală, 1969) and works by historians, philologists, and literary critics Nicolae Iorga and Petre P. Panaitescu, who played a key role in the revival of nation-centric discourse during various stages of Romanian communism.

¹¹⁴ Lupu, *Școli naționale în arhitectură*, pp. 129-75.

¹¹⁵ Ibid. p. 130.

specificity as the most important catalyst of Romanian architecture's evolution towards conceptual maturity.¹¹⁶ Original, locally-specific communist architecture in Romania was no exception, emerging at the beginning of the 1960s through a synthesis between rationalist rigor and a local poétique based on traditional spatiality and formal expression, which Lupu dubbed 'lyrical functionalism'.¹¹⁷

My reading of the three sources discussed above raises a series of questions regarding the professional and individual strategies employed by Romanian architects researching, thinking, writing about, and practising architecture in a politicised cultural landscape. Did Ionescu's striking objectivist language and use of Marxist-Leninist discourse to reclaim modernism's transformative power for the new regime help reinforce political control over the field of architecture, or did the scission between discourse and practice apparent in his work suggest possible avenues of practice-based refusal to engage with the dominant ideology? Did the jarring contradiction between Curinschi-Vorona's text and images hint at a coded level of almost post-modern critique of the architectural discourse? How could an internationally open reading of modern architecture lead, in Lupu's writing, to an insular vision of *nationally specific* architecture? Correlated with similar (and contrasting) examples of architectural practice from *Arhitectura*, these professional modes of engagement will lend to the analysis of Chapters 4 to 6.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., p. 174.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 154-55.

2.2. Breaking the silence. Extant scholarship on communist Romanian architecture

The key texts featured in this section form the predominantly Romanian theoretical core of extant scholarship on communist Romanian architecture. Scarce in frequency but of significant critical depth, they trace relationships and patterns across the entire period in order to lay the bases of a multi-faceted critical history of the subject. Other offshoot studies, scholarship from beyond the borders, or research of a narrower focus, will feature throughout the thesis, bringing subject-specific contributions to each chapter.

Central to scholarship on the subject, Ana Maria Zahariade's *Arhitectura în proiectul comunist. România 1944-1989*¹¹⁸ is the most complex, comprehensive and nuanced theoretical account of the architectural profession under communism. Comprising an astute chronology of key moments in the evolution of post-war architecture, an examination of the main architectural themes of the communist project, insights into the moments of cooperation or antagonism between state and profession, as well as a candid portrait of the professional milieu during and after communism, the book offers a sound, non-restrictive theoretical foundation for the study of Romania's recent architectural past. Sparked by 'exasperation with the silence surrounding everything that had been designed and built under communism' and the profession's curiously faint presence in the contemporary social arena, Zahariade's impeccable academic

¹¹⁸ Ana Maria Zahariade, *Arhitectura în proiectul comunist. România 1944-1989* [Architecture in the communist project. Romania 1944-1989], trans. by Ana Maria Zahariade with Diana Lupu, ed. by Alistair Ian Blyth, and Eugenia Petre (Bucharest: Simetria, 2011).

research is delivered with sensitivity and respect for the traumatic nature of past events, but also with cautious objectivity and a keen eye for the undercurrents of the architecture/power relationship.

In broad strokes, her chronology of communist architecture¹¹⁹ is politically defined:

- 1952 brings the nationalisation of the profession;
- Khrushchev's 1954 speech (echoed locally in 1958 by Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej), triggers a cautious return of modernism after the Socialist Realism interlude;
- During the 1970s and 1980s, the legal framework of architecture praxis turned increasingly coercive under Ceaușescu's direct involvement;
- the July Theses of 1971, a set of policies and reforms designed to increase the control of the political centre over cultural production, combined tightened censorship with the imperative to devise a *nationally specific architecture*;
- the Systematization Law of 1972, the first of a series of country-wide territorial planning policies designed for demographic control and social engineering through the manipulation of the built environment;¹²⁰

¹¹⁹ Zahariade, *Arhitectura în proiectul comunist*, pp. 22-75.

¹²⁰ Villages and rural settlements were the main target of these policies. Ceaușescu's leadership resurrected several socialist development themes from the Stalin era, such as the eradication of differences between villages and grand-scale terraforming projects, and uniform, nation-wide industrial development with a focus on heavy industry. Rural lifestyles and livelihoods were deeply affected by these policies (pursued throughout the 1970s and 1980s) through forced collectivisation and displacement from the countryside to urban peripheries. Zahariade also notes that the Danube – Black Sea channel, a project originating in the 19th century, but allegedly imposed at Stalin's behest in the late 1940s, was used under Gheorghiu-Dej as a forced labour camp for political prisoners, while also serving as a mechanism of resource misdirection. Works on the channel resumed between 1978-1984 to great financial loss, using the army and prisoners as labour force.

For additional details, see Zahariade, *Arhitectura în proiectul comunist*, p. 139-41.

- the Streets Law of 1975 marked the resurgence of the classic streetscape by stipulating the lining of urban arteries with building façades, and was innocently misinterpreted by architects as a post-modern manifesto;¹²¹
- the Investments Law of 1980 spearheaded the construction of Bucharest's gargantuan city centre, preceded by the demolition of 485 hectares of the city's historical centre, including inestimable heritage sites, such as the Văcărești monastic ensemble.¹²²

Architects, however, were far from powerless witnesses to political whims. Zahariade notes that the profession's agenda matched the communist project on several points (the ethos of renewal, of societal progress through the betterment of the built environment; an urge to rewrite the semi-rural, low-density profile of Romanian cities in a more noticeably urban, rational key; the search for national identity) and that, up until the 1970s, power was amenable to professional argument.

According to Zahariade, this openness to dialogue indicates a relative autonomy of architectural form,¹²³ especially in privileged sectors of architectural praxis exempt from the worst of economic restrictions and ideological interference (industry, tourism, architectural design exported to other socialist states, and the 'occult architecture'

¹²¹ While intended to address the exceedingly low density of the modernist free-planning practiced in the 1960s, this measure fell into the opposite extreme of hyper-densification of the urban fabric, creating high-rise enclaves of featureless blocks of flats. During the 1980s, this practice was known as 'architecture of/by the crane', as low construction costs and the high density imposed on urban projects often required buildings to be so tightly spaced that they could be erected using the same stationary crane, removed via dismantling upon project completion.

¹²² According to Zahariade, this was the turning point when the profession, nationalised since 1952, was genuinely confiscated, and 'continued to exist only thanks to its indispensable technical capacities'.

Zahariade, *Arhitectura în proiectul comunist*, p. 83.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, p. 135.

created for the nomenklatura). Nevertheless, a degree of professional autonomy was also present in typified, mass housing design, as will be discussed in Chapter 4 of this thesis.

Professor Augustin Ioan shares Zahariade's sustained research interest in communist Romanian architecture and her attribution of the current state of the profession to unresolved past trauma. Caustic in tone, *Modern architecture and the totalitarian project*¹²⁴ collates findings from Ioan's research on the subject (listed in the Introduction chapter of this thesis) into a mosaic analysis bound by the core theme of national identity. For Ioan, national identity is central to the understanding of Romanian architecture before, during and after communism, as it has consistently served as collaborative grounds between the profession and power, as well as a means to secure legitimacy and social adherence for the dominant ideology through the manipulation of cultural production.¹²⁵ National specificity, however, is a double-edged sword: on one hand, it allowed architects a certain degree of discursive autonomy in the conceptual and formal definition of its architectural parameters; on the other, it monopolised theoretical concerns to the detriment of other relevant lines of discourse, thus sustaining the retrospectivist bent of the profession (always in tension with the urge to modernise and synchronise with the West) and diluting its capacity for self-criticism and reform.

¹²⁴ Augustin Ioan, *Modern Architecture and the Totalitarian Project: a Romanian Case Study*, trans. by Alina Cârâc (Bucharest: Institutul Cultural Român, 2009).

¹²⁵ Ioan, *Modern Architecture and the Totalitarian Project*, pp. 7-10.

Distortion is, according to Ioan, the characteristic mode of discursive exchange between the local and the international architecture scene: ideological control has been unable to fully control architecture praxis, but has instead affected the field's relationship with international architecture, exacerbating the tension between retrospectivism and simultaneity. Parallel architecture – that is, divergent from the official stance, but not exactly contradictory – existed throughout the communist period, and was galvanised during the 1970s and 1980s by access to speciality media from abroad, as discussed in detail in Chapter 5 of this thesis. The resulting aesthetic, experimental effervescence was however misspent during Ceaușescu's last decade in power, when the inconsistency of the political centre with regard to the direction and bureaucratic procedures of architecture praxis once again crushed the profession's naïve hopes to partake in contemporary discursive debates.¹²⁶

Zahariade and Ioan have also collaborated with Professor Nicolae Lascu¹²⁷ on a yet unpublished study focused on the only home-grown specialist publication available to architects during communism: 'Privire generală asupra evoluției revistei "Arhitectura"', part of the *Istorie reprimată* research project.¹²⁸ Investigating *Arhitectura* as mediatic

¹²⁶ Ioan, *Modern Architecture and the Totalitarian Project*, pp. 137-49.

¹²⁷ The work of professor Nicolae Lascu on the topic of pre-war urbanism has also yielded some interesting insights into the continuity of urban design practice across the change in regime: in Bucharest, urban development followed the 1935 masterplan well into the 1960s, although a fictitious new plan for the city's socialist development was often cited in specialist media. Likewise, the core of urban legislation relied heavily on interbellum bases, demonstrating the weak institutional capacity of the regime to materialise the widespread societal reformation heralded by ideological propaganda.

Nicolae Lascu, 'Legislație și dezvoltare urbană. București 1931-1952' [Legislation and urban development. Bucharest 1931-1952] (unpublished doctoral thesis, Ion Mincu Institute of Architecture, Bucharest, 1997).

¹²⁸ Ana Maria Zahariade, Augustin Ioan, and Nicolae Lascu, 'Privire generală asupra evoluției revistei "Arhitectura"' [An Overview of the Evolution of "Arhitectura" Magazine], in *Istorie reprimată* [Repressed Histories], (unpublished CNCSIS research project, Ion Mincu University of Architecture and Urbanism, 2001).

interface between external political pressure and in-field responses, the study analyses the magazine's appearance, content and thematic evolution in order to expose articulations between the professional and political spheres difficult to observe on other levels of praxis. The key findings of the study highlight *Arhitectura's* dual nature (professional information and political propaganda, defined by ambiguity and duplicity¹²⁹ between the transference of the political agenda into architectural discourse and its inefficient subversion). They also discuss the magazine's inconsistent, tentative theoretical dimension, partly due to the editorial challenges of totalitarian cultural production, with limited effect in architectural production. *Arhitectura's* portrayal of praxis was generally localised, programmatic, and normative – a relatively stable trend until 1977, when censorship on Ceaușescu's *grands projets* paradoxically reignited theoretical dialogue with the international architecture scene (belatedly rehashing Modernism's self-critique at the end of the 1950s, and the apparition of Postmodernism during the late 1960s). Finally, the study notes that *Arhitectura* candidly reflected the 'often confused intellectual effervescence' characterizing the professional milieu, with the exception of national specificity, a topic accruing some discursive momentum and consistency.¹³⁰ The magazine's conceptual ambiguity, use of subversive editorial strategies, and the curious blindness to the architectural reality of the late 1970s and 1980s, will be explored in Chapter 6, where I argue that the

¹²⁹ Political interference was at its strongest during the 1950s, 1970s and 1980s, while in the 1960s *Arhitectura* had a neutral, predominantly professional tone.

¹³⁰ Zahariade, Ioan and Lasca, 'Privire generală asupra evoluției revistei "Arhitectura"', pp.19-21.

cumulative effect of these alternative micro-practices amounted to a far greater critical effect than suggested in *Istorie reprimată*.

Working within the chronology sketched by Zahariade, Miruna Stroe's doctoral thesis, *Housing – between design and political decision. Romania, 1954-1966*,¹³¹ traces the architect-mediated channelling of political decision in the housing sector into practice-affecting legislation. Stroe's research makes a solid case for the study of specific areas of communist architecture, likely to unveil characteristics glossed over in more comprehensive studies. Her findings, for instance, indicate a match in the interest and genuine good-will of political and professional actors in providing the population with quality housing. Economic conditions, however, have periodically affected this concerted effort to a significant degree, resulting in major changes that were alternatively constraining and conducive to positive development. For instance, while the inhabitable surface area allotted per person declined in comparison to interbellum standards in the pursuit of high-volume, low-cost mass housing, these same conditions contributed to the return, in 1966, to privately owned housing, also prompted by the state's economic inability to sustain production exclusively from public funds. Stroe finds that these measures once again placed the user at the core of the design process, bringing a dose of realism to political estimates of housing needs (single-function, more spacious rooms, single-person bedrooms, etc.). Moreover, innovations across the construction industry and the relative

¹³¹ Miruna Stroe, 'Locuirea – între proiect și decizie politică' [Housing – between design and political decision. Romania, 1954-1966] (unpublished doctoral thesis, Ion Mincu University of Architecture and Urbanism, Bucharest, 2012).

synchronisation of architecture praxis with modern, international idioms worked in tandem to facilitate the transition from low-rise, medium density housing to preponderantly high-rise buildings at the beginning of the 1960s. Stroe argues that the space of housing design was one of low-key creativity, somewhat shielded from the brunt of ideological control, and supported by state institutions to the best of their ability. Nevertheless, she warns against equating the breadth of the discourse with architectural production: the built norm was only one aspect of the creative directions explored by architects and submitted for political approval.¹³²

One of the most significant scholarly additions to the literature on the subject was also born at IMUAU, at the initiative of Zahariade's research group. Bringing together international studies into the communist architectural past of greater Europe, the peer-reviewed journal *studies in History & Theory of Architecture* counts two volumes to date: *Printed in Red. Architectural Writings during Communism*, and *Indigenous Aliens. Mediators of Architectural Modernity*. The first issue offers parallel investigations of communist architecture from Romania, Poland, Hungary, Albania and Germany. Professor Nicolae Lascu recounts his experience as an IMUAU academic during communism, signalling a lack of censorship and relative ease of obtaining key texts from abroad (through official channels and personal connections) in contrast with the regime's stronghold on cultural production.¹³³ Similarly, professor Gabriela Tabacu's analysis of IMUAU library catalogues supports the idea that professional access to

¹³² Stroe, 'Locuirea – între proiect și decizie politică', pp. 243-45.

¹³³ Nicolae Lascu and Monica Sebestyen, 'Interview with Nicolae Lascu by Monica Sebestyen', *studies in History & Theory of Architecture*, 1 (2013), pp. 14-20.

current information was not excessively hampered by political and ideological filters: IMUAU subscribed to a large number of Western periodicals throughout the communist period. Tabacu hypothesises that this access to information from outside the Soviet bloc may have been an intentional 'oversight' of the regime in the interest of continued professional development, provided its application complied with the Party-defined direction for architecture praxis.¹³⁴ *Indigenous Aliens* delves into the mediation of alien architectural modernity in communist Romania by architects whose theoretical, design, and teaching activity expanded local discourse beyond political diktat and the superficial, insular focus of the profession.

It is important to note that a significant proportion of studies gravitate towards the later stages of communist architecture, perhaps due to the fascination elicited by the paradoxical nature of praxis during Ceaușescu's tenure, combining the leader's neo-Stalinist, top-down approach with the uncertainties of a mushrooming bureaucratic system. Semiotics, hermeneutics, philosophical introspection and parallels to similar breakdowns of architectural logic in the West are some of the methodologies used by Renata Salecl, Constantin Petcu, Dorin Ștefan, Ioana Sandi and Doina Petrescu, all contributors to Neil Leach's volume *Architecture and Revolution*,¹³⁵ while Dana Vais reflects on the survival mechanisms developed by the profession, from abstraction of theoretical argument and disengagement, to dissidence through utopianism.¹³⁶

¹³⁴ Gabriela Tabacu, 'On what and how. Architectural magazines in the School Library (1945-1989)', *studies in History & Theory of Architecture*, 1 (2013), pp. 133-48.

¹³⁵ *Architecture and Revolution. Contemporary Perspectives on Central and Eastern Europe*, ed. by Neil Leach (London: Routledge, 1999).

¹³⁶ Dana Vais, 'From Escapism to Activism: Two Forms of Architectural Dissent in Romania', *Architecture and Culture*, 2.1 (2014), pp. 26-42.

The above sketch of the scholarship on communist Romanian architecture reveals a small though effervescent research field, whose cornerstones have been laid by senior IMUAU researchers. It continues to expand through interdisciplinary studies interrogating both local practice and discourse, and their positioning in a broader international context. Most readings focus on the dialogue between power and the profession, sometimes to the exclusion of other mitigating factors with difficult to detect contributions to the evolution of practice. The very nature of the socialist regime, its economy, legal intricacies, institutional dynamics, as well as the relationships between cultural and social milieus in the particular parameters of Romanian socialism provide a novel avenue for an investigation of the gaps signalled above.

2.3. Distorted reflections. The model of the socialist system and its Romanian application

A well-rounded understanding of socialism as a complex phenomenon is vital for a reading of communist architecture outside the reductive power–oppression/culture–resistance dichotomy, and probing deeper than the deceptive evolution of architectural form. This section examines the internal logics, discursive strengths or tensions, and some of the more destabilising internal paradoxes of socialism, bringing together characteristics identified by prominent theorists to have a relevant degree of cohesion and international transferability. These characteristics will then be linked to the adaptation of the Soviet model to the social, economic, political and cultural circumstances of the Romanian context. Areas of difference, adaptation and deviation

from the model will be afforded special attention, as they not only amplify fissures within the fabric of society, but also impinge strongly on the practice of architecture. For example, the Romanian Communist Party's gradual distancing from the economic direction imposed by the USSR re-focused industrial production on heavy machinery (with the associated mushrooming of industrial settlements) at a time when other satellite states, such as Poland, Hungary, or Czechoslovakia, had implemented a modicum of economic measures targeted at the local consumption of goods and provision of socio-cultural programmes.

The social atomisation implemented by socialism was also compounded in Romania by the misdirection of the socially transformative potential of intellectual activity towards the formulation of national identity through cultural production. In the field of architecture, the effervescence of the professional milieu surrounding the idea of specificity represented an area of professional innovation, as well as an opportunity to connect conceptually with international architecture paradigms of a similar direction (such as Critical Regionalism). However, its effect on the local development of housing was overall more formal, rather than transformative of the modes of individual and collective habitation promoted during communism. These differences and adaptive responses will also inform the discussion of Chapters 4 – 6, while the section below offers a balanced perspective on the subject, drawing upon works by scholars from Romania, the West and former socialist states.

Romanian historian Lucian Boia considers socialism a scientific religion, 'a concrete society functioning in the register of the imaginary', characterised by indissoluble

fusion between ideology constructed as mythology but enacted as 'scientific', and society's mental/social structures,¹³⁷ completely reshaped through the institutional implementation of the main ideological core. This dissonant logic generates the inherent strengths and, paradoxically, weaknesses of the system. On one hand, striking mythological roots in fundamental, millenarian archetypes makes the doctrine ineffably appealing to the subconsciousness, eliciting social adherence from the masses.¹³⁸ On the other, the very stability of this mental structure, Boia suggests, makes systemic change in response to external factors extremely difficult.¹³⁹ Moreover, the (scientifically) unexplainable contrast between the utopian society promised and the often harsh realities of socialist life induce undercurrents of social discontent, leading to socialism's undoing in several satellite states, including Romania.

The tension between the prophetic and post-positivist dimensions of communism, as well as the clash between the system's historically-derived 'epistemic infallibility' and the stark realities of communist life, also represent inherent systemic contradictions for political theorist Vladimir Tismăneanu.¹⁴⁰ Looking at communism's ontological

¹³⁷ Lucian Boia, *Mitologia științifică a comunismului* [The scientific mythology of communism] (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2011), p. 221.

¹³⁸ Boia, *Mitologia științifică a comunismului*, p.5.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 220.

¹⁴⁰ Vladimir Tismăneanu has written extensively on the ontology and particularities of Romanian communism, providing relevant insights into the dynamics of politics and cultural production.

Vladimir Tismăneanu, *Reinventing Politics. Eastern Europe from Stalin to Havel* (New York: The Free Press, 1992).

Vladimir Tismăneanu, *Stalinism for all Seasons. A political History of Romanian Communism* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2003).

Final Report of the Presidential Commission for the Analysis of Communist Dictatorship in Romania, ed. by Vladimir Tismăneanu, Dorin Dobrințu and Cristian Vasile (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2007).

Vladimir Tismăneanu, *Despre comunism. Destinul unei religii politice* [On communism. The destiny of a political religion] (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2011).

constitution from Marxian inception to Romanian application, Tismăneanu's book *Despre comunism. Destinul unei religii politice* examines communism as a secular religion, from the perspective of a former socialist disillusioned by the ideology's flawed political applications. His work embodies much of the Romanian scholarship on the communist phenomenon: a labour of cultural reparation and restitution, geared towards gradually reversing communism's 'mnemophobe', 'axiophobe' and 'noophobe' effects.¹⁴¹

For Tismăneanu, these three coordinates of communism's ontology underpin its radical project of total societal transformation through a grand-scale 'social biology experiment' with no 'sensitivity for the psychological make-up of humanity'. The resulting built environment operates an erasure of private space and a complete homogenisation and politicisation of social space,¹⁴² enlisting architecture in the recoding of space towards social atomisation. While I agree with Tismăneanu that the system's ideological infallibility and prophetic-scientific divination of the 'real needs of the masses' with regard to the ideal socialist habitat has allowed (even in conditions of genuine political good-will) for aberrant policies with severely damaging effects on the lives of millions,¹⁴³ the scope of his argument is limited. Much like Boia's, it stops short of probing into the contribution of individuals and groups to the social imaginary by formulating tactics that reduce the alienation of the ideology/reality rift. Such tactics

¹⁴¹ Vladimir Tismăneanu, *Despre comunism*, pp. 8-10.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 33-41.

¹⁴³ For instance, during Ceaușescu's campaign of 'rural systematisation', the forced relocation of Romanian peasants to makeshift collective housing in emerging town centres meant the erasure of their traditional lifestyle and identities in the drive for a homogenised, urban, industrial proletariat.

are explored in detail by Alexei Yurchak, and will be analysed in the context of the architectural milieu in the next section. However, the instability-inducing contradiction detected by Boia and Tismăneanu between the tacit aspects of ideology (pertaining to the imaginary) and their explicit, scientific implementation can be used to identify and unpack breakdowns of professional logic in a number of activities, including architecture.

Sociologist Jadwiga Staniszkis holds the system to be inherently contradictory, with an internal drive for self-destruction mediated by context-specific countertendencies.¹⁴⁴ Staniszkis argues that many incarnations of Soviet socialism are societies 'of the self-reproduction of artificial reality', where even the most absurd of administrative structures or decisions become reified through the dogmatising exercise of power.¹⁴⁵ With a diminished capacity for self-correction due to excessive bureaucracy and ideological conflict with the Party's infallibility,¹⁴⁶ the institutional network of socialism can often alter reality towards the despairingly surreal.¹⁴⁷ Staniszkis' remarkable book, *The Ontology of Socialism*, contributes to this thesis' methodology by providing a system-specific, logical framework for socialist architecture, and will be analysed in

¹⁴⁴ Jadwiga Staniszkis, 'Ontology, context and change: three exit routes from communism', *Program for the Study of Germany and Europe Working Paper Series 4.9* (1994)
< https://sites.fas.harvard.edu/~ces/publications/docs/pdfs/PSGE_WP4_9.pdf> [accessed 30 September 2017, last accessed 24 May 2018].

¹⁴⁵ Jadwiga Staniszkis, 'On Some Contradictions of Socialist Society: The Case of Poland', *Soviet Studies*, 31.2 (April 1979), pp. 167-87.

¹⁴⁶ Staniszkis, 'On Some Contradictions of Socialist Society', p. 169.

¹⁴⁷ Oral accounts from architects active in design institutions during the communist era are rife with absurd institutional decisions, policies and norms, resulting either from direct political intervention (bureaucrats with no professional training) or the ineffectiveness of the legal/normative process of translation, undertaken without further professional consultation during key stages. According to one particularly amusing example, attempts to cut down the costs of typified, prefabricated high-rise housing units saw an entire building section struck off from the plans, despite the fact that it contained the stairwell.

detail in Chapter 3. For now, it is important to note that Staniszkis's thinking eschews Western instrumental rationality, starting instead from socialism's specific ontological contradictions, affecting the spheres of society, power and mode of production.¹⁴⁸

For Staniszkis, civil society in the Hegelian sense is dismantled under socialism, and subsequently struggles to (re)constitute itself even in times of crisis, due to the particular construction of the mental collective – atomised, non-transformative, and blinded to the structure and relations of the social matrix not mediated by the state's bureaucratic intervention. A marketless economy without differentiated interests or a universalising, structuring principle, such as capital, is insubstantial in nature, creating gaps between the production-for-production priorities of the political centre, and the actual needs of other economic entities. Finally, socialist power structures combine resilience with an actual absence of political substance, forged around a self-premised identity impossible to materialise in its posited form (a nod to Hegel's illusory being).¹⁴⁹ Despite recurrent crises, protests, and ontological contradictions enacting the undoing of the system whilst attempting to make it stronger,¹⁵⁰ the system manages to reproduce itself through any other mechanism but systemic change,¹⁵¹ further entrenching the segmentation of society.

¹⁴⁸ Jadwiga Staniszkis, *The Ontology of Socialism*, ed. by Peggy Watson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992).

¹⁴⁹ Staniszkis, *The Ontology of Socialism*, pp. 1-18.

¹⁵⁰ Such as control rationality in the economy, or the rationalisation of myth for the constitution of political and social subjects.

¹⁵¹ Staniszkis argues that these temporary crisis-mediating mechanisms include control by uncertainty, negative socialisation, the channelling of atomised social forces into the construction of social group identities, and the structuring of everyday consciousness in the image of official ideological thinking (dichotomous, myth-dependent).

Along similar ontological lines, Katherine Verdery's *What was Socialism, and What Comes Next?* investigates the system in the light of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the turbulent waters of Eastern and Central Europe's post-socialist transition.¹⁵² Verdery seeks to dispel both stereotypically negative and misguided idealised images of socialism prevalent in Western scholarship, articulating her critique of socialism *and* the darker side of Western economic and political forms through her ethnographic sensibility.¹⁵³ Built around Romania (a 'typical' case with interesting particularities), the volume proposes a theoretical model of socialism as an endemically weak system affected by a chronic lack of legitimacy, undermined at all levels by internal tensions, resistance and sabotage. For Verdery and Staniszki, the endemic weakness of socialist regimes represents the aggregate effect of socialism's modes of production, governance, and constitution of social subjectivities. A centralised economy ruled by the principles of production-for-production and resource redistribution, with high concentrations of redistributable resources accumulated at the centre, is undone by bargaining, hoarding, clientelism and manipulation of economic figures. Consequently, it is plagued by widespread, insoluble shortages, which in turn configure workers' consciousness towards opposition and resistance, effectively undermining socialism's bid for hegemony.¹⁵⁴

Staniszki argues that the struggle for legitimation of Eastern European socialist regimes was impeded by their non-revolutionary past combined with the obligation

¹⁵² Katherine Verdery, *What was Socialism, and What Comes Next?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

¹⁵³ Verdery, *What was Socialism, and What Comes Next?*, pp. 10-11.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 20-23.

to function ideologically according to revolutionary logic, resulting in ongoing identity crises, and difficulties in adapting to systemic challenges by reformulating the Party's core ideological ethos.¹⁵⁵ Socialism's formulation of political and social subjectivities is also affected by endemic weakness, writes Staniszkis, since the state and the law represent self-imposed entities, rather than emerging ontologically from a heterogenous society. By placing itself above the law, monopolising the definition of social interests based on revolutionary logic, and using the command economy as an instrument of coercive governance, the Party sets up a framework for the definition of the individual and collective social self always in relation, but also in opposition to, the state.¹⁵⁶ Therefore, society's attempts to surpass atomisation contribute to a climate of perpetual crisis, which the socialist system is hard-pressed to address due to the constraints of revolutionary legitimation.

To balance power-preserving and legitimacy-generating measures (accumulation at the centre versus satisfying the population's consumption needs) and avoid economic crisis, socialist economies eventually opened up to Western capital. This move proved instrumental to socialism's collapse, as it aimed to solve structural problems in the absence of structural reform, and introduced the alien economic and temporal logic of capitalism, with unintended consequences on the construction of the social self.¹⁵⁷ These insights from Staniszkis, along with Verdery's observations on the importance

¹⁵⁵ Staniszkis, *The Ontology of Socialism*, pp. 84.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 114-16.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 49-50.

of national discourse, are deeply relevant for the investigation of architecture throughout the various stages of the communist period. As will be discussed in Chapter 5, national discourse has been historically developed in Romania on the grounds of symbolism and morality, and has remained at the centre of political and cultural contention since the 19th century. Due to its symbolic and moral grounding, it lent itself with equal efficiency to the monolithic concepts of nationhood created by successive iterations of state power, as well as to the counter-hegemonic practices of intellectual and cultural milieus.

Johann P. Arnason's study of socialism also stresses the self-destructive logic and innate fragility of the system.¹⁵⁸ Its founding myths (the Party, the Plan, and the ideology of Marxism-Leninism) ensure the structural stability of the model, shaping the reality of the corresponding social spheres: politics, economy and culture. Although each constitutive myth is crucial for the self-definition and legitimation of the regime, they ultimately lead to 'self-defeating excesses and challenges from within'.¹⁵⁹ Socialist economy is ruled by the perpetually unbalanced relationship between the utopian myth of an apparently rational, but unattainable plan. This paradoxical imbalance creates endemic resource waste and shortage, as politically subordinate, but never fully controlled economic actors contribute to the erosion of a stagnant official economy, intractably adverse to innovation and uncertainty as positive economic growth factors. Contradiction also abounds on a political level, since the state

¹⁵⁸ Johann P. Arnason, *The Future That Failed. Origins and Destinies of the Soviet Model* (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 87.

¹⁵⁹ Arnason, *The Future That Failed*, p. 99.

apparatus created in the monocratic exercise of power generates countertrends alien to the logic of the model, yet indispensable for its functioning – for instance, the extensive bureaucracy required by centralised control also increases autonomy through fragmentation. Moreover, the top political tiers often counteract, in the name of maintaining the (ideo)logical purity of the project, its modified implementation through feasible, realistic strategies.¹⁶⁰ These characteristics hold true in the Romanian case, with the added paradox of national Romanian socialism (created to secure autonomy from the USSR) actually exacerbating archaic Stalinism. In a local climate devoted to modernisation and Western values, it is significant that socialism's redefinition of modernity met alternative definitions introduced on professional, cultural and social levels, leading to imbalances and tensions, but also to development potential. This ambiguous relationship with the West (simultaneous dependence and antagonism) will be addressed in Chapters 4 and 6 in the context of architecture practice.

The tension-fraught relationship between socialism, local tradition and Western socio-cultural aspirations is also explored by Romanian historian Adrian Cioroianu. *On Marx's Shoulders. An Incursion into the History of Romanian Communism* traces the historical evolution of an alien model implanted in a delayed, anti-communist and Russophobic society striving to catch up with the West.¹⁶¹ Despite the quality of an academic

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., pp. 104–05.

¹⁶¹ Adrian Cioroianu, *Pe umerii lui Marx. O introducere în istoria comunismului românesc* [On Marx's Shoulders. An incursion into the history of Romanian communism] (Bucharest: Editura Curtea Veche, 2007), p. 45.

discussion far removed from the castigating tone of many post-1989 works,¹⁶² Cioroianu's stance is nevertheless anti-communist: 'The communisation of Eastern Europe [...] is not a joke played by history, but rather, a half-century when *History* itself has been cheated'.¹⁶³ This attitude echoes across the first wave of Romanian scholarship on the subject, particularly in the 1990s: communism interrupted and nullified the country's progress towards political and cultural synchronicity with Western Europe. Still, he acknowledges the regime's awareness of the legitimising potential of the intelligentsia, as well as their historically subservient (and profiteering) relationship with power.¹⁶⁴ Facilitated by the state through patronage and enlistment in public services, this uncritical adhesion to power regardless of ideology was the gateway towards the neutralisation of professional, cultural and intellectual milieus.¹⁶⁵ In the long run, however, the regime's modus operandi proved once again contradictory: if intellectuals were vital to the formulation of ideology and its social dissemination, the confiscation of free thought and expression fostered by the system's drive for total control ultimately proved detrimental not only to this stratum, but to societal development as a whole.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶² These had an undeniably cathartic role, and served the purpose of opening the discussion on subjects too long repressed.

¹⁶³ Cioroianu, *Pe umerii lui Marx*, p. 9.

Despite his clear-cut anti-communist position, Cioroianu does however speculate on the left-leaning potential of Romanian society (whose entanglement with extreme-right regimes under Carol II and General Ion Antonescu had embroiled the country in a severely damaging war) towards social democracy or the moderate-conservative leftism of the National Peasant Party.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 257.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 262.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 274-75.

Cioroianu agrees with Arnason on the totalitarian streak of Romanian communism, turned appealingly *national* in a poisonous meeting between the system's remnant Stalinist core and the political elite's hard-line nationalism.¹⁶⁷ Moreover, Tismăneanu also points out that the manipulation of local passions and frustrations related to national identity helped fashion exacerbated versions of Stalinism in Romania and Albania, where cultural activity contributed, unawares, to the legitimisation of autarchic, isolationist dictatorships.¹⁶⁸ For Cioroianu, the modernising programme spearheaded under communism was disingenuous and illusory – a pseudo-development whose accelerated pace, unsuited to the slow, lacunar growth of capitalist Romania, derailed local resistance.¹⁶⁹ Progressive legislation and social policies – women's electoral emancipation, increased responsibilities and opportunities for the youth, or the 'social wage'¹⁷⁰ added to the financial security of guaranteed employment – were ultimately undone by coercive measures like reproduction control, exploitative, unpaid labour, and a steadily deteriorating quality of life. This cyclical progression/regression dynamic is another regime characteristic, along with perpetual economic crisis, further aggravated in Romania by the aggressive nature of economic measures discriminately imposed by the Soviet Union.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 412.

¹⁶⁸ Tismăneanu, *Despre comunism*, pp. 81-84.

¹⁶⁹ Cioroianu, *Pe umerii lui Marx*, p. 77.

¹⁷⁰ Benefits in the form of free education and healthcare, paid annual leave, maternity leave, etc., were introduced for the first time in Romania under the communist regime.

¹⁷¹ These included, in addition to substantial war reparations, long-term and compulsory participation in schemes like CAER and the SOVROM scheme (Soviet and Romanian partnership enterprises, set up to facilitate mutual economic and technological development, but which in fact syphoned away natural resources from Romania in exchange for overpriced and dated German equipment).

Conversely, David Priestland's prominent historiography of communism, *The Red Flag. Communism and the Making of the Modern World*¹⁷² unveils some of the more easily overlooked, positive aspects of Romanian communism, such as a drive for modernisation which positively boosted the infrastructure and public services of predominantly agrarian and pre-industrial Romania. Urbanisation, free mass education, welfare, and a change in mentality towards personal and professional improvement (leading to the expansion of social networks and acceleration of social mobility) were genuine communist accomplishments,¹⁷³ especially during the 1960s, when the system had traded dreams of a radical socio-economic transformation able to compete with capitalism for the more balanced goals of social justice and economic welfare.¹⁷⁴ Furthermore, Priestland detects a certain moderation and willingness of the Party to cooperate with the local political and cultural elites immediately after WWII,¹⁷⁵ begging the question whether the subsequent, forceful instatement of the Soviet model in Stalinist form (which subsequently provided the main framework of internal leadership successions and international relations) may have been triggered by the obduracy of the intelligentsia.

¹⁷² David Priestland, *The Red Flag. Communism and the Making of the Modern World* (London: Penguin Books, 2010).

¹⁷³ Priestland, *The Red Flag*, p. 445.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 433.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 215.

2.4. Discourse and practice in socialism. Architecture, art, and everyday life

Understanding socialism's inner workings and collapse requires, for Verdery, the connection of its internal organisation with the features of its external environment and shorter-term event history – that is, its articulation with capitalism.¹⁷⁶ The study of Romanian communist architecture presents difficulties on two levels: overcoming its discursive self-centeredness and historical fixation with aesthetics, and understanding the articulations of architecture praxis within a broader framework than the profession's local exchanges with power. I will therefore draw upon the works of David Crowley, Susan Reid, Boris Groys, Susan Buck-Morss, Alexei Yurchak and Klara Kemp-Welch to trace the interferences between cultural practice and the system along four main coordinates: space; the tensions, complicities or contradictions between the modernist and socialist projects; the manipulation of discourse on the level of the quotidian; and anti-political artistic practice.

In their introduction to *Socialist Spaces. Sites of Everyday Life in the Eastern Bloc*,¹⁷⁷ David Crowley and Susan Reid provide an excellent overview of the plural nature of the spaces wrought under socialism. Spaces of all orders unquestionably have a political dimension stemming from their ownership by the state on behalf of the people, and are consequently impregnated with and modified by official ideology. Examining the spatial economy of socialism solely in connection to ideology is

¹⁷⁶ Verdery, *What was Socialism, and What Comes Next?*, p. 30.

¹⁷⁷ *Socialist Spaces. Sites of Everyday Life in the Eastern Bloc*, ed. by David Crowley and Susan E. Reid (Oxford: Berg, 2002).

however limiting, as the political/administrative regulation of spatial use and symbolism could never fully encompass people's spatial practices.

Conversely, the practices of everyday life, albeit maintaining a level of flexible autonomy, cannot be formulated in isolation from the system's overarching strategies. Since socialist spaces are best understood 'only in relation to the shifting and multi-layered interaction between spatial organisation, expression and use',¹⁷⁸ it will be vital to explore Romanian architecture's mediation (through the professional formulation of this interaction) between the not always congruent visions and interests of the regime and its people. Domesticity and the quotidian are nascent research areas in the study of communist Romanian architecture, a field mostly concerned with the interaction of the profession and power over the great public arenas of urban space. For Crowley and Reid, however, the spaces of daily routine also constituted 'a fundamental site of ideological intervention', since the ethos of the modernist project brought together the utopian and the ordinary, ideals and concrete experience, art and routine¹⁷⁹ into an all-encompassing, transformative endeavour. From this perspective, the potential of architecture as social critique and, perhaps, unwitting agent of change (through the routine of design, rather than ideological discursive confrontation with the authorities), is a profoundly important, but overlooked aspect of communist Romanian architecture, which I have also sought to bring to light throughout this thesis.

¹⁷⁸ Crowley and Reid, *Socialist Spaces*, p. 4.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

The utopianism and radical modernist drive of the socialist project also feature in Boris Groys' *The Total Art of Stalinism. Avant-garde, Aesthetic Dictatorship and Beyond*.¹⁸⁰ Looking through the lens of Stalinist art, Groys draws attention to the imaginative side of socialism: an objective rendition of external reality still in the making, shaped according to fluctuating Party objectives, with architecture as the 'visual manifestation' of a perpetually emerging, unendingly redefined notion of the perfect society. Conveying the social force of the dominant order, architecture remained the one cultural domain where, given the considerable resources involved and the enduring effects on the built environment, failure to follow (or anticipate) changes in Party directives had drastic consequences.¹⁸¹ Highlighting interferences between movements habitually perceived as disparate, Groys traces a parallel between Modernism, the avant-garde and Socialist Realism, which managed to outperform the first two in scale, intensity, and the comprehensiveness of radical societal transformation actually implemented. Having little to do with artistic expression by the masses, Socialist Realism was 'formulated in their name by well-educated and

¹⁸⁰ Boris Groys, *The Total Art of Stalinism - Avant-garde, Aesthetic Dictatorship and Beyond* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992).

¹⁸¹ These consequences shifted over time from the extremes of violent repression, such as the purging of the bourgeoisie, intellectuals, and political dissidents during the late 1940s and early 1950s, to more subtle measures of professional coercion. The case of architect Virgil Nițulescu was one of lifelong professional repression. Despite the appreciation of his mentors and peers as one of the most forward-thinking and talented architects of his generation, Nițulescu was branded as a 'reactionary element' as early as 1950, which effectively barred him from accessing the top tiers of architecture praxis. Nițulescu's professional hardship included mandatory relocation from the Bucharest City Council's design department to a low-paid position in the Bucharest Design Institute. He was also banned from enrolling for the doctoral studies required to teach at IMUAU.

For further details, see Enescu, *Architect sub comunism*, pp. 318-31.

My own research has also unpacked the divergent direction of Nițulescu's architectural vision of socialist housing during the early 1950s. See Ioana C. Popovici, 'Architecture competitions – a space for political contention. Socialist Romania, 1950–1956', *Journal of Architecture and Urbanism*, vol. 38, 1 (2014), pp. 24-38.

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experienced elites who had assimilated the experience¹⁸² as well as *appropriated the methods* of the avant-garde. In Romania, this unspoken adoption of modernising ethos and pre-war methods seeped into the framework of socialist art and architecture, subtly working against the implementation of Soviet-model cultural practices.

In *Dreamworld and Catastrophe: The Passing of Mass Utopia in the East and West*,¹⁸³ Susan Buck-Morss argues that mass utopian dreams, from the Cold War to present day, are 'variations of a common theme' in regimes at opposite ends of the political spectrum. She constructs a layered reading of mass utopias, stressing the commonalities between their Eastern and Western manifestations through historically relevant and critically juxtaposed data and imagery¹⁸⁴ to challenge the East / West dichotomy and readings based thereon. For Buck-Morss, socialism and capitalism both rooted their modernisation projects in the Western tradition, striving towards historically-determined dreamworlds of mass sovereignty, technological progress and boundless material prosperity. At the intersection of utopian revolutionary vision (a status-quo justifying construct of the dominant order) and the desired otherness of systems outside this order, the intertwined dreamworlds of the Soviet Union and the USA both devolved into catastrophes (unspeakable violence, exploitation, and subjection through mass culture) through the attachment of utopia to the

¹⁸² Groys, *The Total Art of Stalinism*, p. 9.

¹⁸³ Susan Buck-Morss, *Dreamworld and Catastrophe: The Passing of Mass Utopia in the East and West* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2000).

¹⁸⁴ Buck-Morss, *Dreamworld and Catastrophe*, p. XV.

institutionalised power embodied by the state. The author's analysis of the cross-pollinations between the two power spheres – from modernising concepts to visual myths and mass-propaganda methods, such as the cinema – further stresses the central argument of the book: utopianism and its failure in the real-world formulation of an ideal society are not inherent traits of socialism, but of any political (and economic) power attempting to implement it in the name of, but ultimately without the participation, of its populace.

In counterpoint to Buck-Morss' understanding of totalising utopianism, however, this thesis also explores the imaginative potential of utopian thought, particularly through the diverse modes of individual practice explored in Chapter 6. Nathaniel Coleman's reframing of utopia as a plural, partial, and flexible phenomenon integral to architecture innovation¹⁸⁵ provides the theoretical anchoring for this distinction. If the drive towards totality in the radical transformation of the built environment is responsible, according to Coleman, for the pathological demise of most utopian projects, their 'emphatically social' dimension and ability to produce 'exemplary' works of architecture based on a holistic, progressive vision can nevertheless be channelled into positive potential.¹⁸⁶ Such 'constitutive utopias' are flexible, incremental, re-evaluative, open to complexities and contradictions, and able to make productive use of tension and conflict.¹⁸⁷ These abilities hinge, argues Coleman, on the specific

¹⁸⁵ Nathaniel Coleman, *Utopias and Architecture* (New York: Routledge, 2005).

¹⁸⁶ Coleman, *Utopias and Architecture*, pp. 1-7.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 59-62.

feedback loop established between present requirements, future goals, and past realisations, along with 'a deep understanding that memory, place identification and orientation are valuable qualities inextricably linked to human desire'.¹⁸⁸ Exemplified through praxis philosophies such as Aldo van Eyck's, whose recourse to cultural and historical traditions outside a Western frame of reference critically re-assessed social structures, institutions, and their architectural embodiment,¹⁸⁹ constitutive utopias also serve, in the context of this thesis, to disentangle the partial, forward-thinking modes of practice of individual architects, from the broader, homogenising sweep of the regime's architectural ambitions. For instance, Mircea Enescu's lightweight holiday pods and homes¹⁹⁰ were utopian not simply through the technological progress required from the prefabricated plastics industry, but socially, in terms of extracting the concept of free time and vacationing from under the institutional control of the employer.¹⁹¹

For Alexei Yurchak, looking at the manipulation of discourse within the sphere of power and the realms of the everyday or cultural production sheds light on the paradoxes accompanying the Soviet system's sudden and unexpected, yet unsurprising demise. *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More. The Last Soviet*

¹⁸⁸ Coleman, *Utopias and Architecture*, p. 59.

¹⁸⁹ Aldo van Eyck was also a consistent presence in *Architectura* during the 1960s and 1970s, both in terms of theory and built precedent.

¹⁹⁰ Discussed in more detail on pages 385-87 of this thesis.

¹⁹¹ Vacation times and places were largely dependent on one's place of work, and the tourism amenities allotted from a national network to each state institution.

*Generation*¹⁹² provides a key through the investigation of the performative 'shifts in discursive formations'¹⁹³ found at the core of these paradoxes, and examines the production, coding, circulation, reception and interpretation of knowledge. These shifts and internal discontinuities illuminate the paradoxes inherent to Soviet reality, but also the new and varied 'ways of life, meanings, interests, relations, pursuits and communities' enabled by the discrepancies between the forms of authoritative discourse underpinning official Soviet reality, and their irrelevance to everyday life. Ultimately, the demise of Soviet authoritarian discourse was disguised by the unanimous, but ritualistic participation of all social strata in its reproduction, enabling a multitude of diverse meanings to inhabit it.¹⁹⁴ This suggests that even in hard-line phases of socialism, when political diktats seemed to have displaced professional critique in most activities, perpetuating authoritative discourse in ritualised form breeds subtle, easily-overlooked divergence, detectable in the imbalance between the constative dimension of official discourse (actual engagement with the meaning coded within) and its performative dimension (the ritualised participation in discourse-perpetuating acts).

Klara Kemp-Welch's book *Antipolitics in Central European Art. Reticence as Dissidence under Post-Totalitarian Rule* expands Yurchak's investigation of performative discourse

¹⁹² Alexei Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More. The Last Soviet Generation* (Woodstock: Princeton University Press, 2005).

¹⁹³ As defined by Yurchak, shifts 'at the level of concrete ritualized forms of discourse, in which the performative dimension's importance grows, while the constative dimension opens up to new meanings'.

Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More*, p. 24.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 28-29.

by exploring the diverse formulation of antipolitical strategies in the world of art.¹⁹⁵ Through the work of Hungarian, Czechoslovak and Polish artists, framed by the historical development of communism in Central Europe, the private dimension of the artists' everyday lives, and writings by notable dissident intellectuals such as Václav Havel, Kemp-Welch unveils the subtle yet effective ways in which action-based artistic practice draws from, transforms, and in turn augments the 'power of the powerless'.¹⁹⁶ Building on Havel's theory of dissidence through the refusal to reproduce 'centralised ideology' at the individual and collective level of the quotidian, the author identifies and analyses six modes of antipolitical artistic practice – disinterest, doubt, dissent, humour, reticence, and dialogue – which served as 'a coherent strategy for the reinvigoration of civil society among members of the nascent political intelligentsia', but also as catalysts to the renewal of experimental art.¹⁹⁷

My thesis hopes to expand this dialogue to the field of architecture and the Romanian communist context, adding to recent academic scholarship tracing the historical overlap of various cultural practices in a wider, Central European framework, through parallels and comparisons with socialist cultural activity in Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia. It is important to note here that the temporal framework proposed by Kemp-Welch (the 1956 Hungarian Revolution, the Prague Spring of 1968, and the constitution of social opposition movements in Poland during the 1970s and 1980s)

¹⁹⁵ Klara Kemp-Welch, *Antipolitics in Central European Art. Reticence as Dissidence under Post-Totalitarian Rule. 1956-1989* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd, 2014).

¹⁹⁶ Kemp-Welch, *Antipolitics in Central European Art*, p.7.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

provides a third, triangulating element to the chronology of my own investigation, complementing socio-political changes within Romania's borders and Western developments. Tracing the local reverberations of these key Central European events – whose echoes within Romania's socio-cultural, but most importantly, architectural landscape, have been scarcely studied thus far – will contribute original content to the emerging, transnational picture of antipolitics during communism. From a more applied analytical perspective, Kemp-Welch's insights into the dynamics of experimental art offer critical contextualisation for Gramsci, Althusser and Staniszkis's theoretical readings of the role of the intelligentsia in reinforcing, transforming, and disrupting dominant ideology. Moreover, her model for the identification of types of architectural practice populating a diverse spectrum from lethargic compliance to strategic subversion or fruitful dialogue is transferrable to the architectural milieu, with due adjustments accounting for architecture's ineluctable entrenchment within centralised economy, and legally-binding regulations and performance standards. In the next section, Zahariade's exploration of post-communist, collective professional trauma (and idealised expectations of re-liberalisation) is situated in the research context of Gary Stevens's critique of architecture as a liberal profession, contrasted with the positive, transformative potential identified by Dana Cuff in her analysis of the culture of practice, and Dutton's project for the role of the profession as critical pedagogy. Kemp-Welch's insights into the negotiation of art between individual practice, social engagement, and ideological mechanism will help clarify the fluid boundaries and articulations between the architectural (socio-cultural) milieu and architecture as a field of institutionalised, politicised practice.

2.5. Architect, interrupted. Professional and cultural milieu dynamics

Although the social dynamics of architecture as a professional and cultural group play an important role in the main narrative of its discursive interaction with the political centre, they are seldom explored in studies of Romanian architecture. This reluctance to engage in self-analysis or allow external perspectives to weigh in – for instance, sociology – is not only related to the pervasive silence shrouding architecture's recent communist past, but also to ways of being and acting socially rooted in the profession's capitalist inception. Since the sociology of Romanian architecture has just begun accruing scholarship¹⁹⁸ – although theorists like Zahariade do touch upon the changes in professional mentality implemented during communism – I will use Garry Stevens's *The Favored Circle. The Social Foundations of Architectural Distinction*¹⁹⁹ to sketch a quick profile of architecture in its capitalist, Western, liberal acceptance, which represents a historical model of professional evolution for pre-war praxis, and a current aspiration for the contemporary profession in Romania.

While the choice of Stevens as critical lens for some of the more enduring paradoxes of the architecture field might appear excessively harsh and somewhat dated, its relevance to the current state of architecture culture in Romania recommends it as

¹⁹⁸ The only truly sociological study to date brought together the sociological expertise of Dan Chiribucă and the architectural insights of Șerban Țigănaș, and was developed in partnership by the Order of Romanian Architects and the Faculty of Sociology and Social Work - Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj Napoca.

Șerban Țigănaș, Dan Chiribucă, and Călin Moldovan-Teslios, *Arhitect în România. Studiu de fundamentare a politicilor naționale pentru arhitectură* [Architect in Romania. Preliminary foundational study for national policies for architecture] (Cluj-Napoca: Eikon, 2010).

¹⁹⁹ Garry Stevens, *The Favored Circle. The Social Foundations of Architectural Distinction* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002).

a point of departure in stimulating the local milieu's appetite for self-reflexivity. The roots of liberal practice in Romania were grounded in a socio-economic and political context blending incipient capitalism, a Western-looking modernising project implemented by authoritarian monarchic rule, and a society still largely ruled by quasi-feudal relationships. With the instatement of communism, much of the critical growing pains of the architecture field in the aftermath of the profession's disenchantment with the social project of modernism were lost, delayed, or occurred through diffraction from international architecture discourse. There were also significant points of synchronicity with these self-critical moments, which this thesis identifies and discusses at length. What is of vital importance here, however, is the contemporary negation of these positive steps towards greater social accountability, not only in the aftermath of socialism's collapse, but most crucially, against the hegemonic rule of capitalism. Consequently, I would argue that filtering the current state and expectations of Romanian architecture practice through the harsh light of Stevens's analysis is long overdue. This analysis will nevertheless be accompanied by Dana Cuff's nuanced understanding of practice as a web of meaning-production, whose individual participants can trigger, through self-awareness and concerted action, broader systemic changes.²⁰⁰ With Dutton, I would also argue that these are necessary first steps in shaping contemporary architecture into a 'cultural-political and artistic practice' that, beyond producing meaning, 'can question existing structures and work toward new social relations and new forms of

²⁰⁰ Cuff, *Architecture: The Story of Practice*, pp. 107-8.

politics', mobilising agency and resistance through its pedagogical dimension.²⁰¹

Architecture's disruption during communism will be assessed from the broader angle of cultural production in socialist systems – excellently analysed by Katherine Verdery in *National Ideology Under Socialism. Identity and Cultural Politics in Ceaușescu's Romania*,²⁰² and in Costică Brădățan and Serguei Oushakine's *In Marx's Shadow. Knowledge, Power and Intellectuals in Eastern Europe and Russia*²⁰³ – and from the insider's point of view through works by Zahariade and Șerban Țigănaș.

The Favored Circle is concerned with architecture's endemic self-deception about its own elitism and contribution to inequitable, class-based social stratification. Since the primacy of knowledge-based architectural discourse obscures architecture's internal stratification and role in the wider social system, Stevens argues against its study through the lens of *the profession* – a Western-based acceptance of liberal architecture, excessively focused on tangible praxis output over social engagement, and dismissive of different professional paradigms, such as state-run practice.²⁰⁴ I agree with Stevens that architecture is best understood as a field imbricated with other social systems, mediating between external social forces and its own internal components according to a logic above mere organisation into professional bodies.

²⁰¹ Thomas A. Dutton, 'Cultural Studies and Critical Pedagogy: Cultural Pedagogy and Architecture', in *Reconstructing Architecture: Critical Discourses and Social Practices*, ed. by Thomas A. Dutton and Lian Hurst Mann (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), pp. 196-97.

²⁰² Katherine Verdery, *National Ideology Under Socialism. Identity and Cultural Politics in Ceaușescu's Romania* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).

²⁰³ *In Marx's Shadow. Knowledge, Power and Intellectuals in Eastern Europe and Russia*, ed. by Costică Brădățan and Serguei Oushakine (Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2010).

²⁰⁴ Stevens, *The Favored Circle*, pp. 33-34.

In my own thesis, I use the concept of *profession*, to designate the institutionalised, state-run practice of architecture in communist Romania, and *architectural milieu*, to signify the dynamics of the semi-informal, cultural and intellectual circles connecting Romanian architects outside state design institutes.

For Cuff, architecture as a *profession* is also palpably monolithic and hierarchical, especially at the institutional core of the field, which deploys the trio of professional organisations, architecture schools, and specialist media in the formulation of architecture's autonomy and system of values.²⁰⁵ By contrast, architecture as *milieu* does not only comprise the studio or firm (itself stratified by internal power relations based on knowledge and seniority, and enmeshed in the field's broader echelons of symbolic value), but also the connection between architecture practice and the social world. As a framework for individual and collective enculturation into the profession, but also the site of sense-making, 'the setting where ethos and circumstance lock horns', the architecture *milieu* holds, according to Cuff, untapped transformative potential.²⁰⁶ It is vital to note here that Cuff sees this capacity for the positive transformation of practice as dependent on altering the structural imbalances of the field in order to promote the practice of design as a primarily social process: collective action valued as much as individual autonomy; design activity as contextual sense-making; the recognition of architecture's business and management dimensions; and a wider range of specialised architecture education

²⁰⁵ Cuff, *Architecture: The Story of Practice*, p. 36.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

pathways.²⁰⁷ Assessed from this angle, the practice of architecture in communist Romania has much to contribute to a contemporary re-orientation of praxis towards greater social accountability.

Although generally perceived as homogeneous, architecture consists, according to Stevens, of two subfields – mass production and restricted production – engaged in a tense feedback loop of trickle-down and upscaling, and ruled by temporal/economic capital, and intellectual/symbolic capital, respectively.²⁰⁸ For restricted production, the goal is absolute autonomy – production for the producers themselves, who monopolise the evaluation of architectural output according to the field’s symbolic capital. For Stevens, this is an in-field autonomous principle that stratifies restricted production, while also ensuring the double subjection of mass production – to the discourse-dominated field of restricted production, as well as to the market.²⁰⁹ Thus, architecture contributes to the reproduction of an inequitable class system, and also structures itself internally according to the same principle of elitist stratification which operates, undetected, under the guise of pure aesthetics.²¹⁰ Interestingly, architecture’s reluctance to consistently pursue the greater social good neutralises it as a political actor, minimising architectural criticism of the capitalist hegemony.²¹¹ Moreover,

²⁰⁷ Cuff, *Architecture: The Story of Practice*, pp. 251-60.

²⁰⁸ Stevens, *The Favored Circle*, pp. 88-91.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 91-95.

²¹⁰ The author makes a compelling case for the subversion of Modernism’s social ethos in this fashion: despite initial receptivity to social demand, and the generation of social-oriented rhetoric, architecture’s fundamental logic (the hunt for symbolic capital) transformed social engagement into an aesthetic – the International Style.

²¹¹ Stevens, *The Favored Circle*, p. 96.

Stevens considers conflict between the two subfields and within restricted production to be the motor of architecture's evolution, with the end-game being a reformation of the rules – a drive to place a different type of symbolic capital at the core of architectural discourse, whence it can become, in Spiro Kostoff's words, *doxa*, evidently self-valuable and unchallengeable despite its arbitrariness.²¹²

In profiling the profession, Stevens also dispels myths central to the self-perception of architects, myths I have also encountered as a student, practitioner and educator. The architect as naturally gifted polymath is a mythical standard to which the entirety of the field is held, despite archival evidence of outstanding talent being the exception, not the norm.²¹³ Career progression is seen as solely contingent on talent and work ethic, with all practitioners striving for headway 'feasible only for the few architects inhabiting the purely symbolic space of the field',²¹⁴ reachable through socio-economic selectivity and entering master-pupil chains. This top tier also generates critique on the profession, the education system and praxis in general, leading to the paradoxical situation of schools whose primary function is to preserve the accumulated capital of the field (that is, taking a conservative stance) being found lacking in radical edge.²¹⁵ Cuff's findings also indicate the cultivation of individual autonomy under the architect-hero myth to be pervasive in the educational environment, but she takes a more nuanced view than Stevens. While this trend certainly has significant impact on

²¹² *Ibid.* pp. 98-110.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 132-33.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 223.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 215.

the dissonance felt by young graduates, it actually indicates a more worrying systemic fault: the exclusion of vital 'structural conditions' of practice (the client, design as collaborative effort, and power/economy frameworks) from the educational experience of architecture, and thereby from co-option into the system of beliefs acquired by young practitioners.²¹⁶ Dutton, however, takes an even more pointed critical stance: beyond the sanitisation of the design process from the messiness of context, the architecture studio operates as an undeclared vehicle of hegemonic normalisation, particularly with regard to 'asymmetrical relations of power' such as race, gender, class, and the distribution of knowledge.²¹⁷ For both researchers, however, the susceptibility of architecture education to tacit legitimising practices also indicates the opportunity for their reversal and subversion. Cuff notes that architecture schools are the most logical sites for the implementation of changes that can address the field's imbalances discussed above,²¹⁸ while Dutton proposes 'the hidden curriculum' as a critical and methodological filter allowing teachers and students to identify, question, and restructure the relationships between knowledge, power, culture, and society which permeate design activity.²¹⁹ These misconceptions regarding the idealised model of Western, liberal architecture can also be found at the core of Romanian architecture's desired state of practice.

²¹⁶ Cuff, *Architecture: The Story of Practice*, p. 45.

²¹⁷ Thomas A. Dutton, 'The Hidden Curriculum and the Design Studio: Toward a Critical Studio Pedagogy', in *Voices in Architectural Education: Cultural Politics and Pedagogy*, ed. by Thomas A. Dutton (New York: Bergin & Garvey, 1991), pp. 165-66.

²¹⁸ Cuff, *Architecture: The Story of Practice*, p. 250.

²¹⁹ Dutton, 'The Hidden Curriculum and the Design Studio: Toward a Critical Studio Pedagogy', pp. 167-68.

A recent study coordinated by Dan Chiribucă and Șerban Țigănaș, *Arhitect în România. Studiu de fundamentare a politicilor naționale pentru arhitectură*,²²⁰ further supports the applicability – with some fine tuning – of Stevens’s profile of the profession as a *favoured circle*. Having the laudable merit of being the first published contribution to a nascent sociology of the profession developed with methods extrinsic to *architecture proper*, the study is also the first to probe into the perception of architecture, architects and the built environment by professionals and populace alike. A joint reading of these parallel perspectives was an eye-opening experience, which has prompted, as Țigănaș notes in a short foreword to the study’s conclusions, panicked demands to confine it to the oblivion of academic research.²²¹ Architects predominantly construct their professional and personal identities around a principle of demiurgic creativity that overshadows all other technical and economic aspects, emphasising the importance of architecture praxis for the betterment of society. The distance between their self-perception and that of the population, however, is significant,²²² as are the excessively negative views architects hold about the public and its perception of their art. Architecture also garners the highest rate of non-responses from all professions listed, indicating the lack of social visibility and communication that would allow people to

²²⁰ Șerban Țigănaș, Dan Chiribucă, and Călin Moldovan-Teseliș, *Arhitect în România. Studiu de fundamentare a politicilor naționale pentru arhitectură* [Architect in Romania. Preliminary foundational study for national policies for architecture] (Cluj-Napoca: Eikon, 2010).

²²¹ The presentation in question took place during the 2010 National Council of the Romanian Order of Architects, held in Iași.

Șerban Țigănaș, *Arhitecți, arhitectură și orașe. Despre profesia de arhitect și cum se construiește în România recentă* [Architects, architecture, and cities. On the architecture profession and modes of construction in contemporary Romania. Translation mine] (Bucharest: Simetria, 2014), p 87.

²²² The public ranks architects on the middle tier of socially beneficial and influential professions, among engineers (and below doctors or professors), while architects see themselves topping this hierarchy.

form and articulate an opinion.²²³ A second relevant finding is that, for architects, the factors of architectural success or failure, as well as the possible solutions to the problematic of contemporary praxis are, with the exception of corrupt practice, mostly external to the milieu's psychology.²²⁴ For all its frankness, however, the study does not explain the origins of this convoluted professional mentality, traceable only through reflection on the historical becoming of the profession.

Ana Maria Zahariade's *Simptome de tranziție. Eseuri de arhitectură*²²⁵ picks up the thread of architecture's contemporary problematic, following it back to the little-discussed and ill-understood communist past and further back, making a solid case for the profession's present ailments stemming from a long-term pathology, rather than current circumstances. A decade into the process of transition, Zahariade notes that a paradoxical discrepancy between the expectations of post-communist practice and research (effervescent, experimental eclecticism), and the reality of the chaotic, incoherent development of the built environment. Doubled by professional apathy, this contributes to an 'architectural morass, of things avoiding architects' control, of architects opposing no resistance to their own dismissal'.²²⁶ For Zahariade, a perverted perception of the recent communist past as damaging (therefore, silenced) or ineffective (and consequently dismissed) engenders an anomalous formulation of

²²³ Țigănaș, Chiribucă, and Moldovan-Teslios, *Arhitect în România*, pp. 182-87.

²²⁴ Often cited reasons for the current state of the practice include clients' demands, profit-oriented real-estate speculation, poor legislation, an overgrown and inefficient administrative apparatus, the inconsistency of political decision, etc.

²²⁵ Ana Maria Zahariade, *Simptome de tranziție. Eseuri de arhitectură* [Symptoms of transition. Architecture essays] trans. by Claudia Rada (Bucharest: Editura Fundației Arhitect Design, 2009).

²²⁶ Zahariade, *Simptome de tranziție*, p. 68.

alibis external to the profession: economic hardship and a feral free market, low levels of technical expertise, frustrating relationships with clients, inconsistent legislation and administrative/political decisions, and interestingly, the shock of studio-based practice unveiling the godsend that major design institutes were to secure, lucrative employment.²²⁷ The real causes, however, lie in the formative features of Romanian architecture, and their effective exploitation by the communist regime, which created a professional conditioning so deeply ingrained that even the critical awareness and acuity of researchers like Zahariade struggle to overcome self-deception, censorship and elective silence.

The self-deception identified above, however, is not unique to Romanian architecture culture. In their critique of architecture's loss of cohesion in the pursuit of socially-significant modes of practice, Thomas A. Dutton and Lian Hurst Mann argue that much subversive critical energy has been misspent through retreat into tradition, aesthetics, discursive criticism, and socially-conscious design stripped of the legitimising potential of aesthetic production.²²⁸ Although great strides have been made in the postmodernity towards the self-definition of marginal voices through the dismantling of grand, homogenising narratives, the extreme discursive fragmentation of the post-modern condition has gradually ushered in 'hegemony by disorientation',²²⁹ making it difficult for a 'larger, collective counterhegemonic project'

²²⁷ Ibid., pp. 68-69.

²²⁸ *Reconstructing Architecture: Critical Discourses and Social Practices*, ed. by Thomas A. Dutton and Lian Hurst Mann (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), pp. 13-19.

²²⁹ Anthony Jackson, *The Politics of Architecture* (London: Architectural Press, 1970), pp. 20-38.

to emerge.²³⁰ For Dutton and Hurst Mann, a truly critical, constructive practice would embrace the nature of architecture as a political act, as a cultural system of meaning-making, as a means to construct social critique through knowledge and discourse, to reverse hegemonic polarities through the legitimating potential of aesthetics.²³¹ Reflecting on Zahariade's assessment of contemporary Romanian architecture through the critical lens above, I would argue that the profession currently finds itself at the twin disadvantage of the formative features discussed by Zahariade, and amplified through the experience of communism, and the increasingly more fragmented landscape of discursive and creative sensibilities ushered in by the re-liberalisation of practice after 1989.

Architecture, however, is not alone in this struggle: other fields of cultural production were similarly affected, and understanding their evolution during communism can offset the perceptive bias inherent to architecture. In *National Ideology under Socialism*, Katherine Verdery focuses on the historical reproduction of national ideology in Romania through the political entrenchment of cultural production and intellectual activity. A core characteristic of Romanian politics and cross-discipline cultural exchanges, national discourse was co-opted by a weak regime to compensate for a structural lack of legitimacy and to indigenise the alien discourse of Marxism-Leninism. With socialism's economy of endemic shortage leading to the partial political commodification of culture, intellectual milieus became locked in constant struggles

²³⁰ *Reconstructing Architecture: Critical Discourses and Social Practices*, p. 8.

²³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 19-23.

over the definition and the means of producing cultural values, thus reproducing the system. Consequently, the political and cultural co-production of a monolithic, xenophobic and isolationist nation gradually de-legitimised Marxism-Leninism, replacing it with a national communism of Stalinist derivation.²³²

Through comparison with the activity of intellectual circles in Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia, Verdery explores the limited transformative force of the Romanian elites. Despite working in a 'differentiated social space' defined by cultural authority and political status, Romanian intellectuals could only stage resistance through 'an impassioned defense of the values of *culture*', as Romania had no underground dissident network, no human rights movement, no historical track-record of subordinating elite interests to the general welfare, nor a sufficiently factional ruling Party amenable to moderate reforms.²³³ In this context, the variation of academic and scholarly discourse becomes extremely important. Despite the perpetuation of the hegemonic order stemming from participation in politicised cultural production, the polysemy of contending interpretations explored by intellectuals within national discourse promoted a subdued pluralism, disruptive to the activities of the political centre and smuggling different values into its ideological framework.

Oushakine and Brădăţan's *In Marx's Shadow* unpacks the creation and dissemination of knowledge between power and intellectuals in the Eastern bloc, with particular focus on the role of intellectuals in shaping and circulating discourses enabling the

²³² Verdery, *National Ideology under Socialism*, pp. 302-18.

²³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 310-12.

perception of society by its members, thus mediating between power, knowledge and reality. Central to the communist project, intellectuals created a legitimising theoretical and ideological corpus, but also maintained and updated it to dilute contradictions with everyday reality. Various holders of philosophical, aesthetic, social or political knowledge have worked to justify, 'but also frame oppositional and nonofficial discourses and practices' across communism's collapse, signalling that many post-communist debates are actually 'rooted in cultural processes and intellectual projects of the previous period'.²³⁴ Contributors like Tismăneanu find this logical continuity disruptive during transition and symptomatic of a political pathology mired in discourses of nationalist salvationism and illiberalism.²³⁵ Letitia Guran's chapter on the school of resistance through aesthetics and 'high-culture' promoted by philosopher Constantin Noica demonstrates the popularity of aesthetics-focused cultural production eschewing political involvement, even outside philosophical circles. The compensatory mechanism of assuaging the moral guilt of social and political indifference through the pleasures derived from creative or aesthetic pursuits has been denounced by many as a squandered opportunity for genuine resistance.²³⁶ Returning to Verdery, however, it is possible that this utopian escapism has 'kept the space for

²³⁴ Oushakine and Brădăţan, *In Marx's Shadow*, p. 3.

²³⁵ Vladimir Tismăneanu, 'The Demise of Leninism and the Future of Liberal Values', in *In Marx's Shadow. Knowledge, Power and Intellectuals in Eastern Europe and Russia*, ed. by Costică Brădăţan and Serguei Oushakine, (Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2010), pp. 221-42.

²³⁶ Letitia Guran, 'Aesthetics: A Modus Vivendi in Eastern Europe?', in *In Marx's Shadow. Knowledge, Power and Intellectuals in Eastern Europe and Russia*, ed. by Costică Brădăţan and Serguei Oushakine, (Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2010), pp. 53-72.

different values, for a different kind of social order, from vanishing',²³⁷ a perspective worth investigating in architecture.

2.6. The past as a foreign country. Autobiographical writings from and about the communist era

This section brings in writings by Romanian architects active in practice, education and institutional leadership to complement the official reflection of praxis in *Arhitectura*, and flesh out the profile of the architect under the communist regime. Ion Mihai Enescu's *Arhitect sub comunism*,²³⁸ Gheorghe Leahu's *Arhitect în 'Epoca de Aur'*,²³⁹ and the collective volume edited by Viorica Iuga-Curea, *Arhitecți în timpul dictaturii*²⁴⁰ form the core of this review, but will be supplemented with other sources²⁴¹ throughout the thesis to further refine (or contradict) the narratives, perspectives and themes emerging from these works. The first two are individual retellings of professional and personal life during communism, synchronous with the events (Leahu) and written post-factum (Enescu). The chronological distance provides a means to assess the shifting, over the decades, of in-field perception of the main themes of socialist Romanian architecture, which can subsequently be analysed in conjunction with the past and present dynamics of the professional milieu. Moreover,

²³⁷ Verdery, *National Ideology Under Socialism*, p. 313.

²³⁸ Ion Mircea Enescu, *Arhitect sub comunism* [Architect under communism] (Bucharest: Paideia, 2006).

²³⁹ Gheorghe Leahu, *Arhitect în 'Epoca de Aur'* [Architect in the 'Golden Age'] (Bucharest: Fundația Academia Civică, 2004).

²⁴⁰ *Arhitecți în timpul dictaturii: amintiri* [Architects during the dictatorship: memories], ed. by Viorica Iuga-Curea (Bucharest: Simetria, 2005).

²⁴¹ Such as recent articles, personal communications, and interviews with the practitioners featured in *Arhitectura* during its communist period.

Enescu and Leahu worked in different Design Institutes and had different specialisms²⁴² providing insights into complementary facets of architectural design.

Iuga-Curea's volume, initiated and overseen by the Union of Romanian Architects (URA) assembles eight recollections constructed around a set of editorial prompts, which can reveal whether centrifugal tendencies in contemporary retellings from within the profession are at play, imposing a subtle disingenuousness upon current analyses.²⁴³ The short introductions about – and professional recollections by – the volume's contributors exhibit a set of themes prevalent in the collective self-perception of the profession: overt antagonism between architecture and power; the intensity of personal and cultural persecution; an over-estimation of architecture's role in social progress, dramatically impeded by the regime; and the glorification of the interwar years, equated with valuable, internationally recognised cultural production, brutally dismantled during communism.²⁴⁴ Only two authors invite critical assessment of this volume. Historian Dinu Giurescu bemoans the reluctance of intellectual elites to bring together individual accounts of the recent past in order to demystify practice, be it

²⁴² Ionescu specialised in structurally performant and innovative industrial, sports, health and education programmes, while Leahu's main focus fell on conservation and restoration.

²⁴³ Moreover, Enescu and Leahu also contributed chapters to *Arhitecți în timpul dictaturii*: Enescu's book was, in fact, sparked by his participation in the project, while Leahu's contribution took a wholly different approach to that of his secret journals.

²⁴⁴ Ion Mircea Enescu's chapter is titled 'The anatomy of those abominable times', and presents a narrative of resistance through practice to the political dismantling of the profession's autonomy and creative freedom. Gheorghe Leahu writes bitterly of his experiences as an 'architect-slave' to Ceaușescu's childish whims, to devastating effect for Bucharest's irreplaceable urban heritage. Eugenia Greceanu details the Sovietisation of architecture education, as well as the persecution of students and practitioners on grounds of enmity to class struggle and cosmopolitan inclinations. Dinu C. Giurescu's preface to Leahu's chapter highlights the chasm between the material, social, and experiential richness of pre-war Romanian cities, and the 'urban kolkhoz' generalised under socialism.

Iuga-Curea, *Arhitecți în timpul dictaturii*, pp. 29-90, 93, 95, 113-42, 147, 161-62, 165-91, 201.

artistic or scientific, during communism.²⁴⁵ Professor architect Peter Derer's preface is even more incisive: whilst acknowledging the usefulness of initiating 'an oral professional history', the book could have gone further in illustrating the full range of professional attitudes present 'in a society far removed from normalcy'. The preface subtly implies that the volume has eschewed the responsibility of a truly honest, analytical foray into the recent past, outlining salient points through a mosaic of data, but without venturing onto truly disputable ground.²⁴⁶

Architect Gheorghe Leahu's secret journal (1985-1989) was published in 2004 under the title *Arhitect în 'Epoca de Aur'*.²⁴⁷ As head of a design department in a Bucharest-based Design Institute, Leahu was well enough placed within the profession's circle of power to observe and partake in major urban planning and architecture projects (from commission attribution to navigating the chain of official authorisation), though not in possession of enough professional authority to intervene with noticeable results. Still, the entire mechanism of interaction with the authorities over specific projects²⁴⁸ – and their toll on daily practice – can be pieced together from his recollections. Praxis was affected by a marked disjunction between the level of professional expertise, commitment, and rigor evident in urban and architectural design, and the actual unfeasibility of most projects in the context of restrictive timeframes and resource

²⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 162.

²⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 7 [emphasis mine].

²⁴⁷ The final stretch of Ceaușescu's 'golden age' was a time of radical urban transformation for Bucharest, including an extension of the underground network, channelling works on the Dâmbovița River, several high-rise housing estates, and the development of a gargantuan new Civic Centre, all coordinated by and designed at Proiect București, the country's leading state design institute.

²⁴⁸ Further analysed in Chapter 6, The Power of the State and the Power of the Profession.

shortages. Architects experienced a sense of labour futility even with regard to exciting, unique projects, exacerbated by the constant corrections imposed through political directive. Significant amounts of time and creative energy were spent on maintaining project logic and cohesion in the wake of political intervention and resource shortages.²⁴⁹ Nevertheless, Leahu genuinely believed in the social importance of architecture, perceived as one of the cornerstones of a Romanian culture erected around national discourse.

Leahu's writing reveals the anxiety of professional milieu isolation – a keenly felt absence of lively cultural exchanges, as well as theoretically and creatively stimulating dialogue with architects from abroad. Whilst memoirs by Romanian architects tend towards dispassionate retrospectives or fervent denunciations of the regime's vicious destruction of cultural values, Leahu writes with brutal sincerity of his family's struggle for survival under draconian economic restrictions. It is the very limited presence of architecture in his musings, the scarcity of in-depth considerations on architectural matters versus the lavishly detailed miseries of quotidian drudgery that makes the book so significant. Far from concerted efforts from architects to curtail power's abusive control of architecture practice through overt contention, Leahu's journal unwittingly reveals architecture's simultaneously limited, yet effective range of actions. On one hand, the milieu orchestrated far less organised, overt resistance than seems to be generally recalled. On the other, architects ensured the continuity and consistency of practice at a time of aberrant uncertainty and extreme economic

²⁴⁹ Leahu, *Arhitect în 'Epoca de Aur'*, pp. 81-82, 91-92, 93-96, 97-97, 103-04, etc.

hardship – a genuine achievement of talent and professionalism, given the arbitrariness of political decision under Ceaușescu.

Ion Mircea Enescu's *Arhitect sub comunism* saw print in 2006, and remains to this day an exceptionally detailed and revealing analytical portrayal of socialist Romanian architecture, of great relevance for this thesis. Spanning the entirety of Romania's communist period, it debuts with the architect's pre-communist education, vital for the comparison between the educational aspects of architecture prior to and after the change in regime. Enescu's chronology of practice stems from a slightly divergent position, signalling discursive changes only detectable through direct experience, and less evident correlations of main events in the field of architecture with the major 'eras' of communist historiography. Enescu also highlights unexpected areas of creative discursive renewal, sourced from outside the internal dialogue of architecture. As a specialist in sports and industrial architecture, he partook in 'design export' programmes to developing countries, which afforded him a comparative perspective of praxis in different types of political and economic systems. With feeling, but without pathos, Enescu uses the time elapsed since the 1989 change in regime to reflect on the characteristics of architecture practice under communism but also, more interestingly, to make observations on the conjoined impact of the politics of the Union of Romanian Architects, *Arhitectura* magazine, and IMUAU, on contemporary practice.

2.7. Conclusion

Through the Literature Review, I have assembled a critical overview of extant scholarship on communist architecture, by tracing its theoretical links to architectural theory and critique prior to 1989, and presenting some of the dilemmas of contemporary practice. Although significant progress has been made through the excellent works of IMUAU-based researchers, the review has highlighted several gaps in knowledge which this thesis seeks to address.

Arhitectura magazine has yet to form the object of detailed study as a microcosm of professional thought and practice, with critical and potentially instrumental effects on the direction of praxis during communism. While the broad strokes of architecture's relationship with power have already been traced through extant scholarship, the full range of the profession's subtle instrumental criticality – and its transformative effect on the ideological configuration of communist architecture – invite more detailed mapping. Since the assessment of the power-architecture relationship has been prone to dichotomic narratives of oppression and resistance, examining it afresh through the lens of an ontology of socialism (accounting for institutional logic and bureaucratic procedure, not only political directive) is a necessary step in furthering knowledge on the subject.

My thesis seeks to build on the research of scholars like Zahariade and Ioan by expanding the geo-political and chronological positioning of architecture in communist Romania through correlation with architecture praxis in a wider Eastern

and Western European context, and by assessing its rootedness in pre-war cultural dynamics, as well as the transference of its patterns and modes of practice into post-socialist Romanian architecture. Finally, the theme of national identity in the discourse and practice of architecture will also be analysed from the perspective of transformative meetings with cultural and architectural *otherness*, tracing the external discursive influences at play in the local formulation of identity, but also the effect of Romanian architects' understanding of specificity, reflected in their practice abroad. Together, these gaps in extant knowledge on the subject inform a cluster of interconnected questions, which in turn shape the analytical focus of the thesis.

Did architecture play a role in producing – or at least, mediating in professional terms – a social critique of the communist project? If this was not detectable in architecture's official exchanges with power, could there have been a form of subdued criticality at play, through actual design practice and engagement in performative, rather than constitutive discourse? This first cluster of questions help focus the analytical direction of Chapter 4 on the negotiation of hegemony between architecture and the state, reflected in the profession's openness to work with and within, rather than directly against, the ideological core of Socialist Realism.

Did the concept of a *nationally specific* architecture hinder the evolution of local praxis, or did it provide unexpected connections to architecture abroad? In this context, what was the role of *Arhitectura* magazine in forging a space for alternative ways of thinking and doing architecture, and how did it navigate periods of censorship and conceptual or methodological openness? Chapter 5 addresses this second cluster of questions by

mapping the socio-cultural dynamics between the Romanian architectural milieu and the local political centre, as well as the variegated world of international architecture, framed through the evolution of the problematic of national specificity in architecture. Through its permeability to discursive trends from outside Romania's borders, and to methodologies from disciplines outside the field of architecture, *Arhitectura* magazine is also investigated as a potential soft-trigger to the shifting understanding of *specificity* in the architectural milieu – with significant consequences on the deployment of *nationally specific architecture* in the exercise of political legitimation.

To what extent could and did architects tap into the sources of creative freedom and tension created by socialism's contradictory nature? Moreover, did the inner logic of architecture as a social field and cultural milieu influence the development of practice in ways obscured by its more visible and better documented relationship with power? Leaning on questions prompted by socialism's modes of governance and control, Chapter 6 examines the balance of power between the political centre and architecture, identifying the zones and tactics of negotiation specific to each, along with arenas of fruitful dialogue or transformative confrontation. Insights from the three content chapters, along with reflections of their impact on the contemporary praxis of architecture in Romania, articulate the narrative of the interstitial spaces of communist Romanian architecture, with the Conclusion chapter also highlighting potential directions for further study based on this thesis' original contribution to extant knowledge.

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

Traversing five decades, communist Romanian architecture has produced a perplexing corpus of resources. On one hand, it is marked by continuity, abundance, and clear-cut taxonomy: *Arhitectura* ran continually as the only Romanian architecture periodical; a profusion of laws, decrees, and building codes regulated praxis on behalf of the state, and architectural research conducted at the Ion Mincu University or in state institutions circulated as books or design documentations. On the other hand, it predominantly featured official discourse (professional, legal and political), therefore seeming to project a narrow, fragmented, lacunar picture. As Zahariade, Ioan, and Lascu have noted, this resource corpus is technical rather than reflexive,²⁵⁰ explicitly covering many concrete aspects of practice, whilst delving infrequently – and with caution – into the theoretical debates or wider social phenomena underpinning it. But what bearing could unpacking the intricacies of the recent architectural past (doubly encrypted by political intervention in professional life and, as demonstrated by Stevens, the deceptive self-representation inherent to the profession) have on the historiography of Romanian architecture and, more importantly, on the contemporary direction of its praxis?

The key to this dilemma resides, paradoxically, in the publication *Arhitectura*, due to its fundamental contribution to the field of study of Romanian architecture during the

²⁵⁰ Ana Maria Zahariade, Augustin Ioan, and Nicolae Lascu, 'Privire generală asupra evoluției revistei "Arhitectura"' [An Overview of the Evolution of "Arhitectura" Magazine], in *Istorie reprimată* [Repressed Histories], (unpublished CNCSIS research project, Ion Mincu University of Architecture and Urbanism, 2001).

communist regime. The magazine's exhaustive professional scope, longevity throughout the communist period, ubiquity as professional forum, number of successive editorships, and vast gallery of prominent voices, have contributed significantly to the field of architecture – from the periphery to the epicentre of authority. Despite its careful observance of the shifting rules of cultural (and economic) production in a socialist system, *Arhitectura's* content is revealed, upon closer examination, to be rich with instances of architecture's self-representing discourse, of power's manipulation of the practice, and of their reciprocal mediation in built form, which can shed light on the dynamics of architecture as a politicized field embedded in wider social, cultural and economic systems. Moreover, observance of the rules of the game over an extended period of time – as well as the timing and intensity of their bending – has much to reveal about tacit changes in the relationship between power and architecture. Therefore, investigating *Arhitectura* as a repository of professional and political discourse on architecture praxis, as well as a guiding thread spanning the communist period and suggesting complementary avenues of investigation,²⁵¹ opens up perspectives on the Romanian architectural phenomenon beyond the profession's self-defined genealogy and power's official interpretation. *Arhitectura* has yet to be studied extensively in this fashion, a gap which this thesis seeks to address.

But more importantly than a contribution to gaps in extant scholarship on the subject, probing into the problematic of communist Romanian architecture through

²⁵¹ Such as writings on architecture published by the magazine's contributors outside the constraints of its official framework.

Arhitectura would illuminate the paradoxical condition of contemporary praxis. Simultaneously eroded by unacknowledged patterns of professional practice and negotiation with institutional power rooted in the past, it searches for a level of civic relevance lost to the logic of capital and the refutation of a social ethos associated, perhaps misguidedly, with the collectively traumatic experience of communism. From these insights, alternative modes of thinking, discoursing, and making architecture in the still turbulent context of Romanian capitalism might yet emerge, with positive effects on the myriad lives inhabiting the built – and mental – urban landscapes of post-socialist Romania.

For Dana Cuff, architecture journals have a central role to play in formulating, disseminating, and upholding ‘the wellspring of beliefs within the culture of practice, maintaining professional unity around those core beliefs’.²⁵² That said, Cuff also sees architecture journals, alongside schools, as sites of potential transformative action, whose plurisemic narratives can diminish the contradiction between ‘espoused theories’ and ‘theories-in-use’ – that is, between architectural beliefs and practice.²⁵³ From this angle, the seemingly isolated discursive world of *Arhitectura* magazine seems refreshingly in tune with Cuff’s recommendations for addressing architecture’s four systemic imbalances: the question of individual autonomy and the collective nature of the design process; the acute separation of design (and architecture as art) from business and management; the understanding of design as a sense-making,

²⁵² Cuff, *Architecture: The Story of Practice*, p. 250.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

rather than a decision-making process; and the dilemma of architects as specialists or generalists.²⁵⁴

It is important to note here that, while the dualities above derive from a Western, English-speaking, capitalist framework for architecture practice, they also represent two points of critical anchorage and comparison for Romanian communist architecture. These dilemmas have been observed by scholars of the Romanian architecture system prior to WWII,²⁵⁵ and continue to reverberate through contemporary diagnoses of the state of Romanian practice since the collapse of communism.²⁵⁶ As I will discuss in detail throughout the body of the thesis, *Arhitectura* underwent significant transformations during the communist period, in comparison to both its liberal, capitalist beginnings, and its re-liberalisation. Surprisingly, however, the inevitable concessions to official regime ideology were counter-balanced by changes which align, on closer inspection, with the suggestions made by Cuff for the betterment of practice, and the reduction of the dissonance caused by contrasting modes of thinking/speaking/representing architecture, and modes of practising it in the messy reality of social contexts.²⁵⁷

²⁵⁴ Cuff, *Architecture: The Story of Practice*, p. 11.

²⁵⁵ Gabriela Tabacu, *Revista Arhitectura. Studiu monografic și indici. 1906-1944* [Arhitectura magazine. Monographic study and indices. 1906-1944] (Bucharest: Editura Universitară Ion Mincu, 2006).

²⁵⁶ See section 2.5. of this thesis for an overview of studies exploring this topic, chiefly those of Ana Maria Zahariade and Șerban Țigănaș.

²⁵⁷ Cuff, *Architecture: The Story of Practice*, p. 245-62.

To begin with, communist *Arhitectura* begins to redress the imbalance between indeterminacy²⁵⁸ and objective knowledge, which Jamous and Peloille argue characterises most professions,²⁵⁹ and Cuff identifies as a contributing factor to the distance and mistrust between architects and the wider public.²⁶⁰ During communism, *Arhitectura* gains distance from its pre-war editorial focus on a professional audience valuing the role of indeterminate knowledge in the maintenance of architectural autonomy and the elite social status of practitioners. Articles tackling the nitty-gritty of economics, resource distribution, demographics, legislation, and a host of other data pertaining to the socio-economic context of design begin to appear in its pages. Architects like Maria Cotescu, whose research project on the typology of socialist housing is discussed in detail in Chapter 4,²⁶¹ also make inroads towards divesting architecture of the ideological safety net of artistry, grounding the problematic of design in the profiling of user needs and the intricacies of centralised production. The contribution of the team, or design collective, begins to overshadow the solitary work of the hero-architect figure, and a variety of non-specialist actors with high stakes in the design process are made visible, given a voice traced directly to the development of projects, no matter how small the contribution.

²⁵⁸ Comprising the tacit knowledge, skills, and processes that are non-quantifiable, and are usually acquired through practice and experience, rather than in a systematic manner within the framework of architecture education/pedagogy.

²⁵⁹ H. Jamous and B. Peloille, 'Changes in the French University-Hospital System', *Professions and Professionalization*, ed. by J. A. Jackson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), pp. 111-52.

²⁶⁰ Cuff, *Architecture: The Story of Practice*, pp. 37-41.

²⁶¹ See pp. 233-44 of this thesis.

On the obverse, design as sense-making of complex situations all but disappears from the pages of the magazine, replaced inevitably with excessive bureaucratisation and institutional decision-making chains. The communist period also sees the rise of specialism in Romanian architecture, with various design institutes and individual architects focused on particular programmes and typologies. This is significant for the closer connections engendered by specialism between architects and other disciplines or areas of activity – social geography, industry, engineering, linguistics, etc. – which helped make the sphere of architecture more permeable to other facets of society and modes of production. After the communist period, a noticeable trend towards reversing these shifts began to take place, as discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.²⁶² What is important to note here, however, is that the deliberate, methodological choice made in streaming the arguments of this thesis exclusively through *Arhitectura* magazine has allowed me to track the evolution of these shifts in the field, both in relation to the profession's past, and its desired future. Without this narrowing of analytical focus, the sheer variety of content, ideological, and methodological positions illustrated in *Arhitectura* will have yielded a quantity of dialogues with other professional journals, thinkers, and practitioners, unfeasible to do justice within the confines of one doctoral thesis. Having identified the existence and recurrence of these field imbalances in the Romanian architecture system, through methodological parallels with the work of Cuff and Crysler, I have no doubt that future scholarship on the subject will begin to trace these shifts in a variety of post-socialist contexts.

²⁶² See pp. 98-111 of this thesis.

3.1. A jigsaw archive. Resources and strategy

In a unique position to reflect multiple facets of architectural thought and practice, however subtly expressed – from responsiveness to socio-cultural changes from within and beyond borders, to the complex negotiation between in-field dominant ideas and political directives in the context of a centralised economy – *Arhitectura* is the invaluable centrepiece of my archival research strategy. However, given the varying degree of political interference manifest in the magazine's publication throughout the communist period, it stands to benefit from juxtaposition with other data. As already discussed in the Literature Review, additional help in discerning the subversive, compliant or astutely manipulative undertones in officially published material are theoretical and autobiographic texts published by *Arhitectura's* contributors through other channels of cultural production, written prior to, as well as after the system's collapse.

Visual materials produced in the exercise of architecture practice are equally relevant, providing non-linguistic substantiation (or contradiction) of the accompanying text, decipherable by the trained specialist eye. Likewise, political discourse (speeches, laws, administrative texts) helps clarify the triggers and implementation of practice-wide changes in architecture, while collections of internal IMUUAU documents highlight the rapport between architecture education and political dictum.²⁶³ Interviews with

²⁶³ Lecture notes, information on the design curriculum, memos, correspondence with the Ministry of Education, etc.

architects and urbanists involved in education, practice and administration during communism further contextualise the evidence thus gathered, and offer another layer of analysis: current perception of past issues, crucial to understanding how the recent past – and present attempts to silence or distort it – affect contemporary architecture. With *Arhitectura* incontrovertibly at its core, this jigsaw archive assembles materials intended for in-field circulation or inter-field exchanges, obtained mainly from physical archives in Bucharest,²⁶⁴ but also reputable online archives documenting the everyday life of Romanian communism.²⁶⁵

The tensions between the archive's core and its loose, multi-voiced, sometimes contradictory margins have the potential to amend, contradict or expand the official narratives of the profession and power, exposing patterns, telling absences, unanticipated links, and even sudden shifts in discourse and praxis. Given architecture's situatedness – that is, its participation in the construction, dissemination,

²⁶⁴ The National Archives of Romania, the Archives of the Union of Romanian Architects, the Archives of the Ion Mincu University of Architecture and Urbanism, the Bucharest City Hall Archives, the Archives of *Arhitectura* magazine, the Romanian Academy Library, and the National Library of Romania.

²⁶⁵ Image and information repositories useful in finding data to illustrate or support arguments, facilitating conceptual connections between the various aspects of existence in communist Romania.

Fototeca online a comunismului românesc [The online photographic library of Romanian communism <<http://fototeca.iiccr.ro/>> [accessed 4 June 2018]

Institutul de Investigare a Crimelor Comunismului și Memoria Exilului Românesc [The Institute for the Investigation of Communist Crimes and the Memory of the Romanian Exile] <<http://www.iiccr.ro/>> [accessed 4 June 2018]

Comunismul în România [Communism in Romania] <<http://www.comunismulinromania.ro/>> [accessed 4 June 2018]

Institutul Național pentru Studiul Totalitarismului [The National Institute for the Study of Totalitarianism] <<http://www.totalitarism.ro/>> [accessed 4 June 2018]

Institutul Român de Istorie Recentă [The Romanian Institute for Recent History] <<http://irir.ro/wp/>> [accessed 4 June 2018]

Centrul de Investigare a Crimelor Comunismului [The Centre for Investigation of Communist Crimes] <<http://www.condamnareacomunismului.ro/>> [accessed 4 June 2018]

enforcement, but also dilution and subversion of the dominant social order – *Arhitectura* appears as a ‘microcosm of Romanian architecture’,²⁶⁶ a community of thought and practice where things uttered are as important as things left unsaid.

Combining archival research, critical analysis and qualitative methods, my methodological approach operates on three levels. First, a close examination of the source material – *Arhitectura* and correlated clusters of relevant data – in search of emergent narratives. On the second level, these narratives are embedded in the framework of Romanian socialism, mediated by overarching theoretical insights on the socio-economically contextualized modus operandi of power embodied in state institutions. The third level unpacks the modes of discourse and practice shaped between architects (as individuals, members of socio-cultural circles, and of professional institutions) and the political realm. The first level of analysis establishes *Arhitectura* as the discursive arena and channel for the negotiation of ideology between power and the profession. It brings together complementary perspectives on the source material, drawing on Greig Crysler’s²⁶⁷ method for architecture journal analysis, David Harvey’s²⁶⁸ dialectical reasoning, linking observable practices to the interrelated (and often contradictory) processes of urbanisation as a product and vehicle of hegemonic order, and on Foucault’s²⁶⁹ understanding of historical

²⁶⁶ I am grateful to Professor Malcolm Miles for this insightful phrasing, prompted by our many discussions on the nature of *Arhitectura* as a collective archive. (Plymouth University, 16 December 2015).

²⁶⁷ Greig C. Crysler, *Writing Spaces. Discourses of Architecture, Urbanism, and the Built Environment, 1960-2000* (London: Routledge, 2003).

²⁶⁸ David Harvey, *The Urban Experience* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994).

²⁶⁹ Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (London: Routledge, 2002).

document corpora as vitally-constitutive agents of their respective historical eras *and* their contemporary historical excavation, rather than mere silent mirrors to the past. On the second level, the analysis brings together insights from three theorists seldom used in architecture studies, but able to unlock a fresh perspective on socialist Romanian architecture – Antonio Gramsci,²⁷⁰ Louis Althusser,²⁷¹ and Jadwiga Staniszkis.²⁷² These insights create a three-layer theoretical lens focused on power and the state, cultural hegemony, and discipline-specific discourse, understood in the paradigm of socialist systems and the capitalist liberal practice underpinning the historical formation of Romanian architecture. Together, these complementary ways of looking at and working with the source material allow me to overcome preconceptions and thought patterns specific to the Romanian architecture milieu. The third level examines the modes of discourse and practice animating the field of architecture and its exchanges with power and other social spheres: the corrosive effect of banal, everyday social practices against the unassailable totality of authoritative discourse;²⁷³ the diverse strategies of ideological divergence or cultural dissent enacted on a small-scale professional level, bearing significant similarities to other forms of practice-based dissidence documented in the world of Central European art;²⁷⁴ finally, the precarious position of the Romanian intelligentsia, whose

²⁷⁰ *The Antonio Gramsci Reader. Selected Writings 1916-1935*, ed. by David Forgacs (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 2000).

²⁷¹ Louis Althusser, *Essays on Ideology* (London: Verso, 1976).

²⁷² Jadwiga Staniszkis, *The Ontology of Socialism*, ed. by Peggy Watson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992).

²⁷³ Alexei Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More. The Last Soviet Generation* (Woodstock: Princeton University Press, 2005).

²⁷⁴ Klara Kemp-Welch, *Antipolitics in Central European Art. Reticence as Dissidence under Post-Totalitarian Rule. 1956-1989* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd, 2014).

fixation with national identity resulted in a cultural production simultaneously buttressing *and* undermining the socialist order.²⁷⁵

Before moving on to a more in-depth explanation of the analytic levels of this methodology, I find it important to further clarify the contribution of Gramscian and Althusserian theory to my critical framework, as well as their conceptual links to the subject and each other. Infrequently used in architecture studies, and almost entirely absent from research on communist Romanian architecture, Gramsci represents a critical point of reference in the evolution of Marxist thought, reassessing the incongruities between the historical development prefigured in the original ideological canon, and the realities of socialism's struggle to take hold in Europe in the aftermath of WWI. Grounded in a refined understanding of the social and cultural transformations brought about by the industrialisation of culture and the emergence of modern subjectivities based on cultural consumption, Gramsci's work can support fruitful methodological intersections. As Renate Holub's research indicates, Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks* juxtapose, however inadvertently, elements of modern and post-modern thinking, critical theory, contrasts between rationalism and phenomenology, as well as 'complex interactions with questions of semiotics, linguistic, and phenomenology'.²⁷⁶ From this point of view, Gramsci's work is

²⁷⁵ Katherine Verdery, *National Ideology Under Socialism. Identity and Cultural Politics in Ceaușescu's Romania* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).

²⁷⁶ Renate Holub, *Antonio Gramsci: beyond Marxism and Postmodernism* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 9-10, 12, 20.

particularly suited to interdisciplinary investigations, particularly for subjects where politics and power meet cultural production.

Moreover, Gramsci's forays into architecture as a key aspect of hegemony-enforcing cultural production,²⁷⁷ along with his experience of the Viennese approach to the user-centric urban planning of the 1920s, proposing a degree of reflection of differentiated 'structures of feeling' in the built environment,²⁷⁸ further connect him not only to the subject of this thesis, but also to the urban context of Bucharest, whose interbellum evolution was also marked by a similar, diluted blend of modernism and local typologies. Additionally, Gramsci also provides a point of temporal and ideological intersection with the Romanian context prior to the instatement of communism. At the time of writing his *Prison Notebooks* (1929-1935) Romania was also undergoing a tactically delicate geo-political and cultural positioning on the map of European ideologies, torn between nascent capitalism, the Francophonie of the cultural elites, and the monarchy's emulation of Italian fascism. This vulnerable time of reflection on political opportunities, perils, and alternatives with potential for systemic change, is discussed in Chapter 4.

As part of a methodological line-up for this thesis, Gramsci not only enriches the critical triangulation between Eastern, Western, and Romanian scholarship, but also represents the first point of a chronological progress throughout the period of

²⁷⁷ *The Antonio Gramsci Reader. Selected Writings 1916-1935*, ed. by David Forgacs (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 2000), pp. 380-81, 401-2.

²⁷⁸ Holub, *Antonio Gramsci: beyond Marxism and Postmodernism*, p. 19.

study, connecting it to the interbellum, assessing the regime's institutional maturity and ideological detournement through nationalism (Althusser, Verdery), examining the fundamental paradoxes of the paradigm at the moment of collapse (Staniszki, Yurchak), and looking back upon paths cut short from the vantage point of the post-socialist transition (Verdery). Outside a Marxian perspective, the Gramscian concepts used in this thesis' analysis - for instance, the role of the intellectual in upholding hegemonic practices, but also organising their grassroots disruption through concerted social action - can also illuminate pathways towards a contemporary professional practice embedded more deeply (and richly) in the social context, echoing some of Cuff's proposals for the Anglophone culture of practice.

Althusser's contribution to this thesis does not simply rely on the filiation of his work with the Gramscian concept of hegemony, but provides it with a vital extension and contextualisation into the field of architecture. Through Althusser's work on ideology and ideological state apparatuses, architecture can be seen functioning in the institutional framework of the regime, a dimension often lost in discussions overly-focused on authoritarian political power. This perspective of architecture as a site of simultaneous regime-buttrressing and bureaucratic resistance makes Althusser's contribution to this thesis two-fold. First, it provides an explanation and critique of the system's functioning from within (at the same time applicable to the chronological extremes of the period studied - two distinct versions of capitalism), and links the discussion to Staniszki's observations of the contribution of

organisations to socialism's internal paradoxes. Second, it sketches the mechanisms of resistance available through practice at the time, while also offering, in the light of these analyses, potential strategies for contemporary action against the depoliticization of Romanian architecture, and its disconnection from the social problematic.

The first two levels of my analytic strategy are detailed in the sections below, while the third will be unpacked throughout the next three chapters, depending on the narrative thread explored and the modes of discourse and practice thus revealed. As already stated in the Introduction of the thesis, my investigation of communist Romanian architecture does not pursue a grand narrative of totality, but rather examines key moments of inflection, change, shifts in direction or telling silences – watershed moments pertaining not only to the main chronology of politics, but also to those of interrelated socio-cultural dynamics and the internal timeline of architecture.

By setting this strategy in a temporal framework punctuated by key architectural, cultural, and political events in Romania, other European satellite states, and the West, I seek to expand the discussion on the subject beyond the insular resistance/oppression narrative still prevalent in the contemporary Romanian architectural milieu, and contribute to the nascent scholarly discussion on the commonalities and differences of the architectural phenomenon under communism across Central and Eastern Europe. Most importantly, I envisage the thesis' long-term impact will emerge from questioning the received mentalities, systems of value, mechanisms of discipline-specific knowledge dissemination, rigid hierarchies, but also

the potential for socially-engaged and empowering practice that animated the world of communist Romanian architecture, which will spark the critical awareness and social accountability of its contemporary praxis.

3.2. *Arhitectura*. Writings on space, and a space for writing

In *Writing Spaces. Discourses of Architecture, Urbanism, and the Built Environment, 1960-2000*, Greig C. Crysler sees academic architecture journals as interrelated, institutionalised fields of knowledge enmeshed in a wider network of societal forces and power relations.²⁷⁹ More than mere sites of academic discourse, journals play a vital role in its production and dissemination whilst also constructing 'a complex system of cultural capital' undergirding hierarchies of professional authority, power and prestige. For Crysler, academic journals are also 'communities of method', repositories of the collective knowledge within a discipline and the ways of its production, as well as barometers of their transformation over time. Thus, they can unveil cross-sections through the dynamics of discourse, altered by tensions between individual and collective voices contending from marginal or centralising positions. Crysler argues against the premise of academic neutrality, as it obscures the role of journals in structuring and delineating discursive fields. Simply by assembling a table of contents, connections and thresholds between themes are set in place, centralising or trivialising

²⁷⁹ Greig C. Crysler, *Writing Spaces. Discourses of Architecture, Urbanism, and the Built Environment, 1960-2000*, (London: Routledge, 2003).

forms of knowledge into a general taxonomy of the discipline, which is again mapped out and bounded through the selection of topics.²⁸⁰

Moreover, Crysler suggests that writing and discourse are spatial practices in themselves, constructing representations of the exterior world, but also inner social and institutional worlds tributary to certain socio-cultural assumptions.²⁸¹ The book's central argument – that journals, through the institutional manipulation of discourse, affect disciplines and connected practices to a far greater degree than their position as spaces for writing suggests – certainly raises intriguing questions as to the role of *Arhitectura's* publishing activity within the broader scope of communist Romanian architecture. Developed around five case studies of one international, one British, and three American academic journals of architecture and urban studies,²⁸² *Writing Spaces* examines the connections between the evolution of discourse, journals, and practice, transferable as analytic strategy to *Arhitectura* after contextual adjustments.

Following Foucault, Crysler examines discourse as historically constructed and situated in institutional and social configurations of power. Discursive structures mediate the perception of reality and its linguistic encoding in systems of meaning for which there is no a priori, 'real world' structural order. 'Socially legitimate knowledge', then, emerges at the intersection of groups of discourse responsible not only for the construction of perceived objects through representations, but also for their

²⁸⁰ Crysler, *Writing Spaces*, pp. 12-13.

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 189.

²⁸² The *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* (IJURR, 1977-present); *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* (1983-present); the *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* (JSAH, University of California Press, 1941-present); *Assemblage. A Critical Journal of Architecture and Design Culture* (Berkeley: MIT Press, 1986-2000); and the *Traditional Dwellings and Settlements Review* (TDSR, Berkeley: IASTE, 1989-present).

placement within hierarchies of value and importance, variable over time.²⁸³ This process is open, however, in Paul Rabinow's words, to a 'pragmatically guided reading of practices and coherence of particular configurations of knowledge and power'²⁸⁴ from the position of the 'specific intellectual' – a Foucauldian concept designating a researcher with inside knowledge of institutional practice, but consciously defamiliarised with these patterns of ritualistic power use.²⁸⁵

Crysler further points out that, as a space-making practice, discourse produces 'intellectual territories composed of social and geographic distributions of knowledge and power, fields of disciplinary norms and scholarly representation, and embodied spaces of intellectual activity', effectively shaping, reinforcing or erasing inter-disciplinary boundaries.²⁸⁶ Expanding on Chrysler's assertion, it is my contention that as intellectual territories, *Arhitectura* and the architecture praxis reflected, shaped, and emerging therein possess a dual cartography: on the surface, the fast-track, dynamic shifts of power/knowledge negotiations within the field, as well as between the profession and broader society (in particular, its political sphere); running underground, inertial pathways of intellectual and institutional activity which endured past the collapse of communism into the liberalisation of architecture in the early 1990s. Consequently, *Arhitectura* has much to reveal – not only about communist

²⁸³ Chrysler, *Writing Spaces*, pp. 6-7.

²⁸⁴ Hubert Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, *Michel Foucault. Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), p. 124.

²⁸⁵ Michel Foucault, 'The political Function of the Intellectual', *Radical Philosophy*, No. 17 (1977), pp. 12-14.

²⁸⁶ Chrysler, *Writing Spaces*, p. 4.

architecture as a discipline and practice, but also about the potential genealogy of the processes, boundaries, and metabolism of contemporary Romanian architecture.

Moreover, Crysler's study of architecture journals suggests that, by manipulating discourse through textual production, each publication (a socio-political and institutional community of method) effectively shapes the 'critical and imaginative space' of disciplines, particularly those related to the built environment: 'by intervening in the politics of writing we intervene in the politics of built form'.²⁸⁷ Conversely, fluctuations of discourse over time can be read precisely in these textual variations, indicating deeper changes in the relationship matrix of the social, political, professional and economic actors involved. Crysler's strategy for reading the rise and fall of discourse rests not only on tracking the influence of discursive trends within built environment disciplines, but more importantly, on assessing a set of interconnected factors. The openness of journals to exchanges of ideas and methods, and the filtering effect of the journal's preferred scale (building, city, nation, world) upon the understanding of space and the development of methodologies, directly impinge on its ability to relate to other disciplines and adapt to changes in socio-spatial practices. The tacit chronology espoused by the journal is apt to obscure the inter-conditioning of past and present, while the production of professional identities and of the discipline itself is closely tied to the journal's capacity for self-reflexivity with regard to agendas pursued and their impact on practice.²⁸⁸

²⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 4.

²⁸⁸ Ibid., pp. 191-92.

It is relevant to note that, although Crysler's analysis uses a different journal to unpack the complexities of each of the above characteristics, they are all interlinked dynamics which can animate the discursive space of a single professional medium, such as *Arhitectura*. Examining it through an analytical lens adapted from Crysler's insights on the impact of journals on the disciplines of the built environment represents a new critical reading of *Arhitectura*, aiming to tease out the extent of its influence on the shaping of praxis during communism. Since launching in 1906, the magazine has never been exclusively academic, balancing research and theory, review of current work, legal considerations and professional life events considered relevant for the wider architecture milieu by the editorial team. Although characterised by traditional conservatism,²⁸⁹ *Arhitectura*'s academic production was lively and critically consistent, evident throughout the debates between its contributors and those of rival avant-garde periodical *Simetria*²⁹⁰ in the years preceding WWII.

Reconfigured in 1950 under political and professional editorship, the magazine's structure altered to reflect the integration of praxis into centralized, planned economy. Despite initial, heavy-handed censorship and exercises in obligatory ideological fervour, *Arhitectura*'s scope did expand (with the intervention of the Party as external, political editor) into previously unexplored economic, social and increasingly practical areas of discourse. Even so, the calibre (if not the amount) of academic writing

²⁸⁹ Ana Maria Zahariade, *Arhitectura în proiectul comunist. România 1944-1989* [Architecture in the communist project. Romania 1944-1989], trans. by Ana Maria Zahariade with Diana Lupu, ed. by Alistair Ian Blyth, Eugenia Petre (Bucharest: Simetria, 2011), p. 35.

²⁹⁰ *Simetria. Caiete de Artă și Critică* was a Bucharest-based, avant-garde modernist periodical, published between 1939 and 1947. Regular contributors included some of the best-known names in Romanian architecture, such as G. M. Cantacuzino and Octav Doicescu, but also mathematicians, philosophers, poets and sculptors.

remained consistent throughout the communist period, since the members of the editorial board and chief contributors were primarily engaged in research and teaching at the Ion Mincu University.²⁹¹ Featuring genuine theoretical debate conducted to academic standard (albeit on permitted themes), presentations of projects and completed works by architects throughout the country, detailed updates on legislation, regulation and building codes, a constant dose of political education, but also travel notes, exhibition reviews and reflections on key readings and teaching, *Arhitectura* was a significant archive of collective professional communication.

Historically, *Arhitectura* has contributed to the legitimation and constitution of architecture as a profession and institutional field in Romania since the beginning of the 20th century, in much the same way that, in Crysler's assessment, the *Journal of Architectural Historians* (JSAH) has done in America, by transforming the past 'into an arena of professional expertise and practice through the practices and institutions of architectural discourse'.²⁹² In Romania, *Arhitectura* was founded in 1906 at the initiative of the same tightly-knit circle of practitioners who had sparked the professional organisation of architecture by creating the Union of Romanian Architects, had set up forms of higher architecture education, and had begun to shape a framework for the normalisation of praxis through the creation of laws, standards, and codes of practice.

²⁹¹ This concentration of high-ranking positions in state institutions, the Ion Mincu University, *Arhitectura*'s editorial board and the council of the Union of Romanian Architects, in extremely narrow professional circles (where multiple positions in all bodies are held by the same practitioners) is a crucial dynamic of the field's quest for professional authority and stability, which will be examined in detail in Chapter 6 of the thesis.

²⁹² Crysler, *Writing Spaces*, p. 16.

Recognised as an independent state in 1878 and a kingdom since 1881, Romania was still shaping its modern institutional networks – a process entailing effervescent clashes between the centre of political power, a variegated, factitious political scene, and the intellectual elites populating the various fields of knowledge involved in the state's modernisation.²⁹³ Architecture was one such discipline where the heterogeneity of its members' social backgrounds, professional and political views sustained a polarised self-constitution of the field over a considerable period,²⁹⁴ reflected in and sustained by *Arhitectura's* regular publication of proposals, opinion pieces, and debates over the instrumental, ethical, and legal dimensions of architecture practice.²⁹⁵

Entwined with this instrumental understanding and use of the past as ideologically legitimising, the persistence of tradition at the conceptual core of modern post-war architecture, forged a strong centripetal direction in *Arhitectura's* discursive field, reducing its permeability to extra-disciplinary concepts and methodologies, while also preserving the rigid hierarchy of professional authority. While in *Traditional Dwellings and Settlements Review* (TDSR) tradition gradually progressed, according to Crysler,

²⁹³ It should be noted here that the reign of King Carol I is regarded among Romanian historians and the wider public as an ideal age of governmental technocracy, in whose footsteps contemporary Romanian politics would benefit from following. Prior to the deeply entrenched distinction between intellectual activity and politics operated under communism, Romanian politicians had been people of significant cultural capability, standing, and professional achievement, bringing a wealth of diverse expertise to the fast-paced modernisation of the country. However, this idyllic perspective of past politics completely ignores the almost feudal social divisions and relations of production also characterising Romanian society at this time, and the shortcomings of the privileged intellectual stratum to address them.

²⁹⁴ As discussed in more detail in Chapter 6, it took roughly four decades since the constitution of the Union of Romanian Architects for architecture to be integrated into legally binding frameworks of professional practice. This was due not only to divergent views between the profession and the political centre over the institutional formulation of these frameworks, but also to contention among practitioners over the balance of restrictions and opportunities stemming from the normalisation of praxis.

²⁹⁵ A detailed list of articles published in *Arhitectura* between 1906 and 1944 can be found in: Gabriela Tabacu, *Revista Arhitectura. Studiu monografic și indici. 1906-1944* [*Arhitectura* magazine. Monographic study and indices. 1906-1944] (Bucharest: Editura Universitară Ion Mincu, 2006).

from the 'ethnographic pastoral' to the more nuanced concept of a transient, self-actualising process of socio-spatial transformation through contemporary use,²⁹⁶ *Arhitectura* generally approached tradition as the uncorrupted source of modernity.²⁹⁷ In this discourse of continuity and dialectical synthesis, modernism's crisis of meaning was resolved with the recovery of an identity- and consciousness-shaping vernacular, operating through spatial archetypes. Since tradition was a constantly fertile ground for dialogue between architects and power, as investigated in Chapter 5 of this thesis, it is relevant to question the construction of tradition in *Arhitectura's* discourse, particularly from the perspective of a modern, formally-abstracted, idealised translation of the concept, found in creative tension with local patterns of social habitation and industrial construction techniques.²⁹⁸

Moreover, the articulation between a legitimising chronology of architecture as a practice and academic discipline, and the transformations of its discourse on tradition have not been investigated, thus far, in conjunction with perceptions and representations of *otherness* prevalent in *Arhitectura*. It is my contention that these three elements – a genealogy of the discipline, constructed through the eyes and with

²⁹⁶ Crysler, *Writing Spaces*, pp. 96-97, 103.

²⁹⁷ Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, *Arhitectura* published theoretical pieces and articles accompanying the presentation of buildings with clear statements of the author's design agenda and conceptual position. Architects like Nicolae Porumbescu, Constantin Joja, and Horia Maicu constantly stressed the value of archetypal, traditional Romanian architecture as the inspiration (and validating reference) for modern exercises in *nationally specific* architecture. During the 1980s, a more nuanced understanding of the traditional vernacular emerged through the writings of Alexandru Sandu, Dorin Ștefan, Horea Stănculescu, and a younger generation of theorists and practitioners with an interest in social and cultural studies. These contending perspectives will be analysed in detail in Chapter 5, drawing from the architects and theorists mentioned above to illustrate the evolution of the concept of tradition in Romanian architecture.

²⁹⁸ Such as Vienna's interwar housing programme. Crysler, *Writing Spaces*, p. 90.

the authority-building/legitimising agendas of the present, the constant recourse to tradition as paradoxical catalyst to innovative progress, and an understanding of the cultural and disciplinarian *other* shaped by the first two – have had a significant impact not only on the evolution of discourse within *Arhitectura*, but also on the constitution of professional identity and the whole of communist Romanian architecture. As shown by Crysler’s study of the JSAH, ‘foreignness’ tacitly encompasses methodologies and academic language extraneous to a journal’s discursive field, in addition to designating alien geographies and cultures. While this might appear inclusive, Crysler indicates that a journal’s international connections are often predicated on the bases of shared academic interests, worldviews, and methodologies, reducing the effectiveness of exposure to the disciplinarian and cultural other by reductively (or erroneously) representing it through ‘an a priori analytical system that has no necessary relation to the context studied’.²⁹⁹ With foreignness present in *Arhitectura* in both forms, the manner of its representation should reveal much about the field’s relationship to its international counterparts and other local disciplines concerned with built, lived and imagined space – a narrative thread also contributing to the analysis in Chapter 5 of this thesis.

The introduction of Chapter 5 clarifies the political, architectural, and cultural nuances of the concept of *otherness* brought into discussion, particularly in relation to the works of Seyla Benhabib, Nezar Alsayyad, Robert Mugerauer, and Homi K. Bhabha. Supplementary methodological connections must however be traced in anticipation

²⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 41.

of the main discussion of the particular enactment of *otherness* within the pages of *Arhitectura*. Perhaps the most striking characteristic of othering in the magazine is its directionality. In *Arhitectura*, the geo-cultural other tends to be aligned with Lawrence Grossberg's notion of a positive, recuperative theory of otherness, 'which recognizes that the other exists, in its own place, as what it is, independently of any specific relations'.³⁰⁰ From this critical position, Grossberg argues for an understanding of *otherness* which takes into account its historical production through power relations, while also looking beyond the negativity of its reduction to binary differences.

In contrast to the marginalising, reductive otherness captured in Edward Said's *Orientalism*,³⁰¹ *Arhitectura's* accounts of works developed in a variety of geo-cultural contexts, are delivered from the position of the cultural outsider as attentive partner in a dialogue led by the projects' beneficiaries. While the discussion focuses on articulating a mindful understanding of local patterns of inhabitation, belief, and daily life rhythms with the broader, social development and political goals of the contexts in question, issues of race, gender, and power relations are entirely absent. On one hand, the exclusion merits consideration beyond the scope of this thesis, in closer attunement with the negative reverberations of these acts of excluding vital individual and group identity markers. On the other, engaging partners in architectural dialogue on the basis of a collaborative formulation of tailor-made responses to self-stated needs, rather than racial or ethnic stereotyping, should also be examined in the

³⁰⁰ Lawrence Grossberg, 'Identity and Cultural Studies – Is That All There Is?', in *Questions of Cultural Identity*, ed. by Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay (London: Sage Publications, 2003), pp. 93-94.

³⁰¹ Edward Said, *Orientalism: Western conceptions of the Orient* (Penguin, 1991).

positive light of Grossberg's call re-consider otherness on the positive grounds of effectivity.³⁰² As examined in more detail in Chapter 5, the reverse aspect of othering in *Arhitectura* is inward-looking, as well as negative, and stems from the gradually crystallising construction of national specificity through architecture towards the exclusion of regional differences, ethnic diversity, and political dissent.

During the radical transformation of the Romanian architecture system in 1952 through nationalisation, *Arhitectura* once again served as the linchpin between the professional and political dimensions of architecture. Much like the JSAH, it often espoused an impersonal, technicist tone,³⁰³ readable as either deferral from engaging with the political on ideological grounds, or perhaps signalling a subtle attempt to converse in the more advantageous arena of scientific objectivity. Given the magazine's double editorship – political and professional – it will be relevant to examine how the underlying assumptions and boundaries of the discourse³⁰⁴ have transformed during the communist period, and how these two (differently) collective voices constructed, appropriated or inhabited the space of national identity, or of a 'scientifically interpretable', 'objective' past.

³⁰² Grossberg, 'Identity and Cultural Studies – Is That All There Is?', p. 97.

³⁰³ Ana Maria Zahariade, 'Testing the Physiognomy of the *Arhitectura* Magazine, 1952-1989', in *Studies in History and Theory of Architecture*, vol. 1 (2013), pp. 180-83.

I have opted to use 'technicist' here (as derived from technicism, instead of technical), to emphasise *Arhitectura's* predominantly instrumental, rather than conceptual, approach to practice.

³⁰⁴ What constitutes architecture, the past/present and theory/practice relationship, the remit of the profession, etc.

Working against these centripetal discursive tendencies, a journal's permeability, critical awareness, and resulting ability to question received paradigms and methodologies or operate shifts of scale and method, represent centrifugal attributes. In terms of openness, Crysler categorises some journals as 'worlds unto themselves', closed, bounded, and carefully preserved, where discourse has become dogmatic through normalisation, abandoning reflective self-consciousness and theoretical exploration after achieving disciplinary prominence.³⁰⁵ By contrast, he proposes the term 'leaky habitats' to designate journals (or discipline-specific environments) that are worlds of representation in constant flux, welcoming disruption, innovation, and interdisciplinary exchanges of method through the participation of external voices, rather than the one-directional transcoding so common in architecture.³⁰⁶

Maintaining fluidity requires openness to change (from hypotheses to forms of writing), and crucially, the capacity for critical self-analysis whereby the received core of the discourse is dismantled and reconstructed with minimal cultural determinedness, and increased awareness of the historical constitution of the discipline under larger societal forces.³⁰⁷ Consequently, journals can evolve from innovative spaces for the theoretical constitution of disciplines, to closed, univocal spaces of knowledge, suspended in discursive stasis – and, finally, move beyond these self-imposed constraints into a self-critical questioning of aims, assumptions and

³⁰⁵ Crysler, *Writing Spaces*, p. 190.

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 190-91.

³⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 196-99.

methodologies. If any of these stages are detectable in *Arhitectura's* evolution, to what degree did the tension between the political and professional dimensions of architecture shape them, and how?

For Crysler, self-reflexivity is the path towards achieving the radical transformation described above, by deploying dissension and criticism of architecture from within to question the institutions of architecture culture and their role in formulating architectural thought. This is precisely the quality that practitioners like Țigănaș and scholars like Ioan and Zahariade have signalled is largely missing from the contemporary field of Romanian architecture.³⁰⁸ Historically, the evolution of Romanian architecture has relied on the twin motors of osmotic capacity (originality emerging from the synthesis of criss-crossing, contending cultural influences) and an instrumental approach to praxis, rooted in the profession's Beaux-Arts filiation – an ideology of design virtually unchanged since the 19th century. Zahariade argues that, during communism, the construction of a genuinely critical theoretical counterweight to the ideology of making was short-circuited by the regime's cultural insularity and the profession's appetency for preserving its traditionally 'liberal' approach to instrumental modes of practice.

³⁰⁸ Șerban Țigănaș, *Arhitecți, arhitectură, orașe. Despre profesia de arhitect și cum se construiește în România recentă* [Architects, Architecture, Cities. On the Architectural Profession and Ways of Building in Contemporary Romania], (Bucharest: Simetria, 2014).

Augustin Ioan, *Modern Architecture and The Totalitarian Project: a Romanian Case Study*, trans. by Alina Cârâc (Bucharest: Institutul Cultural Român, 2009).

Ana Maria Zahariade, *Simptome de tranziție. Eseuri de arhitectură* [Symptoms of transition. Architecture essays] trans. by Claudia Rada (Bucharest: Editura Fundației Arhitect Design, 2009).

In contemporary Romanian architecture, the tension between this enduring, deeply entrenched approach to praxis and the awareness of its obsolescence in an increasingly meditative and socially-inclined international architecture landscape³⁰⁹ only deepens the impasse of current practice. For Zahariade, architecture's post-communist convalescence is hampered by the avoidance of 'critical objective confrontations': while older generations refuse to revisit the tacit professional legacy of the communist era, younger generations of architects remain torn between the ideology of making and an appetency for self-criticality, lacking the information and tools to analyse the recent past in search of answers and valuable lessons.³¹⁰

It is therefore vital to unpack the types of spatial discourse constructed by *Arhitectura's* preferred narratives in search of moments of critical self-awareness. Did they highlight or mask the relevance of social factors extraneous to its professional, political and economic framework? Were these narratives conducive to or disruptive of the inscription of the discipline's assumptions and methodologies in architects as readers, writers, and space-makers? Although *Arhitectura* was, unlike the journal *Assemblage*, generally disinclined towards discursive radicalism,³¹¹ its very mediation by the political during communism allowed it to side-step the devolution of critical discourse into self-referential textual analysis. Crysler's analysis of *Assemblage* discusses the journal's transition from its initial denunciation of architecture as politically and institutionally

³⁰⁹ Here Zahariade proves more hopeful than Garry Stevens with regard to architecture's ability to reflect on its own social position and responsibilities.

³¹⁰ Zahariade, *Simptome de tranziție*, pp. 52-56.

³¹¹ Through a firmly conservative, traditional orientation before WWII, and political interference since 1950.

contingent, and of the dependence of meaning on the critic rather than on immanent qualities of built space, towards a reinterpretation of architecture's well-established canon, also losing sight of the social dimension of space, written off as an effect of architecture praxis itself.³¹²

For Crysler, *Assemblage's* focus on the 'hidden structures and presuppositions' of the discipline precluded mediation with interpretive frames placing architecture in relation to the state, education or the economy, ultimately reinforcing, rather than disrupting, 'a socially abstracted architectural culture'.³¹³ Conversely, *Arhitectura's* comprehensive scope ensured that manifold social issues came under investigation, although it remains to be seen to what extent political intervention and the writers' professional and cultural bias resulted in narratives likely to instigate change in academia or practice.

Critical reflexivity in excess, however, is not without danger. As Crysler notes in his analysis of *Assemblage*, focusing excessively on the philosophical parameters and situatedness of research paradigms can narrow the discursive focus of journals to the purely theoretical (and meta-critical), diminishing the transfer of innovative ways of understanding architecture into material, legal, and administrative spatial practices. Conversely, the application of theoretical innovation in concrete practice seldom reflects back onto its scholarly source with transformative consequences. According to Crysler, a more sustained discursive feedback loop between theory and practice (and

³¹² Crysler, *Writing Spaces*, pp. 57-84.

³¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 60, 72, 79.

between the centralising and divergent tendencies discussed above) is a vital prerequisite in altering both spheres towards mutual inclusion, to the overall benefit of the built environment disciplines.³¹⁴

Crysler also highlights a noxious opposition between the worlds of academic discourse and theory, directing the bulk of reflexive analysis to academia, whilst the channels through which knowledge infuses practice – and their historical constitution – remain obscure. Knowledge is more apparently connected to the production of professional identity, establishing a ‘staging ground where the “architect” is discursively produced and transmitted’,³¹⁵ and to the reinforcement of a discipline's standing (and monopoly) of particular areas of spatial practice. Thus, even the exposure of architecture as a process of capitalism by Marxist theorists in a variety of fields has yet to yield a model of counter-practice (similar to Gramsci's organic intellectual model) able to efficiently connect knowledge and social activism through spatial practices.³¹⁶

In the paradigm of a socialist, nationalised architecture praxis like that of post-war Romania, however, could the professional identity and social awareness constructed by architects have represented the grassroots beginnings of such a model of architectural counter-practice? The three-layer theoretical lens used throughout the main content chapters of this thesis was also designed to tease out the subtly progressive potential detectable across areas of communist architecture praxis.

³¹⁴ Ibid., p. 199-200.

³¹⁵ Ibid., p. 170.

³¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 199-201.

Delineating these overlooked, positive areas of the recent architectural past may yet suggest strategies for the current management of Romania's communist urban legacy that ensure a softer, more context-mindful transition to the radically different social and functional requirements of capitalist contemporaneity.

While the 1980s debates between structure and agency, over the source of meaning in built form as a reflection of capitalism or emergent from the realm of symbolic ecology, had more or less resolved into the idea that social structures are knowingly and constantly (re)produced through quotidian practices,³¹⁷ the discursive traces of either position or their merger could prove difficult to detect in *Arhitectura's* double-censored contents. With architecture enlisted in the regime's total societal transformation programme,³¹⁸ did any theories emphasising human agency feature in *Arhitectura*, however subtly? Did any of the major transformations which influenced Western architecture and urban studies in the 1970s and 1980s with the incorporation of Marxist methodologies and research frameworks garner professional interest?

Journals like *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* questioned the rapport between built form and social processes, refusing to pursue an inflexible meta-theory, by collating contending and congruent perspectives in a contradictory discursive space of interpretation, exposing the interdependency of seemingly incommensurate conditions.³¹⁹ Could *Arhitectura* have been, however subtly, such a space of discursive

³¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 153-59.

³¹⁸ Sharing a belief in the consciousness-altering properties of the built environment with Modernism.

³¹⁹ Ibid., p. 178.

plurivalence? A similar debate between political-economic and cultural determinism animated the *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* (IJURR), sparked by issues visible on the larger scale of globally interconnected cities.

Readings of capitalism as a 'structure in dominance' perpetuated by unstoppable ingression into private life and a culture of collective consumption (however unequal the distribution of urban infrastructure), such as Castells's or Harvey's, contended with narratives of grassroots practices of social resistance, turning urban conflict into an innovative research paradigm.³²⁰ Whilst discussions of power and its entrenchment in professional practices would have been difficult to introduce and sustain in *Arhitectura*, socio-economics, cultural differences and the homogenising role of academic privilege and locally hegemonic paradigms could possibly be detected in its (perhaps intentionally) vague theoretical margins. Applied for the first time to *Arhitectura*, Crysler's method provides an original way of working with the source material through themed cross-sections opening this microcosm of communist Romanian architecture to questions outside its disciplinary scope, and to connections to international architecture culture.

³²⁰ An idealised, de-historicised, chronologically and spatially abstracted phenomenon, posited as the deepest undercurrent of a community's collective psyche and wholly unaffected by cultural determinism.

Crysler, *Writing Spaces*, p. 121.

3.3. Reading between the lines. Power, hegemony and the socialist state

As an institutionalised community of knowledge and practice, *Arhitectura* is entrenched in a network of complex relationships with other social spheres, whose underlying principles can be revealed, in a method similar to David Harvey's, by looking at the narratives emerging from the archival material. In the Literature Review, I have touched upon *Arhitectura's* perception, even in some of the most insightful recent studies on communist Romanian architecture, as essentially non-critical – objectivist even.³²¹ I would posit that the reasons behind this reductive perception are two-fold.

Firstly, *Arhitectura* has been, and continues to be treated as a historical *document* in its classical historical acceptance – in Foucault's words, a mere tool of varying degrees of relevance and veracity, through which to reconstitute and memorialise the past.³²² In this capacity, *Arhitectura's* pages, brimming with technical detail, curiously juxtaposed with seemingly unrelated theoretical pieces, have little to reveal. But should we look at it, with Foucault, from a historical and critical perspective concerned with the meanings, connections and relations revealed through constellations of discontinuities, working from within the document towards the architectural culture which produced it, *Arhitectura* might yet reveal not only a factual record of architecture

³²¹ Zahariade, 'Privire generală asupra evoluției revistei "Arhitectura"', pp. 75-76.

³²² Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 7-8.

praxis, but also how it perceived (and strove to shape) itself in the broader social landscape of Romanian communism.

Secondly, despite its continuity, longevity, recurrent themes and evident formal and discursive transformations, *Arhitectura's* content is best described as bricolage – a disconcertingly polyphonic morass of individual voices, political directive, and undeclared institutional agendas. Harvey's analytical strategy, working dialectically from the teeming multitude of the factual towards the assemblage of multiple, contending, intersecting and complementary perspectives on the broader phenomena underpinning the banality of the quotidian, is particularly well suited to unpack *Arhitectura* from within.

In *The Urban Experience*,³²³ Harvey seeks a comprehensive theory of the historical geography of capitalism, understood through the process of urbanisation.³²⁴ Equally grounded in Marxian historical determinism and urban geography, Harvey's meta-theory pursues balance between two predominant modes of looking – a top-down, encompassing vision of systemic processes, and an awareness of the untold multitude of urban experience – as well the reintroduction of spatial production into the frameworks of social theories primarily preoccupied with time. For Harvey, the observation of the 'production of physical and social landscapes and [...] ways of thinking and acting' among urban dwellers holds the key to a unified theory apt to

³²³ David Harvey, *The Urban Experience*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994).

The volume brings together essays from Harvey's *Consciousness and the Urban Experience* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1985) and *The Urbanization of Capital* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1985).

³²⁴ Harvey, *The Urban Experience*, p. 13.

account for the array of unique historical-geographic processes of capitalism's urban geography through 'a continuous dialogue between experience, action, concept formation, and dialectical theorizing'.³²⁵

Designed as an applicable theoretical framework, Harvey's method starts by examining basic facts, be they elements of the urban quotidian or, in my case, the archival traces of an architectural microcosm. Looking beneath the fetishism of appearances, a set of simple concrete abstractions can then be derived from interrelated facts, illuminating the processes underpinning the reproduction of material life. Deeper still, these concrete abstractions serve as the basis for abstract, non-observable concepts at the intersection of manifold systemic processes which elucidate the dynamics of the social system as a whole, but also the seemingly inconsistent 'surface occurrences' generated by each process in different historical and geographic circumstances. The strategy is then reversed through the gradual reframing of underlying abstractions into a reflection of daily life much more insightful than the initial facts, abundant in 'contradictions, antagonisms and oppositions'³²⁶ – three words which also faithfully describe *Arhitectura's* fragmented, kaleidoscopic contents.

Harvey argues that it is precisely this Marxian dialectical mode of argument, deploying oppositions implanted in the construction of a theoretical apparatus, which leads to the assemblage of different, partial perspectives into a cognitive map of overarching

³²⁵ Ibid., pp. 4-8.

³²⁶ Harvey, *The Urban Experience*, pp. 8-12.

system dynamics and their interruption or alteration in the course of the quotidian. Explanatory power, or, in Harvey's words, the 'capacity to interpret historical geography in coherent and compelling ways', represents the central criterion of theoretical acceptability, and is in itself a powerful analytical tool, gauging the effectiveness of the conceptual apparatus and indicating paths of adjustment.³²⁷

Alongside this applicable theoretical framework, Harvey's insights on the interrelatedness of capital, time and space in the urban environment will contribute to the line of argument developed in the next three thesis chapters. Harvey's writing offers a valuable basis for comparison between the dynamics of socialism and capitalism, reflected in the history of built urban space. Examining the conquest and the creation of space as a source of social power, underpinned by frameworks of time, space and money coordinated to a significant degree by the state, Harvey tracks the effects of capitalism's internal contradictions (and mechanisms of addressing them) on the constitution of a spatially articulated urban hierarchy.³²⁸ This can help shed light on the vested interest of architects in this homogeneity- and fragmentation-generating process, and provide a point of comparison for architectural praxis in capitalist and socialist paradigms. Through this lens, the activity of Romanian architects during the communist period, as reflected in, but also shaped by, *Arhitectura*, can also be investigated in the positive framework of a professional critique of capitalist architecture practice and capitalism itself. Detecting this type of emergent criticality in

³²⁷ Ibid., pp. 13-14.

³²⁸ Ibid., pp. 90-199.

the mosaic of *Arhitectura's* content is doubly relevant. On one hand, for a richer, more insightful understanding of communist Romanian architecture as an ecosystem of knowledge and practice.³²⁹ On the other, for a valuable critique of contemporary, capitalist Romanian practice, delivered from outside its own frame of reference – from the vantage point of a past critically imagining and trying to shape a brighter future based on the ethos of the socialist project.

Complementing Harvey's approach, the second level of the methodology examines, from an overarching theoretical perspective based on Staniszkis,³³⁰ Althusser³³¹ and Gramsci,³³² the frameworks traversing architecture's discursive production, affecting and simultaneously affected by this interaction. These frameworks comprise power (a multi-faceted phenomenon subsuming the Party, the state in its legal, institutional and economic capacity), hegemony (the mechanism of constant negotiation over power and transference thereof between the various segments of the state and civil society) and ideologies, the discourse- and practice-embodied strategies of this negotiation.

Antonio Gramsci's seminal work *Prison Notebooks* explores the interrelated characteristics of power, hegemony, ideology, passive revolution, political and civil society, open to investigation from different angles and within different systems.³³³

³²⁹ Even more valuable if nascent in an anti-communist and Russophobic society, and in intellectual and cultural circle deeply attached to the ideal of autonomous, liberal practice enjoyed during the profession's constitutive years on the cusp of the 20th century.

³³⁰ Jadwiga Staniszkis, *The Ontology of Socialism*, ed. by Peggy Watson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992).

³³¹ Louis Althusser, *Essays on Ideology* (London: Verso, 1976).

³³² *The Antonio Gramsci Reader. Selected Writings 1916-1935*, ed. by David Forgacs (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 2000).

³³³ *The Antonio Gramsci Reader. Selected Writings 1916-1935*, ed. by David Forgacs (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 2000).

Jadwiga Staniszkis' *The Ontology of Socialism* illuminates the mechanics of the system's splitting of power into a dual state entity coordinating a particular mode of production and constitution of civil society.³³⁴ In *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*, Louis Althusser analyses the process of societal subjection to the hegemonic capitalist order via the dissemination of dominant ideology through state apparatuses³³⁵ – process equally valid – with key ontological differences identified by Staniszkis – in socialism. Gramsci understood power as a network of directional relationships ubiquitous in both political and civil society, designating the comprehensive domination of a system by one class through the coercion exercised by the state and the manipulation of legitimising ideologies in the cultural and civil spheres.

Stretching beyond the confines of the state's coercive and administrative apparatuses, power permeates the farthest reaches of civil society³³⁶ to manifest in the minutest of social practices, eliciting consent to the hegemonic order.³³⁷ Gramsci's hegemony is reversible, designating both subjection and the possibility of its subversion through 'counter-ideologies to specific relations of power', articulating counter-hegemony through political, cultural and social practices on all levels of civil society.³³⁸ In this process, cultural production represents the key to the preservation of power in capitalism, or its appropriation through peaceful revolution in emergent socialist

³³⁴ Jadwiga Staniszkis, *The Ontology of Socialism*, ed. by Peggy Watson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

³³⁵ Louis Althusser, *Essays on Ideology* (London: Verso, 1976), pp. 1-61.

³³⁶ Comprising the totality of organisations and underpinning social relations not determined primarily by relations of production or the activity of state institutions.

³³⁷ Roger Simon, *Gramsci's Political Thought. An Introduction* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1991), p. 27.

³³⁸ Renate Holub, *Antonio Gramsci: beyond Marxism and Postmodernism* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 104, 141.

systems. Consequently, architecture – a field of indissoluble thought and practice belonging simultaneously to political and civil society – is illuminated as a site of both maintenance and potential disturbance of the status quo through interaction with other polarised social groups in the exercise of cultural production.

Louis Althusser sheds light on societal subjection through ideology by introducing the concepts of Repressive State Apparatus (RSA) and Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs).³³⁹ In a capitalist system, the subjection of the masses to the hegemonic order is the sine qua non precondition of the reproduction of relations of production by maintaining a compliant labour force.³⁴⁰ Working in tandem, the unified, state-based entity of the RSA (government, police, armed forces, penal system, etc.) and a plurality of civil society ISAs (religious, educational, cultural organisations, the family, law, political parties, media, etc.) reproduce the dominant ideology through repressive strategies overt and violent and, respectively, attenuated, concealed and symbolic.³⁴¹ This very overlap between institutionally enforced, ideologised coercion and the cumulative effect of hegemony-enforcing everyday practices obscures hegemony on the immediate level of the quotidian through an internalised sense of dominance and subordination.³⁴²

³³⁹ Althusser, *Essays on Ideology*, pp. 11-18.

³⁴⁰ Michael Payne, *Reading Knowledge. An Introduction to Barthes, Foucault and Althusser* (London: Blackwell, 1997), p. 36.

³⁴¹ Althusser, *Essays on Ideology*, p. 19.

³⁴² Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), pp. 108-15.

Such a subjecting, paralysing sense of reality engendered by power's ubiquity in civil society also characterises, according to Staniszki, socialist regimes. As already discussed in the Literature Review, although the structure of socialist society does not stem solely from the socialist mode of production, it contributes significantly to societal segmentation in the absence of a universal principle of organisation, such as capital. Socialist society therefore presents as a matrix whose elements carry distinct, unique properties and principles for interaction.³⁴³ Apprehending the whole system and its hierarchy is only possible through interpretive symbolic vision operating through the added values of myth and ideology, resulting in a distorted representation of society which paradoxically outweighs individual, empirical experience of the stratification of the system, making it difficult to conceptualize the real structure of power relations and societal subjection.³⁴⁴

Nevertheless, the duality of thought identified by Staniszki in the dynamics of collective consciousness under socialism suggests potential for rebellious criticality³⁴⁵ under auspicious circumstances. Likewise, Gramsci considers everyday practices to be underpinned by a tacit, critical awareness of the hegemony-suffused worldview espoused in civil society.³⁴⁶ Althusser also posits that ISAs can be the *stake and site* of resistance to the subjection of ideology by the oppressed,³⁴⁷ who populate the state's

³⁴³ Staniszki, *The Ontology of Socialism*, pp. 89, 100-03.

³⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 94-97, 105.

³⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 114.

³⁴⁶ Forgacs, *The Antonio Gramsci Reader*, p. 323.

³⁴⁷ Althusser, *Essays on Ideology*, p. 21.

institutional structures and hold varying degrees of decisional power. Thus, resistance is bred *on the realm of production*, rather than the discursive terrain of conflicting ideologies,³⁴⁸ making practice doubly important in all economic and cultural sectors. From this perspective, architecture, with its manifold institutional forms interspersed throughout the state's centralised structure, can be analysed as an ISA, a site of practice-affecting decision-making, contending or converging ideologies, and a breeding ground for the professional milieu's own agenda.

Conversely, architecture also belongs to civil society, its members in an arguably advantageous position to achieve and exercise critical awareness. In these circumstances, the emergence of self-reflexivity within the field could ultimately transcend the confines of the discipline – a vital prerequisite in achieving balance between architecture's hegemony-enforcing institutional dimension, and the empowering, cumulative effect of socially-conscious, individual modes of practice. In the case of communist Romanian architecture, how could a practice-impacting critical awareness begin to develop and transgress the paradoxical boundaries of a discipline still encumbered by the elitist hermeticism of its capitalist infancy? Moreover, in what set of circumstances could it begin to negotiate the contending directions of 'social progress' as defined by power for (and in the name of) the masses, and its grassroots formulation through critical practice and everyday experience?

For Gramsci and Staniszki, the condition of the intellectual is a double-edged sword, able to catalyse collective consciousness into awareness and action, but also

³⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 57-59.

legitimizing power in the civil sphere by organising practice on all societal levels according to hegemony-enforcing ideologies.³⁴⁹ In Staniszki, intellectuals are simultaneously in a position of influence – invested by other social groups with the myth of a moral mission, as well as by power with the responsibility of regime legitimisation – and in one of deprivation, affected by low living standards and censorship.

Consequently, the intelligentsia entertains a dual relationship with the system, manipulating symbols and ritualised practice in exchange for professional standing (which begets funding), but also organising socialism's discontinuous social space through cultural production and the maintenance of relatable moral standards (no matter how symbolic).³⁵⁰ Nevertheless, the credibility, social standing, and pervasiveness of intellectuals throughout the state apparatus confer significant potential for subversive action. From this position – embodied in ideas, in individual and institutional practices alike – ideology is susceptible to moulding into a 'philosophy of praxis', a comprehensive counter-ideology able to bind, according to Gramsci, disparate social movements into a cohesive social force³⁵¹ strong enough to derail the status quo.

³⁴⁹ Holub, *Antonio Gramsci*, pp. 164-65.

³⁵⁰ Staniszki, *The Ontology of Socialism*, p. 100.

³⁵¹ The philosophy of praxis is, according to Gramsci, able to expose the contradictions, struggles and exploitation masked by the dominant superstructure and its ideology, even when they are 'formally dialectical'.

Forgacs, *The Antonio Gramsci Reader*, p. 197.

The socialist mode of production and the multi-faceted embodiment of power within the state also have bearing on the situatedness of architecture. Staniszkis argues that the collective ownership principle operates a two-fold split within the channelling of power into the state structure. In the absence of free market economic interests and information-generating mechanisms, the state ensures the continuity of material reproduction,³⁵² operating according to a complex network of contending logics.³⁵³ Anarchic, devoid of political substance and crisis-prone, the producing state defuses tensions within the system through administrative redistribution, thus ensuring its stability and social perpetuation.³⁵⁴ The second split is the party/state cluster, a dual regulatory mechanism dividing the state into two segments enforcing different logics of government.

As the monolithic power structure at the centre of the system and above judicial control, the prerogative state defines and acts for 'the public good', rejecting social and economic self-regulation in the interest of counteracting systemic crises. Fuelled by rational functionality geared towards self-reproduction rather than ideological consistency, the modus operandi of the prerogative state seems to account for the contradictions and inconsistencies between the ritualistic propagation of ideological discourse and the practicalities of actual production. The normative state – wholly dependent on the prerogative state – regulates through legislative and administrative

³⁵² Staniszkis, *The Ontology of Socialism*, pp. 22-24.

³⁵³ Such as structures of dependence within the USSR, local standards of control rationality, the quasi-economic interests of institutions, etc.

³⁵⁴ Staniszkis, *The Ontology of Socialism*, p. 71-72.

structures and procedures areas of social life from which the prerogative state has withdrawn. It is worth noting that certain sectors and social groups whose activity is deemed 'constructive' or vital for the reproduction of political power remain under the control of the prerogative state.³⁵⁵ By this logic, architecture stands out as a field under dual regulation by the prerogative and normative aspects of the state, explored in further detail in Chapter 6.

Through the theoretical insights explored above, architecture's potentially subversive civic and cultural dimension is revealed as conterminous with its hegemony-consolidating role as institutionalised praxis, with the tension between these intermittently centrifugal and centripetal characteristics disguised by the field's tangible production and professional discourse. In the following chapters, the characteristics, role and behaviour of Romanian architecture during socialism – as a critical point of system reinforcement *and* disarticulation – will be analysed through the lens of the profession's potential agency exercised through actual practice.

³⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 79-81.

3.4. Case Studies

Before moving on to the concluding remarks of this chapter, clarification must be brought to the selection of case studies supporting the arguments of each chapter. Although a more extensive line of reasoning for these selections accompanies the chapter introductions, a few grounding points must also be made here. This touches not only on the connection between case studies and the critical lenses through which the main discussion is channelled, but also on the deliberate exclusion of certain seminal buildings, particularly from the Ceaușescu era, which have perhaps become *de rigueur* in the scholarship of communist Romanian architecture. Leaning on Dana Cuff's anthropology-derived definition of the culture of architecture practice as the dynamic process of constructing socially-situated meaning, all case studies chosen have something to reveal about the practice of architecture as a common language allowing the negotiation of values, beliefs, and the way they inform action.

Some of the buildings, architects, or key moments in the practice of architecture in communist Romania discussed in this thesis will be familiar to readers of scholarship on the subject. Casa Scânteii, Cezar Lăzărescu, the National Bucharest Theatre, or the movement of lyrical functionalism, for instance, appear with some regularity in this field of research. That said, they are all investigated through fresh critical lenses, and framed in discussions revealing their under-, or mis-represented, contributions to architecture practice. In Chapter 4, the design process of Casa Scânteii reveals, under its constrictive formal iteration that has long been equated with Stalinist oppression, a lively professional dialogue on the boundaries and contextualisation of Socialist

Realism, the new regime's representational paradigm. Cezar Lăzărescu, icon of the Black Sea's modernist littoral development under Gheorgiu-Dej's thaw, is also captured, in Chapter 5, in earnest negotiations over local and regional specificity in the cultural sphere of the African continent and the Middle East. In the same chapter, the National Bucharest Theatre offers a mirrored event - chronologically and ideologically - to Romania's 1937 exhibition pavilion (Chapter 4), both capturing critical shifts in the formulation of national identity, grounded on the selective re-writing of the recent past.

Other case studies and instances of practice found throughout the thesis chapters (and too numerous to list here) will be virtually unknown to readers outside the milieu of Romanian architecture. These entail letters to the editor, galleries of student projects, number-heavy studies grounded in economical constraints, changes in legislation, or modestly competent projects pulled through thematic cross-sections from *Arhitectura* magazine's abundant contents. Their commonality is that they all capture complementary facets of the essence of day to day practice – or, to borrow Cuff's phrasing, the essence of design 'as a social process', grounded not only on drawing-board knowledge and the dialogue with state power, but also on interactions with the 'human constellation' of contributors enmeshed in any project.³⁵⁶ These facets entail the balancing act between individual professional values, and the pathways for action available in the framework of Romanian communism. They explore some of the internal conflicts of the profession, like the friction between the field's central hierarchy

³⁵⁶ Cuff, *Architecture: The Story of Practice*, p. 248.

and the multitude of voices on the fringes of professional authority. Finally, they capture modes of practice ranging from the individual pursuit of professional autonomy to ethically-minded, collaborative, participative design. But most importantly, they represent aspects of past practice with genuine value in the questioning, and building impetus for change, of contemporary architecture in Romania.

The exclusion of Casa Poporului (The House of the People) from this thesis' array of case studies was, likewise, deliberate. This is due not only to the sheer density of scholarship accumulated by the chronological and ideological moment it represents in the evolution of the Romanian regime,³⁵⁷ but also to the fact that it is, in essence, both anomalous when held against the course of regular architecture practice, and the apex of its erosion through authoritarian, bureaucratic, and professional means. Ana Maria Zahariade's concept of 'occult architecture',³⁵⁸ which I briefly unpack in Chapter 6,³⁵⁹ captures the gradual transference of the exclusive (and secretive) branch of practice developed for the nomenklatura – particularly its exemption from the financial and bureaucratic constraints of mass-produced architecture – onto the main stage of praxis. While Casa Poporului remains a qualitatively (and quantitatively) significant point of research in the history of communist Romanian architecture, it has

³⁵⁷ See pp. 32, 71 of this thesis for references to studies focused on Casa Poporului and architecture production during Ceaușescu's tenure.

³⁵⁸ Ana Maria Zahariade, '*Arhitectura care nu a existat: "Arhitectura ocultă"*' [The Architecture that did not exist: Occult architecture], in Ana Maria Zahariade, *Arhitectura în proiectul comunist. România 1944-1989* [Architecture in the communist project. Romania 1944-1989], trans. by Ana Maria Zahariade with Diana Lupu, ed. by Alistair Ian Blyth, Eugenia Petre (Bucharest: Simetria, 2001), pp. 111-31.

³⁵⁹ See pp. 391-93 of this thesis.

nevertheless drawn research interest and energy away from the study of everyday practice. Since this thesis seeks to address this gap in the extant body of knowledge on the subject, I have chosen to step away from the high-profile, artefactual peaks produced during the communist period, in favour of case studies affording a clearer view into practice as collective sense-making in a social context, bounded by political, ideological, and economic frameworks.

3. 5. Conclusion

This chapter has set out the source material and research strategy devised for the study of Romanian architecture within the network of social, economic and power relationships in socialist Romania. Through *Arhitectura* magazine, a veritable professional microcosm, architecture's discursive evolution, its negotiations with power and interactions with other social spheres, can be traced in conjunction with other sources. Based on Crysler's analysis of Anglo-American discourse on the built environment, *Arhitectura* emerges as a space for writing affected by the in-field dynamics of architectural discourse, and as a collective space-shaping practice, potentially able to affect the boundaries of the discipline with significant reverberations on the built environment, even in a professionally restrictive political climate. Points of congruence or divergence between architecture discourse in the English-speaking West and Romania also suggest intriguing, themed cross-sections through *Arhitectura's* ample material. An investigation of architecture's framing within wider

societal networks traversed by power in both capitalist and socialist paradigms based on the works of Harvey, Staniszkis, Gramsci and Althusser, focuses on architecture's dual role as constitutive and disruptive agent of the hegemonic order, whose potential for social action can be sought in the cumulative effect of minute, yet ideology-embodiment and transforming practices.

Structuring the methodology along the coordinates unpacked in the sections above has several implications for the analytical direction of the following content chapters, as well as this thesis' original contribution to knowledge. A combination of archival research and theoretical discourse was chosen in order to counteract some of the preconceived notions, biases, and judgements of value prevalent in contemporary Romanian architecture with regard to its communist past. Transmitted through professional and social enculturation, these patterns of relating professionally and personally to the recent past of architecture can obscure its contribution to the configuration of contemporary modes of practice, as well as dissuade from the exploration of alternatives outside the *capitalist, liberal ideal* of praxis, defined in opposition to communist repression.

Deliberately working from within the rich archival material of *Arhitectura* better clarifies the mechanisms of communist praxis, while also serving as an indicator of the current agendas and value hierarchies of the field of Romanian architecture, through contrast with the themes retrospectively diminished or amplified as the core architectural concerns of the communist period. Moreover, parsing *Arhitectura's* content inductively, allowing its main narratives to emerge against the three-layered

theoretical framework set up by the Methodology chapter, takes an original approach to the study of the magazine by considering its constitutive, not merely reflective, role in the shaping of Romanian architecture history. Although *Arhitectura* has by now become a staple in the study of communist Romanian architecture (by virtue of being the country's only specialist periodical), extant scholarship tends to follow the threads of pre-set themes and hypotheses through the magazine's contents. By analysing *Arhitectura* as a space for architectural writing, but also a spatial and institutional practice with structuring capabilities across the field of architecture, this thesis takes a new, holistic approach to research on the subject, producing a necessary next step in the historiography of this publication.³⁶⁰

Consequently, this thesis' methodology enables the mapping of modes of discourse and practice animating *Arhitectura's* field of institutional knowledge, whose role in the accumulation of cultural capital, construction of hierarchies of value, and production of scales of professional authority has not yet been investigated. Another consideration feeding into the structuring of my methodology has been its

³⁶⁰ In terms of scope and main focus on *Arhitectura* itself, there is only one similar study to date - Gabriela Tabacu's *Revista Arhitectura. Studiu monografic și indici. 1906-1944*, a monograph on the magazine's pre-war iteration, with a focus on thematic indexing. Post-war *Arhitectura* has also been the object of an unfinished and unpublished study with a more critical approach, authored by Ana Maria Zahariade, Augustin Ioan, and Nicolae Lascu. This study was revisited by Zahariade in a more recent paper on the correlation between the magazine's material presentation and its political message.

For further details, see:

Gabriela Tabacu, *Revista Arhitectura. Studiu monografic și indici. 1906-1944* [Arhitectura magazine. Monographic study and indices. 1906-1944] (Bucharest: Editura Universitară Ion Mincu, 2006).

Ana Maria Zahariade, Augustin Ioan, and Nicolae Lascu, 'Privire generală asupra evoluției revistei "Arhitectura"' [An Overview of the Evolution of "Arhitectura" Magazine], in *Istorii reprimare* [Repressed Histories], (unpublished CNCIS research project, Ion Mincu University of Architecture and Urbanism, 2001).

Ana Maria Zahariade, 'Testing the Physiognomy of the *Arhitectura* Magazine. 1952-1989', *studies in History & Theory of Architecture*, 1 (2013), pp. 161-83.

transferability to other disciplines of the built environment and fields of cultural production in the wider Eastern and Central European context of socialist studies. The *interstitial spaces* of communist Romanian architecture represent areas of alternative practice still circumscribed by and traversed by the logics of the socialist system. They are pathways of soft-resistance enacted not through overt ideological contention, but through the structuring effects of routine professional practices. They constitute arenas of collaboration and mutual transfiguration of the agendas, knowledge, and goals shared by the field of architecture and the political centre, often overshadowed by the much brighter sparks of discursive confrontation.

As much as they are not confined to architecture, but can be traced across the variety of cultural production, these interstitial spaces are not unique to Romania, nor exclusive to its communist past. By maintaining a strong focus on the transferability of findings and analytical strategy, this thesis seeks to expand subject-specific knowledge, but also propose a research method that can illuminate the role of the phenomena investigated in the genealogy of contemporary cultural practices in post-socialist contexts.

CHAPTER 4. SOCIALIST REALISM. THE FUTURE THAT DID NOT (YET) BELONG

In this first content chapter, I discuss the tensions between Socialist Realism and the pre-established dynamics of local professional culture and practice, with an analytical focus on the negotiation of hegemony between the state and the profession, conducted through discursive contention. To a significant extent, these tensions outlined a space of subtle political engagement based on professional discourse, leading to the emergence of alternative readings of Socialist Realism. The first section of the chapter examines the ambiguous positioning of Romanian politics, culture, and architecture on the pre-WWII map of Europe, outlining the counterbalance between the country's mode of governance (totalitarian monarchy with fascist tendencies) and cultural outlook, as well as the mediating role of discourse on the nation. In the second section, the richness and diversity of Socialist Realism as a cultural phenomenon are explored in contrast with the distortion of its core characteristics, through either political pressure or institutional activity, resulting in coercive cultural policies. The third section investigates the role of *Arhitectura* magazine in the introduction and normalisation of the alien discourse of Socialist Realism to a still Western-culture-oriented Romanian architecture system in the midst of post-war nationalisation.

Finally, the fourth (and most extensive) section traces the adaptive responses of the local architectural milieu to Socialist Realism, mapped through three layers of practice: establishing, contending and discussing theory; applying, expanding, or

attempting to change theory through design/projects; presentation and critique of built works. Supported with case studies drawn from *Architectura* magazine, these professional strategies delineate the space of subtle political engagement mentioned above, bringing new insights regarding the significance of the Socialist Realist period in the post-war restructuring of the architecture field. At the same time, these case-studies also serve as cross-sections through *Architectura* as a community of professional thought and practice, reflecting – in condensed, and sometimes interestingly refracting forms – the evolution of the architectural milieu as a whole throughout the 1950s.

4.1. 1937. Romania at the crossroads

One of the most enduring visual legacies of the 1937 Exposition Internationale held in Paris captures the Soviet and German pavilions (Fig. 2) facing off across the Léna bridge. Dominating the entrance to the Trocadero Gardens, they addressed, according to Sarah Wilson, ‘an unmistakable visual and ideological challenge’ to exhibiting states across the political spectrum between fascism and socialism.³⁶¹ Both pavilions were conceived as *Gesamtkunstwerke* – microcosms merging architecture and ‘popular’ art under political guidance to represent (and thereby, help actualise) the enlightened future they embodied.³⁶² Wilson suggests that the strong visual

³⁶¹ Sarah Wilson, ‘The Soviet Pavilion in Paris’, in *Art of the Soviets. Painting, Sculpture and Architecture in a One-Party State, 1917-1992*, ed. by Matthew Cullerne Bown and Brandon Taylor (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), p. 106.

³⁶² Wilson, ‘The Soviet Pavilion in Paris’, pp. 106-07, 115.

parallel between the USSR and Germany's pavilion architecture – and the progress-driven societal narratives housed therein, merging artistic tradition and innovation through similar propaganda programmes – may have facilitated the two nations' rapprochement later that year.³⁶³ For György Péteri,³⁶⁴ international exhibitions constituted deliberately ambiguous international arenas of ideological convergence and confrontation between 'systemic "camps"', conducive to a 'mutual assimilation of norms, values and standards'.³⁶⁵



Fig. 2. Contending narratives. The German and the Soviet pavilions – Paris, 1937.

Romania's Exhibition pavilion has garnered scant scholarship,³⁶⁶ despite being an

³⁶³ Ibid., pp. 111 - 12. This architectural dialogue predates the Exhibition, with Albert Speer reportedly modifying his design in response to Boris Iofan's Soviet pavilion models.

³⁶⁴ György Péteri, 'Sites of Convergence. The USSR and Communist Eastern Europe at International Fairs Abroad and at Home', *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 47, 1 (2012), pp. 3-12.

³⁶⁵ György Péteri, 'Sites of Convergence', p. 5.

³⁶⁶ One researcher who has begun examining this topic is Miruna Stroe. For further details, see: Miruna Stroe, 'Ascanio Damian, Trade Fair Designer Extraordinaire', *studies in History & Theory of Architecture*, 2 (2014), pp. 77-93.

insightful record into the country's positioning on the geo-political map of interwar Europe, and the role of liberal architecture praxis in the international promotion of nationhood. Sited two plots away from Iofan's soaring edifice, between the Hungarian and Austrian pavilions, Romania's diminutive pavilion was notably absent from *Arhitectura* between 1936-1939.³⁶⁷

Culture magazine *Cele Trei Crișuri*, however, ran six extensive articles on the Exhibition and the Romanian pavilion, particularly its reception in the French and international press.³⁶⁸ Designed by architect Duiliu Marcu, the pavilion's austere, white marble façade merged neo-classical and modernist elements (Fig. 3). Beyond the entrance wing's monolithic severity, the building – 'a profane cathedral' appreciated by the French press for its intelligent concept³⁶⁹ – staged a richly layered spatial journey based on complementary contrasts. The modern, gilded translucency of the entrance hall³⁷⁰ balanced the earthiness of the lime-rendered, wooden-porticoed restaurant – a space of nostalgic, traditionalist escapism.

A brief, illustrated overview of Romanian participation to pre-war international exhibitions can also be found in *Spațiul Modernității Românești 1906-1947* [The Space of Romanian Modernity 1906-1947] ed. by Arpad Zachi, trans. by Alistair Ian Blyth (Bucharest: Editura Fundației Arhitect, 2011), pp. 159-82.

³⁶⁷ *Arhitectura* did nevertheless cover the Brussels exhibition of 1935 in issues 3 (1935), pp. 5-8, and issue 5 (1936), pp. 7-8, when a picture of the Romanian pavilion was used as closing argument to C. Moșinschi's virulent xenophobic article, 'Arhitectii și protecția muncii naționale' [Architecture and the protection of national work], in which he called for the barring from practice and expulsion of foreign architects practising in Romania, particularly Bucharest.

³⁶⁸ *Cele Trei Crișuri, Anale Culturale* 7-8 (July-August 1937), Oradea, pp. 122-23, 126-34, 137, 140-43. <<http://dspace.bcuculuj.ro/handle/123456789/48055>> [accessed 9 June 2018]

³⁶⁹ Charles Oulmont, member of the French government, cited in Victor Ion Popa, 'Expoziția Internațională din Paris, 1937. Pavilionul Românesc' [The International Exhibition in Paris, 1937] The Romanian Pavilion', *Cele Trei Crișuri* 7-8 (July-August 1937), Oradea, p. 126.

³⁷⁰ Rendered in backlit alabaster and aragonite, with hollow columns lit up from the inside to resemble room-sized stone lamps. The economic section was housed under vaults fashioned out of salt slabs, resting on clear salt pillars. Popa, 'Expoziția Internațională din Paris, 1937', pp. 126-27.

Figure has been removed due to Copyright restrictions

Fig. 3. The Romanian pavilion at the 1937 International Exhibition in Paris.

Technologically-innovative displays of Romania's modernising industries³⁷¹ partnered vibrant wildlife dioramas and photo-montages of idyllic countryside landscapes, celebrating rural life and folk art. Referenced in sculpture, painting and photography, King Carol II dominated this visual narrative (Fig. 4) as monarch, military leader, and patron of numerous foundations promoting Romania's socio-cultural development.³⁷²

³⁷¹ Engineer Dimitrie Leonida's electricity-powered infographic map of Romania condensed data on natural resources and industrial development in a single, dynamic visual display. The Romanian pavilion was also rich in film and photographic montages on a variety of topics, from geographical displays to ethnographic reportage. Ibid., p. 134.

³⁷² King Carol II was also patron to the paramilitary youth educational and workforce organisation *Straja Țării* [The Sentinel of the Motherland]. It combined education, rendering service to the motherland through labour, military and ideological training, in a similar manner to the various branches of *Opera Nazionale Balilla*, the Italian fascist youth organisation active during Mussolini's tenure, as well as *Hitlerjugend*. *Straja Țării* was created in 1935 by Carol II in an attempt to counteract the influence of the Iron Guard, another far-right, ultra-nationalist political movement active in Romania between 1927 and the early years of WWII.



Fig. 4. Romania's international representation: modernity meets tradition under authoritarian leadership. From the top left, clockwise: the entrance hall, the hall of industrial development and natural resources, the bust of King Carol II surrounded by Romania's youth (a fresco referencing traditional Orthodox iconography), and an exhibit on traditional arts and crafts.

Three narratives underpinned the pavilion's design: a claim to autonomous statehood, based on the historical continuity and civilising presence of the 'Romanian people' within Romania's 'ancestral borders',³⁷³ echoing the Nazi myth of 'blood and soil'; the king's enlightened, modernising influence, staged similarly to Stalin's personality cult celebrated in the Soviet pavilion; a bid for inclusion among modern European countries, and tighter international connections in the event of future conflagrations.³⁷⁴ This narrative of cultural and intellectual kinship with greater Europe

³⁷³ Throughout the pavilion's visual displays, this was illustrated by archaeological exhibits emphasising Dacian and Roman ancestry, but also works of art depicting 'ancestral lifestyles'. Another display was devoted to an ethnic distribution map of Romania, intended, according to V. Ion Popa, to serve as a warning to Hungary against expansionism into Transylvania.

Victor Ion Popa, 'Expoziția Internațională din Paris, 1937. Pavilionul Românesc' [The International Exhibition in Paris, 1937] *The Romanian Pavilion*, *Cele Trei Crișuri* 7-8 (July-August 1937), Oradea, p. 128.

³⁷⁴ References to the strength, valour and creativity of the Little Entente countries present at the Exhibition permeate Popa's article.

deployed an eclectic assemblage of artistic and architectural paradigms, demonstrating the wide range of autonomous modes of artistic self-expression within national propaganda.³⁷⁵

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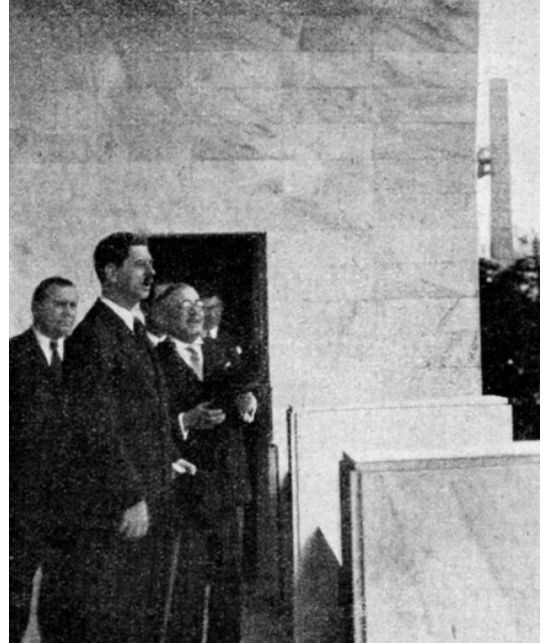


Fig. 5. The official architectural image of the Romanian monarchy. King Carol II and professor Dimitrie Gusti (General Commissioner and organiser of Romania's participation to International Exhibitions, 1937-1939) collaborated closely on the concept of Romania's international representation.

The understated classicism of the pavilion's exterior (Fig. 5) – evoking Marcello Piacentini's works, but also Albert Speer's austere monumental style – was the aesthetic favoured by Romania's monarch for modern urban development, but stood in nuanced architectural dialogue with the subdued, context-mindful modernism of the restaurant, and the eclectic exuberance of the atrium's neo-Romanian detailing.³⁷⁶

³⁷⁵ The works featured included paintings by Lucian Grigorescu, Theodor Pallady, Camil Ressu, Nicolae Tonitza, and sculptures by Constantin Brancusi, Cornel Medrea, Ion Jalea, Milița Petrașcu, Frederic Storck, among others. According to recent research on the subject, King Carol II was personally involved in the selection.

Claudiu Alexandru Vitanos, *Imaginea României prin turism, târguri și expoziții universale, în perioada interbelică* [The image of Romania through tourism, fairs and universal exhibitions during the interbellum] (Bucharest: Editura Mica Valahie, 2013).

[eBook] <<https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=aACVCwAAQBAJ>> [accessed 10 August 2018]

³⁷⁶ The restaurant's eclectic aesthetics combined Moorish and Byzantine decorative elements with the traditional Romanian spatial archetype of an inn's interior courtyard. Augustin Ioan, *Modern Architecture and the Totalitarian Project: a Romanian Case Study*, trans. by Alina Cârâc (Bucharest: Institutul Cultural Român, 2009), pp. 18-19.

In Marcu's words,

*We have not come to Paris to make propaganda, but rather to make art [...] to demonstrate the degree of culture reached by our artists. [...] The Romanian pavilion has notes of classical sobriety and restrained grandeur... I have tried to show the foreign public a modern architecture, nourished by the lifeblood of our distant past.*³⁷⁷

This political statement of nationhood relied on deliberate ambiguity, layered meaning, and diverse formal expression, reflecting the desire for international recognition and belonging prevalent in Romania's cultural milieu,³⁷⁸ but also a diplomatically equivocal positioning among contending European ideologies.

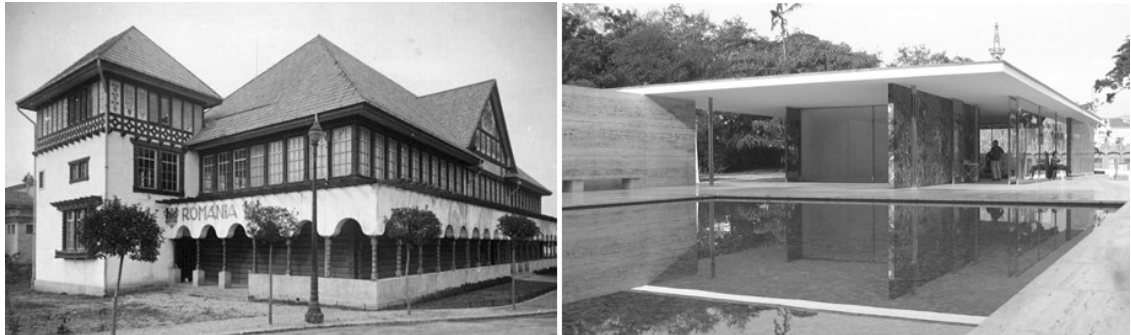


Fig. 6. A world of contrasts: the Romanian and German pavilions at the 1929 International Exhibition in Barcelona, designed by Duiliu Marcu, and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, respectively.

This strategy is traceable through the evolution of Romania's International Exhibition pavilions: vernacular historicism for Barcelona, 1929 (Fig. 6);³⁷⁹ neoclassicism merged with a sharper modernist aesthetic – 1935, Brussels (Fig. 7); and the carefully layered architectural and ideological narrative of Paris 1937. For the 1939 New York Universal

³⁷⁷ Duiliu Marcu, 'Pavilionul și Restaurantul României' [The Romanian Pavilion and Restaurant], *Cele Trei Crișuri, Anale Culturale* 7-8 (July-August 1937), Oradea, p. 127.

³⁷⁸ Even if membership to these milieus was disputed on ethnic grounds. Gabriela Tabacu has documented the efforts of Romanian architects to ban foreign and Jewish architects from practice during the reign of King Carol II.

Gabriela Tabacu, *Revista Arhitectura. Studiu monografic și indici. 1906-1944* [Arhitectura magazine. Monographic study and indices. 1906-1944] (Bucharest: Editura Universitară Ion Mincu, 2006), pp. 58-61.

³⁷⁹ Designed by Duiliu Marcu, the same architect behind the modern aesthetics of the 1937 Romanian pavilion.

Exhibition (Fig. 7), Romania consolidated the modernism-steeped-in-tradition narrative that had become its default strategy of international representation, with a pavilion by G. M. Cantacuzino in the same modernist-neoclassicist synthesis with simplified, vernacular decorative touches, and a restaurant by Octav Doicescu (Fig. 8).

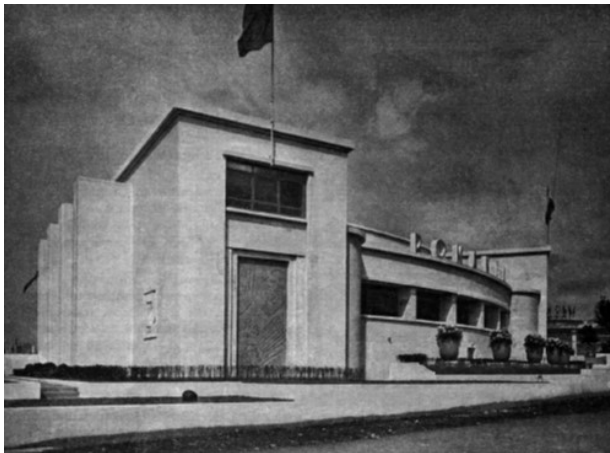


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Fig. 7. Precedent and postcedent: the 1935 Romanian pavilion (left, arch. C. Moșinschi) prefigures the merger between neo-classicism and modernism that characterised official Romanian architecture under Carol II. The 1939 Romanian pavilion designed for the International Exhibition in New York (right, arch. G. M. Cantacuzino) further develops the narrative of tradition-suffused modernity.

Throughout the 1930s, Romanian foreign policy was fraught with tension between the deeply Francophile intelligentsia and the monarch's gradual rapprochement with Nazi Germany.³⁸⁰ Carol II instated a royal dictatorship in 1938 by seeding dissent between major political parties and supporting the ultra-nationalist, anti-Semitic Iron Guard, whose climb to power culminated with the National Legionary State in 1940 under Marshal Ion Antonescu.

³⁸⁰ By the 1940s, the Romanian economy was secured within the German circle of economic interests, marking a trajectory of subjection as economic colony of capitalist powers.

Katherine Verdery, *National Ideology Under Socialism. Identity and Cultural Politics in Ceaușescu's Romania* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), p. 42.

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Fig. 8. The 'Romanian House', designed by architect Octav Doicescu, was a much-appreciated restaurant accompanying the main Romanian pavilion at the 1939 New York International Exhibition, building on the successful strategies of the Paris 1937 experience.

Whereas Carol II opportunistically pursued alliances in the interest of Romania's unity and independence³⁸¹ (especially against Hungarian claims to Transylvania), Antonescu

³⁸¹ Notably with France, Great Britain, Little Entente states, on one hand, but also with Nazi Germany when it became clear, after the re-militarization of the Rhineland region, that French aid would be unlikely in the event of German aggression.

allied Romania with Germany against the USSR, resulting in the brutal reclamation of Basarabia, Bucovina and Transnistria by the Soviet army.³⁸² King Michael's³⁸³ 1944 coup d'état against Antonescu sided Romania with the Allies against Germany,³⁸⁴ but could not prevent the country's invasion and subsequent Soviet occupation. The anti-Bolshevik rhetoric underpinning Carol II and Antonescu's foreign policies had an enduring effect beyond WWII, polarising local politics between rapprochement with the West (especially France, *la grande sœur*) and the rejection of socialism.

Political and ideological tensions like anti-Bolshevism, the monarchy's fascist tendencies, and a strong political and cultural current towards national self-determination based on the fabricated narrative of historical continuity and ethnic homogeneity (Fig. 9) also animated the discourse around Romania's 1937 pavilion and the Exhibition itself. The Romanian press also delivered thinly-veiled critiques of the Soviet Pavilion, openly admiring the German, and enthusing profusely about the British, French, and Italian pavilions.³⁸⁵

³⁸² The unspeakable horrors of the Holocaust that laid waste to local Romanian Jewish and Romani communities has been documented in *Romania and the Holocaust. Events – Contexts – Aftermath*, ed. by Simon Geissbühler (Stuttgart: ibidem Press, 2016).

³⁸³ King Michael I of Romania succeeded both his grandfather, King Ferdinand I, and his father, King Carol II, to the throne of Romania. While Michael I's initial reign (20 July 1927 – 8 June 1930) took place while he was still a child, his second reign (6 September 1940 – 30 December 1947) was marked by the political turbulence of the rise of fascism, WWII, and the country's invasion by the Soviet army. King Michael I was the last king of Romania, stripped of citizenship and forced into abdication and exile through the political manoeuvring of Petru Groza's communist government.

³⁸⁴ According to Florin Constantiniu, this act may have shortened the war by six months. Florin Constantiniu, *O istorie sinceră a poporului român* [An Honest History of the Romanian People] (Bucharest: Editura Univers Enciclopedic, 1997).

³⁸⁵ Victor Ion Popa, 'Expoziția Internațională din Paris, 1937. Pavilionul Românesc' [The International Exhibition in Paris, 1937] *The Romanian Pavilion*, *Cele Trei Crișuri* 7-8 (July-August 1937), Oradea, pp. 129-32.



Fig. 9. Fresco from the interior of the 1937 Romanian pavilion. Despite the anti-Bolshevik rhetoric animating prevalent in Romanian interbellum culture, some of the visual mechanisms of Romania's self-representation bore strong conceptual and graphic resemblance to Soviet art.

Alexandru Iacobescu's short article 'Pavilioanele Marilor Puteri din Expoziția Internațională' reviews the architectural presence of France, Great Britain, Italy and Germany in glowing terms. France's pavilion reflects its ancient 'national genius' and the 'splendour of its civilisation, refined over the ages', while the British pavilion is a statement to the country's progressive social outlook, evident in its 'visual arts, in public works of social assistance and hygiene', as well as the modern techniques of its industrial development.³⁸⁶ Iacobescu's portrayal of Italy merges the iconic image of the Roman empire with the 'colossal accomplishments of the fascist regime', whose colonial strength shines through its 'grandiose urbanism'. For Iacobescu, the simple lines and volumes of Germany's pavilion coalesce into an image of monumental, 'overwhelming exterior greatness', contrasting with the impression of methodical economic efficiency displayed within.³⁸⁷

These pavilion critiques are significant not only through their delivery of condensed

³⁸⁶ Alexandru Iacobescu, 'Pavilioanele Marilor Puteri din Expoziția Internațională' [The Pavilions of the Great Powers at the International Exhibition], *Cele Trei Crișuri, Anale Culturale* 7-8 (July-August 1937), Oradea, p. 142.

³⁸⁷ Iacobescu, 'Pavilioanele Marilor Puteri din Expoziția Internațională', p. 142.

snapshots of the generalised perceptions of the Romanian cultural milieu on the socio-political strengths of each country, but more significantly by operating a shift in the core group of European powers forged through the first World War: Great Britain, France, Italy and Russia. Removing the latter and supplanting it with Germany, Romania's political and cultural Russophobe stance is made abundantly clear. Moreover, Victor Ion Popa's extensive article 'Expoziția Internațională din Paris, 1937. Pavilionul Românesc'³⁸⁸ also includes critiques of several other exhibition sites,³⁸⁹ with the Soviet pavilion discussed in unfavourable detail: 'an eerie wall awash in strange lights [...] blocking the path [...] with a severe, ashy countenance', conceived as a gigantic pedestal of interminable ascension, crowned with a 'huge, unearthly statue' that, despite the technical achievement of its production, amounted to 'nothing more than a three-dimensional, metal propaganda poster'.³⁹⁰ While Popa does acknowledge the Russian people in terms of the arts, crafts, and technical ingenuity evident in the construction of the pavilion and the material culture displayed within, he sets it in opposition – if not in a subservient position – to the communist regime: 'the inner hall climbs, climbs ever more for over one hundred meters, to a tall dead-end where Stalin's pathetic statue keeps guard, surrounded by the sunny and ebullient

³⁸⁸ Victor Ion Popa, 'Expoziția Internațională din Paris, 1937. Pavilionul Românesc' [The International Exhibition in Paris, 1937] *The Romanian Pavilion*, *Cele Trei Crișuri* 7-8 (July-August 1937), Oradea, pp. 129-34.

³⁸⁹ Popa considers the Belgian pavilion to be 'the most beautiful out of the entire exhibition [...] A modern building, with large windows and rich, varied displays. From the exterior brickwork to the most minute frame exhibiting a drawing by a Congolese child, everything is tasteful, everything is new, everything is utterly perfect.' Other pavilions reviewed by Popa in his article include those of Germany, the Vatican, Spain, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Switzerland, Italy, Canada, Portugal, and France.

Popa, 'Expoziția Internațională din Paris, 1937', p. 131.

³⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 130.

fresco of a new country's ideal'.³⁹¹

The strength of the anti-communist sentiment permeating Romanian culture is made even more plainly evident in a political editorial piece by George Bacaloglu, prefacing the discussion of the International Exhibition in *Cele Trei Crișuri* magazine. 'Războarele de la antipozii. Tinerimea de ieri și România de azi'³⁹² reports growing local concern over international conflicts caused by the spread of communism, and predicts with alarming foresight Romania's post-war isolation and annexing by the USSR: 'Romania need not harbour illusions that, in the misfortunate event of war, the cabinets of the great powers will labour for its salvation, unless marginal to their egotistical interests. [...] geographical impossibilities will also intervene, as they have in 1916; we will perhaps be isolated and certainly troubled by the Eastern Bolshevik colossus.'³⁹³

In current socialist studies, Katherine Verdery suggests that anti-Bolshevism weighed heavily on Romania's interwar national discourse,³⁹⁴ while David Priestland notes that the deep mistrust of the USSR prevalent, before and after WWII, in Germany's former allies (Hungary, Bulgaria) or countries with tense relations with Russia (Poland), hindered the creation of efficient coalition governments,³⁹⁵ culminating in Romania

³⁹¹ Ibid., p. 130.

³⁹² George Bacaloglu, 'Războarele de la antipozii. Tinerimea de ieri și România de azi' [The wars of the Antipodes. Yesterday's youth and Romania today] *Cele Trei Crișuri, Anale Culturale* 7-8 (July-August 1937), Oradea, pp. 124-25.

Bacaloglu uses the term Antipodes somewhat loosely – in the context of 1937 conflagrations, his article most likely refers to the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937 - 1945), the Chinese Civil War (1927-1949), the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), and the unrest caused by the USSR's Eurasian expansion.

³⁹³ Bacaloglu, 'Războarele de la antipozii', p. 124.

³⁹⁴ Verdery, *National Ideology Under Socialism*, p. 44.

³⁹⁵ David Priestland *The Red Flag. Communism and the Making of the Modern World* (London: Penguin Books, 2010), pp. 213, 215.

with the fraudulent 1946 elections resulting in the Communist Party's victory.³⁹⁶ Proportionally the smallest in Eastern Europe, it had struggled to accrue popular support due to Romania's interwar social structure (agrarian economy, a recently enfranchised peasantry, nascent industrial development and emergent proletarian stratum), a predominantly non-Romanian membership and vocal anti-national propaganda, which saw the Party banned in 1924.³⁹⁷ Such comprehensive *otherness* meant, in Verdery's words, that 'without Soviet support during the late 1940s, the Romanian Communist Party could not have attained power'.³⁹⁸ Moreover, through the joint effect of Romania's post-war Soviet occupation and the Communist Party's vociferous internationalism, the idea of 'the nation' became further entrenched at the centre of discursive contention in politics as well as culture.³⁹⁹ Three main branches of interwar national discourse are identified by Verdery – orientalists, glorifying Orthodoxy-steeped indigenism with fascist leanings; moderate westernisers, seeing Western influence as indispensable to modernisation, but secondary to national values; and enthusiastic westernisers, considering occidentalisation as intrinsic to the development of Romania's specific political, cultural and economic context.⁴⁰⁰

³⁹⁶ For details, see:

Adrian Cioroianu, *Pe umerii lui Marx. O introducere în istoria comunismului românesc* [On Marx's Shoulders. An incursion into the history of Romanian communism] (Bucharest: Editura Curtea Veche, 2007).

Dinu C. Giurescu, *Falsificatorii. Alegerile din 1946* [The Forgers. The 1946 Elections] (Bucharest: Editura Enciclopedică, 2015).

Vladimir Tismăneanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons: A Political History of Romanian Communism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

³⁹⁷ Verdery, *National Ideology Under Socialism*, pp. 103-04.

³⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 104.

³⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

⁴⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 48-51.



Fig. 10. Romanian architecture in the late 1930s. The median level of praxis, as reflected in *Arhitectura* 1 (1935), 6,7 (1936), 8 (1937), 11 (1938), captures the coexistence and creative mergers between traditionalist and modernist paradigms. The middle row also reflects the local influence of the severe monumentalism of fascist German and Italian architecture.

I would argue that the latter view (synchronicity with the West nurturing and affirming 'a Romanian identity with its own special characteristics'),⁴⁰¹ had significant, enduring

⁴⁰¹ Ibid., p. 53.

adhesion amongst post-war intellectual circles.⁴⁰² As discussed above through the case study of the Romanian 1937 pavilion, the country's narrative of international self-representation was predicated on the dual coordinates of historically-derived ethno-cultural uniqueness, and a long-standing aspiration to be included among leading European nations with similar systems of cultural and social values. Fig. 10 above illustrates the presence of these polarising tendencies of the pre-war architecture praxis.

In his analysis of national Stalinism, Vladimir Tismăneanu notes that this paradoxical duality also fuelled the Communist Romanian Party's 'limitless obsession' with genealogy, authenticity, national identity, and 'historical predestination' – the last two also commonly found across Romanian intellectual strata.⁴⁰³ For Tismăneanu, this enduring trait of the Romanian communist leadership (manifest since the end of the 1950s), was responsible for its contradictory internal and international political strategies. Resistance to the reforms of the socialist model devised in Moscow (Khrushchev's de-Stalinisation) or more locally, in the satellite states (Alexander Dubček's socialism with a human face) on grounds of patriotism and national self-determination proved increasingly isolating for Romania, as well as corrosive for the Party's local search for legitimisation.⁴⁰⁴

⁴⁰² Based on memoirs by architects active before and after, such as Ion Mircea Enescu, or recollections on the formative years of Eugenia Greceanu, referenced in the Literature Review.

⁴⁰³ Tismăneanu, *Despre comunism. Destinul unei religii politice* [On communism. The destiny of a political religion (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2011), p 83.

⁴⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 84-85.

As far as architecture is concerned, the same duality observed by Verdery as consistent for overall intellectual activity in Romania – an impassioned involvement in the production and defence of national values as self-described modes of political resistance, which simultaneously contributed to the consolidation of power by virtue of the intelligentsia’s agreement with the political centre on the prime importance of national discourse at the heart of cultural production⁴⁰⁵ – can be tracked through autobiographical accounts of praxis under communism and *Arhitectura’s* contents. Moments of openness, synchronicity, and welcome international architectural influences represent one of the main themes recurring persistently through Ion Mircea Enescu’s *Arhitect sub comunism*,⁴⁰⁶ an account of the architect’s pre-war education, active practice over the entire communist period, and reflections on the post-socialist state of Romanian architecture. In terms of Verdery’s classification of pre-war cultural stances with regard to the relationship between national development and international connectivity, Enescu was patently an enthusiastic westerniser. Architects like Nicolae Porumbescu and Constantin Joja represented, through theoretical activity as well as practice, the orientalist position, glorifying local tradition and the architectural vernacular – a stance most congruent with isolationist nationalism constructed by the political centre. As I will discuss in greater detail in Chapter 6, theorists and practitioners like Mircea Lupu, Alexandru M. Sandu, and Mircea Alifanti pursued a moderate approach to a modernised, contextual Romanian architecture, with *national specificity* formulated within the diverse framework of global architecture,

⁴⁰⁵ Verdery, *National Ideology Under Socialism*, p. 303-05.

⁴⁰⁶ Ion Mircea Enescu, *Arhitect sub comunism* [Architect under communism] (Bucharest: Paideia, 2006).

and through lively discursive exchanges with a variety of architectural paradigms from abroad.

In the light of the pre-war political and cultural dynamics discussed above, Romania's 1948 transition to socialism, comprising the reorientation of culture to Socialist Realism, was fraught with Russophobia, anti-Bolshevik tensions, compounded by the country's forced Sovietisation through military occupation. After the interbellum period (widely regarded as a golden age of modernisation and Western rapprochement) was ended prematurely by WWII, the introduction of Marxism-Leninism as overarching political and cultural ideology was slow to gain traction, particularly among the intellectual elites. However, the very narrative of national identity construction and political legitimisation captured by Romania's 1937 participation to the international exhibition would also provide a fertile (albeit contentious) ground for the indigenisation of both socialism and Socialist Realism.

For most of its recent history as an independent state, Romania had devoted the bulk of its strategic growth to narrowing the developmental gap separating it from Western European countries of similar Latinate origins – mainly, France. Despite operating a brutal scission from the previous political and economic status quo, the instatement of socialism in Romania – with its core of radical social progress, erasure of class-based inequity, empowerment of the oppressed majorities (the peasantry, women), modern industrialisation, but also strong appeal to national sentiment (through the 'socialist content in national form' dictum) – provided an alternative societal model, potentially more effective in accelerating Romania's overall development. Before examining the

theoretical and practical normalisation of Socialist Realism in Romanian architecture, the next section delivers an overview of Socialist Realism through scholarship from both East and West, focused on the areas of potential congruence – but also antagonism – with pre-war cultural patterns.

4.2. Socialist Realism. Between radical social progress and cultural coercion

As identified in the Literature Review, one of the gaps in knowledge and scholarship about communist Romanian architecture is a predominantly negative view of its Socialist Realism period, reductively understood as rigid, Stalin-era political diktat resulting in architecture of negligible importance. This section explores the cultural, political and artistic phenomenon of Socialist Realism in its original, plural dimension, with a particular focus on characteristics impinging on architecture praxis. As Matthew Cullerne Bown and Brandon Taylor suggest in *Art of the Soviets. Painting, Sculpture and Architecture in a One-party State, 1917-1992*,⁴⁰⁷ everyday Socialist Realism enjoyed great variety across the USSR's diverse geo-cultural contexts,⁴⁰⁸ overshadowed in Western Soviet studies by the dichotomy between Lenin's era of utopian, revolutionary struggles and the 'ossification of Soviet life' under Stalin's totalitarian regime.⁴⁰⁹ Emphasising the importance of continuities and scissions in the stream of sometimes

⁴⁰⁷ *Art of the Soviets. Painting, Sculpture and Architecture in a One-party State, 1917-1992*, ed. by Matthew Cullerne Bown and Brandon Taylor (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), pp. 135-37.

⁴⁰⁸ Matthew Cullerne Bown, 'Aleksandr Gerasimov', in *Art of the Soviets. Painting, Sculpture and Architecture in a One-party State, 1917-1992*, ed. by Matthew Cullerne Bown and Brandon Taylor, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), pp. 135-37.

⁴⁰⁹ Matthew Cullerne Bown and Brandon Taylor, 'Introduction', in *Art of the Soviets*, pp. 2, 6.

deceptively linked cultural and political events, Bown and Taylor highlight the rich heterogeneity of the Soviet art phenomenon,⁴¹⁰ shaped by internal political decisions, but also by the cultural autonomy exercised by individuals, groups and institutions.⁴¹¹

As Catherine Cooke argues,⁴¹² Socialist Realism was *ab origine* a method of artistic creation designed to bridge the gap between ideology and discipline-specific practice through a flexible normalisation of discourse. This transition from political project to aesthetic principle represented a source of creative opportunity through the involvement of professional milieus, tasked with casting ideological principle into artistic or architectural design with considerable structural or idiomatic manoeuvrability (Fig. 11).



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Fig. 11. The rich variety of pre-war Soviet architecture. From top left, clockwise: the Soviet pavilion for the 1925 International Exhibition in Paris (Konstantin Melnikov); Narkomtiazhprom project (Ivan A. Fomin; 1934); Composition 16 (Iakov Chernikhov; 1929); horizontal skyscrapers – Wolkenbügel (El Lissitzky; 1924).

⁴¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 11-12.

⁴¹¹ Ibid., pp. 2-4.

⁴¹² Catherine Cooke, 'Socialist Realist architecture: theory and practice', in *Art of the Soviets. Painting, Sculpture and Architecture in a One-party State, 1917-1992*, ed. by Matthew Cullerne Bown and Brandon Taylor (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), pp. 86-105.

Although susceptible to political critique and impinged on by multiple economic and social factors, Socialist Realism sought an original synthesis between a diversity of ideologically appropriate styles, between the expression of a modern revolutionary ethos and progressive local traditions with strong appeal to collective memory. The manifold perspectives shaping the nascent Socialist Realism of the 1920s manifested in Soviet art and architecture even after the 1930s, with practice shaped through competition and even cross-pollination between modernist and classicist idioms⁴¹³ in a 'richly varied and energetic architectural practice'.⁴¹⁴

Cooke further notes that Socialist Realism was also tasked with nurturing the psychological development of the masses towards class consciousness, political involvement, and increased agency.⁴¹⁵ This moral, socially-conscious and empowering ethos was as important a core component of Socialist Realism as its normative, political dimension. By democratising and disseminating art, cultural elites working within the discursive arena of Socialist Realism took on, according to Cooke, a leadership role in the development of mass consciousness (Fig. 12).

⁴¹³ Such as the work of Ivan Aleksandrovich Fomin, whose architecture was based on the core principles and relations between structural elements of classicism, adaptable to modern aesthetic expressions.

Anders Åman, *Architecture and Ideology in Eastern Europe During the Stalin Era. An Aspect of Cold War History* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), pp. 53-57.

⁴¹⁴ Arkady Langman's allusions to the American corporate style (STO building, 1935), to Zholtovsky's rigorously classical Sadovaya building (1947) and the scale-defying eclecticism of Moscow's Seven Sisters.

Sergei Kavtaradze, with Alexei Tarkhanov and Mikhail Ankist, *Stalinist Architecture* (Lawrence King Publishing, 1992), p. 54.

⁴¹⁵ Cooke, 'Socialist Realist architecture: theory and practice', pp. 86-105.



Fig. 12. Festival of the 2nd Congress of Comintern (Boris Kustodiev; 1921).

By using images (understood as form-with-a-meaning, a pre-modern aesthetic tradition with longstanding resonance in Russian art), Socialist Realist artists hastened the pace of societal transformation, elevating the present into a progressive future. To this end, myth-making was crucial in instilling 'a revolutionary attitude to reality', drawing on distilled positive local histories, personalities and traditions.⁴¹⁶ Moreover, Brandon Taylor's *Modernism, Post-modernism, Realism. A critical perspective for art*⁴¹⁷ emphasises the immense significance of the method and associated arts movements in shaping more socially-engaged artistic practices across Europe, but also in wresting art from the limitations of Modernist and, retrospectively, Postmodernist paradigms. The 20th century, writes Taylor, 'failed to nurture subjective life in all its richness and revolutionary potential', mostly through Modernism's social and intellectual exclusivity, as well as reduced relevance beyond the immediacy of artistic circles.⁴¹⁸

⁴¹⁶ Cooke, 'Socialist Realist architecture: theory and practice', p. 87, 97-98.

⁴¹⁷ Brandon Taylor, *Modernism, Post-modernism, Realism. A critical perspective for art*, 3rd edn (Winchester: Winchester School of Art Press, 1990).

⁴¹⁸ Taylor, *Modernism, Post-modernism, Realism*, pp. 125-27.

As I have touched on in the Literature Review, research has begun to explore Socialist Realism as a space of alternative modernity, predicated on the same goals of societal betterment and progress as the Western notion of modernity, but enacted through different artistic paradigms and cultural strategies specific to socialist systems. Susan Buck-Morss writes of the rootedness of both socialist and capitalist modernizing programmes in the Western tradition of utopias, with their eventual undoing stemming from the excessive binding of modernising factors to state-embodied power.⁴¹⁹ Alexei Yurchak identifies the space of Soviet culture as one of performative engagement with ideology, where irony, multiple meanings, humour and double-entendre blur the boundaries of official discourse,⁴²⁰ in a similarly post-modern manner as that detected by Augustin Ioan in his analysis of Socialist Realist architecture.⁴²¹ Cullerne Bown and Taylor's volume questions the very concepts of modernity and progress, especially their longstanding (Western) association with artistic paradigms from which Socialist Realism became increasingly divorced. As Taylor suggests, alternative strands of Soviet modernism were dynamic, future-oriented, relating to the past through assimilation, rather than overthrow, and able to combine utopianism, functionality and cultural continuity.⁴²² However, the effectiveness and staying power of this alternative modernity depends, as highlighted

⁴¹⁹ Susan Buck-Morss, *Dreamworld and Catastrophe: The Passing of Mass Utopia in the East and West* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2000).

⁴²⁰ Alexei Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More. The Last Soviet Generation* (Woodstock: Princeton University Press, 2005).

⁴²¹ Augustin Ioan, *Arhitectura (supra)realismului socialist* [The architecture of socialist (sur)realism] (Bucharest: Paideia, 2012).

⁴²² Brandon Taylor, 'On AKhRR', *Art of the Soviets. Painting, Sculpture and Architecture in a One-party State, 1917-1992*, ed. by Matthew Cullerne Bown and Brandon Taylor (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), pp. 69-70.

by Verdery and Gramsci, on the intellectual elites' ability to act as a mediating channel for the dual flow of hegemony, balancing the normalisation of Socialist Realism's ideological underpinnings through practice, while also infusing it with alternative meanings relevant for (and often informed by) the wider social audience. As will be discussed in the next section, the intellectual milieus' own dynamics, disciplinary practices, permeability or hermeticism as fields of knowledge also weigh in on this mechanism.

I would argue that some of the most intriguing characteristics of Socialist Realism were the creative states of tension generated between its flexibility as a theoretical method of artistic creation, and the gradually constricting academism of its practice. Similarly, productive tensions also polarised the (often traditional) Russian-ness of its cultural lineage, the modernising drive of socialism, and the geo-cultural patterns specific to its varied sites of application across the USSR. Acting as a Soviet cultural policy over the decades, Socialist Realism underwent complex transformations. From Lenin's initial acknowledgement of the contribution of capitalist scientific, technological and cultural advancements to the formulation of socialist society,⁴²³ Socialist Realism under Lunacharski's evolved towards the gradual exclusion of modernist paradigms in favour of Renaissance-inspired classicism. From the initial, vanguard role of art in the revolutionary development of society through idealised, symbolic and archetypal imagery,⁴²⁴ Socialist Realism's progressive reach and stylistic range were gradually

⁴²³ Discussed by Susan Reid, 'The "art of memory": retrospectivism in Soviet painting of the Brezhnev era', in *Art of the Soviets. Painting, Sculpture and Architecture in a One-party State, 1917-1992*, ed. by Matthew Cullerne Bown and Brandon Taylor (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), p. 161.

⁴²⁴ Cooke, 'Socialist Realist architecture: theory and practice', p. 97.

constricted and calcified in the late 1940s through the Zhdanov doctrine.⁴²⁵ Nevertheless, even during the height of late Stalinist academism, significant Socialist Realist art continued to be produced through a variety of mechanisms (Fig. 13), from the ironic parody of Sots-Art⁴²⁶ to a surplus of meaning spilling over the confines of official ideology,⁴²⁷ or authority-eroding ritualised practices.⁴²⁸

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Fig. 13. Left: *Downed* (Aleksandr Deyneka; 1943). Right: *Waiting* (Yuri Pimenov; 1959).

Verdery sees in the individual and institutional competition for professional authority a normalisation, but also a slow erosion of Marxism-Leninism in favour of local ideological undercurrents.⁴²⁹ I would add that this same contention, staged within the resource redistribution framework of socialism, has also affected the gradual crystallisation of Socialist Realism, with censorship and ideological policing enacted within cultural milieus *in the name*, but *not necessarily at the behest*, of the Party. Moreover, ideologically-conformant praxis could be wielded towards the manipulation of taste among political and institutional decision-makers, thus

⁴²⁵ Aleksandr Borofski, 'Non-conformist art in Leningrad', *Art of the Soviets. Painting, Sculpture and Architecture in a One-party State, 1917-1992*, ed. by Matthew Cullerne Bown and Brandon Taylor (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), p. 196.

⁴²⁶ Borofski, 'Non-conformist art in Leningrad', p. 199.

⁴²⁷ Reid, 'The "art of memory": retrospectivism in Soviet painting of the Brezhnev era', pp. 170-71.

⁴²⁸ Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More*, p. 283.

⁴²⁹ Verdery, *National Ideology Under Socialism*, p. 315.

introducing alternative interpretations of Socialist Realism's ideological core. The shifts between the states of tension discussed above was also enacted through discoursing on one's discipline, especially through critique. As Bown also points out, institutional activity (especially as an Academy critic) had greater impact on the rigidity and repressiveness of Soviet culture after the 1940s than individual artistic practice,⁴³⁰ while Taylor notes the ascension to almost official prominence of the Association of Artists of Revolutionary Russia (later AKhRR)⁴³¹ through the pursuit of agendas congruent with, but not necessarily imposed, by Party ideology.⁴³² Likewise, the revolutionary goal of societal reformation through the built environment was fiercely disputed between architecture groups (OSA, AsNovA and VOPrA)⁴³³ with markedly different conceptual and formal directions stemming from the same ideological rhetoric.⁴³⁴ While creative contention between art groups was tolerated – and often encouraged – by the political centre, art from the non-Russian republics often co-opted Socialist

⁴³⁰ Matthew Cullerne Bown, 'Aleksandr Gerasimov', in *Art of the Soviets. Painting, Sculpture and Architecture in a One-party State, 1917-1992*, ed. by Matthew Cullerne Bown and Brandon Taylor (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), pp. 135-37.

⁴³¹ Founded in 1922, The Association of Artists of Revolutionary Russia (AKhRR) was the most productive and diverse artistic organisation on the scene of Soviet culture until 1932. Its members played a crucial role in the conceptual and stylistic formulation of Socialist Realism, with the AKhRR eventually rising to near-official standing as a state-approved cultural producer.

⁴³² Brandon Taylor, 'On AKhRR', in *Art of the Soviets. Painting, Sculpture and Architecture in a One-party State, 1917-1992*, ed. by Matthew Cullerne Bown and Brandon Taylor (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), pp. 51-67.

⁴³³ OSA (Organisation of Contemporary Architects) was a 1920s Constructivist architecture group (founded by Moisei Ginzburg, among others) promoting a generally modern approach to socialist architecture. AsNovA (Association of New Architects) represented the rationalist branch of 1920s and 1930s Soviet architecture, based on the psychology of perception. AsNOVA members included Nikolai Ladovsky, El Lissitzky, and Konstantin Melnikov. VOPrA was founded in 1929 by Alabyan and Mordvinov (among others) as a militantly proletarian architecture group, whose manifesto rejected all avant-garde iterations of socialist architecture, prefiguring the crystallisation of Socialist Realism in a neo-classical paradigm as a repressive cultural mechanism.

⁴³⁴ Cooke, 'Socialist Realist architecture: theory and practice', p. 93.

Realist rhetoric into legitimising ideologically problematic art.⁴³⁵ This rhetorical duplicity and discursive performativity was, I would argue, a key element in the transference of Socialist Realism beyond Russian borders, helping shape a variety of local responses to the challenges of 'national form, socialist content'.

Several of the mechanisms of Socialist Realism as a cultural policy have significant bearing on the articulation of Socialist Realist architecture. The relationship between the Soviet state and culture was predicated on the latter's ability to maintain and legitimise the status-quo by, in Katerina Clark's words, merging two orders of reality – the glorious future heralded by the guiding consciousness of the Party, and the daily struggle of communist life⁴³⁶ – via mythologisation. For Wolfgang Holz, Socialist Realism was 'a complex allegorical device' enabling the creation (through sensory, rather than cognitive strategies) of a unified ideological and psychological space of identification between state and art, forging a 'cultural and political identity in which the nation collectively could believe'.⁴³⁷ Therefore, the shifting architecture of this

⁴³⁵ Matthew Cullerne Bown, 'Painting in the non-Russian republics', in *Art of the Soviets. Painting, Sculpture and Architecture in a One-party State, 1917-1992*, ed. by Matthew Cullerne Bown and Brandon Taylor (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), p. 144.

⁴³⁶ Based on Katerina Clark's assessment that this mechanism legitimised the Party's paradoxical relationship with its own vanguardism, Toby Clark argues that 'instead of socialism arising out of the achievement of political power by a Party representing a large proletarian majority in a country already thoroughly industrialised, the Communist Party [...] was attempting to create by force of will the organisation, the industry and the proletariat which should, in theory, have preceded it'.

Toby Clark, 'The "new man's" body: a motif in early Soviet culture', in *Art of the Soviets. Painting, Sculpture and Architecture in a One-party State, 1917-1992*, ed. by Matthew Cullerne Bown and Brandon Taylor (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), pp. 44-45.

Also see Katerina Clark, *The Soviet Novel. History as Ritual*, 3rd edn (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000).
⁴³⁷ Wolfgang Holz, 'Allegory and iconography in Socialist Realist painting', in *Art of the Soviets. Painting, Sculpture and Architecture in a One-party State, 1917-1992*, ed. by Matthew Cullerne Bown and Brandon Taylor (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), pp. 73-79.

'world of myth according to a state plan'⁴³⁸ had to perform as propaganda machine for the restructuring of society, as epitomised by Tatlin's Monument to the Third International (Fig. 14), synthesising radical aesthetics and revolutionary momentum in a truly performative building.⁴³⁹

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Fig. 14. Monument to the Third International (Vladimir Tatlin; 1919-1920). It also had to provide an immersive environment for the shaping of collective consciousness based on the shifting construct of 'the new man', whose physical,

⁴³⁸ Aleksandr Kamenski, 'Art in the twilight of totalitarianism', in *Art of the Soviets. Painting, Sculpture and Architecture in a One-party State, 1917-1992*, ed. by Matthew Cullerne Bown and Brandon Taylor (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), p. 155.

⁴³⁹ Christina Lodder, 'Lenin's Plan for Monumental Propaganda', in *Art of the Soviets. Painting, Sculpture and Architecture in a One-party State, 1917-1992*, ed. by Matthew Cullerne Bown and Brandon Taylor (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), pp. 29-30.

psychological and social needs were the exclusive remit of political knowledge. Toby Clark notes that the political-driven variation of this construct can be linked to transitions between Socialist Realism's many artistic incarnations. From the engaging dynamism of constructivist design to the sensory-rich, but cognitively simplistic neo-classical forms addressing the great Russian post-revolutionary fatigue through a built environment inviting contemplative awe, rather than active participation, Socialist Realism has nevertheless shared concepts and practices with Western architectural paradigms. Despite its rootedness in Russian culture and (uncelebrated) traditional modes of urban and rural habitation, Socialist Realist architecture has converged with Modernism, writes Zahariade, on the construct of *homme-type* as the building block of a new society, on collectivist modes of habitation and architectural practice, and even on models of urban development⁴⁴⁰ – aspects discussed further in Chapter 6 of this thesis.

In Romania, the advent of Socialist Realism coincided with the creation of the Academy of Arts in 1947 and Zhdanov's rigid decrees, issued between 1946 and 1948, and the theoretical presence of architects like Mordvinov, Shchusev and Alabyan in *Arhitectura* magazine and as state consultants for architecture, responsible for overseeing the socialist reconfiguration of the architecture system. This would suggest that the most rigid configuration of the discourse was imported (Fig. 15), also coinciding with

⁴⁴⁰ Ana Maria Zahariade, *Arhitectura în proiectul comunist. România 1944-1989* [Architecture in the communist project. Romania 1944-1989], trans. by Ana Maria Zahariade with Diana Lupu, ed. by Alistair Ian Blyth, and Eugenia Petre (Bucharest: Simetria, 2001), pp. 96-109.

ferocious local power struggles⁴⁴¹ and the terror of bloody purges sweeping through all social strata opposed to the new regime. The next section examines the introduction of Socialist Realism to Romanian architecture by unpacking *Arhitectura's* pedagogical portrayal of the discourse, and the responses of its professional audience.

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Fig. 15. A radiant vision of the Socialist Realist future and its structuring effects on the urban fabric. Palace of the Soviets competition entry (Boris Iofan; 1931-1933).

⁴⁴¹ These struggles took place between the Party's Muscovite faction, led by Ana Pauker, and the so-called prison faction (comprising members of the Romanian Workers' Party who had been imprisoned during the Party's period of illegality) led by Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej.

4.3. Socialist Realist *Arhitectura*: pedagogical tool or transfiguring lens

This section examines the intensive promotion of Socialist Realism in early socialist *Arhitectura*, designed to maximise the professional assimilation of and adherence to a newly introduced architectural paradigm. When *Arhitectura* magazine resumed publication in 1950, two years after the official instatement of communism through the 1948 constitution, Socialist Realism had already been introduced as the unofficial ideological direction of Romanian culture.⁴⁴² Adding to the anti-socialist, Russophobic cultural mentality explored in section 4.1. of this chapter, the architectural milieu was ambivalent towards the new discourse. With political censorship limiting debate, scant directives on the official direction of praxis, and the challenges of an ailing post-war economy focused on reconstruction and industrial development, architects hoped to rekindle Modernism. According to Zahariade, a significant number of younger architects were left-leaning, and eager to partake in a socially-oriented, nationalised practice; however, most equated progressive architecture with Modernist paradigms,

⁴⁴² Åman, Tarkhanov and Kavtaradze emphasise the far stricter introduction of Socialist Realism to USSR satellite states as an instrument of Sovietisation lacking the flexibility of the discourse in Russia. Although my own research produced only one oblique reference to Socialist Realism dating from the 1952 constitution, Romanian researchers are generally in agreement about the wide-spread but unlegislated introduction of Socialist Realism as country-wide cultural policy soon after the change in regime. Zahariade dates this as around the late 1940s, with the new method of cultural production introduced through Romania's first socialist constitution (1948).

Anders Åman, *Architecture and Ideology in Eastern Europe During the Stalin Era. An Aspect of Cold War History* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), pp. 53-57.

Sergei Kavtaradze, with Alexei Tarkhanov and Mikhail Ankist, *Stalinist Architecture* (Lawrence King Publishing, 1992), p. 54.

Ana Maria Zahariade et al., *Teme ale arhitecturii din România în secolul XX* [Themes of 20th century Romanian architecture] (Bucharest: Editura Institutului Cultural Român, 2003), p. 21.

Constituția Republicii Populare Române [The Constitution of the Popular Republic of Romania], Monitorul Oficial 1 (27 September 1952) <<http://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliuDocument/14933>> [accessed 12 June 2018] Chapter 2, Article 17, subsection j) stipulate that the Romanian state 'ensures the development of the culture of the Romanian people and of national minorities, socialist in content, national in form'.

and were disillusioned by the regime's preference for neo-classical modes of representation.⁴⁴³ Consequently, 1950-1954 *Arhitectura* had, alongside its functions as official propaganda channel, medium for architectural information, and quasi-critical professional forum, a distinct pedagogical dimension, designed to shift the ideological, theoretical, and formal coordinates of praxis onto Socialist Realism (Fig. 16).



Fig. 16. *Arhitectura* over the years: from left to right, issues 1 (1906), 1 (1935), 1 (1950). The magazine's cover is generally indicative of the overall programmatic direction pursued by the editors: from heritage-reverent traditionalism at the beginning of the century, to streamlined modernism during the interbellum, and the tentative formulation of scientific-minded socialist architecture on the basis of tradition.

During the first five years of post-war publication, approximately 28% of *Arhitectura's* content was devoted to Socialist Realism.⁴⁴⁴ As introduced by I. Rudnev, one of the one of the magazine's Russian contributors:

*[...] the structures of future monumental buildings arise in different parts of Moscow, and, way up in the night sky, giant cranes shine like fairy-tale constellations over construction sites, framed by rows of electric light bulbs.*⁴⁴⁵

⁴⁴³ Zahariade, *Arhitectura în proiectul comunist*, p. 30.

⁴⁴⁴ *Arhitectura* published 157 articles between 1950 and 1952 (excluding purely propagandistic articles, bibliographies, news, etc.); 45 focused on Socialist Realism in either theory or practice, abroad or in Romania.

⁴⁴⁵ I. Rudnev, 'Succesele arhitecturii sovietice' [The successes of Soviet architecture], *Arhitectura R.P.R.* 2-3 (1950), pp. 67-68.

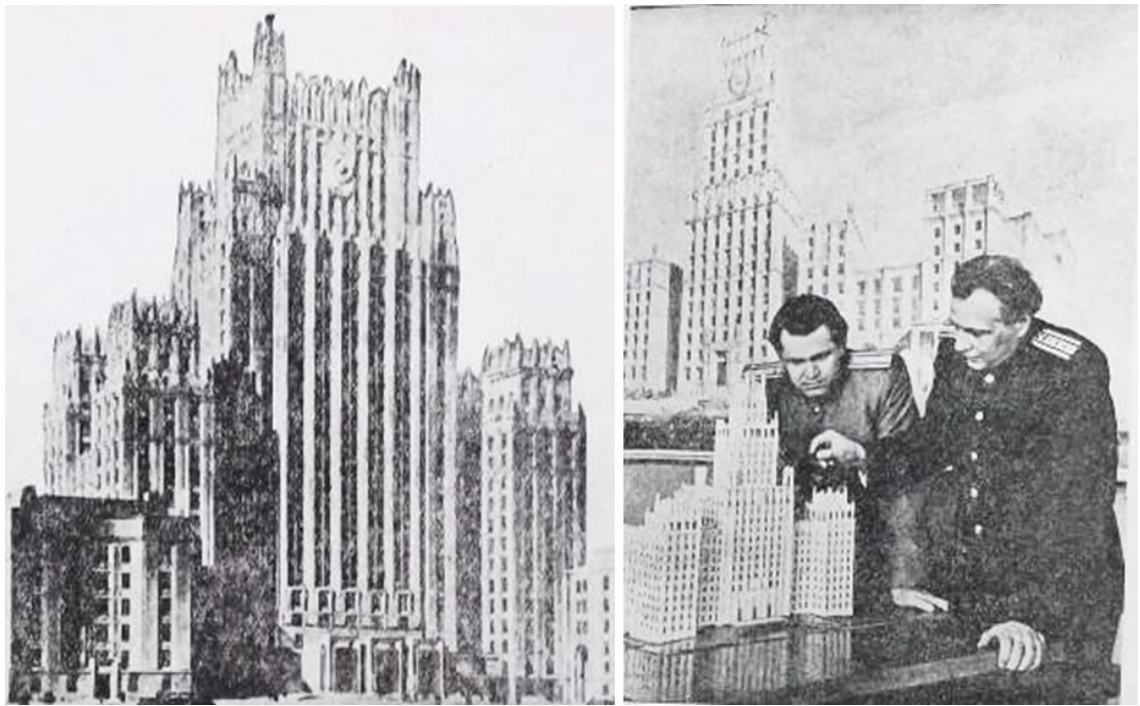


Fig. 17. Models of practice to follow: the Socialist Realism of Moscow's high-rise developments, as illustrated in *Arhitectura*.

The quote above captures the almost mythical dimension of the Socialist Realism portrayed in *Arhitectura* (Fig. 17): awash in a profusion of light conveying order, truth, and clarity, it epitomised ownership of space through the transformative action of construction, and mastery of nature at the hands of man. From the gilded spires of high-rise buildings to the shimmering, multi-coloured depths of the Moscow metropolitan, this iconographic environment was the total landscape of Soviet architecture emerging from *Arhitectura*. Both Soviet architecture model and the method underpinning it were intensively promoted in a bid to ensure professional adherence to Socialist Realism by contextualising political rhetoric through the medium of specialist publications. Articles ran the gamut from ideologically effervescent to aridly technical, including a few academic efforts to acquaint readers with the method's theoretical core. But it was quotes like Rudnev's which best

conveyed the incongruities of a strategy with destabilising effects on the introduction of Socialist Realism to Romanian architecture. The main coordinates of this strategy were the vilification (and subsequent banning) of all capitalist or bourgeois architectural paradigms encompassed within the field of pre-war Romanian architecture; the portrayal of Socialist Realism as the inevitable historical culmination of the world's most progressive architecture moments, linked through a distorted genealogy; and the disconnect between the nebulous conceptual core of the method and its application, over-reliant on examples from Muscovite practice.

Despite variations in theme and quality, few academic texts explored the conceptual problematic of Socialist Realism without illustrating the argument with architectural examples.⁴⁴⁶ Articles taught by precedent, associating theoretical principle and architectural embodiment for an easier decryption of political directive and ideological jargon. However, 40% of the articles narrowly equated Socialist Realism with a handful of Moscow projects (the metropolitan, high-rise buildings and Lomonosov University)⁴⁴⁷ effectively overpowering the campaign's didactic dimension. Representing a narrow segment of actual Soviet construction, the selection read as a

⁴⁴⁶ Nicolae Bădescu, 'Împotriva cosmopolitismului și arhitecturii burgheze imperialiste' [Against cosmopolitanism and imperialist bourgeois architecture], *Arhitectura R.P.R.* 1 (1950), pp. 5-17, an essay on the deficiencies of Western architecture movements, followed by an ideological re-education strategy aimed at architects trained before WWII.

'Arhitectura' [Architecture], *Arhitectura R.P.R.* 9 (1951), pp. 1-4 - the entry on Architecture from the Soviet Encyclopaedia, vol. III, 1950. An article for general audiences with a brief summary of Socialist Realist principles, such as the representation of Soviet reality in its revolutionary becoming.

'Conținut de idei și măestrie în creația arhitectului' [Content of ideas and mastery in the architect's creation], *Arhitectura R.P.R.* 6-7 (1952), pp. 36-41 – anonymous article translated from *Arkhitektura SSSR*, 3 (1952). This is perhaps the clearest, lengthiest theoretical text affording some insight into Socialist Realism.

⁴⁴⁷ 18 out of 45 articles (including reviews) analysed these three developments.

demonstration of the transformative power, range and ambition towards totality of the socialist project.⁴⁴⁸

In addition to contemporary Soviet architecture and its nationalised infrastructure, *Arhitectura's* presentation of the legitimising historical lineage of Socialist Realism also relied heavily on Soviet architecture and Russian architectural precedents. Nevertheless, the authorship of published articles was overwhelmingly Romanian, at 89%,⁴⁴⁹ with the handful of practitioner-theorists writing articles, essays and reviews based on the same Soviet sources, and curating magazine content for extended periods.⁴⁵⁰ Even if *Arhitectura's* overview of Socialist Realist architecture was unitary, it remained superficial, especially with regard to the much-needed development of design strategies applicable in local practice. At its most explicit, as summarised by architect Horia Maicu,⁴⁵¹ Socialist architecture would satisfy the material and spiritual needs of the people, express the serene force, grandiose perspectives and humanistic ideas of Soviet society, positively influence the mentality of the masses, and depict an imminent, radiant future. Compositions should visually convey vigorous, dynamic progress, and be placed at the intersection of major urban axes, or on monumental

⁴⁴⁸ 'The Soviet architect is, above all, the constructor of a city, of a cohesive whole, whose evolution is subordinate, for the first time in history, to a socialist development plan.' Rudnev, 'Succesele arhitecturii sovietice', p. 61.

⁴⁴⁹ Only five Russian authors contributed articles to *Arhitectura*, making up 11% of the magazine's content on Socialist Realism.

⁴⁵⁰ *Arhitectura's* main reviewers were H. Marcus (1950-51) and A. Moiescu (1952). Horia Maicu was the most prolific author among practitioners (four articles), rivaled only by L. Adler and Z. Solomon (five articles on Soviet industrial architecture). Other recurring authorial voices included architects Gustav Gusti, Pompiliu Macovei, and Gheorghe Curinschi.

⁴⁵¹ Project leader for Romania's iconic Socialist Realist building, Casa Scânteii – a gargantuan typographic institute built in Bucharest between 1951-1955.

river embankments. Detailing should be masterfully executed, combining architecture, sculpture, painting into themes reflecting proletarian life.⁴⁵²

In the context of *Arhitectura's* ample promotion of flagship Muscovite architecture projects, the theoretical guidelines provided by Soviet theorists had a constraining effect on local practice. Catherine Cooke argues that the permissive dimension of Socialist Realism, often discredited through reduction to 'Stalinist architecture', is coded through concepts like *originality*, *radiance* and *optimism*,⁴⁵³ also present in the theoretical discussion of Socialist Realism in *Arhitectura*.⁴⁵⁴ The 'deep content of ideas' referred to the encoding of historical and cultural events relevant to the masses, merging architecture and figurative arts into mythologised built environments fostering psychological attachment to the regime. For Cooke, *originality* entailed innovation, contextuality, and distinctiveness – critical assimilation of progressive instances of European and local architecture, re-structured around socialist content into original images (*obrazy*), whose clarity of form and meaning blended cultural heritage and socialist order.⁴⁵⁵

⁴⁵² Horia Maicu, 'Arhitectura sovietică. Clădirile înalte din Moscova' [Soviet architecture. The high-rise buildings of Moscow], *Arhitectura R.P.R.* 10-11 (1951), p. 12.

⁴⁵³ Catherine Cooke, 'Beauty as a Route to "the Radiant Future": Responses of Soviet Architecture', *Journal of Design History*, vol. 10, 2 (1997), pp. 137-60.

⁴⁵⁴ And perfectly in line with key texts from the latter stages of Socialist Realism, like Zhdanov's 1934 speech at the First All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers.

⁴⁵⁵ A vibrant layer of mural decoration (painting, mosaics, reliefs), lost to time, contributed to the modest, but lively and distinctive *obrazy* of *civartals*. Distinctiveness and innovation resided in the use of space, scale and decoration of mass-built Socialist architecture, rather than the iconic architecture pioneering Socialist Realism abroad. In this respect, the transfer of Socialist Realism to Eastern-European architecture through the stricter model of official, grand-scale architecture hindered the method's potential adaptability.

Cooke, 'Beauty as a Route to "the Radiant Future"', pp. 143-45.

In Cooke's decryption, this radiant built environment 'was both the ideological activator and the ultimate reward'⁴⁵⁶ – a global image of the future society sublime and its glorified construction site. *Radiance* combined a totality of vision, manifest in urban planning; a realistic, humanist dimension, mediating between the necessities of state propaganda and addressing social priorities; a mentality-altering interface of the built environment, based on emotional resonance (Fig. 18).

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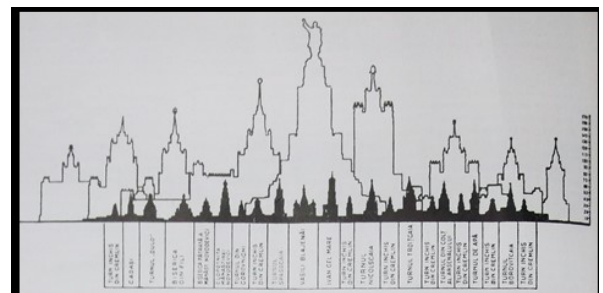


Fig. 18. Elements of Socialist Realist radiance lost in translation: a strong classical tradition, the church spire punctuated silhouette of Russian cities, and the narrative vibrancy of façade decoration. Left: Hotel Ukraina (Arkady Mordvinov and Vyacheslav Oltarzhevsky; Moscow; 1948-1950); top right: mosaic mural depicting work and leisure (Jeziorki, Mostowa street); bottom right: graphic representation for the urban precedent of Moscow's high-rise developments – *Arhitectura* 3 (1955), p.36.

In *Arhitectura*, the often-invoked radiance of socialist architecture was reduced to natural lighting, and the ease of perception deriving from classical, symmetric composition. Demoted to empty formulae, radiance and its conceptual substrata

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 147.

slipped into disregard as meaningless ideological jargon.⁴⁵⁷ Romanian Socialist Realism fell short of the totality of vision ensconced in Socialist Realist urban planning, despite the positive reception of small-scale housing developments. Post-war construction focused on heavy industry and a handful of iconic, regime-legitimising architectural programmes, rather than the socialist (re)development of cities.⁴⁵⁸ Iconic buildings erected in Bucharest, a few socio-cultural, infrastructure, health and sports programs designed in a classicised modernism – these were the isolated foci of a future urban hierarchy.⁴⁵⁹ More extensively built, *cvartals* slotted easily into the built context of Romanian cities, bearing echoes of the Russian *usadba*, Clarence Perry's neighbourhood unit, and local, *intra-muros* interpretations of the garden-city model. *Optimism* distinguished Socialist Realism from bourgeois architecture⁴⁶⁰ through figurative decoration, transforming housing with almost magical radiance⁴⁶¹ via lively depictions of the joyful socialist quotidian. But the examples featured in *Arhitectura* focused on the excessive decorativism and monumentality of Moscow's 'crystal

⁴⁵⁷ In Kurskaya station, the halls had a 'monumental, radiant character progressing in crescendo [...] flooded by light [...] of a simple, sober, majestic beauty'.

Boris Rubanenko, 'Noi succese ale arhitecturii sovietice' [New successes of Soviet architecture], *Arhitectura R.P.R.* 1 (1950), p. 25.

⁴⁵⁸ According to professor Nicolae Lascu (quoted in Ioan, *Arhitectura (supra)realismului socialist*, p. 201-02), socialist development plans for most Romanian cities, even if constantly invoked, were only drawn up in the 1960s. In Bucharest, the go-to development plan and legislation predated WWII. This is also confirmed in Constantin Jugurică, *Memoria carnetelor cu însemnări - Bucureștiul cutremurat 1977-1989* [The memory of jotting pads – Bucharest under the quake 1977-1989] (Bucharest: Arhilibra, 2012), pp. 17-18.

⁴⁵⁹ In Bucharest, some of the more notable Socialist Realist projects included Horia Maicu's Casa Scânteii, Octav Doicescu's Opera and Ballet Theatre, Mircea Alifanti's Băneasa airport, and Casa Radiofoniei, a collaboration between Mircea Alifanti and Tiberiu Ricci.

⁴⁶⁰ Described in *Arhitectura's* as 'sharp, harsh, technical [...] like industrial drawing', in contrast with the warmth and humanity suffusing the aesthetic of Socialist Realist architecture.

Horia Maicu, 'Despre proiectarea Casei Scânteii' [On the design of Casa Scânteii], *Arhitectura R.P.R.* 1 (1951), pp. 6-7.

⁴⁶¹ Cooke, 'Beauty as a Route to "the Radiant Future"', p.152.

palaces, bathed by sunlight deep underground'.⁴⁶² Optimism via decorative exuberance bypassed Romanian socialist architecture (Fig. 19), even for unique programs like Casa Scântei.



Fig. 19. Romanian Socialist Realism during the early 1950s: 1. The National Opera and Ballet Theatre (arch. Octav Doicescu; Bucharest; 1953); 2. Dinamo Club House (arch. H. Stern, I. Medilanschi, C. Lăzărescu, S. Sebastian, S. Daniel; Bucharest; 1951-1952,); 3. Open air Theatre in Bălcescu Park (arch. P. E. Miclescu, D. V. Marinescu; Bucharest); 4. Project entry for an urban systematisation competition – Casa Centrală a Armatei (arch. I. Giurea, S. Niculescu, M. Nicolau; Bucharest; 1954); 5. Leisure centre (arch. Richard Bordenache; Snagov; 1951-1952); 6. Workers' housing (Galați).

Architects preferred subtle colour palettes – a possible nod to Modernism or the chromatic restraint of Classicism. A depleted post-war economy further reduced

⁴⁶² A. Cuprin, quoted in Anton Moisescu, 'Metropolitanul Moscovei' [Moscow's Metropolitan], *Arhitectura R.P.R* 12 (1952), p. 37.

detailed, polychromic decoration in construction, despite the occasional incentives towards a healthy, optimistic built environment.⁴⁶³

Optimism also resided in the literal dynamism of soaring edifices, inspired by gilded church spires and a revolutionary fixation with literally-expressed motion⁴⁶⁴ to create a symmetrical, staccato tapering of buildings. In Romania, the heroic momentum of a (geographically distant) people's revolution had less symbolic impact, while the requirement of symmetrical verticality struggled to take hold in an architecture culture equally inclined to asymmetrical compositional movement.⁴⁶⁵ Finally, Cooke credits Russia's classical heritage for the method's humanism (flexibility, appropriateness of scale, and tectonic logic), drawing on local cultural context and tradition for 'new languages and new common myths',⁴⁶⁶ reductively transmitted as the 'national form for a socialist content' dictum.⁴⁶⁷ However, Romanian architecture of local derivation (Fig. 20), like Henriette Delavrancea's Hunedoara sanatorium, were critiqued as historicist, provincial and 'feudally mystical'.⁴⁶⁸ Excessive structural clarity and less

⁴⁶³ H. Marcus, 'Arhitectură și Construcție, N-rele 4-11, 1950' [Architecture and Construction, No. 4-11, 1950], *Arhitectura R.P.R.* 3 (1951), pp. 29-30. This article provides summaries for issues 4-11 of the Russian specialist magazine *Arkhitectura I Stroitelstvo* (1950), which also supplied the model template for the socialist re-imagining of *Arhitectura*.

⁴⁶⁴ Augustin Ioan, *Arhitectura (supra)realismului socialist*, p. 77.

⁴⁶⁵ Years later, Mihail Caffé would deplore the negative effect of this drive towards revolutionary monumentality on local architecture: to perpetuate the false, grandiose character of this age, 'the simple, modest, non-ostentatious life of the socialist man' is ignored, to the detriment of his actual needs and well-being.

Mihail Caffé, 'Despre câteva probleme actuale ale arhitecturii' [On a few current problems in architecture] *Arhitectura R.P.R.* 9 (1957), p. 53.

⁴⁶⁶ Cooke, 'Beauty as a Route to "the Radiant Future"', p. 138.

⁴⁶⁷ *Arhitectura* occasionally featured Soviet architecture from the 1930s and 1940s: smaller-scale, versatile buildings designed by the first two generations of the method's enthusiasts (Zholtovsky, Fomin, Melnikov, Shchusev), and scale-appropriate regional architecture with distinctively traditional features (Zabolotny's Supreme Soviet of the Ukraine, Tamanyan's Armenian Government House, Chiheizde's Chiatura Theatre – Georgia).

⁴⁶⁸ Pompiliu Macovei, 'Probleme de creație în arhitectura R.P.R.' [Creative problems in R.P.R. architecture] *Arhitectura R.P.R.* 9-10 (1952), p. 51.

referential, but more economical types of architectural expression – Mihail and Tiberiu

Ricci's Casa Radiofoniei also attracted critique for 'barren, hostile' imagery.⁴⁶⁹

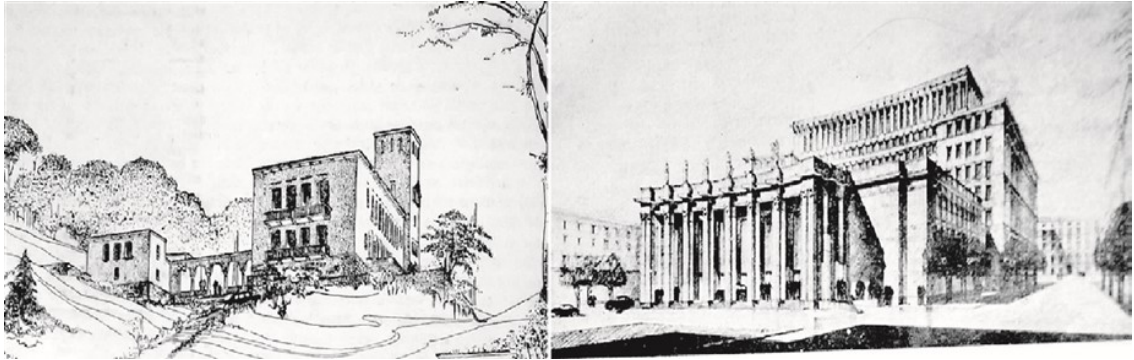


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Fig. 20. Inappropriate realism: local spatial precedent (left: Hundeoara Sanatorium, arch. Henriette Delavrancea, 1951-1953) and structural honesty (right: Palatul Radiodifuziunii și Televiziunii, arch. Tiberiu Ricci, Mihail Ricci, L. Garcia 1949-1960). Initially rejected on the grounds of cosmopolitanism, the latter was eventually revisited and built in the severe classicist-modernist aesthetic proposed by the design team (which bears a striking resemblance to Romania's 1939 pavilion for the New York exhibition).

⁴⁶⁹ Marcel Locar, 'Pe drumul unei noi arhitecturi în R.P.R.' [Towards a new architecture in the R.P.R.] *Arhitectura R.P.R.* 1-2 (1952), p. 6.

4.4. Socialist Realism – expansion through practice

The following sections investigate the tensions between pre-war patterns and dynamics of the architecture field and Socialist Realism, shaping a space for productive political contention based on discipline-specific knowledge, conducive to the alteration of the Socialist Realist canon through new conceptual and formal paradigms. Case studies from *Arhitectura* map the coordinates of this space through three facets of praxis: theoretical debate, the adjustment of Socialist Realism's theoretical parameters through design practices, and project critiques. The first case study sets out an interrogation of *Arhitectura's* socialist transfiguration, while the second unpacks the dialogue between Romanian and Russian theorists applied in the design of Romania's iconic Socialist Realist building, Casa Scânteii. The effect of scientific innovation on pushing the boundaries of architectural discourse is discussed in the third case study, with the fourth affording a glimpse into the profession's own assessment and multi-voiced performance of Socialist Realist canon. These aspects of early socialist Romanian architecture also serve as cross-sections through *Arhitectura* as a community of professional thought and practice, capturing the profession's multi-voiced responses to the dual professional challenge of nationalised praxis and a markedly different architectural direction.

4.4.1. *Arhitectura* 1950. Quo vadis?

Arhitectura 2-3 (1950) features a harsh critique of its first issue by architect Bleyer, highlighting a significant number of drawbacks, like conceptual mismatches between the magazine's scientific content and its traditional presentation, inconsistent with the realist, progressive nature of Romania's new architecture.⁴⁷⁰ Although the late 1940s and early 1950s are associated, in the historiography of Romanian communism and that of its architecture, with the often violently-coercive mode of governance necessitated by the change in regime, instances of questioning and criticism, such as Bleyer's letter, were not uncommon. At this point in time, the Romanian socialist regime had yet to secure hegemony – defined, in the Gramscian sense, as the encoding of social assent into the patterns of coercion upon which governance is dependent. For Robert Bocock, all forms of 'actually existing socialism' lack the very bases of hegemony – widespread understanding and acceptance of the core ideology of socialism (Marxism-Leninism), and free, active participation in the societal structuring deriving from it.⁴⁷¹ In the specific case of Romanian socialism, Katherine Verdery argues that national identity was the only ideological process with hegemonic potential, able to overcome the atomisation of society and diffuse social divisions. Nevertheless, Verdery is also in agreement with Bocock over the unattainability of

⁴⁷⁰ 'Poșta redacției' [Letters to the editors], *Arhitectura R.P.R.* 2-3 (1950), pp. 117-18.

The only letter published is this first instalment of 'Poșta redacției' is authored by Bleyer, and is titled 'Observații la apariția primului număr al revistei "Arhitectura"' [Observations on the publication of the first issue of 'Arhitectura']. In the architect's view, the coverage of other SAT (Scientific Association of Technicians) publications presented minimal interest to *Arhitectura's* readership, while single-page summaries in Romanian, Russian and French wasted valuable content space, detracting from the magazine's overall quality.

⁴⁷¹ Robert Bocock, *Hegemony* (London: Tavistock Publications Limited, 1986), p. 120.

hegemonic status by socialist regimes: since the silencing of dissent through coercion does not imply assent, but simply the social subjects' inability to construct and implement an alternative social order, legitimacy is all socialist systems can aspire to.⁴⁷²

Returning to Bleyer, however, and the significance of *Arhitectura's* first couple of issues under socialism and in the new logic of Socialist Realism, the intent of the letter discussed below can be construed as an overture to the dialogue between the profession and holders of power, through which the conditions of consent to the new architectural status quo can be negotiated.

Although appreciative of the issue's ideological articles,⁴⁷³ Bleyer also remarked on the 'general, non-informative' character of the articles exploring Socialist Realism: the lack of detailed examples and substantial theoretical discourse 'offered nothing new to Romanian architects, nothing we could learn from, although we all ardently desire to learn about Soviet architecture'.⁴⁷⁴ This critique affords an interesting glimpse into

⁴⁷² Verdery, *National Ideology Under Socialism*, pp. 10-11.

⁴⁷³ Although Bleyer's first name is not mentioned in *Arhitectura*, my research suggests that the author might be Gheorghe Bleyer (1907-1971), Romanian architect of Jewish heritage born in Timișoara, who studied architecture in Stuttgart and Zürich due to the difficulties encountered by members of the Jewish community in pursuing higher education in interbellum Romania. Although Bleyer identified politically with the socialist left, he was a Bauhaus enthusiast and a proponent of socialist architecture based on modern paradigms, as evidenced by his built output, theoretical work, and teaching activity. Ostracised for association with other 'reactionary' European communist parties, he emigrated to Germany in 1969, settling in Düsseldorf. For more details on Bleyer's life and professional activity, see:

Getta Neumann, *Destine evreiești la Timișoara. Portretul comunității din perioada interbelică până azi* [Jewish destinies in Timișoara. A portrait of the community from the interbellum to the present] (Hasefer, 2014).

Gabriel Szekely, 'Contribuția evreilor la evoluția arhitecturii orașelor Timișoara și Arad 1718–1945' [Jewish contributions to the architectural evolution of Timișoara and Arad]
<http://www.bjt2006.org/GS_Arhitectura3_4813.pdf> [accessed 14 June 2018]

Tiberiu Schatteles, 'Gheorghe Bleyer, arhitect' <http://www.bjt2006.org/TS_Bleyer_Gheorghe_5214.pdf> [accessed 14 June 2018]

⁴⁷⁴ 'Poșta redacției' [Letters to the editors], *Arhitectura R.P.R.* 2-3 (1950), pp. 117-18.

Romanian architects' relationship with a new dominant discourse, set against the backdrop of Romanian architecture's socialist reconfiguration. By engaging with the rhetoric of Marxist-Leninism,⁴⁷⁵ Bleyer exposed areas of uncertainty within architectural praxis in need of resolution: the gap between the ideological foundations of Socialist Realism and its practical, local application; the extent of contextualising freedom this application could explore, illustrated through examples from Czechoslovak and Polish magazines; a lack of clear direction in terms of technical and institutional support.⁴⁷⁶

Through the lens of Crysler's analysis of the architectural microcosms of Western architecture periodicals,⁴⁷⁷ Bleyer questioned the permeability of socialist *Arhitectura* to new discourses. He suggested a nuanced approach to the Soviet architecture model through a variety of local interpretations, but supported the enforcement of discipline-specific boundaries.⁴⁷⁸ The issue of scale is indirectly approached through Bleyer's emphasis on building-focused content versus only a brief mention of E. Cristian's insightful view of urbanism within planned economy,⁴⁷⁹ indicating tensions between architecture's object-focus and the broader socio-economic dimensions of urbanism,

⁴⁷⁵ And the mechanism of critique and self-critique on behalf of *Arhitectura's* readership. 'Poșta redacției', p. 117.

⁴⁷⁶ Amusingly, the architect points out that perhaps a Russian-Romanian vocabulary section, instead of the Romanian-Russian version, would better assist architects studying Soviet books and magazines in order to bridge these gaps. Ibid., p. 118.

⁴⁷⁷ Greig C. Crysler, *Writing Spaces. Discourses of Architecture, Urbanism, and the Built Environment, 1960-2000* (New York: Routledge, 2003), pp. 1-29, 189-204.

⁴⁷⁸ Bleyer also wished to see references to and translations from other engineering publications removed from *Arhitectura*. 'Poșta redacției', p. 117.

⁴⁷⁹ E. Cristian, 'Urbanism și planificare' [Urbanism and planning], *Arhitectura* 1 (1950), pp. 18-20.

requiring connection to a different set of disciplines. Regarding architectural chronology, Bleyer contrasted the progressiveness of modern architecture with the traditional, vernacular past,⁴⁸⁰ signalling perhaps the preference of a significant number of architects to base Romania's socialist architecture on contemporary idioms. Finally, Bleyer's enthusiastic appraisal of ideological articles weighed ironically against his suggestions for future brevity, in favour of additional theoretical unpacking of Socialist Realism through examples of its local application. In the following sections, I discuss ways in which the ideological core and architectural formalisation of Socialist Realism in Romania were transformed through the dialogue between political imperative and professional expertise.

4.4.2 A Romanian Palace of the Soviets

To provide further clarity on local Socialist Realism, *Arhitectura* 1 (1951) published four articles about Bucharest's new typographic institute, Casa Scânteii.⁴⁸¹ As a socialist flagship project, the gargantuan building housed Scînteia⁴⁸² and several state press

⁴⁸⁰ 'Poșta redacției', p. 117.

⁴⁸¹ In translation, The House of the Spark. *Scînteia* (later, *Scânteia*) was Romania's premier communist newspaper and official publication of the Romanian Communist Party's Council of Ministers, named in honour of the original Russian publication *Iskra*.

⁴⁸² The variation in spelling between Casa Scânteii and the name of the newspaper, Scînteia, is due to successive grammatical changes over the graphemes *â* and *î*, which both represent the phoneme *i* (a close central unrounded vowel similar to the last vowel sound in the English word *roses*). I have opted to reproduce the spelling used by *Arhitectura* authors, regardless of observance of the grammatical rules valid at the time of print. In 1954, *î* was generalised as the only grapheme for this particular sound, and the alternative *â* fell into disuse. In 1964 however, *â* was reintroduced – but only for the words *România*, *Român*, and other members of this word family, supposedly in an attempt to underline the Latinate roots of the language and the Romanian people during the increasingly nationalistic stages of the local communist regime.

departments crucial to the production of nation-wide socialist culture through the sheer volume and remarkable subject variety of the printed material. This embodiment of socialist modernisation needed equally iconic headquarters to represent the regime's drive for societal transformation (Fig. 21).



Fig. 21. Casa Scânteii, celebrated on the 100 lei banknote circulated from 1952.

From an architectural standpoint, the design offered an invaluable opportunity to explore, test, and locally configure the discourse of Socialist Realism. After *Arhitectura's* initial promotional campaign of Socialist Realism as method of architectural creation, and its readership's subtle questioning of the lack of clarity surrounding this new paradigm, as well as the circumscribing of praxis to the command economy, the dialogue analysed below represented a crucial next step in the negotiation of hegemony between power and the profession.

Unlike most projects,⁴⁸³ the attention *Arhitectura* lavished on the project indicates Casa Scânteii as a testing ground for local Socialist Realism, and the realignment of inter-

⁴⁸³ Usually presented in one or two articles, unless part of a longer, themed series.

disciplinary collaborations within the socialist institutional framework. In the article 'Despre proiectarea Casei Scânteii', chief architect Horia Maicu unpacked the design's ideological foundations,⁴⁸⁴ laid in collaboration with Soviet consultants, and complemented by engineers Ștefan Bălan, H. Hornstein and A. Stavrescu with a multi-discipline (though exclusively technical) presentation of the building's structural and technical systems.⁴⁸⁵ Horia Maicu belonged to a professional demographic whose genuine ideological conviction or professional opportunism led them to advocate for Socialist Realism during the late 1940s and early 1950s, rising to positions of professional prominence echoing pre-war patterns of professional capital accrual.⁴⁸⁶ As director of the Institute of Construction Design⁴⁸⁷ (1949-1951), member of IMUAU academic staff (1950-1972) and one of *Arhitectura's* most prolific theorists, Maicu's political engagement paid off: between 1958-1969, he served as chief architect of Bucharest, a sought-after professional role of mediation between the interests of the profession and state institutions. Although Maicu was officially credited with the design

⁴⁸⁴ Horia Maicu, 'Despre proiectarea Casei Scânteii' [On the design of Casa Scânteii], *Arhitectura R.P.R.* 1 (1951), pp. 3-13.

⁴⁸⁵ Ștefan Bălan, 'Calculul de rezistență la Casa Scânteii' [Calculating the structure of Casa Scânteii], *Arhitectura R.P.R.* 1 (1951), pp. 14-20.

H. Hornstein, 'Problema instalațiilor la Casa Scânteii' [The problem of plumbing for the Casa Scânteii project], *Arhitectura R.P.R.* 1 (1951), pp. 20-22.

A. Stavrescu, 'Instalațiile electrice de la Casa Scânteii' [The electrical installations of Casa Scânteii], *Arhitectura R.P.R.* 1 (1951), pp. 23-25.

Although quite technical, these articles do allude to the subordination of their corresponding disciplines to architecture in the conception of such an innovative project.

⁴⁸⁶ For a more detailed analysis, see Ioana C. Popovici, 'Architecture competitions – a space for political contention. Socialist Romania, 1950–1956', *Journal of Architecture and Urbanism*, vol. 38, 1 (2014), pp. 24-38.

⁴⁸⁷ In Romanian, Institutul de Proiectare a Construcțiilor (IPC). Founded in 1949, IPC and IPI (Institutul de Proiectări Industriale) were the first two state design institutes in Romania, providing the organisational model for the subsequent multiplication of regional and specialist architecture and construction design institutes.

of Casa Scântei, contemporary scholarship assigns conceptual authorship⁴⁸⁸ to Mircea Alifanti,⁴⁸⁹ whose context-conscious modernist aesthetic became representative of 1960s and 1970s *nationally specific architecture*.⁴⁹⁰

Maicu's writing extolled the importance of Casa Scântei for Romania's socialist development. One of the major objectives constructed during (and developed along with) the first Romanian five-year plan with Soviet financial support and multi-disciplinary consultancy,⁴⁹¹ it was an unprecedentedly complex architectural programme, delivering 3,000,000 newspapers, 100,000 bound books and 160,000 brochures daily.⁴⁹² During the first stages of inception (spring of 1948 – summer of 1949), it had no fixed site but 8-14 plan solutions, further detailed in 30 proposals based on hypothetical sites. Working closely with Party officials, Maicu's 'small research

⁴⁸⁸ According to Ion Mircea Enescu, authorial misattribution was common practice throughout the socialist period, with high-placed members of the profession garnering impressive portfolios as 'project collective leaders' whilst only minimally involved in actual design.

Ion Mircea Enescu, 'Anatomia unor vremuri abominabile' [The anatomy of those abominable times] in *Arhitecți în timpul dictaturii: amintiri* [Architects during the dictatorship: memories], ed. by Viorica Iuga-Curea (Bucharest: Simetria, 2005), p. 44-45.

For further details on the evolution of authorial opportunism in the 1970s and 1980s, see the works of Vladimir Tismăneanu, Lucian Boia or Adrian Cioroianu, cited in the Literature Review of this thesis, and Verdery, *National Ideology Under Socialism*, p. 103.

⁴⁸⁹ This fact is confirmed by Enescu (*Arhitect sub comunism*, p. 43), while Zahariade and Radu Ponta's study of Alifanti's professional career during communism emphasises the architect's central role in the design of multiple projects of great political importance, despite having a tense relationship with the authorities and his peers. His design contributions were often diffused under the labels 'collaborator' or 'project collective member'.

Ana Maria Zahariade and Radu Ponta, 'Professor Alifanti's Notebooks', *studies in History & Theory of Architecture*, 2 (2014), pp. 167-68.

According to Mircea Enescu, Alifanti worked surrounded by examples of modernist logic: sectioned radio lamps and brakes from a Delage automobile.

Enescu, *Arhitect sub comunism*, p. 221.

⁴⁹⁰ Mircea Lupu, *Școli naționale în arhitectură* [National schools of architecture] (Bucharest: Editura Tehnică, 1977), pp. 160-61.

⁴⁹¹ Maicu, 'Despre proiectarea Casei Scântei', p.3.

⁴⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 12.

collective' progressively upgraded the scale and complexity of the programme, as the concept of a national publishing complex became better detailed through the five-year plan.⁴⁹³ In this respect, the project mirrors that of the Palace of the Soviets: an iconic building with no fixed site, developed a-contextually for the purest translation of ideological message into architectural language. As previously mentioned, the architectural formulation of political messages was primarily a place of creative opportunity in Socialist Realism, with the manifold perspectives animating it in the 1920s transgressing into and enriching 1930s practice through competition and cross-pollination between modernist and classicist idioms. During Stalin's political ascension, Socialist Realism became increasingly crystallised,⁴⁹⁴ although pockets of alternative practice flourished across the USSR in a variety of disciplines. Considering its late introduction to Romania, Maicu's team had to navigate the tension between theoretical flexibility and the more authoritative dimension of the discourse promoted in *Arhitectura*,⁴⁹⁵ as well as the dual editorship of local Soviet consultants for architecture (coordinating the restructuring of the architecture system and the implementation of Socialist Realism)⁴⁹⁶ and a specialist Moscow-based committee.

⁴⁹³ Ibid., p. 3.

⁴⁹⁴ Danilo Udovički-Selb, 'Between Modernism and Socialist Realism: Soviet Architectural Culture Under Stalin's Revolution from Above, 1928-1938', *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 4 (2009), pp. 467-95.

⁴⁹⁵ Bakhtin likens authoritative discourse to religious dogma, demanding submissive acknowledgement and application without structural change or contextualisation. Structurally finite, it makes artistic representation impossible without inventive subversion through social and professional practices.

Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*, ed. by Michel Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), pp. 342-44.

⁴⁹⁶ Although the influence of Soviet consultants (such as Ivan Andreevich Zvezdin, possibly the postconstructivist architect who designed School 518 in Balchug, near Moscow) on the early evolution of socialist architecture in Romania remains to be addressed through academic research, the memoirs of architects practising during the Socialist Realist period indicate their assiduous involvement, especially in the development of high-profile projects of political importance. For further details, see:

I would argue that Casa Scânteii served as a similar arena of forging architectural idioms around a politically-driven ideological core, but under the watchful eye of external editors and the established canon of Moscow's high-rise buildings, referenced by Maicu as overarching precedents.⁴⁹⁷ Moreover, the project staged international dialogue between two architecture cultures negotiating Socialist Realism's local application within the 'national in form, socialist in content' paradigm. This hypothesis has thus far received little credit or interest, as Casa Scânteii tends to be dismissed as uncritical application of 'pseudo-classicist, Stalinist formalism' against the backdrop of the violent suppression of local culture precluding all debate, 'carried out with much more severity in Romania than other countries occupied by the Soviets'.⁴⁹⁸ This retrospective dismissal of Stalin-era architecture as valueless, political coercion disconnects the early years of socialist praxis from the timeline of communist Romanian architecture. Nevertheless, this was a period of radical change – the profession's understanding of space-making, architecture's re-calibrated relationship with other built environment disciplines, the shift from a liberal architecture praxis to a nationalised branch of cultural and material production – with consequences beyond the demise of Socialist Realism in the late 1950s. Maicu's article captures the profession's early attempts to negotiate the ideological and applied architectural bases

Paraschiva Iubu, 'O viață, o pasiune' [One life, one passion], in *Arhitecți în timpul dictaturii: amintiri* [Architects during the dictatorship: memories], ed. by Viorica Iuga-Curea (Bucharest: Simetria, 2005), p.152.

Alexandru Panaitescu, *De la Casa Scânteii la Casa Poporului: patru decenii de arhitectură în București 1945-1989* [From Casa Scânteii to the People's House: four decades of architecture in Bucharest] (Bucharest: Simetria, 2012), p. 23-24.

⁴⁹⁷ Maicu, 'Despre proiectarea Casei Scânteii', p. 7.

⁴⁹⁸ Alexandru Panaitescu, *De la Casa Scânteii la Casa Poporului*, pp. 22-23.

of Romania's new, socialist architecture,⁴⁹⁹ testing the flexibility and hard limits of Socialist Realism through ingenious use of Marxist-Leninist rhetoric.

Moreover, the process of design for Casa Scântei entailed, undoubtedly for the first time for such a grand-scale, high-profile project, a series of successive steps for the conception, alteration, and approval of the project, mobilising a variety of professional and political actors: project design teams across built environment disciplines, the design institutes architects on the team were employed in, the State Committee for Construction, Architecture and Systematisation (overseen by the Council of Ministers and Soviet consultants), and their Moscow-based counterparts. During the course of this project, patterns of working, collaborating, negotiation, deferral and contestation were also established – effectively reconfiguring the architecture system through the incorporation, on an unprecedented level, of all mechanisms of praxis within the institutionalised framework of state control. In Althusserian terms, architecture was transfigured, for the first time in Romania, into an effective Ideological State Apparatus – paradoxically, under a systemic logic enabling architecture to rise to its most instrumentally effective in terms of societal restructuring through the shaping of the built environment, while also being apparently stripped of most of its internal autonomy.

As Mariana Celac pertinently notes, during the incipient stages of the communist regime authoritative control was rapidly implemented:

⁴⁹⁹ With the limitations of privileged programmes, such as increased political scrutiny from local and Soviet authorities, and a stricter collaboration with Soviet consultants.

*not only over architects' rights to associate freely or over their professional output, but also over technical language and studio arrangements. Despite the latent and tenacious inertial forces that have always regulated the transformation of architecture, a coercive act – or a series of coercive acts – has imposed such a radical shift in professional mentality that the mutations of the practitioner's genetic code still secrete their effects to this very day, even if the structurally violent regime enthroned at the time [...] has been revoked, through violence still, over ten years ago.*⁵⁰⁰

During the early 1950s, *Arhitectura* called with urgency for concerted efforts to define tangible bases for a socialist architecture practice based on the still unclear ideological principles of an alien discourse. Architects like Horia Maicu, Nicolae Bădescu,⁵⁰¹ and Gustav Gusti assumed this role of mediation. Regardless of their subsequent discrediting as regime mouthpieces,⁵⁰² their politically-centred activity helped shape the dynamics for dialogue between architecture and power in the new socialist paradigm. In this light, Maicu's constant references to the input of the Romanian Communist Party, Russian consultants and Soviet documentation on the design of Casa Scânteii were doubly coded: behind due tribute to their 'lighthouse guidance on the road to Socialist Realism' in matters both theoretical and practical, lurks a *nota bene* to practitioners, signalling the discourse's non-negotiable aspects.

⁵⁰⁰ Mariana Celac, 'Timpul fracturii' [The time of rupture] postface to George Matei Cantacuzino, *Despre o estetică a reconstrucției* [Of an aesthetic of reconstruction] (Bucharest: Paideia, 2010), pp.118-19.

⁵⁰¹ Nicolae Bădescu (author of the introductory theoretical article on Socialist Realism in *Arhitectura*) and Marcel Locar (theorist and member of staff at the University of Architecture) were also part of the Casa Scânteii design team. Both enjoyed high-ranking positions within the State Committee for Construction, Architecture and Systematisation, and were prolific contributors to *Arhitectura* in the 1950s.

⁵⁰² Panaitescu, *De la Casa Scânteii la Casa Poporului* pp. 22-24.

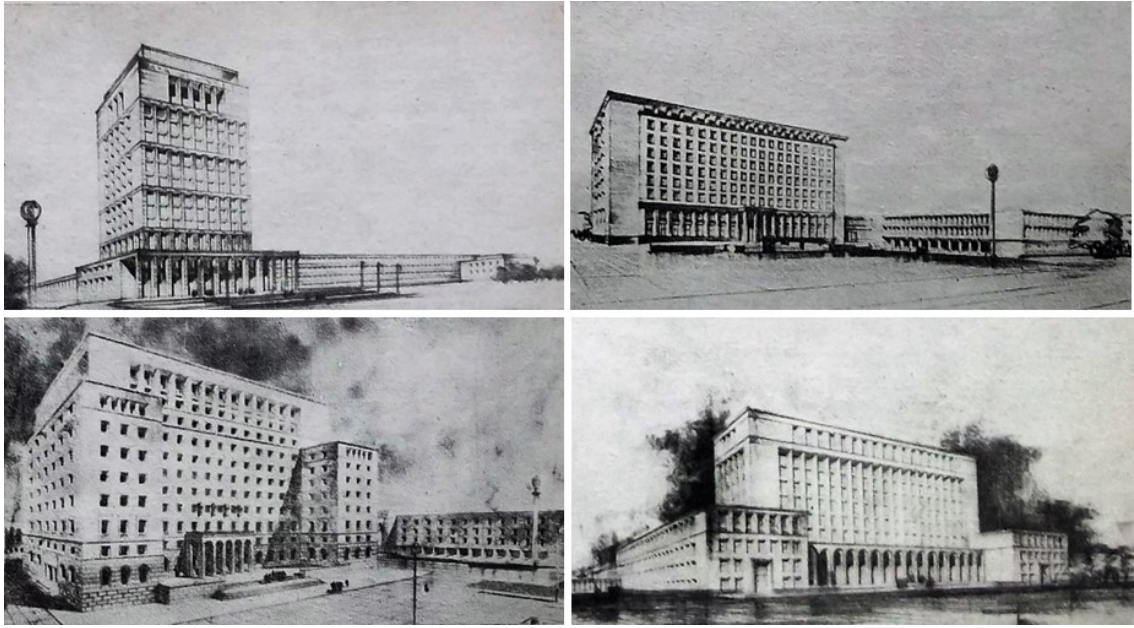


Fig. 22. Negotiating the direction of Socialist Realism: four initial versions of Casa Scântei.

Fig. 22 illustrates four of the eight final versions of Casa Scântei, presented to a specialist Soviet panel featuring Moscow-based architects N. D. Fomin,⁵⁰³ Arkady Mordvinov (the president of the USSR's Academy of architecture), and Simonov (deputy minister for urban construction and Soviet consultant). To paraphrase Maicu, they documented the gradual adoption of Socialist Realist principles through growing understanding of ideological content – an admirable exercise in self-critique *en route* to overcoming decadent bourgeois tendencies.⁵⁰⁴ Their variety, however, suggests the design team's conscious efforts to negotiate a local Socialist Realist aesthetic based on the profession's preferred, pre-war modes of expression. In Simonov's critique,⁵⁰⁵ the four versions represented the barren expression of machine-based constructivism; the

⁵⁰³ It is uncertain whether the name was a coincidence, or the architect was related to the celebrated Russian architect Ivan Aleksandrovich Fomin or his son, I. I. Fomin.

⁵⁰⁴ Maicu's original self-critique.

Maicu, 'Despre proiectarea Casei Scântei', p. 4.

⁵⁰⁵ Illustrated by Maicu with ample direct quotes, presumably in his translation.

oppressive capitalist domination;⁵⁰⁶ the regressive imprint of fascist neo-classicism, devoid of future-bound impetus; and finally, a pleasingly symmetrical, gradually tiered composition of harmonious proportions, unfortunately 'cut off suddenly, its upper volumes resembling a suitcase'.⁵⁰⁷ Functionalism, constructivism, and the pared-down neo-classicism of Carol II's brief totalitarian reign – all major schools of thought and practice in pre-war Romania, explicitly flagged as unacceptable under the ideological premises of Socialist Realism.

Through the juxtaposition of successive project versions and detailed quotes from the Soviet consultants involved in the project, Maicu makes it clear for *Arhitectura's* readership that two fundamentally different premises for the local architectural adaptation of Socialist Realism were in dispute. By attempting to adapt some of the previously dominant stylistic paradigms to Socialist Realism's *national forms for socialist content* dictum, Maicu's team was operating well within the long-established logic of architectural innovation through the synthesis of contending influences, discussed through the lens of Zahariade's writing in the Literature Review of this thesis. In this context, the *national form* proper to Romanian architecture was to be drawn from the adaptable variety of modes of expression that had contributed to shaping the image of Romania's modernisation in the pre-war period. *The national* was therefore conceptualised by the Casa Scânteii design team in a progressive (albeit form-focused) manner, as the height of local modern architectural expression,

⁵⁰⁶ With the vertical accent read by Simonov literally, as the domineering presence of the master over the oppressed workers.

⁵⁰⁷ Maicu, 'Despre proiectarea Casei Scânteii', pp. 5-6.

adaptable to a range of representational needs. For Simonov and Mordvinov, however, *national form* was steeped in the historical becoming of progressive social orders, and congruent with modes of architectural expression of the widest popular appeal and comprehensibility – most notably, Renaissance and the neo-classical. Paradoxically, however, the Marxist-Leninist acceptance of national specificity portrayed in *Arhitectura* by Soviet and Romanian theorists rejected, at least during the early stages of Socialist Realism, spatial archetypes drawn from the local vernacular (or the erudite architecture of the Romanian principalities that had been construed as *locally specific* by Romanian theorists), in favour of the generic neo-classicism of Moscow's high-rise Stalinist developments.

For Simonov, socialist buildings should be symmetrical, 'dynamic and upwards-sweeping', 'triumphantly and luminously tracing the path forward, towards the future' and 'expressing the triumph of the liberated masses over nature and oppressive social forces [...] their certain march forward, on the path opened by the Party'.⁵⁰⁸ Unity should underpin plan and volume composition: function-based scissions between buildings symbolised rifts between theory and practice, manual and intellectual labour inherent in capitalist architecture, and had no place in a unified, complex socialist design merging the deep content of ideas and its appropriate forms.⁵⁰⁹ Simonov also offered suggestions for the formal implementation of these principles: symmetry in plan and volume, following a staggered rise to a vertical accent; functional transitions

⁵⁰⁸ Maicu, 'Despre proiectarea Casei Scântei', p. 6.

⁵⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 4.

negotiated through lower, narrower wings, lightly accenting façade profiles; the equal decorative treatment of façades, providing a beautiful, joyous built environment for the proletariat. For Simonov, these guidelines underpinned a ‘warm, human architecture’ conceived around the people’s needs, and thus radically different than the sharp, hostile harshness of bourgeois art.⁵¹⁰

In the wake of *Arhitectura’s* culturally-unfiltered promotion of flagship Muscovite architecture projects, however, Simonov’s guidelines had perhaps an unintentionally restrictive effect on local practice, becoming a staple of theoretical discussions of Socialist Realism published in the magazine, with no further clarification, as discussed in subsection 4.3. of this chapter. Simonov further recommended drawing from the thesaurus of Romanian *national tradition*, recruiting *valuable* (i.e., ideologically progressive) instances of local traditional expression towards the conscious development of a forward-thinking architecture of the present, conducive to a better socialist future.⁵¹¹ Similarly, Mordvinov’s⁵¹² critical contribution emphasised the human-centeredness and artistic dimension of socialist architecture and urbanism, in need of careful calibration with technical progress achieved through planned economy. Unlike

⁵¹⁰ Ibid., p. 7-8.

⁵¹¹ Maicu, ‘Despre proiectarea Casei Scântei’, p. 7.

⁵¹² Arkady Grigoryevich Mordvinov (1906-1964) was a Soviet architect of Armenian origin (born Mordvyshev) and one of the founding members of the self-styled proletarian architecture group VOPRA, whose ideology-fuelled campaign against other architecture groups was instrumental in the dissolution of the avant-garde and the nationalisation of liberal professions. Mordvinov’s accrual of political and professional authority included the chairmanship of the Soviet State Committee on Construction and Architecture (1943-1947), the presidency of the Academy of Architecture (1950-1955), and a permanent seat on the board of the Union of Soviet Architects. His design activity focused on the development of the Muscovite, neo-classical style of Socialist Realism (e.g., Hotel Ukraina, Moscow’s ‘skyscrapers’), later generalised across satellite states for high-profile projects. For further details, see *Art of the Soviets. Painting, Sculpture and Architecture in a One-party State, 1917-1992*, ed. by Matthew Cullerne Bown and Brandon Taylor (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), pp. 92, 99, 103.

Western architecture – for Mordvinov, bereft of any humanity through deliberate rejection of core humanistic values and a nihilistic relationship with the past⁵¹³ – socialist architecture harnessed the past’s heritage to deliver a nurturing, educational built environment allowing people to thrive.

As suggested in the sections above, Maicu’s article misrepresented the depth of core Socialist Realist principles. This missing criticality relates precisely to Socialist Realism’s rootedness in Russian thought and cultural practices. *Arhitectura* lacked a filter of cultural translation for the method’s ideatic core (self-explanatory in a Russian context, but palpably impoverished in conjunction the very narrow canon of Moscow-based Soviet construction),⁵¹⁴ and a recalibration of culturally-meaningful themes based on relevant local precedents. The connection between ‘deep ideas’ and the appropriate blend of architectural form and decorative art needed for accurate delivery revolved around Russian history and the Soviet revolutionary ethos, mythologising the transformative power of people working towards socialism.⁵¹⁵

⁵¹³ Mordvinov also critiqued the techniques, formality and exploitative socio-economic dynamics of capitalist architecture as indicative of broader social pathologies – a stance echoed by recent critiques of Western capitalist architecture. For instance, Garry Stevens highlights the contribution of architecture to the reproduction of an inequitable class system, operating under the camouflage of aesthetic debates to obscure oppressive societal relationships coded into and reinforced by the built environment.

Garry Stevens, *The Favored Circle. The Social Foundations of Architectural Distinction* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), pp. 91-95.

⁵¹⁴ The radiance of Socialist Realism came across as confusing ideological jargon sandwiching concrete information. In Kurskaya station, the halls had a ‘monumental, radiant character progressing in crescendo [...] flooded by light [...] of a simple, sober, majestic beauty’. As architectural instruction, it was no less cryptic: buildings should be ‘optimistic, joyful and radiant’, and must convey ‘great freedom, dynamism, force and greatness [...] the characteristics of the socialist regime’.

Boris Rubanenko, ‘Noi succese ale arhitecturii sovietice’ [New successes of Soviet architecture], *Arhitectura* 1 (1950), p. 25.

⁵¹⁵ Abstract or personal interpretations were harshly criticised. Metropolitan station Botanichesky Sad (currently Prospekt Mira) received negative critiques for a far too abstract celebration of natural precedents.

Anton Moisescu, ‘Arhitectura U.R.S.S. nr. 4, Aprilie 1952’, *Arhitectura R.P.R.* 6-7 (1952), p. 44.

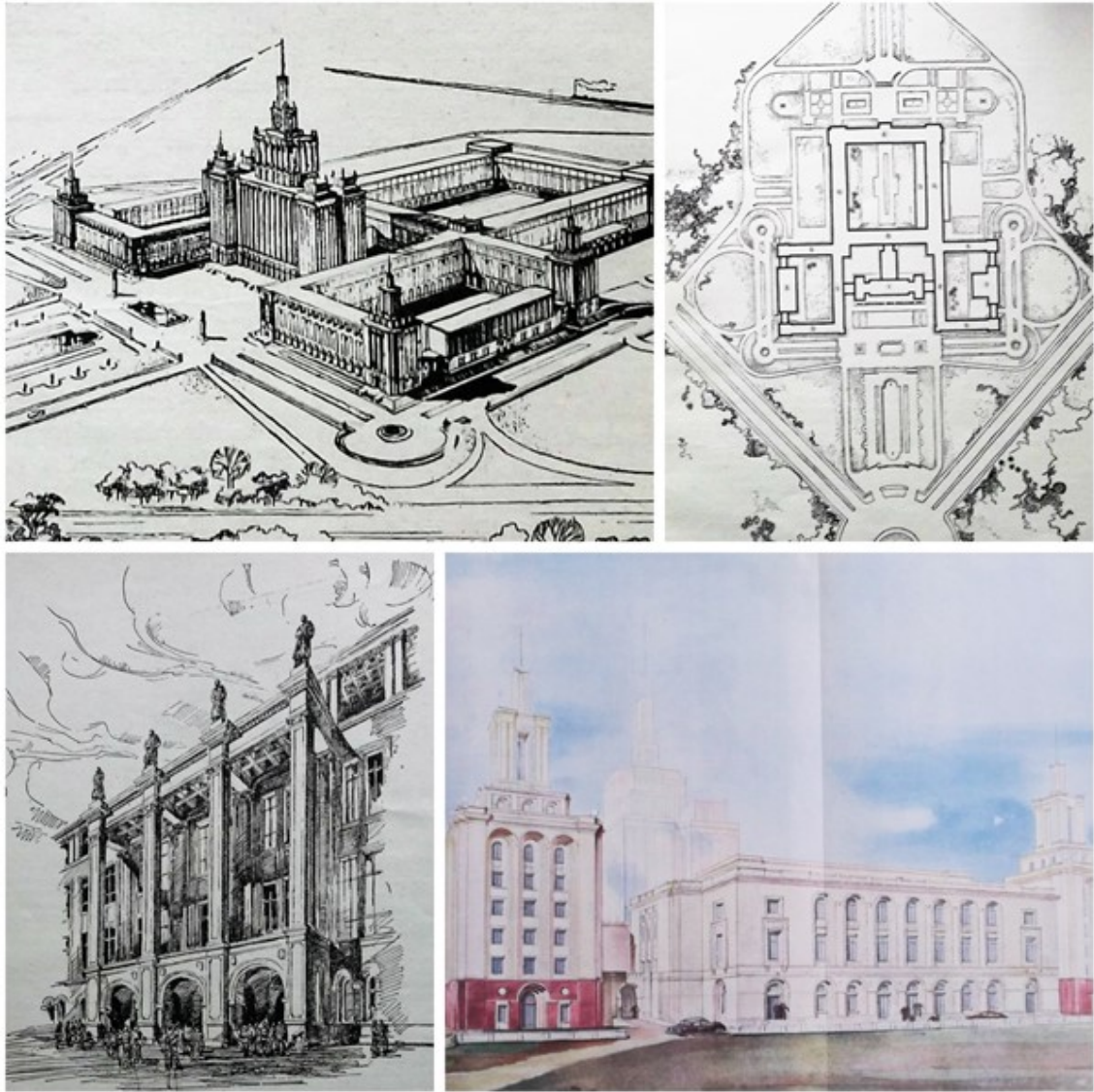


Fig. 23. Casa Scântei project design, finalised under Soviet guidance

Romanian Socialist architecture, however, referenced local traditional architecture⁵¹⁶ – *a second mythologisation of an already built mythology*. While context-appropriate, it excluded historical figures and events appealing to the non-professional collective imaginary, perhaps through deliberate professional avoidance of the figurativeness of

⁵¹⁶ As Maicu would detail in a second article on the local architectural precedents chosen for the building's design. Fortified Moldavian monasteries (Sucevița, Dragomirna), Brâncovenian style palaces (Mogoșoia, Potlogi), and Walachian monasteries (Cozia, Văcărești) inspired the design of Casa Scântei.

Horia Maicu, 'Despre folosirea moștenirii trecutului în arhitectura "Casei Scântei"' [On the use of the past's heritage in the architecture of Casa Scântei], *Arhitectura*, 4-5 (1952), pp. 9-14.

the architecture-arts synthesis, or simply a lack of politically-acceptable themes.⁵¹⁷ Moreover, recourse to traditional architecture remained at the superficial level of decoration, resulting in schematic monotony (sourced from Muscovite precedents) disguised by ornamentation mixing socialist symbols and traditional motifs (Fig. 23). Much like the Polish Palace of Culture and Science, the finalised Casa Scânteii resembled a miniature, exquisitely decorated Lomonosov University, in a similar aesthetic to Mordvinov's Hotel Ukraina (Fig. 24).



Figure section (top right) has been removed due to Copyright restrictions



Fig. 24. Crystallised Socialist Realism: from left to right clockwise, Hotel Ukraina (arch. Arkady Mordvinov and Vyacheslav Oltarzhevsky; Moscow; 1947-1957), Casa Scânteii (arch. Horia Maicu, Mircea Alifanti; Bucharest; 1949-1956), the Palace of Culture and Science (arch. Lev Rudnev; Warsaw; 1952-1955), and Lomonosov University (arch. Lev Rudnev; Moscow; 1949-1953).

⁵¹⁷ As mentioned in the previous chapter, due to the pre-war illegality and small number of the Romanian Communist Party, Romania's brief socialist history had very few key moments and figures for architecture and the visual arts to reference.

The traditional Romanian architectural elements (towers, loggias, columns, arches) used in Casa Scântei spanned the time-range and geographical space of local architecture, but had no bearing on the overall spatiality of the building, serving instead as cosmetic appliqués stripped of original meaning, albeit masterfully executed (Fig. 25).⁵¹⁸



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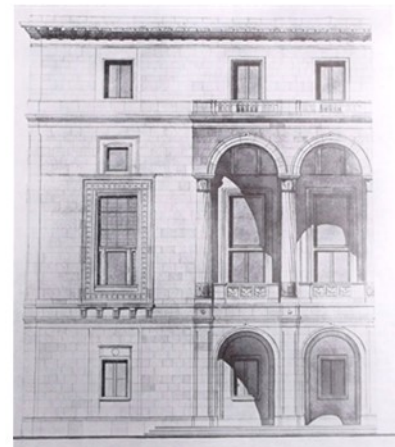


Fig. 25. Socialist content in Soviet forms: the architectural elements of national derivation (such as the loggias, cable moulded columns, and bas-reliefs inspired by the terracotta façade decorations of Medieval Wallachian and Moldavian ecclesiastic architecture) dissolve on the canvas of Casa Scântei's neo-classical composition, adapted from Lomonosov University.

⁵¹⁸ IMUAU Studio tutor Herman Stern, author of a handful of articles on Socialist Realism in *Arhitectura*, gave this advice to a student stymied by the challenge of designing large-scale programmes in a 'national form' around socialist content: 'Develop your plans and sections according to the brief and structural requirements. Then apply the Văcărești column or a Palladian colossal order onto the façades and everyone will be happy.'

Eugenia Greceanu, 'Transformarea atelierelor de arhitectură' [The transformation of design studios], in *Arhitecți în timpul dictaturii: amintiri* [Architects during the dictatorship: memories], ed. by Viorica Iuga-Curea (Bucharest: Simetria, 2005), p. 129.

Armed with 96 pages of Soviet feedback, Maicu finalised the design in collaboration with Party officials and Soviet consultants.⁵¹⁹ The building's complex structural design represented another opportunity for the development of new professional networks: the application of Soviet methods of structural calculus led, according to Maicu, to the training of professionals versed in these new methods, and the dissemination of a 'new, healthy mentality' conducive to the consistent application of uniform design methodologies across the country.⁵²⁰ But the linchpin of the article, especially in terms of decoding Socialist Realism's core principles for practical application in local architecture, were Simonov's and Mordvinov's ideological and theoretical arguments, echoed dutifully throughout the first half of the 1950s. As discussed below, this tension between the artistry and scientific nature of architecture as a socialist practice (highlighted by Mordvinov) would be creatively speculated by architects in an almost ritual reproduction of Socialist Realism, subtly and gradually infusing it with new meanings.

⁵²⁰ Maicu, 'Despre proiectarea Casei Scînteii', p. 10.

4.4.3. Scientific Socialist Realism. The experimental side of housing and industrial design.

In *Arhitectura* 4-5 (1950), Maria Cotescu wrote 'Studiul rațional al locuințelor',⁵²¹ summarising research conducted by the Service for Studies and Research (SSR) of the Institute for Construction Design (ICD). In the developing structure of Romania's nationalised architecture system,⁵²² Bucharest-based ICD was the largest and most prominent design nucleus,⁵²³ responsible for Bucharest-based projects or country-wide, high-profile objectives. Its research department drew from a variety of projects for analysis, but also functioned as an autonomous research cluster focused on advancing theoretical, technical and ideological architectural knowledge.⁵²⁴ Between

⁵²¹ Maria Cotescu, 'Studiul rațional al locuințelor' [The rational study of housing], *Arhitectura R.P.R.* 4-5 (1950), pp. 146-52.

⁵²² Crystallised in broad strokes on the 13th of November 1952 through the last act of the Plenum of the Central Committee of the Romanian Workers' Party and of the Council of Ministers. The act also established the overarching state apparatus responsible for architecture praxis, the State Committee for Architecture and Construction, and the national network of design institutes, either self-standing or part of various ministries, which endured throughout the socialist period.

'Hotărârea Comitetului Central al P.M.R. și a Consiliului de Miniștri al R.P.R. cu privire la construcția și reconstrucția orașelor și organizarea activității din domeniul arhitecturii' [Decision of the Central Committee of the Romanian Workers' Party and of the Council of Ministers of the People's Republic of Romania regarding the construction and reconstruction of cities and the organisation of activity in the field of architecture] *Arhitectura* 11 (1952), pp. 1-8.

⁵²³ Based on a presentation of the new ICD building in *Arhitectura R.P.R.* 5 (1951), which mentions the repartition of 40 studios with 8-10 drawing boards on each of the ICD's 4 floors, the institute employed between 320 and 400 architects, not counting associated staff.

S. Sebastian, 'Institutul de proiectare a construcțiilor (I.P.C.)' [The Institute of Construction Design], *Arhitectura R.P.R.* 1 (1951), pp. 20-23.

⁵²⁴ Although similar nuclei existed in every design institution and department as branches of the Scientific Association of Technicians, their activity was, according to annual reviews of SAT activity published in *Arhitectura*, sporadic, inconsistent and ideologically superficial, mostly due to the overlap between the considerable workload and tight deadlines of design activities and the mandatory quota of participation in architectural research. The SAT was dissolved in 1952 to make way for profession-specific associations, like the Union of Romanian Architects.

'Rezoluția congresului AST' [The resolution of the SAT Congress], *Arhitectura R.P.R.* 6 (1951), pp. 1-2.

1950-1952,⁵²⁵ self-critical reports from institutional research departments featured regularly in *Arhitectura*,⁵²⁶ revealing intensive research around the problematic of architecture's socialist reconfiguring, but also the difficulties of combining intensive research with full-time studio work. This SSR study devised a scientific method of housing quality assessment, geared towards shaping governmental policies,⁵²⁷ and derived from the analysis of workers' housing designed at ICD.⁵²⁸

The analysis criteria translated the goal of economic and comfortable proletarian housing into *functionality* (defined as the optimal sheltering of domestic activities), *economicity* (in investment, construction, maintenance, ease of use), and a 'pleasant, welcoming, restful exterior and interior appearance',⁵²⁹ – all underpinned by technical, economic, social and aesthetic values (Fig. 26). In the context of the debates around the domestication of Socialist Realism, Cotescu's dismissal of aesthetics as numerically unquantifiable is deeply relevant. I would argue that the study's focus on technical, economic and social aspects, connected to building codes and economic policy, was an innovative (and potentially anti-hegemonic) way of furthering architectural

⁵²⁵Years marking the socialist re-launch of *Arhitectura*, the official nationalisation of the architecture system, and the reinstatement of the Union of Romanian Architects.

⁵²⁶ See:

'Activitatea în secțiile și resoartele de arhitectură' [Activity in SAT branches] *Arhitectura R.P.R.* 1 (1950), p. 47.

'AST, un an de activitate' [SAT, a year of activity] *Arhitectura* 2-3 (1950), p. 59.

'AST. Filialele, subfilialele și cercurile se pregătesc în vederea congresului' [SAT. The branches, sub-branches, and research clusters are preparing for the congress] *Arhitectura R.P.R.* 5 (1951), p. 28.

'Rezoluția congresului AST' [The resolution of the SAT congress] *Arhitectura R.P.R.* 6 (1951), pp. 1-2.

⁵²⁷ Cotescu, 'Studiul rațional al locuintelor', p. 150.

⁵²⁸ Proletarian housing typically varied in size from one to four rooms, built as flats in low-to-medium-rise blocks, or detached/semi-detached houses. An interesting distinction is made here by Maria Cotescu between the familial dwelling (intended for habitation by one or more unrelated families), and collective dwellings, such as hotels and halls of residence. This indicates that the preferred socialist model in the fledgling socialist republic of Romania was based on the family unit, whilst the idea of collectivity was based on transient habitation, such as that of students.

⁵²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 146.

acceptations of the socialist dwelling⁵³⁰ outside negotiations on the form of Socialist Realism. Cotescu and her colleagues focused primarily on the user's comfort, but also – crucially – on economic and technical aspects drawn from, *but also with the power to influence* the building codes and typified design norms intrinsic to governmental policies.

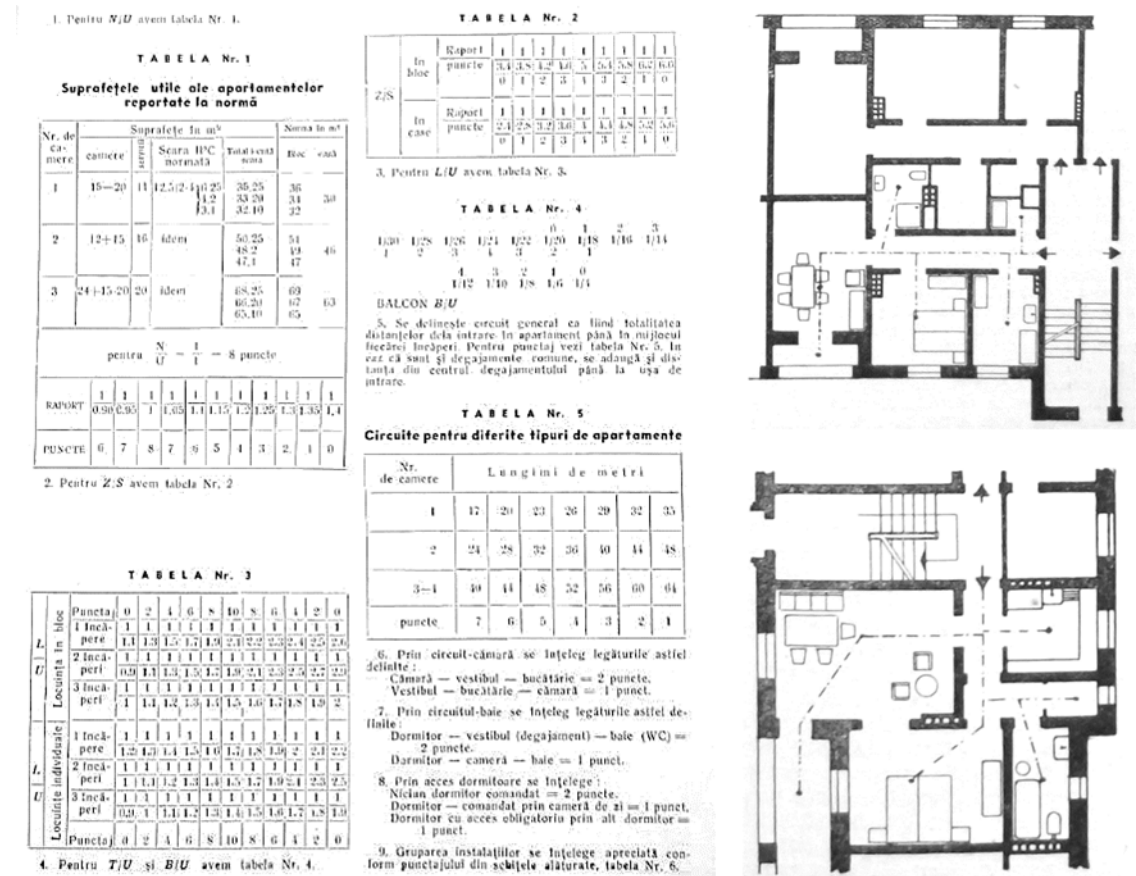


Fig. 26. Cotescu's system of coefficients, applied in demonstration of her team's method to two apartment types. The tables help quantify the level of comfort by relating, for example, the usable surface area to transit surface areas (in this case, the apartment on the bottom right has shorter and more efficient distribution, and would score higher in Cotescu's system).

In the context of the profession's adaptation to functioning in a socialist logic and shaping new pathways in the negotiation of hegemony, studies like Cotescu's represent the next step after initial attempts to contextualise Socialist Realism based

⁵³⁰ Defined, as I have shown in the last chapter, mostly on ideological terms and planned economy quotas.

on ideological and formal grounds, as illustrated above in the case of Casa Scântei. By shifting the negotiation onto technical language and an almost sociological approach to the socialist dwelling, with deep implications as to the needs and ideal urban lifestyle of the proletarian stratum, Cotescu and her team sought to minimise the influence of two of the most unpredictable influences on architectural design. As noted by Marin Nițulescu, decisional power over the routine processes of cultural production was held by apparatchiks of little or no specialist training in the fields they affected as members of approval committees, and often shared the inferiority complex of cultural outsiders, resulting in excessive, micro-managerial control tactics.⁵³¹ Project proposals like Cotescu's explored the numerically-quantifiable dimension of socialist housing, thereby circumventing the liabilities of decision holders' personal tastes (e.g., literal oversimplification, rejection of abstraction, or preferences for decorative ostentatiousness), and potential dismissal on the ambiguous grounds of the ideological inappropriateness of form.

The analysis used multiple coefficients to assess: the functional logic and economy of the layout (controlling space allocation in favour of actually habitable space); suitability for industrialised, mass production and speedy, prefabricated construction in accordance with S.T.A.S.⁵³² and ICD norms; social performance (a combination of

⁵³¹ Marin Nițulescu, *Sub zodiac proletcultismului. Dialectica puterii* [Under the sign of proletkultism. The dialectic of power] (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1995), p. 127.

⁵³² The S.T.A.S. were an enormous body of law-based regulations, codes and norms for all aspects of production, developed throughout the post-war period in Romania in an effort to align all branches of production with economic goals, as well as ensure a certain quality. Updated, revised, and expanded versions of these codes are still widely used in Romanian architecture, construction and engineering.

hygienic habitation⁵³³ and user comfort.⁵³⁴ Although the proletarian dwelling had never benefitted, in Romania, from such comprehensive quality control, Cotescu's method did show some limitations through the high scores afforded to multiple family occupancy per housing unit (even apartment).⁵³⁵ However, this step towards communal living – perhaps motivated by the post-war housing crisis and rapidly rising demands for urban accommodation – was not mitigated by other concessions to sociable domesticity (for instance, a play/study space for children).⁵³⁶ Nevertheless, the study's strength resided in the scientific quantification of design and construction variables, with tangible impact on the overall quality of housing. Alongside local codes of architectural practice, it also drew from Soviet theory, legislation, and economic design,⁵³⁷ vital to architecture within the framework of planned-economy through standardisation, closely connected to the construction materials industry, cost-effectiveness, and a more economical professional mentality. This strategy proved particularly effective for Romanian architects attempting to shape a modicum of local contextuality from a Socialist Realism introduced as calcified discourse through the

⁵³³ Defined as sufficient and well distributed natural lighting, thermal insulation, soundproofing, and transverse interior ventilation. The study authors' concern for improving living conditions through adequate provisions of lighting based on scientific methods combining building placement and the design of sufficiently-sized and well-placed windows in relation to room depth (the D. Vernescu method) is significant. Likewise, the highest score in the ventilation category is awarded to apartments with windows on opposite sides of the building, placement able to sustain a current of air moving transversally through the habitable space.

⁵³⁴ Cotescu, 'Studiul rational al locuințelor', p. 152.

⁵³⁵ A comparison of the apartment plans and corresponding housing comfort scores presented in Cotescu's study suggests the likelihood that even a one-bedroom apartment might have housed two families through the conversion of the living-room into a bedroom during the night.

⁵³⁶ As does the time's conception of suitable housing in the local context. On the whole, the local preference was and remains one for single familial occupancy, regardless of housing type or size – confirmed through research on the quality of housing undertaken under my guidance by IMUAU students between 2010-2012, as part of the 'Architecture, dwelling, city' course led by prof. Zahariade.

⁵³⁷ Referenced by the authors from a Soviet article by I. Rudenko-Morgun.

Cotescu, 'Studiul rational al locuințelor', p. 146.

Muscovite architecture model, by referencing the ultimate authority of Soviet theory and economic logic. As Cotescu observed, the time for haphazard improvisation had passed: housing was a quintessential social problem requiring comprehensive, nationwide, scientific design and assessment methods. Thus, the SSR's method had multiple applications, from the objective classification of housing competition entries,⁵³⁸ to project selections for Ministerial boards or local authorities, and informing governmental housing policies. Finally, it hoped to spark interest in scientific debates about socialist housing through a tangible contribution.⁵³⁹

Cotescu's article was accompanied by a short, anonymous editorial response, appreciative of the method's analytical scope, but wary of the elimination of 'aesthetic and urbanistic criteria [...], as the exclusive and isolated consideration of the economical side cannot yield wholly viable solutions'.⁵⁴⁰ The editors' review had a subtle, cautionary tone: in the space of two decades, the use of coefficients in architectural design would transform, from a method of ensuring dignified living conditions for the masses, into a numerical straightjacket working against architects – and, indeed, housing policy makers – in their quest for further improvement. As Cotescu had anticipated, the development and wide-spread application of unified, national building codes at the beginning of the 1950s made design quicker, more cost-

⁵³⁸ With aesthetic merits taken into account only on equal scores.

⁵³⁹ In Cotescu's own words, 'the contribution of the SSR is real' – suggesting perhaps a need to justify the importance of research and studies on the subject against disinterest for the more technical aspects of housing design.

Cotescu, 'Studiul rational al locuințelor', p. 148.

⁵⁴⁰ Response to Cotescu's study by the Editorial Team, *Arhitectura R.P.R.* 4-5 (1950), p. 152.

effective, and better suited to standardised, prefabricated construction. *Arhitectura* promoted typified design attuned to the emergent industry of prefabricated construction materials, and modernised construction slowly supplanted the out-dated building techniques required by Socialist Realism's neo-classical iterations.⁵⁴¹ Sustaining a sufficiently non-monotonous typified production increased the detailing design workload, untenable under the political directive towards reduced construction costs.⁵⁴² With their modernist echoes, industrial architecture and prefabrication enjoyed positive reception among professionals, inadvertently limiting the scale and repertoire of Moscow-style Socialist Realism, which vanished from current design, if not delayed construction, by 1956.⁵⁴³

Although the rational approach to housing launched by research initiatives like Cotescu's opened architectural design to parameters beyond ideological correctness and aesthetics, the editors' warning also came to fruition. Architect M.P., who practised in the 1970s and 1980s at Proiect Bucureşti (the Bucharest Design Institute - BDI)⁵⁴⁴ recalls that project approval hinged on meeting a vast and sometimes contradictory

⁵⁴¹ It is significant that, aside from *Arhitectura's* ineffective campaign for the adoption of Socialist Realist ideology and theory, the number of *Arhitectura* articles focused on the economicity of design outstripped that of ideology-focused pieces, signalling perhaps the detection by the profession of an area of systemic weakness where the architectural direction could be tweaked towards a less historically referential mode of expression.

⁵⁴² Excerpt from the first five-year plan.

Gustav Gusti, 'Aniversarea a 30 ani de luptă glorioasă a Partidului' [The celebration of the Party's 30 years of glorious struggle], *Arhitectura R.P.R.* 5 (1951), p. 3.

⁵⁴³ Cvatals were built as late as 1957. For an example of a typical cvartal development in Bucharest, see: Ioan Novîţchi, 'Un cvartal de locuinţe în Bucureşti' [A housing cvartal in Bucharest], *Arhitectura R.P.R.* 9 (1957), pp. 4-9.

⁵⁴⁴ One of the country's largest design institutes, occupying a privileged space in the institutional framework of Romanian socialist design: the BDI handled the capital's most important projects and construction investments, coordinated the design activity of smaller institutes across the country, and had a regular presence in the outsourcing of Romanian expertise abroad.

array of coefficient targets, impacting negatively on plan functionality and user comfort.⁵⁴⁵ By conceptualising housing in a reductively technical and economic manner to the exclusion of social,⁵⁴⁶ aesthetic and urbanistic aspects, the 'design by coefficients' method has negatively affected Romania's typical communist urban landscape. Still, the contrast between the initial, positive intent (ensuring a minimum standard of housing quality regardless of the architect's stylistic preferences or a local council's approach to governmental policies) and its later, restrictive dimension,⁵⁴⁷ raises questions on the contribution of institutions to the distortion of architectural practices over long periods of time, ultimately matching neither the agenda of the profession, nor that of the Party.

Architects like Cotescu illustrate the Gramscian role of intellectuals in the maintenance or subversion of hegemony, complicit in the subjection of the masses to the dominant order by normalising dominant ideologies, but also subverting them through the counter-ideologies stemming from political, cultural and social practices at all levels of civil society.⁵⁴⁸ Although intellectuals are instrumental in forging grassroots alliances between varied social groups and catalyse collective consciousness into awareness of reality and effective action, 'collective will' has a measure of innate resistance to the

⁵⁴⁵ M.P., 'Coefficient quotas', email correspondence, 20 July 2016.

⁵⁴⁶ Defined in a more sociologically complex manner than Cotescu's reduction to dwelling comfort and hygiene.

⁵⁴⁷ Due to the strictures of the coefficient system of design, rooms would often fall below the recommended surface area. In my parents' 1960s Bucharest apartment, the bathroom measures 2,54m by 1,53m, with a usable surface area of 3,65 m² (1m² below the time's minimum bathroom allowance), and over half of this area occupied by fixed bathroom equipment. The excessively elongated proportions make everyday use awkward and uncomfortable.

⁵⁴⁸ Antonio Gramsci, 'Hegemony, relations of force, historical bloc', in *The Antonio Gramsci Reader. Selected Writings 1916-1935*, ed. by David Forgacs, (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1999), pp. 189-221.

direct imposition of norms and values.⁵⁴⁹ Gramsci also cautions that the function of professional strata in cultural production is *legitimation and mediation* between the holders of power (also owners of the means of production) and society at large, by disseminating/withholding knowledge, normalising and organising activity in all social spheres according to the dominant ideology, and thus, producing disciplined subjects. In this light, architects hold 'subaltern functions of social hegemony and political government',⁵⁵⁰ and architecture is a cultural production site where the prevalent ideology is (re)produced, aiding the infiltration of everyday life by power relations.⁵⁵¹

Nevertheless, the intelligentsia's social standing⁵⁵² and pervasiveness within the state apparatus afford significant potential for subversion through small-scale action throughout the vast administrative and institutional structure of the system, weakening its hierarchical rigidity by introducing alternatives, flexibility, and doubts. This was achieved through a variety of tactics, from building enduring and fruitful professional relationships with cultured nomenklatura members open to professional expertise,⁵⁵³ to exploiting technical knowledge and manipulating the coded representation specific to architecture in order to influence the outcome of political consultations. For

⁵⁴⁹ Renate Holub, *Antonio Gramsci. Beyond Marxism and Postmodernism*, (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 71.

⁵⁵⁰ Holub, *Antonio Gramsci*, p. 164-65.

⁵⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 196-97.

⁵⁵² As individual agents and institutional bodies.

⁵⁵³ During the 1950s and early 1960s, the collaboration between architect Cezar Lăzărescu and Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej resulted in the development of the Black Sea littoral in a modernist aesthetic, perfectly comparable in diversity and quality to the period's Western European resort architecture. A detailed discussion of the development of Romania's sea-side waterfronts for national and international tourism can be found in:

Irina Tulbure, 'Arhitectură și urbanism în România anilor 1944-1960: constrângere și experiment' [Architecture and urban planning in Romania 1944-1960. Constraint and experimentation] (unpublished doctoral thesis, Ion Mincu University of Architecture and Urbanism, Bucharest, 2011).

instance, architect Gheorghe Leahu describes the camouflaging tactics routinely used in the presentation of projects located on or near heritage sites: given Ceaușescu's notorious aversion to the architectural presence of the past, monuments (especially churches) were disguised in plans through colour coding, escaping demolition as part of urban green spaces, and via model scaling suggesting heights of 1-2 meters.⁵⁵⁴ In the same vein, engineer Eugeniu Iordăchescu led monument-salvaging campaigns by devising innovative strategies for building relocation, effectively severing the foundations and translating the buildings via a system of rails and hydraulics to new sites (Fig. 27), secreted behind the concrete curtains of high-rise blocks of flats.



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Fig. 27. Apartment building A2 (Alba Iulia) and Sfântul-Ioan-Nou Church (Bucharest) translated by Iordăchescu's team using the engineer's method (which entailed building a structural foundation 'tray' under the building, and transporting it to the new site, where the structural links between the building and a new foundation would be recast).

As technical director of the Bucharest Design Institute, Iordăchescu was a regular participant to the Council of Ministers' sessions, and was able to use his professional authority, expertise, and institutional resources to mitigate some of the destructive

⁵⁵⁴ Gheorghe Leahu, *Arhitect în 'Epoca de Aur'* [Architect in the 'Golden Age'] (Bucharest: Fundația Academia Civică, 2004), p. 168.

intensity of Ceaușescu's civic centre project.⁵⁵⁵ In Ion Mircea Enescu's case, these tactics took the form of successfully challenging outdated architectural and artistic practices – relics of the Socialist Realist period, often propagated or unchallenged in avoidance of political retribution (Fig. 28).

Figure has been removed due to Copyright restrictions

Fig. 28. Ion Mircea Enescu's structural expressionism: Pitești sports hall, 1968, designed and built before the architect's involvement in the Costinești architectural-artistic experiment.

⁵⁵⁵ During the 1980s, Iordăchescu's assiduous work and technical ingenuity saved 12 of Bucharest's listed monument churches (the oldest dating from the 16th century) that would have been demolished during the construction of the city's new civic centre. A further 29 churches were demolished, and often not even replaced with new buildings. Iordăchescu and his team performed roughly 30 building translations across the country, not limited to the protection of built patrimony, but also deployed in resolution to infrastructure development conflicts that would have resulted in the forced relocation of a significant number of inhabitants.

Salvatorul Bisericilor condamnate [The saviour of condemned Churches] produced by Mihaela Poenaru and Petru Mihalea (Trinitas TV, 2009-2016).

Hristache Popescu, 'Personalități din construcții – Eugeniu Iordăchescu' [Notable figures in the world of construction – Eugeniu Iordăchescu], *Revista Construcțiilor* (April 2011)

<<http://www.revistaconstrucțiilor.eu/index.php/2011/04/10/personalitati-din-construcții-eugeniu-iordachescu/>> [accessed 15 June 2018]

In the 1960s and 1970s, Enescu was involved in the architectural design and public art decoration of Costinești summer camp, a popular sea-side resort. By advising a more abstract, non-figurative approach to the camp's sculptural ensembles, in tune with the subtly brutalist, structurally-expressive aesthetic pursued in the architectural design (but most importantly, consistent with the preferences of the camp's younger Romanian and foreign demographic), Enescu's intervention led to an architectural and artistic collaborative experiment at Costinești, celebrated at the time for its modern expressionism.⁵⁵⁶

For Gramsci, these embodied practices can mould ideology into a 'philosophy of praxis' – a comprehensive counter-ideology able to bind disparate social movements into a cohesive social force strong enough to derail the status quo.⁵⁵⁷ For instance, Cotescu's research, although very much in line with the demands of planned economy (and therefore, readable as hegemony-reinforcing), doubles as an alternative practice, using the practical materiality of design to loosen the hold of Socialist Realism's ideological dimension, and curb local propensities towards aesthetic debate. Moreover, it accounted for direct user involvement in the assessment of housing quality by examining the concept of comfort in easily understandable, non-professional language.

⁵⁵⁶ Enescu, *Arhitect sub comunism*, pp. 269-70.

⁵⁵⁷ The philosophy of praxis is, according to Gramsci, able to expose the contradictions, struggles and exploitation masked by the dominant superstructure and its ideology, even when they are 'formally dialectical'. Forgas, *The Antonio Gramsci Reader*, p. 197.

4.4.4. Discussing discourse, performing practice

Another strategic position in the negotiation of hegemony through architecture was illustrated by Mihail Caffé, whose activity as researcher, theorist and lecturer at IMUAU constituted yet another mode of within-the-rules subversive practice. Publishing frequently in *Arhitectura*, Caffé turned the discourse of Marxism-Leninism against itself for a substantial critique of the theoretical and practical shortcomings of Socialist Realism in architecture. As early as 1956, Caffé's analysis of housing design competitions highlighted, with some urgency, the professional ignorance deriving from the Party's scientific monopoly on knowledge of 'the masses', and the need to reconnect with disciplines providing complex demographic data (sociology) or cultural dialogue and symbolic exchanges (the arts, history, philosophy).⁵⁵⁸ Architecture competitions held during the Stalinist period were under institutional monopoly, generally serving as time- and money-saving resources with minimal expenses (professional recognition, remuneration for prizes). Despite aiming to foster design creativity, their management through multiple institutions worked against architectural innovation.⁵⁵⁹ Nevertheless, architects intuited the potential of competitions to open up a productive form of dialogue with the political.

⁵⁵⁸ Mihail Caffé, 'Discuții pe marginea concursului de locuințe unifamiliale' [Discussions on the single-family housing competition], *Arhitectura R.P.R.* 3 (1956), pp. 28–31.

⁵⁵⁹ Architect Ion Mircea Enescu recalls their double falsification: institutional, through strict, limiting design briefs and a process of evaluation dominated by (often) non-specialist Ministry representatives; professional, by participants who would develop their designs based on the known aesthetic preferences of the jury.

Enescu, *Arhitect sub comunism*, p. 232.

Caffé's published research and articles demonstrate *Arhitectura's* discursive performativity on the topic of Socialist Realism through critique. For Caffé, Socialist Realism was doomed from the start (in Romania) through the literal, though exceedingly general translation of Marxist-Leninist principles, to the disadvantage of a less ideology-centred, rational, but human-oriented socialist architecture. However diverse in aesthetic, dogmatic interpretations lead to years of uncritical pastiche, but, most importantly in Caffé's estimation, to a devaluing of theoretical discussion, *regarded with irony and mistrust by the vast majority of practitioners.*⁵⁶⁰ Caffé's analysis indicated the need to open a moderate, context-mindful, economically-realistic approach to the theory of Socialist architecture, mediating between the extremes of non-critical silence and disingenuous proselytising.

According to Caffé, the problem stemmed from the identification of architecture with art, which prompted theorists to search for artwork's 'deep content of ideas' within architectural objects. This bound architecture primarily to ideological content (for Caffé, sometimes inexpressible, or not requiring expression through architectural means)⁵⁶¹ to the detriment of its technical and functional dimensions, where the field's progressive, social potential actually lay. Calling for architecture to reflect the modernising, progress-driven message of the socialist project, Caffé urged the

⁵⁶⁰ Mihail Caffé, 'Despre câteva probleme actuale ale arhitecturii' [On a few current problems in architecture] *Arhitectura R.P.R.* 9 (1957), p.51.

⁵⁶¹ 'Speaking of the content of the work of art, we often understand it as the content of ideas, its social and human meaning. Architecture, however, does not always express, first and foremost, a content of ideas. The identification of the content of architectural works with the content of ideas has led to formalist, grandiloquent manifestations, striving to see a content of ideas in every power station or small agricultural construction. This tendency leads to the banalisation and vulgarisation of the notion of content of ideas.'

Caffé, 'Despre câteva probleme actuale ale arhitecturii', p. 51.

profession to adapt innovation in design and construction to the actual needs of the proletariat. 'Wilfully ignored... and replaced by very general assumptions' in Socialist Realism, accurate social profiling and technical progress should lead to a 'modern, contemporary and therefore truly national architecture', free from the retrograde anachronism of glorifying a crafts-based traditional aesthetic.⁵⁶²

Since architectural shape was, for Caffé, a means of articulating space around specific programmes, the pursuit of nationally-specific forms (especially in a vernacular language) seemed irrational, especially for hospitals, schools, theatres, etc.⁵⁶³

Remarkably, Caffé saw very clearly through the beguiling rhetoric of national discourse, persistent at the core of Romanian architecture long after Socialist Realism:

*national architecture should be nothing more than the diversity of contemporary architecture practised within a country's borders in response to the population's needs and in reflection of the intricacies of their society and culture.*⁵⁶⁴

As a final, cautionary tale, Caffé reflected on the limited economic and constructive means of Romanian architecture, warning against the conflation of antiquated on-site production and a dated, traditionalist aesthetic: 'the solution of big conceptual problems passes through small matters of prosaic economic and technical interest.'⁵⁶⁵ Subtle withdrawal from further ideological quandaries, or ingenious tactic supporting architecture shifting tracks to a more rational direction?

⁵⁶² Ibid., p. 53.

⁵⁶³ Ibid., p. 52.

⁵⁶⁴ Ibid., pp.52-53.

⁵⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 53.

Written during the end of an architectural period focused on national forms for socialist content, Caffé's analysis cautioned against a narrow, monolithic, historicist resurgence of *national architecture*. As Verdery points out, 'the national' was initially banned in the satellite republics during sovietisation to subdue previously hegemonic local discourses, thus depriving intellectual groups of their default form of self-definition and interaction.⁵⁶⁶ Without the repertoire of national symbols and values shaping cultural production across discipline boundaries, and given the perhaps unintentional rigidity of the Russian architecture model as theoretical and practical foundation for home-grown Socialist Realism put forward by *Arhitectura*, the profession struggled to devise a culturally-specific adaptation of 'socialist content in national form'. Nevertheless, by questioning and interpreting the boundaries of Socialist Realism, architects created, if not counter-discourses,⁵⁶⁷ at least a loosening of the Soviet architecture model's hold on architectural production. Thus, even the passive existence of a multitude of individual professional voices, privately unaligned with the official discourse, gradually built up into a repository of alternatives converging around the national. In Bakhtin's terms, professional culture set in motion de-normatising, centrifugal forces working against the centripetal, hierarchising drive of dominant discourse. Multiplicity of meaning stemmed from the locus of collision

⁵⁶⁶ Verdery, *National ideology under Socialism*, p. 303.

⁵⁶⁷ For a discourse to be socially relevant – instrumental in forming consciousness, animating civil society or implementing change – it must generate counter-discourses, understood as creative dialogue, not antagonistic critique. Verdery, *National ideology under Socialism*, p.126.

between these forces – in a word, *heteroglossia* – a state of creative tension counteracting the homogenising logic of authoritative discourse.⁵⁶⁸

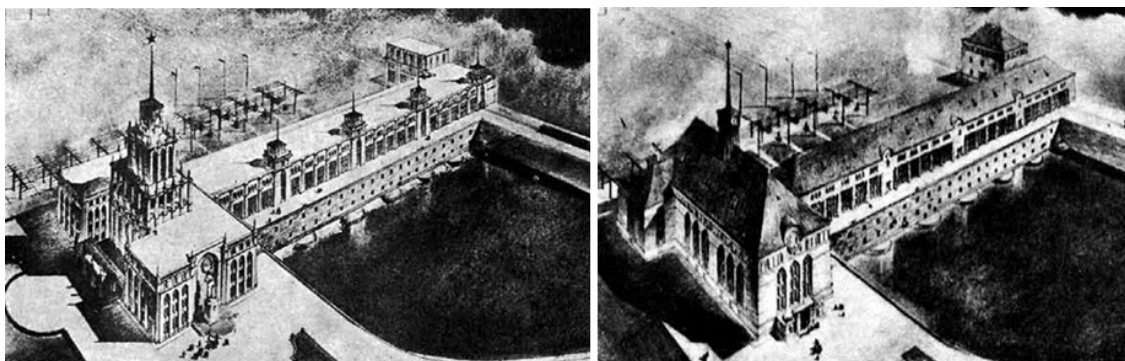


Fig. 29. Socialist flair or a national aesthetic? N. Nedelescu's treatment of both as interchangeable skins for his waterworks project calls into question the over-reliance of early socialist architecture on the Muscovite model promoted in *Arhitectura*. His source of precedent for the national-inspired version – the Medieval church architecture of Moldova – also cast doubts on the suitability of these paradigms for industrial developments.

Fig. 29 illustrates perhaps the first attempt recorded in *Arhitectura* to subvert authoritative discourse through practice: Nicolae Nedelescu's project entry for the V. I. Lenin hydroelectric plant architecture competition. Authoritative discourse, writes Bakhtin, makes artistic representations impossible without inventive subversion through the social practices of the quotidian or professional practice.⁵⁶⁹ Yurchak's study of Soviet authoritative discourse also reveals an increasing imbalance between its performative dimension (ritualised participation in acts perpetuating discourse) and constative dimension (engagement with the meanings coded in said acts).⁵⁷⁰

⁵⁶⁸ Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin, *The dialogic imagination. Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*, ed. by M. Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), pp. 262–73.

⁵⁶⁹ Bakhtin, *The dialogic imagination*, pp. 342–44.

⁵⁷⁰ Alexei Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More*, pp. 25–29.

Supported by the disappearance of an external editorial figure evaluating the accuracy of representations (Stalin), this performative shift normalised authoritative discourse at a structural level. With the constative dimension rendered indeterminate, irrelevant even, professional practice engaged in ritualised reproduction of indistinguishable instances of authoritative discourse. Far from restrictive, performativity fostered a wealth of unexpected meanings, divergent to those prescribed by authoritative discourse.⁵⁷¹ Nicolae Nedelescu's⁵⁷² waterworks project observed the ritual form, but not the meaning of socialist architecture: his design could support both Moldavian neo-gothic and Muscovite neo-classical without spatial alterations, suggesting a critical refuge from meaning into form.⁵⁷³ For a Romanian architecture twice-edited – through the canon of Soviet architecture reviewed against the Stalinist version of Marxist-Leninist discourse – this shift in performativity contributed to a blurring of Socialist Realism's official boundaries.

⁵⁷¹ Ibid., pp. 25–26.

⁵⁷² Nedelescu worked in Horia Creangă's studio between 1935– 1939, and was an enthusiast of functionalist architecture.

⁵⁷³ My published research also includes a more detailed exploration of the pedagogical dimension of architecture competitions critiqued in *Arhitectura* between 1950 and 1952. For more details, see Published Work on p. 528.

When the Party decided, in 1958,⁵⁷⁴ to follow Khrushchev's call for a 'rational architecture',⁵⁷⁵ a hybrid type of experimental, vernacular-derived modernist discourse was already underway.⁵⁷⁶ With architecture competitions tentatively exploring slightly divergent lines from the official direction,⁵⁷⁷ critique in *Arhitectura* was now dominated by professional standards, finally addressing politically-induced dysfunctionalities.⁵⁷⁸ In the context of Socialist Realism's dissolution, practice diversified further, recalibrated around national discourse. One architectural direction advocated 'nation-centric' Modernism; another, a reconnection with 'international' pre-war Modernism – perhaps under the dual incentive of rewriting a more context-mindful ideological agenda for socialist architecture, or simply as a strategy to ensure the permanence of modernism through a connection with the formerly hegemonic discourse.

⁵⁷⁴ Speech given by Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej at the 26-28 November 1958 Plenum of the Central Committee of the Romanian Worker's Party.

'Extras din expunerea făcută de Tovarășul Gh. Gheorghiu-Dej la ședința plenară a C.C. al P.M.R. din 26-28 noiembrie 1958' [Excerpt from the allocution given by Comrade Gh. Gheorghiu-Dej at the plenum of the CC of the RWP of 26-28 November 1958], *Arhitectura* R.P.R. 10-11 (1958), pp. 6-7.

⁵⁷⁵ Essentially, Modernism couched in terms of rationality.

⁵⁷⁶ *Arhitectura* R.P.R. 3 (1956) is devoted to prefabricated construction using large-scale concrete panels, 6 (1956) features high-rise collective housing by Nițulescu, while issue 8 (1956) presents some interesting mergers between modern and traditional housing.

⁵⁷⁷ Namely, sourcing planning and architectural references outside the consecrated cvartal architecture preferred for collective housing during the time, and pushing against the collectivism of urban habitation, e.g. apartments for more than one family.

Nicolae Nedelescu, 'Concursul de locuințe tip unifamiliale orășenești' [The competition for typified single-family urban dwellings] *Arhitectura* R.P.R., 3 (1956), pp. 21-27.

⁵⁷⁸ Mihail Caffé, 'Discuții pe marginea concursului de locuințe unifamiliale', pp. 28-31.

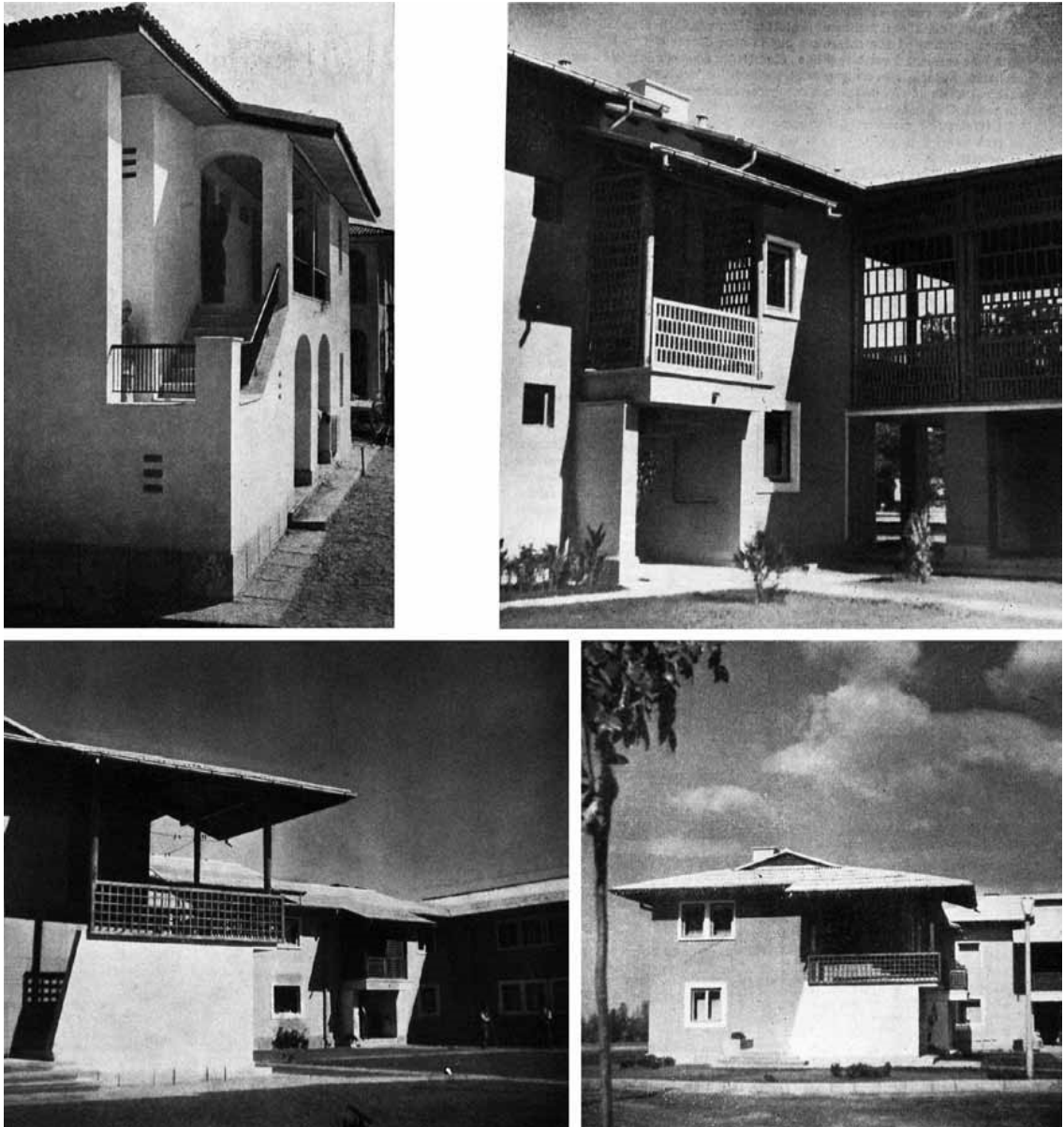


Fig. 30. Social housing, 1957–1958. Top left: Cățelu cvartal, by Tiberiu Niga. Top right, bottom row: Băneasa housing estate, by Octav Doicescu.

Amidst the discursive diversity seeded by the creative tensions surrounding Socialist Realism’s dissolution, these groups revitalized architectural production. Suited to small-scale, mass architecture, ‘vernacular’ modernism updated traditional typologies for the urban pattern of cvartals (Fig. 30).⁵⁷⁹ ‘Internationalist’ modernism produced

⁵⁷⁹ Or, according to Zahariade, Clarence Perry’s neighbourhood unit, thought to have been the unattributed source of cvartal theory in Soviet urban planning.

Zahariade, *Arhitectura în proiectul comunist*, p. 54.

privileged architecture in a quasi-Bauhausian aesthetic for the nomenklatura,⁵⁸⁰ whose tastes diverged considerably from both mass architecture and the Muscovite iconography portrayed in *Arhitectura*. Moreover, the area of overlap between these two directions – tourism – retells the narrative of Romania's post-war international pavilions, integrating seamlessly into the landscape of Western European architecture (Fig. 31).

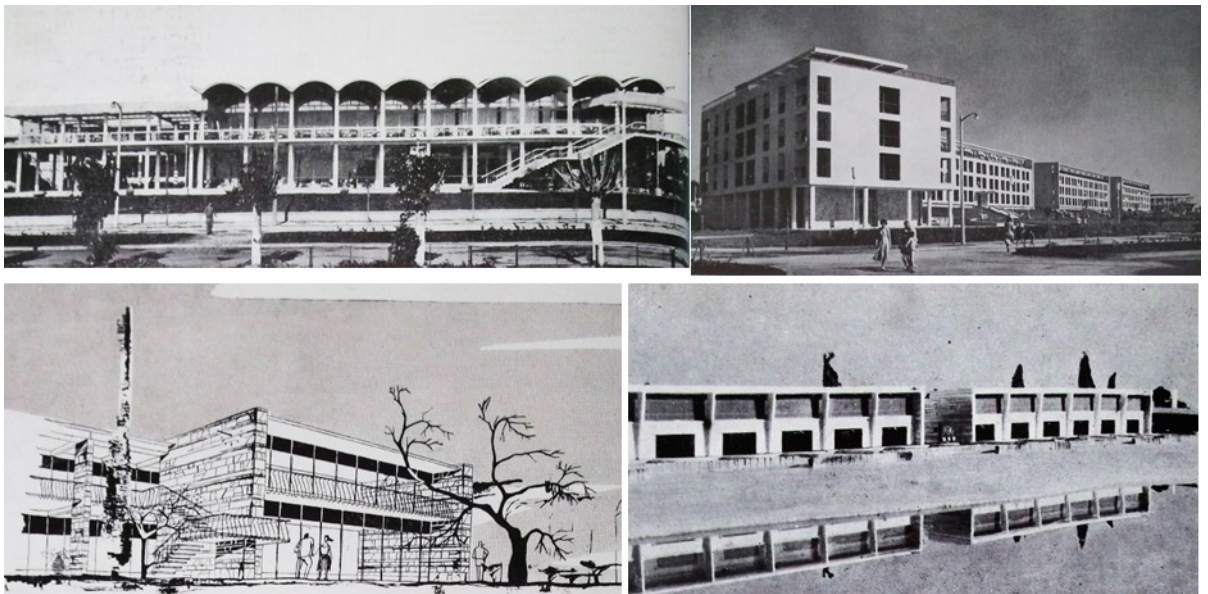


Fig. 31. Tourism architecture by architect Cezar Lăzărescu (1956-1958).

From a Foucauldian perspective, Romanian socialism was a simultaneously restrictive and permissive network traversing the social body to create and enable knowledge and discourse.⁵⁸¹ Ultimately, power's duplicitous treatment of the modernist aesthetic contributed to its hybridation with the local vernacular, inadvertently facilitating the transition to rationalist architecture. For Foucault, spatial utopias enforce oppression

⁵⁸⁰ The persistence of an international modernist aesthetic in what Zahariade defines as 'occult' architecture – 'the area of building activity [...] somehow exempt from the Communist planning [...] maneuvered by the members of the "inner circle" in their own private interest'.

Zahariade, *Arhitectura în proiectul comunist*, p. 112.

⁵⁸¹ Michel Foucault, 'Space, Knowledge, and Power', in *The Foucault reader. An introduction to Foucault's thought*, ed. by Paul Rabinow, (London: Penguin, 1986), p. 61.

or enable freedom, depending on the coincidence of initial intent with 'the real practice of people in the exercise of their freedom'.⁵⁸² Romanian Socialist Realism aspired towards utopian totality, but remained partial, deploying architecture as a technique of power for radical social governance. Translated into a constricting framework for the practice of mass construction, from which privileged architecture was exempt, Socialist Realism gave rise to professional confusion expressed with unexpected, authority-eroding honesty, from theoretical debate to duplicitous design and innovation in fringe areas of practice.

The disciplines, writes Foucault, can generate discontinuous, effective criticisms against 'the inhibiting effect of global, totalitarian theories', illuminating viable alternatives for social change 'on the condition that the theoretical unity of these discourses was [...] put in abeyance, or at least curtailed, divided, overthrown, caricatured, theatricalised'.⁵⁸³ In Romania, the regime's aim of societal transformation through the radical alteration of the built environment in a Socialist Realist key was ultimately diffused by the profession's pre-war mentality and resistance to the discourse's neo-classicist dialectic. Architects across the spectrum of political sympathies embraced Socialist Realism's discourse and aesthetics, but applied them duplicitously, exploiting weak points in the system, resulting, in Yurchak's terms, in the demise of authoritarian discourse through widespread, superficially performative participation in its

⁵⁸² Foucault, 'Space, Knowledge, and Power', p. 246.

⁵⁸³ Michel Foucault, 'Two lectures', in *Power/ knowledge: selected interviews and other writings 1972–1977*, ed. by Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), pp. 80–81.

reproduction.⁵⁸⁴ Using permeability, deflection and selective engagement, Romanian architecture made the boundaries of Soviet Socialist Realism malleable through the creative use of practice, negotiating with the political centre in the development of alternative modes of discourse.

Section 4 of this chapter has explored the processes through which architecture was gradually made subordinate to the state and planned economy and directed towards normalising, on a broader social level, the structuring logic and visual representation of the new regime. At the same time, it has examined the wide range of knowledge- and practice-based tactics devised by architects in the course of this normalisation in order to modify, contextualise, and adapt political vision to local realities and dominant professional agendas.

In 'Space, Knowledge, and Power', Foucault differentiates between the types of professions engaged in mediating the flow of power throughout the social network, thereby influencing the political centre's accrual or loss of hegemony. Doctors, priests, judges and psychiatrists are significant agents in the field of power relations, instrumental 'in the organisation, the implementation, and all the techniques of power' exercised in society. Architects, wielding considerably less direct control, do not belong to this same category; however, Foucault argues that they are significant in the understanding of 'a certain number of the techniques of power that are invested in architecture', but that this is always open to subversion through their own mentalities,

⁵⁸⁴ Which, in fact, enabled 'diverse and unpredictable meanings and styles of living to spring up everywhere within it'.

Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More*, pp. 28-29.

projects and attitudes.⁵⁸⁵ In Althusser and Gramsci, this positioning is linked to the formulation of counter-hegemonic practices: while the institutionalised practice of architecture, as an Ideological State Apparatus, is responsible for the non-coercive reproduction and normalisation of dominant ideologies, the individual professional practices of architects can prove destabilising for the same dominant logic they are called to normalise. In the case of early socialist Romanian architecture, the tension between these two mechanisms of architecture praxis has limited the scope of Socialist Realism through the counter-hegemonic effect of its local theoretical and practical adaptation.

The tactics deployed in the negotiation of hegemony in Romanian architecture, however, highlight another problematic dynamic shaped by pre-war socio-cultural patterns and the change in regime. In capitalist systems, Stevens argues that architecture does indeed play a vital part in the maintenance of the status quo by encoding relations of social inequality into the built environment through its tangible practice, and into its own constitution as a profession, a cultural milieu and a discipline of specialist knowledge.⁵⁸⁶ This holds true for pre-war Romanian architecture in terms of the reproduction of relations of social dominance and of the hierarchical structuring of the architecture field itself. However, the volume and social impact of architecture were limited, not only by the low number of architects overall and the country's still nascent industrialisation, but also through the reluctance of the profession to integrate

⁵⁸⁵ Foucault, 'Space, Knowledge, and Power', p. 357.

⁵⁸⁶ Garry Stevens, *The Favored Circle. The Social Foundations of Architectural Distinction*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), p. 96.

the state's institutional structures. Paradoxically, the shift to a fledgling socialist society focused on comprehensive, fast-paced and often radical social reform afforded the Romanian architectural milieu a significant boost in professional authority and role in the implementation of social policies. Nevertheless, the system's de-liberalisation and institutionalisation of the profession was perceived among practitioners at the time as a strategy of coercive control, compounded by the curbing of creative freedom through the obligation to practice according to the canon of Socialist Realism. As the case studies above have demonstrated, however, Romanian architects developed a wide range of professional tactics, from ideological contention to the ritualistic performance of design, to mediate the tensions between the field's own professional agendas and architecture's role as agent of politically-driven societal transformation. Although they might have begun as isolated, individual gestures, these tactics (reflected and amplified by *Arhitectura*) helped expose, to paraphrase Foucault, the gaps – but also reciprocities – between the intentions of holders of political power and those of architects,⁵⁸⁷ illustrated and creatively exploited in the gradual erosion and domestication of Socialist Realism.

⁵⁸⁷ Foucault, 'Space, Knowledge, and Power', p. 247.

4.5. Conclusion

This chapter has explored the transition of Romanian architecture to socialist practice and to the overarching logic of Socialist Realism, putting forward the argument that, far from inconsequential due to the violently coercive instatement of local socialism, this was a period of significant consequence for the restructuring of architecture as a politicised field of socialist production, but also – and most importantly – for the creation of a field of diverse professional tactics, shaping new pathways for the negotiation of hegemony with the political centre. This dynamic has been analysed through the lens of ideological contention – be it theoretical discussion on the grounds of Marxism-Leninism, or the diversification of the allowable formal range of Socialist Realism through practice – illustrated through case-studies drawn from *Arhitectura*. These cross-sections through material drawn from the magazine have been theoretically framed by insights from Crysler (allowing an initial mapping of *Arhitectura* in terms of discursive permeability and emergent criticality), Gramsci's understanding of hegemony and counter-hegemony, amended via Verdery for the particular case of Romanian socialism, and Althusser's theory of Institutional State Apparatuses.

Through the discussion developed above, Chapter 4 begins to address the overarching thesis aim (unpacking the relationship between political power and architecture as a politicised field of cultural production) and first subset of research questions, pertaining to the transference and alteration of pre-war professional dynamics into socialist praxis, and the potential mediation of the local parameters of the socialist project through professional critique and the performative dimension of

design. By unpacking the surrounding problematic of hegemony in the Romanian context, where the socialist regime struggled to amass legitimacy and social adherence, Chapter 4 also highlights the role of ideological contention centred on the nation, identity and national specificity, which will be addressed in detail in the next chapter.

Arhitectura's handling of Socialist Realism reveals a partial, theoretically cryptic and culturally un-filtered transmission of the original message, highlighting the distance between the method's pre-war conceptual flexibility and the bounded scope of its local application during Stalinism. Architecture theory was under-represented, steeped in political jargon, and overshadowed by concrete examples from Soviet practice. The predominant perspective was Romanian, but one lacking enough information to unearth the conceptual core behind the jargon, and attempt a translation of the spatial implications carried by concepts which were self-explanatory in a Soviet cultural context. Crucial ideas like flexibility in manipulating space, contextuality, distinctiveness, appealing to the collective imaginary through the creative use of local spatial precedent, became secondary to the accurate transmission of propagandistic messages, which focused the argument on formal representation. The space of creative manoeuvrability afforded architects by the original method – and promised to Romanian architects in *Arhitectura* – was diminished in (mis)translation, but interestingly enough, this encouraged within-the rules architectural experiment and critical discussion. By exploring the rhetoric of Marxism-Leninism, and through ritualised practice in a Socialist Realist key, Romanian architects were able to open a

space of creative questioning and alternative space-making. Moreover, drawing from the regime's political and economic goals – such as reduction of housing costs or increased building efficiency – the profession sidestepped the aesthetic, historicist bounds of a crystallised Socialist Realism and made valuable contributions to the new direction of post-war Romanian architecture by exploring the materiality, technical, and social aspects of housing or industrial design.⁵⁸⁸

Censorship and deference to Soviet instruction were certainly real. But so was the non-monolithic mentality of the professional milieu, underpinning a truly varied and creatively significant architectural practice, from uncritical compliance⁵⁸⁹ to subversion (via refuge in liminal areas of praxis, like heritage), and, perhaps in the majority, genuine efforts to produce quality architecture by reconciling the rules of the political game with the financial and technical limitations of practice through talent, competence and common sense. *Arhitectura* magazine was simultaneously the conduit, initiator, and the (sometimes distorting) reflection of these professional exchanges – a microcosm of emergent socialist praxis of selective permeability to new ideas and variable degrees of critical self-perception. Most significant, however, was the magazine's placement in the profession's triune locus of power, alongside the Ion Mincu University of Architecture and the URA, through the strategic positioning in all three bodies of the most prominent Romanian architects. The next chapter further

⁵⁸⁸ These gradual transformations in the praxis sector of socialist housing are illustrated in Appendices 4 and 5 of this thesis, pp. 475-76.

⁵⁸⁹ Which nevertheless served the purpose of testing the boundaries of Socialist Realism, and, as was the case of Casa Scânteii, diminish the pressure put upon the entirety of architectural production through the creation of a small series of canon-compliant buildings to serve as regime legitimization markers in a certain aesthetic.

explores the re-formulation of *the national* as conceptual cornerstone of Romanian architectural production, process in which this triad of professional authority had a significant role to play.

CHAPTER 5. NATIONAL IDENTITY, SPECIFICITY, THE SYSTEM

By examining the introduction, dissemination, and creative subversion of Socialist Realism through architectural discourse and practice, Chapter 4 highlighted the realignment of cultural hegemony negotiations between architecture and the political centre, mediated by pre-war cultural patterns and modes of architectural praxis, and the logic of the new socialist regime. Building on these emergent tactics of engagement with dominant ideology, developed in response to the dual challenge of post-war reconstruction and socialism's call for an architecture praxis of yet unmatched scale and social engagement, Chapter 5 unpacks the interdependent constitution of national identity and architectural specificity. Through the lens of socio-cultural dynamics, the profession's negotiations with holders of political power over the common goal of a specifically Romanian architectural production and built environment appear polarised. This is particularly evident in the dynamics between political legitimation (internal and international), and the profession's reading of architectural and geo-cultural otherness, its desire for synchronicity with the Western architecture scene, as well as the pursuit of a uniquely and specifically Romanian architecture.

As shown in the previous chapter, communist *Arhitectura* had begun to establish itself as a critical channel for the subtle negotiation, dilution, and local contextualisation of the Marxist-Leninist underpinnings of socialist architecture praxis, particularly through the resurgence of national discourse. Chapter 5 tracks the further entrenchment of the

idea of *the national* at the core of both political and architectural discourse throughout the 1960s and 1970s, through fault-lines and merger points between the political and professional understanding of local specificity during periods of cultural openness (paradoxically predicated on Romanian socialism's drive for legitimation through the recognition of cultural uniqueness) and inward-looking, nationalistic insularity. These moments of critical discourse reconfiguration illuminate the growing influence of architects as members of intersecting social, professional and institutional circles, suggesting a gradual recalibration of the profession's mechanisms of knowledge-based authority accrual, but also an increasingly diverse and fragmented state institutional hierarchy (Fig. 32).



Fig. 32. The second national conference of the Union of Romanian Architects – 24-26 May 1965. The conference committee delivers an overview of the proceedings and sets out the main coordinates of future praxis. The flags of the Romanian Communist Party and of the People's republic of Romania provide an official background, while the folk rugs decorating the stage signify the new basis of modern architecture: national tradition.

By following three interconnected narrative threads – architecture practised abroad by Romanian architects, the reverberations of international architectural thought in *Arhitectura*, and the theoretical and political formulation of a *nationally-specific architecture* – Chapter 5 charts patterns of socio-cultural interaction between the profession and the state, and the professional and its international counterpart, which will in turn reveal the loci and mechanisms of power exchanges between the two, explored further in Chapter 6. The theoretical framework of this chapter draws from Katherine Verdery's study of national ideology and cultural production in the Romanian socialist system, from Seyla Benhabib and Nezar Alsayyad's readings of cultural dynamics and their potential hijacking within frameworks of power, and Jadwiga Staniszkis's discussion of the indissoluble link between nationalism and the definition of social identity in the USSR's satellite states.

5.1. Architectural otherness. Meetings, exchanges, and influences

This section focuses on *Arhitectura's* increased permeability to discourses, methodologies, institutional and spatial practices from outside Romania's borders, with a direct influence on the profession's formulation of identity and specificity. As a socio-political and institutional community of method, the magazine was able to subtly affect (to borrow Crysler's phrasing), the politics of built form by manipulating the politics of writing within the discipline, even during the ideologically strict period of Socialist Realism. Although the three main narrative threads signalled above are

closely interwoven, this chapter begins by unpacking the reflections of foreign architectural thought and practice in the magazine for two reasons. First, this will help isolate discursive influences feeding into the concepts of identity and architectural specificity extraneous to both spheres of Romanian politics and culture, thereby helping establish the tacit (and little studied) influence of architectural and cultural *otherness* on the shaping of local identity through architecture. Second, it will contribute to the emergent image of *Arhitectura* as an intellectual space of genuine criticality, whose activity throughout the communist period had a palpable influence on the general direction of socialist praxis. In the methodological framework of this chapter, the concept of *otherness* serves as an indicator of the conceptual differences, but also points of congruence, between the political, architectural, and social understanding of the disputed form and boundaries of *national specificity*. To this end, I have approached the analytic lens of *otherness* that underpins the discussion below from a multi-dimensional perspective. *Architectural otherness* denotes encounters with the discourses and practices of architecture outside Romania's borders. *Disciplinarian otherness* entails ideas, methodologies, and analytical scales sourced from other specialist fields, while *geo-cultural otherness* refers to the influence of lifestyles and modes of habitation feeding into the Romanian architecture field through its practice abroad. Finally, *political otherness* captures the ontological contrast between the legitimisation strategies of the political centre capitalising on the local ubiquity of nation-centric discourses, and the constitution of a monolithic, socialist Romanian collective consciousness.

As stated in the Methodology chapter of this thesis, the cross-sections through *Arhitectura* are both content- and analysis-driven, working from within the source material to identify key theoretical or instrumental shifts in direction, and applying Crysler's method of journal analysis, focused on variations in the openness of the publication to contending discursive trends and methodologies, preferred spatial scale, chronology, and level of self-reflexivity. In this chapter, Crysler's multi-focal analytical lens is used to discern critical changes in the magazine's quantitatively dense and qualitatively rich contents.⁵⁹⁰ Moreover, this lens supports my analysis of the articulation between *Arhitectura's* construction of tradition through discourse (both local and from radically different geo-cultural contexts), and the self-awareness of the architecture field as complicit (but also seditious) in the creation of legitimising architectural iconographies of *national* derivation (Fig. 33). As highlighted in the Literature Review, there is a scarcity of studies devoted to this articulation, which my research seeks to address.

⁵⁹⁰ The magazine amassed 249 issues of post-war publication, averaging 500 pages per year. Publication frequency was more inconsistent during the 1950s, when the number of yearly issues varied between 2 and 11, with the most significant drop in publication in 1953 (2 issues compared to 11 in 1951 and 8 in 1952), a year after the complete nationalisation of architecture through the 1952 Decision of the Council of Ministers. *Arhitectura's* publication stabilised between 1959 and 1989, with most years achieving 5 or 6 issues. During years with less than 6 published outputs, one or two issues would be combined to compensate for publication gaps - e.g. *Arhitectura* 2-3 (1966), counting 89 main content pages, as compared to *Arhitectura* 1 (1966) with 58 pages.

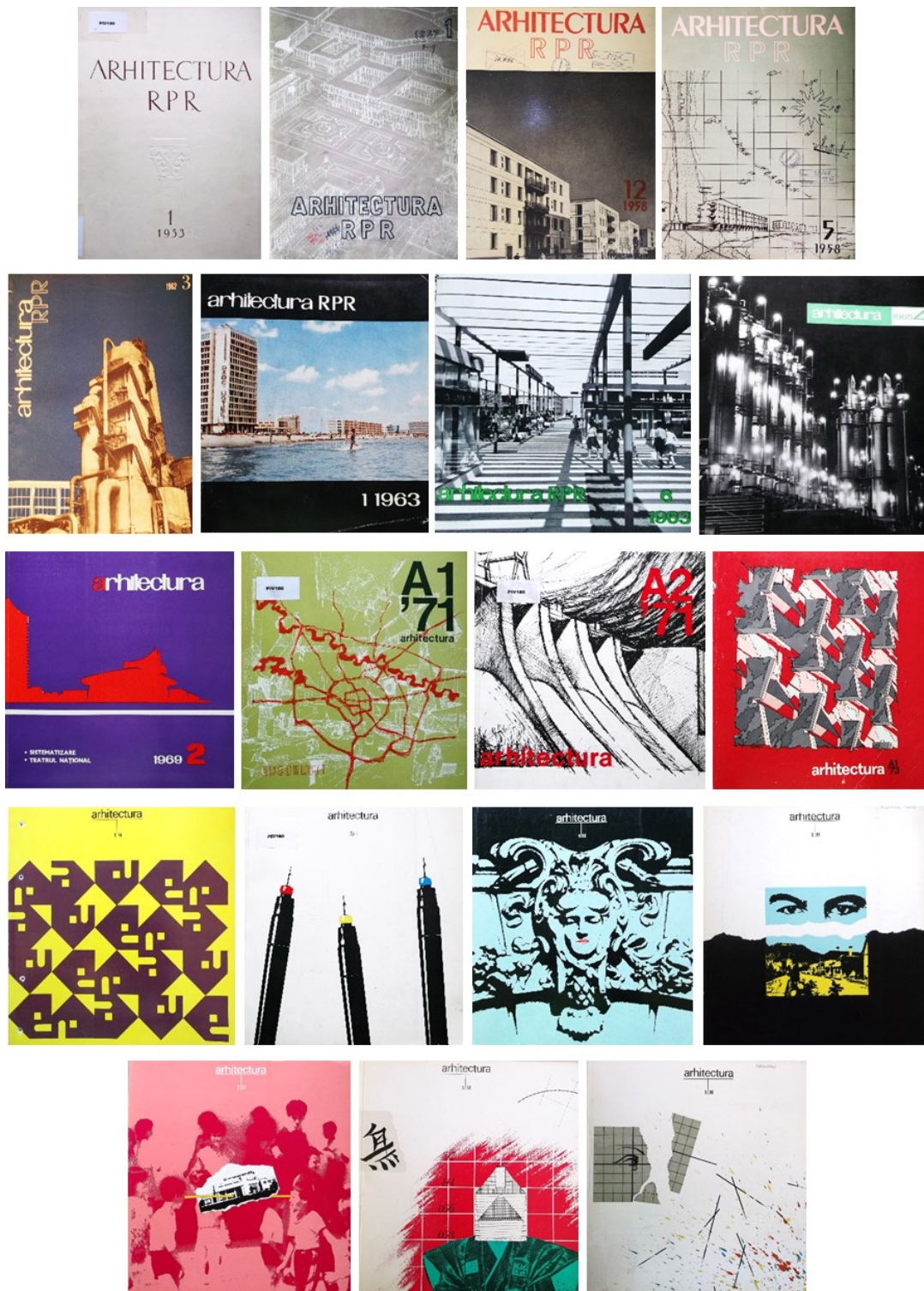


Fig. 33. Changes in *Arhitectura*'s visual presentation as a reflection of shifts in editorial direction. Top row: the 1950s saw a slow breakaway from the classicising model of Socialist Realism influenced by Russian magazine *Arkhitkura I Stroitelstvo* towards a local variant with subtle modernist influences. In the 1960s (second row), *Arhitectura* updated to a square format, and alternated between photography and collage, also playing on different architectural and urban scales. Third row: in the 1970s, minimalist graphics and hand-drawn sketches reflected the diversity of local and international issues polarising discussion. During the 1980s (last two rows), *Arhitectura*'s cover presentation became increasingly postmodern (and almost cryptographic) in its questioning of the politically-mandated direction of praxis, and the nature of the profession itself. National specificity (penultimate row – second cover, last row – last cover) often featured in deceptively celebratory graphics, hiding a deeper layer of criticality.

In her study of *Arhitectura's* physical transformation over the communist period, Zahariade also notes that even subtle changes in its 'editorial skin' reflect the shifting balance between the publication's ideological obligations and its professional agenda.⁵⁹¹ The chronological anchor points suggested by Zahariade also feed into this chapter's cross-sections through *Arhitectura*, expanding on her analysis of the key moments reflected on the epidermal level of the magazine, with my own investigation of themed contents. The articles and case studies drawn from *Arhitectura's* vast contents are by no means exhaustive, but have been chosen to support the critical analysis of this chapter for being either typical examples of discursive trends unfolding over the period in discussion, or representative of the earliest identifiable points of conceptual shifts in the magazine's direction.

The end of the 1950s ushered in a period of relative cultural liberalisation in Romania, consistent with the lessening of Soviet control sparked by de-Stalinisation.⁵⁹² The Romanian political and cultural landscape was also affected internally by the very different political strategies and personal idiosyncrasies of top leadership (Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, succeeded by Nicolae Ceauşescu), and externally by progression through two cycles of systemic dependence on the USSR. Staniszkis's breakdown of the shifts and differentiations in Soviet policy across satellite states cast the first half of the 1960s, a fondly remembered, golden-age of Romanian communism, in the more

⁵⁹¹ Ana Maria Zahariade, *Arhitectura în proiectul comunist. 1944-1989. România 1944-1989* [Architecture in the communist project. Romania 1944-1989], trans. by Ana Maria Zahariade with Diana Lupu, ed. by Alistair Ian Blyth, Eugenia Petre (Bucharest: Simetria, 2001), p. 162.

⁵⁹² In Romania, the end of the 1950s saw the departure of Soviet consultants (1957), the dismantling of SOVROMS, and the withdrawal of Soviet troops (1958).

sombre light of economic imbalance and increased dependence on the USSR but also, paradoxically, the capitalist West. According to Staniszki, the cycles of dependence recur in the same three-step pattern of: political seclusion from Western influence; the enforcement of economic strategies designed to entrench dependence;⁵⁹³ and the creation of institutional structures to carry out the tactics of continued dependence. Ending in 1953, the first cycle enforced local communist leadership and unbalanced, 'production for production' economic structures. Romania's response to the second, 1960s cycle was an autarchic centralisation and politicisation of the economy, predicated on a renewed fervour of nationalist sentiment.⁵⁹⁴ Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej's 1947-1965 tenure was instrumental to this process, initiating the political breakaway from Moscow in a bid for relative economic and socio-cultural policies serving national, rather than Soviet, interests.⁵⁹⁵ However, the hyper-centralised state forged by this nation-centric strategy increased resistance to the de-Stalinisation process⁵⁹⁶ reforming socialist regimes across Eastern and Central Europe,⁵⁹⁷ shaping instead a reform-resistant, local brand of neo-Stalinism.

⁵⁹³ Such as the heavy industrialisation of agrarian economies, ensuring dependence on Russian resources and technology, with a focus on producing means of production, rather than consumer goods.

⁵⁹⁴ Jadwiga Staniszki, *The Ontology of Socialism*, ed. by Peggy Watson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), p.60.

⁵⁹⁵ Katherine Verdery, *National Ideology Under Socialism. Identity and Cultural Politics in Ceaușescu's Romania* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), pp. 105-06.

⁵⁹⁶ Reinforced through the April 1964 declaration of the Romanian Workers' Party, affirming national sovereignty and integrity over Soviet interests.

Declarația cu privire la poziția Partidului Muncitoresc Român în problemele mișcării comuniste și muncitorești internaționale adoptată de Plenara lărgită a C.C. al P.M.R din aprilie 1964 [Declaration on the position of the Romanian Workers' Party regarding the problematic of the international communist and workers' movement, adopted by the Plenum of the Council of Ministers of the Romanian Workers' Party of April 1964] (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1964).

⁵⁹⁷ Such as Czechoslovakia, Poland, or Hungary. More details on the different paths taken by these satellite states within the general framework of Eastern-European socialism can be found in Staniszki, *The Ontology of Socialism*, pp. 45-53.

In the framework of Central and Eastern European socialism and its dependence on the Kremlin, this shift represents a second stage of self-defined *otherness*. As discussed in the previous chapter, the Romanian Communist Party's formative years were marked by *comprehensive otherness* – ideologically, ethnically, and culturally. An initial period of struggle between local communist factions took place during the end of the 1940s and early 1950s, resulting in the violent purging of the Muscovite branch of the Party led by Ana Pauker, who served as Minister of Foreign Affairs between 1947 and 1952. As a woman of Jewish descent and a communist who had spent the years of the Party's pre-war illegality in Muscovite exile, rather than a Romanian jail, Pauker was the ultimate outsider to Romanian politics. Despite her unreserved loyalty to the Kremlin and ideological devotion to Stalin, however, she pursued a moderate approach to Romania's Sovietisation by advocating political plurality via coalitions with other local parties, attempting to lessen the persecution of the intellectual strata, openly opposing collectivisation, and facilitating the emigration to Israel of approximately 100,000 Jews. Pauker was vilified after her political demise as the proponent or facilitator of some of the most violently repressive strategies of Stalinisation, albeit having pursued an almost social-democratic approach to the local instatement of communism.⁵⁹⁸ Conversely, Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, her successor at the centre of communist power in Romania, reversed the balance between declarative *ideological otherness* and its operative application in Romania's

⁵⁹⁸ From this point of view, Ana Pauker's approach to local communism bears similarity to Władysław Gomułka's openness to reform and local adaptation of socialism. For more details on Pauker's influence on early communism in Romania, see Robert Levy, *Ana Pauker: The Rise and Fall of a Jewish Communist* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

development as a satellite socialist state. By taking a hard-line approach to local autonomy predicated on national self-determination and dismissing the wave of reform initiated by Khrushchev, which afforded satellite states some leeway in attuning socialism to local development requirements, Gheorghiu-Dej set the Romanian communist party on the path of neo-Stalinist economy and political insularism later taken to the extreme during Ceaușescu's last decade in power.

For Staniszkis, the cultural openness of the early 1960s represented a local economic tactic counteracting dependence on the USSR through cultural consumption, with the unforeseen consequence of introducing additional factors of dependence. During the third cycle (1970s), socialist countries unsuccessfully attempted to participate in the Western-run, international division of labour, while also receiving Western capital and obsolete technology, relying on massive expenditures of energy supplied by the USSR. Unable to supplant the absent interests and mechanisms of a free market, the distribution of foreign funds was also mediated by the state, thus increasing the dependence of satellite states on the West without any developmental gains from this additional subjection – situation which ultimately highlighted and widened the ontological chasm between the two systems.⁵⁹⁹ As I will discuss below, the situation of Romanian architecture as a consumer of Western cultural goods and a novice participant in the international design arena is more nuanced. Exposure to global media was, to some extent, tolerated and even encouraged to mitigate the dearth of

⁵⁹⁹ Staniszkis, *The Ontology of Socialism*, pp. 45-48.

innovation endemic to socialist systems.⁶⁰⁰ At the same time, Romania's participation on the international labour market had skyrocketed by 1974,⁶⁰¹ with architectural expertise contracts established as a lucrative sector. To further nuance Staniszki's assessment on the unsuccessful attempts by socialist states to partake in international labour, I would argue that Romanian architecture practice abroad represented one modestly successful niche of specialist knowledge outsourcing.

For *Arhitectura*, this was a time of tentative editorial recalibration in terms of graphic presentation and content, underpinned by a short-lived, but well-specified period of institutional independence: from 1957 to 1960, the magazine was subordinate only to the Union of Romanian Architects, before returning to the jurisdiction of the State Committee for Construction, Architecture and Systematisation.⁶⁰² *Arhitectura*, whose editorial board was no longer obscured by anonymity, phased out translated Russian content approaching architecture from an ideology-heavy, Marxist-Leninist perspective. One of the first moments of welcome self-reflexivity triggered by the opening up of Romania's cultural horizon was the magazine's exposure of the realignment of local praxis between the economic rationalism of post-Socialist-Realist Soviet architecture, and the once again permissible theoretical connections to Western capitalist architecture. In 1959, S. Mojneagun's article 'Căutări în domeniul arhitecturii

⁶⁰⁰ Gabriela Tabacu, 'On what and how. Architectural magazines in the School Library (1945-1989)' *studies in History & Theory of Architecture*, 1 (2013), pp. 133-48.

⁶⁰¹ According to Verdery, Romania's trade with countries outside the Soviet bloc exceeded internal trade by over 50%. Verdery, *National Ideology Under Socialism*, p. 105.

⁶⁰² Zahariade, *Arhitectura în proiectul comunist*, pp. 165-66.

în Occident⁶⁰³ reflected the magazine's search for a wider, interdisciplinary scope, calling on sociology, economy, psychology, and law (among other disciplines) to diversify architectural knowledge. Mojneagun's discussion was perhaps more genuinely dialectical than most Socialist Realist theoretical pieces, constructing a parallel between Eastern and Western architecture which highlighted commonalities of discourse and praxis, and addressed both ontological systems outside the dichotomy of ideological and moral purity prevalent on both sides during the Cold War.⁶⁰⁴

Supported with ample quotes and references from theorists, architects and historians across the political spectrum,⁶⁰⁵ Mojneagun's article analysed urban development in conjunction with the crisis of modern architecture, reflected in the diminished social dimension and cultural relevance of housing. To address the crisis of the city (itself perceived as a complex mechanism of social oppression, alienation and coercion through consumerism), the article looked, perhaps for the first time since 1950, outside the sphere of Soviet *scientific urbanism*,⁶⁰⁶ whose rigid urban models and reliance on

⁶⁰³ S. Mojneagun, 'Căutări în domeniul arhitecturii în Occident' [Research directions in Western architecture], *Arhitectura R.P.R.* 1 (1959), pp. 66-68.

⁶⁰⁴ Although cautiously factual analyses of contemporary Western architecture had begun to slip into *Arhitectura* after 1954, the more extensive comparative analyses hailed from the time of Nicolae Bădescu's excoriation of decadent bourgeois architecture (see Chapter 4 of this thesis, section 4.3).

⁶⁰⁵ Frank Lloyd Wright, Joseph Hudnut, Lewis Mumford, Rudolf Hillebrecht, Le Corbusier, Eero Saarinen, Richard Neutra, Josep Lluís Sert, Bauhaus, UIA, CIAM, among others. Mojneagun, 'Căutări în domeniul arhitecturii în Occident', pp. 66-68.

⁶⁰⁶ I have chosen to emphasise certain terms and phrases through use of italics to denote literal translations of the terminology used in *Arhitectura* and other specialist publications while discussing these topics. In general, these concepts (e.g., claims to Soviet pre-eminence in many of the pioneering scientific and technological advancements of the 20th century) have been, since the timeframe discussed in this chapter, either restructured to illustrate the international, collaborative dimension of scientific innovation, or dismissed through academic research. For instance, Susan Buck-Morss has discussed the vital role played by Henry Ford in the automotive development of the USSR under Stalin in the 1920s and 1930s, from the provision of patents and knowledge through specialised

prefabricated construction had also resulted in crisis-prone urban landscapes. Although the urban crisis gaining momentum at the time stemmed from profit-driven development and capitalism's inherent contradictions, Mojneagun advocated for the reconsideration of Western urbanism – from zoning to city centre reconstruction, decentralisation, diffuse garden-city systems, and even more utopian, urban dissolution schemes, like Broadacre city.⁶⁰⁷ Alongside Western thinkers, Mojneagun appreciated the effectiveness of socialist property laws on the implementation of high-impact, effective social architecture. This conceptual direction would link the architectural cultures of the two blocs, dismantling political and cultural misconceptions,⁶⁰⁸ but also introducing alternative spatial and urban models, as well as richer aesthetic interpretations. Tradition, identity, and 'national originality' represented, for Mojneagun, valid paths towards architectural specificity, albeit erroneously rooted in the West in an intellectually-abstruse proliferation of styles. Drawing from Hudnut,⁶⁰⁹ he argued for a conceptually new merger of architecture and the arts, able to reflect tradition-based 'historical and national particularities' and diversify the formal and symbolic vocabulary of modern architecture.⁶¹⁰ After

personnel, to the organisation of industrial facilities. For more details, see Susan Buck-Morss, *Dreamworlds and Catastrophe: The Passing of Mass Utopia in the East and West* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2000), pp. 164-66.

⁶⁰⁷ Mojneagun's discussion of modern concepts of the dwelling is equally diverse, from Neutra's acceptance of the dwelling as the fundamental locus of individuality, familial intimacy and spiritual development supported by close ties with nature, to Feldman's hardline collectivist, intimacy-erasing worker's housing units with no internal partitions, and even the conclusion of an all-female American conference on the ideal house, highlighting the gender imbalance at play in the modern formulation of modes of habitation.

⁶⁰⁸ Zahariade also points out that the model of socialist, nationalised architecture practice represented a shared ideal across the iron curtain, comparable to Gropius' ideas of global design and cooperative teamwork. Zahariade, *Arhitectura în proiectul comunist*, p. 99.

⁶⁰⁹ Joseph Hudnut, American architect, theorist, and Harvard University professor, credited with the recruitment of Marcel Breuer and Walter Gropius into Harvard academic staff.

⁶¹⁰ Mojneagun, 'Căutări în domeniul arhitecturii în Occident', p. 68.

Arhitectura's discursive subversion of Socialist Realism discussed in the previous chapter, this suggests emergent critical awareness regarding the limitations and effects of the post-war reconstruction implemented in the spirit of CIAM,⁶¹¹ synchronous with the critical activity of Team X, whose theoretical and practical work would also incite discussion in *Arhitectura*.⁶¹²

During the early 1960s, *Arhitectura's* openness of thought and method – indicative of the Romanian architectural milieu – was also bolstered by the international mobility of architects and their involvement in notable organisations worldwide, such as the International Union of Architects (IUA) and UNESCO.⁶¹³ As early as 1957-1959, Romania took part in international design exhibitions⁶¹⁴ and congresses organised by IUA,⁶¹⁵ and set up professional visit programmes within the USSR and satellite states, extended by 1965 to capitalist countries across Europe, North and South America.⁶¹⁶ The

⁶¹¹ After Socialist Realism, *Arhitectura* gradually phased out all discussions of Marxism-Leninism, dialectic materialism, and translations from Russian theorists by issue 4-5 (1961).

⁶¹² For instance, Dutch Structuralism or new modes of vernacularised modernist expression based on anthropological interpretations of modern habitation. For typical articles illustrating these discursive directions, see *Arhitectura* 5 (1976), p. 55; 6 (1977), pp. 94; 3 (1978), p. 80; 1-2 (1980), p. 157; 3 (1980), p. 96; 3 (1982), p. 72.

⁶¹³ It should be noted that changes in the composition of the editorial board were often due to the emigration of editors and staff. Two successive editorships (held by Marcel Melicson and Mircea Lupu) ended with the editors' emigration to Israel and Switzerland, respectively. Zahariade, *Arhitectura în proiectul comunist*, pp. 66-67.

⁶¹⁴ Romania was a participant to the 1957 International Design exhibition held in Berlin, focusing on typified design in socialist countries.

Mihai Ricci and Leon Garcia, 'Expoziția Internațională de proiectare tip (I). Clădiri de locuit și social-culturale' [The International typified design Exhibition (I). Housing and socio-cultural programmes] *Arhitectura R.P.R.* 3 (1958), pp. 14-18.

Isac Finkelstein and Dinu Grigoriu, 'Expoziția Internațională de proiectare tip (II). Tipizarea construcțiilor industriale' [The International typified design Exhibition. The standardisation of industrial constructions] *Arhitectura R.P.R.* 4 (1958), pp. 13-15.

⁶¹⁵ IUA's 5th World Congress of Architects (The Construction and Reconstruction of Cities 1945-1957) took place in Moscow in July 1958, and was discussed in *Arhitectura R.P.R.* 2 (1959), pp. 52-56.

⁶¹⁶ In-bound visits by foreign architects from abroad were just as frequent as Romanian study trips abroad. While architects from the USSR and other satellite states accounted for the majority of international exchanges to begin with, the 1960s saw an influx of world-wide specialist visitors. *Arhitectura R.P.R.* 5 (1963), p. 60, briefly details the visit of Richard Neutra to the Black Sea littoral, Northern Moldova heritage sites, and Bucharest.

collaboration between the Union of Romanian Architects and IUA was particularly energetic and well-documented in *Arhitectura*: the 1966 IUA International Colloquium on housing was organised and hosted by the URA in Bucharest.⁶¹⁷ Approaching the theme of housing from the point of view of societal progress and international cooperation, this colloquium organised by the Romanian IUA branch represented a landmark moment in the shift of both the methodologies and the scales (local, regional, global) on which the interdependencies of the built environment disciplines, economic development, and frameworks of geo-political dependence were understood. By printing full translations of the lectures given by French sociologist Paul-Henry Chombart de Lauwe,⁶¹⁸ Duccio Alfredo Turin (UN official and architecture professor at University College London),⁶¹⁹ and Portuguese architect Nuno Portas (director of housing and urbanism research branch of the National Laboratory for Civil Engineering, and editor of *Arquitectura* magazine),⁶²⁰ *Arhitectura* collated for its professional audience an alternative methodology of praxis.

⁶¹⁷ Extensively covered in *Arhitectura* 4 (1966), including proceedings summarised in: Alexandru Budişteanu, 'Colocviul internațional asupra locuinței U.I.A. Construcția de locuințe, factor al progresului social și al colaborării internaționale' [International IUA Colloquium. Housing construction, a factor of social progress and international collaboration] *Arhitectura* 4 (1966), pp. 2-27.

⁶¹⁸ Paul-Henry Chombart de Lauwe, 'Evoluția necesităților și transformarea modului de a locui' [The evolution of needs and the transformation of dwelling patterns] *Arhitectura* 4 (1966), pp. 4-7. Paul-Henry Chombart de Lauwe was an urban sociologist who founded the Parisian Groupe d'Ethnologie Sociale in 1950, and argued for participatory architecture and urban planning, as well as against the functional zoning prevalent in modernist urbanism.

⁶¹⁹ Duccio A. Turin, 'Aspecte economice ale politicii de construcție de locuințe în țările în curs de dezvoltare, cu deosebire în Africa' [Economic aspects of the housing construction policy in developing countries, particularly Africa] *Arhitectura* 4 (1966), pp. 14-17, 71.

⁶²⁰ Architect, theorist, and academic Nuno Portas has been a leading figure of Portuguese architecture since the 1960s, also serving three consecutive terms as Secretary of State for Housing and Urbanism after the 1974 revolution. Nuno Portas, 'Definiția și evoluția normelor pentru locuințe' [The definition and evolution of housing standards] *Arhitectura* 4 (1966), pp. 7-13.

Arhitectura also opened international subscriptions to audiences abroad,⁶²¹ published excerpts from notable foreign specialist periodicals,⁶²² ran interviews with world-renowned architects (Oscar Niemeyer, Richard Neutra),⁶²³ and reported on the 1964 New York exhibition of contemporary Romanian architecture, reviewed by Ada Louise Huxtable.⁶²⁴ From the 1960s onwards, the in-bound stream of cultural and professional information closely followed the latest developments in international architecture (Fig. 34). Starting with Le Corbusier's Ronchamp chapel,⁶²⁵ *Arhitectura's* portrayal of modern architecture emphasised discursive plurivalence, from Aldo van Eyck's Amsterdam orphanage, Moshe Safdie's Habitat '67, Alvar Aalto's Finlandia Hall,⁶²⁶ to Louis Kahn's Bangladeshi Parliament.⁶²⁷ Modern architecture had outgrown purist rationality, and lively debates among Romanian architects also explored (theoretically, at least) the local and regional contextualisation of Modernism⁶²⁸ through offshoots

⁶²¹ Subscriptions to *Arhitectura* became available in Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, China, Cuba, Czechoslovakia, Finland, France, German Democratic Republic, Federal Republic of Germany, Hungary, Israel, Italy, Japan, Mongolia, People's Democratic Republic of Korea, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, UK, USA, USSR, Democratic Republic of Vietnam, Yugoslavia.

⁶²² *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, *L'Urbanisme*, *Japan Architect*, *Deutsche Architektur*, *Radical Architecture*, etc.

⁶²³ Ladislau Adler, 'Oscar Niemeyer și orașul Brasilia' [Oscar Niemeyer and the city of Brasilia] *Arhitectura R.P.R.* 5 (1963), pp. 52-57.

Richard Neutra, 'Arhitectura ca activitate umană' [Architecture as a human activity] *Arhitectura R.P.R.* 3 (1964), pp. 36-47.

⁶²⁴ Alexandru Budișteanu, 'Prezentarea peste hotare a realizărilor arhitecturii românești' [International exhibitions of Romanian architectural accomplishments] *Arhitectura R.P.R.* 3 (1965), pp. 58-59.

⁶²⁵ Marcel Melicson, 'Le Corbusier', *Arhitectura* 6 (1965), pp. 54-57.

⁶²⁶ Louis Khan's work is presented in *Arhitectura* 1 (1973), p. 74; 5 (1976), pp. 62-64; 5-6 (1978), pp. 94-96.

⁶²⁷ Works by Alvaar Alto can be found in *Arhitectura* 2 (1973), pp. 56-57; 5-6 (1978), pp. 96-97; 1 (1981), pp. 81-82. Also see *Arhitectura* 6 (1969), pp. 12-13, for a short interview with the Finnish architect conducted by Gheorghe Săsărman.

⁶²⁸ Ideas tending towards what Kenneth Frampton would coin, in 1983, Critical Regionalism through his influential essay 'Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance', in *The Anti-aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, ed. by Hal Foster (Seattle: Bay Press, 1983), pp. 16-30.

like Structuralism and Brutalism, at a time when Romania's industrialised urbanisation still focused on functionalist efficiency.

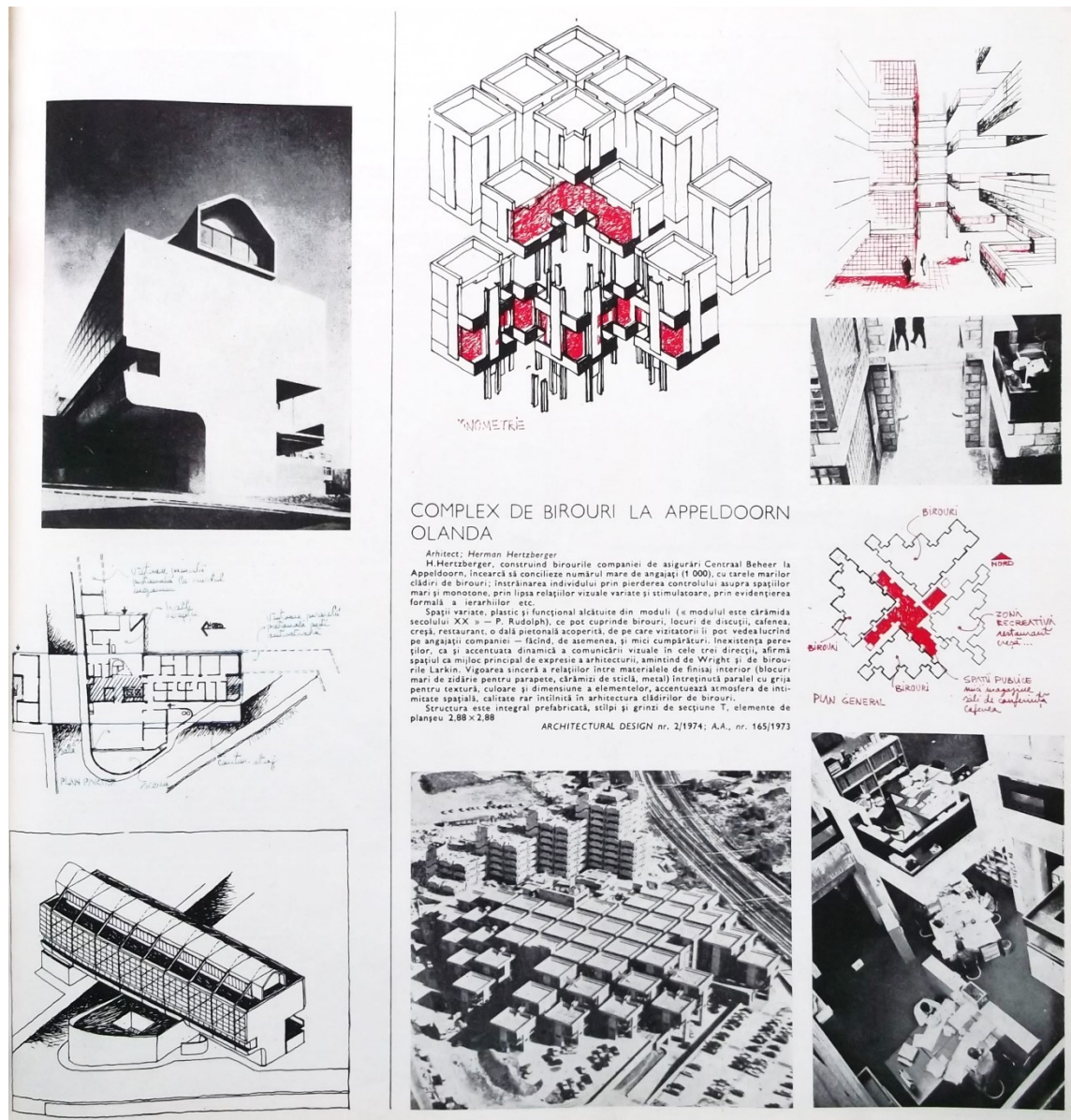


Fig. 34. A typical page from *Arhitectura's* popular 'Cadran' series (1970-1989), an information-dense rubric unpacking discursive trends in architecture from abroad through presentations of built works, projects, and excerpts from notable architecture critics. The authors of 'Cadran' also accompanied their discussion with sketches and diagramming, effectively assembling an encyclopaedia of visual and conceptual precedents for the Romanian professional audience. This particular page (1976) delves into Dutch Structuralism through Herman Hertzberger's Central Beheer Administration Building.

Arhitectura 6 (1979) was the first issue themed around the international achievements of Romanian architects. Titled 'Prezențe arhitecturale românești peste hotare',⁶²⁹ it revealed one of the least studied, and therefore all the more significant, aspects of communist Romanian architecture: its international presence as provider of comprehensive specialist knowledge, particularly in developing African countries and the Middle East. Between 1958⁶³⁰ and the early 1980s, Romanian architects authored projects and studies, and provided consultancy for the formulation of housing and regional development policies across six continents and over 45 countries with a wide range of political and economic systems, as presented in Appendix 9 of this thesis⁶³¹ and discussed in more detail in the next chapter. *Arhitectura* 6 (1979) serves as a general indicator of Romanian architecture abroad since it condenses architectural activity initiated through international collaboration during the 1960s and finalised during the 1970s, but also because it explicitly links, through interviews with the authors of projects based abroad, the discursive dynamic between *national specificity* and the *specificity of cultural otherness*. Moreover, it highlights the self-perception of Romanian architects as participants on the stage of global architecture, their positioning with

⁶²⁹ 'Prezențe arhitecturale românești peste hotare' ['Romanian architecture presences abroad'] was an *Arhitectura* series comprising three issues devoted exclusively to Romanian architecture practice abroad - 6 (1979), 5 (1980), and 6 (1980). 'Romanian architecture presences abroad' subsequently became a semi-regular, though far less extensive feature in *Arhitectura*, featured in issues 2 (1982), 2 (1983), 1 (1984), 5 (1984), 6 (1984), 4 (1985), 1 (1986), 3 (1986), 6 (1986), 2 (1987), 3 (1987), 4 (1987), 6 (1987), 2 (1988), 2 (1989), 5-6 (1989).

⁶³⁰ The first presentation of Romanian architectural design abroad featured in *Arhitectura R.P.R.* 3 (1958) and detailed the design of a hospital for general medicine in Pyongyang, North Korea, designed by Bogdan Cotaru, Ignace Șerban, Vasile Arvunescu, and Guido Haiman from the Institute of Construction Design (ICD). Bogdan Cotaru, 'Spital general cu 500 de paturi la Phenian' [500 bed general hospital at Pyongyang] *Arhitectura R.P.R.* 3 (1958), pp. 6-9.

⁶³¹ See pp. 480-482 of this thesis.

regard to different sets of professional challenges, and their attempts to shape a truly contemporary, culturally mindful architecture praxis.

Cezar Lăzărescu, a prominent figure of communist Romanian architecture and active in architectural and urban design, research, innovation, education and publication since the early 1950s (Fig. 35),⁶³² was the central voice of Romanian practice abroad.



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Fig. 35. Cezar Lăzărescu in front of Otopeni International Airport, one of his most influential projects. Top right: Europa Hotel at Eforie Nord (1971); bottom: Perla Mării restaurant at Eforie Nord (1958). Even at the heights of Socialist Realism, the architect had political *carte blanche* with regard to developing the Black Sea littoral in a modern architectural aesthetic relatable to foreign tourists.

⁶³² Lăzărescu's professionalism and extensive knowledge in political leadership cast him in a position of enduring professional authority over successive stages in Romanian communism. More details on his extensive career and professional outlook can be found in Ileana Lăzărescu and Georgeta Gabrea. *Vise în piatră. În memoria Prof. Dr. Arh. Cezar Lăzărescu* [Dreams in stone. In memory Of Prof. Dr. Arch. Cezar Lăzărescu] (Bucharest: Capitel, 2003).

For Lăzărescu, its core principle was collaboration, understood as the self-effacing provision of professional support, guidance, and knowledge, enabling the client to realise projects tailored to each unique geo-cultural situation, which they would, most importantly, regard as their own achievement.⁶³³ This modest approach contrasted vividly, in Lăzărescu's eyes, with the *modus operandi* of Western architecture firms active in the same geo-cultural contexts: besides tendencies towards architectural peacocking, the inadaptability of their designs to 'third world' realities indicated their misunderstanding of (or worse yet, indifference to) local modes of life and habitation, but also of the balance between local developmental goals, and the resources and infrastructure required for implementation (Fig. 36).

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Fig. 36. Oscar Niemeyer's Algerian university campuses: left – University of Constantine (1969-1972); middle: Mentouri University (1969-1975); right: University of Science and Technology Houari Boumediene (1969-1965).

Lăzărescu's openness to the *geo-cultural otherness* encountered through practice abroad echoes Seyla Benhabib's approach to inter-cultural dialogue as 'interactive universalism', where *the other* is always a potential partner in moral discourse, and the

⁶³³ Cezar Lăzărescu and Ileana Murgescu, 'Convorbire cu Profesor emerit doctor arh. Cezar Lăzărescu' [Discussion with Emeritus professor doctor architect Cezar Lăzărescu] *Arhitectura* 6 (1979), pp. 9-11.

The motto prefacing this interview is a quote from Lăzărescu, succinctly summarising the ethical dimension of Romanian intervention abroad: 'To collaborate means, for us, helping your partner achieve their own goals.'

mutual cognizance of *'the otherness of others'* stems from each dialogue partner's own cultural narratives.⁶³⁴

Moreover, Lăzărescu equates the Romanian philosophy of intervention with *synthesis* or *symbiosis* between local aspirations towards industrialised development, and a rational deployment of investment and resources. Significantly, he also refers to the Club of Rome's *The Limits to Growth*⁶³⁵ to caution against the enticement of developing countries towards the same path of intensive industrialisation and urban hypertrophy experienced by advanced capitalist nations.

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Fig. 37. Modernism as a vehicle of local authoritarianism and Western dependence. Le Corbusier: top left, Chandigarh ministerial secretariat (1953); top right and bottom: 'Project Shrapnel (Algiers; 1930).

⁶³⁴ Seyla Benhabib, *The Claims of Culture: Equality and Diversity in the Global Era* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), p. 14.

⁶³⁵ Donella H Meadows, et al., *The Limits to Growth: A Report for the Club of Rome's Project on the Predicament of Mankind*, (New York: Universe Books, 1972).

As Nezar Alsayyad notes in his preface to *Consuming Tradition, Manufacturing Heritage*,⁶³⁶ Modernism's initial revolutionary social ethos did not survive its global spread. Rather, modernist urban structures and architectural forms became agents of governmental and financial control, particularly in the developing countries of the Global South, as illustrated in Fig. 37. For Robert Mugerauer, Modernist architecture – for instance, Le Corbusier's interventions in Algeria or India – operated a double displacement of traditional habitats, either through outright replacement with the urban and architectural forms developed in the West for a markedly different cultural outlook, or through the production of a contemporary vernacular build environment, updated through the lens of Western architectural sensibilities.⁶³⁷ From this perspective, the strategy of Romanian architectural consultancy reported by Lăzărescu suggests that its popularity was partly due to sincere engagement with, to borrow Mugerauer's phrasing, 'the existing, historically sophisticated, local cultural-climatic environments'.⁶³⁸ In addition, it was also reportedly consistent in initiating local networks of professional knowledge through staff training and the modelling of institutional structures and logistics, as well as prioritising countries with similar socio-political systems and development goals.⁶³⁹ Author of the Sudanese Parliament – a

⁶³⁶ Nezar Alsayyad, 'Global Norms and Urban Forms in the Age of Tourism: Manufacturing Heritage, Consuming Tradition', in *Consuming Tradition, Manufacturing Heritage. Global Norms and Urban Forms in the Age of Tourism*, ed. by Nezar Alsayyad (London: Routledge, 2001), pp. 1-33.

⁶³⁷ Robert Mugerauer, 'Openings to Each Other in the Technological Age', in *Consuming Tradition, Manufacturing Heritage. Global Norms and Urban Forms in the Age of Tourism*, ed. by Nezar Alsayyad (London: Routledge, 2001), pp. 92-95.

⁶³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 95.

⁶³⁹ For Lăzărescu, interventions in the spirit of Paolo Soleri or Leonardo Ricci were utopian and ill-suited for the needs of the contexts considered – showing once again not only awareness of new directions in international architecture in response to the critiques of the capitalist city – such as experimental, hyper-dense urbanism or community-centric design, but also discernment in assessing their applicability in very concrete frames of geo-cultural reference.

building which has endured the test of time and still serves the same function today (Fig. 38) – Lăzărescu demonstrates the subtle positioning of Romanian architecture on the world map of architectural praxis: engaged, critical, and performing competitively in niche markets by calibrating interventions to local desiderata with beneficial effects.

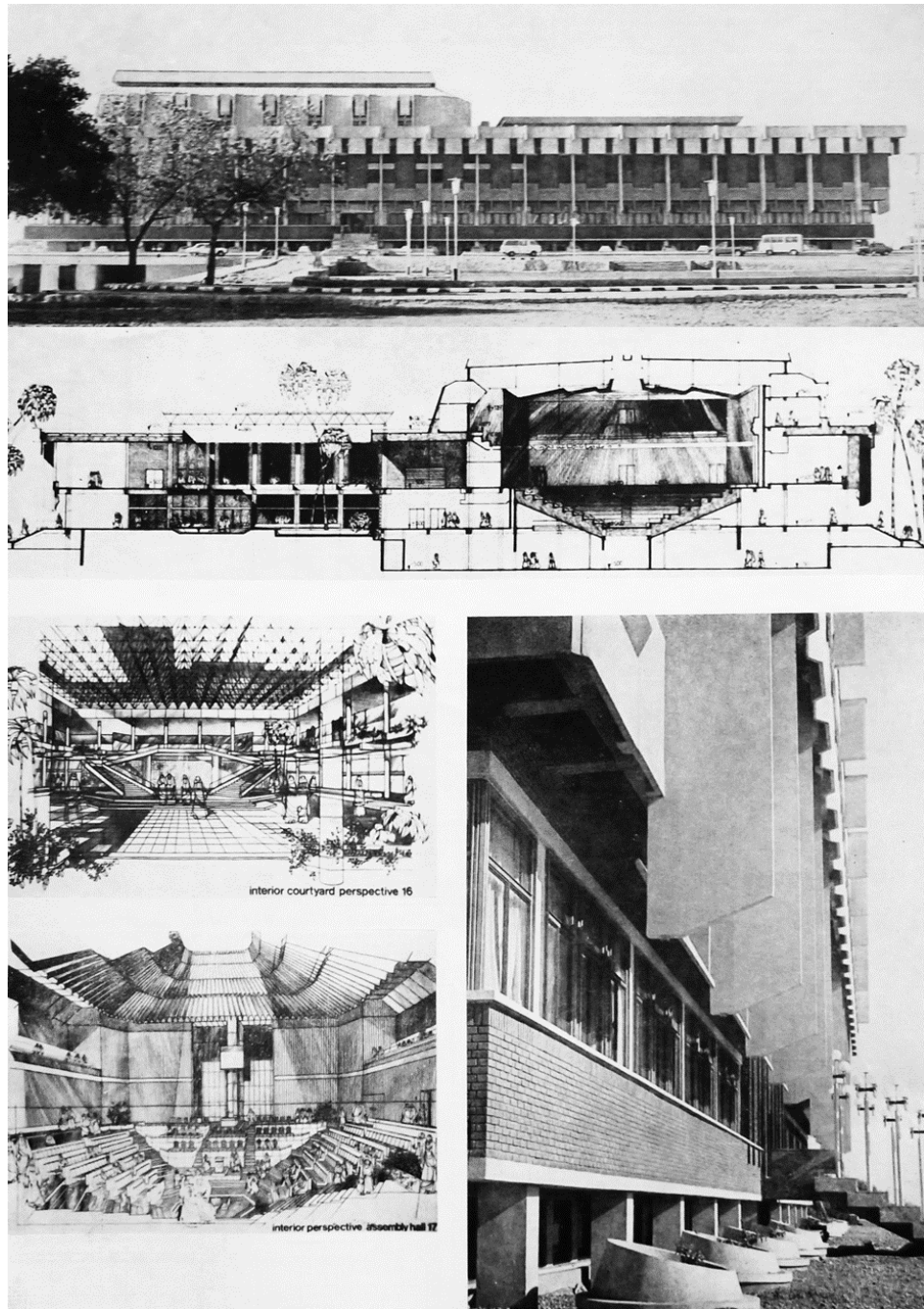


Fig. 38. Cezar Lăzărescu's project for the Sudanese Parliament in Khartoum (1973-1978).

Cezar Lăzărescu and Ileana Murgescu, 'Convorbire cu Profesor emerit doctor arh. Cezar Lăzărescu' [Conversation with emeritus Professor doctor architect Cezar Lăzărescu] *Arhitectura* 6 (1979), p.10.

Although appreciative of the opportunity to converse architecturally on Algerian grounds with ‘masters of international architecture like Oscar Niemeyer, Kenzo Tange, Skidmore, Owing and Merrill [sic]’, whose projects represented ‘symbols of the Algerian people’s affirmation of national independence’, Cătină’s design approach reveals careful consideration of the urban, spatial, and formal patterns of local architecture. By emphasising modular design, variety circumscribed to unity, spatial typologies (such as the patio and *iwan*) responding to the strictures of climate and the juxtaposition between the introspective and sociable turns of Algerian life, and the mediation of visibility and public–private transitions through latticework brise-soleils, Cătină’s definition of cultural specificity merged modern functionality and local precedent, from the macro level of urban spatiality to the comforting familiarity of decorative detailing (Fig. 40).

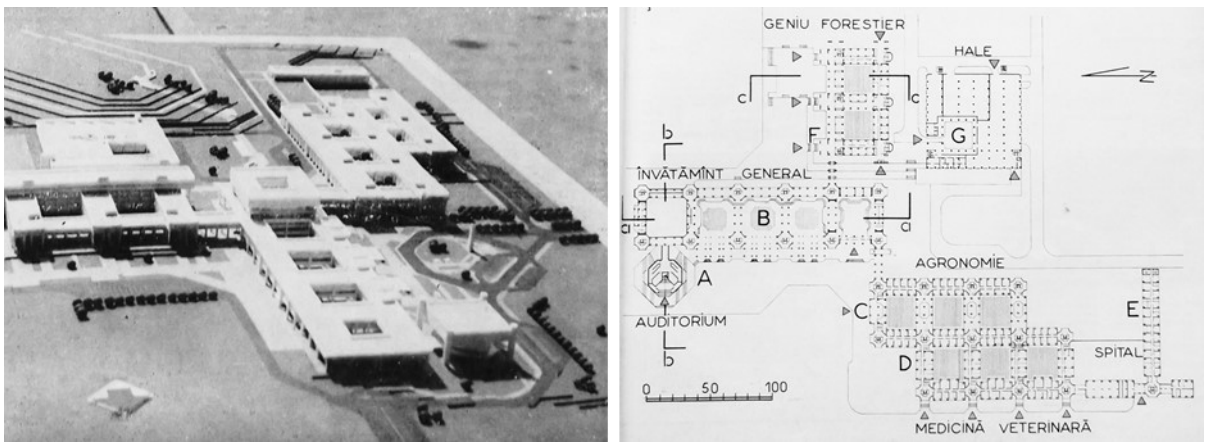


Fig. 40. El Khroub, Algeria – Institute of Agronomy and Veterinary Sciences, Institute of Forestry (arch. Sebastian Moraru, Mihai Cătină and team; 1979).

From the variety of cultural contexts underpinning the different takes on (or subversions of) modernism presented in *Arhitectura*, Japan provided a stimulating, yet *non-competitively similar* architectural approach. The two strains of discourse met on common ground made *firmer* by geographical, cultural and, in terms of technological

progress, chronological distance. Both countries had undergone rapid, all-encompassing post-war restructuring, from political regime to economy and societal stratification. Fast-paced industrialisation and the development of modern infrastructure networks had pushed the limits of engineering and architectural innovation, as well as revolutionised production. But most importantly, the preservation-*cum*-modern-reimagining of tradition fuelled Japanese and Romanian cultural production with the same urgency. For the Romanian architectural milieu, the perception of Japanese culture and architecture gradually evolved towards what I would term *kindred otherness*. As a set of cultural coordinates, *kindred otherness* highlights strands of philosophical and architectural discourse underpinning, in both countries, the search for a modern, yet *national* architecture predicated on the cohesive, culturally-unique existence of a singularly-defined *national spirit*.

For Japanese and Romanian theorists of the *national spirit*, a common conceptual link was the reflection of a religion-dependent, spiritual understanding of the world into the (surmised) historically-consistency and specific spatiality of traditional architecture.⁶⁴² Japan's syncretic Shintoism (*multiplicity* of form, *ubiquity* of the sacred, *interrelatedness*) and Buddhism (secular/ transcendental *connectedness*, the *relativity of material existence* outside the mind) emphasised *impermanence* and the immanence of *constant change*. Romania's Orthodox religious thought and practice translated into the spatial coding of *permanence*, *finality*, *stark limits*, and *mediated*

⁶⁴² For my extended analysis of the influences of Japanese architecture discourse on the development of *nationally-specific* Romanian architecture, see Ioana C. Popovici, '... the city as a part of nature and concrete as a kind of earth. Japanese Architecture Meets 1960s-1980s Romanian Modernism', *studies in History & Theory of Architecture: Indigenous Aliens. Mediators of Architectural Modernity*, 2 (2014), pp. 116-39.

unity with the transcendental through *durable material form*. Thus, Japanese and Romanian culture occupied opposite ends of the 'relevance of form and materiality' spectrum.⁶⁴³ Both architecture cultures entertained profound connections with nature. In Japan, nature was considered sacred, yet intangible source of spiritual support,⁶⁴⁴ clearly delineated from man-made space. Beyond nature's cyclicity, acceptance of metabolic processes (slow decay,⁶⁴⁵ natural disasters, rapid re-growth) have translated into a traditional architecture of transient flexibility, almost rhizomatic in its use of quasi-typified structural and spatial units. Conversely, traditional Romanian architecture marked both circumscription of the natural into anthropised space, and insertion of the man-made into predominantly natural scenery⁶⁴⁶ in a collaborative relationship with nature that tipped the balance towards human agency, and the *durability/resilience* of the man-made.

In terms of aesthetic sensibility, architects from both countries predominantly focused on the *aformal* characteristics of local cultural sensibility:⁶⁴⁷ *lyricism*, rather than narrativity; *tension and subdued drama*, enacted through ambivalences, ambiguities, contrasts; a constant *shifting between*, and sometimes combination of, *metaphoricity*

⁶⁴³ If the Ise Grand Shrine, reconstructed by master craftsmen every twenty years over a millennium, nevertheless preserves, for the Japanese, not the style, but the essence of the divine, traditional Romanian architecture makes a bid for immortality in built object form – an artefactual culture of *attachment* to edifices as monuments consecrated into *perpetuity*.

Kenzo Tange and Noboru Kawazoe, *Ise: Prototype of Japanese Architecture* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1965), p. 202.

⁶⁴⁴ Kisho Kurokawa, *Philosophy of Symbiosis*, (London: Academy editions, 1994), p.176.

⁶⁴⁵ Chūji Kawashima, *Japan's Folk Architecture. Traditional Thatched Farmhouses* (New York: Kodansha International, 1986), p. 13.

⁶⁴⁶ Mircea Lupu, *Școli naționale în arhitectură* [National schools of architecture] (Bucharest: Editura Tehnică, 1977), p. 160.

⁶⁴⁷ Kurokawa, *Philosophy of Symbiosis*, p. 238-39.

and *realism*.⁶⁴⁸ Two of the most influential and widely appreciated architects for *Arhitectura's* audience were Kisho Kurokawa and Kenzo Tange. Kurokawa's modern recovery of traditional aesthetics was *hanasuki*: a heterogeneous symbiosis of splendour-simplicity, boldness-reserve, darkness-light, monochrome-polychrome, disparate states of mind and soul (Fig. 41).⁶⁴⁹



Fig. 41. Kisho Kurokawa's architecture: philosophy of symbiosis. From top left, clockwise: Nagakin Capsule Tower (1970-1972), K House (1973), Fukuoka Bank (1975), Saitama Prefectural Museum of Modern Art (1978-1982).

Kenzo Tange's stern lyricism and bare concrete structural modulation (Fig. 42) was instrumental, as a model, in the Romanian vernacularisation of international

⁶⁴⁸ Kurokawa, *Philosophy of Symbiosis*, p. 211; Lupu, *Școli naționale de arhitectură*, p.153.

⁶⁴⁹ Kurokawa, *Philosophy of Symbiosis*, p. 110-13.

modernism, linking contemporary function and scale with the expressivity and sense of belonging afforded by folk architecture.



Fig. 42. Kenzo Tange's structural lyricism. From top left, clockwise: Hiroshima Peace Centre (1950-1955); Kagawa Administrative Centre (1955-1958); Kenzo Tange's house (1953); Yoyogi Olympic Stadium (1961-1964).

Traditional Romanian architecture also inhabited an aesthetic continuum between minimalist *reserve* and *exuberance* of form and decoration.⁶⁵⁰ Architects like Mircea Alifanti channelled this contrast into contemporary architectural creation,⁶⁵¹ or, like Dorin Ștefan, pursued ambiguity and unresolved, balanced tensions between heterogeneous elements, contending and merging towards the creation of cultural nuances.⁶⁵²

⁶⁵⁰ The tea-room and Kinkakuji, and the Castranova bordei and Voroneț monastery, demonstrate the range of Japanese and, respectively, Romanian aesthetic sensibility.

⁶⁵¹ Mircea Alifanti, 'Baia Mare, sediul politico-administrativ al județului Maramureș' [Baia Mare, political-administrative headquarters of Maramureș county], *Arhitectura* 6 (1972), pp. 19-30.

⁶⁵² Dorin Ștefan, 'Lungul drum al ambiguității spre arhitectură' [The long route of ambiguity towards architecture], *Arhitectura* 1 (1982), pp. 68-72.

Belief in a monolithic, culturally-unique *national identity* animated the political and academic discourse in Romania and Japan, resulting in the rerouting of modern architecture praxis through *tradition*.⁶⁵³ In Japan, scholarship devoted to local cultural uniqueness, *Nihonjinron*,⁶⁵⁴ had been steadily accruing since the 18th century,⁶⁵⁵ while Romanian philosopher Lucian Blaga's concept of an *unconscious spatial horizon* (stylistic matrix) specific to the Romanian people⁶⁵⁶ became a cornerstone of architectural thought in the second half of the 20th century. However, during Ceaușescu's bid for a Romanian autarky,⁶⁵⁷ this theory was exacerbated into radical traditionalism,⁶⁵⁸ with cultural policies touting the pre-eminence of Romanian artistic discourses over Western equivalents. Architecture was under pressure to develop a current, *national* discourse, based on the *in-nuce* modern traits of folk architecture (Fig. 43).

⁶⁵³ In the words of theorist Mircea Lupu, 'Architecture was [...] a factor of vital importance in the constant struggle to preserve and strengthen the national spirit.' Lupu, *Școli naționale în arhitectură*, p.129.

⁶⁵⁴ Chris Burgess, 'Maintaining Identities. Discourses of Homogeneity in a Rapidly Globalizing Japan', *Electronic Journal of Contemporary Japanese Studies*, 1 (2004)
<<http://www.japanesestudies.org.uk/articles/Burgess.html>> [accessed 1 July 2014; last accessed 27 June 2018]

⁶⁵⁵ For Harada, the economy and standardized construction of folk architecture indicate an *inherent modernity* predating Western modernism – an idea with similar echoes in the Romanian architectural milieu.

Jiro Harada, *The Lesson of Japanese Architecture* (London: The studio Ltd., 1936), pp. 11-12.

⁶⁵⁶ Lucian Blaga, *Triologia Culturii* [The Trilogy of Culture] (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2011).

⁶⁵⁷ Katherine Verdery, *National Ideology Under Socialism*, pp. 116-23.

⁶⁵⁸ For further details on Romanian Protochronism, see the works of literary critic and researcher Edgar Papu. Edgar Papu, 'Protocronismul românesc' [Romanian Protochronism] *Secolul XX* 5-6 (1974), pp. 8-11. Edgar Papu, 'Protocronism și sinteză' [Protochronism and synthesis] *Secolul XX* 6 (1976), pp. 7-9. Edgar Papu, *Din clasicii noștri: Contribuții la idea unui protocronism românesc* [From our classics: Contributions to the idea of a Romanian protochronism] (Bucharest: Editura Eminescu, 1977).



Fig. 43. The modernisation of tradition. From top left, clockwise: State Circus (arch. Nicolae Porumbescu, Constantin Rulea; Bucharest; 1960), Otopeni Airport (arch. Cezar Lăzărescu; Bucharest; 1970), Botoșani Culture Hall (arch. Nicolae and Maria Vaida-Porumbescu; Botoșani; 1968-1970), Baia Mare City Hall (arch. Mircea Alifanti; Baia Mare; 1970).

Reflecting on Homi Bhabha's concept of 'writing the nation' from the continuist, pedagogical perspective of political authority versus the repetitive, performative strategies of everyday life,⁶⁵⁹ Benhabib observes that the tendency of nationalist ideologies towards artificially constructing wholeness and cohesion is based on the systematic rejection and purging of 'the constitutive otherness at the basis of all culture'.⁶⁶⁰ This encompasses not only the otherness of those situated outside the disputable geographic and historical boundaries of the national narrative being constructed, but also pockets of internal heterogeneity. Nelson Graburn also emphasises the contemporary dimension of tradition as the by-product of a modern

⁶⁵⁹ Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge Press), pp. 145-46.

⁶⁶⁰ Benhabib, *The Claims of Culture*, pp. 8-9.

era predicated on radical social changes, and the rapid differentiation of lived experience between successive generations.⁶⁶¹

Another factor impinging on the modern construction of tradition with significant relevance for the built environment disciplines is, according to Mugerauer, the subordination of spiritual and cultural values to Western scientism, which placed the geo-culturally distant and non-modern *other* in a position of disadvantaged subordination.⁶⁶² Consequently, the direction of nationally-specific architecture or urban development created through the collaboration of holders of political power and holders of professional knowledge (even when referential of 'traditional' aesthetics) is often a sanitised version what Mugerauer would call the original 'life-world',⁶⁶³ coded through the twin agendas of societal control and intellectual vanguardism.

Discursive exchanges often debut with observation from afar, followed by the construction of a set of presuppositions filtered through the observer's own cultural lens.⁶⁶⁴ In this context, *otherness* primarily relates to culturally-localised facets of the

⁶⁶¹ Nelson Graburn, 'Learning to Consume: What is Heritage and When is it Traditional?', in *Consuming Tradition, Manufacturing Heritage. Global Norms and Urban Forms in the Age of Tourism*, ed. by Nezar Alsayyad (London: Routledge, 2001), pp. 80-81.

⁶⁶² Mugerauer, 'Openings to Each Other in the Technological Age', p. 92.

⁶⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 92.

⁶⁶⁴ Nevertheless, these unintentional misreadings constructed before conversing with the alien other afford relevant clues to the puzzle of yet undocumented cross-cultural influences. A major figure of Romanian modernism, Cezar Lăzărescu's travel notes fixate on the alien exoticism of the 'fairy-tale world' of traditional Japanese culture, and only obliquely allude to a modern architecture parsed through a Western chronology and frame of reference. For details, see Lăzărescu's travel notes from Japan, published in *Arhitectura* 6 (1974), and China - *Arhitectura* 1 (1984). Cezar Lăzărescu, 'Impresii dintr-o călătorie în Japonia' [Impressions from a visit to Japan] *Arhitectura* 6 (1974), pp. 65-67.

Cezar Lăzărescu, 'Drumuri asiatice – Republica Populară Chineză' [Asian travels – People's Republic of China] *Arhitectura* 1 (1984), pp. 67-71.

discourse of modern architecture, engaged in by professional communities with similar socio-economic and political standing in their respective countries – despite a considerable difference in political regime. For Seyla Benhabib, the relative lack of disparity in social standing and agency does not exempt these observations from replacing the multiple, contested, fuzzy-edged narratives of the *other* with an internally-constructed, clearly delimited and unitary coherence specific to the (elite) observer.⁶⁶⁵ Nevertheless, the image of Japanese architecture presented by *Arhitectura* gradually came into focus, with 36 articles on the subject featured in the magazine focusing mainly on the Japanese reconstruction of modernism in a culturally specific key.⁶⁶⁶

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Fig. 44. From left to right: Tokyo Bay Plan (Kenzo Tange; 1960); City Farm (Kisho Kurokawa; 1960); City in the Air (Arata Isozaki; 1961); Helix City (Kisho Kurokawa; 1961).

It should be noted however that the most accurate readings of Japanese architecture were contributed by student-architects, who focused on both the alien logic of *metabolic city planning* (Fig. 44) and on the *lyrical coding of the individual dwelling*,

⁶⁶⁵ Benhabib, *The Claims of Culture*, p. 5.

⁶⁶⁶ There is a significant evolution in the perception of *architectural otherness* between Cezar Lăzărescu's travel notes, referenced above, and subsequent articles and reviews of Japanese architecture. For comparison, see articles by the younger architects and architecture students in *Arhitectura* 1 (1964); 1 (1965); 1, 3, 6 (1970); 2 (1971); 2 (1972); 1, 2, 3, 6 (1973); 4, 6 (1974); 1, 4, 5, 6 (1975); 2, 6 (1976); 1, 4, 5 (1977); 1, 3, 4 (1979); 5, 6 (1980); 3, 5, 6 (1985); 1 (1986); 1 (1987).

expanding the range of programmes thought to lend themselves to one-off design exercises (Fig. 45).⁶⁶⁷

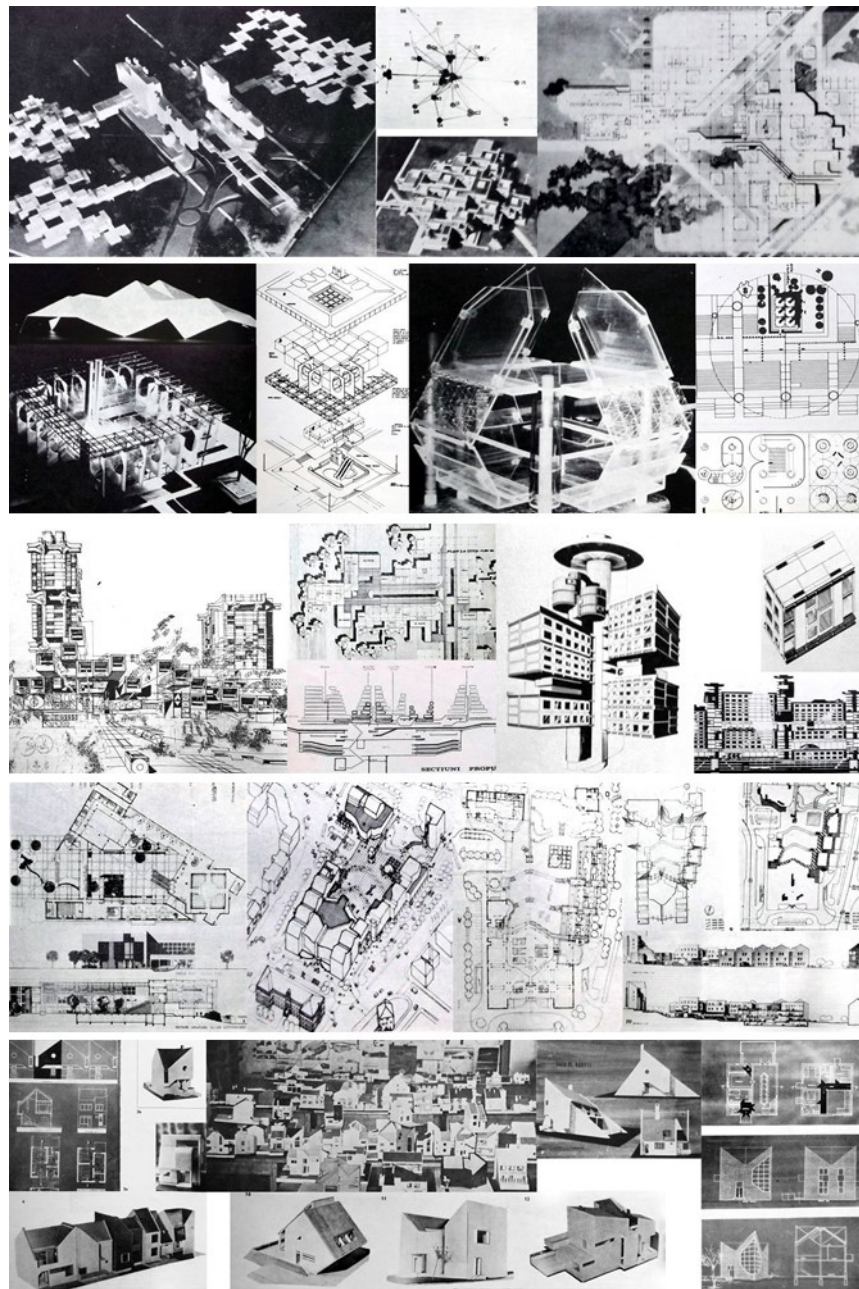


Fig. 45. The influence of Japanese metabolism and experimental high-tech on student work from IMUAU. Top row: diploma project – homogeneous systems – housing study in Bucharest (Francisc Echeriu, Romeo Simiraş, 1972). Second row: entries to competition for public leisure equipment (1972); top left: Serban-Costin Popoescu, Anca Pavlu; centre: Cristian Nicolae and team; Mihai Anania and team; right: Viorel Simion and team. Third row: capsule and prefabricated-unit collective housing – diploma projects. Left: Roxana Savin. Right: Olga Gluvacov (1972). Fourth row: cultural urban centres – diploma projects. Far left: Marina Mărginean; centre/right: Marcel Crişan. Bottom row: 1st and 2nd year projects, Timișoara Polytechnic (Liviu Martinescu, Vlad Gaivoronski, Corneliu Butnărescu, Dobrai Laszlo, Adrian Ionaşiu, Ştefan Mircea, Sebastian Schön).

⁶⁶⁷ See articles by Ileana Murgescu and Oni Enescu in *Arhitectura* 2 (1973), pp. 54-55; 6 (1973), pp. 58-60, and the series on contemporary Japanese dwelling by Adrian Panaitescu and Ion Enescu, published in *Arhitectura* 4, 5(1977).

In the 1970s, theorists like Mircea Lupu discussed the inherent modernity of folk architecture in both Romania and Japan.⁶⁶⁸ The concept of an *a priori core of modernity* encoded in traditional architecture became hugely popular with both Romanian and Japanese architects during the second half of the 20th century resurgence of nationalist ideologies attempting to create, in Benhabib's words, 'forced unity from diversity, coherence from inconsistencies, and homogeneity from narrative dissonance'.⁶⁶⁹ For example, Lupu attributed 20th century Japanese architecture a continuous, linear evolution embodied in the career progression of Kenzo Tange. From a period of deference to Western modernism, his work progressed to syntaxes and rhythms specific to traditional architecture, ultimately developing a sculptural expressivity that echoed, in concrete, the structural principles of woodworking. Finally, Tange's contribution to the meta-urbanism of Metabolism's futuristic marine cities also contributed significantly to the international appeal of Japan's modern architecture.

I would argue that this unified, linear progression, belied by Kisho Kurokawa, and subsequently dismantled by recent studies recovering narratives internal to the culture,⁶⁷⁰ represented a wishful projection of the path Romanian architecture seemed to have embarked on during the late 1970s. Both international architecture discourse preoccupations coincided with local cultural policies aimed at fashioning an insular national identity in the attempt to increase political autonomy. In Romania, the

⁶⁶⁸ Lupu, *Școli naționale în arhitectură*, p. 55.

⁶⁶⁹ Benhabib, *The Claims of Culture*, p. 8.

⁶⁷⁰ *Shaking the Foundations. Japanese Architects in Dialogue*, ed. by Christopher Knabe and Joerg R. Noennig, (London: Prestel Verlag, 1999), p. 9-20.

resulting complex network of measures designed to 'urbanise' the country and nullify the village-city distinction during Ceaușescu⁶⁷¹ provided the illusive opportunity of a radical shift in direction, sabotaged in reality by the inefficacy of institutionalised practice and the shortcomings of construction. The significant gap between the innovative focus of the professional milieu and the constraints placed on practice by political impetus and a state economy of resource scarcity is evident in the contrast between the conceptual freedom animating competition entries and student projects,⁶⁷² and the dreariness of the vast majority of built projects featured in *Arhitectura* (mostly housing estates, as illustrated in Fig. 46).

Figure has been removed due to Copyright restrictions

Fig. 46. Pajura micro-rayon (arch. Radu Gherghel, Viorica Goga, L. Stănescu Bucharest; Bucharest; early 1960s).

⁶⁷¹ 'Lege Nr. 58 din 29 octombrie 1974 privind sistematizarea teritoriului și localităților urbane și rurale' [Law 58 of the 29th of October 1974 regarding the systematisation of the territory and urban and rural settlements] *Buletinul Oficial* 135 (1 November 1974) <<http://www.lexex.ro/Legea-58-1974-565.aspx>> [accessed 27 June 2018]

⁶⁷² The alternative methodologies and creative freedom of research and student work is illustrated in Appendix 10, p.483.

Nevertheless, the strongest channel of affinity between the Japanese modern aesthetics and Romanian architecture stemmed from a common devotion to tradition and desire to employ it as a catalyst in the further development of modern discourse: the *poetic language of structure*, and the *lyricism* of its sculptural potential (Fig. 47).



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Fig. 47. Intersecting paths towards national specificity. From top left, clockwise: Hiraoka City Hall (Junzo Sakakura; 1964); National Bucharest Theatre (Horia Maicu, Romeo Belea; 1963-1971); Pitești Sports Hall (Ion Enescu; 1968); Tokyo Metropolitan Hall (Kunio Maekawa; 1961).

Alongside the vigorous imagery achieved through the manipulation of reinforced concrete towards the limits of structural capacity *and* range of expression, modern Japanese architecture also played on the subtleties of traditional spatiality invoked through idiomatic referencing (roof shapes, translation of structural patterns from wood to concrete), reaching an unprecedented degree of unanimously recognised specificity. For the Romanian professional audience, Kenzo Tange shone as the exponent of this architectural merger, whose diverse portfolio of projects and built works had best adapted the flexibility of traditional structural and spatial sequences to modern usage. Moreover, Tange's use of roof shapes reminiscent of those adorning traditional homesteads as a symbolic locus of design bypassed the limited sculptural capabilities of the traditional Japanese vernacular (always rectangular, planar),

signalling a potential avenue of architectural innovation based on traditional archetypes. Romanian proponents of sculptural lyricism derived from vernacular architecture and folk art unreservedly admired this conceptual direction and its built output as a merger between a late-Corbuserian modernity and 'an illustrious tradition'.⁶⁷³

In comparison, however, the diminutive scale and finite object boundaries of the Romanian vernacular are challenging to scale up in order to match the complex spatial requirements of modern programmes. Consequently, Romanian exercises in the same strategy of sculpturality deployed by Tange usually displayed the eerie sense of proportion of minute woodcarvings magnified to inhabitable scale (Fig. 48). At the heart of the problem lie two factors: firstly, the additive, borderless quality of traditional Japanese space versus the finite, enclosed, full-object logic of Romanian spatiality; secondly, the difference in the two architectural cultures' conceptual approach to built form – impermanence and change (Japan) versus perpetuity and finality (Romania).



Fig. 48. Scaled-up sculpturaliy: Nicolae and Maria Vaida-Porumbescu's Suceava culture hall (1965-1969).

Despite the confluence of international influences discussed above, as well as the resurgence of the local vernacular in Romanian architecture critique – prompting

⁶⁷³ Nicolae Porumbescu and Maria Vaida-Porumbescu, 'Specificul în arhitectură' [Specificity in architecture] *Arhitectura* 2 (1967), p. 17.

Lupu's assertion of lyrical functionalism being the dominant creative paradigm since 1965 – the actual architectural production under the lyrical functionalism conceptual direction was quite low, and mostly of the one-off, high-profile, exclusive commission variety (Fig. 49).

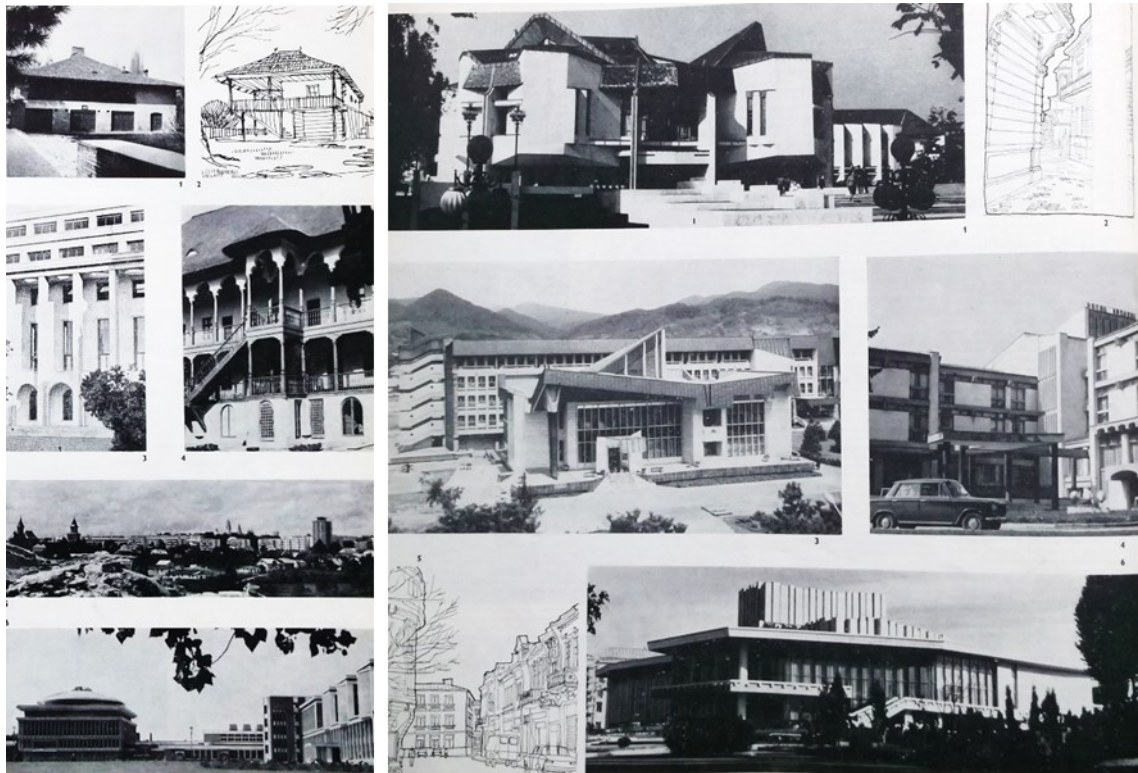


Fig. 49. A wide range of architectural directions exploring regional specificity, discussed by architect and theorist Alexandru M. Sandu in *Arhitectura* 4 (1976), pp. 14-19.

For the majority of practitioners, the endless local and state commission reviews operated arbitrary changes based on the scarce architectural knowledge and often little common sense of their political members. With country-wide cultural policies hard at work creating *the national*, a low-brow, facile derivation of the lyrical quality of top-tier architecture gradually suffused design from industrial to low-budget

housing, setting in motion a pastiche decorativism which would later be dubbed, with dark humour, 'parapet architecture' (Fig. 50).⁶⁷⁴



Fig. 50. Parapet architecture, critiqued obliquely on the cover of *Arhitectura*, and questioned in numerous caricatures peppered through the magazine. The text caption of the bottom left caricature reads: 'We've finished assembling the large prefabricated panels – all that's left to go on now is the local specificity!' On the bottom right, a typical built example in Miercurea Ciuc (1988).

It is significant to note here that, while the works of IMUAU architecture students displayed more susceptibility to the futuristic aspects of Japanese design (e.g., Kurokawa's post-dissolution Metabolist works, with a strong focus on urbanism), the architectural production dominated by elite practitioners also active in education continued to pursue the same tradition-infused, sculptural lyricism found in Tange's

⁶⁷⁴ Marius Marcu-Lapadat, *Fețele ornamentului. Arhitectura bucureșteană în secolul 20* [The Faces of ornament. Bucharest Architecture in the 20th Century] (Bucharest: Editura Univers Enciclopedic, 2003), pp. 128-31.

work. Particularly during the 1960s and 1970s, Romanian *lyrical functionalism* produced works with an immediately discernible local flavour (Fig. 51, 1-5), conveyed through updated spatial archetypes (porch, roof), spatial logics and rapports, or folk-art vocabulary referencing. A parallel direction characterised by a merger between brutalist aesthetics, contextual specificity and a pronounced sense of drama (Fig 51, 6-7) gradually segued, during the 1980s, into an exploration of expressivity through advanced technology (Fig. 51, 8), exposing the machine-like inner processes of the building. From the grandiose cultural urban centre and programmes, the local flair or Romanian Modernism turned poetic once again, but in a diminutive, subtly symbolic manner (Fig. 51, 9). This condensed, sublimated, small-scale contemporary rephrasing of folk architecture declined during the late 1980s, only to reappear after 1989, when the pressures of globalisation once again brought to the forefront of discourse a redefinition of identity as the basis of current architecture. Finally, the development of Romanian Postmodernism exhibited, perhaps through conceptual filiation with the variety of Japanese architecture reviewed by *Arhitectura*, several design directions (Fig. 51, 10-12), from minimal clarity and subtle imagery to pronounced tension, ambiguity, and even a sense of the ludic.



Fig. 51. Regional interpretations of national specificity. 1. State Theatre – Târgu Mureș, Constantin Săvescu, Vladimir Slavu, *Arhitectura* 6 (1973). 2. Culture Centre – Ploiești, Gheorghe Dorin, Medy Mayer, 6(1973). 3. Syndical Culture Centre – Sibiu, Dorin Gheorghe, Milița Sion, 2 (1974). 4. Hotel – Bistrița, Mircea Alifanti, Adrian Panaitescu, 3 (1975). 5. Commercial Centre Luxor – Târgu Mureș, Constantin Săvescu, 5 (1975). 6. Commercial Centre – Brașov, Ion Rădăcină, 5 (1975). 7. Ice-rink – Miercurea Ciuc, Ion Rădăcină, 1-2 (1978). 8. Youth Science Centre – Râmnicu Vâlcea, Ștefan Lungu, Emil Barbu Popescu, 6 (1982). 9. Liviu Rebreanu Memorial House – Dan C. Duzinschi, 6 (1984) 10. Youth Science Centre – Slatina, E.B. Popescu, Dorin Ștefan, 5 (1987). 11. Collective housing – Baia Mare, Angela Mureșan, Mircea Pop, 1(1989). 12. Housing – Slobozia, Cristian Nicolae, Cristian Iacob, 3 (1989).

In this section, I have explored forms of *otherness* that bore influence on the formulation of architectural specificity in Romania by contributing to the field's understanding of cultural and architectural identity. Narratives of *otherness* with the most palpable effect on the direction of local praxis seemed to be those predicated on a mutually-recognised sense of kinship. Romania and the newly-independent African and Middle-Eastern republics shared a keen sense of the development struggles entailed by the first stages of socialist economic, political, and social restructuring.

In their consultancy practice abroad, Romanian architects clearly distinguished between the pedagogical construction of the nation and its performative production through countless encounters between self and others,⁶⁷⁵ and tried to support the latter through a culturally-mindful, ethical approach to architectural mentorship. In return, this international experience promoted awareness within the field of Romanian architecture regarding the multiple forms of local *otherness* lost to Romania's own pedagogical construction of nationhood, as well as destabilised some of the intellectual biases held by architects with regard to the *correct* perception of the traits of *national specificity*. Conversely, the *kindred otherness* fostered between the Japanese and Romanian architecture cultures on the grounds of the lyrical and narrative potential of the traditional vernacular proved both empowering and limiting.

⁶⁷⁵ Timothy Mitchell, 'Making the Nation: The Politics of Heritage in Egypt', in *Consuming Tradition, Manufacturing Heritage. Global Norms and Urban Forms in the Age of Tourism*, ed. by Nezar Alsayyad (London: Routledge, 2001), pp. 212-39.

As Kisho Kurokawa noted in his interview in *Arhitectura*, a radical alteration of the Western-dominated system of architectural thought could only spring from the fringes of its sphere of influence,⁶⁷⁶ where myriad forms of *otherness* interact in their search for self-determination (Fig. 52).

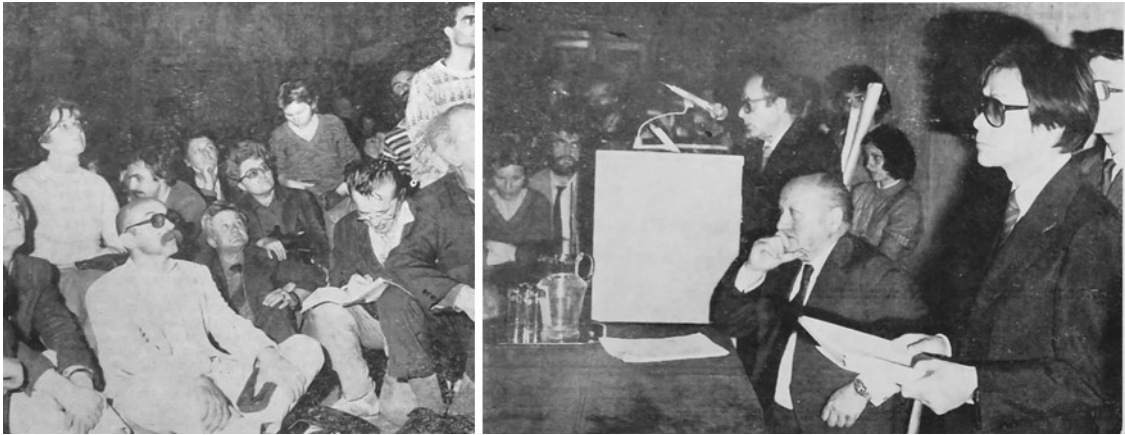


Fig. 52. A drive for international connectivity and belonging: a diverse audience of Romanian architects (left) listening raptly to Kisho Kurokawa's presentation (right).

Japanese architecture like that practised by Kenzo Tange and Kisho Kurokawa was undeniably inspirational for *Arhitectura's* audience in terms of modelling contemporary architecture around the lyrical core of the folk vernacular, and devising innovative ways of adapting this merger to an urban scale. Nevertheless, its visual strength and aesthetic appeal contributed to the emergence of a Romanian branch of nationally-specific architecture focused on the mimesis of form, rather than a syncretic merger between traditional and modern design parameters.

⁶⁷⁶ Kisho Kurokawa, 'Convorbire cu Kisho Kurokawa' [Conversation with Kisho Kurokawa], *Arhitectura* 5 (1985), pp. 52-54.

5.2. Political legitimization through national specificity. Creative architectural mediation.

I think we must draw attention to the duty of our higher education to instil among students the traditions of national architecture, of guiding future architects towards the harmonious merger between the popular, national specificity, and the requirements of modern construction, so as to develop an original synthesis, unique to our new Romanian architecture, vividly expressing the characteristics and taste of our people, as well as the aesthetic principles of socialist society.⁶⁷⁷

Nicolae Ceaușescu

President of the State Council of the Socialist Republic of Romania

Specificity cannot be an a-priori act to creation, as it is a product of the historical synthesis of creation.⁶⁷⁸

Alexandru M. Sandu, architect and theorist

This section is focused on mapping the general evolution of the discourse on national specificity within the field of communist Romanian architecture, mediated both professionally and politically. As discussed in the previous section, after the tip-over point between the predominance of Soviet versus local and Western theory in *Arhitectura* in 1959-1960, Romanian architecture embarked on a journey of theoretical self-discovery through enthusiastic involvement with a number of leading international organisations, as well as the most pressing and widely debated social, urban and aesthetic aspects of global contemporary architecture. After the first successful participation of Romanian architects to an International Congress of Architecture organised by IUA in 1961 and the growing involvement of Romanian specialists in the

⁶⁷⁷ 'Cuvîntarea tovarășului Nicolae Ceaușescu' [Comrade Nicolae Ceaușescu's speech] *Arhitectura* 2 (1971), p. 5.

⁶⁷⁸ Alexandru M. Sandu, 'Din nou, despre specific' [Once again, on specificity] *Arhitectura* 6 (1981), p. 77.

infrastructural development of African and Middle Eastern countries through UNESCO partnerships, but also expertise outsourcing opportunities secured by the Romanian government, the field of Romanian architecture seemed intent on overcoming both the disciplinary hermeticism of its pre-war heritage, and the discursive isolation of Socialist Realism. One of the most significant traits of Romanian architecture has been its recalibration between the East, West, and the predominant local cultural narrative of Central Europeanism steeped in Latinity. During this process, there emerged a recognition of the middle path between the Western, liberal approach to the practice of architecture (with all the alluring creative freedom entailed), and the undeniably wider scope and social impact of nationalised architectural production. This trend would be cut short, however, by the regime's evolving needs for *political legitimization*. Nicolae Ceaușescu, whose first six years in power had catapulted him to unexpected heights of popularity for a communist leader,⁶⁷⁹ returned from a 1971 visit to North Korea with visions of a nationalistic cultural revolution (Fig. 53).

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Fig. 53. On the left, Nicolae Ceaușescu at the height of his popularity, on a visit to Cluj in 1968. On the right, the masses assembled in a carefully orchestrated celebration of his personality cult, 1978.

⁶⁷⁹ Reaping the benefit of Gheorghiu-Dej's culturally-open, but regime-consolidating thaw, supplemented with his own maverick stance on Soviet policies – for instance, his refusal to participate in, and public condemnation of, the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968.

The July theses of 1971 reinstated acerbic state control over all areas and means of cultural production.⁶⁸⁰ Fed by the growing popularity of Protochronism and similar philosophical currents extolling the historical superiority of Romanian culture – but also, most relevantly for architecture, the existence of a specifically Romanian spiritual matrix with a corresponding spatiality moulded by ancestral landscapes, and refined over millennia in the quintessential purity of folk architecture – the concept of *specificity* gradually became a tool for isolating, insular nationalism. During the 1970s and 1980s, while Ceaușescu paved his way towards his own brand of increasingly authoritarian neo-Stalinism, the system deployed a legal framework designed to render architecture and urbanism more effective in the exercise of autarchic communism. Zahariade notes that, after the July theses, the *Systematisation Law* of 1972⁶⁸¹ and *Roads Law* of 1975⁶⁸² put an end to modernist urbanism while also

⁶⁸⁰ The main motor of tightened political control on cultural production were the 1971 July Theses detailing Ceaușescu's vision for mass ideological indoctrination through cultural production. Excerpts from the speech and subsequent resolutions can be found in *Sfârșitul perioadei liberale a regimului Ceaușescu: minirevoluția culturală din 1971* [The end of the liberal period of Ceaușescu's regime: the 1971 cultural minirevolution] ed. by Ana-Maria Cătănuș (Bucharest: Institutul Național Pentru Studiul Totalitarismului, 2005), pp. 121-36.

⁶⁸¹ 'Directivele Conferinței Naționale a Partidului Comunist Român cu privire la sistematizarea teritoriului, a orașelor și a satelor, la dezvoltarea lor economico-socială' [The Directives of the National Conference of the Romanian Communist Party with regard to the systematisation of territory, cities and villages, and their socio-economic development] in *Conferința Națională a Partidului Comunist Român – 19-21 Iulie 1972* (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1972), pp. 476-98.

<http://www.cnsas.ro/documente/istoria_comunism/volume/1972%20-%20Conferinta%20Nationala%20a%20PC%20R.pdf> [accessed 1 July 2018]

These directives formed the basis of the 1974 Systematisation Law:

Marea Adunare Națională, 'Lege nr. 58 din 1 noiembrie 1974 privind sistematizarea teritoriului și localităților urbane și rurale' [Law no. 58 of the 1st of November 1974 regarding the systematisation of the territory and urban and rural settlements] *Buletinul Oficial* 135 (1 November 1974).

<<http://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocument/351>> [accessed 29 June 2018]

⁶⁸² The generally-termed 'Streets Law' refers to two laws passed in 1974 and 1975.

Marea Adunare Națională, 'Lege nr. 13 din 26 iulie 1974 – Legea drumurilor' [Law no. 13 of the 26th of July 1974 – The roads law] *Buletinul Oficial* 107 (31 July 1974) <<http://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocument/348>> [accessed 29 June 2018]

Marea Adunare Națională, 'Lege nr. 43 din 27 decembrie 1975 pentru stabilirea normelor privind proiectarea, construirea și modernizarea drumurilor' [Law no. 43 of the 27th of December 1975 for the establishment of

centralising the processes of urban design in their entirety, effectively 'confiscating' all but the profession's indispensable technical knowledge, subsequently used to implement nation-wide 'systematisation' policies predicated on a 'perplexing and unclear requirement for a national style'.⁶⁸³

Historian Vladimir Tismăneanu suggests that the 1968-1972 period of 'cultural orthodoxy' and tightened control over intellectual and artistic production was enacted through Zhdanovist policies designed to solidify a monolithic narrative of the nation.⁶⁸⁴

Lucian Boia also notes that the 1970s and 1980s constitute the obverse of the 1950s repression of pre-war discourses on the nation, where national values were taken up again by the political centre, altered, and disseminated through carefully curated cultural production.⁶⁸⁵ The Party's exacerbated glorification of Romanian history, in particular, was distorted towards the construction of a legitimising genealogy of uninterrupted, progressive struggle starting with the Dacian king Burebista and culminating with Nicolae Ceaușescu.⁶⁸⁶ Although the vast majority of fields of intellectual activity and cultural production were co-opted in this endeavour (Fig. 54), it was the disciplines of history, philosophy, and literature that were chiefly responsible for producing the new ideological canon of national Romanian communism.

standards regarding the design, construction, and modernisation of roads] *Buletinul Oficial* 136 (27 December 1975) <<http://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocument/385>> [accessed 29 June 2018]

⁶⁸³ Zahariade, *Arhitectura în proiectul comunist*, p. 83.

⁶⁸⁴ Vladimir Tismăneanu, *Despre comunism. Destinul unei religii politice* [On communism. The destiny of a political religion] (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2011), pp. 86-87.

⁶⁸⁵ Lucian Boia, *De ce este România altfel?* [Why is Romania different?] (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2012), p. 71.

⁶⁸⁶ Lucian Boia, *Mitologia științifică a comunismului* [The scientific mythology of communism] (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2011), 157-64.

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Fig. 54. The omnipresence of Ceaușescu at the heart of national communism, expressed through art. Top left, Nicolae and Elena Ceaușescu receive a legitimating clink of champagne glasses from Ștefan cel Mare (Stephen the Great, medieval Moldavian voivode celebrated as a defender of the faith against Ottoman expansion).

But while Romanian historians emphasise the role of the Party and, later, Ceaușescu's autarchic tendencies in the initiation and construction of this communist narrative of nationhood, Katherine Verdery argues that participation in the communist configuration of narratives of nationhood was eagerly pursued across various fields of cultural and artistic production (Fig. 55). Along with the revival of pre-war traditionalist and pro-westerniser intellectual factions, this level of participation cannot be attributed solely to the regime's ineluctable choice for a symbolic-ideological mode of control. For Verdery, the engagement of intellectuals in the 'discourse and counterdiscourse, definition and counterdefinition' of a national ideology with too much autonomy and

momentum to ever be wholly under Party control was both a vehicle of resistance to Marxist-Leninist ideology, and a perpetuation of the socialist political economy.⁶⁸⁷

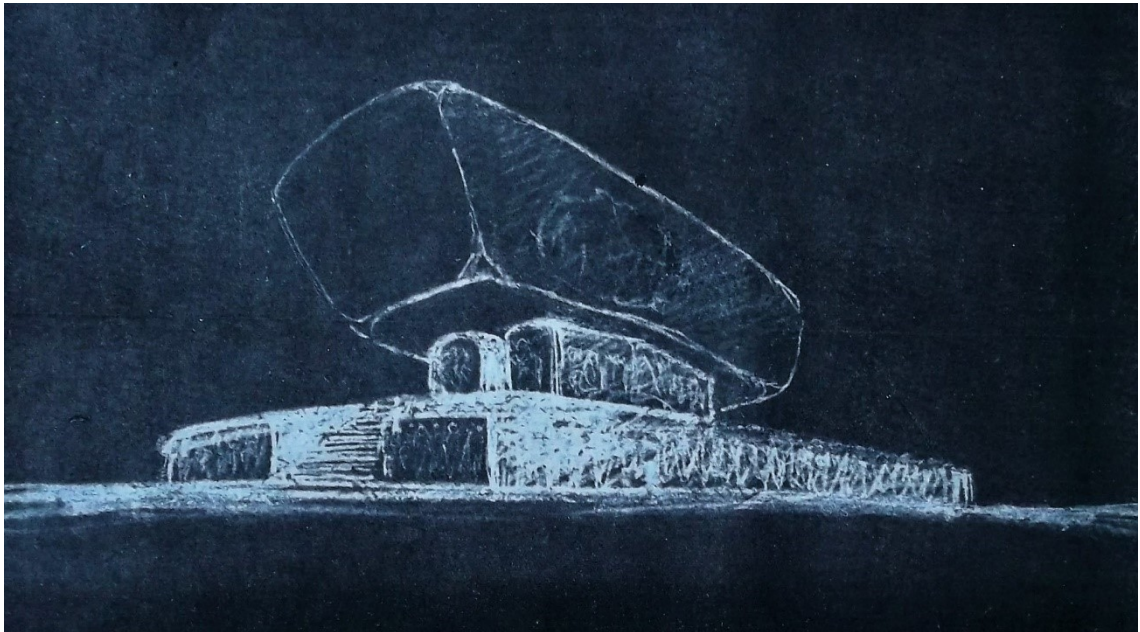


Fig. 55. Project for the 'Union Monument' by architect Anghel Marcu, prefacing an article of nationalist historiography in *Arhitectura* 6 (1988), and perhaps subconsciously illustrating the monolithic, yet unstable nature of communist national identity.

For Augustin Ioan, the use of national identity in the visual legitimation of power was always paradoxical, with the diversity and ambiguity of the concept belied by the theoretical dogmatism of its application, purporting unity and cohesion where only difference and heterogeneity could be found. Ioan examines the building blocks of the discourse and the methods of its confection – the fetishism of origins (Latinity, Orthodoxy), the misappropriation of Protochronist philosophy, and a tendency to collate unique, disparate, and very localised instances of cultural production into a seemingly ubiquitous national character whilst suppressing those very same regional differences. This discursive cluster, concludes Ioan, resulted in one of the most

⁶⁸⁷ Verdery, *National Ideology Under Socialism*, pp. 125-26.

repressive tools of mass conscience manipulation by the regime.⁶⁸⁸ Applied on a national scale since the 1960s, the reconstruction of Romania's city centres in the name of progressive socialist development in a national key has systematically erased the past, local identity and community spirit, and replaced truly social public spaces with the panoptic crowd control machines of the administrative/political civic centres. Ironically, a range of quotes from international architecture precedents can be detected in the design of individual civic centre buildings: allusions to Le Corbusier's Chandigarh, critical regionalism, architecture parlante, etc., testify to the creative leeway architects speculated under the regime.⁶⁸⁹ At the same time, they highlight the superficial, aesthetic nature of this creative licence, lacking a solid programmatic foundation to significantly influence the politically-mandated transformation of the built environment.

From this perspective (congruent with the work of Boris Groys), Ioan sees the total re-writing of the urban fabric operated during communism in Eastern Europe as the totalitarian legacy of the avant-garde's utopian reality redesign, in a warped authoritarian application of the Western concept of megastructure.⁶⁹⁰ In conjunction with the Party's vision of national communism, the interpretation of specificity as variation of form rather than contextuality of structure and processes would gradually prevail over the more nuanced interpretations of architectural identity discussed in

⁶⁸⁸ Augustin Ioan, *Modern Architecture and the Totalitarian Project: a Romanian Case Study*, trans. by Alina Cârâc (Bucharest: Institutul Cultural Român, 2009), pp. 18-37.

⁶⁸⁹ Ioan, *Modern Architecture and the Totalitarian Project*, pp.185-94.

⁶⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 160-63.

section 5.1. of this chapter, providing a new impetus for unique and standardised construction.⁶⁹¹

Through this mechanism of political intervention, the iteration of *national specificity* through architecture began losing focus on nurturing a holistic approach to regional development, informed by the participation of Romanian architects in international forums of expertise, and the return to the fascination of form supported by liberalised access to Western architectural media. As early as 1965, Romanian theorists and architects cautioned against the equation of specificity with foreign architectural trends based on the modernisation of the vernacular, like the works of Japanese architects, or – just as importantly – with the introspective turn of uncritically reiterating one’s own architectural tradition.⁶⁹²

This warning would come to fruition towards the end of the 1960s, with *Arhitectura* marking, perhaps subconsciously, the shift between a more systemic, wider-scale approach to architecture as socio-cultural development, to a renewed fascination with form: the cover of issue 2 (1967) displays *The Table of Silence*, one of Constantin Brâncuși’s iconic sculptural ensembles. During the early 1970s, Brâncuși’s laconic sublimation of folk decorative shapes and patterns would transgress into architecture,

⁶⁹¹ As demonstrated by the general flow of discussion at the national congresses organised by the Union of Romanian Architects, and covered extensively by *Arhitectura* between 1976-1978.

⁶⁹² ‘A doua conferință pe țară a Uniunii Arhitecților din R.P.R.’ [The second national conference of the Union of Architects of the People’s Republic of Romania] *Arhitectura* 3 (1965), pp. 22-43.

This is a key article in assessing the diversity of views on the problematic of specificity, as it comprises excerpts and, in the case of architects of considerable professional authority, full allocutions from 40 architects who attended the conference discussions.

adding decoration-derived sculpturality to the repertoire of *specific* Romanian architecture (Fig. 56).

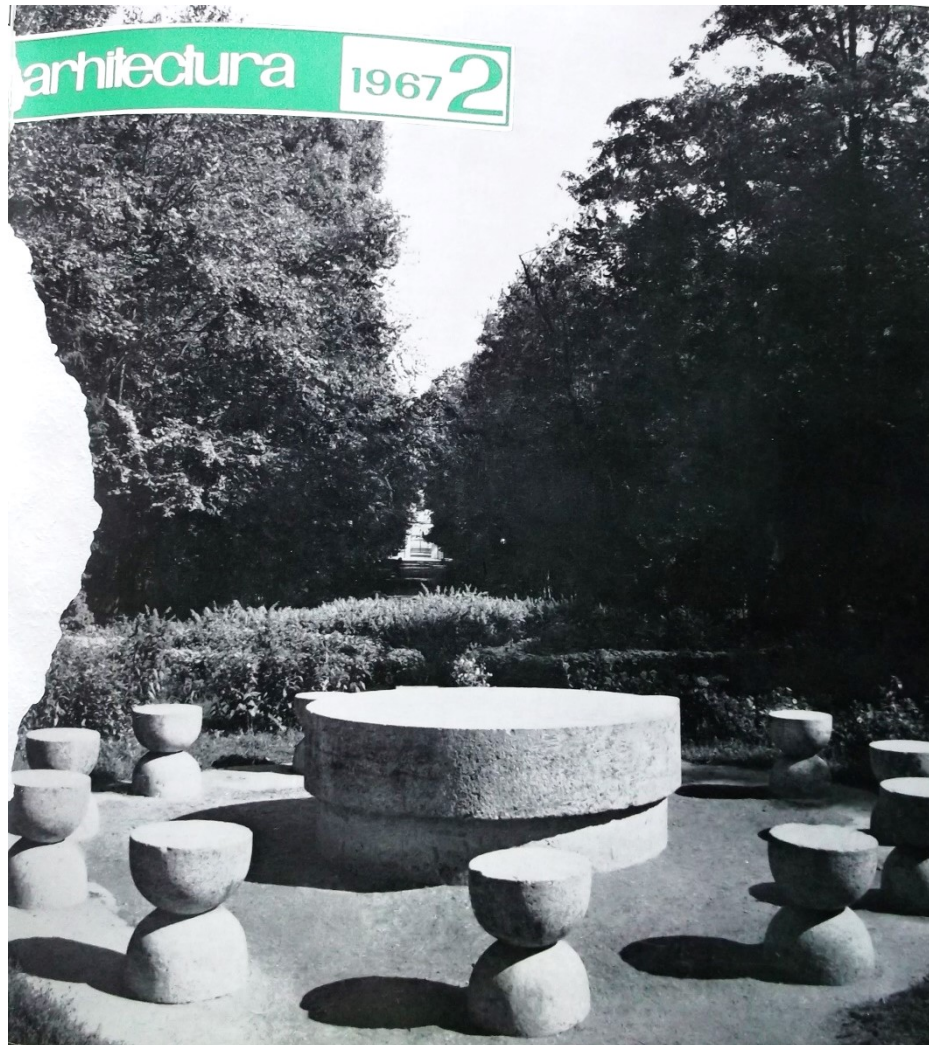


Fig. 56. *Arhitectura* 2 (1967) – front cover.

It is also significant to note that, during the 1960s, *national specificity* and *nationally specific architecture* did not exist as a cohesive body of discourse or praxis. While specificity itself was still being disputed in the variety of acceptations highlighted above, unique, high-profile projects were presented by their authors in *Arhitectura* not as architectural pursuits of the national spirit, but rather as adaptations to the historical and cultural characteristics of the context, mitigated by the challenges of modern programmes. In most cases, it was only after 1990 that they came to be regarded as

watershed moments of *national specificity* in Romanian architecture. The construct of *national Romanian architecture* arose through isolated theoretical pieces such as those of Constantin Joja, or Nicolae and Maria Vaida-Porumbescu,⁶⁹³ calling for a modern interpretation of the spiritual coordinates coded into vernacular architecture, itself understood as a *spatial matrix* of quintessential Romanian-ness (Fig. 57).

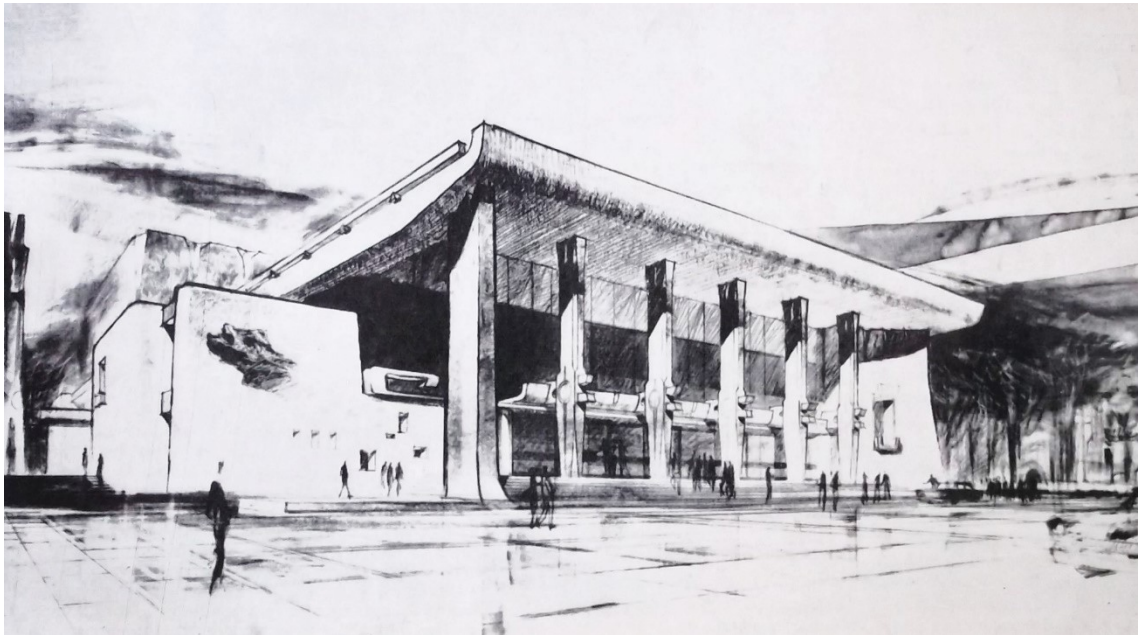


Fig. 57. Project for Oradea culture hall (Nicolae Vlădescu; 1967). This type of urban-scale portico based on the spatial archetype of the traditional veranda as a mediator of public-private transitions would become formulaic in the development of civic centres during the 1970s.

A small number of projects explicitly signalling the pursuit of national specificity as a core design agenda helped sketch the formal dimension of this architectural direction for *Arhitectura's* audience. A significant project from this point of view was the National Bucharest Theatre, whose design parameters and 1969 presentation in *Arhitectura* will

⁶⁹³ For Constanting Joja, see *Arhitectura* 4 (1968), pp. 17-21; 2 (1969), pp. 32-33, and his most influential theoretical work: Constantin Joja, *Sensuri și valori regăsite* [Meanings and values rediscovered] (Bucharest: Editura Eminescu, 1981).

Nicolae and Maria Vaida-Porumbescu's work was featured in *Arhitectura* 2 (1967), pp.12-17; 4 (1969), pp. 34-49; 1 (1970), pp. 52-57; 2-3 (1981), pp. 60-61; 5 (1984), pp. 14-15.

be analysed in the last section of this chapter as a litmus test for the negotiation of *national specificity* in direct dialogue between power and the profession.

But if the application of national specificity in unique architecture programmes was problematic, its ubiquity in mass, standardised construction was doubly so. Soon after the 1971 diktat for the pursuit of specificity took hold in cultural production, numerous caricatures sprouted up in *Arhitectura* (Fig. 58) on the subject of the superficial and, more often than not, irrelevant application of *national specificity* detailing to typified construction (collectively known as ‘parapet architecture’ – a collage application of regional folkloric woodworking motifs and a variety of sloped roofs).

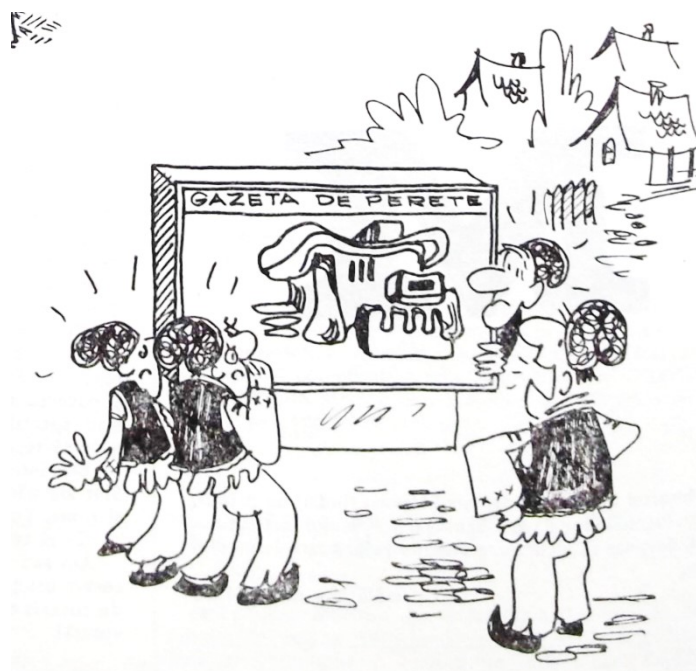


Fig. 58. Caricature by architect Marian Oproiu, published in *Arhitectura* 3 (1973). The caption reads: ‘Don’t worry, lads, it’s only the design of the future culture hall!’ This caricature also highlights the chasm in the perception of specificity between holders of professional knowledge, and the user base for whom *regional specificity* was developed.

At the same time, *Arhitectura's* contributors were also concerned with the erasure of the *otherness* of the non-specialist public, homogenised between regional formal

clichés and the uniformity of standardised collective habitation. In issue 6 (1970), Mircea Stancu broached the issue of modern vernacular architecture in the form of illegal self-builds, arguing that the rise in illegal vernacular construction was a symptom of the deficiencies of the state-run housing system – slow allocation mired in bureaucracy, subpar quality of design and execution, and limited adaptability to the evolving needs of the modern urban population. The most significant revelation of the article, however, was that, according to sociological surveys, architects and users worked at cross-purposes, with the user-base distancing itself from traditional archetypes in search of a modern aesthetic, while typified architecture praxis, especially for mass housing, relied precisely on this aesthetic for the formal illusion of regional contextuality.⁶⁹⁴

As previously mentioned in the Literature Review, scholars like Augustin Ioan have already linked the not inconsiderable degree of discursive autonomy exercised by the profession in the shaping of national specificity in architecture, to the tendency towards discourse-monopolising retrospectivism and a reduced capacity for self-reflexivity. Another two defining characteristics of contemporary Romanian architecture linked to the revival of the national specificity problematic during the last two decades of communism are, according to Ioan, archaism and rigidity, which reduce the profession's public accountability and capacity to collaborate with the authorities to produce consistent urban planning policies. Ioan attributes these faults to the in-field struggle between traditionalism, classicism and modernism wrought

⁶⁹⁴ Mircea Stancu, 'Arhitectura meșteșugărească contemporană a clădirilor de locuit' [The contemporary vernacular architecture of housing] *Arhitectura* 6 (1970), pp. 61-65.

during the artificial formulation of national identity in 19th century Romania, and transferred across multiple systemic logics.⁶⁹⁵

In architecture, these three trends have hybridised into stylistic variants,⁶⁹⁶ each able to accommodate the political definition of *national specificity*, despite running the gamut between conservative regionalism and avant-garde modernity. Moreover, Ioan argues that power's pre-war tendency to divide architecture praxis into two or more aesthetically divergent 'gears' has spilled into the communist era, eliciting from the profession a conceptual and stylistic 'chameleonism'⁶⁹⁷ which, in the absence of sustained programmatic spirit, further eroded architecture's critical dimension. As Ioan notes, the younger generations of architects training during the heights of the national specificity campaign fervently consumed the works of Louis Kahn, Stirling, Meier, Botta, Japanese metabolists or high-tech icons, critical regionalists and many others, collating these influences into a 'formal bouillon' (creative, certainly, but superficial and outside social relevance). Meanwhile, the older teaching staff still clung to hard-line, CIAM functionalism, subtly disguised with formal traits sourced from the traditional vernacular.⁶⁹⁸

⁶⁹⁵ Ioan, *Modern Architecture and the Totalitarian Project*, pp. 12-36.

⁶⁹⁶ Such as the neo-Romanian style, 'stripped' classicism, modernism, lyrical functionalism, Art Deco, etc., and their cross-pollinations. Ioan, *Modern architecture and the totalitarian project*, p. 14-17.

⁶⁹⁷ The documented cases of architects with considerable professional and academic standing, like Octav Doicescu and Duiliu Marcu, serenely switching between classicism, modernism and Socialist Realism (as required by the political client) further supports this point.

⁶⁹⁸ Ioan, *Modern Architecture and the Totalitarian Project*, p. 137-41.

As already discussed in Chapter 4 of this thesis, *Arhitectura* magazine had already established itself as an arena of *architectural mediation* for the testing, refining, and dissemination of adaptive responses to the twin challenges of socialist ideology and planned economy. After a brief rationalist interlude between 1958 and 1962, when Romanian architecture praxis was essentially driven by economic functionality, *Arhitectura* affirmed its separation from the dual constraints of the Soviet model of praxis and its own traditionalist bent, by reimagining its graphic epidermis in 1963, to better reflect its commitment to a contemporary architecture of global relevance. At the same time, the magazine had begun following the dialogue between the profession and the political centre on the subject of *specificity* in the context of housing and urban development. Between 1962 and 1965, this dialogue held the main focus of *Arhitectura's* local theoretical concerns, with specificity shaping up as the attunement of architectural and urban interventions to the diversity of geographical, social and economic contexts detectable even in the politically enforced homogeneity of planned development.

In accord with Western-based critiques of the identity-eroding effect of rational, economy-driven post-war reconstruction, the limitations of the typified, prefabricated design promoted since 1954 across the Soviet bloc had also become a pressing concern for the Romanian political leadership and architects alike. In the light of the profession's increased exposure to international, identity-centric debates, as well as participation in the development of national housing strategies for markedly different

geo-cultural contexts, the lack of integration between post-war urban interventions⁶⁹⁹ and the more organically-developed spatial character of Romanian cities became a focal point of discussion, fuelled by rising interdisciplinary exchange, most notably with sociology. This period is particularly relevant from the point of view of the political centre relaxing its teleological hold on the definition of the needs of the masses in favour of the built environment disciplines. Paradoxically, however, this manoeuvre also bolstered the rise of the managerial power of state institutions, whose short-term self-preservation efforts worked against the emergent technocracy of Gheorghiu-Dej's thaw.

1967 was the pivotal year when *Arhitectura* published Marcel Melicson's theoretical series, 'Fişe pentru o istorie a gândirii arhitecturale contemporane',⁷⁰⁰ which made the connection between architecture's social and symbolic relevance for its target audience and the necessity of a cultural imprint, grounding it in the geo-cultural context of its application. This corpus of texts was in itself a valuable analytical exercise in the critical genealogy of the rootedness of Romanian praxis in perhaps misapprehended core concepts of modern architecture. Melicson's choice of supporting Western theorists is key here, particularly that of Gropius:

⁶⁹⁹ Early critiques of the limited suitability of these interventions to the evolving social needs of their inhabitants can be found in Grigore Ionescu, *Arhitectura pe teritoriul României de-a lungul veacurilor* [*Architecture in Romania throughout the ages*] (Bucharest: Editura Academiei RSR, 1982).

⁷⁰⁰ Melicson's theoretical article series ran between 1967 and 1969, and comprised 15 articles of comparative architecture critique.

Marcel Melicson, 'Fişe pentru o istorie a gândirii arhitecturale contemporane' [Excerpts for a critical understanding of contemporary architecture] *Arhitectura* 1 (1967), annex, pp. 1-8; 2 (1967), annex, pp. 9-16; 3 (1967), annex, pp. 17-28; 4 (1967), annex, pp. 29-40; 5 (1967), annex, pp. 41-56; 6 (1967), annex, pp. 57-72; 1 (1968), annex, pp. 73-84; 2 (1968), annex, pp. 85-96; 3 (1968), annex, pp. 97-108; 4 (1968), annex, pp. 109-20; 5 (1968), annex, pp. 121-32; 6 (1968), annex, pp. 133-48; 1 (1969), annex, pp. 149-60; 2 (1969), annex, pp. 161-70; 3 (1969), annex, pp. 171-84.

In modern architecture the objectification of the personal and the national is clearly recognizable. A uniformity of the character of modern buildings across natural borders, to which peoples and individuals remain bound, caused by world trade and technology is invading all cultured nations. Architecture is always national, also always individual, but of the three concentric circles — individual, people, humanity — the last and greatest encompasses the other two. Therefore the title: International Architecture.⁷⁰¹

This message would soon be readily embraced by Romanian architects, and the drive towards a local architecture whose discernible national derivation would be precisely the quality recommending it to international relevance would be taken up with renewed interest. Moreover, Melicson's own curated gallery of world architecture embodying this desideratum also offers a mesmeric terminology: 'lyrical functionalism' is used as a descriptor of Le Corbusier's later work, such as the Swiss Pavilion and Ronchamp Chapel.⁷⁰² These allusions to individual creativity and the powerful symbolism of a lyrical or narrative architecture benefitted from the renewed arousal of nationalist cultural tendencies, but also from Romanian architecture's disillusionment with functionalism's contextual irreverence.

Arhitectura's emergent criticality on this topic can be traced back to issue 5 (1963), featuring an incisively critical interview with Oscar Niemeyer, touching on some of the disparities between the design intent and actual performance of Brasilia, especially

⁷⁰¹ Walter Gropius, *Internationale Architektur*, (Bauhaus Bücher, 1925), p. 7.

Translation from <<https://thecharnelhouse.org/2014/08/25/walter-gropius-international-architecture-1925/>> [accessed 10 March 2018]

⁷⁰² The genealogy of the term 'lyrical functionalism' also merits further research. Although the term is generally credited to theorist Mircea Lupu and his original theory on the conceptual direction of Romanian architecture in the 1960s and 1970s, Melicson's use of 'lyrical functionalism' in description of Le Corbusier's work precedes the publication of the term in Lupu's 1977 *Școli naționale în arhitectură* by 10 years. The significance of the term's evolution is precisely its conceptual connection to parallel directions present in architecture from abroad.

from a social needs perspective.⁷⁰³ By 1970, theorists like Gheorghe Săsărman were re-examining the conceptual underpinning of functionalism in search of alternatives to the limiting 'mechanicism' that this architectural direction, in conjunction with the socialist drive for prefabricated construction, had developed. Under the motto 'Functionalism is dead' (a sentiment echoed across *Arhitectura* at the time, through writings and works emphasising the narrativity or lyricism of form), Săsărman called for the reconsideration of function as architectural synthesis, rather than programme-specific technologism.⁷⁰⁴ As a research sketch for an updated architectural methodology, the article proposed a model of function as a compound of material-utilitarian, material-constructive, spiritual-expressive, and cognitive-semantic-performative factors, bound by relationships of varying degrees of dependence, autonomy, and complexity of scale (from the micro level of ergonomics to the macro level of urbanism).⁷⁰⁵

While I agree with Zahariade and Ioan on the instrumental role played by national identity in the increasing severity of societal control, especially during the last two decades of the Romanian regime,⁷⁰⁶ a closer look at *Arhitectura's* discourse during this period reveals a far more nuanced understanding of this problematic, only gradually

⁷⁰³ Ladislau Adler, 'Oscar Niemeyer și orașul Brasilia' [Oscar Niemeyer and the city of Brasilia] *Arhitectura R.P.R.* 5 (1963), pp. 52-57.

⁷⁰⁴ Gheorghe Săsărman, 'Determinări în arhitectură' [Determinations in architecture] *Arhitectura* 4 (1970), pp. 68-75.

⁷⁰⁵ Săsărman, 'Determinări în arhitectură', pp. 69-73.

⁷⁰⁶ Zahariade, *Arhitectura în proiectul comunist*, pp. 143-44.

eroded during the 1970s and 1980s into irrelevant pastiche, through the mechanisms discussed above (Fig. 59).

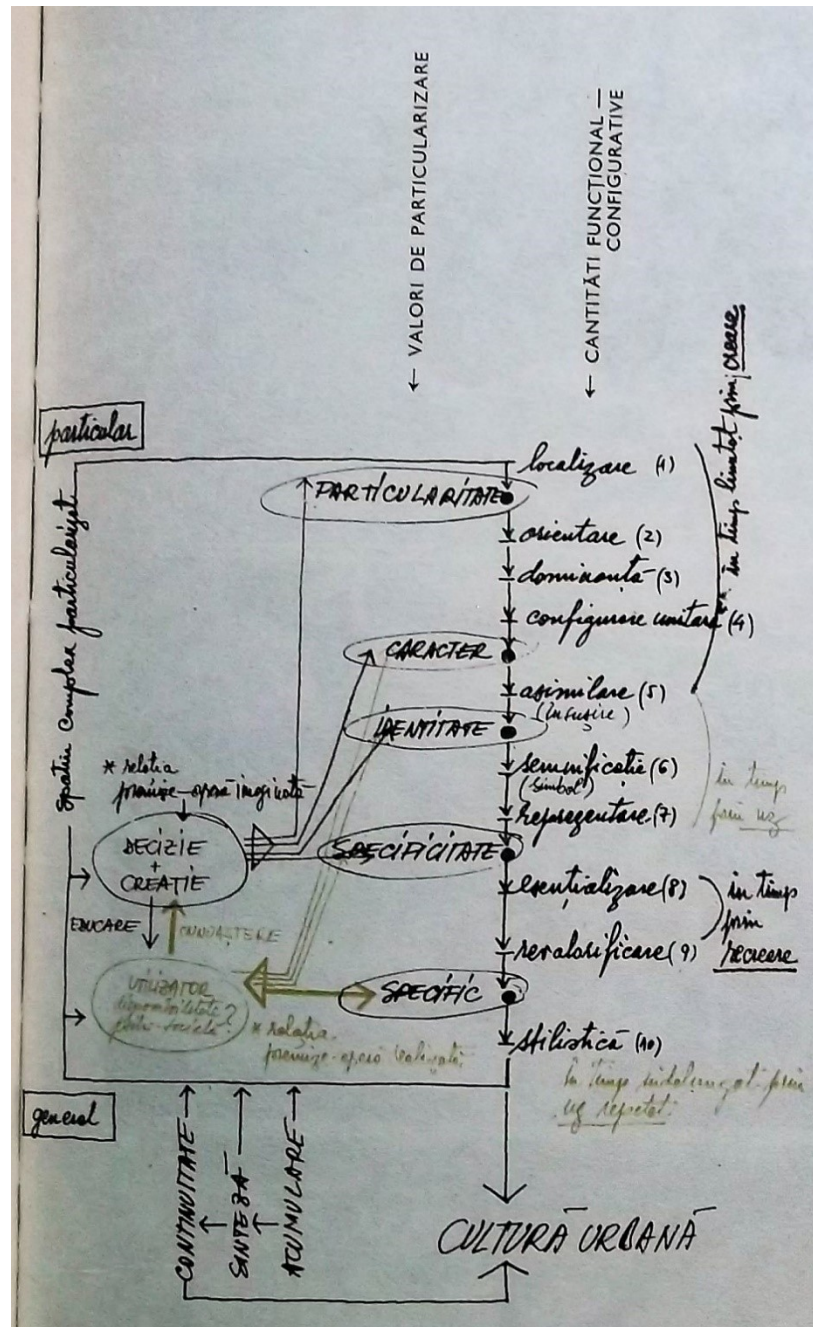


Fig. 59. Diagram by theorist Alexandru M. Sandu, one of the key advocates of specificity as syncretic heterogeneity based on the contemporary cultural and urban experience. His analyses, published in *Arhitectura* as late as 1981, always highlighted the idea of specificity as a cumulative function of lived experience.

My research indicates that, far from lacking in critical awareness, *Arhitectura's* diffuse, seemingly superficial engagement with a diverse range of contemporary issues, emerged through constellations of isolated articles which summarised key debates on

the international scene for the Romanian specialist public.⁷⁰⁷ Although the depth and frequency, if not regularity, of their discussion in *Arhitectura* reflected their significance for local praxis, the professional milieu could not fully reap the benefits of their concrete application, due to the constraints of a nationalised construction programme.

One strategy used by *Arhitectura* to foster discussion on contemporary directions in international architecture of deep significance to the problematic of specificity was the publication, in full, of papers presented at conferences by architects from abroad whose ethos and praxis ran divergent, if not contrary, to the dirigisme setting the course of Romanian architecture. These papers would usually be followed, in seemingly unconnected rubrics (or even subsequent issues) by short reviews of built works from abroad illustrating these alternative directions, as well as book reviews or shorter theoretical pieces providing further insight into the issues discussed. For example, one such constellation of theoretical insights and their contextualisation in practice discernible in *Arhitectura* during the 1960s focused on the limitations of long-term urban planning with regard to the rapid transformation of urban modes of habitation. The theoretical work of sociologists and urban geographers like Chombart de Lauwe, applicable to both socialist and capitalist contexts,⁷⁰⁸ was echoed in critiques from within the socialist bloc on the limited adaptability of socialist urban development to the demographic boom and qualitative shift in rural to urban lifestyles triggered by

⁷⁰⁷ While this list is far from exhaustive, the 1960s were animated by a diverse range of architectural discussion. For a range of subjects, see Appendix 3 this thesis, pp. 464-74.

⁷⁰⁸ Paul-Henry Chombart de Lauwe, 'Evoluția necesităților și transformarea modului de a locui' [The evolution of needs and the transformation of dwelling patterns] *Arhitectura* 4 (1966), pp. 4-7.

industrialisation.⁷⁰⁹ A more balanced position was sought between the quasi-demiurgic role of the modernist architect⁷¹⁰ and the lack of professional self-determination and creative ownership of architects in socialist regimes.⁷¹¹ Together with examples of practice based on user participation and incrementalism,⁷¹² these fragments of critique and theoretical insight slotted into alternative ways of thinking about and practicing socialist architecture in Romania. As Miruna Stroe remarks, these alternatives often sparked studies for collective and individual housing on a large scale divergent from the official direction of praxis.⁷¹³ Regrettably, the vast majority never progressed past the research stage, and were relegated to the archives of design institutes, with only a rare few presented in *Arhitectura* as proposed research directions.

Based on my research, I would also argue that this same kaleidoscopic mode of assembling architectural thought also enabled a variegated understanding of *specificity*, synchronous with the interpretations of this problematic animating international architecture discourse, but also evolving in tension with the *national*

⁷⁰⁹ Anna Tanova, 'Construcția de locuințe în R. P. Bulgaria' [The construction of housing in the People's Republic of Bulgaria] *Arhitectura* 1 (1968), pp. 5-6.

⁷¹⁰ For details, see Ladislau Adler's critical appraisal of Brasilia's performance over time from the point of view of adaptability to social needs, in *Arhitectura* 5 (1963), pp. 52-57, or a short excerpt from Lucien Kroll, discussing the futility of preoccupations with the aesthetic dimension of architecture in the absence of significant structural changes in the make-up of the profession and its framing within capitalist logics in *Arhitectura* 1 (1965), p.52.

⁷¹¹ 'Plenara largită a Comitetului de Conducere al Uniunii Arhitecților din Republica Socialistă România, din zilele de 21 și 22 aprilie 1966 (Sinteza lucrărilor)' [Full plenum of the Leadership Committee of the Union of Architects of the Socialist Republic of Romania (Summary of works)] *Arhitectura* 5 (1966), pp. 65-67.

⁷¹² For example, the works of Herman Herzberger, Lucien Kroll, Nuno Portas, Kisho Kurokawa, etc.

⁷¹³ Miruna Stroe, 'Locuirea – între proiect și decizie politică' [Housing – between design and political decision. Romania, 1954-1966] (unpublished doctoral thesis, Ion Mincu University of Architecture and Urbanism, Bucharest, 2012), pp. 8-9.

specificity based on insular, Protochronist philosophies.⁷¹⁴ The magazine proves, once again, a microcosm of contending voices: while the design of isolated objects was more open to the glorification of traditional spatial archetypes (the peasant abode) and the sublimation of symbolic decorativism into sculptural structures, urbanistic debate strove towards mapping urban specificity from a variety of inter-disciplinary perspectives. *Arhitectura* 4 (1973) is the embodiment of this undercurrent of deep criticality (Fig. 60).

⁷¹⁴ The theoretical writings and practical work of architects like Constantin Joja and Nicolae Porumbescu were instrumental in establishing the theoretical core of the national specificity direction adopted and promoted by the political centre. As Augustin Ioan also notes, this direction quickly became dogmatic as well as vulgarised through prefabricated housing construction.

Ioan, *Modern Architecture and the Totalitarian Project*, pp. 93-94.

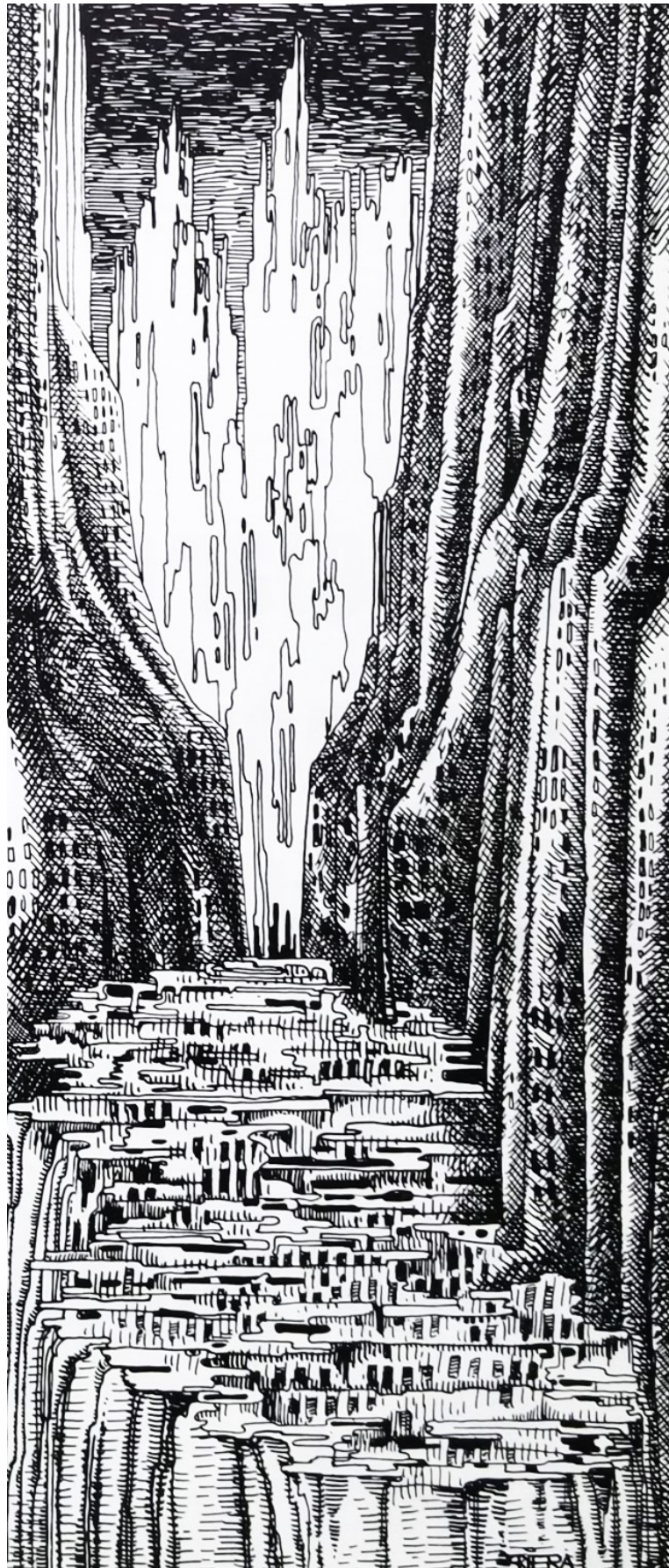


Fig. 60. The heart of the city: a sketch accompanying Octav Doicescu's preface to *Arhitectura 4* (1973). The sketch is readable on several levels of visual and architectural symbolism, from dystopian visions of autarchy to alternative pathways to the urban experience – the hive or ant hill, with an incremental, community-centric approach to world-building.

Under the unofficial title 'The Heart of the City', *Arhitectura* demonstrated the range of the lively debate on the parameters of *nationally specific architecture*. The debate ranged from the need to adapt the output of industrialised construction (which severely limited the formal variety of approved projects),⁷¹⁵ to questioning the consequences of socialist systematisation strategies (such as the homogenising erasure of regional, urban and rural differences through standardised design).⁷¹⁶ This questioning also extended to systemic analyses of the regional or urban context (often through alternative methodologies, such as rhythmanalysis, or algorithm-based computer simulations of development scenarios with variable parameters),⁷¹⁷ as well as historical and socio-psychological investigations of the profession's and non-specialist public's mapping of the specific urban traits of Bucharest.⁷¹⁸ Moreover, *Arhitectura* also investigated the discrepancy between the understanding of both the Party and the architecture milieu of the formal aspects of *specific architecture*, versus that of the actual masses in whose name this specificity was formulated.

⁷¹⁵ Alexandru M. Sandu, 'Pentru o înțelegere complex, științifică a restructurării urbane' [For a complex, scientific understanding of urban restructuring] *Arhitectura* 4 (1973), pp. 4-11.

Gheorghe Săsărman, 'Locuințele construite fără autorizație și sistematizarea Bucureștiului' [Housing constructed without a building permit and the systematisation of Bucharest] *Arhitectura* 4 (1973), pp. 128-30.

⁷¹⁶ Mihai Macavescu, 'Inima orașului. Cerințe față de psihosociologie' [The heart of the city. Demands versus socio-psychology] *Arhitectura* 4 (1973), pp. 12-14.

⁷¹⁷ Mariana Celac and Cristian Munteanu, 'SISARH RV 74 – un program pentru remodelare urbană' [SISARH RV 74 – software for urban remodelling] *Arhitectura* 4 (1973), pp. 16-17.

⁷¹⁸ Petre Derer, 'Traiectoriile pietonului în structura urbană' [The trajectories of pedestrians through the urban structure] *Arhitectura* 4 (1973), pp. 17-19.

Radu Șerban and Marilena Șerban, 'Integrarea imaginii urbane. O încercare de analiză a spațiului urban în partea veche a Bucureștiului' [The integration of the urban image. Analytical essay on the urban space of the Bucharest historical quarters] *Arhitectura* 4 (1973), pp. 92-103.

Petre Derer, Dumitru Guarneri, Mircea Lupu, Șerban Popescu-Criveanu, Alexandru M. Sandu, and Paul Stănescu, 'Ancheta revistei. Centrul actual al Municipiului București' [The magazine's survey. The actual centre of the Bucharest Municipality] *Arhitectura* 4 (1973), pp. 104-19.

In 1977, however, architect and academic Mircea Lupu published *Școli naționale în arhitectură*,⁷¹⁹ a work of notable academic erudition and refinement that was instrumental in establishing, retrospectively, a gradual, linear, and most importantly, deliberate evolution of communist Romanian architecture from rationalism to the national specificity of *lyrical functionalism*. As discussed in the previous section, despite the comparative methodology of Lupu's study, and his astute analysis of the core characteristics of architecture practices from abroad also focused on the critically selective updating of local spatial traditions, his reading of the Romanian architecture praxis after Socialist Realism was almost deterministic, with *nationally-specific architecture* emerging as the natural culmination of the post-war evolution of praxis.

5.3. The National Bucharest Theatre. National specificity, memory, identity.

This section examines the tension between the retrospective and innovative directions comprised in architectural discourse on *national specificity* and *identity*, tensions which also illuminate some of their enduring effects on contemporary praxis. The National Bucharest Theatre (NBT) was – and still is – a project of momentous significance not only for the formulation of a *nationally-specific* Romanian architecture, but also for the study of the patterns of interaction between the political centre and the profession, as well as for the profession's internal processes of self-determination. Moreover, since the NBT has undergone three physical alterations to better cohere with the parameters

⁷¹⁹ Mircea Lupu, *Școli naționale în arhitectură* [National schools of architecture] (Bucharest: Editura Tehnică, 1977).

of architectural specificity constantly transformed by the dialogue between the state and the profession (two during the communist period, and the last as recent as the 2010s, all illustrated in Fig. 61 below), it provides valuable insights into the transference and transformations of these processes into post-socialist, contemporary praxis.

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Fig. 61. The National Bucharest Theatre in three successive iterations. From left to right, 1970s, 1980s, 2010s.

The process of myth construction in post-war Romanian architecture, based on characteristics of collective professional memory which underpin the formulation of contemporary professional identity, has significant – but troublingly undiagnosed – effects on current architectural praxis. In a professional climate of renegeing, distorting, or simply keeping silent on the recent past of Romanian architecture, it is vital to re-examine these mechanisms in order to address the crisis faced by the profession today. During its period of interment, the original NBT accrued a wealth of meanings, values, and even post-factum memories, gradually becoming synonymous, for the architectural milieu, with resistance to mediocrity-enforcing cultural policies. As revealed in the short interviews discussed below,⁷²⁰ each new generation of architects acquired, through the University apprenticeship system, memories of the unseen, augmenting the visually-inaccessible reality of the NBT to the status of architectural

⁷²⁰ The full transcripts of the interviews conducted via email correspondence can be found in Appendix 1 of this thesis, pp. 436-54.

myth. But how does this identity-based process of memory construction and reiteration of the past function for professional milieus primarily defined, as was the case of architecture in communist Romania, by internal dynamics and negotiations with the political sphere?⁷²¹

Traversing most of the communist period, the transformation of the National Bucharest Theatre (NBT) represents a cross-section through shifts in the articulation between political discourse, urban strategy and architectural agenda, mediated through discourse on *national specificity*. As highlighted in the timeline above, the temporal geometry of communist Romanian architecture structured around this problematic covers the 1960s cultural thaw and reconnection with the Western architecture scene, increasingly curtailed during the 1970s, and, finally, the decline of the totalitarian regime in the mid and late 1980s, heralded by the introduction of inhumane restrictions on food and basic amenities for the population to repay Romania's external debt. Although the design, construction and alteration of the NBT belong to the last two stages, the concept of a large-scale performance venue suited to Bucharest's increasingly modernised city centre, and able to embody the redefinition of national culture in Romania, predates the communist take-over.

Plans for the expansion of the NBT's site, Universităţii Square (Fig. 62), spilled into socialist urban strategies, with Bucharest city centre interventions mostly following pre-

⁷²¹ I will use *collective memory* instead of *collected memories* to signify the top-down directionality of memory formation in architecture, based on judgements of value and perceptions formulated within the profession's circle of power. The contention of this article is that professional recollection would be better served by relying on collected memories to inform current professional identity and practice.

war development directives. But while the square had long been a place of privileged, yet socio-culturally diverse urban function, the socialist planning agenda envisaged an upscale in legitimising political representation in a *national* key, to the detriment of the square's cultural and commercial plurivalence.⁷²²

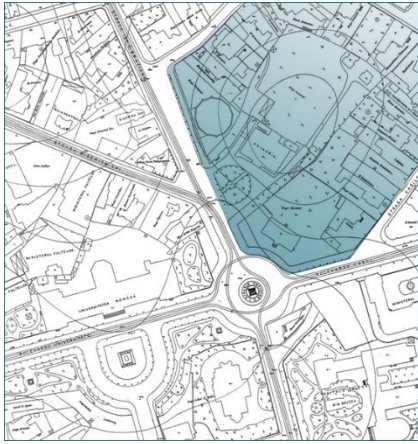


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Fig. 62. Universităţii Square: plan and aerial views predating the NBT. Bottom right: urbanism competition solution, 1956-1957.

In 1971, Nicolae Ceauşescu challenged architects to employ 'the rich and valuable traditions of Romanian architecture, our national specificity'.⁷²³ By the mid-1980s, architecture of a national flair (Fig. 63) was required of mass, typified housing and privileged urban developments (civic centres, high-profile administrative or cultural buildings), and had produced designs ranging from the most banal decorative pastiche to truly experimental forays into the modernist vernacular.⁷²⁴ Nevertheless,

⁷²² Universităţii Square is one of Bucharest's main multi-functional urban nuclei, fashioned in the Hausmannian planning tradition during the modern development of the capital during the late 19th century and the first half of the 20th. Its pre-war configuration featured the country's second modern university, administrative buildings, a monastery, a hospital, shops and restaurants, and even a circus.

⁷²³ Speech given at the Third Conference of the Union of Architects of the Socialist Republic of Romania, printed in full in *Arhitectura* 2 (1971), pp. 3-8.

⁷²⁴ Vernacular modernism is a concept denoting various 'modes of dialogical engagement with the natural and human environment,' seeking to enrich the modernist discourse through reconnections with the geo-cultural and social context. For further details, see *Vernacular Modernism. Heimat, Globalization and the Built Environment*, ed. by Maiken Umbach and Bernd Hüppauf (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), p. 11.

the ideal of *nationally-specific architecture* fluctuated significantly throughout the period, hinging on overall political vision and the regime's need of representation, the idiosyncratic tastes of the members of project approval committees, and, not least, on the in-field evolution of the concept, which integrated repeated attempts to connect to international architecture discourse.



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Fig. 63. National architecture: a world of contrasts. Left: collective housing in the civic centre of Târgoviște (arch. Gheorghe Pintea; 1982), combining two staples of regional specificity: the sloped roof and prefabricated façade panels replicating wood joinery. Right: Orșova Roman-Catholic Cathedral (arch. Hans Facklemann; 1970-1976).

The destiny of the NBT officially began in 1962 via competition for a new, large-scale theatre, recycling to some extent the brief of the 1946 competition for the National Opera.⁷²⁵ Given the depth of political involvement in such a high-profile project, it is telling that the competition was not covered by *Arhitectura*, but in a monograph on theatre architecture by architect and theorist Alexandru Iotzu. The submissions (Fig. 64) cautiously toed the line of avant-garde expression: an almost ironic overlay of structurally purposeless arches and a minimal, rectangular volume (obliquely satirical of Socialist Realism's staple classicist architectural heroics by subtly suggesting an

⁷²⁵ Competition with some innovative solutions for the time: an aluminium egg housing the foyer and auditorium, projected against the blank prism of the stage and annexes (Virgil Nițulescu), and a modernist merger of performance and public space through a raised platform sweeping over the boulevard (Nicolae Porumbescu, the same architect who would later contribute to shaping the mainstream direction of nationally-specific architecture).

alternative aesthetic for mass-friendly socialist grandeur), while other selected entries embraced a sedately modern aesthetic.⁷²⁶

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Fig. 64. 1962 NBT competition entries: left, entry by architects Anton and Margareta Dâmbaianu; right, project by G. Filipeanu and L. Strulovici.

Moreover, *Arhitectura* 6 (1962) did publish a truly avant-garde study on theatre architecture by Liviu Ciulei and Paul Bortnovski (Fig. 65),⁷²⁷ developed hors-concours but demonstrating a truly innovative approach to theatre design, from technical requirements to a genuine reflection of the users' socio-cultural needs.

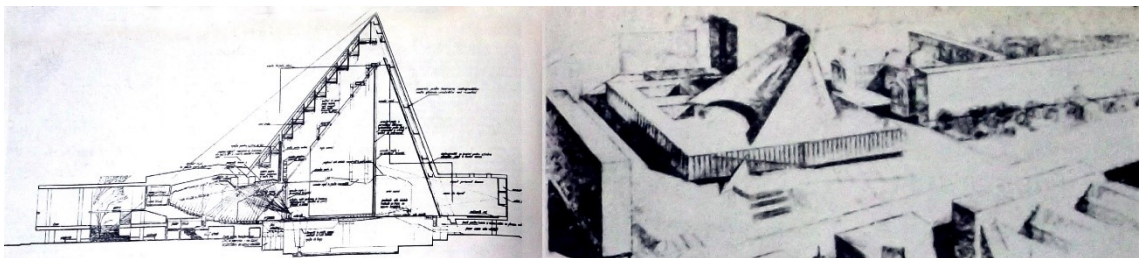


Fig. 65. Ciulei and Bortnovski's 'Study for a contemporary theatre concept', rethinking the theatre as an adaptable, streamlined machine, whose interior volume and external shape derived from the intersection of visibility and audibility curves with the spatial requirements of immersive stage engineering.

In an almost traditional follow-up of architecture competitions in communist Romania, none of the winning projects secured the commission. The NBT was designed in 1963

⁷²⁶ lotzu also remarks, perhaps rhetorically, on the odd lack of coverage of such a major competition in *Arhitectura* magazine. The reasons why *Arhitectura* did not advertise, nor cover such an important competition, remain subject to speculation. Images of the two ex-aequo prizes can be found in Alexandru lotzu, *Teatrul. Act de creație arhitecturală*, (Bucharest: Editura Tehnică, 1981), pp. 103-105.

⁷²⁷ Liviu Ciulei and Paul Bortnovski, 'Studiu pentru o rezolvare contemporană a teatrului' [Study for a contemporary theatre design] *Arhitectura R.P.R.* 5 (1962), pp. 41-46.

by Horia Maicu⁷²⁸ and Romeo Belea⁷²⁹ in partnership with the Bucharest Design Institute (BDI), and was functional (albeit incomplete) by late 1973 (Fig. 66).

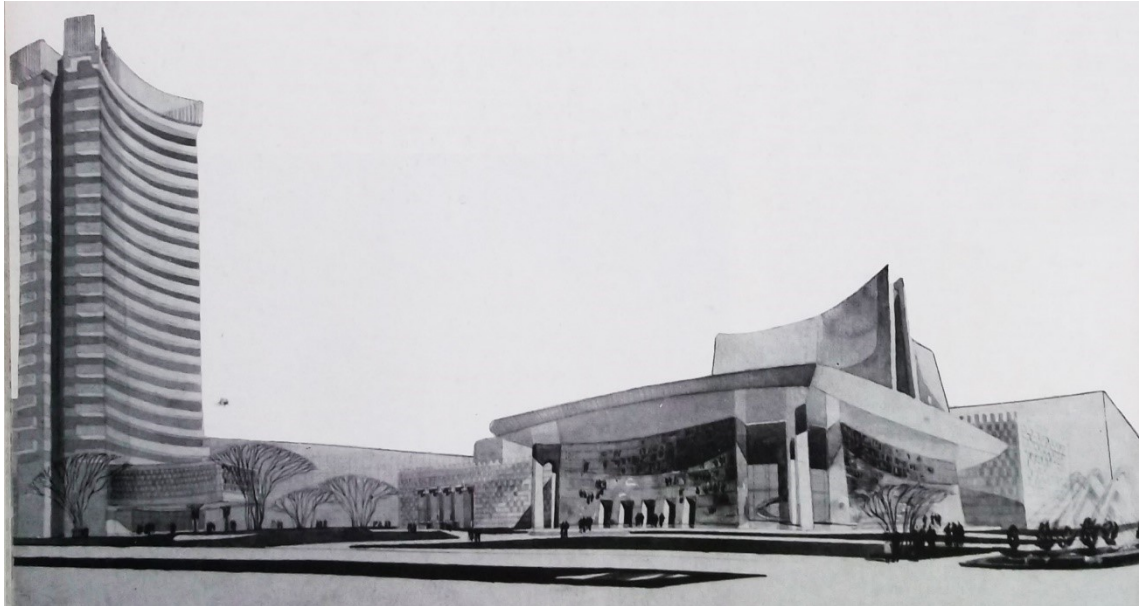


Fig. 66. NBT project design by Horia Maicu and Romeo Belea. Perspective drawing from *Arhitectura 2* (1969). On the right, Hotel Intercontinental, the NBT's compositional counterweight.

Although the project authors toured contemporary theatre venues in Japan, USA and Germany,⁷³⁰ and consulted with visiting specialists,⁷³¹ the final design comprised three contradictory conceptual directions. While the long-awaited merger between Modernism with brutalist nuances and vernacular Romanian architecture represented a welcome (though tentative) attempt to participate in international architectural discussion in the vein of Kenzo Tange's tradition-suffused, robust architecture, it

⁷²⁸ Bucharest's chief architect and project leader for Casa Scânteii.

⁷²⁹ Unofficially credited with the conceptual and visual authorship of the project, in much the same way Alifanti's contribution to Casa Scânteii was also attributed to Maicu.

⁷³⁰ Horia Maicu and Romeo Belea, 'Proiectul Teatrului Național din București' [The project of the Romanian National Theatre in Bucharest] *Arhitectura 2* (1969), pp. 42-53.

⁷³¹ 'Despre Teatrul Național I. L. Caragiale din București, cu prof. dr. arh. Romeo Ștefan Belea' [On the I. L. Caragiale National Theatre in Bucharest, with professor doctor architect Romeo Ștefan Belea] *Revista Construcțiilor*, 100 (January-February 2014), pp. 16-17.

nevertheless entailed a surprising regression to traditional theatre space. Finalised in 1963, the NBT project eluded print until 1969, when *Arhitectura* devoted 14 pages and the cover image to the theatre after a significantly lengthy period of press obscurity. At the time, the NBT was the first Romanian theatre to enjoy the benefits of a central urban site sizeable enough to accommodate three performance halls (the biggest designed for 920 spectators), annexes fitted with cutting edge technology, ample facilities and recreation spaces for actors and staff, as well as multiple foyers, exhibition and services areas.⁷³² But if, for the public and theatre professionals, the NBT was congruent with its artistic and cultural dimension, its outer shell held far more significance for architects.

For the authors, the NBT was underpinned by extensive research into experimental theatre design, focused on theatre-going as an act of individual and collective socio-cultural participation (Fig. 67),⁷³³ while the building's outward appearance had to embody the idea (and ideal) of a *national theatre* – the country's biggest, most awe-inspiring performance venue.

⁷³² The resulting project was conceived at the highest standards of professionalism and quality, later betrayed by a *mise-en-œuvre* a couple of decades behind the design.

⁷³³ Maicu and Belea, 'Proiectul Teatrului Național din București', pp. 43-46.

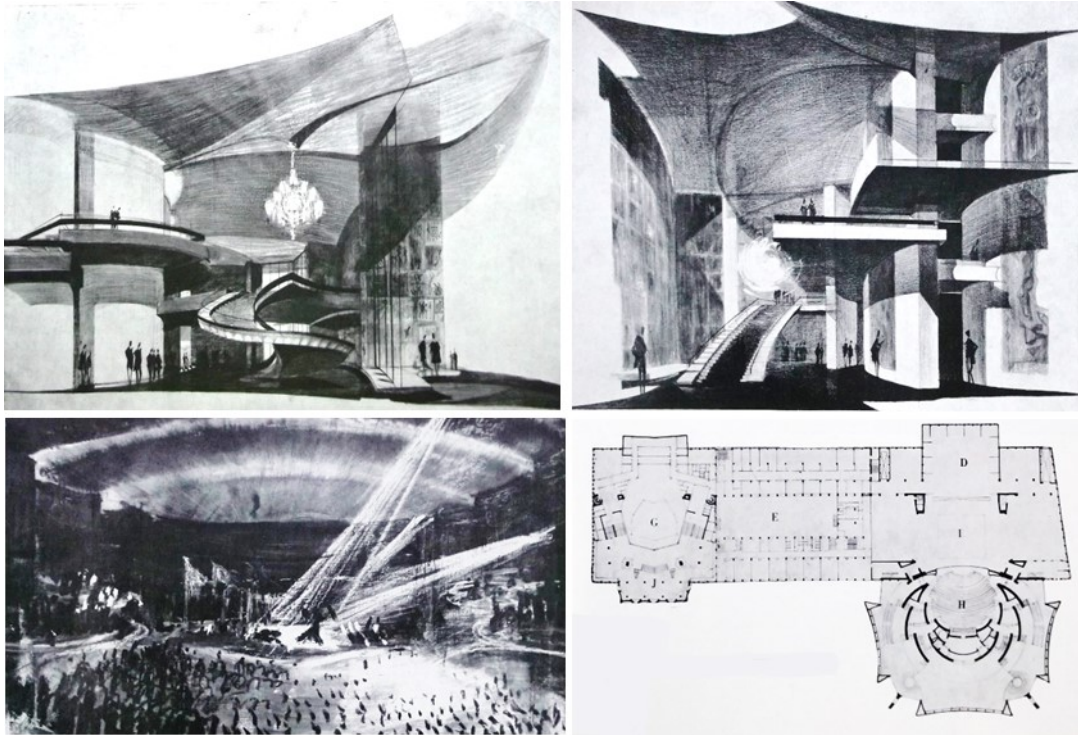


Fig. 67. The interior space of the NBT as presented in *Arhitectura* through the authors' evocative sketches. Bottom right – plan of the main and secondary hall, stage space and annexes.

Maicu and Belea's *Arhitectura* article constantly stresses the traditional Romanian precedents informing the design, drawing on 'traditions deeply rooted into the culture and consciousness of us all [...] tradition was and always is a point of departure for the future'.⁷³⁴ The theatre's main façade and foyer re-imaged elements of architectural syntax and vocabulary generally ascribed to *essential* Romanian architecture into an urban-scale veranda (Fig. 68) – a space of selective openness, visibility and sociability.⁷³⁵

⁷³⁴ Ibid., p. 46.

⁷³⁵ Ibid., p. 50.

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Fig. 68. The NBT during the 1970s, in the busy thoroughfare of Universităţii Square.

According to the time's Protochronist philosophy-infused discourse, using spatial and decorative archetypes⁷³⁶ resonating with a *specifically Romanian cultural matrix* – for instance, the swooping eaves and svelte towers of medieval churches, echoed in the veranda/urban portico synthesis and the shape of the stage tower – conferred a note of architectural specificity to modern design. Additionally, the NBT paid (rather literal) homage to Le Corbusier's Notre Dame du Haut, whose upturned concrete overhang the NBT was accused to have surreptitiously copied. With an aesthetic verging on brutalism or, as Colin Rowe and Fred Koetter see it, *bricolage*,⁷³⁷ Le Corbusier's chapel was a striking return to the meaningful, symbolic dimension of built form. But while

⁷³⁶ The exterior walls were to be decorated with polychrome mosaics and frescos reminiscent of 'the painted exterior walls of monuments in Northern Moldova', while the overhang referenced 'shapes of an authentic and contemporary architectural expression, specific for our country and people through their spiritual link with the most valuable traditions of erudite and folk architecture'. Ibid., p. 53. For further references, see the works of Constantin Noica and Nicolae Iorga on Romanian culture and spirituality.

⁷³⁷ An assemblage of archetypes sourced from architecture history. Colin Rowe and Fred Koetter, *Collage City* (Cambridge MA: The MIT Press, 1978).

Ronchamp represented – inside and out – an exercise in pure tectonics and refined religious symbolism, the NBT's reiteration of tradition juxtaposed updated vernacular imagery with an otherwise functionalist building (Fig. 69).

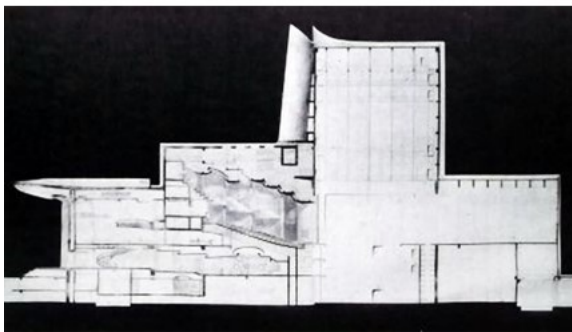
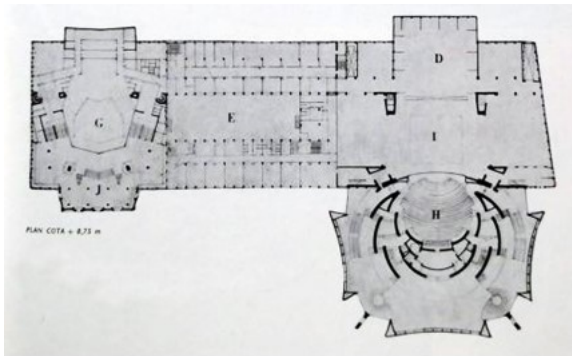


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Fig. 69. The NBT and Ronchamp in plan and section: a comparison of conceptual cohesion.

Only the main façade and foyers follow a curvilinear, tectonic logic, with the collage most apparent in the foyer/amphitheatre connection and the section of the stage tower. The third visual reference of the theatre's collage aesthetics arose from the non-professional audience's imaginative comparison between the building and playwright Ion Luca Caragiale's iconic 19th century hat.⁷³⁸ Ironically, the public's humorous assessment⁷³⁹ predated professional critique in perceiving the NBT's aesthetics as less of a synthesis between the two conceptual mainlines reported by the

⁷³⁸ Ion Luca Caragiale (1852-1912), one of Romania's greatest playwrights and literary figures.

⁷³⁹ Also including the moniker of 'the greatest toilet seat in Romania', as recorded by Augustin Ioan in *Modern Architecture and the Totalitarian Project*, p. 184.

design team (a modern reinterpretation of traditional architecture and an attempt to enter international dialogue exploring alternative, local expressions of modernism) and more of a *bricolage*, blending two churches and a hat (Fig. 70).



Figure sections (top right, bottom left) have been removed due to Copyright restrictions



Fig. 70. The NBT's historical, professional, and cultural influences. From top left, counter-clockwise: Voroneț monastery (Suceava county, 1488); Notre Dame du Haut – Ronchamp chapel (Le Corbusier, 1955); Ion Luca Caragiale (pivotal figure of Romanian dramatic arts and satirical literature, 1909).

With a dual claim to national representation *and* international connectivity, the NBT echoed similar tendencies towards culture- and context-conscious 'vernacular modernism'⁷⁴⁰ whilst also representing the social welfare, modernising drive of the socialist project. While this appeal to local contextuality initiated by political and professional circles did open a line of potentially constructive dialogue, the Party's

⁷⁴⁰ Such as the architectural directions pursued in Japan and Scandinavian countries during this period, which featured with some regularity in *Arhitectura* through articles on the work of individual architects, or overviews of the main conceptual and formal directions animating a certain country's architectural scene. For example, see *Arhitectura* 2 (1957), 5 (1971), 1 (1979), 5 (1980), 1 (1981), as well as the issues referenced in section 5.2 of this chapter.

reinstatement of *the national* as an instrument of power centralisation limited the degree of negotiation on its exact parameters across several fields of cultural production. Architecture project authorisation committees⁷⁴¹ preferred clarity, ease of (non-professional) perception and literal reference to elements of local tradition. This cookie-cutter national filter made cultural production exploring fluidity, ambiguity and different nuances within a territory's cultural system exceedingly difficult.

Reactions to the NBT were, at the time, subdued, due to Horia Maicu's position within architecture's locus of professional and institutional power.⁷⁴² *Arhitectura's* first critical reaction came nine years after the NBT's inauguration, in an article by architect and academic Dorin Ștefan, who found the theatre's design 'nonsensical', and lacking in the ambiguous tension between transitional spaces that unites several variants of Romanian architecture.⁷⁴³ Ștefan's conclusion – that simply collating instances of traditional architecture syntax and vocabulary could never produce national specificity – subtly implies that *national specificity* itself was a problematic concept, misunderstood and misapplied by political and professional circles alike. Similarly to

⁷⁴¹ Depending on their complexity and level of standardisation or uniqueness, architecture projects would have to navigate multiple stages of approval, overseen by committees of increasing levels of authority and decisional power.

⁷⁴² My research has identified a triangulation between *Arhitectura* magazine, the staff of IMUAU and the Romanian Architect's Union, due to a select handful of practitioners holding leadership and key roles in all three institutions at the same time, throughout their joint history. This privileged professional circle does secure a certain degree of discursive autonomy in relation to power, but it also increases the inertia of the architectural agenda and hermeticism of the field. Further details can be found in Chapter 6 of this thesis.

⁷⁴³ Dorin Ștefan, 'Lungul drum al ambiguității către arhitectură' [The long route of ambiguity towards architecture] *Arhitectura* 1-2 (1982), pp. 68-71.

This article on ambiguity in architecture featured in 'Mișcarea ideilor' [Ideas in motion], a marginal rubric which packed a considerable theoretical punch (often along divergent lines than mainstream Romanian architecture), running sporadically in *Arhitectura* between 1981 and 1989.

Benhabib's reading of culture as narrative polyphony,⁷⁴⁴ Ștefan argued that the archetypal spatial patterns ascribed to a certain geo-cultural space resided in the ontological interferences, tensions, contradictions, ambiguities, and multitudes of marginal nuances of cultural creation exchanged between social groups inhabiting the same territory.⁷⁴⁵

But even for projects successful in tailoring these complex patterns to modern requirements and sneaking them past architecture committees, the limitations of socialist construction led to poor execution with quickly-degrading materials and inelegant, rushed detailing. The NBT met the same fate, with weather and neglect exacerbating the building's already morose image, lacklustre without the originally planned polychrome mosaics and frescos (Fig. 71). Moreover, the raised platform housing the theatre and Hotel Intercontinental was equally deserted, failing to become a stage of public interaction and socialising. While the area did have a presence in public and individual memory, they stemmed from wholly different reasons than the intended poignancy and specificity of the NBT's design.

⁷⁴⁴ Seyla Benhabib, *The Claims of Culture*. Equality and Diversity in the Global Era (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), pp. 5-8.

⁷⁴⁵ Ștefan, 'Lungul drum al ambiguității către arhitectură', pp. 70-71.

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Fig. 71. The quasi-finished NBT. A desolate urban presence.

Ceaușescu would eventually take exception to the building's aesthetic, reportedly due to its grim appearance and mimicry of foreign architecture. After a fire damaged the main theatre venue in 1978, he seized the opportunity to transform the NBT according to his own taste by neo-classicising the theatre via application of a mock façade. The idea of effectively entombing the building in a concrete sarcophagus is the ultimate in surreal, communist bricollage reasoning,⁷⁴⁶ and stemmed from the *in-situ* setup of 1:1

⁷⁴⁶ For details on the epistemological dualism exhibited by in both political ideology and everyday thinking, see Staniszki, *The Ontology of Socialism*, pp. 117-19, 121-23.

models (Fig. 72), necessary for Ceaușescu to understand architectural proposals.

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Fig. 72. Ceaușescu's architectural playground.

In 1983, the responsibility for transfiguring the NBT fell on Cezar Lăzărescu, a powerhouse of modern Romanian architecture who had shaped most of Romania's littoral resorts under Gheorghiu-Dej, and was once again in the system's good graces. After several attempts to give some sort of architectural coherence to the project, Lăzărescu folded in front of Ceaușescu's vision, and executed a mock-façade consisting of two levels of arches wrapped around the original building, topped above overhang level

with a third, disguising the stage tower (Fig. 73). According to professional consensus, the stress and disappointment of the project ultimately led to Lăzărescu's death.⁷⁴⁷

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Fig. 73. The NBT during interment.

Since 2012, when works began to unearth the theatre from its concrete sarcophagus, the NBT began its third architectural reiteration (Fig. 74), receiving mixed responses from the profession and public. All three have not only been gestures of political and cultural appropriation, but also of the selective erasure and reconfiguration of the past dictated by desired shifts of identity – in political as well as cultural and architectural discourse – which the building was meant to embody. As I will discuss below, the NBT is still symptomatic of certain characteristics of the Romanian architecture field shaped under communism, and centred on the articulation between *national specificity* and *professional identity*.

⁷⁴⁷ Ileana Lăzărescu and Georgeta Gabrea. *Vise în piatră. În memoria Prof. Dr. Arh. Cezar Lăzărescu* [Dreams in stone. In memory Of Prof. Dr. Arch. Cezar Lăzărescu] (Bucharest: Capitel, 2003), pp. 13-14.

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Fig. 74. The national spirit, resurrected. Images from the NBT's rehabilitation project, led by architect Romeo Belea.

While my investigation of the NBT as repository of professional identity and memory – *a museum of architectural recollection and thought* – is by no means an in-depth examination of professional memory,⁷⁴⁸ it draws from interconnected theories on

⁷⁴⁸ This represents a potential next step in the research direction and findings shaped by this thesis.

collective memory, understood as the process and the result of complex interferences between multiple sites, perspectives and voices.⁷⁴⁹ Pierre Nora's memory is a 'polyreferential entity' facilitating the appropriation of cultural myths for political and ideological gain in a top-down, hierarchising manner.⁷⁵⁰ Conversely, anthropology and sociology locate collective memory on the margins, within the voices and experiences of disenfranchised communities. In both instances, collective memory produces material artefacts – from memorials and monuments to the simple objects of daily existence, preserved through 'museal sensibility' in attempt to rekindle connections to the past.⁷⁵¹ David Lowenthal however highlights the almost spatial foreignness of the past and the present obsession to re-possess it through artefact manipulation as a 20th century paradox, questioning the validity of collective memory: 'life back then was based on ways of being and believing incommensurable with our own'.⁷⁵²

Collective memory is often co-opted (and produced) by political agendas, especially those centred on national identity – a concept constructed in the present based on contemporary imaginings of a cohesive and homogeneous past and people. In this instance, built artefacts function as 'mnemonic devices'⁷⁵³ indicative of power's official interpretation of the past, rather than items of actual recollection. Individual memory

⁷⁴⁹ Anna Green, *Cultural History* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p. 99.

⁷⁵⁰ Green, *Cultural History*, p. 102.

⁷⁵¹ Andreas Huyssen, *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia* (New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 251.

⁷⁵² David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. XV-XVI.

⁷⁵³ Green, *Cultural History*, pp. 104-05.

and the shared memories of social groups find themselves in a disputed relationship with a collective memory prone to disregard their existence. James Young's construct of 'collected memory' as 'an aggregate collection of its members' many, often competing memories', constitutes the middle ground of this confrontation.⁷⁵⁴ Thus, the construction of collected memory accounts for individual experiences, with common denominators falling into patterns informing tradition and commonly shared values. Memory makers, memory users and historically-established cultural traditions interact, in Wulf Kansteiner's view, to create this repository of shared recollection and meanings.⁷⁵⁵ From this perspective, the NBT is a similar site of interference, confrontation, and synthesis between the political and architectural interpretations (and distortions) of Romania's traditional architectural past as basis to a modern, *specifically Romanian architecture*.

Professor architect Constantin Enache remembers the ambiguity of opinion elicited by the NBT's construction. Lacking a critical dimension, it nevertheless indicated a dissonance between design intent and professional reception – the theatre was deemed inconsistent with the desired *nationally specific modernity* and unsettlingly similar to Ronchamp, indicating that synchronicity with the Western architectural scene was often prone to aesthetic emulation over critical adaptation. Involved in the theatre's second iteration under Ceaușescu, Enache witnessed Lăzărescu's struggle to mediate between professional standards and the political dictum pushing the new

⁷⁵⁴ James Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), p. XI.

⁷⁵⁵ Wulf Kansteiner, 'Finding meaning in memory. A methodological critique of collective memory studies', *History and Theory* 41 (2002), p. 180.

façade to logic-defying, neo-classicist monumentality. Ceaușescu's gargantuan, resource-depleting urban projects led, Enache writes, to increasing animosity towards the system and built icons of power abuse, like the NBT. Then, 'the façade which had disappeared became idealised, and *transformed into a veritable myth*'. For Enache, the contemporary unveiling of the old façade enjoyed enthusiastic reception among intellectual circles because it represents 'requital, a gesture of final separation from years of discretionarily-imposed bad taste'. In addition, he recognizes the merit of younger generations, less traumatised by the communist experience, who question the merits of this revival, especially weighed against the loss of many of their preferred sites of cultural and social interaction.⁷⁵⁶

Professor and theorist Ana-Maria Zahariade also remarks on the ambivalence of cross-generational reactions generated by the NBT's restoration, and the loss of the initial spirit of the project:

*I share your disappointment with the NBT. It's a strange case of 'restoration', nullifying the chances of a possible international competition for a redefined national theatre... which, in all probability, wouldn't have happened. Paradoxically, I am revolted and glad: glad that Cezar's horrendous façade is gone, but not at all happy with what I see in its place – or rather, in both their places... There is no way out of this dilemma.*⁷⁵⁷

For architects educated in the 1970s, the NBT urban ensemble – deserted and anodyne – is more present in memory than the insipid architectural presence of the theatre.

⁷⁵⁶ Constantin Enache (Professor, Urbanism and Landscape Design Department, Ion Mincu University of Architecture and Urbanism), email communication, 24 February, 12 March 2014 [translation mine] For a full transcript, see Appendix 1.

⁷⁵⁷ Ana Maria Zahariade (Professor, History & Theory of Architecture and Heritage Conservation Department, Ion Mincu University of Architecture and Urbanism), email communication, 24 February 2014 [emphasis and translation mine]. For a full transcript, see Appendix 1.

Architects A.V. and R.M. recall tentative professional critiques of the original NBT iteration by university staff and students, while architects M.P. and C.S. attribute the NBT's lack of public appeal to its placement on a raised platform, design strategy which failed to create a social and cultural open-air hub.⁷⁵⁸ Moreover, they express frustration at the quasi-critical in-studio discussions on both iterations, and report preferring Ronchamp over a poorly-executed local imitation failing to deliver an original, modern interpretation of traditional architecture.⁷⁵⁹ Although Lăzărescu's intervention eventually garnered increasingly negative critiques, his privileged professional position as IMUAU rector and more-or-less official architect of the system soon brought emergent debates to a close.

Professional recollection differs significantly from public perception and the individual memories of members of other cultural circles not privy to the insights – nor victim to the prejudices – prevalent in the architectural milieu. Claims to national symbolism embodied in the theatre's first iteration and the brutal shift in aesthetics of the second had more impact in those circles, where collected memories coalesce without a filter of architectural value dependent on the profession's self-perception and agenda. Moreover, the performativity of architectural objects has far more poignancy than their appearance. Thus, many intellectuals equate the NBT with the cultural freedom and diversity of its highly professional artistic repertoire.

⁷⁵⁸ 'I remember much more vividly what the area was like before the theatre, with stores, services, a circus,' recounts architect M.B., who vividly recollects 'a ground floor shop in an old building, with a continuous water-flow in the window display', rather than the characterless theatre.

⁷⁵⁹ A.V., R.M., M.B., M.P. and C.S. (practising architects), group interview based on an open-ended questionnaire, conducted and on my behalf by M.P. in Bucharest, 1 March 2014. For a full transcript, see Appendix 1.

Journalist A.D. remembers the excitement of cultural re-awakening incited by the first NBT, divergent in meaning and appearance from typified mass construction. 'It represented an unprecedented note of modernity [...] and *an affirmation of the national spirit*, a reflection of an ideology which, during those years, seemed to us a breath of fresh air,' signalling Romania's maverick stance within the Eastern bloc. She associates the 1980s transformation of the building with Ceaușescu's destructive involvement: 'a retelling of the legend of master builder Manole, with the role of wall-crumbling hazard featuring not chance or divinity, but a simple man'.⁷⁶⁰ For A.D., these irrational, unpredictable decisions foretold, 'with wounds and scars deeply tattooed into *the memory of us all, and each one of us individually*, that these were just the first symptoms of the destructive madness of a man self-styled – what semantic irony – Romania's ktitor'.⁷⁶¹ A.I., former ballet dancer, stresses the lack of emotional reaction prompted by the theatre among his social circle, and classifies it as a lacklustre 'stage of architectural adventure' lacking modernity, exacerbated in scale and monumentality by the second iteration. At present, he welcomes the return to the initial façade, since 'it is now a multi-functional building, as well as a part of our cultural patrimony, comparable to other spiritual values'.⁷⁶²

⁷⁶⁰ Master Manole, the main character of the folk poem 'Monastirea Argeșului', is a mythical figure in Romanian folklore and literature. Linked to the construction of Curtea de Argeș Monastery, 'Monastirea Argeșului' is a foundational myth on the theme of Christian martyrdom. Curtea de Argeș is a monastic complex with a cathedral dating from the 16th century, built in the adapted Byzantine style characteristic of Wallachian ecclesiastic architecture. It is considered one of the finest examples of medieval Wallachian architecture, and is currently a candidate for the UNESCO list of world heritage sites.

⁷⁶¹ A.D. (journalist, retired) email communication [translation mine] 22 - 23 February 2014. For a full transcript, see Appendix 1.

⁷⁶² A.I. (ballet dancer, retired), interview conducted on my behalf by in Bucharest by M.P., with responses sent via email communication [translation mine] 1 March 2014. For the full transcript, see Appendix 1.

After the NBT's interment, time gradually operated a shift in architectural perception, identifiable starting with the 1980s student generation: rejecting the anodyne urban ensemble and unfamiliar with the initial building, they shaped their memories around the activities housed within. For Maria Enache, this was 'a cultural refuge, where you could see spectacularly staged plays, open to parallel interpretations.'⁷⁶³ Her dislike of the second façade equals her disappointment in the lack of a public architecture competition apt to deliver better solutions preserving the plurivalent cultural nucleus affixed to the NBT.

Over the early 1990s, the old NBT once again reconnected with the ethos behind the project, even entering university courses on Romanian architecture as an instance of *lyrical functionalism*, retrospectively certifying the project's genuine aim towards *national specificity*. Miruna Stroe sees the first NBT as representative of its period, but not wholly original, and deplores the loss of grassroots cultural spaces entailed by the 2012 refurbishment (Fig. 75), which she considers 'a retrograde gesture... lacking interrogation and interpretation'.⁷⁶⁴

⁷⁶³ Maria Enache (Associate Professor, Ion Mincu University of Architecture and Urbanism), email communication 24 February, 1 March 2014 [translation mine]. For the full transcript, see Appendix 1.

⁷⁶⁴ Miruna Stroe (Associate Lecturer, History & Theory of Architecture and Heritage Conservation Department, Ion Mincu University of Architecture and Urbanism), email communication, 24 February, 4 March 2014 [translation mine]. For a full transcript, see Appendix 1.



Fig. 75. The NBT's contemporary restoration: historical restitution, or act of professional and cultural erasure?

Through these accounts, the process of the NBT's gradual transition from disputed project to architectural myth begins to emerge. First, the critically inarticulate dissonance between design agenda and resulting image was dispelled by the construction of the second façade, which, conflated with Ceaușescu's abuse of power, transformed the first iteration of the NBT into an idealised instance of professional agency from a more culturally permissive age. Subsequently, the fervid cultural diversity fostered by the theatre displaced both architectural iterations from public and professional recollection, until the recovery of the original design ethos restored the NBT into the limelight as a key moment in Romanian architecture. This shift highlights traits of professional collective memory which, unheeded, underpin the formulation of contemporary professional identity, affecting current architectural praxis.⁷⁶⁵

⁷⁶⁵ I have explored these dynamics in more detail in: Ioana C. Popovici, 'Two Churches and A Hat: The National Bucharest Theatre or the Mythology of Post-War Romanian Architecture', *PARSE Journal*, 3 (2017), pp. 109-28.

Professional recollection is prone to imparting memories through mentorship, making individual repositories of architectural recollection heavily dependent on general professional consensus on value. The type of architecture deemed valuable enough to be actively remembered is distilled and hierarchised in the profession's locus of power, whose interpretation is then irradiated throughout the field and internalised by younger generations with little critical resistance, partly due to the strong creative identification between memory makers and memory users typical of the educational dynamics of the Beaux-Arts model. Architectural value tends to equate, in this case, perceived professional agency and social influence (narrowly self-defined in relation to power) regardless of the actual social impact of key moments of architectural evolution. Moreover, the value-dependent chronology thus shaped enables the selective reiteration of the past, pushing certain moments to the forefront of professional recollection, whilst others linger on the edges of obscurity. Coupled with the post-1989 reluctance to explore the recent past, this selective professional recollection creates a tacit mythology of idealised professional agency to be restored in the present, which diverts much of contemporary discursive concerns and energy from issues of actual social relevance.⁷⁶⁶

⁷⁶⁶ Architect Ion Mircea Enescu also signalled the profession's enduring preoccupation with national discourse, monopolising the discussion to the detriment of other relevant issues.

5.4. Conclusion

By examining the construction of *national specificity* in communist Romanian architecture, this chapter has highlighted characteristic socio-cultural dynamics between power and the profession, as well as within the architectural milieu, and the profession's rapport with architecture abroad. The politically-sanctioned cultural thaw of the 1960s has not only meant a fresh influx of discipline-specific knowledge and rekindled international dialogue, but also an increasingly active participation of Romanian architects in a variety of international professional bodies as consultants and holders of decisional power. Participating in international discussion on the fundamental differences – and resulting advantages or disadvantages in the practice of architecture and urbanism – between diverse iterations of socialism and capitalism, the Romanian architectural milieu operated a shift of scale from the very localised focus of praxis within Romania's borders, to global issues relevant to socialist, capitalist, advanced, and developing countries alike.⁷⁶⁷

Along with the export of professional knowledge, *Arhitectura's* increased permeability to multi-discipline discourses and methodologies, both foreign and Romanian, has allowed the profession to recalibrate and redefine itself in relation to the Soviet sphere, the capitalist West, and the developing South, based on the concept of *specificity*. Although the preoccupation with defining a *nationally-specific architecture* had been a core concern of both professional and political milieus, the idea of specificity in

⁷⁶⁷ Appendix 9 (pp. 480-82) illustrates the wide range of Romanian architecture practice abroad.

communist Romanian architecture is often perceived negatively in conjunction with Ceaușescu's nation-centric isolationism, rather than seen in the context of the vibrant international dialogue of the 1960s and 1970s, focused on reshaping modern architecture practice in the spirit of cultural mindfulness and social accountability. However, the Romanian resurgence of *nationally-specific architecture* presents significant similarities (and discursive interferences) with other instances of international architecture, for instance, Japan and Finland, and was not solely derived from political diktat.

Cultural and architectural otherness from a variety of international contexts contributed to the profession's understanding of specificity and the strategy of its deployment as a simulacrum of continuity masking factors of discontinuity, enabling 'a transition to otherness (modernity) under the pretext of identity (tradition).'⁷⁶⁸ From this point of view, architecture's recourse to tradition, especially understood through the framework of the field's reconnection to international architecture and a diverse range of culturally different narratives of the self, the nation, and tradition, was a renewed quest for modernity and perhaps even a gesture of political resistance. The modernity being sought went deeper than the reaffirmation and representation of the problematic construct of national identity through architecture: it served to recalibrate architectural agency under communism, as well as recover the plurality of regional voices eroded by the atomisation of socialist society. Nevertheless, the political hijacking of architectural specificity in Romanian did erode the initial multiplicity of

⁷⁶⁸ Françoise Gaspard and Khosrokhavar Farhad, *Le Foulard et la République* (Paris: Éditions La Découverte, 1995), pp. 44-45, trans. by Seyla Benhabib in *The Claims of Culture*, p. 97.

theoretical and practical experiments in this direction. The subsequent, caricatured nature of mass-produced construction, whose national specificity was reduced to an epidermal sprinkling of folk-inspired decoration, gradually led to the mythologisation of the theory and built output of lyrical functionalism, through mechanisms of selective professional recollection and attribution of value.

Although the production of a modern architectural direction that captured the specificity of Romanian identity was the shared goal of both power and the profession,⁷⁶⁹ it was ultimately the process of its formulation, rather than the built output, that had the most pivotal consequences for the evolution of the Romanian architecture field under communism. During this process, the profession set up strategies of discursive contention (like opening up discussion to international perspectives) able to dilute the strength of political directive, and subtly diversify the typological and expressive range of standardised, prefabricated design. It worked to secure increased professional authority and autonomy by integrating international networks of professional expertise. Through active consultancy practice abroad, Romanian architects opened up the field (and its political and institutional framework) to a wider range of political and economic logics, as well as client – architect interactions. All of these patterns and tactics contributed to shaping pathways for the dual-flow negotiation of power between the state and the profession, analysed in the next chapter of this thesis.

⁷⁶⁹ Illustrated in more detail in Appendix 8 of this thesis, p. 479.

CHAPTER 6. THE POWER OF THE STATE AND THE POWER OF THE PROFESSION

The main focus of this chapter falls on the processes of power negotiation between the state and the field of architecture throughout the four decades of the communist period, unpacking the strategies and tools specific to each sphere, as well as the ebb and flow of decisional power between the two in pursuit of hegemony – often framed by mutual support, collaboration, and a congruence of agendas, but also contention, dissent and coercion. Findings and insights from Chapters 4 and 5 also contribute to the analysis of Chapter 6. These findings will focus on the mechanisms of power negotiation between architects and the state, comprising discourse-based ideological contention further negotiated or exacerbated by the socio-cultural dynamics animating the internal field of architecture, its rapports with the state's institutional structures, and the wider world of international architecture.

In Chapter 4, the discussion highlighted the reciprocal disruption of two potentially hegemonic bodies of discourse: nationhood and national identity, the principal coordinates of pre-war Romanian culture, and Socialist Realism. The newly instated socialist regime attempted to first restrict access to, then syphon the legitimising potential of national discourse through incorporation into both Marxism-Leninism and Socialist Realism. In response, the field of architecture developed a range of adaptive tactics to bridge the gaps between the inertia of liberal praxis and the new challenges of a nationalised architecture system with a markedly different institutional structure, imbricated with planned economy and the Party's monopoly on specialist knowledge.

Two of these tactics were the astute speculation of the theoretical confusion stemming from Socialist Realism's culturally unfiltered translation, which belayed and limited its concrete hold on built output, and the dilution of authoritative discourse through performative practice. Their effect was a gradual erosion of the hold of Socialist Realism on Romanian architecture, and the introduction of hybrid architectural alternatives based on the resurgence of national discourse and the profession's preferred, pre-war modes of practice. Chapter 5 has illuminated the previously undocumented flexibility of the profession, well-supported by *Arhitectura*, in formulating a diversity of images of architectural specificity, routed through cultural experiences and modes of thought and practice sourced from outside Romania's borders, in tension with the monolithic, inward-looking acceptance of the same concept, promoted by certain factions of the architecture field in concert with that espoused or constructed by the Party.

In Chapter 6, these tactics and strategies contribute to an analysis of power *in action* for both sides of the equation, revealing processes and patterns with tacit transference past 1989 into (re)liberalised architecture praxis in Romania. The discussion unfolds across three sections, with the first dedicated to the theoretical framing of power through the work of Verdery, Foucault, Gramsci, Althusser, and Staniszki, capturing its dual, discourse-mediated flow between the state and the profession. It also proposes a working definition of power that reflects the range of concrete actions and discursive exchanges between the two spheres, contextualised to the peculiarities of socialist Romanian architecture. The main coordinates of this theoretical framing are

represented by: analyses of socialism's modes of control, particularly in connection with cultural production; the legitimising and subverting role of intellectuals and the intellectual activity taking place in the space of legitimation disputed with the political centre; hegemony-building ideological processes; the negotiation of professional authority; and the little-studied effects of institutional logic on the effectiveness of the contending spheres of professional and political activity. In addition to a discussion of findings and insights, the conclusion also delineates the ways in which these patterns of power negotiation in pursuit of hegemony have transferred, subtly and tacitly, into contemporary practice. Sections two and three focus on the power of the state and the power of the profession acting in tandem, initiating and responding to one another's strategies in different areas of the arena of legitimation through ideological contention: planned economy and the law; professional interactions in an institutional framework; socio-cultural dynamics affecting the architecture milieu as a professional group, and its members on an individual level. Each section is underpinned by case studies of interconnected strategies and counterstrategies, supported by examples drawn from *Arhitectura*.

6.1. Power. Constructing an operative definition between state control and cultural agency

Throughout this thesis, I have avoided using the term 'power' to refer to the Romanian socialist regime, its institutional structure, or the political centre represented by the Party's top tiers, since it implies permanency of control, and merges interconnected,

yet distinct aspects of a socialist system into one monolithic entity. Instead, I have referred to the state, when the institutional or legal aspects of the system were the focus of discussion, and to the Party, or the political centre, when the impetus of change lay with the prerogative dimension of the regime.⁷⁷⁰ By making this distinction, the concept of power can be understood as a network of forces permeating the social structure, some fluctuating in direction, scope and intensity, some more enduring and productive, especially in the formation of social subjectivities. For instance, the mandatory assignment of young architecture graduates (particularly those from major urban centres) to regional institutes or the design departments of industrial platforms or rural cooperatives had an undeniable element of coercive control exercised by the political centre, perhaps in an effort to disperse social groups with potential for ideological contention. However, the same measure also addressed the historically endemic concentration of specialists in Bucharest and other major cities,⁷⁷¹ to the marked benefit of regional development. As will be discussed in more detail below, architects in regional posts enjoyed less political scrutiny, and developed a variety of tactics for adapting ideological direction to local conditions of praxis.

⁷⁷⁰ Discussed in section 3.3. of the Methodology through the lens of Staniszki's analysis of the split between the prerogative state and normative state characteristic of socialist systems.

⁷⁷¹ In 1959, 814 of the 996 architects registered with the Union of Romanian Architects lived and practiced in Bucharest alone, with the remaining 182 dispersed across the rest of the country.

Alexandru Panaitescu, with Mariana Celac and Alexandru Beldiman, 'Scurt istoric al organizării profesionale a arhitecților din România' [Brief history of the professional organisation of architects in Romania] p. 20.

<<https://www.uniuneearhitectilor.ro/s/dl/9c39dec2af6f4a7036d5d530a8d1e803e07cd1a0/Scurt%20istoric%20al%20organizarii%20profesionale%20a%20arhitectilor%20din%20Romania.pdf>> [accessed 24 July 2018].

Thus, power is not a given characteristic of the political centre (which nevertheless strives to absorb and control as much of the network as possible), but a framework of relations usable, contestable, and potentially subvertible by a variety of social actors. To construct a working definition of power that captures its dual, discourse-mediated flow between the state and the profession, this section draws insights on the nature of power (amended for the peculiarities of socialism) from Gramsci,⁷⁷² Althusser,⁷⁷³ Foucault,⁷⁷⁴ Verdery,⁷⁷⁵ and Staniszkis.⁷⁷⁶ In the Methodology, I have set out the three main analytical lenses used throughout this thesis – power and the state, cultural hegemony, and discipline-specific discourse. While the analysis of each content chapter is primarily constructed through one of these lenses, Chapter 6 also brings them all into focus to better delineate the interstitial spaces of communist Romanian architecture, revealed through their interaction. Consequently, concepts like ideology and hegemony (the backbones of Chapter 4) and the mapping of socio-cultural dynamics affecting the architectural profession (developed in Chapter 5) will be succinctly re-examined as contributing factors to the contention for power between the state and the field of architecture.

⁷⁷² *The Antonio Gramsci Reader. Selected Writings 1916-1935*, ed. by David Forgacs (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 2000).

⁷⁷³ Louis Althusser, *Essays on Ideology* (London: Verso, 1976).

⁷⁷⁴ Michel Foucault, 'Space, knowledge, and power', in *The Foucault reader. An introduction to Foucault's thought*, ed. by Paul Rabinow, (London: Penguin, 1986).

Michel Foucault, 'Two lectures', in *Power/knowledge: selected interviews and other writings 1972-1977*, ed. by Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980).

⁷⁷⁵ Katherine Verdery, *National Ideology Under Socialism. Identity and Cultural Politics in Ceaușescu's Romania* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).

⁷⁷⁶ Jadwiga Staniszkis, *The Ontology of Socialism*, ed. by Peggy Watson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992).

To look beyond the limitations of ideology as dogma, Katherine Verdery proposes the terms 'ideologies' or 'ideological processes', which better capture the broad range of subjectivity-forming mechanics at play even in socialist systems, along with the importance of their experiential nature. For Verdery, ideologies are not only means of conceptualising the self as a multi-layering of subjectivities in the social world, but also pathways to experiencing and affecting this world through concrete action.⁷⁷⁷ In socialist systems, especially newer regimes instated without popular support, ideological processes are subject to fierce contention, as they are tasked with producing a radically different range of economic and social relations, often working against local 'master-symbols with structuring properties' – in Romania's case, the nation.⁷⁷⁸

For this reason, Verdery considers hegemony – defined in Gramscian terms as the society-wide normalisation of discourses and practices that result in a minimum of contestation from those subjugated – as absent from socialist regimes, as the silencing (through coercion, or dismantling of alternative world-views) of the subjugated does not equate the broad social consent implied by the original concept. Instead, she proposes the concept of *legitimation*, a provisional, ongoing process of ideological struggles between the political centre and various contending factions, but also between these factions – struggles mediated locally by bodies of discourse with hegemonic potential, such as national identity.

⁷⁷⁷ Verdery, *National Ideology Under Socialism*, p. 9.

⁷⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

From this perspective, power is the ability to control, monopolise, disseminate, silence, or adulterate the discourses, practices, and categories through which society is conceptualised by its members, and through which the social subjects are formed. Foucault notes that the most significant ways in which relations of power act are non-obvious and often independent of the intent of social actors engaged in ideological struggles enacted through discourse.⁷⁷⁹ Moreover, Verdery argues that, in the particular case of Romanian socialism, contention over the 'true' meaning or ascribed value of a category, such as national identity, reinforces the centre's ability to control the fundamental categories of societal construction, to the detriment of alternative world-building categories.⁷⁸⁰

The understanding of power is further nuanced by the modes of domination and control specific to socialist regimes, and – of particular interest to this thesis – the effects of such modes of control on cultural production. While the Literature Review has examined the main characteristics of socialist regimes on a broader level – it will later become evident how the contending perspectives explored previously are underpinned by different acceptations of the nature of power attributed to the political centre – this Chapter further unpacks control in socialist systems as a fluctuating mix between remunerative, coercive, and symbolic-ideological strategies.⁷⁸¹

⁷⁷⁹ Michel Foucault, *The Foucault Reader*, ed. by Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984) pp. 173-75.

⁷⁸⁰ Verdery, *National Ideology Under Socialism*, pp. 240-41.

⁷⁸¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 86-87.

Based on anthropological research, Verdery's understanding of the power of the political centre hinges on the capacity to construct and enact policies, mitigated by dependence for their local application on an extensive structure of lower-level bureaucracy. It is also at this level where the policies crafted at the top tiers of political and institutional control become altered in adjustment to the realities of local conditions. Foucault also highlights the dependency of the state (a meta-power stemming from 'multiple and indefinite power relations', including knowledge) on the institutional apparatus whose activities reinforce the dominant order,⁷⁸² and a 'polymorphous disciplinary mechanism' whose discipline-specific discourses normalise the dominant order.⁷⁸³ Throughout the gradual subordination of the architecture system to the state and planned economy, the theoretical activity and concrete design practices of architects served to normalise, on a broader social level, the top-down ideological premises underpinning the new socialist direction of architecture, and the built environment thereby derived. However, as will be discussed below, this normalisation was hindered by the gradually coalescing autonomy and properties of discourse (resulting in the loss of original meaning and intent through confrontation and reinterpretation),⁷⁸⁴ but also by the significant relational gap between the specialised sphere of architecture and other social strata with the capacity to receive and further disseminate knowledge adapted for non-specialist audiences.

⁷⁸² Michel Foucault, 'Truth and Power', in *Power/Knowledge: selected interviews and other writings 1972-1977*, ed. by Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), pp. 122-23.

⁷⁸³ Michel Foucault, 'Two Lectures', in *Power/Knowledge: selected interviews and other writings 1972-1977*, ed. by Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), pp. 106-07.

⁷⁸⁴ Verdery, *National Ideology Under Socialism*, pp. 8-9.

6.1.1. Intellectual activity and the space of legitimation

It is from this tactical position of being able to mediate the flow of discourse in ways both constitutive and disruptive of the dominant social order that intellectuals emerge as a social category with structuring capabilities. As noted by Verdery, the activity of intellectual strata cannot be dissociated from politics, as it is intimately enmeshed with it and inherently political – as is the site of intellectual activity, inclusive of all fields of specialist knowledge and practice. Together they form a privileged dimension where discourses are structured, contested, transformed, and whence they are disseminated throughout wider society to shape productive and compliant subjects.⁷⁸⁵ In the Methodology chapter leaning on Gramsci and Staniszkis, this thesis discussed the role of intellectuals in empowering other social groups by rendering apparent the stratification of the systems and means of social subjection, but also in perpetuating and legitimising the latter through intellectual activity. This section draws on the concept of the space of legitimation – based on insights from Verdery and Zygmunt Bauman⁷⁸⁶ – to analyse the space of ideological contention occupied by Romanian intellectuals as a social stratum with differentiating characteristics. Before delving into case studies of the negotiation of power between the state and the profession of architecture, the following section reflects on the particular positioning of architecture

⁷⁸⁵ Ibid., pp. 15-19.

⁷⁸⁶ Zygmunt Bauman, 'Intellectuals in East-Central Europe: Continuity and change', *Eastern European Politics and Societies*, 1 (2), pp. 162-86.

within the realm of cultural production in socialist Romania, intersected with the sphere of planned economy.

In socialism, the double-flow of legitimation between the centre of political power and the intelligentsia takes disproportional precedence over other aspects of intellectual activity, due to the system's preference for a primarily symbolic-ideological mode of control, subordinating coercive and remunerative strategies in varying proportions. As intellectuals are instrumental to the fast-paced restructuring of society, this stratum is kept under the dual pressure of fierce competition (with the system producing significantly more intellectuals than it can integrate into its bureaucratic structure) and the uncertainty of the relevance of their specialist knowledge, absorbed and monopolised by the Party as teleological knowledge.⁷⁸⁷ The latter strategy has the paradoxical effect of increasing the dependence of intellectual activity on the political centre, where restricted access to domains of knowledge is mediated, while at the same time preventing the efficient dissemination of ideologies with legitimising potential by curtailing the formation of cognizant publics, since the centre encourages the containment of contending discourses within the intellectual realm.⁷⁸⁸

Verdery's observations on the reduction of areas of uncertainty by the political centre, areas necessitating the deployment of specialist knowledge, and which would have fallen under the management of intellectual strata under capitalism,⁷⁸⁹ has significant

⁷⁸⁷ Verdery, *National Ideology Under Socialism*, p. 87.

⁷⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 142-45.

⁷⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 283.

implications for the practice of architecture. As a discipline with a complex articulation of artistic, technical, psycho-social and economic aspects, the practice of architecture proved challenging to bring under the complete control of the centre, despite the nationalisation of the architecture system. Moreover, having to maintain building production not only at unprecedented scale and volume, but also on the steep increase dictated by the command economy (and detailed in the Five-year-plans in lavish quantitative detail, such as number of flats, apartments, and total housing square footage) meant that the vast number of architects produced by the system⁷⁹⁰ would be granted access to practice, albeit in less privileged positions.⁷⁹¹ Architects also enjoyed great mobility between various sectors of cultural production and socio-cultural circles, with many also involved in theatre, music, and the visual arts – capacity in which they were relatively better positioned than other participants in cultural production to accrue recognition from other intellectuals, holders of political power,

⁷⁹⁰ The average number of architects listed as members of the Society of Romanian Architects was approximately 400 in the 1930s. By 1959, their number had increased to 996, while in 1965, the Union of Romanian Architects boasted 1238 members and candidates, reaching 2476 in 1981. The number of places at the Ion Mincu University in Bucharest also increased from 120 in the early 1950s to 200 in the 1960s, stabilising around 300 during the 1970s. Approximately two thirds of architecture students graduated as architects each year, with the remainder obtaining conductor-architect diplomas. Currently there are 7600 active architects in Romania, one of the lowest numbers per total population in Europe.

Alexandru Panaitescu, with Mariana Celac and Alexandru Beldiman, 'Scurt istoric al organizării profesionale a arhitecților din România' [Brief history of the professional organisation of architects in Romania]

<<https://www.uniuneaarhitectilor.ro/s/dl/9c39dec2af6f4a7036d5d530a8d1e803e07cd1a0/Scurt%20istoric%20al%20organizarii%20profesionale%20a%20arhitectilor%20din%20Romania.pdf>> [accessed 24 July 2018]

Pompiliu Macovei, 'Darea de seamă a comitetului de conducere al Uniunii Arhitecților din R.P.R. prezentată de Prof. Dr. Arhitect Pompiliu Macovei' [The report of the executive committee of the Union of Architects of the People's Republic of Romania] *Arhitectura* 3 (1965), p. 13.

Architects' Council of Europe, 'Architects in Europe. Romania' <<https://www.ace-cae.eu/architects-in-europe/romania/>> [accessed 24 July 2018]

⁷⁹¹ As opposed to historians, writers, and other producers of works of art or culture, whose undesirability or lack of political approval could make it nearly impossible to publish or obtain commissions by appointment.

and a not-insignificant proportion of the educated public. Nevertheless, the centre's initial chokehold on the means of cultural production (with particular emphasis on symbolic production, through the control of language and restriction of access to practice) instilled in architects the same sense of frustrated entitlement to cultural capital and public recognition observed by Verdery among the Romanian intelligentsia, particularly writers and historians.⁷⁹² In conjunction with the surplus of intellectuals created to manufacture the system's legitimacy through cultural production and uphold the bureaucratic apparatus, this frustration misdirected the energy of ideological contention against extant hierarchies, with intellectuals attempting to carve a place for themselves by displacing others, instead of, as Verdery puts it, working against the structural order that implemented these hierarchies.⁷⁹³

More specific to Romanian intellectuals, the situation above was compounded by the marginal positioning of Romanian culture, whose interstitial placement between imperial powers (Fig. 76) exacerbated the importance of national ideology while producing contradictory images of national identity, as discussed by Kenneth Jowitt.⁷⁹⁴

⁷⁹² Verdery, *National Ideology Under Socialism*, pp. 91-92, 281-84.

⁷⁹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 17, 97.

⁷⁹⁴ Kenneth Jowitt, *Social change in Romania 1860-1940: A debate on development in a European nation* (Berkeley: University of California, Institute of International Studies, 1978).



Fig. 76. 16th century map of Europe as a queen (Sebastian Münster). The territory of future Romania was often distilled in maps of the geo-political hierarchy of Europe to the geographic features of the Carpathians and the Danube. According to Zahariade, this map (and subsequent iterations up to the 19th century) summarises the enduring complex of liminality and developmental delay characteristic of Romanian culture.

Moreover, the sense of urgency to participate in cultural production and defend 'true' cultural values was also fed, argues Verdery, by the transposition into their own field of activity of the tensions, uncertainties, and feelings of powerlessness over the

quotidian – particularly acerbic in 1980s Romania, when even architects of relatively high standing, such as Gheorghe Leahu, happily devoted numerous pages of their personal journal to successful quests for rarities such as cheese, eggs and milk.⁷⁹⁵

According to Verdery, another crucial aspect of intellectual activity in socialist systems is the open recognition of its politicised nature and economic ramifications by members of the intellectual elites.⁷⁹⁶ This recognition is seen in contrast to the self-reported indifference and remoteness of Western intellectuals from the politico-economic underpinnings of their cultural capital. Intellectuals on both sides of the systemic divide espouse a biased, self-ascriptive view of their own stratum at the apex of the social structure – a placement hinging, according to Bauman, on enthroning knowledge as a societal value, and monopolising the social space of its negotiation.⁷⁹⁷

Romanian architects are no exception, and perhaps ascribe more fiercely to this view, due to their identification primarily with artistic and cultural production, rather than the technical side of the profession. Thus, intellectuals tend to view themselves as communities of highly-educated people united by what Gella describes as ‘a charismatic sense of calling and a certain set of values and manners’.⁷⁹⁸ This cocktail of biased self-perception, acute sense of the political dimension of one’s intellectual activity in the grand scope of societal restructuring, and sense of urgency to participate

⁷⁹⁵ Gheorghe Leahu, *Arhitect în ‘Epoca de Aur’* [Architect in the ‘Golden Age’] (Bucharest: Fundația Academia Civică, 2004), pp. 13-26, 27-29, 31-32, 40, 47-48, 51, etc.

⁷⁹⁶ Verdery, *National Ideology Under Socialism*, p. 282.

⁷⁹⁷ Zygmunt Bauman, *Legislators and Interpreters: on modernity, post-modernity, and intellectuals* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989), pp. 8-9.

⁷⁹⁸ Aleksander Gella, *Development of class structure in Eastern Europe: Poland and her Southern neighbours* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1989), p. 132, cited in Verdery, *National Ideology Under Socialism*, p. 15.

in cultural production, frustrated by the dependence of professional recognition on holders of political power, has endured past Romania's post-socialist transition, exacerbated by the new dynamics of liberal competition and the absconded legal and procedural endurance of bureaucratic practices.

6.2. The power of the state

Before delving into the specific tactics and strategies deployed by the political and administrative centre in dialogue with architecture, the latter bears examining through the lens of its dual status as a sector of socialist cultural production and as one of the main motors of planned economy. From this perspective, architecture differs significantly from other branches of the economic and cultural apparatus, subject to additional constraints, but also the beneficiary of additional liberties than other spheres of artistic or intellectual activity.

To begin with, architecture is not only a complex social field, densely packed with power relations and inextricably enmeshed with other social systems – particularly political and economic power – but also a space where a society's myriad cultural practices, meanings, narratives and discourses are distilled, transformed, layered and reflected back with great transformative power. In capitalist systems, this transformative potential is usually channelled into upholding the dominant order and reproducing class-based social hierarchies and subjectivities. For socialist systems seeking radical societal restructuring, it plays a pivotal role in the structuring,

normalisation, and embedding of new societal subjectivities and relations through the visual and lived narrative of the built environment.

In addition to constituting a field of ideological confrontation between specialist knowledge and the Party's teleological vision, architecture also forms a significant sector of the planned economy through its ability to mobilise a wide variety of resources for redistribution, to justify the development of entire branches of industrial production, and direct broad segments of labour power – from the holders of specialised knowledge to manual labourers. Moreover, architecture is in equal measure subject to legal and scientific parameters for the logics, quality and efficiency of its output, as much as it is animated by cultural sensibilities, professional standards, and ideological currents. As a grand-scale, non-figurative medium of cultural production it is best able to materialise and stand testimony to socialism's effectiveness in terms of tangible social progress. Romania is no exception: the country's rate of industrialisation, expanse and quality of the urban network, and development of national infrastructure increased exponentially after the change in regime.⁷⁹⁹ After the period of post-war reconstruction and expansion of urban areas to sustain the production of a proletarian demographic base, the output of architecture and construction continued to increase yearly by significant margins,⁸⁰⁰ as did the laws, codes, norms and regulations addressing all aspects of praxis.

⁷⁹⁹ Doubly so due to the urgency of transforming a predominantly agrarian country into the industrialised, proletarian nation for whom power had been secured.

⁸⁰⁰ Difficult to assess beyond the reported figures, due to the unreliability of reporting back to the centre, plus the modification of reports by the centre to portray constant progress and overachievement.

This arena of legality and procedure also enabled confrontation in the negotiation of power between the state and the profession. If the political centre could impose laws affecting the main direction of praxis (such as the 1970s systematisation laws enforcing homogeneous urban development across the country through the forced relocation of rural population and typified expansion of extant regional centres),⁸⁰¹ the profession would attempt to manage this general direction in accordance to professional standards, ethics, and the agenda of the architectural milieu, by intervening in the formulation of regulations, codes, and norms. That is to say, it was specifically the area where political directive required translation into applicability through the intervention of specialist knowledge that the profession was able to not only counter some of the more negative consequences of political decision, but open up a genuine dialogue with holders of political power amenable to professional argument.

The resulting partnerships (for instance, that of Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej and Cezar Lăzărescu), resulted in some of the most liberal decisions taken for all parties involved, from the securement of popular adhesion for power, the ability to exercise relative creative freedom in select areas of architectural design,⁸⁰² and finally, for the populace, the opportunity to own their own apartment, or build their own home. From this point of view, architecture's double situatedness – as an integral segment of the political centre's administrative apparatus, and as a profession practiced by intellectual strata

⁸⁰¹ Anecdotes and recollections regarding the obsession of higher Party members with the uniform urbanisation of the country are abundant in the profession. Further information can be found in the transcript of my interview with M.P. - Appendix 2.

⁸⁰² The main sectors of the architecture field where innovation and creativity could thrive were industrial platforms, tourism (particularly the development of the Black Sea coast, but also mountainside resorts), sports halls and medical facilities.

with a long-standing history of liberal cultural production – enabled a dilution, or nuancing of the effects of laws and policies through the translation of political direction into the language of praxis.

Thus, the Romanian architecture system behaved, in Althusserian terms, as an Ideological State Apparatus (ISA).⁸⁰³ In the Methodology chapter of this thesis, I have sketched an initial profile of the profession as an Althusserian ISA, perspective from which Romanian communist architecture has yet to be investigated. Throughout Chapter 6, this angle of analysis will be further contextualised to the Romanian socialist system, illuminating the institutional channels of power exchange between the profession and the political centre in the pursuit of hegemony. With a vital role to play in societal subjection operated through ideology, ISAs partnered the state's repressive apparatus in reproducing the relations of production supplying the pool of compliant labour.

For Althusser, the effectiveness of ISAs – whose primary modus operandi hinges on the dispersal of normalised, subjecting ideologies, rather than their imposition through coercive, violent means (as is the remit of RSAs) – lies in their diversity, plurality, and ubiquity throughout the social fabric, as well as in the concealed, diffuse mode of dominant ideology dispersal through everyday discourses and practices.⁸⁰⁴ Since Althusser's theory of ideology and ideological apparatuses was formulated as a critique of Western, capitalist societies, several adjustments to the concept must be

⁸⁰³ Louis Althusser, *Essays on Ideology* (London: Verso, 1976), p. 16.

⁸⁰⁴ Althusser, *Essays on Ideology*, pp. 18-22.

made in order to account for the differentiating traits of Romanian architecture prior to the communist take-over, and its subsequent transformation. As historian Lucian Boia points out, pre-war Romanian society was, despite a fast-track rate of capitalist industrialisation and modernisation, still structured along quasi-feudal social hierarchies, with stark class boundaries compounded by insurmountable financial chasms,⁸⁰⁵ reduced social mobility, and the notable absence of certain progress-driven societal segments – such as the proletariat. Moreover, Romanian culture has always been *liminal* in all geo-political and cultural aspects, situated at the ebb and flow of imperial spheres of military occupation and cultural influence, manifest in a pronounced (and enduring) developmental delay, and moments of rapid, though superficial progression.⁸⁰⁶

Pre-war architecture practice had yet to establish itself (or be established by the state) as an ISA with sufficient gravitational pull within the social sphere to affect genuine change. Consequently, the nationalisation and complete restructuring of the architecture system operated under communism was actually a first step in embedding architecture more firmly within the social structure. It is only after 1952 that the field of architecture in socialist Romania truly became and began operating as an ISA, with the proviso that its imbrication with wider society was simultaneously more expansive

⁸⁰⁵ Lucian Boia, *De ce este România altfel?* [Why is Romania different?] (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2012), pp. 10-17.

⁸⁰⁶ Boia further stresses that the models of political organisation of the Romanian territories have been uncritically adopted by the elites from various external influences (Slavo-Byzantine, Ottoman-Phanariote, the hyper-centralised model of French democracy). Regardless of the mode of governance, Boia characterises the Romanian 'state' as endemically weak due to its inability (and disinterest) in constituting a diverse social structure, well-encompassed within and supported by a complex and efficient institutional and legal network.

Boia, *De ce este România altfel?*, p. 14.

than previously, but of a different nature. If ISAs in capitalist societies belong primarily to the civic sphere – which makes the detection of their subjection-normalising activities all the more difficult – socialist architecture was circumscribed institutionally to the centre’s administrative apparatus, while its civic dimension was transferred onto the social relations of the milieu with other social groups and professions. As discussed in the Introduction and Literature Review chapters of this thesis, the majority of Romanian scholarship on the topic has delivered, until recently, a portrayal of state power that is coercive and destructive in its rapports with the space of intellectual activity and the spheres of social life and individual experience.⁸⁰⁷ A closer look at the interstitial spaces of praxis reflected in *Arhitectura*, however, indicate an ambivalence of the political centre in its use of power – in turns restrictive and coercive, yet at the same time opening up spaces where alternative modes of practice could evolve in relative freedom, serving an important role in the adjustment of centralised planning to the realities and capabilities of each domain of activity.

To better understand this ambivalence, it is helpful to sketch a short overview of the Romanian state’s main framework of legal coercion, affecting the architecture profession between 1948 and 1989. These laws have become principal coordinates in the chronology of socialist Romanian architecture through the research of theorists like Zahariade and Ioan, and have accrued substantial scholarship during recent decades. My own research seeks to add to this network – briefly sketched below to

⁸⁰⁷ Alexandru Panaitescu, *De la Casa Scânteii la Casa Poporului: patru decenii de arhitectură în București 1945-1989* [From Casa Scânteii to the People’s House: four decades of architecture in Bucharest] (Bucharest: Simetria, 2012), pp. 14-75.

situate its more diffuse connections – by examining two spaces of legal ambiguity in their transformation at key points over the communist period: the rapport between architect and beneficiary in the design of privately-owned housing, and the transference of institutional control over the practice of architecture between various ministerial bodies.

The first legal measures affecting the practice of architecture in Romania soon after the instatement of the communist government preceded the nationalisation of the profession, and were designed to dismantle the socio-economic dominance of the bourgeoisie. The fiscal reform of 1947,⁸⁰⁸ the nationalisation of the means of production, financial and material assets in 1948,⁸⁰⁹ and the 1948 law of reformed education⁸¹⁰ effectively stripped the top tiers of the social structure of private property, of the legal and material bases of exercising liberal professions, and of the unrestricted access to higher education on which privileged social positioning depended.

Reverberating throughout the remainder of the communist period, the effects of the 1948 education law were undeniably empowering for previously disenfranchised social strata.⁸¹¹ However, coupled with the exclusion of students and teaching staff of

⁸⁰⁸ 'Lege Nr. 287 din 16 August 1947 pentru reforma monetară' [Law no. 287 of the 16th of August 1947 for financial reform] *Monitorul Oficial* 187 (16th of August 1947), <<http://www.legex.ro/Legea-287-1947-104.aspx>> [accessed 21 July 2018]

⁸⁰⁹ 'Lege Nr. 119 din 11 iunie 1948 pentru naționalizarea întreprinderilor industriale, bancare, de asigurări, miniere și de transporturi' [Law no. 119 of the 11th of June 1948 for the nationalisation of industrial, financial, insurance, mining, and transport enterprises] *Monitorul Oficial* 133 bis (11 July 1948), <<http://www.legex.ro/Legea-119-1948-109.aspx>> [accessed 21 July 2018]

⁸¹⁰ 'Decret Nr. 175 din 3 august 1948 pentru reforma învățământului' [Decree no. 175 of the 3rd of August 1948 for the reform of education] *Monitorul Oficial* 177 (3rd August 1948) <https://www.utcb.ro/informarepublica/docs/2_MO%20177%203%20aug%201948.pdf> [accessed 21 July 2018]

⁸¹¹ Some of the law's measures included the democratisation of education, elimination of illiteracy, and special accelerated programs for older demographics, etc. But the same law also set up the fast-track academic

'ideologically unsound' social origin and the hardline Sovietisation of curricula across all areas of learning, emphasising the formation of socialist consciousness above the acquisition of knowledge and skill, it ultimately proved detrimental to the quality of the emergent socialist practice.⁸¹² In November 1952, the absorption of the architecture system into the state apparatus and its restructuring in correlation with planned economy was legalised by an act of the Central Committee of the Romanian Workers' Party and the Council of Ministers through the constitution of the State Committee for Architecture and Construction (SCAC) – the main coordinating institution for the entirety of architecture praxis on a national and regional level, comprising a complex network of design institutes, research clusters, and authorisation committees.

The same act also made some allowances (and future allusions) with regard to professional recognition, if not autonomy: the Union of Romanian Architects was reinstated as official professional body, with the stewardship of *Arhitectura* magazine and the rather nebulous 'advisory' capacity in secondment to the SCAC.⁸¹³ Zahariade

advancement of workers retired from production, who could obtain secondary cycle and high school diplomas within one or two years of study at technical schools focused on ideological education, and move on to university studies with barely two to four years of schooling lacking both general knowledge and discipline-specific topics.

⁸¹² During the late 1940s and early 1950s, the main criterion of admission to university studies was a 'healthy social background', regardless of the students' academic capabilities or interest in a particular profession. Together with the blanket exclusion of certain demographics (students and staff of Jewish heritage, foreign provenance, from bourgeois backgrounds, or the Romanian equivalent of landed gentry), these measures had a palpable, negative effect on vocational professions such as architecture, through the homogenisation of the student body and the elimination of cultural differences.

⁸¹² Ana Maria Zahariade, *Arhitectura în proiectul comunist. România 1944-1989* [Architecture in the communist project. Romania 1944-1989], trans. by Ana Maria Zahariade with Diana Lupu, ed. by Alistair Ian Blyth, Eugenia Petre (Bucharest: Simetria, 2001), p. 29.

⁸¹³ 'Hotărârea Comitetului Central al P.M.R. și a Consiliului de Miniștri al R.P.R. cu privire la construcția și reconstrucția orașelor și organizarea activității din domeniul arhitecturii' [Decision of the Central Committee of the Romanian Workers' Party and of the Council of Ministers of the People's Republic of Romania regarding the construction and reconstruction of cities and the organisation of activity in the field of architecture] *Arhitectura* 11 (1952), pp. 1-8.

considers this moment to be the scission between the two very different logics of pre-war and communist architecture: from this point onwards, the rationale of architecture praxis would depend entirely for its internal coherence on ideological themes set by the political centre through planned investment.⁸¹⁴ Industrialisation (particularly heavy industry and the development of the construction materials industry), the 'new' as complete purification of remnant traits of the capitalist society, as well the progressive, constructive dimension of the socialist project, economicity through typified design, and the obliteration of 'the differences between the centre and periphery' would be the triggers at the core of every significant change in architectural direction over the communist period.⁸¹⁵

As mentioned above, one of the tactics used by the political centre in ensuring the compliance of the profession (and, as a result, the participation of its members in further normalising ideological direction through practice) was the illusion of a certain congruence between the political and professional agendas. Zahariade touches on this phenomenon in her 'Reading the silence: "The happy architect"', where she argues that the profession was, for a significant part of the communist period, not only complacent in the subjugation of architecture to political and ideological goals, but happily engaged in their realisation, due to superficial similarities with patterns and paradigms also animating the world of Western capitalist architecture.⁸¹⁶ The

⁸¹⁴ Zahariade, *Arhitectura în proiectul comunist*, pp. 32-33.

⁸¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 33-37.

⁸¹⁶ Ana Maria Zahariade, 'Citind tăcerea: "Arhitectul fericit"' [Reading the silence: "The happy architect"] in Ana Maria Zahariade, *Arhitectura în proiectul comunist. România 1944-1989* [Architecture in the communist project. Romania 1944-1989], trans. by Ana Maria Zahariade with Diana Lupu, ed. by Alistair Ian Blyth, Eugenia Petre (Bucharest: Simetria, 2001), pp. 97-109.

Corbuserian *homme-type* at the centre of modern architecture's reshaping of design logic seemed comparable to the *socialist masses*, whose new type of needs, monopolised by the Party, were in equal part nascent with socialist consciousness, and in need of being encoded through an ideologically-active living environment. Gropius' ideal of architecture practice as a multi-disciplinary team in pursuit of innovation, rather than profit-driven competition, was echoed in the institutional architecture practice with architects as financially-secure, salaried professionals, freed from the shackles of design by commission. The switch to economicity-driven, rational design during the late 1950s, after the historicist interlude of Socialist Realism, mirrored the free-plan urbanism closely enough for the profession to entertain thoughts of synchronicity. Finally, Zahariade points out the naively hopeful reception of Ceaușescu's Streets Law, seen at the time (all too optimistically) as a politically-maladroit post-modern gesture, initiating the return to the density of forms, shapes and meanings of traditional city space.⁸¹⁷ Over the communist period, the political centre perfected the ability to speculate professional desiderata coinciding with dominant discursive trends from the international architecture scene convincingly enough to elicit compliance, or at least minimise dissent.

There was however another area with potential to exact compliance by simulating some of the dynamics specific to architecture as a liberal profession, but never allowing them to fully come to fruition (except perhaps for a small number of those targeted): the direct relationship between architects and the intended users of their designs.

⁸¹⁷ Zahariade, *Arhitectura în proiectul comunist*, pp. 60-63.

While it is undeniable that the state had substituted itself as sole beneficiary through the nationalisation of the architecture system (shaping its direction through the combination of centralised planning and teleological insight into the needs of the masses), and that consequently, commissioning designs was mostly an intra-institutional affair, a grey area of self-funded builds on state-attributed land was legally shaped as early as 1954. Decree 493/1954 authorised local rural administrations to attribute buildable plots of land in perpetuity to individuals or cooperative groups able to build individual or collective housing through their own financial means, with priority afforded to professions and specialised trades underrepresented in rural demographics (teachers, doctors, engineers, technicians, highly-skilled workers).⁸¹⁸ Moreover, local administrations could also attribute rights to perpetual land use to skilled people residing in illegal builds predating 1951. This suggests a rational policy of the political centre to address the imbalance between rural and urban demographics, as well as diversify and encourage the social mobility of the disproportionately high, impoverished and illiterate rural population.

⁸¹⁸ 'Decret Nr. 493 din 10 Decembrie 1954 pentru autorizarea comitetelor executive ale sfaturilor populare să atribuie terenuri unor categorii de cetățeni ce voiesc a-și construi locuințe' [Decree no. 493 of the 10th of December 1954 for the authorisation of local popular councils to attribute terrains to categories of citizens wanting to build their own housing] *Monitorul Oficial* 460 (10th December 1954)

<<http://www.monitoruljuridic.ro/act/decret-nr-493-din-10-decembrie-1954-pentru-autorizarea-comitetelor-executive-ale-sfaturilor-populare-sa-atribuie-terenuri-proprietatea-statului-unor-categorii-de-cetateni-ce-voiesc-a-si-construi-locuinte-fara-92.html>> [accessed 22 July 2018]

Over the years, this policy evolved towards supplementing state housing production (insufficient despite the massive built output due to skyrocketing demographics and the rapid expansion of urban centres triggered by industrialisation) by further encouraging self-builds in urban areas through the same system of terrain attribution coupled, in 1966, with state-provided financial support.⁸¹⁹ Decree 445/1966 also sheds some light on the institutional and bureaucratic pathways entailed by this process, as well as the involvement of architects. Despite the illusion of a more direct relationship with the beneficiaries of these housing projects, the design process was mediated in its entirety by 'specialist socialist organisations' setting up contracts between the users and various design and construction enterprises, linked together through the flow of labour and resource redistribution. At most, architects would design, as part of their routine work in design institutes, typified housing in a strictly controlled range of typologies, costs and user comfort levels, subsequently compiled into catalogues (Fig. 77) sent to local administrations across the country.



Fig. 77. A typical catalogue of standardised, low-rise housing, developed by a central design research institute for the use of local administration councils across the country.

⁸¹⁹ 'Decret Nr. 445 din 27 mai 1966 privind sprijinirea de către stat a cetățenilor de la orașe în construirea de locuințe proprietate personală' [Decree no. 445 of the 27th of May 1966 regarding state support of urban citizens for the construction of personal property housing] *Buletinul Oficial* 27 (27th May 1966)

<<https://lege5.ro/Gratuit/he2damjr/decretul-nr-445-1966-privind-sprrijinirea-de-catre-stat-a-cetatenilor-de-la-orase-in-construirea-de-locuinte-proprietate-personala>> [accessed 22 July 2018]

Locally, design options would be further restricted by the authorities in correlation with their building capabilities or local industry development interests, allowing for minimal adaptation of the typified project to site conditions. Although the decree made some allowances for low-rise collective housing with a small number of apartments and a higher degree of user comfort (correlated with a 10% jump in the deposit required), these projects followed the same process described above, in a complete disconnect between architects and users. Furthermore, the typified housing design commissioned from design institutes, although animated by well-meaning efforts towards regionally-specific designs (as discussed in the previous chapter) was often too reflective of professional interpretations of local forms, archetypes and modes of habitation.

Consequently, the number of illegal self-builds of markedly different layouts and aesthetic expressions than those promoted through typified design rose enough to warrant professional discussion in *Arhitectura*, particularly with regard to the indifference of the population to markers of architectural specificity, and their preference for bricolage, modern aesthetics.⁸²⁰ In rural areas, however, people who could not afford building their own home continued to erect precarious dwellings with traditional, perishable materials and vernacular techniques – practice traversing the communist period and spilling over into the present in a stark reminder that, for all the pursuit of *national specificity*, there remain modes of traditional habitation within impoverished communities unaddressed by the centre and profession alike.

⁸²⁰ Mircea Stancu, 'Arhitectura meșteșugărească contemporană a clădirilor de locuit' [The contemporary craftsmanship architecture of housing] *Arhitectura* 6 (1970), pp. 61-65.

Within this grey area of almost-permissible property, decrees from 1968 and 1972 brought additional liberties, and perhaps the sole opportunity for direct user-architect consultancy outside the institutional framework. By introducing the legal opportunity for citizens to own a holiday home in areas designated for the development of tourism across the country, Law 9/1968 allowed the population to control and oversee the design of their own holiday homes by contracting architects and construction enterprises directly.⁸²¹ Partially financed with state-approved loans, these holiday homes cropped up in mountainous regions, particularly around scenic rivers and artificial dams, and became an unexpected oasis of creative freedom in architectural design. Although *Arhitectura* understandably holds no records of such privately-commissioned holiday residences, the more experimental side of this design niche occasionally comes through in design proposals. While Fig. 77 discussed above is representative of the limited range of choice offered through local authority offices for permanent housing, Fig. 79 below illustrates the creative leeway of tourism design, even for the most minimal of serialised, prefabricated units, or, in the case of Mircea Enescu's light-weight, modular projects – referenced with post-modern/structuralist flair as 'clip-on, plug-in cells' offering temporary escapism from urban psychosis.⁸²²

⁸²¹ 'Lege Nr. 9 din 9 mai 1968 pentru dezvoltarea construcției de locuințe, vânzarea de locuințe din fondul de stat către populație și construirea de case proprietate personal de odihnă sau turism' [Law no. 9 of the 9th of May 1968 for the development of housing construction, for the sale of state-owned housing to the population, and for the construction of personal property houses for vacationing or tourism] *Monitorul Oficial* 572 (9th May 1968)

<<http://www.monitoruljuridic.ro/act/lege-nr-9-din-9-mai-1968-pentru-dezvoltarea-construcției-de-locuințe-vinzarea-de-locuințe-din-fondul-de-stat-către-populație-si-construirea-de-case-proprietate-personala-de-odihna-46867.html>> [accessed 22 July 2018]

⁸²² Mircea Enescu and Ștefan Angelescu, 'Case de vacanță prefabricate' [Prefabricated holiday homes] *Arhitectura* 3 (1968), pp. 60-64.

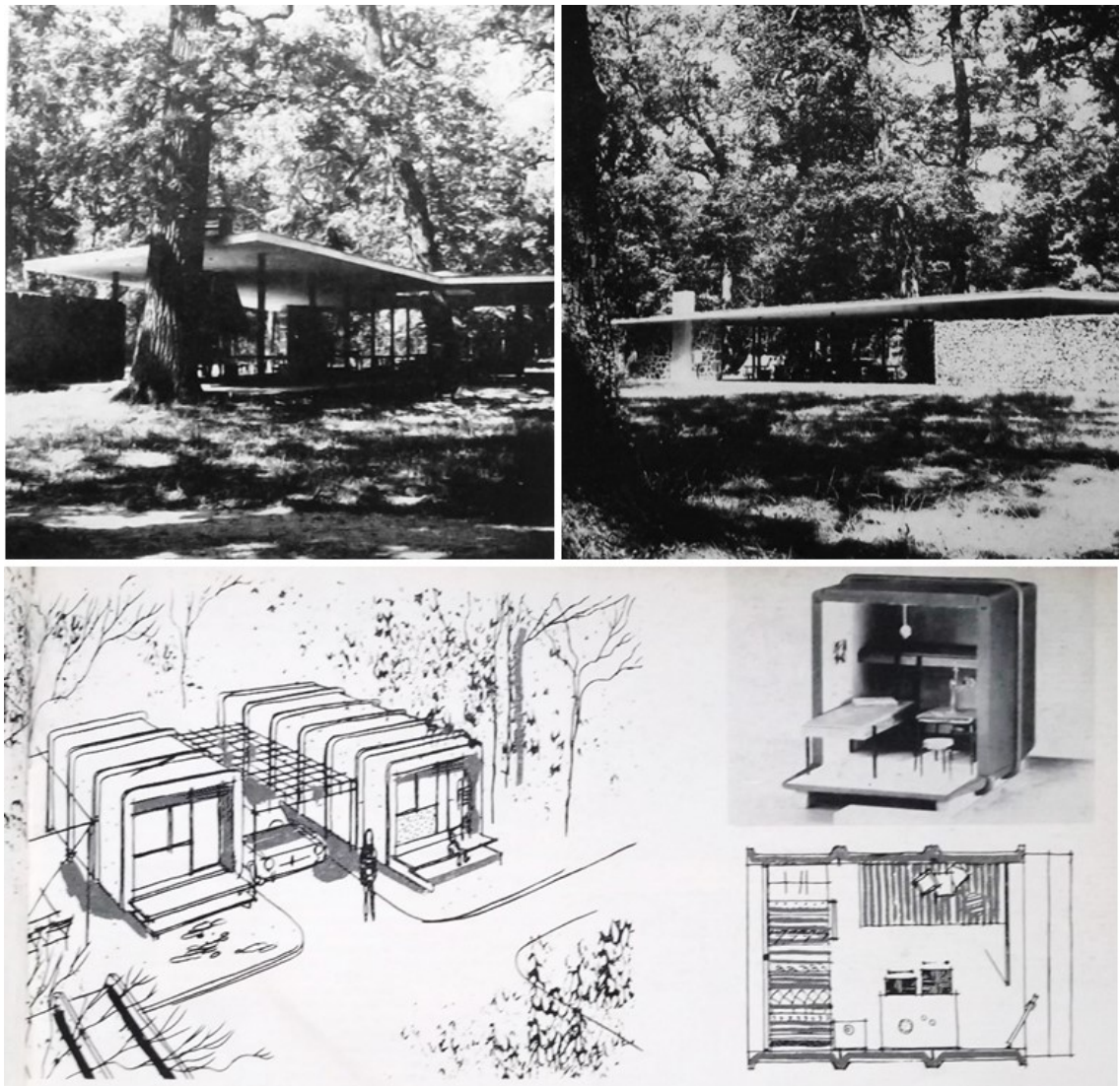


Fig. 78. Top row: camping pavilions (arch. Ara Erețian; Sibiu; 1966.). Bottom row: proposal for prefabricated, plug-in or clip-on holiday homes (arch. Mircea Enescu; 1968).

From this perspective, I would argue that the most effective control tactics used by the political centre in the negotiation of power over the direction of architecture have not stemmed exclusively from the handful of hard-line legal measures with systemic restructuring effects on praxis such as the 1952 nationalisation of architecture, or the more coercive laws and decrees specifying the direction of architecture practice during the 1970s, analysed in detail by Zahariade in *Architecture in the communist project*.⁸²³

⁸²³ For example, the 1975 Streets Law (discussed in the Literature Review and in more detail in Chapter 5) which effectively put an end to free-plan urbanism by requiring all urban arteries to be lined with building façades.

Rather, it resided in strategies like the monopolisation of discipline-specific knowledge during the Socialist Realist period, subsequently returned to the profession, but in the compartmentalised form of a difficult to control proliferation of narrowly-specialised institutes.

While this may have been geared, in the beginning, towards securing additional means of control against the profession by fragmenting knowledge and its practical application, with the 'bigger picture' collated only at the centre, this strategy would eventually backfire. As early as 1950, architect E. Cristian cautioned, in the first *Arhitectura* article on the reconfiguration of urbanism in conjunction with planned economy, against the ineffective work of departments or institutions dealing with complex regional development projects in isolation, improvising solutions instead of drawing on a pool of relevant interdisciplinary knowledge directed by a central, professional (rather than predominantly political) coordinating forum.⁸²⁴ Cristian's warning came too quickly to fruition: in a 1950 series of critiques of competitions for housing⁸²⁵ and industrial objectives of national importance,⁸²⁶ Gustav Gusti pointed out the severe lack of processual clarity (stemming from the lack of communication and coordination between the several state institutes and ministries involved) that led to inapplicable project designs. Gusti's critiques, although delivered from a fervent Socialist Realist standpoint, unwittingly exposed a grave flaw of the institutionalized

⁸²⁴ E. Cristian, 'Urbanism și planificare' [Urbanism and planning] *Arhitectura R.P.R.* 1 (1950), pp. 18-20.

⁸²⁵ Gustav Gusti, 'Considerații asupra concursului pentru planuri de locuințe' [Thoughts on the housing competition] *Arhitectura R.P.R.* 2-3 (1950), pp. 69-75.

⁸²⁶ Gustav Gusti, 'Considerații' asupra concursului de Arhitectură pentru Hidrocentrala "Lenin" [Thoughts on the Architecture competition for the "Lenin" hydroelectric plant] *Arhitectura R.P.R.* 1-2 (1952), pp. 40-45.

architecture system – an inability to manage complex aspects of practice requiring active coordination of several institutions and individual holders of specialist knowledge. As Cristian had warned, the dispersal of complex process components and tasks among a number of specialist departments, whose work was re-assembled and interpreted at the political centre according to planned economy directives, but without any genuine professional feedback, hindered inter-institutional efforts towards coordination in the field of architecture.

It is relevant to compare the extreme splintering of control and coordination introduced by Decree 674/1969 (whereby the State Committee for Construction, Architecture and Systematisation was dissolved, with the coordination of its intimately linked activities dispersed across four other central organisations – the Ministry of Industrial Construction, the State Committee for Local Economy and Administration, the State Planning Committee, and the State Committee for Culture and Art)⁸²⁷ with the extremely rigid, linear model at work during the last decade of Ceaușescu's rule, when the vast majority of projects navigated an upstream chain of approval culminating with the Council of Ministers and the supreme leader himself.⁸²⁸ Although it aimed to reduce the costs and duration of construction through the expansion of prefabrication, typification, and mechanisation, as well as 'eliminate the dispersal

⁸²⁷ 'Decret Nr. 674 din 1 octombrie 1969 pentru stabilirea unor măsuri privind îndrumarea, coordonarea și controlul în domeniul construcțiilor, arhitecturii și sistematizării' [Decree no. 774 of the 1st of October 1969 for the establishment of measures regarding the guidance, coordination, and control in the sector of constructions, architecture, and systematisation] *Monitorul Oficial* 1090 (8th of October 1969)

<<http://www.monitoruljuridic.ro/act/decret-nr-674-din-1-octombrie-1969-pentru-stabilirea-unor-masuri-privind-indrumarea-coordonarea-si-controlul-in-domeniul-construcțiilor-arhitecturii-si-sistematizării-emitent-27649.html>> [accessed 22 July 2018]

⁸²⁸ Constantin Jugurică, *Memoria carnetelor cu însemnări - Bucureștiul cutremurat 1977-1989* [The memory of jotting pads – Bucharest under the quake 1977-1989] (Bucharest: Arhilibra, 2012), p. 23.

potential of this sector', the 1969 decree effectively quadrupled the number of institutions called to approve, but also able to request amendments to projects falling within their remit. Given the complexity of most urban projects undertaken at the time, as well as the multi-function/multi-layer nature of the urban fabric, the vast majority of projects would be subject to these measures.

Within this constant flux of tightening and loosening of institutional and legal control, through the shaping and dissolution of governing bodies responsible for architecture praxis, the interstitial spaces whence the profession could deploy specialist knowledge in an attempt to normalise design processes as much as possible became unsung sites of hegemonic contention. As already explored in Chapter 4, through the case study of Maria Cotescu's alternative interpretation of Socialist Realism via quantitative habitation comfort studies, the dilution or nuancing of the effects of laws and policies through the professional translation of political direction (norms, codes, specifications, etc., often developed in productive partnership with certain members of the state apparatus amenable to professional insight) was in equal measure constitutive and eroding of the dominant ideologies generated by the political centre.

In the Literature Review and Chapter 4, I have touched on the ambivalence of the Romanian socialist regime with regard to the construction of legitimacy through visual representation, but also the persistent variation in the quality, volume, and aesthetic direction of three registers of architectural production: mass-produced architecture (and architecture for the masses), the unique, high-profile projects of urban administrative centres or culture/leisure programmes, and the more obscure and less

documented architecture designed by commission for members of the Party's inner circle. While the first split in architectural production is not uncommon in socialist (and for different reasons, capitalist) regime(s), it is the visual representation of statehood and nationhood in Romania that presented additional challenges by virtue of being polarised between contending images of *national identity* (Fig. 79).



Fig. 79. Low-rise collective housing from the communist period, elevated into national specificity through the application of a mosaic exalting Dacian rulers and warriors. (Orăștie, period and architect unknown).

In his discussion of the 1937 Romanian pavilion, Augustin Ioan notes that its aesthetic ambiguity reflected the country's fast-paced socio-political transformation blending feudalism and capitalism, the heterogeneity of its ethnically diverse demographic makeup (top social strata included), and the polarisation of culture between traditional archaism and modernity.⁸²⁹ Despite the apparent dominance (from the point of view of architecture history) of certain paradigms, such as the neo-Romanian style or

⁸²⁹ Augustin Ioan, *Modern Architecture and the Totalitarian Project: a Romanian Case Study*, trans. by Alina Cârâc (Bucharest: Institutul Cultura Român, 2009), p. 36.

Modernism with neo-classical influences, in the 'official' architecture of political-administrative and cultural programmes, Romanian architecture production has been significantly diversified by the cultural tensions described above. Moreover, the hybrid conceptual and aesthetic paradigms resulting from these discursive confrontations form one of the most enduring characteristics of Romanian cultural production, where originality is derived from the synthesis of apparently dichotomic conceptual directions. In Chapter 4, I have discussed the effect of this mainline of the local architectural field on the domestication of Socialist Realism, whose ethos was diverted into an aesthetic blending the local vernacular and pre-war international Modernism.

Throughout the communist period, the generally parallel aesthetic directions of the four major channels of architecture praxis (mass-produced housing, non-typified urban infrastructure, tourism, and residential/leisure programmes for the nomenklatura) would intersect sporadically through stylistic mergers or transference of processual logics. Ana Maria Zahariade's research⁸³⁰ has already explored the transference of mechanisms proper to what she terms the 'occult architecture' for the Party into the biggest (and most brutal) urban transformation – Bucharest's new civic centre (Fig. 80).

⁸³⁰ Ana Maria Zahariade, 'Arhitectura care nu a existat: "Arhitectura ocultă"' [The Architecture that did not exist: Occult architecture], in Ana Maria Zahariade, *Arhitectura în proiectul comunist. România 1944-1989* [Architecture in the communist project. Romania 1944-1989], trans. by Ana Maria Zahariade with Diana Lupu, ed. by Alistair Ian Blyth, Eugenia Petre (Bucharest: Simetria, 2001), pp. 111-31.

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Fig. 80. A typical scene of the tabula rasa campaign deployed during the late 1970s in preparation for the civic centre masterminded by Ceaușescu. In the foreground, the epicentre of the civic centre – the future site of the People’s house, cleared of Albă Postăvari church.

These include exemption from the constraints of planned economy and yearly plans, secrecy of commission attribution (via a ‘Byzantine court’ encompassing architects and members of the Party’s top ranks in a narrow, privileged space of power over architectural investment), complete absence from specialist publication, and the discretionary use of Western aesthetic paradigms forbidden to mass construction on ideological grounds.⁸³¹ The seeping of occult architecture into everyday practice normalised secrecy, circumvented legal and professional frameworks, and shaped pathways of interaction between architects and stakeholders (be they the autarchic authorities of a socialist regime, or the private interests of capitalist investors) which would inform the post-socialist reconfiguration of the profession.

⁸³¹ Zahariade, ‘Arhitectura care nu a existat: “Arhitectura ocultă”’, p. 116.

My own analysis of *Arhitectura's* contents has revealed yet another area of similar duplicitous architectural expression: Romania's self-portrayal abroad, in international commercial exhibitions. Through a similar logic to the ambiguity of the Romanian international exhibition pavilions examined in Chapter 4, the more diminutive, highly adaptable and recyclable commercial pavilions (often, no more than room-sized displays, set up inside the main exhibition venue) portrayed a surprising image for a socialist state, at odds with both the official ideological mainlines and the quotidian experience of its population: Romania as a producer of high-end consumer goods and exclusive tourism experiences. Unlike occult architecture, this segment of architectural production was well documented by *Arhitectura* in issues 1 (1964), 2-3 (1966), and 4 (1969).

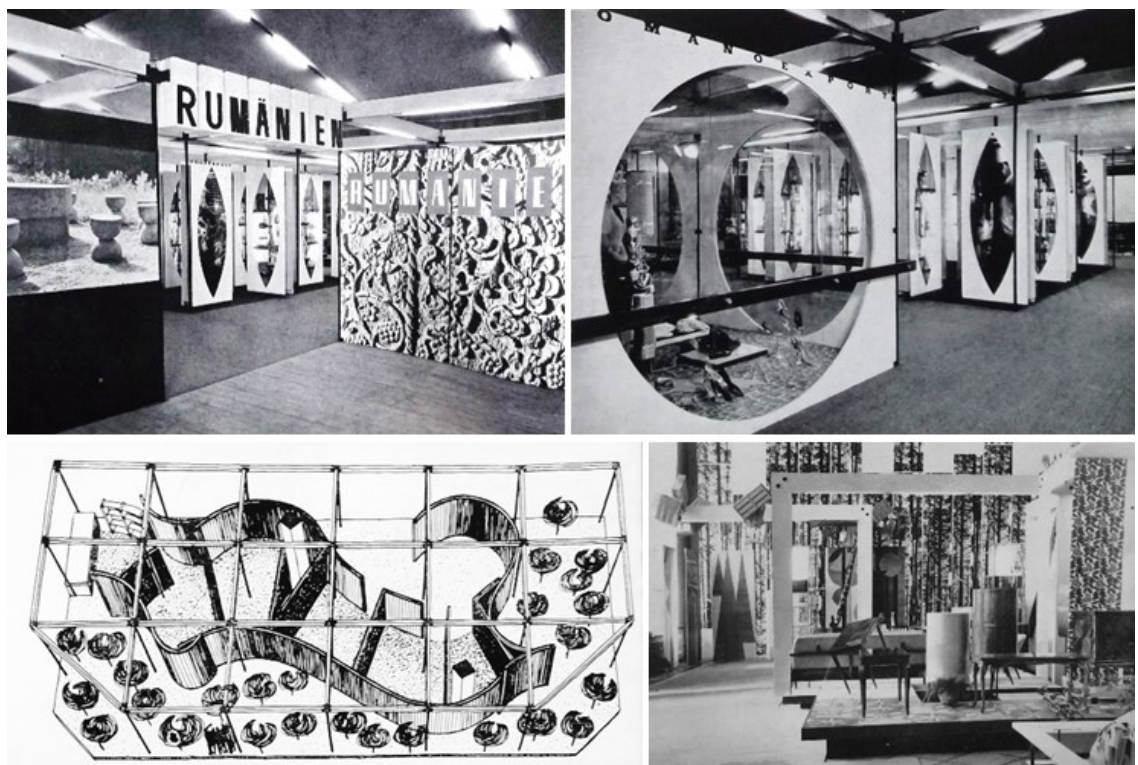


Fig. 81. Romania's pavilions at international commercial exhibitions. Top row: Frankfurt (1965); bottom left: London (1964); bottom right: Beijing (1965).

Written by Mircea Bodianu, project leader for a small team including architects, designers, scenographers and graphic artists selected from the design departments of the Chamber of Commerce, the articles document the aesthetic and sensory richness of the pavilions, exhibited yearly in up to 40 countries across the globe (Fig. 81). Commercial pavilion design represented yet another interstitial space of privileged, though ephemeral architectural production, a space of creative freedom in terms of aesthetics, but also the flexibility and modernity of the design practices and outputs – modular, interchangeable, almost post-modern in their playful use of visual referencing from a wide traditional repertoire, attractively staged to enhance a multi-sensory viewing experience geared towards the consumption of goods and experiences.

This was a zone of fleeting utopianism, built on the joint duplicity of the profession and the state. For architects, having the opportunity to create freely, in and for a competitive creative environment ruled by entirely different aesthetic logics, coupled with the dynamics of small but multi-discipline teams (reminiscent of liberal practice), and the attractive prospects of extensive travel abroad, was panacea. For the political centre, putting forward an image of Romania where socialist morality met quasi-Western living standards contributed to maintaining the country's ambivalent positioning, so particular of Romanian society: politically socialist but culturally Western European; reaping the advantages of a socialist economy, able to pursue the development of nation-wide industry and infrastructure, unfettered by private concerns and interests, all while boosting living standards and consumer satisfaction.

The state's preferential treatment of certain sectors of architectural production, like the realm of international representation, maintained the profession's hopes for a more permissive future practice, mitigating at least the appearance, if not the severity, of the political centre's range of coercive strategies. Censorship, restricted access to cultural production, the curtailing of personal liberties and rights, a constant state of uncertainty over the most mundane aspects of daily life – all of these tactics were designed to erode resistance by dissipating energy into perpetual worry and toil for subsistence. In addition, uncompliant architects also faced ostracisation through assignment to rural or low-profile institutes, which eventually become clusters of multi-disciplinarian nuclei by accruing a diverse body of specialists with alternative views on praxis. Thus, the restrictive and coercive measures deployed by the political centre have often had the unexpected consequence of becoming spaces of counter-hegemonic practice; as Althusser notes, resistance can sometimes be more effectively bred in the realm of production, rather than the discursive terrain of ideologies,⁸³² as demonstrated by the responses of the Romanian architecture milieu to the tactics of the political centre.

⁸³² Althusser, *Essays on Ideology*, p. 21.

6.3. The power of the profession

This section unpacks the main characteristics, range of tactics, and preferred modes of discourse created around discipline-specific knowledge within architecture's sphere of power – with power understood along the same operative, productive lines that have helped contour the agency of the state discussed above. It is important to note here that, much like the power of the state, the power of the profession is never a clearly defined field, nor is it ever the sole product (or exclusive reflection) of neatly-delineated swatches of socio-political history. Despite the apparent holistic cohesion of the term, power within the field of architecture contains strong undercurrents of cultural and professional dynamics originating from and transformed over transitions between different socio-political orders and economic logics, blended with those specific to the socialist period itself. It surrounds a solid core of great systemic inertia with fluid, diffuse, and overlapping areas of very general, as well as very narrow, influence. Most importantly, it does not exist entirely outside, and exclusively in contention with, the realm of the political centre's power (despite the prevalence of a contrary self-positioning with regard to state power, particularly since 1989) but is intimately intertwined with it in a constant feedback loop of mutual transformation along legal, institutional, as well as socio-cultural and individual ways.

In this section, the diverse, heterogeneous range of architecture's diffuse field of power comes to light, with particular focus on the interstitial spaces of discourse and practice that enable accumulations and dispersals of decisional power in non-obvious ways,

and which have thus far received little attention from within the profession, or even been obscured as areas of perceived professional weakness. In the next thesis chapter – the conclusion – this balance between self-identified and actual professional strengths and weaknesses will be further detailed to reflect on the relevance of the thesis to contemporary professional concerns in Romania, and to indicate areas of future research.

6.3.1. Networks of professional authority

Perhaps the most dominant, but least discussed coordinate of professional power in Romanian architecture – including its pre-war and post-communist iterations – is the locus of power formed between the three major circles of institutional authority that have shaped the modern constitution of architecture in Romania since the end of the 19th century: the Union of Romanian Architects, the Ion Mincu University of Architecture and Urbanism, and *Arhitectura* magazine. Over the years, their names, institutional configurations, and levels of autonomy or dependence on the state and various ministries have fluctuated, but the network of power relations woven between them has remained quintessentially unchanged.⁸³³

⁸³³ The last two decades have seen a slight dilution of this framework of professional authority, through the constitution of the Order of Romanian Architects in 2001. The OAR over the majority of legally binding aspects of practice from the Union of Romanian Architects, and currently accredits IMUAU graduates with the right to practice after formative internships.

The evolution of the profession as legal entity with a vital role to play in national development policies holds another clue to its relationship with state-embodied power. As noted by Tabacu, although the Society of Romanian Architects (SRA) had been active since 1891 and had quickly established itself as the de facto authority in all matters architectural, it kept itself just outside the bounds applicable to nation-wide professional organisations falling under the authority of relevant ministries.⁸³⁴ In four decades of activity, the Society constituted itself as the centre of professional culture and practice, but did not become legally recognised as a national professional body until 1932, although by that time it comprised 230 of the 240 architects eligible for state-approved practice, and various architecture departments had been active within ministries and Bucharest city administration since 1880.⁸³⁵

The SRA's intriguing inefficiency in becoming more politically and socially active is well documented by Gabriela Tabacu in her monograph on pre-war *Arhitectura*, where she discusses the disparity between the profession's long-standing goal to secure decisional power over the course of praxis in Romania, and the desultory, almost self-sabotaging activity of its members towards this common goal.⁸³⁶ Although pre-war *Arhitectura* reflected the agenda of the profession to integrate state decision-making forums to enable participation in previously inaccessible processes, such as the initial stages of social policy and urban strategy development, this desideratum fell prey,

⁸³⁴ Gabriela Tabacu, *Revista Arhitectura. Studiu monografic și indici. 1906-1944* [Arhitectura magazine. Monographic study and indices. 1906-1944] (Bucharest: Editura Universitară Ion Mincu, 2006), pp. 30-42.

⁸³⁵ Gabriela Tabacu, *Fapte și întreprinderi fondatoare pentru breasla arhitecților români* [Founding facts and actions of the architecture profession in Romania] trans. by Magda Teodorescu (Bucharest: Editura Universitară Ion Mincu, 2005), p. 30.

⁸³⁶ Tabacu, *Revista Arhitectura*, pp. 13-17, 57-61.

according to Tabacu, to divergent organisational visions, personal egos, individualist fears of becoming too tightly regimented by laws and regulations, and of being homogenised and robbed of the total freedom perceived as inherent to the practice of architecture.⁸³⁷

This is not to say, however, that the profession lacked political shrewdness. Quite on the contrary, Tabacu demonstrates the assiduity with which the same SRA that reluctantly flirted with the prospect of increased decisional power through legalisation, pursued the barring from practice and even expulsion from Romania of ‘foreign architects practicing against the interests of Romanian citizens’, as well as severe sanctions against Romanian architects enabling their access to local work.⁸³⁸ Tabacu also points out that the profession’s immediate adherence to the fascist political doctrine of King Carol II’s regal dictatorship went beyond the mere compliance required to survive as a professional body in times of socio-political upheaval,⁸³⁹ in a typical example of the *modus operandi* of Romanian intellectuals unpacked in the first section of this chapter through Boia’s historical analysis of class dynamics. As discussed in the previous chapter in relation to the profession’s search for national specificity, the ability of architects as a professional body, but also as individual practitioners, to adapt their conceptual and formal repertoire to the radical changes in the ideological direction of praxis required by different modes of governance represents one of the most deeply ingrained and enduring traits of the profession.

⁸³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 58-59.

⁸³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

Architecture education in Romania began to take shape during the second half of the 19th century, in correlation with the rapid modernisation and Westernisation of the newly united Romanian principalities under Alexandru Ioan Cuza,⁸⁴⁰ and continued during the reign of Carol I,⁸⁴¹ when Romania became an independent national state. Between 1850 and 1892, various higher schools, academies, and faculties of existent technical and artistic institutions of higher learning were set up following governmental policies to address the need for a local body of professionals across the spectrum of built environment disciplines, and curtail the outsourcing of commissions for the development of Romania's infrastructure to Austrian, French, German and Italian architects.⁸⁴² However, few schools functioned for more than a couple of years, due in part to the lack of teaching staff and students, but also to the ephemeral quality of most of the state's burgeoning institutional structures. It would take the initiative of the Society of Romanian Architects, founded in 1891 after similar transitional attempts to organise engineers and architects into professional bodies,⁸⁴³ to lay the bases of

⁸⁴⁰ Alexandru Ioan Cuza ruled Moldavia and Wallachia between 1859 and 1862. His accession to the throne in both principalities equated to a de facto union of the two predominantly Romanian-speaking territories. Having played a key local role in the 1848 wave of European revolutions, Cuza set the united principalities on the path to modernisation, industrialisation, and progressive social reform (most notably, the land reform of 1864 that abolished the corvée and granted land property rights to peasants, the setup of a unified legal framework for criminal and civil code, free and compulsory primary education, the foundation of the first two universities in Iași and București, etc.).

⁸⁴¹ King Carol I of Romania (born Prince Karl of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen) succeeded Cuza to the throne of the united Principalities of Wallachia and Moldova. During his reign (1866-1914), Carol's foreign policies did give Romania more traction on the geo-political map of Europe, but his local policies favoured the landed nobility, stalling or undoing the social reforms initiated by Cuza, and consequently perpetuating social inequity.

⁸⁴² Lupu notes that the vast majority of high-profile projects and infrastructural developments were awarded, in the 19th century, to foreign architects (e.g., Cassien Bernard, Albert Galleron, Paul Gottereau, Louis Blanc, Ferdinand Fellner and Herman Helmer, etc.). The first generation of Romanian architects comprised 29 architects trained at the Parisian École des Beaux-Arts.

Mircea Lupu, Mircea Lupu, *Școli naționale în arhitectură* [National schools of architecture] (Bucharest: Editura Tehnică, 1977), pp. 131-34.

⁸⁴³ Tabacu, *Fapte și întreprinderi fondatoare pentru breasla arhitecților români*, pp. 27, 29.

the School of Architecture in Bucharest, which would function consistently between 1892 and 1897, when architecture education was brought under the remit of the Belle Arte Academy. It is telling that the short historical overview on the IMUAU homepage describes this step as a mere transfer of essentially the same school between similar institutions for higher learning,⁸⁴⁴ rather than the complete dissolution of the original school initiated by the Society of Romanian Architects. Moreover, Gabriela Tabacu's research into the constitution of pre-war Romanian architecture points out that the school was not a recognised provider of architecture education, and could only award 'surveyor of construction work' diplomas at the end of the 5 year study cycle, which did not entitle the bearer to access posts within relevant public services.⁸⁴⁵ Although it was the Belle Arte Architecture department that was integrated into the national education reform of 1897, and not the original school founded by the Society of Architects, this shift is brought into the long line of the school's transformations, emphasising continuity and tradition above all else (Fig. 82).

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Fig. 82. The building of the Ion Mincu University of Architecture (arch. Grigore Cerchez; Bucharest; 1912-1927). This grand perspective, serving as the university's calling card since 1956 (when it featured in issue 9 of *Arhitectura*) cannot actually be seen in real life, due to the proximity of the opposite street front.

⁸⁴⁴ 'Universitatea de Arhitectură și Urbanism "Ion Mincu". Istorice' [The Ion Mincu University of Architecture and Urbanism. History] <<https://www.uauim.ro/universitatea/istoric/>> [accessed 23 July 2018]

⁸⁴⁵ Tabacu, *Fapte și întreprinderi fondatoare pentru breasla arhitecților români*, pp. 32-33.

This is symptomatic of the construction of architectural identity in Romania, with instances of uninterrupted continuity fabricated to smooth over fissures and historical blanks, and scissions introduced retrospectively in the gradual progression between one systemic logic to another, to reflect the moralistic stance of the contemporary profession on past eras.

Conceived as the official publication of the SRA in 1906, *Arhitectura* quickly became the country's most authoritative specialist magazine, despite the inconsistency of its publication (varying between one and four issues per year between 1906 and 1944, with significant gaps between issues, sometimes up to 10 years). As discussed in the Methodology chapter of this thesis, although pre-war *Arhitectura* reflected a relatively wide range of professional preoccupations, it did so from a conservative, traditionalist standpoint geared towards privileged architecture, in theoretical contention with the more socially-oriented, progressive periodical *Simetria*. Moreover, the modest resources pooled by the SRA into the production of the magazine meant that issues would sometimes see print through the care and effort of only two or three architects, few with staying power as editorial figures.⁸⁴⁶ Consequently, *Arhitectura* lacked a consistent, programmatic direction (outside its main traditionalist standpoint), and would often reflect the particular professional interests of a small number of content contributors.

⁸⁴⁶ Tabacu, *Revista Arhitectura*, p. 20-21.

Nevertheless, the tight connections between the magazine, the SRA and the school of architecture began to take shape during this tentative period of professional self-positioning within the wider social structure. Initially due to the reduced number of architects trained in Romania (Fig. 83), all three professional bodies shared approximately the same member base, with those most able to accrue symbolic capital through their activity (usually a mix of theoretical, pedagogical, and practical work) quickly rising to positions of authority.

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Fig. 83. A portrait of the profession in 1916: the participants to the first Congress of Romanian Architects (25-26 February 1916, Bucharest). The Society of Romanian Architects had a membership of 126, with 116 architects active in Bucharest.

For the better part of the pre-war period, the magazine's editorial team was practically identical to that of the SRA committee, with most members also teaching at the School of Architecture in Bucharest.⁸⁴⁷ From these key positions, the core of the SRA was able to prolong the dominance of a neo-traditional architecture discourse into the 1930s, when the balance started to tip in favour of Modernism. At this point, the field of Romanian architecture was mostly characterised by a paradoxical combination of

⁸⁴⁷ Lists of the teaching staff can be found in Grigore Ionescu, *75 years of higher architectural education in Romania*. (Bucharest: Editura Universitară Ion Mincu, 1973), pp. 69–90. For lists of the S.R.A. council and *Arhitectura* editorial team over the years, see Tabacu, *Revista Arhitectura*, pp. 21–55.

openness to discursive exchanges with the state in the pursuit of symbolic capital, as well as to connections with the architecture cultures of Western Europe, but also by a hermeticism with regard to architecture's connection to the local social sphere impacted by its relationship with power, accompanied by the tendency to monopolise specialist knowledge, rather than disseminate it.

Caught between the introversion of professional culture, the disinterest of the authorities and the bolstering short-term effects of a rapidly developing construction market, the Romanian architecture of the first half of the 20th century was one of stark contrasts between the privileged and mass architectural production. A resolute professional focus on high commission also translated into reduced concern for the study of more banal architecture programs, regardless of their beneficial impact on the lives of broader segments of the population. Although architecture considered banal or utilitarian (by competition standards) did form a sizable portion of the practice, it was relegated to the peripheral field of dominant architectural concerns – outside theoretical debate, not the target of innovation, nor the grounds for architectural experiment. Therefore, it was often the remit of civil engineers enlisted in public service, rather than architects, who would continue, with a few notable exceptions, to disregard its critical importance for social and urban development, as well as not acquire the ease (and knowledge background) of its design.

As discussed throughout this thesis, the instatement of communism in Romania wrought significant systemic changes in the constitution and functioning of the architecture field, especially its relation with other social spheres. Although architecture

maintained and strengthened its pre-war locus of professional power, created through the concentration of high-profile positions within a narrow circle of individuals belonging to the university, *Arhitectura*, and the Union of Romanian Architects, the political centre jostled in-field equilibrium by propelling a peripheral sector (social housing) to the centre, forcing it into coexistence with the previously dominant focus of discursive concerns (privileged architecture) and dictating their equal treatment in the same method and language (Socialist Realism). Insufficient training in the practice of affordable architecture for a previously un-profiled beneficiary presented architects with additional challenges, facilitating the Party's monopolisation of this crucial pool of design data. Privileged architecture would retain a crucial role in visually representing the new regime's ideology through urban networks of markers – and reminders – of its legitimacy, but access to high command would be henceforth conditioned by political involvement.

Outside the internal coherence and unity of expression of styles contending for discursive dominance before the socialist takeover, even radical modernist practitioners had failed to reduce the disparity between banal and high-brow architecture, especially in terms of their theoretical underpinnings. The strategy of splitting the central focus of discourse into divergent halves to be addressed through a single, yet undefined creative method backfired, temporarily plunging the profession into inaction.⁸⁴⁸ With the added difficulty of translating said method (linking politics and aesthetics into a rigid cluster of ideological tenets) into architectural language, the

⁸⁴⁸ As discussed in Chapter 4, section 4.3.

hesitant re-definition of architecture as nationalised activity stretched well into the 1950s, accounting for the wildly varying quality of the works produced during this time.

During the consolidation stage, the shortage economy of Romanian socialism also redefined contention for professional authority in cultural production. Through tentative, ideology-focused dialogue with state institutions, practitioners made cultural fields permeable to political discourse in exchange for material, professional and social gain. Political activism now conditioned participation in the production of culture, but this did not necessarily imply that, from this point onward, cultural activities were entirely subdued by the state. Architecture deployed a dual discursive mode – textual and visual – complicating in-field dialogue and intra-field communication with exclusively textual disciplines. The projects presented in *Arhitectura* displayed a variety of ideologically inappropriate professional interpretations of briefs based on political text. Although similar to other arts in this respect, architecture had other facets inseparable from the aesthetic – scientific, economic, socio-cultural – already engaged in visual/textual competition for the discursive upper-hand, making professional authority difficult to bring under a political control whose predominant mode of address was text. To some extent, this peculiarity preserved the in-field focus of professional power and authority – the University of Architecture, *Arhitectura* and the professional association – since the effort needed to attain control based on professional standards in each sub-branch of discourse would have been unmanageable. Instead, as analysed in the previous section, control was exerted

through institution, bureaucracy and legislation, transforming the structure and functioning logic of the professional body and the complexity of practice.

However, the field's restructuring under communism also proved unexpectedly beneficial to the cohesiveness of architects as a professional body, united around a common agenda. While the architectural milieu still was a multi-voiced microcosm of thought and practice, through the reorganisation of the Society of Architects into the Union of Romanian Architects (with limited agency, but far more institutional cohesion) the field of architecture came into its own as an Ideological State Apparatus, intrinsically linked to the political and economic spheres through institutional pathways allowing a much more effective negotiation of power than the SRA had endeavoured to create before the war. Along with the repressive, coercive, and levelling aspects of the profession's socialist restructuring, I would argue that this transformation also introduced the potential for greater efficiency as a socially-engaged practice, as well as strengthened the profession's centre of authority by shaping it according to the logics of socialist bureaucracy.

Similarly, Verdery also discusses the vital importance of the dialogue between intellectual elites and cognizant publics for the cultural and social dissemination of knowledge through the accessible translation, for the non-professional public, of the ideas, concepts and discoveries which drive social progress.⁸⁴⁹ In Romania, architecture's pre-war cognizant public had been elitist and exclusive. After the change in regime, professionals on the fringes of the field's locus of power (unable to

⁸⁴⁹ Verdery, *National Ideology Under Socialism*, pp. 143-44, 197-98, 294-96.

access the privileged practice of architecture) coalesced into a specialist cognizant public with little interest for social reform. Although architecture's ability to reach a wider audience through the dispersal and dissemination of specialist knowledge did increase in comparison to the pre-war period, it was still limited by the profession's locus of power (high inertia, slow to reform). Moreover, the centre's monopoly on the laws of societal progress also contributed to the slow, hesitant emergence of cognizant publics in Romania.

Unlike other satellite states such as Poland, where professional elites had an active role in the dissemination of knowledge towards the broader strata of society, as well as in facilitating the more accurate perception of socialism's discontinuous social space by collective consciousness,⁸⁵⁰ Romania's specialist cognizant publics confined discursive exchanges to their respective fields, or between holders of decisional power. This selective permeability of architecture's agenda (hinging on the top-down or bottom-up origin of discourse) and inability to project knowledge across the barrier of professional language is still a characteristic of contemporary Romanian architecture.

⁸⁵⁰ Staniszki, *The Ontology of Socialism*, pp. 121-22.

6.3.2. Shaping individual tactics for alternative practice

After the initial realignment of the architecture system, when the URA had only recently separated from the professionally-homogenising SAT, *Arhitectura* was gradually beginning to change track to specialist-knowledge-led discourse after the rhetorical fervour of Socialist Realism, and the University of Architecture was working to minimise the effects of the politicisation of the education process in the late 1940s and early 1950s, the profession understandably prioritised the recovery of advantages lost in the post-war transformation of its relationship with the state. Consequently, the field became selectively permeable towards the apex of the social structure, remaining hermetic towards broader social strata. With dire consequences for social progress, this prevented the post-war re-shaping of a cognizant public linking intellectual elites and society at large by disseminating knowledge made accessible through dialogue.⁸⁵¹

If architecture's pre-war cognizant public had been exclusive and restrictive, it was not recreated in Socialist Romania as an agent for widespread social development. Instead, the field split into a specialist cognizant public (the architect-employees of State Design Institutes) and an elite-within-the-elite: the select council of the URA, the editorial team of *Arhitectura*, University teaching staff and practitioners with access to the privileged sector of architecture for State apparatus and Party nomenklatura. The effect of this split on architecture's new-found propensity for dialogue confined it to

⁸⁵¹ Verdery, *National Ideology Under Socialism*, pp.197-98.

professional circles or circulation between holders of decisional power; as a result, the full scope of socialist architecture's progressive project remained, regrettably, utopian.

Architecture's political situatedness was not only made irrefutably apparent, but also exacerbated due to the restriction of access to top-tier creative commissions – in a sense, creating a sense of competition even more acerbic than in capitalist times, no less reliant on the good graces of relevant holders of political power, but also dependent on critique based on the external canon of Marxism-Leninism. Architects adapted to this new mechanism of symbolic capital accrual and the disparity between mass/unique/nomenklatura commissions by practising in a wide formal range (at odds with the purported unity of the main direction of praxis, especially national specificity, but also by choosing and shaping career paths in accordance with their own ethical and political compass. The sheer diversity of modes of practice animating the architectural milieu even at the strictest heights of communism stands proof to the power of the profession, steeped in the astute channelling of specialist knowledge into interstitial spaces of praxis.

In the wider framework of Eastern and Central European cultural production, the individual professional tactics discussed below share a number of traits with the adaptive strategies practiced, for example, by the Polish, Czech, Hungarian and Slovak artists discussed by Kemp-Welch: detached disinterest, overt dissent, practice-based subversion, and humour⁸⁵² – all had a place in Romanian communist architecture. A

⁸⁵² Klara Kemp-Welch, *Antipolitics in Central European Art. Reticence as Dissidence under Post-Totalitarian Rule. 1956-1989* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd, 2014), pp. 2-11.

significant difference, however, was that the levelling effect of low-cost socialist construction, as well as of the collective and institutional nature of communist architecture practice, meant that the most frequent adaptive response – openness to dialogue with the political, and the upholding of professional standards – has been written off in the post-socialist age as a professional *weakness*, rather than a *strength*.

To better understand this diversity, a cursory glance at the pre-war professional milieu is necessary. Forged in a pre-war modernist paradigm, the body of architects engaged in practice at the time of the change in regime stretched across two generations. The first comprised the initial wave of modernist architects, who shaped the movement's theoretical basis: Marcel Iancu, Horia Creangă, Duiliu Marcu, Octav Doicescu – highly cultured, widely travelled, and, with few exceptions, recipients of a double architecture training combining traditionalism (at IMUAU) and Modernism (in various schools in France and Switzerland, but mostly through practice in architecture offices abroad). Consequently, the field of architecture remained remarkably well-connected to the architecture cultures of Western Europe throughout the pre-war era, focusing particularly on France, Italy, Austria and Germany. This receptivity did not diminish after modernism rose to discursive prominence at the beginning of the 1930s, although the change did increase tendencies towards synthesis and adaptation of the modernist agenda to local conditions, and hybridising with conceptual models of different origins in a non-discriminate stylistic manner. Pre-war Romanian Modernism, writes Zahariade, was elegant but pragmatic, with minor inclinations towards experimenting, mostly confined to the expressionist branch of the movement. Closer

to a merger between Art Deco and the subtle, Parisian version of the modernist aesthetic during initial stages of inception, it later became heavily influenced by Italian fascist architecture. Of particular relevance to post-war developments is the fact that, through tailoring to a socio-cultural context dominated by the traditionalism vs. modernity dispute, Romanian architecture dispensed with the progressive, socially-oriented agenda of the Modern Movement, and refocused the ideology of local modernism on aesthetics and conceptual rationalism.⁸⁵³

The second generation, trained in Bucharest under the first and beginning practice just after WWII or at the beginning of the 1950s, shifted the focus of Romanian Modernism onto more radical, reformist issues. Influenced to a great extent by CIAM, Le Corbusier, Bauhaus and the principles of the Athens Charter, they were concerned with the social aspects of architecture clustered around the idea of housing in the context of post-war reconstruction. Despite a homogeneous professional milieu (in terms of the social background, upbringing, education and professional mentality of its members), architects navigated the transition to a practice legally bound to Socialist Realism in a number of different ways.

Octav Doicescu was one of the key figures of pre-war Romanian modernism. A talented and active practitioner, he responded to the change in political regime by recasting himself as an academic, out of genuine interest in matters theoretical as well as in a bid to safeguard a privileged situation. In fact, his involvement in education –

⁸⁵³ Ana Maria Zahariade et al., *Teme ale arhitecturii din România în secolul XX* [Themes of 20th century Romanian architecture] (Bucharest: Editura Institutului Cultural Român, 2003), pp. 16-17.

as a studio tutor, lecturer and theorist at the University of Architecture in Bucharest – had an important role to play in the reception of Socialist Realism in Romania. Part of a teaching staff espousing Modernism – but a subdued, non-confrontational, almost anti-technicist version (Fig. 84) – Doicescu’s legacy to the second generation of architects consisted of a solid core of modernist principles disguisable at will through aesthetic flexibility,⁸⁵⁴ and a lesson on the importance of cautious silence or non-committal discursive engagement with ideology.⁸⁵⁵

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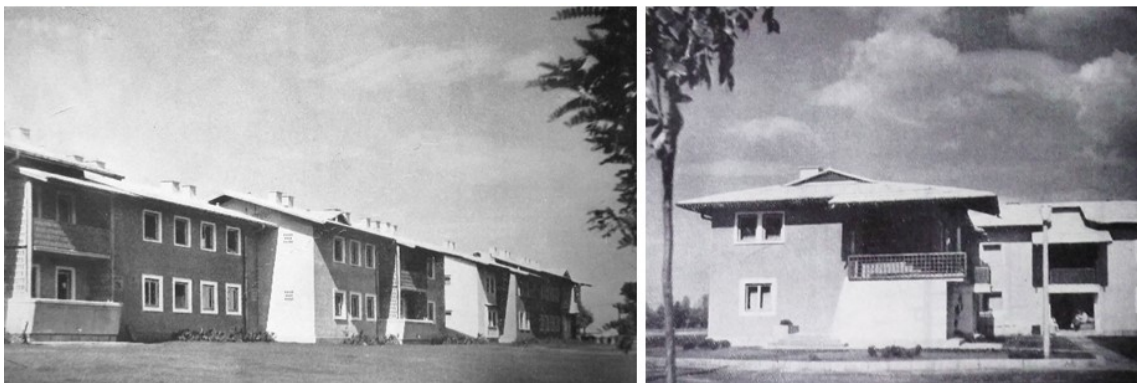


Fig. 84. A small sample of Doicescu’s stylistic versatility. Top left: Yacht Club (Snagov; 1933); top right: Băneasa Airport project (Bucharest; 1947); bottom row: Băneasa housing estate (Bucharest; 1958-1959).

⁸⁵⁴ As discussed in Chapter 4, Octav Doicescu’s practice was the epitome of stylistic adaptation, switching from a modernised take on neo-Romanian architecture (Romania’s restaurant at the 1939 International Exhibition) to the classicist aesthetic of the National Opera House in Bucharest during the heights of Socialist Realism, and back to a merger between modernism and vernacular housing typologies (Băneasa housing estate).

⁸⁵⁵ Ion Mircea Enescu, *Arhitect sub comunism* [Architect under communism] (Bucharest: Paideia, 2006), pp. 182-202.

Of the same generation, Gustav Gusti epitomised the type of political engagement practiced by architects during the Stalinist years on an individual, rather than collective professional basis. A competent architect with an already solid pre-war professional standing, Gusti managed to preserve his position within the privileged core of the profession through duplicitous action. On one hand, he subscribed to a modernist take on architecture which would continue to inform his work – from the design of Hunedoara’s reconstruction plan to seminars and lectures delivered on the modern concept of the dwelling, and the development of a theoretical framework of post-war urban housing. On the other, he became a virulent critic of ‘cosmopolitan’ architecture and a vocal supporter of Socialist Realism and Soviet architectural dogma. During Socialist Realism, he occupied increasingly more important functions in the nationalised architecture system: director of the Institute of Construction Design⁸⁵⁶ (before 1950), representative of the State Committee for Architecture and Construction (1955), etc.⁸⁵⁷ Like the majority of other architects with high-ranking positions, Gusti transitioned seamlessly into the rationality-driven practice succeeding Socialist Realism, later on becoming a proponent of urban polycentrism, organic regional development, and urban growth models practised in the Scandinavian countries.⁸⁵⁸

⁸⁵⁶ Until 1952, the Institute of Construction Design dealt with projects ranging from urban development to typified housing design. Created in 1952, the State Committee for Architecture and Construction (CSAC) was the main state institution legally organising and controlling architecture practice on behalf of the Council of Ministers.

⁸⁵⁷ Mara Mărginean, ‘Aesthetic Mechanisms of Stalinization in Romanian Architecture. The Case of Hunedoara, 1947-1954’ (unpublished master’s thesis, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, 2008).

⁸⁵⁸ Gustav Gusti, ‘Al IX-lea congress al Uniunii Internaționale a Arhitecților. Praga – iulie 1967. Omul, mediul, arhitectura’ [The 9th congress of the International Union of Architects. Prague – July 1967. Man, the environment, architecture] *Arhitectura* 6 (1967), pp. 2-8.

Graduating in 1946, Ion Mircea Enescu represented modernist architects of the second generation, who built successful careers without becoming manifest advocates of an ideology to which they remained opposed. Through a combination of irrefutable professional skill and determination, doubled by a strategic focus on programs less given to ideological debate and dependent on technical and structural innovation (medicine, sports, industry, etc.), Enescu circumvented most hardships of practice under the new regime, especially for someone under continuous suspicion for harbouring American sympathies.⁸⁵⁹

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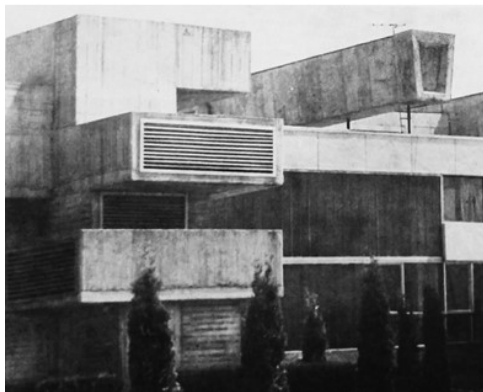
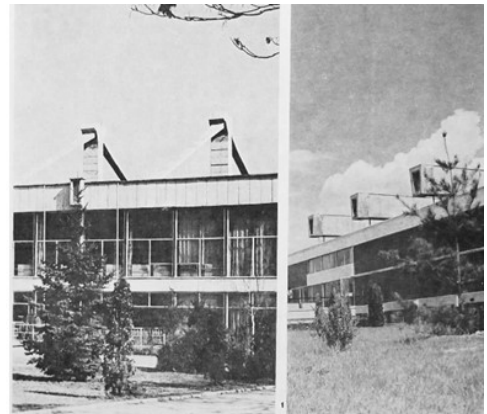


Fig. 85. Ion Mircea Enescu – samples of creative practice. Top left: Polizu Maternity (1952); top right: sports halls in Iași and Pitești (1978); bottom left: Pitești sports hall, detail; bottom right: Cluj-Napoca sports hall, interior (1966).

⁸⁵⁹ Ion Mircea Enescu, 'Anatomia unor vremuri abominabile' [The anatomy of those abominable times] in *Arhitecți în timpul dictaturii: amintiri* [Architects during the dictatorship: memories], ed. by Viorica Iuga-Curea (Bucharest: Simetria, 2005), p. 47.

Enescu's 1951-1952 project for the Polizu Maternity in Bucharest exemplifies the design flexibility afforded architectural programmes with strict functional requirements, especially when updated according to evolving medical standards. With a seemingly-floating overhang, a severe expression and minimal façade detailing, this modernist building successfully completed an ensemble of pre-war, neo-Romanian edifices (Fig. 85). Tributary to neither traditionalist nor Socialist Realism aesthetics, Enescu's project was, first and foremost, a space shaped by innovative medical procedure. By noting the unprecedented novelty and importance, at the time, of interdisciplinary architecture studies involving top-tier professionals in medicine, and intended to spearhead typified projects adaptable country-wide, the architect paid a rare compliment to the socialist regime.⁸⁶⁰ Thus, health programmes fostered alternative discourses answering social needs based on scientific, rather than ideological requirements defined outside the sphere of political power, subtly extending the modernist aesthetic into the Stalinist period, and opening up the gallery of admissible models to German or Polish architecture.

Another member of the second generation, Virgil Nițulescu was the voice of professional disgruntlement, and endured systematic persecution throughout his career: public shaming in *Arhitectura* for practicing a decadently bourgeois architecture,⁸⁶¹ denied access to high-profile projects, relegation to low-pay, minor positions during employment in Design Institutes, and a ban from entering

⁸⁶⁰ Enescu, *Arhitect sub comunism*, pp.35-36.

⁸⁶¹ Gustav Gusti, 'Considerații asupra concursului pentru planuri de locuințe' [Thoughts on the housing competition] *Arhitectura R.P.R.* 2-3 (1950), pp. 69-75.

architecture education as a tutor.⁸⁶² According to his colleagues, Nițulescu was perhaps the most forward-thinking, radical architect of their generation. Still, his innovative touch can be traced through the pages of *Arhitectura*, no matter how subtle – and always part of a ‘collaborative design collective’ (to use the terminology most often encountered in *Arhitectura*’s project presentations).

Eugenia Greceanu fell somewhere between overt subversion and tacit dissimulation of discontent. In a way, hers was the default position adopted by the majority of Romanian architects, who, unwilling or unable to become enmeshed in politics to gain access to privileged commission and higher professional status, devoted themselves to niche areas of architecture less exposed to political influence, such as restoration. In addition, her profile was that of the typical Romanian architect: a solid intellectual upbringing (not necessarily coinciding with financial affluence) steeped in exposure to Western culture and art; a fundamentally pro-Western mentality reinforced during the years spent at University; a framework of architectural reference sourced from Western Europe and America through periodicals such as *Architectural Review* and *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*.⁸⁶³

Through specialisation in certain branches of architecture, Enescu and Greceanu positioned themselves on the margins of socialist practice. Due to his preference for medical, industrial and sports architecture, Enescu was able to transfer between ministries and institutes for experimental projects, staying true to his own discursive

⁸⁶² Ibid., pp. 318–31.

⁸⁶³ Eugenia Greceanu, untitled chapter in *Arhitecți în timpul dictaturii: amintiri* [Architects during the dictatorship: memories], ed. by Viorica Iuga-Curea (Bucharest: Simetria, 2005), pp. 113–42.

agenda, and even implementing it abroad.⁸⁶⁴ Chastised for 'shameful pro-Western behaviour' during her undergraduate degree, Greceanu reaped the unexpected benefits of transfer to one of the least desirable design clusters (MGCIL – Ministry of Communal Administration and Local Industries), where small groups of similar misfits from many intellectual backgrounds (sociologists, urban geographers, linguists, urbanists, cartographers, photographers)⁸⁶⁵ flew under the radar of high-profile institutionalised design, bringing to complex urban planning and regional systematisation the kind of multi-disciplinary approach dismantled by the excessive ramification of the state design apparatuses (Fig. 86).

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Fig. 86. Eugenia Greceanu (top row, fourth from the right) and her interdisciplinary design collective.

⁸⁶⁴ See Enescu's projects for international competitions in Enescu, *Arhitect sub comunism* - Toronto city hall, 1958, p. 233; Centre Pompidou, 1969, p. 252;) and for universities in Algeria (1973-1978, pp. 102-06.

⁸⁶⁵ Greceanu, pp. 136-42.

The career of architect Hans Fackelmann also stood testament to the creative drive of a regional architecture practice where specificity was perhaps better understood as the intersection of contemporary lived experience rooted in the local context, and cross-cultural influences (Fig. 87). Graduating from IMUAU in 1958, Fackelmann's built work across Transylvanian counties and teaching practice at the Timișoara Polytechnic were widely appreciated by his peers and students.⁸⁶⁶

Figure has been removed due to Copyright restrictions

Fig. 87. Architect Hans Fackelmann: left, West University of Timișoara (1964); right: Orșova Roman-Catholic Cathedral, interior (1970-1976).

But perhaps the most telling cases were those of architects like Mircea Alifanti (Fig. 88) and Ascanio Damian, who championed radical Modernism *and* a belief in the socialist project, and had tension-fraught, but undeniably crucial careers throughout the communist period.

⁸⁶⁶ Vlad Gaivoronschi, 'Hans Fackelmann 1933-1979' <<http://arhitectura-1906.ro/2013/03/hans-fackelmann-1933-1979/>> [accessed 28th July 2018]



Fig. 88. National specificity as Critical Regionalism: Baia Mare political-administrative complex (Mircea Alifanti, 1972).

Although both had a hand in the creation of Casa Scânteii, the Romanian Socialist Realist building par excellence, Damian was the regime's preferred International Exhibition pavilion designer between 1949 and 1958.⁸⁶⁷ Contrastingly modernist, if not high-tech by comparison with the official aesthetic, his 1956 Damascus pavilion (Fig. 89) illustrates the duplicitous treatment by power of architecture within and outside Romania's borders. Dubbed by Ioan 'several-speed architecture',⁸⁶⁸ the contrasting requirements for internal architecture (congruent with the Soviet canon) and that for international display (governed by the subtly propagandistic, misrepresenting dialogue between World Fair participants) must have been particularly frustrating for architects who believed that the radical social progress pursued by socialism in domestic architecture would have benefitted from the same contemporary conceptual

⁸⁶⁷ Miruna Stroe, 'Ascanio Damian, Trade Fair Designer Extraordinaire', *studies in History & Theory of Architecture*, 2 (2014), pp. 77-93.

⁸⁶⁸ Ioan, *Modern Architecture and the Totalitarian Project*, p. 19.

and aesthetic direction⁸⁶⁹ reserved for the international dialogue of World Fairs. Damian's 1956 pavilion seemed to anticipate by two years the abrupt change in aesthetics evident between the Soviet pavilions of 1939 (a less successful derivation of the emblematic 1937 pavilion) and 1958 (a translucent, high-tech glass box fronted by a classical portico, housing satellite replicas, cutting-edge machinery and two model Soviet apartments).⁸⁷⁰ In contrast to Romania's 1939 pavilion (subdued modernism with vernacular undertones), Damian's project was startlingly industrial, almost reminiscent of aeronautical facilities (Fig. 89).

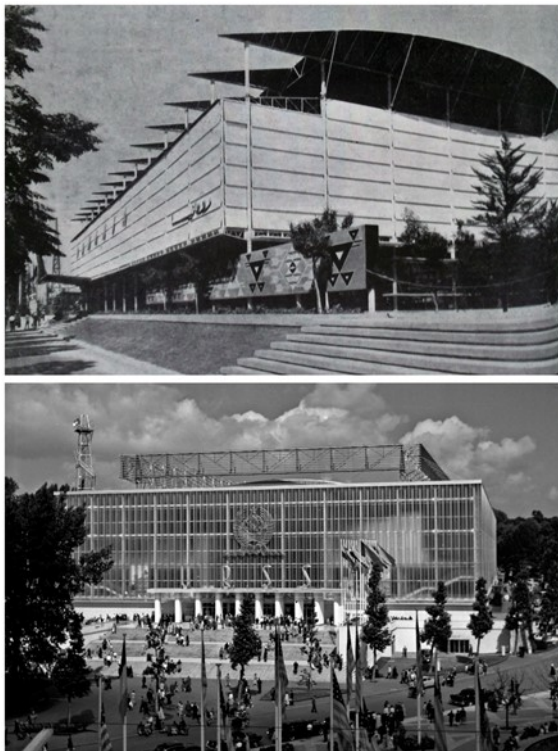


Figure sections (top right, bottom right) have been removed due to Copyright restrictions

Fig. 89. International dialogue in the socialist world. Top left: the Romanian pavilion at the 1956 International Exhibition in Damascus (arch. Ascanio Damian); bottom left: the USSR pavilion at the 1958 Brussels World Fair; top right and bottom right: the Czechoslovak and Yugoslavian pavilions (1958, Brussels).

⁸⁶⁹ Alifanti's 1945-1947 designs for Băneasa Airport and the APACA textiles factory evidence this belief, while his project for the Baia Mare city hall (1969) is a successful exercise in non-referential vernacular modernism, using the 'logical uncanny' of local rhythms and patterns of space-making to inform a context-mindful design.

⁸⁷⁰ Other satellite states like Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia also broke away from the historicist Socialist Realist aesthetic, choosing modernism for their 1958 Brussels World Fair pavilions. However, this shift occurred simultaneously with that of the USSR's pavilion aesthetics. For further details, see Kimberley E. Zarecor, 'Socialism on Display: The Czechoslovak and Yugoslavian Pavilions at the 1958 Brussels World's Fair', in *Meet Me at the Fair: A World's Fair Reader*, ed. by Laura Hollengreen et al. (Pittsburgh: ETC/Carnegie Mellon Press, 2014), pp. 225-39.

However, the contrast between the pavilion's exterior and the displays housed within (local produce, traditional craftwork, agricultural machinery, etc.) rehashed the same dialectic between tradition-based nationalism and technical progress as that put forward by Romania's International Exhibition pavilions examined in Chapter 4, suggesting the transference of core ideas about national identity across the change in regime. Moreover, the fact that Romania's international self-representation was distinctly modernist, rather than classically Socialist Realist, even before the USSR's official transition on the world stage to this new type of representational architecture, was indicative of the general trend of political and cultural distancing from Moscow initiated by Gheorghiu-Dej, but also attests to the ability of talented architects to find, inhabit and shape less ideologically constricted areas of practice with alternative interpretations of *Romanian socialist architecture*.

6.3.3. The power of permeable boundaries: expanding the field of Romanian architecture.

During the 1960s and 1970s, the stable structure linking the Union of Romanian Architects, *Arhitectura* and the Ion Mincu University through multiple memberships in high-power positions held by a narrow circle of privileged practitioners added another layer of stability and strength to its formation by sourcing cultural capital from outside Romania's borders through the introduction of a globally-relevant problematic outside the Party's control. As discussed in the previous chapter, *Arhitectura's* increased transparency with regard to its editorial team, contributing authors, but also

detailed reflection of the internal structure of the URA, accompanied by summaries of meetings and conference proceedings, allows a clear mapping of the positioning of architects throughout key state organisations.

Architects such as Gustav Gusti epitomised this narrow concentration of power. His many professional and institutional roles included the presidency of the Union of Romanian Architects, vice-presidency of the State Committee for Architecture and Construction, a professorship at the Ion Mincu University, and prolific authorship in *Arhitectura*. It is relevant to note here that, while positions such as Gusti's generally represented a centrifugal, reform-adverse force in the field of architecture (much to the frustration of younger generations of practitioners having to secure positions within these rigid hierarchies), they also accounted for much of the profession's negotiating ability in dialogue with power: architecture spoke with the unified voice of professional authority. This unified voice, however, was responsible for more than strategic discursive exchanges with power: it also chronicled *the history of the profession*, through research and authorship concentrated in the same narrow circle of professional authority, much to the loss of the field's diverse histories and narratives, only partially discernible now through *Arhitectura* and oral histories.

Starting with the late 1950s, Romanian architects also began participating actively in a variety of international specialist and non-specialist bodies, such as the International Union of Architects (since 1958) and its many specialised branches, the United Nations (1955) and its specialised agencies with relevance to the practice of architecture (such as UNESCO – 1961, or the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation – 1980),

Fédération Internationale pour l'Habitation, l'Urbanisme et l'Aménagement des Territoires (FIHUAT, 1964), the International Hospital Federation (IHF, 1977), etc.

Consequently, the most prominent members of the Union of Romanian Architects also began accruing positions of authority in these international organisations, supplementing their source of symbolic capital through the recognition of intellectual activity in international forums. In addition to Gusti, who also served as president-elect of one of the UN's committees on urbanism and housing design, as well as on several commissions of the UIA, other examples include Pompiliu Macovei, professor at IMUAU since 1956, chief-architect for Bucharest between 1953 and 1958, Romanian delegate to the UN at Geneva, 1954-1957, vice-president of the URA between 1952 and 1966, followed by a 1966-1971 presidency of the same. He was also appointed in various consultancy positions with Romanian embassies abroad (Paris, 1959), served as Romanian ambassador to Italy (Rome, 1962-1965) and UNESCO (1971-1977) and occupied high-ranking bureaucratic positions within the Romanian state apparatus: president of the State Committee for Construction and Architecture (1965-1971), and deputy minister of External Affairs (1962-1965). His architecture design portfolio included high-profile, unique projects, such as the Băneasa International Airport (1945-1948, in collaboration with Mircea Alifanti, Ascanio Damian, Nicolae Bădescu), the refurbishment and expansion of Romanian embassies (Paris, 1958-1960, Rome, 1960-1962), as well as international exhibition pavilion design (Vienna, Frankfurt, Bern, Venice, Moscow, etc.). While it is evident that architects like Macovei inhabited (and restricted access to) some of the profession's most coveted spaces of privileged,

relatively free and creative practice, their assiduous pursuit of international connections nevertheless facilitated a steady influx of information, ideas, methodologies and, last but not least, identity-shaping experiences (professionally and personally) from the architectural macrocosm outside Romania's borders.

In addition to the openness of thought and method that animated the profession, reflected by and enabled through *Arhitectura's* 1960s and 1970s activity (discussed in the previous chapter), participation in international architecture forums had two additional consequences of great importance for the internal shaping of praxis. Chapter 4 has analysed the theoretical confusion surrounding the introduction of Socialist Realism as a body of discourse and practice validated through the external canon of Marxism-Leninism and Muscovite architecture, as well as the tactics deployed by Romanian architects to gradually erode it through ritualised, performative practice. After Romania's de-Stalinisation, the role of external editorship was taken over (and exacerbated, on grounds of economicity, rather than ideologically-correct form) by the Romanian Communist Party. Despite the gradual removal of architectural critique on the grounds of Marxism-Leninism, the endurance of *mythically-scientific* themes at the heart of Romanian communism (to borrow Boia's term), such as the obsessive pursuit of heavy industrialisation long past the Stalin era, which permeated architecture along the coordinates of industrialisation, typification and prefabrication,⁸⁷¹ and the political centre's focus on certain urban development

⁸⁷¹ Along with a massively disproportionate investment rapport between heavy industries and other sectors of construction, including housing.

models and housing typologies, strictly controlled through economic coefficients, proved equally restrictive. In response, the profession introduced a subtle shift in the scale of the architectural and urban problematic, through their engaged participation in conferences and symposia worldwide. From the very localised focus of economicity-bound praxis within Romania's borders, discussion in *Arhitectura* expanded to global issues relevant for socialist, capitalist, advanced and developing countries alike, showing a genuine commonality of thought and (at least desired) direction.

To illustrate *Arhitectura's* frequent reports on international debate, issue 1 (1964) covered the UIA World Congress in Havana (1963), focused on 'Architecture in underdeveloped countries',⁸⁷² highlighting the importance of multi-industry regional development in conjunction with housing programmes, of boosting local professional self-sufficiency through training programmes, and the need to devise a national infrastructure development model combining the best elements of both socialist (economic integration, property laws) and capitalist models (new approaches to urban development beginning to conceptualise sustainability, multi-functionality, and socio-centric design methodologies).⁸⁷³ *Arhitectura* 1 (1967) published a detailed activity report from the UN Commission for housing, Construction and Planning, presenting key achievements since 1963, along with strategies and provisions until 1970.⁸⁷⁴ Written

⁸⁷² This was the terminology used at the time in *Arhitectura*. However, terms like 'underdeveloped' or 'Third World countries' had little staying power in the magazine, and were soon replaced by 'developing' or 'industrialising nations'.

⁸⁷³ 'Rezoluția finală a Congresului al VII-lea al Uniunii Internaționale a Arhitecților – Havana – septembrie 1963' [Final resolution of the 7th congress of the International Union of Architects – Havana – September 1963] *Arhitectura* 1 (1964), pp.44-45.

⁸⁷⁴ Alexandru Budișteanu, 'Din activitatea Comitetului O.N.U. pentru locuințe, construcții și sistematizare' [From the activity of the UN Committee for housing, constructions and systematisation] *Arhitectura* 1 (1967), pp. 49, 72.

by architect Alexandru Budişteanu,⁸⁷⁵ president of the UN Commission for Housing and high-ranking member of the URA, the report calls attention to the aggravating housing crisis facing developing countries, still insufficiently addressed on a local scale through precarious, low-quality interventions providing scant relief, and often triggering the rapid and uncontrolled expansion of urban centres, set against the deterioration of local environments. Budişteanu stressed the need to empower local specialists through training programmes, already implemented by the UN commission in a number of African and Middle Eastern countries, with the active participation of Romanian architects (among others) as providers of professional knowledge required for the subsequent creation of local-led national and regional development strategies.

Similarly, projects designed by Romanian architects in the same developing countries were underpinned by a distinct ethical dimension, focused on facilitating the application of specialist knowledge whilst training local practitioners and empowering them towards full ownership of their local praxis.⁸⁷⁶ As discussed in the previous chapter through Cezar Lăzărescu's perspective on the subject, Romanian architects saw and expressly articulated their position in distinct, moral opposition to the designs of world-famous architects, whose statement, iconic buildings expressed the national image of the newly independent African republics (from an arguably Western perspective), but did little to sustain and enrich local professional networks or social progress. *Arhitectura* 6 (1979) affords a glimpse in the complex phenomenon of

⁸⁷⁵ Budişteanu was also a part of the IMUAU teaching staff, and, later, director of the national systematisation department of ISLGC.

⁸⁷⁶ See Appendices 6 and 7, pp. 477-78.

Romanian intervention abroad, through articles discussing the design of Algerian universities.⁸⁷⁷

Beyond architecture, the Romanian-Algerian partnership included the creation of entire pedagogical systems and curricula in articulation with the Algerian development plan, mobilising a wide range of state institutions on both sides of the equation. Moreover, the unexpected transparency surrounding the multiple Romanian state organisations mediating the export of architectural expertise as part of complex trade and mutual aid agreements with developing socialist republics – for instance, *Arhitectura* lists the collaboration of the Ministry of Education, IMUAU, The Design Centre for Educational and Research Facilities, ARCOM, and ROMCONSULT – indicates Romanian architecture practice abroad as another zone functioning under altered logics than those governing local socialist practice, often bearing resemblance to what the Romanian architectural milieu would have deemed, at the time, ‘liberal’.

6.4. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed the balance of power between the profession of architecture and the political centre, focusing on the strategies and tactics developed by both sides in the contention over the main direction of praxis. To this end, the analysis has set up a definition of power as an instrumental field of action with diffuse boundaries, negotiable forces, as well as enduring nuclei of decisional authority. As

⁸⁷⁷ *Arhitectura* 6 (1979), pp. 22-38.

this thesis is concerned with the interstitial spaces of communist Romanian architecture and the patterns of power negotiation in pursuit of hegemony with transference into contemporary practice, this chapter has mostly drawn from case studies mapping their boundaries and processes, rather than points in the main chronology of the subject, so far investigated predominantly from the dichotomic narrative of oppression and resistance.

Far more pervasive and effective than the tactics of outright coercion already documented in extant scholarship, my findings suggest that the mainstay of the power tactics deployed by the political centre stem from the manipulation of intellectual activity in the space of legitimation created through the discursive exchanges between professionals and the state. In the case of architecture, the state maintained a finely tuned balance between political directives and eliciting compliance by appealing to professional desiderata through the introduction of permissive measures bearing similarity to developments in international architecture. Although this congruence of architectural direction with strands of Western architecture discourse seemed plausibly applicable in everyday practice, it was consistently undone through the restrictive nature of planned economy and the realities of socialist production.

Moreover, spaces of genuinely creative architecture praxis were carefully curated throughout the communist period, engendering fierce competition among architects to gain access by ascending the professional and institutional hierarchies upheld and defended by other architects. Another subtle misdirection of contentious energy was the Party's manipulation of discourses with legitimising potential – national identity

and its reflection and consolidation through cultural production. By engaging architects in debates on the parameters of national specificity, the political centre secured their assent as to the importance of the discourse at the core of Romanian politics and culture to the detriment of questioning the dominant order or considering systemic reform. This tactic also worked against the formation of cognizant publics and alliances between holders of expert knowledge and wider society by circumscribing the discussion to circles of political and professional authority.

Another point to make on the strategies of the political centre in the exercise of power was the unpredictability of shifts between the attributions of the prerogative and the normative state clusters, with certain architecture sectors or grand-scale developments (like the Bucharest civic centre) subject to direct political dictum, yet still forced to function in the institutional and legal framework of nationalised praxis. Finally, the frequent restructuring of state ministries and decisional forums also had a perhaps unintended effect on the homogenisation and diminished quality of praxis, by multiplying the points of political mediation and creating an excessive bureaucratic workload for architects to manage in addition to the labour of design.

The field of architecture has also reaped unexpected benefits from the nationalisation of the profession. It was only through the incorporation of the professional body into the infrastructure of the state and through the creation of a unified framework of practice on a national level that architecture became an Ideological State Apparatus (in the fullness of the Althusserian sense). While the locus of professional authority formed by the Union of Romanian architects, the Ion Mincu University, and *Arhitectura*

magazine had emerged prior to the communist takeover, it was further strengthened by the addition of a political dimension.

Architects occupying high-ranking positions in all three professional bodies also integrated into the top tiers of ministries and committees, giving the profession a unified voice in the formulation of policies affecting praxis, particularly by amending the translation of political direction into the concrete laws, norms, and standards required in construction. Gradually, the same top-ranking architects also secured memberships in international professional organisations, effectively opening local practice to influence and editorship from abroad (sourced from various political and economic systems).

On the level of everyday design practice, architects also deployed a wide range of tactics, from the performative observance of ideological requirements (voided of meaning through association with a wide stylistic range) to pursuing specialisms in areas of design whose technical (industry) or contextual (restoration) specifics allowed for innovative, case-by-case solutions. *Arhitectura* magazine had a crucial role in the creation and dissemination of these tactics. One of the most salient characteristics of *Arhitectura* after the 1950s was the degree of openness, questioning, and tumultuous exchange of ideas on the nature and practice of architecture, re-routed through the external perspectives of architecture discourse from abroad, and inter-disciplinary dialogue. Although shaped through disparate articles, opinion pieces, and reviews of books or built output, the themes of reflection set up for the Romanian professional audience hinged on the re-examination, from a critical sociological perspective, of

architecture users as individuals and social groups with non-static needs, evolving according to socio-cultural dynamics at paradoxical odds with state planning and provisions. By publishing the proceedings of international conferences with Romanian participation, *Arhitectura* showcased the refreshing awareness of architects from both socialist and capitalist systems, in an age of political and professional certainty regarding the needs of 'the masses', of just how far behind recent societal transformations architecture and urbanism had fallen.

For Romanian architects in particular, the permeating sentiment was one of professional kinship, coming together with peers from a variety of political systems (including the 'paradise lost' of liberal practice) to share experiences and thoughts on a common problematic, dispelling some of the isolation and disillusionment contributing to the apathy of nationalised architecture practice. Of even more consequence for the understanding of the power of the profession under communism, was the unexplored ethical dimension of the practice, especially in the support of the developing nations of Africa and the Middle East. Although communist Romanian architecture is generally considered by the contemporary public and professionals alike to be of negligible importance, I would argue that its little documented, and even less celebrated ethical dimension, apparent behind Romanian interventions abroad, constitute a genuine professional achievement, derived not from celebrated works of theory or architecture, but from the sustained, conscientious effort put into the creation of specialist guides, the provision of expertise, and formulation of financial aid programmes mostly focused on housing, urbanism, and regional development.

CHAPTER 7. CONCLUSION.

The incapacity of accounting for, of leaving traces and documents, of drawing up archives, of preserving and publicly displaying the names of Romanian architects acquires in itself a mythical scope. There is no history of architecture, just small garrulous, armchair little stories, memories never put down on paper, an exuberant flow of words proper to Romanian culture in general, anyway of the traditional one that keeps the Romanian architect in mystical awe. [...] the Romanian architecton, freshly escaped from communism, camouflages his lack of culture – both professional and general – by celebrating "the making", direct, physical action, to the detriment of contemplative "conception"; he praises the drawing and vituperates against writing/reading; he retells reminiscent stories over a cup of coffee and abhors institutionalized criticism, specially when it fails to mention him at all.⁸⁷⁸

Augustin Ioan

[...] the research so far only strengthens my opinion that in Romania the communist project in concrete can be translated into the history of a trauma for the profession – even if there were some outstanding achievements (which, undeniably, exist). Perhaps this is too emotional a reading, but what I can see in our present architectural production makes me believe that it was indeed trauma and we still endure its consequences. [...] But I do believe that, if we lucidly face up to the trauma, it will ultimately help us to evaluate the architecture of this period and ourselves from a different perspective: with the eye of normality looking upon abnormality.⁸⁷⁹

Ana Maria Zahariade

⁸⁷⁸ Augustin Ioan, *Modern Architecture and The Totalitarian Project: a Romanian Case Study*, trans. by Alina Cârâc (Bucharest: Institutul Cultura Român, 2009), pp. 9-10.

⁸⁷⁹ Ana Maria Zahariade, *Arhitectura în proiectul comunist. România 1944-1989* [Architecture in the communist project. Romania 1944-1989], trans. by Ana Maria Zahariade with Diana Lupu, ed. by Alistair Ian Blyth, and Eugenia Petre (Bucharest: Simetria, 2011), p. 144.

The quotes above are fundamental in understanding the hold still exercised by the collective experience of communist architecture in Romania on the evolution of contemporary praxis. They also unpack, through the perspective of two eminent scholars in this field of research, the most prevalent stances among Romanian architects in relation to the recent past: vehement disownment, obfuscating misinformation, and voluntary amnesia. While Ioan's assessment shares, perhaps intentionally, the same loquacious, recriminatory style of address as that reproached to the architecture milieu at large, Zahariade's empathetic analysis highlights the causes of the fractured relationship between contemporary praxis and its recent past. For younger generations of architects – even mine, removed by almost two decades from those turbulent times – these quotes also convey the disquieting rootlessness and displacement that marked our professional coming of age. The collective trauma discussed by Zahariade has refracted, through the dynamics of an architecture education still driven by mentorship (both academic and in social circles), onto young architects who experienced a double displacement during formative stages of our lives. These points of displacement are represented by the fracture of 1989 and a childhood split between fundamentally different systemic logics,⁸⁸⁰ and the contrast between the professional dismissal of the communist urban landscape, and its ubiquity as the setting of everyday life.

⁸⁸⁰ Romania's pavilion for the 2018 Venice Biennale, *Mnemonics*, focused on the experience of a childhood hemmed in by enclaves of high-rise buildings erected during the communist period, and the richness of the imaginary worlds fostered by the uniformity of this urban landscape.

<<http://www.labiennale.org/en/architecture/2018/national-participations/romania>>

Moving on to studio practice after graduation, the perceived tensions and contradictions between the appearance of Western-centric, capitalist reform and the obscured endurance of networks and patterns of personal and institutional influence⁸⁸¹ compounded this feeling of displacement. In my case, it has also fed into my motivation for pursuing this research subject. By contributing to a budding field of research (for Romanian architecture, at least) and working towards, as Zahariade has suggested, an expanded understanding of the recent past conducive to the resolution of present trauma, I also embarked on a journey of professional (and personal) place-finding.

The focus of this thesis has therefore fallen on what I have called the *interstitial spaces* of communist Romanian architecture, those zones of discourse and praxis where the mutual conditioning between the profession, the political centre, and other social factors can be discerned with better clarity. Throughout this thesis, I have discussed the acuity with which architects recognised, exploited, and even worked to further the politicised nature of architecture as a field of cultural production, doubly bound by the requirements of ideological representation and the logic of socialist economic planning. Since the 1989 re-liberalisation of architecture,⁸⁸² contemporary Romanian architecture has recused itself from the political dimension of the country's post-socialist transition. This withdrawal, while very much in line with the now dated dissociation of intellectuals in the West from political matters, has been illusory, only

⁸⁸¹ Such as commission attribution, the undisclosed factors of decision playing a role on the formulation of policies, the discretionary rapport between client (money) and architect, etc.

⁸⁸² I use this term only for contrast with the communist period when architecture was a nationalised professional system, since architecture praxis in a capitalist logic is still subject to binding, but through different mechanisms.

serving to mask the transference of socio-political dynamics shaped during communism onto liberal institutional networks and processes. During that withdrawal period, the profession was stripped of a significant source of decisional power as well as the social accountability thereby derived. In an almost mirror image of interbellum architecture, the profession's concern is yet again drawn to the problematic of resistance to the homogenising sweep of globalism through a contemporary architectural reformulation of local identity, as well as the pursuit of an autonomy of practice geared more towards individual creative freedom, rather than collective, programmatic agency.



Figure sections (middle, bottom) have been removed due to Copyright restrictions

Fig. 90. Top: Romania's pavilion at the 2015 Milan Expo, revisiting the contrast between vernacular archetypes and modern technology that has been at the core of the country's international representation since the 1930s. Middle: Germany's pavilion abstractly references agricultural landscapes under the motto 'Fields of ideas', also playing on the visual and semantic richness of 'germination'. Bottom: Poland's pavilion can be read as both a critique of modern consumerism, and a celebration of content over form.

As illustrated by the concept of Romania's pavilion at the 2015 Milan Expo (Fig. 90), the theme of local specificity is still polarised aesthetically, rather than conceptually, between the traditional vernacular and modernisation – this time, driven by the digital revolution. This is a cluster of little documented, overlapping effects: the aesthetic pursuit of specificity; the glorification of architecture's instrumentalism, of the culture of instinctive, inspired *making*; the reticence towards self-reflexivity through critical discourse (seen as the remit of those ill-suited to *making*, and further distrusted through association with the rhetorical effluence of the communist era); and the scission from the communist period (anomalous, but also deeply formative). Together, they exercise a detrimental influence on the resolution of recent professional trauma, and the progression of praxis towards the syncretism that Zahariade considers inherent to its evolution and originality.⁸⁸³

In the Literature Review of this thesis, I have touched on the similarities between the contemporary architecture field in Romania and its monolithically idealised counterpart, Western architecture culture, in terms of opportunities for growth lost to systemic imbalances and the fragmentation of discursive sensibilities stemming from the post-modern condition. After examining, throughout the chapters of this thesis, the many pathways and modes of practice geared towards social change that Romanian architects developed within the framework of the communist regime, I return to Dutton's concept of architecture as critical pedagogy, in hopes of forging even deeper links between the lessons of the recent past and this thesis' contribution

⁸⁸³ Ana Maria Zahariade *Simptome de tranziție. Eseuri de arhitectură* [Symptoms of transition. Architecture essays] (Bucharest: Editura Fundației Arhitext Design, 2009), pp. 71-72.

to the shaping of future practice. For Dutton and Hurst Mann, although the grand narratives of the modernist social project (and, I would add, its varied socialist iterations), were crippled by the ambition to universalise lived experience,⁸⁸⁴ the core idea of cohesive social action against the levelling forces of the status quo merits rekindling, especially in light of global capitalism's new forms of subjection. With agency at its core, writes Dutton, architecture as critical pedagogy 'frames the world, structures experience, shapes consciousness and identity', and combines the strategic critique of social practices with the tactical organisation of the users' knowledge and lived experiences towards greater social change.⁸⁸⁵ The findings of this thesis align with one of the prerequisites of initiating a shift towards a critical pedagogy of architecture in Romania: to lean on Dutton's words, 'recovering subjugated knowledges and deconstructing dominant histories in order to construct new identities' is the first step towards conceiving an architecture of social difference.⁸⁸⁶

Therefore, the research strategy I have developed for this investigation has focused on analytical methods designed to counteract the effects discussed above, as well as the biases of the architectural milieu towards their existence or consequences. In this regard, the methodology itself carries elements of originality in the study of communist Romanian architecture. Throughout the content chapters, the main line of argument

⁸⁸⁴ *Reconstructing Architecture: Critical Discourses and Social Practices*, ed. by Thomas A. Dutton and Lian Hurst Mann (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), pp. 19-23.

⁸⁸⁵ Thomas A. Dutton, 'The Hidden Curriculum and the Design Studio: Toward a Critical Studio Pedagogy', in *Voices in Architectural Education: Cultural Politics and Pedagogy*, ed. by Thomas A. Dutton (New York: Bergin & Garvey, 1991), pp. 174-79.

⁸⁸⁶ Dutton, 'The Hidden Curriculum and the Design Studio: Toward a Critical Studio Pedagogy', p. 176.

has been conducted from two converging vantage points – the overarching perspective of the ontology of socialism and its systemic processes, and the small-scale level of everyday architecture practice reflected in the professional microcosm of *Arhitectura*. With Verdery, my approach to this field of cultural production has highlighted architecture as one of the ‘systems of action within which meanings are invoked, brought into confrontation, altered, and reproduced’,⁸⁸⁷ rather than an assessment of the legitimacy and level of the ‘values’ ascribed to the output of praxis. As I have discussed in Chapter 6, the propensity of the Romanian intelligentsia to dispute the ‘truth’ level and formulation of social values and categories, rather than the systemic processes which produce them, has been ably speculated by the communist regime, to the point of becoming seamlessly embedded in the discursive mechanisms internal to the field of architecture, not only its dialogue with the political centre. Moreover, I have approached the jigsaw archive of *Arhitectura* magazine not as an inert medium, merely reflective (with considerable distortion) of praxis under communism, but as a field of action with subtle, yet pervasive transformative power, fluctuating in the permeability of its discursive boundaries and the level of criticality deployed within its pages.

By adapting the method of architecture journal analysis developed by Greig C. Crysler to socialist *Arhitectura*,⁸⁸⁸ this thesis proposes a new perspective on the agency of

⁸⁸⁷ Katherine Verdery, *National Ideology Under Socialism. Identity and Cultural Politics in Ceaușescu's Romania* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), p. 302.

⁸⁸⁸ *Arhitectura* is seen here as an institutionalised space for writing and a community of thought and practice affecting the in-field flow of discourse, the constitution of professional identity, and also the politics and concrete practices of socialist construction.

similar worlds of specialised knowledge framed within coercive political systems. Moreover, my choice to develop this *Arhitectura*-centric research project in English (and in an academic environment animated by different perspectives and methodologies than that of my formative years as an architect) adds to the original contribution of my thesis to the research field by opening it up, through translations and mapping of clusters of themed content, to non-Romanian researchers. With this goal of facilitating future research on the topic from a variety of academic fields and methodological approaches, I have also assembled a translated list of themed *Arhitectura* issues (Appendix 3), designed to aid thematic cross-sections through the magazine's 50 years of content published under communism.

7.1. Thesis findings

The main analysis of this thesis unfolds through a three-layer theoretical lens, with each layer underpinning one of the content chapters. The first layer, explored in Chapter 4, examines the realignment of ideological processes between the architecture field and the political centre in the new systemic logic of socialism, with the overarching goal of accruing legitimacy through cultural hegemony. In Chapter 5, the intersecting networks of political and professional authority shaped by the restructuring of intellectual activity in socialist Romania are investigated in greater detail through the scope of the socio-cultural dynamics animating the field of architecture, its embedding within the infrastructure of the state, and its reconnection

with the world of international architecture. By focusing on defining and mapping exchanges of power between architecture and the state, Chapter 6 builds on the insights of the previous content chapters to better highlight the mutual constitution of strategies, tactics, and practices developed by both social spheres, as well as the spaces of praxis where these dynamics can best be discerned and analysed.

Before moving on to an overview of the findings of this research project, I find it necessary to discuss another counterpoint of opinion among scholars on the subject: the absence of *a history* of communist Romanian architecture. In the opening quote of this chapter, Augustin Ioan deplored the lack of concerted effort towards assembling such a history – singular. But while I have also been prompted into this line of research by its absence, I have come, towards the end of the thesis writing process, to the realisation that a history – in the singular – is not only unfeasible, given the morass of recollection and opinion on the subject, but perhaps also misguided. In the Literature Review, I have discussed the predilection of critical discourse in Romanian architecture history towards retrospective unity and grand, deterministic narratives.

There is no disputing the fact that communist architecture is still inexcusably absent from university courses (which expedite it in one or two lectures, focused on a handful of ‘valuable’, almost anomalous buildings produced during the time) and current scholarship, and that its built output is still regarded by practitioners as a worst-case-scenario context for contemporary projects. Even Zahariade, whose research has spearheaded the recent academic drive towards the study of Romania’s recent

architecture past, also providing a vital chronological framework of the major systemic changes in the political and professional realm as a starting point for all new research on the topic, does not hesitate to point out the partial (and even subjective, due to aforementioned professional trauma) nature of her critical perspective.⁸⁸⁹ The findings below offer my own critical reading of the subject, contributing to a nascent corpus of *histories* of Romanian architecture during communism. In due time, however, this multi-voiced collection of histories will reveal narrative strands yet undetected.

In Chapter 4, I have argued for the reconsideration of Socialist Realism as a period of crucial realignment of the relationship between the architecture system and the political centre, importance obscured by the negligible quantity and quality of the actual built output. It was during this period that the pre-war patterns of ideological contention for cultural and professional authority faced the fundamentally alien (for Romania) logics of socialism, in an exercise that redefined the terrain and rules of engagement for hegemonic and counter-hegemonic practices. My findings suggest that the limited hold of Socialist Realism on the output of local practice was also compounded by the fundamental contradiction of Marxism-Leninism's mobilisation of national discourse at a time of Stalinist repression of the various modes of cultural expression animating this legitimising arena of discourse.

In addition, *Arhitectura* magazine was revealed to have had a subtle hand to play in the theoretical destabilisation of Socialist Realism through the partial, culturally unfiltered translation of the method for the Romanian professional audience.

⁸⁸⁹ Zahariade, *Arhitectura în proiectul comunist*, pp. 6-11, 144.

Moreover, the periodical's emergent criticality and instrumental agency begin taking shape around this time. By promoting a variety of tactics – such as testing the boundaries of permissible practice through ideological debate; deploying the scientism of socialist ideology against the aesthetic strictures of a Socialist Realism of narrow, late-Stalinist derivation; and diluting the severity of ideological dictum through a proliferation of (often contradictory) formal interpretations – *Arhitectura* helped shape the path of what I would call soft-resistance, or subversive compliance. In a period when overt ideological contention was strictly out of bounds without severe personal risk, the profession resorted to the subtle alteration of the politically-mandated direction of praxis at the point of design.

Chapter 5 picks up the narrative thread of national identity and the negotiation of local architectural specificity – an arena of discursive contention where the foreign logics of Marxism-Leninism and, in architecture, Socialist Realism, have been eroded and disrupted in favour of Romania's emergent national communism and vernacular modernism. I have opted to reflect on the shifting patterns of socio-cultural dynamics between the Party and the profession through the scope of national identity due to the endemic persistence of the latter at the core of Romanian culture, politicking, and self-definition of the intellectual strata across most fields of activity. Moreover, this scope allowed for yet another original perspective of the evolution of communist architecture in Romania: that of its journey of self-discovery through meetings with cultural and architectural *otherness* from the developing South, the USSR, and the capitalist West.

Examining the debates on architectural specificity hosted by *Arhitectura* has revealed an unexpectedly nuanced permeability to concepts and methodologies from outside the discipline of architecture, as well as the boundaries of Romanian culture. From this perspective, the Romanian search for specificity shares a commonality of thought and practice with other international architecture movements focused on the critical adaptation of modern architecture to local cultural parameters. In this context, the profession made strategic use of the legitimising potential of national specificity and the deceptively traditionalist appearance of its aesthetic formulation to introduce modernising shifts in the direction of praxis without the need to dispute them politically.

Although by no means an exhaustive list, some of the shifts discussed in Chapter 5 through case studies drawn from *Arhitectura* focused on greater social relevance and accountability through the return of sociology, psychology and urban geography at the heart of design; increased professional agency through the increased participation of Romanian architects in international discourse, itself used as an external editorial voice in counterpoint to the internal, political direction; and the recovery of regional specificity in an effort to diversify the limited range of prefabricated construction.

Despite the subsequent hijacking by the state of the profession's plurivalent take on architectural specificity, the process of negotiating its parameters did nevertheless strengthen the networks of professional authority, as well as expand the range of tactics used in the architectural adaptation of political directives. For example, although initially staged for the official dissemination of political directives for praxis

through speeches by high-ranking Party members, the national conferences of the Union of Romanian Architects were gradually transformed into a mechanism for the translation (and subtle amendment) of these directives through the unified voice of the profession (the report given in response by the URA committee). Moreover, *Arhitectura's* print format allowed for the juxtaposition of a variety of individual professional voices to enter this dialogue with the political sphere, often from contentious positions.⁸⁹⁰

In Chapter 6, the findings and insights discussed above also contribute to an overarching analysis of the pathways and mechanisms of exchanges of power between the milieu of architecture and the political sphere. Through the nationalisation and subordination of the architecture system to the state, the political centre set in place not only a framework of legal and institutional coercion, but also, paradoxically, the means for their subversion, by effectively transforming architecture into an Ideological State Apparatus tasked with the normalisation (but also prone, through the individual practices of its members, to the adulteration) of dominant ideologies. The profession's nexus of professional authority, shaped during the pre-war period between the Union of Romanian Architects, the Ion Mincu University, and *Arhitectura* magazine, gradually expanded to include political positions with decisional power. As a result, architects were better able to influence the direction of the policies affecting praxis (up to the 1980s, when Ceaușescu's architectural whims supplanted

⁸⁹⁰ For an example of this particular dynamic between political instruction and its nuancing through multi-voiced professional language, see the political prompt, response of the URA, and individual addresses on the topic of specificity in Romanian architecture, given at the 3rd National Architecture Conference of the URA, in *Arhitectura* 2 (1971), pp. 3-41.

nearly all decisional forums), as well as the translation of political directive into the professionally-coded language of building codes and regulations.

On the level of everyday design practice, political dictum was further diluted through an increasing variety of tactics, showcased (and sometimes, even created) in the pages of *Arhitectura*, such as the performative dilution of ideological meaning through an exuberance of formal interpretations,⁸⁹¹ or the pursuit of highly specialised areas of practice incompatible with the rigors of regime representation.⁸⁹² Perhaps most important, however, for a definition of the power of the profession as a field of transformative action, was the ethical dimension of the sustained provision of Romanian expertise abroad (concentrated in Africa and the Middle East), demonstrating both cultural sensibility to local patterns of habitation, and an unprecedented level of social engagement. Conversely, the power of the state was revealed at its most effective not via the exercise of coercive means of control, but by eliciting the compliance of the architectural milieu through measures bearing illusory similarity to discursive trends in Western architecture, and by maintaining highly competitive zones of creative practice that helped dissipate the profession's potential for ideological contention aimed at structural reform. Finally, the uncontrolled proliferation of the state's bureaucratic structure, the restrictions of planned economy, the periodical redistribution of decisional power over the course of architecture among

⁸⁹¹ For example, the wide array of architectural idioms (neo-classical, neo-Romanian, Brâncovenesc, Moldavian gothic, etc.) proposed as local anchors to Socialist Realism, often presented as interchangeable façade variations for the same spatial and functional schemes.

⁸⁹² Discussed throughout the thesis through the practice of Ion Mircea Enescu, architect specialising in sports venues and industrial design, with a strong focus on structural innovation.

ministries and commissions, and the unpredictable encroachment of the prerogative state cluster onto certain sectors of praxis regulated by the normative state, also worked against the profession's bid for increased autonomy.

7.2. Implications for contemporary praxis

The findings outlined above not only articulate an original perspective of Romanian architecture as a politicised field of cultural production during communism, but also have significant implications for the contemporary practice of architecture, which merit further reflection as potential direction for self-reflective research. The locus of professional power established prior to the change in regime, and strengthened through the nationalisation of the profession, continues to uphold hierarchies of professional authority and retrospectively-assigned architecture value. Despite more recent schisms that saw the constitution of the Order of Romanian Architects, in an operational (or, perhaps, programmatic) counterpoint to the Union of Romanian Architects, and the creation of *Zeppelin* magazine as a discursive contender to *Arhitectura's* more conservative critical direction and embeddedness in the profession's cluster of authority, the field of architecture is slow to formulate and accept reform. Its withdrawal from political action and inefficiency in stimulating and supporting the growth of cognizant publics also impedes the efficiency of architecture as a catalyst of positive social change through the formulation of policies for the built environment, bridging the gap between the political sphere and diverse social groups through the targeted application of specialist knowledge.

The effect of the patterns discussed above can also be detected in the realms of architecture education and everyday practice. Through its foundation as a Beaux-Arts school, politicisation during the early stages of communism, and subsequent reinvention, towards the end of the communist period, as a utopian space of creative freedom and alternative discourse, the Ion Mincu University of Architecture and Urbanism has also been affected, in terms of reluctance towards systemic reform, by its positioning at the core of the profession's nexus of authority. The pervasiveness of dated pedagogical methods and models counteracts the superficial openness pursued by the school through affiliation with international bodies of professional authority, such as the RIBA.⁸⁹³ As Zahariade has already pointed out, the mentality of the profession under communism was significantly shaped by the pre-war ideals and ethos of architecture as a *guild* of free-thinking, artistic and cultural innovators.⁸⁹⁴ Following this pattern of mentality transference across generations of architects training at Ion Mincu, the current corpus of graduates (myself included) has been shaped professionally by staff affected by the experience of communism in a variety of ways scarcely spoken of, let alone researched systematically.

Where practice is concerned, the imbalance between its instrumental and discursive dimensions is still to recover from the detrimental association of architectural critique

⁸⁹³ In my research through the material found in the archives of the university, I have come across detailed curricula from the 1960s through the 1980s, assigning essentially the same major projects types, in the same succession, for the progression between years 3 and 5 of study.

⁸⁹⁴ Ana Maria Zahariade, 'The drawing board *au féminin*. Women architects in Communist Romania', in *Ideological Equals. Women Architects in Socialist Europe 1945-1989*, ed. by Mary Pepchinski and Mariann Simon (New York: Routledge, 2017), pp. 79-80.

with ideological demagoguery. The mistrust of the written word and avoidance of self-reflection, perhaps subconsciously promoted by the exaltation of *making* in the current capitalist logic, robs the profession of the potential for growth unlocked by critical self-analysis. For instance, the celebration of the long-awaited freedom of architectural self-expression and autonomous practice revived by the 1989 collapse of the regime bears striking similarity to the mechanism of refuge from political obligation and ideological meaning into the exuberance of form during Socialist Realism, but without the deliberately political gesture of subversion entailed by the latter.

From this perspective, I would argue that the adaptive tactics developed by the profession in response to the communist regime's mode of symbolic-ideological control have endured, unquestioned, throughout Romania's post-socialist transition. As Verdery notes, this same mode of control is also responsible for the unchecked persistence of morality- and value-centric cultural issues,⁸⁹⁵ supplanting the coercive logic of socialism for the (differently and more subtly) coercive one of capitalist gain. Finally, the positioning of contemporary Romanian architecture at the intersection of contending relationships of dependence – in both the geo-political sense of globalism, and that of the profession's interaction with the past logic of socialism and current logic of capitalist democracy – calls for long overdue academic consideration. If it is to gain traction and succeed in reorienting the practice of architecture towards

⁸⁹⁵ Verdery, *National Ideology Under Socialism*, p. 307.

instrumental criticality, this academic reconsideration would be best served to reintroduce an explicit political dimension into its social project. After all,

*to make architecture is to construct knowledge, to build a vision. To make architecture is to map the world in some way, to intervene, to signify: it is a political act.*⁸⁹⁶

7.3. Further research

While working on this research project, the quantitative and qualitative richness of *Arhitectura's* contents has often suggested captivating offshoots of the main narrative threads pursued in this thesis. I have already begun investigating four of these sub-narratives through standalone, peer-reviewed published papers,⁸⁹⁷ and will revisit them again for more in-depth studies. In 'Architecture competitions – a space for political contention. Socialist Romania, 1950–1956',⁸⁹⁸ I have examined the pedagogical role of early socialist architecture competitions in Romania, their unexpectedly effective re-routing as professional critiques of the field's nationalised framework, as well as their corrosive effect on the discourse of Socialist Realism. This investigation tied in with my study of *Arhitectura's* promotion campaign for Socialist Realism: 'Star-

⁸⁹⁶ *Reconstructing Architecture: Critical Discourses and Social Practices*, ed. by Thomas A. Dutton and Lian Hurst Mann (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), p. 1.

⁸⁹⁷ Attached at the end of this thesis.

⁸⁹⁸ Ioana C. Popovici 'Architecture competitions – a space for political contention. Socialist Romania, 1950–1956', *Journal of Architecture and Urbanism*, 38:1 (2014), pp. 24–38. <<https://doi.org/10.3846/20297955.2014.891561>> [accessed 8 August 2018]

Topped Spires and Cardboard Heroes. Soviet Socialist Realism in *Arhitectura R.P.R.*'⁸⁹⁹

Although partially discussed in Chapter 4, the paper also touches on the artificial shaping of a genealogy of socialist Romanian architecture (modelled after the Soviet gallery of retrospectively-claimed architecture precedents), with significant effects on the re-introduction of national discourse to architecture praxis following de-Stalinisation.

Focusing on the last two decades of the communist period, ' "... the city as a part of nature, and concrete as a kind of earth". Japanese Architecture Meets 1960s-1980s Romanian Modernism'⁹⁰⁰ looked into the conceptual and formal influences of modern Japanese architecture on the evolution of its Romanian counterpart through the lens of the common pursuit of national specificity. There is a scarcity of study on this topic to date, as well as on the potentially formative meetings between Romanian architecture and other architecture cultures from abroad. Although the prevalent perception in current scholarship is that these meetings and influences took place on the superficial level of formal mimicry,⁹⁰¹ I would argue that, under the initial mimicry of form, there developed a subtle transference of thought and method.

⁸⁹⁹ Ioana C. Popovici, 'Star-Topped Spires and Cardboard Heroes. Soviet Socialist Realism in *Arhitectura R.P.R.*', *studies in History & Theory of Architecture*, 1 (2013), pp. 60–77.
<https://sita.uauim.ro/f/sita/art/4_sITA_Popovici.pdf/> [accessed 8 August 2018]

⁹⁰⁰ Ioana C. Popovici, ' "... the city as a part of nature, and concrete as a kind of earth". Japanese Architecture Meets 1960s-1980s Romanian Modernism', *studies in History & Theory of Architecture*, 2 (2014), pp. 116–39.
<https://sita.uauim.ro/f/sita/art/06_Popovici.pdf> [accessed 8 August 2018]

⁹⁰¹ For details, see Zahariade, *Arhitectura în proiectul comunist*, p. 144, and Ioan, *Modern Architecture and the Totalitarian Project*, pp. 137-41.

Chapter 5 of this thesis and the paper summarised above are merely starting points in tracing the extent of communist Romanian architecture's openness to, and effect on, different architecture cultures. The constitution of a corpus of collected architecture memory and the hierarchies of value thereby derived represents yet another research direction that emerged during my studies. While I have touched upon this in Chapter 5, as well as in a standalone paper,⁹⁰² the mechanisms through which the writing, re-writing, and erasure of the recent architecture past feeds into the articulation of architectural identity in the present (supporting dominant hierarchies and logics, which prevented the emergence of alternatives) calls for further investigation from a self-critical perspective. One other direction of research that I hope to pursue in the future is the articulation of critiques regarding the general direction of praxis during communism that took alternative forms to those discussed in this thesis. Caricature, film, theatre, music, literature – Romanian architects were often active in several fields of cultural production, where they could articulate professional critique rendered impossible through censorship in their main field of activity.⁹⁰³

⁹⁰² Ioana C. Popovici, 'Two Churches and A Hat: The National Bucharest Theatre or the Mythology of Post-War Romanian Architecture', *PARSE Journal*, 3 (2017), pp. 109-28.

⁹⁰³ Ioana C. Popovici, 'Communist Romanian architecture. *Des critiques autres: song, comedy, caricature*' (unpublished article, University of Plymouth, 2017). The initial sketch of the article can be found in the Current Research Sketches section, p. 607.

7.4. Research limitations

I am however duly aware that my critical reading of the profession under communism is carried predominantly from a Bucharest-centric perspective. This is a limitation of this field of study difficult to circumvent, due to the historical anchorage of praxis and the centre of political authority in Romania's capital. I have tried however to highlight regional areas of practice (such as the Timișoara Polytechnic) where the polyphony of professional voices has much to reveal about the effect of the Party's homogenisation policies, and their local mediation through alternative modes of practice. Likewise, the projects and consultancy activity of Romanian architects abroad merits further consideration, especially from a contemporary perspective of the long-term use, performance from a socio-cultural point of view, and subsequent physical transformations of built work to meet the shifting parameters of the quotidian. Along similar lines, the models of professional practice and pedagogical structures developed, in partnership, by Romanian professionals and experts local to the African and Middle Eastern countries that enlisted Romanian consultancy could also form the subject of an in-depth study.

Finally, a direction of research that I have not approached in this thesis, but which has constantly weighed on my mind throughout my investigation of *Arhitectura's* contents is the activity of women architects during the communist period. Although the instatement of communism in Romania has had an overall positive effect on equalising the imbalance of genders across the spectrum of physical and mental work, the role

of women in Romanian communist society was defined by the contending influences of a traditionalist, patriarchal society underpinning the dynamics of interpersonal relationships, and socialism's progressive stance on the empowerment of women through access to (and advancement in) a variety of careers. Katherine Verdery has already delved into the gender dynamics at play in the shaping of discourse on the nation,⁹⁰⁴ pointing out that, at least in Romanian socialism, women's workplace responsibilities were a supplemental load to the unmodified requirements of domestic and emotional labour. Even in intellectual circles, this dynamic was only slightly attenuated, yet at the same time, compounded by systemic professional subordination.

Despite making up half of the number of architects active in Romania during the communist period, the professional voices dominating *Arhitectura's* critical space, the competitive niches of high-profile design, and institutional hierarchies were almost exclusively male – an issue echoed globally across architecture cultures. As illustrated in the image below (Fig. 91) of Cezar Lăzărescu and his wife (herself an architect specialising in interior design) women architects were predominantly represented as attentive collaborators to the pioneering initiatives of their male colleagues: a self-effacing (or, rather, endemically effaced?) presence at the routine level of design work.

⁹⁰⁴ Katherine Verdery, *What Was Socialism, and What Comes Next?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), pp. 61-82.



Fig. 91. Cezar Lăzărescu and his wife, Ileana Lăzărescu.

The voices of women architects emerging from *Arhitectura* during the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s – for example, Sanda Voiculescu, in the realm of historical studies, or Doina Cristea in the field of urbanism, along with the visible presence of women as project authors and coordinators in their own right – call for further academic enquiry, particularly in juxtaposition with their pervasive absence from major forums of political and professional authority.⁹⁰⁵ Ana Maria Zahariade has already begun research into the subject,⁹⁰⁶ offering a reading of women architects as empowered equals to men in the profession, despite the demonstrable lack of concerted feminist action on behalf of the architectural milieu, or the socialist system. However, the discrepancy she notes between the prevalence of women, in equal

⁹⁰⁵ It is also significant to note that, even today, the equal proportion of men and women in academic positions (lecturer and above) at IMUAU diminishes in direct correlation with the year of study they teach, reaching 5:1 in favour of men for years 4-6. Disciplines like landscape design are predominantly run by women academics, while technical disciplines, urbanism, and theoretical studies present the most consistently even splits between genders.

⁹⁰⁶ Ana Maria Zahariade, 'The drawing board *au féminin*. Women architects in Communist Romania', in *Ideological Equals. Women Architects in Socialist Europe 1945-1989*, ed. by Mary Pepchinski and Mariann Simon (New York: Routledge, 2017), pp. 78-91.

proportion to men, at the top of academic performance during university, and their significantly reduced presence as projects leaders or critical voices in *Arhitectura* certainly calls for further study, perhaps through the collection of a variety of oral histories.

7.5. Concluding remarks.

The overarching aim of this research project was to expand current knowledge on the politicised dimension of Romanian architecture as a field of communist cultural production, with an original focus on revealing pathways and mechanisms for the negotiation of power between the state and the profession, and their significant impact on contemporary praxis through tacit transference after the fall of the regime. With *Arhitectura* as a guiding narrative thread, this thesis has identified and traced the boundaries of interstitial spaces of praxis where the relationship between the political centre and the architecture milieu is revealed to have been mutually-constitutive, rather than exclusively oppressive.

Arhitectura was also highlighted as a subtle generator of alternative professional narratives with discernible impact on wider architecture praxis, despite its deceptive camouflage of instrumental neutrality. Together with the Union of Romanian Architects and the Ion Mincu University of Architecture and Urbanism, the magazine has been a mainstay of the profession's locus of professional authority, pre-dating the

instatement of communism, and becoming strengthened throughout the communist period through integration into the state's institutional framework.

It was from this dual positioning – as an integral part of the state apparatus tasked with normalising ideological vision through applied specialist knowledge, but also as a segment of civil society and cultural production with a solid tradition of autonomous intellectual activity – that architecture was best able to adjust political vision to the daily realities of communist practice. Outside of this primary dynamic, the field of communist Romanian architecture also entertained a far more nuanced and productive (in the conceptual, not only formal sense) relationship with other architecture cultures, with which it synchronised at strategic points in time not only in search of external editorship to counterbalance the local political drive, but also as a provider of mentorship and expertise. These points of synchronicity alternated with periods when national discourse dominated the field of ideological contention between the state and architecture – a dynamic with profoundly destabilising effects on the profession's ability to establish a productive dialogue with its user base, conducive to more socially-engaged methods of practice.

The alternative framework proposed in this thesis for examining the dual-flow of power negotiation between the spheres of political power and architecture has also helped illuminate the enduring effects of ideological processes and dynamics of practice shaped under communism, despite the 1989 change in systemic logic and recent transformations of the political and financial modes of dominance. As discussed in the sections above, these patterns of interaction are detrimental to the profession's

emerging sense of self-criticality. These effects include, but are not limited to: architecture's withdrawal from overt political action following the collapse of communism; disparity between the instrumental and discursive dimensions of praxis; and the undisclosed rooting of contemporary identities and hierarchies of value on the distortion or erasure of the recent past, rendered more alien with each reiteration. I am optimistic, however, that in due time, the accumulation of research narratives approaching the imbalances of contemporary praxis through a better understanding of the recent past will provide much needed clarity and criticality for a contemporary Romanian architecture striving for self-definition and social relevance in the still more alien landscape of globalisation.

APPENDIX 1

THE NATIONAL BUCHAREST THEATRE A JIGSAW ARCHIVE OF COLLECTED MEMORIES

For my investigation of the process of memory construction in communist Romanian architecture, and its impact on the formulation and dissemination of hierarchies of architectural values, I have conducted short interviews through written communication (email) with architects spanning four (educational) generations. The questionnaire they responded to was purposely structured as a short cluster of interconnected questions, encouraging the free-flow of memories, impressions, and present-day reflection on the case of the NBT.

The questionnaire responses were collected through personal email correspondence, with the exact dates indicated for each respondent in a corresponding footnote. Plymouth University ethical protocol guidelines were followed throughout, as indicated in my successful Application for Ethical Approval of Research, obtained on the 17th July 2013.

Open-ended questionnaire for the professional audience:

- Do you have any memories of the NBT in its initial iteration?
- Do you recall how it may have been perceived or discussed by architecture students and staff at the time?
- What was its significance in the context of Romanian architecture during the communist period?
- After being secreted away under the false façade for such a lengthy period, what is your current impression of the building?
- Has anything changed in your critical judgement of it, or the meanings you associate with it?

The responses to this questionnaire are arranged in the chronological order of architectural generations, starting with Professor Constantin Enache, who was involved in the second iteration of the theatre as a junior architect, and ending with Dr Miruna Stroe, whose architecture education began after the fall of the regime.

In order to compare differences in the perception of the NBT between a professional and a non-professional audience, I have also administered a similar questionnaire to two respondents from other fields of cultural activity.

Open-ended questionnaire for the non-professional audience:

Q1: Do you remember the National Bucharest Theatre in its initial, 1970s form, with the visible, wide overhang?

Q2: What was the perception of the building at that time, among your group of peers and friends?

Q3: What was the meaning of the building in the context of Bucharest's urban landscape?

Q4: What do you think of the building now that it has been restored to its initial form through the removal of the false façade built at the beginning of the 1980s?

Q5: Did anything change in your perception of the building, compared to your first impressions of the original NBT? What meanings and associations does it currently hold for you?

QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES - THE PROFESSIONAL AUDIENCE

1. Professor Dr architect Constantin Enache

'Dear Ioana, I have managed with much delay to answer your questions, not necessarily in the order you have asked them, nor in a very organised manner, but rather as memories and personal reflections from then and now, strung together.

When the project was underway, on-site works began, and when the building was opened for use, I was a student on the receiving end of rumours and legends (truths bedecked in different clothes, depending on the understanding of each storyteller). I was a student between 1967 and 1973. It was rumoured that it would be a modern building, with a strong profile of national specificity, that would call to mind Voronet monastery. The images of the project that were presented showed a fresco or mosaic covered façade under a wide concrete overhang. After we found out more about contemporary architecture, I thought it was far too similar to Le Corbusier's Ronchamp, but you know how things are around here, there are many, far too many Romanian architects who deem themselves modern, European, the instant they can replicate over here a known work of Western continental architecture. During communist times, many perceived this as a great merit, as it showed a will to imitate, to deliberately imitate occidental models. The façade was never to be finished, I am not aware that the fresco had a project in the true sense of the word, and all that was left was bare brickwork, with modest detailing only on the doorframes leading to the foyer. Seen from Magheru Boulevard, the theatre building was dominated by the far

too pronounced stage tower, closer in image to a hydroelectrical dam. The image of the building in the 1970s was that of a work yet to be finished.

It would seem that the image of the theatre was not to the liking of the Ceaușescu couple, and it is probable that this was the reason why the funds needed for the completion of the façade were not found. There followed a fire in the main stage hall, whose cause did not draw much commentary, but that prompted Ceaușescu to initiate a competition to scale up the theatre and upgrade it to a cultural centre. There was an internal competition with a few favoured architects, invited to draw up proposals for the modification of the façade. From this point on, I was much more connected to the course of events, as I had returned to the school as a teaching assistant and the professors of the Institute of Architecture "Ion Mincu", as it was called then, were directly involved in the subsequent events. After the presentation of ideas for the alteration of the façade, three versions were selected (I am not entirely certain of the exact number) for which butaphorical 1:1 models were assembled on site. Sadly, I lacked the foresight to take a picture then, as they were only in place for a few days. After the president saw them, they were immediately taken down. The chosen architect was Cezar Lăzărescu, who was the rector of the Institute of Architecture, and who was going to lead a design team from the "Carpați" Design Institute (the Romanian Communist Party's design institute).

Professor Lăzărescu was my doctoral supervisor, so he asked me to support him during this project. My role was not an important one, as my speciality was urbanism, not theatres (I drew some details for exterior finishes according to his very precise

instructions), but it still placed me at the centre of unfolding events. Ceaușescu's habit, which became a working rule, was to visit, on Saturdays, all grand-scale construction sites that he deemed important, so he came to the National Theatre almost every Saturday, and after the visit was over Professor Lăzărescu came back from the construction site to tell us what modifications were required, and how to proceed. I came to the conclusion that the modest scale of the old building was the main cause of Ceaușescu's displeasure. I remember one of the discussions we had in the studio, when the professor called for our opinion on his design of the presidential loge (as was his habit whenever he was pleased with what he had drawn up). The sketches were beautiful, the loge was generous in size, almost as big as the stage. Architects with a bit more design responsibility in this project (Dan Postelnicu, Dan Ilie, Mihai Eftenie) praised him, but at the same time said the loge was slightly too big. "Too big, you say?" came Lăzărescu's answer, "This is the only thing for which I am certain the president will never reprimand me." The initial faade had one row of monumental pillars topped by arches, which Lăzărescu was asked to double with another row. When the building was nearly finished, the president wanted it even taller, and so the third row of arches was added. The result was the faade you are also familiar with, completely lacking elegance.

(Mihai Stănescu, one of the most beloved pre-1989 caricature artists famous for his borderline dissident ironies, devoted a drawing to this event, where a drunkard asks the waiter for a foaming pint of beer, and is served one closely resembling the theatre with its two rows of arches. Our thirsty chap asks for "another round", and this time

the waiter brings him a pint with three frothy rows, just like the theatre with its third arcade.)

Faced with this reality, as everyday restrictions (on food, heating, petrol, etc.) multiplied, and as the [country's] development model started to resemble the Korean one, Ceaușescu became increasingly hated, and all of his initiatives met with disapproval. Almost subconsciously, the people rejected the image of the new theatre. This was the context in which the façade which had disappeared became idealised and transformed into a veritable myth. Professor Lăzărescu lived with the regret of failing to convince him [Ceaușescu] to transform the ensemble⁹⁰⁷ into a veritable cultural centre. The theatre hall had been enlarged, another one had been added to the underground level, the experimental hall had been bequeathed to the operetta theatre (recently demolished for works on the House of the People), exhibition spaces had been added (hard to access, and therefore rarely visited), but the space in front of the theatre and underneath had been left unutilised.

The current refurbishment of the old façade, hastily accepted by the majority of the cultural milieu, even with enthusiasm by those who have lived "the golden age" to the fullest, constitutes a requital, a gesture of final separation from the years of discretionarily-imposed bad taste. The younger generation, less affected by living in those times, have begun asking questions: whether the restoration of the old theatre was indeed the best solution, or whether this was an opportunity to develop a truly

⁹⁰⁷ The NBT, the Intercontinental Hotel, and the urban space defined between them and the intersection of Bucharest's North-South and East-West axes.

alive and dynamic cultural centre, belonging to this day and age. You can find a similar position in a short article by the editor of *Zeppelin* magazine,⁹⁰⁸ article that we'll send you along with these lines I have written. I don't think that the new voices that I mentioned will turn into a torrent, but will for now persist as murmurs, given the predominant feeling of relief that we are no longer faced daily with the ugliness of the former building.⁹⁰⁹

2. Professor Dr architect Ana Maria Zahariade

'I share your disappointment with the NBT. It's a strange case of "restoration", nullifying the chances of a possible international competition for a redefined national theatre... which, in all probability, wouldn't have happened. Belea, while theoretically the most entitled to it,⁹¹⁰ has landed a lucrative deal, but has completely forgotten the spirit of the initial project. Paradoxically, I am revolted and glad: glad that Cezar's horrendous façade is gone, but not at all happy with what I see in its place – or rather, in both their places... There is no way out of this dilemma.'⁹¹¹

⁹⁰⁸ Ștefan Ghenciulescu, 'Mari proiecte publice. Și unul mai mic, dar mai cum trebuie' [Grand public projects and a smaller but better one] *Zeppelin* 121 (February 2014), p. 15.

⁹⁰⁹ Constantin Enache (Professor, Urbanism and Landscape Design Department, Ion Mincu University of Architecture and Urbanism), email communication, 24 February, 12 March 2014 [translation mine]

⁹¹⁰ As co-author of the original project.

⁹¹¹ Ana Maria Zahariade (Professor, History & Theory of Architecture and Heritage Conservation Department, Ion Mincu University of Architecture and Urbanism), email communication, 24 February 2014 [translation mine]

3. Architect M.P.

'The NBT – original version

I will jot down some initial memories about the NBT, then revisit them after perusing some books and photos, as they more readily evoke for me impressions and perceptions I had of that space years ago. The urban presence of the building was barely noticeable, as the NBT was placed too far from the pavement, from the street, and the silhouette was awash in drab colours, despite being topped by the disproportionately massive stage tower. It did not look like a National Theatre, a unique project, or the most prominent theatrical venue in the country.

Without looking further into the subject, the excessive height of the stage tower was baffling – was it really a functional necessity, since there are theatres with more modest backstage amenities... I remember that, even back then, the discussions we had about it focused on the height, the composition, proportions, balance of volumes, etc., but I cannot recall there ever being a result or a consensus on it. Overall, critical commentary was pretty sparse, I cannot say whether this was due to the complexity of the programme, or the general atmosphere at university. Again, these impressions might have only been prevalent among my immediate circle, so I wouldn't want to generalise. Perhaps, in other architectural milieus, debates on the subject were more present and critical!

I have just looked up a photograph of Voroneţ, as I wanted to draw a comparison between the theatre's volume composition and that of the original precedent. I was

aware of this design link back then, in addition to the connection provided by the exterior mural. The picture I saw was taken right underneath the church eaves, looking up, and captures the painted walls and generous roof... the NBT's overhang almost seems like an exact volumetric copy, with only the curves inverted. Even as a student, I wondered why they would copy-interpret this precedent, or Le Corbusier's [Ronchamp chapel]. These questions must have weighed on everyone's mind, but I cannot recall an active critical dialogue between students and staff.

Thinking back to the layout of the area – the whole ensemble comprising the Hotel, underground parking and pedestrian crossings, all finished roughly in the 1970s – I only remember perceiving the Intercontinental Hotel as an architectural object, which dominated anyway through its height, but also the aesthetic consistency of the façades. The NBT was comparatively forgettable, almost invisible under its “pointy tower” and “floppy hat”, not to mention that it was finished in slapdash way.

The space preceding the theatre is also higher up than street level, and I don't know why, but this “object on a tray” effect makes the area seem even bigger, deserted, and lacking interest. Sparsely planted green spaces, a narrow driveway up to the entrance (as if approaching an airport) – these do not make for an interesting open-air urban foyer.

The NBT – modified by Lăzărescu

I thought this version was much worse, it somehow amplified that pervasive feeling of incompleteness that the building exuded. It's possible that the proportion between the

two arcades gives that impression, as if suspended in the wait of... a concluding tier? A heftier horizontal register to bind them together? Again, it all clashes with the massive proportions of the stage tower, especially the repetitive pattern of the arcades, which brings to mind those chain paper-cut decorations for Christmas trees. I wonder whether the arch straddling the corner of the building was the chance result of wrapping it in such a "garland", or whether this disconcerting effect was the result of assiduous studies.

Oftentimes I would return home from university late at night, and though I might have wanted to linger and take in the sights,⁹¹² there was nothing there to behold – nothing interesting, nothing representative... The theatre itself was not lit, except for a few weak spotlights inserted into the hollows of the "hat", dimly pointing the way to the five entrance doors. But they weren't lit on a daily basis, only during shows, so people could find the way in (if you'll pardon the sarcasm). Other than that, there was only regular street lighting, which didn't really do much for the theatre, as it was placed so remotely.⁹¹³

⁹¹² The building of the Ion Mincu University of Architecture and Urbanism is situated opposite the NBT, across Magheru Boulevard.

⁹¹³ M.P. (architect, retired) email communication, 22 February, 1 March 2014 [translation mine]

4. GROUP INTERVIEW - DISCUSSION⁹¹⁴

4.1. Architect A.V.

'I have few personal impressions of the theatre, but during my time at university (1972-1978), the general opinion was critical, controversial, although not very present in current discussion. I admit to having been influenced by these opinions, however, I have just taken on these ideas, without getting around to forming a personal opinion on the NBT outside the general dislike. Afterwards, I found the modification even less inspired.'

4.2. Architect R.M.

'The theatre was not discussed much at university, in the comments of either staff or students. I don't recall it having too noticeable a presence, however; the idea was to borrow elements from the painted churches of Bucovina. After it was modified by Lăzărescu, although the solution was worse, no open, free discussions were had either.'

⁹¹⁴ Kindly conducted and recorded on my behalf by in Bucharest by M.P., based on the open-ended questionnaire on the first page of this appendix. Discussion minutes sent via email communication 1 March 2014 [translation mine]

4.3. Architect M.B.

'I remember much more vividly what the area was like before the theatre, with stores, services, a circus, other buildings – a ground floor shop in an old building, with a continuous water-flow in the window display (as was the style in other shops at the time). Otherwise, the space was deserted and not at all representative.'

4.4. Architect C.S.

[The NBT] 'was an unsuccessful design, comments pointed out that it resembled Le Corbusier's chapel, rather than an interpretation of traditional Romanian architecture. It was also placed too far above footfall and traffic flow, it was abandoned and not animated by pedestrian routes or activities, although this was this original intent. No comments or analyses were exchanged between students and teaching staff. After its transformation via Lăzărescu's shell, it looked far worse, as the bottom tier was oversized. Almost everybody thought it looked far worse, but no comments were made due to Lăzărescu's position as rector.'

5. Associate Professor Dr architect Maria Enache

'I have only known the theatre in its second transformation, as a cultural refuge, where you could see spectacularly staged plays, open to parallel interpretations. There wasn't much discussion around the building in my time [at university] either, or about Lăzărescu. I did not enjoy that configuration, which I thought inferior, but neither do I agree with what is being done now, the disinterment and return [to the initial form]. If you think about it, this is a stage of construction that must not be altered. It's far more important that Lăptăria lui Enache, the gallery on the terrace, things that pertained to a cultural spirit cultivated by these clubs through discussions and events, all developed inside the NBT, are now lost to *tradition* and *renown*. That spirituality is now lost.'⁹¹⁵

6. Associate Lecturer Dr architect Miruna Stroe

'There have been talks in our midst regarding the NBT, I have a good friend making a documentary there (about the works). Here's what I can say:

I think it was an architectural object representative of a certain period, despite not being the most original; the supplemental façade was not an aesthetic improvement, but tearing it down seems to me a retrograde gesture. The way it looks now, with the colour choices made, it looks very sad, like a pompously inflated model with unfortunate detailing. The office area around the back [of the building] is painted in a horrendously frumpy colour, which I don't know if you've seen yet.

⁹¹⁵ Maria Enache (Associate Professor, Ion Mincu University of Architecture and Urbanism), email communication 24 February, 1 March 2014 [translation mine]

Beyond the image, I obviously ascribe to the group opinion that the disappearance of all those cultural spaces made possible by the “shell” was idiotic. And, of course, I intensely deplore the loss of “Lăptăria lui Enache” and “La Motoare”. I don’t think that the city has managed to compensate for their disappearance, although new spots have sprung up all over the place.

Sadly, this entire intervention is rudimentary (I recently saw some photos of the inside, which make it resemble a sad, provincial mall), there was no critical gesture behind this endeavour. A competition was necessary, with the theme of reinterpreting the initial image of the theatre, and not a mere update of this initial image, lacking interrogation and interpretation.⁹¹⁶

⁹¹⁶ Miruna Stroe (Associate Lecturer, History & Theory of Architecture and Heritage Conservation Department, Ion Mincu University of Architecture and Urbanism), email communication, 24 February, 4 March 2014 [translation mine]

QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES - THE NON-ARCHITECTURAL AUDIENCE

7. Journalist A.D.

'NBT – subjective recollections

In 1970s Romania, the development of the NBT – Intercontinental space came towards the end of a period when the edifices of socialism had primarily consisted of factories and industrial plants, as well as housing blocks for the new urban proletariat.

It represented an unprecedented note of modernity for those times. And, concomitantly, an affirmation of the national spirit, a reflection of an ideology which, during those years, seemed to us a breath of fresh air.

In a situation unprecedented during the years of socialism, the new National Theatre was going to share Bucharest's central area with a building (Intercontinental Hotel) that was iconic not only through its height, unprecedented in the architecture of Bucharest, but mostly through its representation of imperialist capitalism. An unconceivable juxtaposition up until then.

Romania (Ceaușescu) had just affirmed – in the Prague spring of 1968 – its singular, rebellious position among the group of socialist countries.

We, the Romanians – especially the young generation, looked upon our present and future with pride and confidence.

As construction on the NBT went ahead, one fact – itself unprecedented – began to draw our attention, puzzlement, and daily commentary: the man with the highest position in the Communist Party would periodically abandon his political responsibilities to go inspect the progression of works on the National Theatre. And not only that, but he would opine on the plans, gave orders for walls to be torn down, for spaces to be enlarged, for pillars to be erected, etc., as if in a retelling of the legend of master builder Manole, with the role of wall-crumbling hazard featuring not chance or divinity, but a simple man. His name was Nicolae Ceaușescu. The situation, without known precedent, sparked ironic, indulging, and, as time progressed, stupefied smiles on the faces of those following the events with some degree of interest. It was known that brilliant architectural and theatrical minds had collaborated on the creation of a new building comprising everything that was best and most modern for a 20th century theatre. With each new plan-altering command, with each working visit of The Comrade, with each construction period extension, the bewilderment and stupefaction of Bucharesters grew.

We would soon find out, with wounds and scars deeply tattooed into the memory of us all, and each one of us individually, that these were just the first symptoms of the destructive madness of a man self-styled – what semantic irony – Romania's ktitor.⁹¹⁷

⁹¹⁷ A.D. (journalist, retired) email communication [translation mine] 22 - 23 February 2014.

8. A.I. (ballet dancer)

Q1: Do you remember the National Bucharest Theatre in its initial, 1970s form, with the visible, wide overhang?

A1: 'Yes, I remember it in 1973, and if I'm not mistaken, that the NBT was build by academician professor architect Belea Romeo-Ştefan, and that the initial project also included a fresco, which was not realised.'

Q2: What was the perception of the building at that time, among your group of peers and friends?

A2: 'Romania went through numerous forms of adventure, including architectural. Therefore, I disliked the building because it had nothing to impress me, nothing to engage me emotionally.'

Q3: What was the meaning of the building in the context of Bucharest's urban landscape?

A3: 'A new, monumental building, but incapable of sparking emotion. A new building on an abandoned terrain.'

Q4: What do you think of the building now that it has been restored to its initial form through the removal of the false façade built at the beginning of the 1980s?

A4: 'I am glad that to see a return to the initial form of the NBT by getting rid of the false façade, because during the communist period the emphasis always fell on grandiose constructions, rather than the [cultural] use of the buildings.'

Q5: Did anything change in your perception of the building, compared to your first impressions of the original NBT? What meanings and associations does it currently hold for you?

A5: 'I don't know. But I do know that it is now a multi-functional building, as well as a part of our cultural patrimony, comparable to other spiritual values.'⁹¹⁸

⁹¹⁸ A.I. (ballet dancer, retired), interview kindly conducted on my behalf by in Bucharest by M.P., with responses sent via email communication [translation mine] 1 March 2014.

A.I. was the only questionnaire respondent who chose to adhere strictly to the structure and order of the questions, as presented in the questionnaire.

APPENDIX 2

RECOLLECTIONS OF BUCHAREST-BASED AND REGIONAL DESIGN PRACTICE

Architect M.P. – open-ended questionnaire responses⁹¹⁹

Q1. Can you recall any examples from architecture practice when you observed (or participated in) the mediation of political directives in accordance with local requirements, economic restrictions or particularities, geo-topographical conditions, etc.?

A1. 'I was a young graduate architect practising at the Reșița regional design institute (between 1978 and 1981), as a member of the Systematisation Department. The workload was intense, with short deadlines, especially given that systematisation plans were being drawn up for all cities in that county, alongside additional urban planning work for various developments.

I remember one event which today might seem absurd, but during those times was "in exact accordance with the directives of the state and the party".⁹²⁰ I was part of a team of architects, engineers, and other specialists who travelled to Bucharest (on a truck brimming with models, presentation plans and displays, and our modelling team armed with lots of supplies, in the event of damage incurred en route). This was a

⁹¹⁹ The questionnaire responses were collected through personal email correspondence on the 23rd – 24th of July, and 15th – 16th of August 2018, observing the ethical guidelines laid out in my Application for Ethical Approval of Research, obtained on the 17th July 2013. M.P. responded to the bilingual Romanian-English questionnaire in Romanian. The translation of her responses is my own.

⁹²⁰ M.P. has used quotes here to reference a phrase common in the ideological wooden language of the time.

regular event, where all regional design institutes exhibited their projects (through plans, models) in the Plenary Hall of the CPCP.⁹²¹ Before the final viewing (I can't exactly recall the level of ministerial clearance) the projects were reviewed by architects and engineers working for CPCP, who gave last-minute suggestions for modifications, so that everything would turn out well.

Each county's exhibition was headed by a geographical presentation map, which also featured cities – those with investment projects pending approval were highlighted. Caraş-Severin county has a predominantly mountainous geographical setting, so the presentation map was almost entirely rendered in shades of brown, in beautiful graphics, with cities marked by small flags, and the county's future development strategy clearly explained. A note to make here – the cities of Caraş-Severin have a perimetric distribution around the county's mountain range, which occupies most of the centre. This alone triggered urgent "corrections" by CPCP officials, who asked for the brown hues to be toned down (it was too obvious, and what if it prompted their superiors to ask questions?) and for the cities to be shifted towards the centre of the county, for a more uniform territorial repartition!

We made these changes; the team that went through the projects before the final viewing was well aware that our county was predominantly mountainous, but they were also well-versed in presenting different situations in advantageous ways,

⁹²¹ CPCP - Comitetul pentru Problemele Consiliilor Populare (The Committee for the Problems of Popular Councils) was a state organisation founded in 1973, charged with the coordination of regional development. The pronunciation of the CPCP initialism in Romanian (ce-pe-ce-pe) bears strong resemblance to the word 'onions', which prompted the humorous appellation of this state organisation as the 'Two Onions' (două cepe).

depending on what the Party officials du jour favoured, in order to avoid potentially problematic questions. In the end, these pre-viewings (and the specialists who conducted them) were helpful to those from peripheral design institutes whose investment projects hung in the balance; the advice they gave helped us “put our best foot forward” in front of Party and state institutions.’

Q2. What was your experience (as an architect practising design in a national design institute - regional, or Bucharest-based) of the process of project authorisation?

A2. ‘Again from the Reșița regional design institute, I have designed a few projects (“investment objectives”, as they were called then) for the Forestry Inspectorate of Caraș-Severin. These were in fact retreats and holiday homes up to diplomatic protocol standards of comfort, where “those from the centre”, or with important state and Party positions, would stay during their working visits. The projects themselves, however, bore titles like: double forestry lodge, or housing for pisciculture workers. But they were designed with generous proportions, materials and detailing way above the level of the programme associated with the project name – even interesting volume compositions were encouraged. Everybody knew what they actually were, but the denomination was necessary in order for the project to be included in the list of regional developments as a routine economic necessity, without the risk of raising questions.’⁹²²

⁹²² This is an instance of the ‘occult architecture’ discussed through the work of Ana Maria Zahariade in Chapter 5 of this thesis.

Q3. How did the authorisation process unfold for high-profile projects of regional importance, or that benefited from unique (as opposed to standardised) designs?

A3. 'Another memory that springs to mind is the design of systematisation solutions for Reșița's civic centre, that included a unique project (collective housing with some commercial spaces) set within the urban space delineated by the County Council and the Design Institute. The pitch of the proposal was that this project would complete and diversify the civic centre both visually and functionally – this increased the probability of authorisation, since the same building, presented for approval on its own, had been rejected on financial grounds. The urban space itself was somewhat problematic, as it included a church (listed monument) that was an integral part of the civic centre configuration. Project approvals were held in Bucharest, and the presence of the church was a constant cause of worry and concern for the design team. It was always handled very discreetly, making sure that it wouldn't have a too conspicuous urban presence in the new civic centre ensemble. The chosen solution was to hide the church behind a taller volume assigned vague socio-cultural functions, which did not secure authorisation, but served the purpose of protecting the church from incurring notice and probable demolition. The rest of the civic centre projects were approved. The church that was thus saved from demolition subsequently made the object of a collaborative relocation study between the regional design institute and the County Council: the church was moved just outside the perimeter of the civic centre, so that it would not be perceived as adding to the general play of volumes or competing with the compositional focus held by the County Council headquarters.

Engineer E. Iordăchescu led the relocation project, and the church was translated in 1985-1986. I thought this was a prime example of cooperation between central and local authorities for the preservation of a monument that held profound meaning for the people of Reșița.'

Q4. How did specialists of the built environment disciplines clarify the coded language of professional practice for a political audience with decisional power, but without much knowledge in the field?

A4. 'I remember another instance – perhaps this is minor – that really highlights the lengths to which the higher-ups of the design institutes went in order to avoid any complications resulting from potential misunderstandings during project authorisation sessions on a regional level. Senior architects in charge of various design departments or studios often attended such sessions, and made note of the types of graphic presentations that facilitated understanding, or were disliked. For instance, façade renderings with realistic shadows that, for the professional eye, gave an accurate impression of the play of volumes, were misunderstood by certain members of the approval committee; if these members were in session, we would avoid this type of presentation, opting for simpler styles. It was far more important for a project to pass... rather than garner collegial appreciation!'

Q5. How many stages of professional interpretation did the political directives issued by various architecture oversight commissions have to navigate before being implemented through design?

A5. Two crucial factors that affected the design process as well as the stages of project approval were the type of investment (size, importance) and the notion of “uniqueness” – so, one of a kind buildings or tailor-made urban planning solutions, as opposed to typified solutions that would just be adapted from a generic model. Back then, “repeatable” projects formed the vast majority of practice, based on catalogues of typified projects for all kinds of architecture programmes. As this cut down on the time allotted to design and execution (higher efficiency, etc.), it was rare that unique projects would be designed, so their necessity had to be solidly demonstrated.

From this point of view, the situation was similar in regional design institutes, as well as in Bucharest, at the Bucharest Design Institute. The County Council, or Bucharest City Hall, had an investment plan with various objectives based on the socio-economic directives transmitted from the centre; based on this plan, they would commission projects from their respective design institutes. Project tasks were first given to institute directors, who then assembled the design infrastructure needed for each project – a combination of specialist departments (architecture, engineering, economic coordination, etc.) working together within a tight deadline framework. For a commissioned project to undergo authorisation successfully, this exchange of information – from top-tier Party-direction, through regional councils, to design institute directors (always very attuned to the “vision” of political heavyweights) – was

a crucial step of professional “translation” taken before the theme even reached the actual designers.

Likewise, the reverse process was equally important. Once a draft of the project was ready, it would go through consecutive stages of approval before leaving the institute. CTE meetings (technico-economic councils) were held on the level of studios, departments, and finally, institute-wide, ensuring that the project delivered to the beneficiary for construction, or, in the case of high-profile cases, to higher decisional forums (ministries, state and party organisations, all the way up to the president of the republic), met all initial requirements.

There are a few note-worthy aspects here as well. Usually, institute directors were skilled mediators. They took part in all kinds of meetings with party officials, and became familiar enough with their expectations and preferences to facilitate the understanding of projects (for those who lacked not only the education, but also the ability to properly understand the presentation material). At the same time, the directors knew how to secure approval for correct project solutions, fielding off the majority of unreasonable demands. There were cases, however, when they returned from viewings with the political instruction of “make it look like this”. Overall, I think this was perhaps the most effective layer of professional mediation.’

Q6. What was your opinion of (or participation in) the reciprocal transformation of design trends originating from the architectural field (for instance, free-plan urbanism, certain conceptual or aesthetic movements, etc.) and those of political origin (for example, increasing the built density of cities through housing programmes after 1975, or the return to a more traditional streetscape, defined through the consistent alignment of main façades)?

A6. 'As a young architect (imbued with dreams of designing perhaps a little more than typified housing), I was assigned a project for terraced housing on sloping terrain in Băile Herculane.⁹²³ I plunged into work with aplomb, even before having a more in-depth discussion with the studio leader, and developed a project for terraced housing with one or two levels, playing on the natural slope of the terrain, and featuring ample balconies and terrace gardens. They suited the topography, and I really enjoyed coming up with the design.

But I was quickly brought back to my senses by the senior architects in charge, who asked me to give up this approach: there could be no question of me proposing unique solutions for the housing needed in this spa town, since it was more important to get the urban planning sketch approved... In the end, I designed part of the urban plan with blocks of flats in typified sections, as this was required for the whole project to get the go-ahead. (It was never built, however.) In terms of urban planning and systematisation, especially for areas of predominantly housing, architects wouldn't

⁹²³ A small spa town in Caraş-Severin county, with a long history of health tourism develop around mineral-rich hot springs.

design or create, but rather “redistribute” everything according to the norms and standards in place – a number of blocks, typified projects, following a certain density, plot streets and alleyways with set dimensions – everything identical and monotonous in cities across the country.

APPENDIX 3

ARHITECTURA MAGAZINE 1950-1989

THEMATIC INDEX

To facilitate further research on the topic of this thesis or on *Arhitectura* itself, the list below details some of the most prevalent architectural themes addressed by the magazine over the years. The first section of this appendix indexes issues explicitly dedicated to a certain theme, which prefaces the table of contents. These are listed chronologically, with the translation of the issue's title following the issue number and the title in Romanian; any necessary observations follow in parentheses. Themed *Arhitectura* issues entered regular publication from the 1960s; during the decade prior, the content matter was a generally diverse sampling from all sectors of praxis, with some issues weighted more noticeably towards certain topics - for instance, the majority of articles in 1 (1951) deal with the design and construction of Casa Scântei. In the second section, I have indexed *Arhitectura* issues starting from 1960 that contain a significant proportion of articles dedicated to a cohesive theme. Finally, the third section is structured according to theme, rather than chronological order, and reflects the distribution of alternative discursive concerns, running in parallel to the main themes of typified design. These tangential directions were of particular relevance during the late 1970s and 1980s, when censorship returned to *Arhitectura* with the banning of reporting on or discussion about works on Bucharest's civic centre.

I. *Arhitectura* issues with clearly stated themes

- 1 (1961) - Lucrari valoroase de arhitectură premiate în anul 1960
Valuable works of architecture recipient of prizes in 1960
- 2 (1961) - Sistematizarea și reconstrucția Căii Grivița- București
The systematisation and reconstruction of Calea Griviței – Bucharest
(Calea Griviței is an important urban artery in Bucharest, spanning over 5 km)
- 4-5 (1961) - Litoral 1961
Littoral 1961 (focused on the development of the Black Sea coast for tourism)
- 1 (1962) - Unități comerciale
Commercial programmes
- 2 (1962) – Urbanism
- 3 (1962) – Construcții industrial
Industrial constructions
- 4 (1962) – Construcții social – culturale
Socio-cultural programmes
- 5 (1962) - Construcții sanitare
Healthcare and sanitation programmes
- 6 (1962) – Regiunea Brașov
Brașov region
- 6 (1963) – Unități comerciale
Commercial programmes
- 6 (1964) – Urbanism (focused on the systematisation of Bucharest)
- 4 (1965) – Construcții industriale
Industrial constructions
- 5 (1965) - Proiectarea tip
Typified design
- 3 (1971) – Cercetarea în Arhitectură și Urbanism I
Research in architecture and urbanism I
- 4 (1971) – Cercetarea în Arhitectură și Urbanism II
Research in architecture and urbanism II
- 6 (1971) – Odihnă - Recreație - Litoral '71
Repose - Leisure – Littoral '71
- 2 (1972) – Loisirul în viața contemporanilor. Timp – Loisir – Arhitectura
Leisure for contemporary living. Time – leisure - architecture
- 3-4 (1972) – Orașul viitorului. Viitorul orașului
City of the future. Future of the city

- 4 (1973) – Oraşul şi substanţa lui
The city and its substance (mainly theoretical discussion, with some focus on Bucharest)
- 1 (1974) – Teatre
Theatres
- 2 (1974) – Case de Cultură
Culture halls (in socialist Romania, culture halls were multi-function cultural programmes dominating urban centres across the country; they could serve as theatres, clubs, cinemas, social gathering settings, but their main purpose was that of venues for political assemblies, celebrations, as well as monitors and disseminators of ideology through cultural production).
- 3 (1974) – Probleme actuale ale sistematizării
Current systematisation problems
- 4 (1974) – A XXX-a Aniversare a eliberării patriei
The 30th celebration of the motherland's liberation (these anniversary issues were usually compendiums of decades of the most important infrastructure and urban developments across the country, preceded by a higher percentage of propagandistic articles)
- 5 (1974) – Realizări
Accomplishments (regional development, the Palace of Sports and Culture in Bucharest, tourism, healthcare)
- 6 (1974) – Educaţie - Învăţământ
Education – pedagogy (pre-school, primary and secondary programmes)
- 1 (1975) – Educaţie - Învăţământ II
Education – pedagogy (higher education and research programmes)
- 2 (1975) – Tipizare, Industrializare, Prefabricare
Typification, industrialisation, prefabrication
- 3 (1975) – Hoteluri urbane
Urban hotels
- 4 (1975) – Sistematizare urbană
Urban systematisation (in socialist Romania, systematisation was a blanket term denoting the initial planning / design, but also subsequent interventions in urban or rural contexts of any scale; it also applied to infrastructure networks or industrial programmes).

- 5 (1975) – Premiile anuale. Comerț I
Annual prizes. Commercial programmes I (the issue starts with a table of works of architecture awarded prizes by the Union of Romanian architects across all types of programme, while the main body of content is dedicated to commercial programmes)
- 6 (1975) – Comerț II
Commercial programmes I
- 1 (1976) – Arhitectura industriei
The architecture of industry
- 2 (1976) – Locuințe I
Housing I
- 3 (1976) – Sistematizarea zonei de locuit
The systematisation of residential zones
- 4 (1976) – Centre istorice. Renovare urbană
Historical centres. Urban renovation
- 5 (1976) – Mediul inconjurator. Confortul urban
The environment. Urban comfort
- 6 (1976) – Arhitectura muntelui
The architecture of the mountain
- 1 (1977) – Arhitectura muntelui II
The architecture of the mountain II
- 2-3 (1977) – Arhitectura spitalelor
The architecture of hospitals
- 4 (1977) – Materiale, tehnici, tehnologii, inginerie seismica
Materials, techniques, technologies, seismic engineering
(featuring articles by prominent seismic engineer Alexandru Cișmigiu, following the 4th March 1977 earthquake that caused significant fatalities and material damages across the Vrancea region; Bucharest was also severely affected)
- 5 (1977) – Actualități
Current developments and news
- 6 (1977) – Zone centrale
Urban centres
- 1-2 (1978) – Arhitectura pentru sport
Sports programmes
- 3 (1978) – Arhitectura și dezvoltarea națională I
Architecture and national development I
- 4/1978 – Arhitectura și dezvoltarea națională II
Architecture and national development II

- 5-6 (1978) – Realizări
Accomplishments
- 1 (1979) – Municipiul Cluj-Napoca
Cluj-Napoca county
- 2 (1979) – Permanențe. Realizări
Permanence. Accomplishments (the Permanence rubric refers to analyses of Roman, Greek, and Dacian heritage sites, as well as a series of articles titled 'Înaintașii noștri' – Our Forebearers, that chronicles the history of the profession in Romania and the activity of notable architects of the 19th and early 20th century)
- 3 (1979) – Învățământ superior
Higher education
- 4 (1979) – Materiale – Tehnologii
Materials - technologies
- 5 (1979) – Locuințe în sisteme industrializate
Housing developed through industrialised systems
- 6 (1979) – Prezențe arhitecturale românești peste hotare
Romanian architecture presences abroad
- 1-2 (1980) – Municipiul București
The Municipality of Bucharest
- 3 (1980) – Localități mici
Small settlements
- 4 (1980) – Metroul din București
The Bucharest Underground
- 5 (1980) – Prezențe arhitecturale românești peste hotare II
Romanian architecture presences abroad II
- 6 (1980) – Prezențe arhitecturale românești peste hotare III
Romanian architecture presences abroad
- 1 (1981) – Realizări noi – Restaurare, Valorificare. Inginerie seismică
New developments – restoration, re-evaluation/regeneration.
Seismic engineering
- 2-3 (1981) – Municipiul Iași
The Municipality of Iași
- 4-5 (1981) – Momente de aniversare
Anniversary moments (celebrating 75 years from the publication of the first Arhitectura issue, and 90 years since the establishment of the Society of Romanian Architects)
- 6 (1981) – Locuințe
Housing

- 1 (1982) – Învățământ – Cercetare, proiecte, studii
Education and teaching – Research, projects, studies
- 2 (1982) – Calitatea locuinței
The quality of housing
- 3 (1982) – Municipiul Craiova
The Municipality of Craiova
- 4 (1982) – Comerț – Servicii
Commercial programmes – Urban amenities and services
- 5 (1982) – Realizări noi
New developments
- 6 (1982) – Dotări noi
New urban facilities (focusing on grand-scale socio-cultural developments in urban contexts)
- 1 (1983) – Sistematizare
Systematisation
- 2 (1983) – Tineret – Învățământ
Youth and education programmes
- 3 (1983) – Hoteluri – Turism
Hotels - tourism
- 4 (1983) – Proiecte – Studii – Realizări
Projects – studies – new developments
- 5 (1983) – Balneologie
Balneotherapy
- 6 (1983) – Restaurări – Completări funcționale – Extinderi
Restorations – Functional enhancements - Extensions
- 1 (1984) - Patrimoniu arhitectural
Architectural heritage
- 2 (1984) – Realizări - Proiecte – Studii
New developments – projects - studies
- 3 (1984) – Studii și proiecte românești pentru străinătate
Romanian studies and projects abroad
- 4 (1984) – 40 de ani de mari împliniri arhitectural-urbanistice
40 years of great architectural-urbanistic accomplishments
- 5 (1984) – Suceava (focused on the development of Suceava county and Suceava city)
- 6 (1984) – Noi afirmări
New affirmations
- 1 (1985) – Valori patrimoniale noi și vechi
New and old patrimonial values

- 2 (1985) – Tipizare – Diversificare - Adaptabilitate
Typification – Diversification - Adaptability
- 3 (1985) – Tineri arhitecți
Young architects
- 4 (1985) – Tineri arhitecți II
Young architects II
- 5 (1985) – Cercetare inginerască în construcții
Engineering research in construction
- 6 (1985) – Tipizare – Diversificare - Adaptabilitate II
Typification – Diversification – Adaptability II
- 1 (1986) – Căutări și propuneri
Investigations and propositions
- 2 (1986) – Proiecte ale arhitecților din Timișoara
Projects by architects from Timișoara
- 3 (1986) – Proiecte ale arhitecților din Timișoara II
Projects by architects from Timișoara II
- 4 (1986) – Extinderi – Dezvoltări – Revitalizare
Extensions – Developments - Regeneration
- 5 (1986) – Din activitatea tipizării și cercetării
From the practice of typification and research
- 6 (1986) – Realizări noi
New developments
- 1 (1987) – Realizări noi
New developments
- 2 (1987) – Tineret – Învățământ
Youth and education programmes
- 3 (1987) – Dotări
Socio-cultural urban programmes
- 4 (1987) – Locuințe și dotări
Housing and urban amenities
- 5 (1987) - Dotări și locuințe
Urban amenities and housing
- 6 (1987) – Actualitate în proiectare
Contemporary design
- 1 (1988) – Premiile Uniunii Arhitecților – 1986. Arhitectura solară
The prizes of the Union of Architects – 1986. Solar architecture
- 2 (1988) – Prezențe
Presences (the focus falls on the participation of Romanian architects
in international competitions)

- 3 (1988) – Tineri arhitecți
Young architects
- 4 (1988) – Centre noi și dotări
New urban centres and amenities
- 5 (1988) – Restaurări – Revitalizări – Comerț – Turism
Restoration – Regeneration – Commerce - Tourism
- 6 (1988) – Monumente și ansambluri dedicate Unirii. Cercetarea în arhitectura
Monuments and architectural ensembles dedicated to the Union.
Architecture research
(the Union refers collectively to historical moments of de jure and de facto state unions that brought together the Romanian principalities and later shaped the modern nation state of Romania)
- 1 (1989) – Locuințe
Housing
- 2 (1989) – Locuințe
Housing (with a strong secondary focus on commercial programmes)
- 3 (1989) – Premiile pentru Arhitectură – 1987. Realizări
Architecture prizes for 1987. New developments
- 4 (1989) – Prezentare lucrări – Cercetare
Review of built works - Research
- 5-6 (1989) – Sub suflul libertății
Under the winds of freedom (the last issue of communist *Arhitectura* was published immediately after the collapse of the regime, and includes a section of editorials and opinion pieces in reaction to the event, followed by the main body of content prepared before the events of the December revolution – commerce, tourism, sports, industry, restoration, etc.)

II. *Arhitectura* issues with the majority of content focused on a particular theme

- 1 (1963) – Litoral 1962
Littoral 1962
- 3 (1963) – Premiile Uniunii Arhitecților Români pe 1962
The prizes of the Union of Romanian Architects for 1962
- 6 (1963) – Unități comerciale
Commercial programmes
- 2 (1964) – Construcții social-culturale
Socio-cultural programmes

- 3 (1964) – Construcții sanitare
Healthcare programmes
- 4 (1964) A XX-a Aniversare a eliberării patriei
The 20th Anniversary of the liberation of the motherland
- 1 (1966) – În dezbatere: probleme actuale ale creației arhitecturale. Construcția și reconstrucția
In debate: current problems of architectural creation. Construction and reconstruction
- 2-3 (1966) - În dezbatere: Probleme actuale ale creației arhitecturale. Estetica ansamblurilor arhitecturale industriale
In debate: current problems of architectural creation. The aesthetic of industrial architectural ensembles
- 5 (1966) – Construcții hoteliere
Hospitality programmes
- 6 (1966) – Unități comerciale
Commercial programmes
- 1 (1967) – În dezbatere: sistematizarea rețelei de sate
In debate: the systematisation of the rural network
- 2 (1967) – În dezbatere: problemele actuale ale creației arhitecturale contemporane românești
In debate: the current problems of the contemporary Romanian architecture creation
- 3 (1969) – Construcții sanatoriale
Healthcare resorts
- 4 (1969) – Un sfert de veac de la eliberarea patriei
A quarter of a century since the liberation of the motherland
- 6 (1969) - Industrializarea și prefabricarea construcțiilor de locuințe și social-culturale
The industrialisation and prefabricated construction of housing and socio-cultural programmes
- 1 (1970) – Probleme actuale ale sistematizării
Current problems of systematisation
- 3 (1970) – În dezbatere: arhitectura industrială și aspectele ei economice
In debate: industrial architecture and its economic aspects
- 1 (1971) – Schița de sistematizare a Capitalei
The Capital's systematisation sketch (in the field of systematisation, a sketch actually denoted the complete development plan of the urban context, open to subsequent modifications)

- 2 (1973) – Județe - Argeș, Mureș, Brașov, Prahova, Cluj, Ilfov
Counties - Argeș, Mureș, Brașov, Prahova, Cluj, Ilfov
- 3 (1973) – Județe – Dolj, Bihor, Suceava, Satu-Mare, Arad
Counties - Dolj, Bihor, Suceava, Satu-Mare, Arad

III. Alternative discursive directions pursued in *Arhitectura*⁹²⁴

- Romanian architecture interventions abroad made the main focus of *Arhitectura* 6 (1979), 5 (1980), and 6 (1980), then became a semi-regular feature in:
 - 2 (1982)
 - 2 (1983)
 - 1 (1984); 5 (1984); 6 (1984)
 - 4 (1985)
 - 1 (1986); 3 (1986); 6 (1986)
 - 2 (1987); 3 (1987); 4 (1987); 6 (1987)
 - 2 (1988)
 - 2 (1989); 5-6 (1989)
- Marcel Melicson's theoretical series, 'Fișe pentru o istorie a gândirii arhitecturale contemporane I-XV' [Excerpts for a critical understanding of contemporary architecture] featured in *Arhitectura*
 - 1 (1967), annex, pp. 1-8; 2 (1967), annex, pp. 9-16; 3 (1967), annex, pp. 17-28; 4 (1967), annex, pp. 29-40; 5 (1967), annex, pp. 41-56; 6 (1967), annex, 57-72;
 - 1 (1968), annex, pp. 73-84; 2 (1968), annex, pp. 85-96; 3 (1968), annex, pp. 97-108; 4 (1968), annex, pp. 109-20; 5 (1968), annex, pp. 121-32; 6 (1968), annex, pp. 133-48;
 - 1 (1969), annex, pp. 149-60; 2 (1969), annex, pp. 161-70; 3 (1969), annex, pp. 171-84
- Japanese architecture, as well as architecture from the Scandinavian Peninsula, also drew the attention of the Romanian audience, featuring in *Arhitectura*:
 - 2 (1957)
 - 5 (1971)
 - 1 (1979)
 - 5 (1980)
 - 1 (1981)

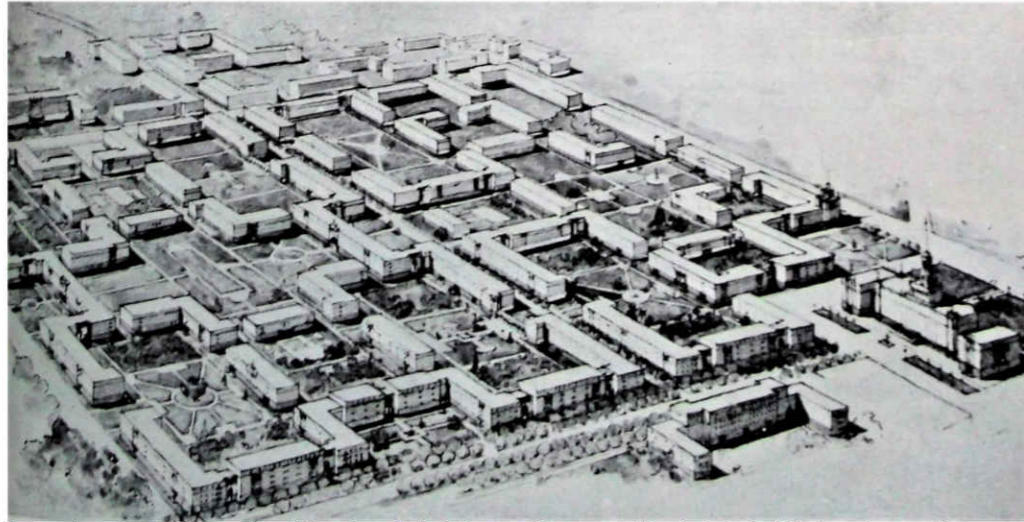
⁹²⁴ This list is far from exhaustive, but indicates possible cross-sections through the magazine's contents that merit further investigation.

- the discrepancy between the rigid functionality of typified collective housing and the rapid transformation of urban lifestyles, often assessed from a sociological perspective:
 - 1 (1963), pp. 40-47
 - 1 (1965), pp. 30-32
 - 3 (1967), pp. 20-37
 - 5 (1968), pp. 14-17
 - 6 (1968), pp. 14-18
 - 2 (1969)
- contextuality and place-making through architectural and urban intervention
 - 1 (1966)
- questioning the validity of the large-scale housing estate model, particularly in the context of authorship discontinuity between various project stages, and reported inadequacies in long-term use, resulting in low user satisfaction
 - 4 (1967), pp. 29-31
- reconsiderations on the nature of the profession and patterns of professional enculturation
 - 2 (1968)

In the 1970s and 1980s, other kernels of potentially alternative practice emerged:

- the use of computer-assisted analytic and graphic design:
 - 1 (1970), pp. 24-25
 - 1 (1977), pp. 60
 - 6 (1981), pp. 32-36
- grassroots definitions and visions of the urban phenomenon and its ideal condition, with additional contributions from literature
 - 3-4 (1972)
- solar and ecological architecture
 - 5 (1980), pp. 74-75
 - 6 (1981), pp. 94-96
 - 6 (1982), pp. 48-51
 - 1 (1988)
- proxemics:
 - 2 (1982), pp. 46-48
- postmodernism and the architecture of material and visual consumption:
 - 5 (1982), p. 39
 - 6 (1982), pp. 81-85
 - 2 (1983)
 - 6 (1986), pp. 27-28

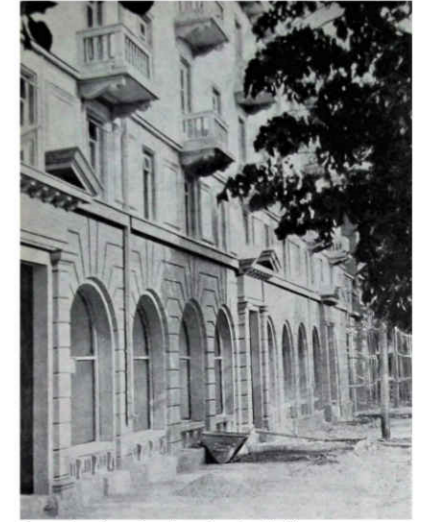
APPENDIX 4 - SOCIALIST HOUSING IN THE 1950S. FROM SOCIALIST REALIST CVARTALS TO LOCAL HYBRIDS AND CAUTIOUS MODERNITY



Urban study for a 1000 apartment housing estate in Roman. The composition is typical of the low-rise, medium density cvartals built in the first half of the 1950s (arch. V. Sebestyen, N. Pruncu; Roman; 1954).



Cvartal and student housing. The semi-enclosed, communal green spaces, barrel-vaulted passageways, and the low-rise scale of the buildings were appreciated features of this type of development. (arch. Victor Sebestyen; Galați; 1956).



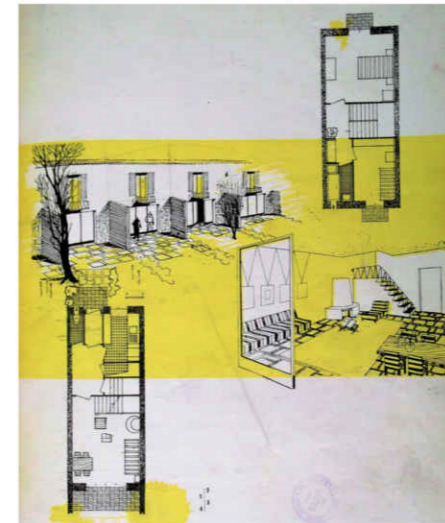
Cvartal and student housing (arch. Victor Sebestyen; Galați; 1956).

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A typical 1950s Socialist Realist cvartal in Bucharest, with a cinema/club as composition focal point (arch. N. Porumbescu, D. Bacalu, Tr. Stanescu).



Typified terraced housing using prefabricated elements (arch. D. Slavici, E. Cosmatu, N. Marcus; Bucharest; 1955).



Typified terraced housing using prefabricated elements (arch. Margareta Pinchis; Bucharest; 1955).

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Minimal, low-cost socialist housing, reimagined with the help of the local vernacular. Cățelu housing estate (arch. Tiberiu Niga and team; Bucharest; 1957-1958).



Cățelu housing estate (arch. Tiberiu Niga and team; Bucharest; 1957-1958).

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A cautious transition to 'rationalist' modernity. Floreasca housing estate (arch. Corneliu Rădulescu and team; Bucharest; 1960).

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Floreasca housing estate (arch. Corneliu Rădulescu and team; Bucharest; 1960).

APPENDIX 5 - SOCIALIST HOUSING 1960S - 1980S. FROM THE GRAND-SCALE OF HOUSING ESTATES TO THE MICROCOSM OF THE QUOTIDIAN

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A shift in the scale and density of the socialist city. Apartment block on Bălcescu Boulevard in Bucharest - main façade (arch. Virgil Nițulescu, A. Iosif; 1960).

Apartment block on Bălcescu Boulevard in Bucharest - plan (arch. Virgil Nițulescu, A. Iosif; 1960).

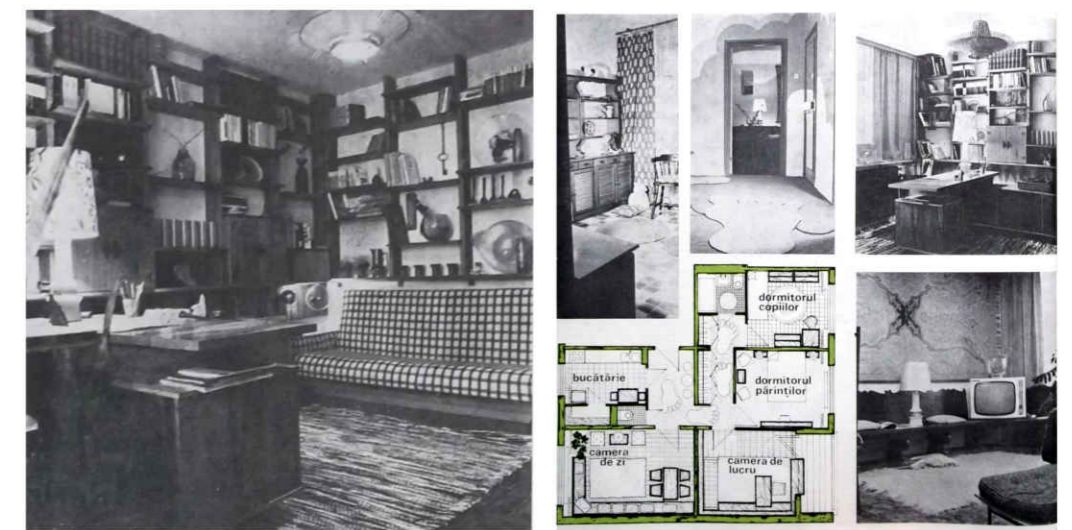
A more diverse aesthetic gamut for collective housing to mitigate the homogenising effect of typified, prefabricated construction (arch. A. Prescan, N. Litvin, I. Vîts; Dragalina neighbourhood, Cluj; early 1960s).



Patterns of habitation across common types of apartments, documented through sociological methods. The study notes the transference of rural patterns onto modern layouts (keeping a 'clean room' solely for valuables and receiving guests); the multi-layering of functions (living rooms served as the family's gathering space, learning/play/homework space for children, and bedroom for elderly relations); and the use of the furnishings available for purchase on grounds of durability, desire to fill up empty space, financial ability to buy an entire range, etc., rather than functionality.



Architecture studies for the ideal socialist apartment, including modern modular furniture (arch. Cătălina Atanasiu, Mircea Bivolaru, Octavian Nicolae; 1973).



Architects at home: a standardised apartment, adapted for use by architects Virginia and Florian Dumitriu. This represents the higher end of socialist housing: 4 room apartments were generally inhabited by families of 6 or more members; the room serving as studio/study (bottom right corner of the plan) rather than a third bedroom was also atypical, denoting a degree of professional and financial privilege.

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Sala Palatului Square - collective housing on the left and in the background, Sala Palatului concert hall on the right (arch. Tiberiu Niga, G. Filipeanu, Leon Garcia; Bucharest; 1961).

The free-plan urbanism of grand-scale housing estates, contrasted with Bucharest's typical low-rise, medium-density pre-war urban fabric. Șoseaua Giurgiului (arch. Const. Gherghiceanu, Cleopatra Alifanti, S. Bercovici; Bucharest; late 1960s).

Titan-Balta Albă housing estate in Bucharest, one of the largest urban planning developments of the late 1960s - early 1970s (arch. Nicolae Kepeș, Nicolae Porumbescu, Ana Keszeg, Margareta Dâmboianu, Ion Moscu, etc.).

Urban densification triggered by the 1975 Streets law: the interstitial spaces produced by the previous urban planning paradigm were gradually filled with new apartment blocks, often leaving inadequate spacing between buildings (Pantelimon housing estate, Bucharest, 1977).

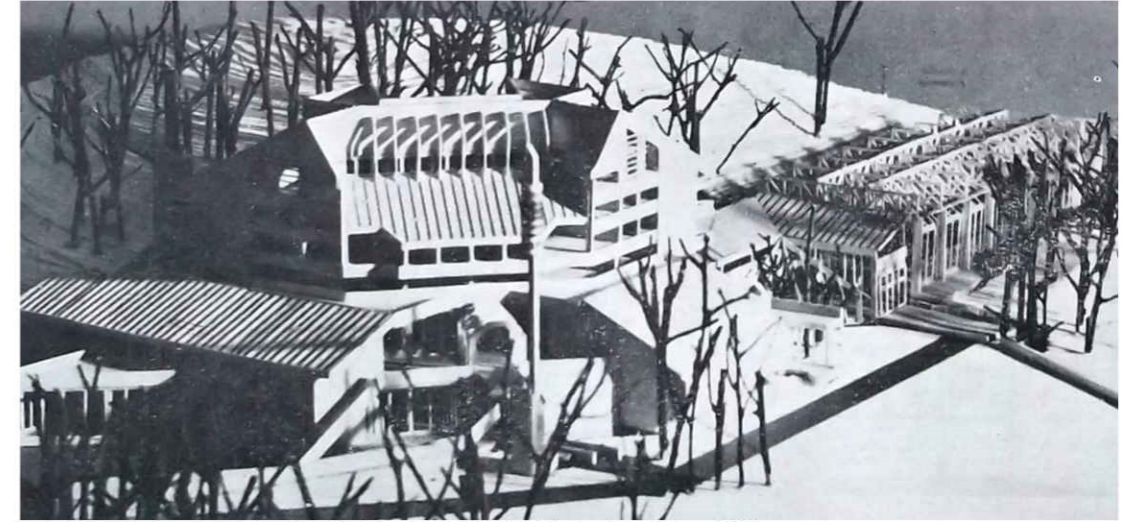
APPENDIX 6 - INTERSTITIAL SPACES OF EXPERIMENTAL PRAXIS - LEISURE, SPORTS, TOURISM



Târgu-Mureș sports hall (arch. András Szilvester, Karol Bartha; 1977-1978).

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Summer theatre in Mamaia (arch. A. Solari-Grimberg, Mina Laurian; first half of the 1960s).



Study for the development of Ștrand-Codlea for tourism (arch. Viorel Simion, Daria Simion; 1976).



Sports hall in Ploiești (arch. Gheorghe Dumitrescu; 1968-1971).



Târgu-Mureș national theatre (arch. Constantin Săvescu, Vladimir Slavu, Mihaela Sava, Aurel Sârbu; 1972).



Craiova national theatre (arch. Alexandru Iotzu; 1972).

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Open-air cinema in Galați (arch. Mariana Bucur; Galați; 1965).



Arad sports hall (arch. Viorel Bulgăreanu, Elisabeta Popescu, Petre Șerbănuț, Marian Bell, Ioan Darida; 1977-1978).

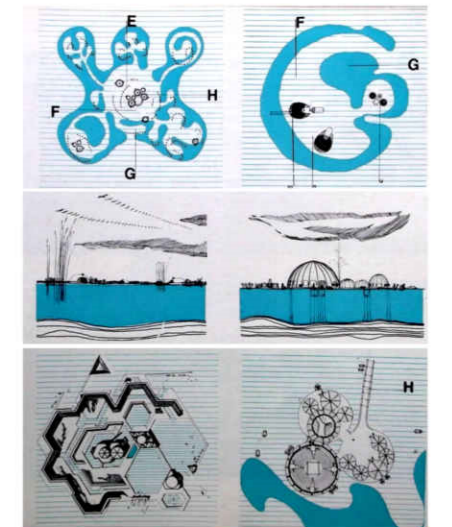


Student housing in Cluj (arch. Marioara Salvanu, Cr. Iacobi, I. Sovago, I. Stancu, Ioana Pop; 1962).

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National Circus in Bucharest (arch. Nicolae Porumbescu, Constantin Rulea, Nicolae Pruncu; 1960).



Study for a high-density urban unit and floating leisure centre (arch. Anca Borgovan, Radu Patruleius; 1972).

APPENDIX 7 - INTERSTITIAL SPACES OF EXPERIMENTAL PRAXIS - BLACK SEA COASTLINE RESORTS, TOURISM FACILITIES (MOUNTAINSIDE, URBAN)



Venus seaside resort, developed by the Constanța County Design Institute (arch. Gheorghe Dumitrașcu, Șerban Manolescu, Kemal Ghengiomer, Nicolae Cuimdjoglu, Vasile Telea and team; late 1960s - early 1970s).



Venus seaside resort - minimal holiday villas (Constanța County Design Institute; late 1960s - early 1970s).

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Restaurant and patisserie in Eforie Sud (arch. M. Stancu, Rodica Dumitrașcu, P. Căliman; 1963).



Hospitality complex (arch. Solari Grimberg, Șerban Manolescu, Radu Mănăilă, Dan Ioanovici, and team; Olimp; 1972).

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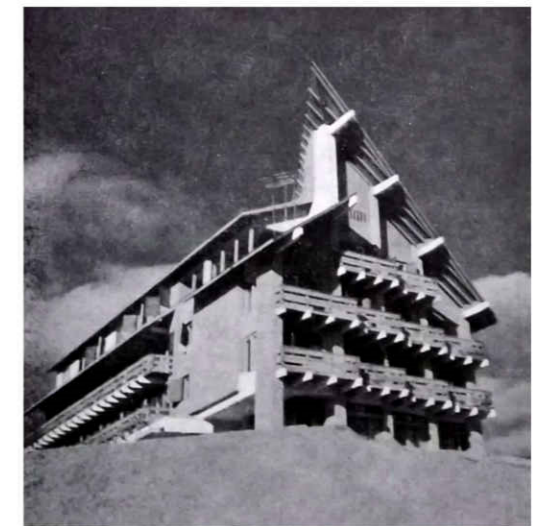
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Briza Mării restaurant in Eforie Sud (arch. Alexandru Iotzu, G. Rudich; 1961).



Mamaia city and tourism resort on the Black Sea coast, in development from the late 1950s to the 1970s. Image published in *Arhitectura* in 1971.



Hotel at Clăbucet (arch. Dan Cristescu; Predeal; 1972).

Parc Hotel (arch. Violeta Constantinescu, Gabriela Bădiceanu-Gheorghiu; Mamaia; early 1960s).



Șura Dacilor restaurant in Brașov (arch. Marian Renel, 1972).



Cioplea Hotel (arch. George Postelnicu, Dietmar Zermen; Predeal; 1976).



Astoria Hotel in Arad (arch. Cristea Miloș, 1972).



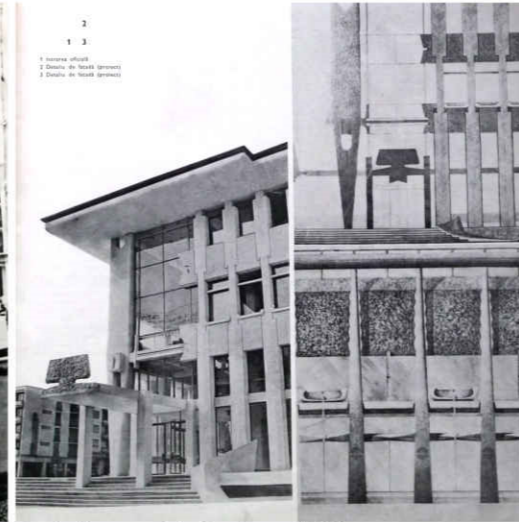
Hotel Intercontinental (arch. Dinu Hariton, Gheorghe Nădrag, Ion Moscu, Romeo Belea; Bucharest; 1967-1971).

APPENDIX 8 - THE SEARCH FOR A 'NATIONALLY SPECIFIC' ARCHITECTURE

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Suceava culture hall (arch. Nicolae Porumbescu, Maria Vaida-Porumbescu; Sergiu Hanganu, Tudor Dumitrașcu; 1969).



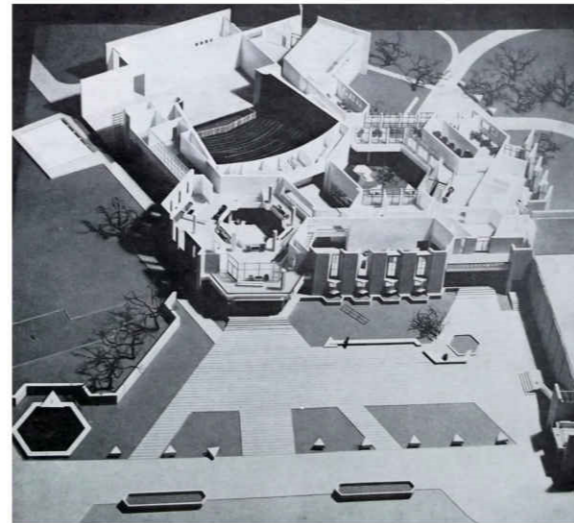
Syndicate culture hall in Alexandria (arch. Nicolae Vlădescu, Dumitru Iacob; 1974).



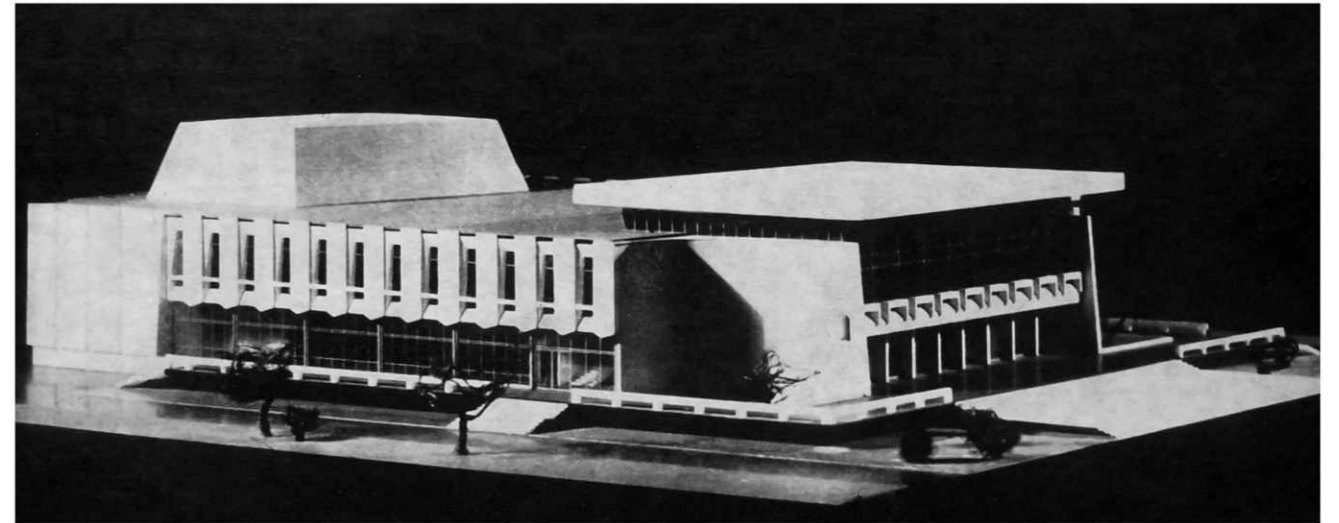
The local vernacular - the conceptual precedent of 'nationally specific' architecture. Image sourced from Mircea Lupu's *Școli naționale în arhitectură* (1977).



Suceava culture hall - interior detail (arch. Nicolae Porumbescu, Maria Vaida-Porumbescu; 1969).



Buzău culture hall (arch. Mihaela Sion, Constantin Frumuzache; 1969).



Ploiești culture hall (arch. Dorin Gheorghe, Liliana Belea, Mady Mayer, Rodica Radocea; 1969).



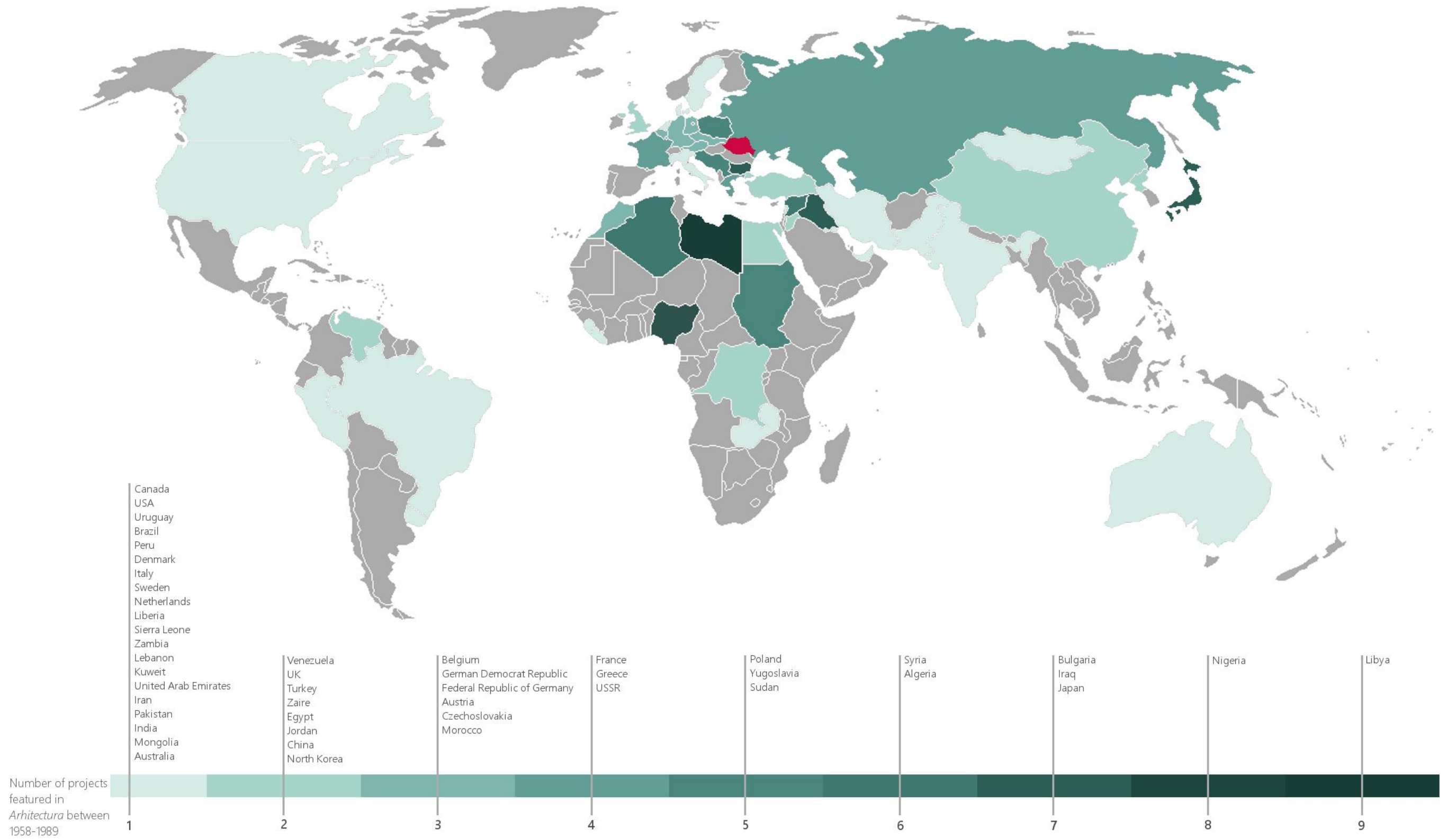
Craiova national theatre (arch. Alexandru Iotzu; 1969).



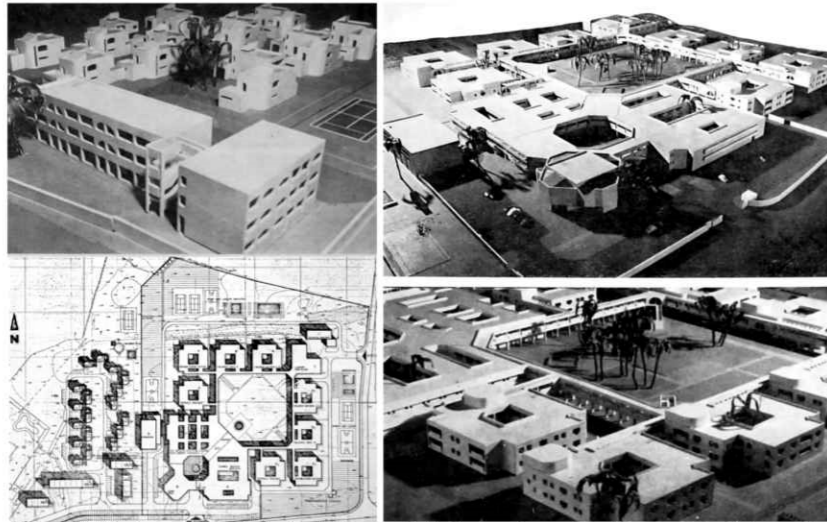
Hotel in Bistrița (arch. Mircea Alifanti, Adrian Panaitescu; 1975).



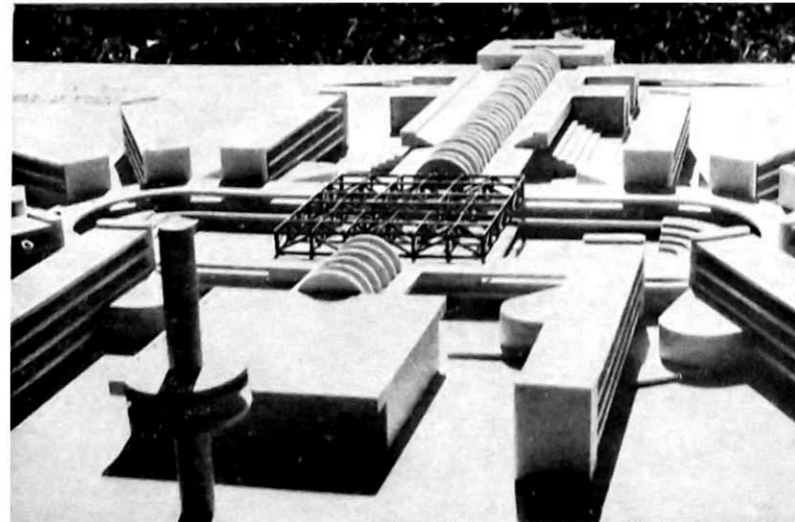
APPENDIX 1 - DISTRIBUTION OF ROMANIAN ARCHITECTURAL EXPERTISE ABROAD
(BUILT WORKS, PROJECTS, CONSULTANCY, COMPETITIONS)



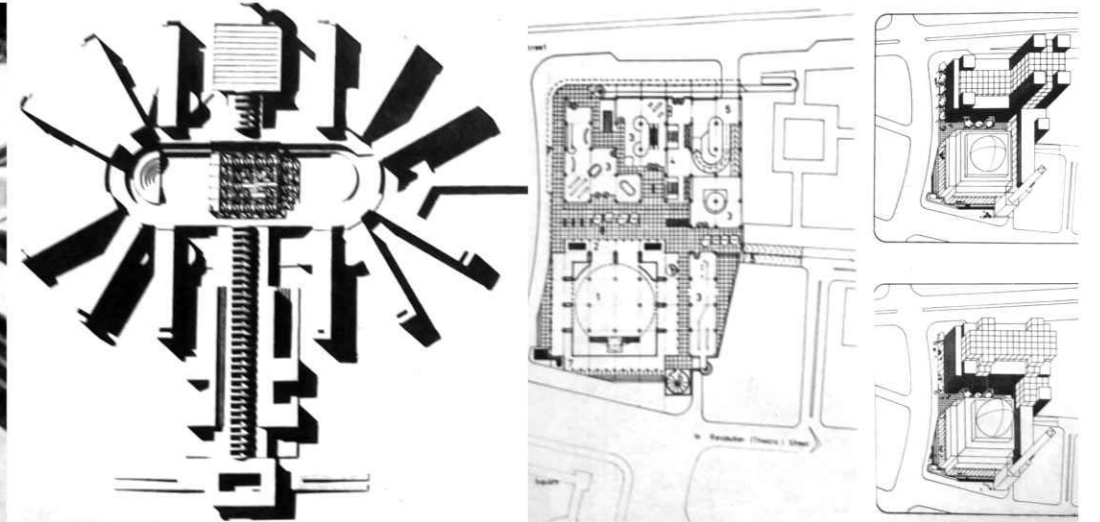
APPENDIX 9 - ENCOUNTERS WITH CULTURAL AND ARCHITECTURAL OTHERNESS. ROMANIAN ARCHITECTURE INTERVENTIONS ABROAD



Al Swani children's sanatorium (arch. Aurel Mureşan, Radu Constantinescu, Viorel Trocan, Radu Păslăraşu; Al Swani, Libya; 1979-1981).



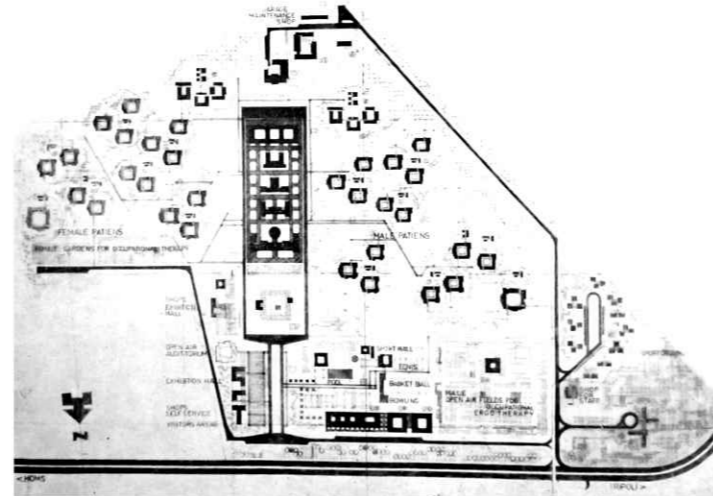
College of Technology (arch. Viorel Simion, Dorin Ştefan; Bauchi, Nigeria; 1979).



Yalbugha commercial and religious complex (arch. Dorin Ştefan, eng. Gheorghe Dobrescu, Alexandru Cişmigiu; Damascus, Syria; 1979).



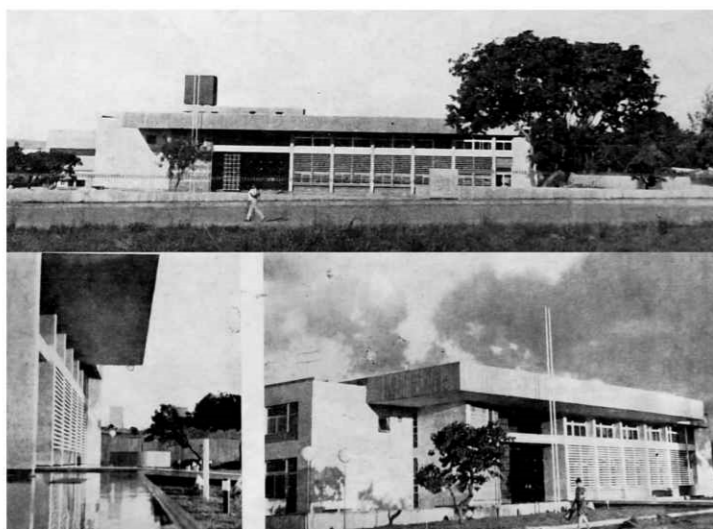
A range of projects designed and built by ARCOM across Europe, Africa and Asia, in collaboration with various state design institutes (1972-1978).



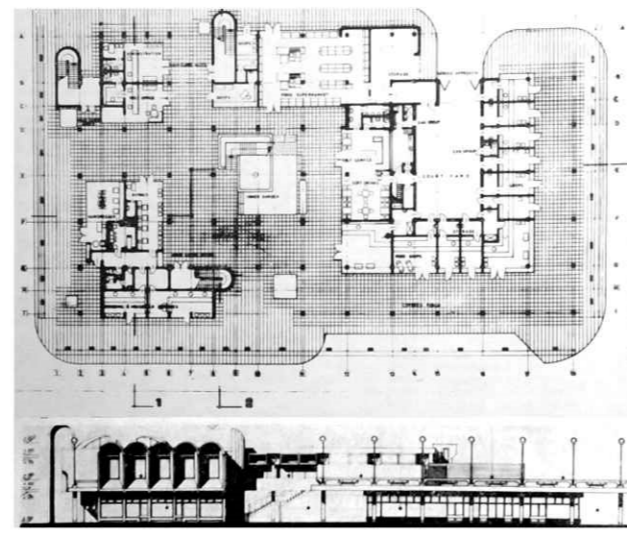
Neuropsychiatric clinical complex for 1200 patients (arch. Aurel Mureşan, Lidia Ghelman, Aurelia Teodorescu; Tripoli, Libya; 1974).



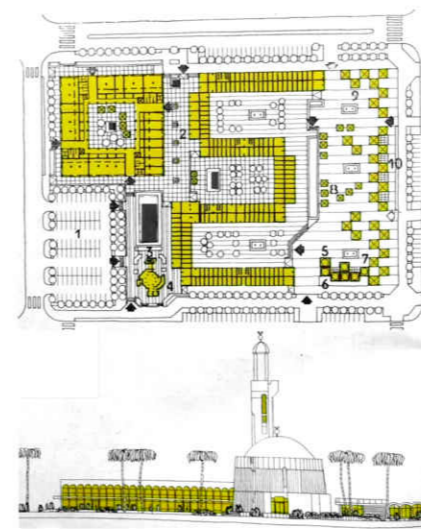
Hotel at Ouzoud Waterfalls (arch. Cornel Ghenculescu, Romeo Belea, Mariana Fetti; Morocco; 1980).



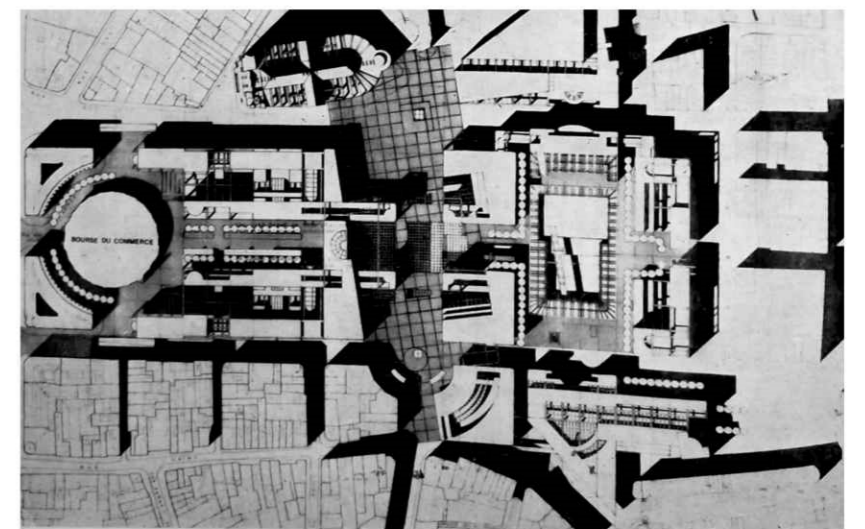
Romanian Embassy in Brasilia (arch. Horia Hudită; Brasil; 1979).



Collina Verde socio-cultural centre (arch. Laura Valentin, Andrei Draculis; Libya; 1980).

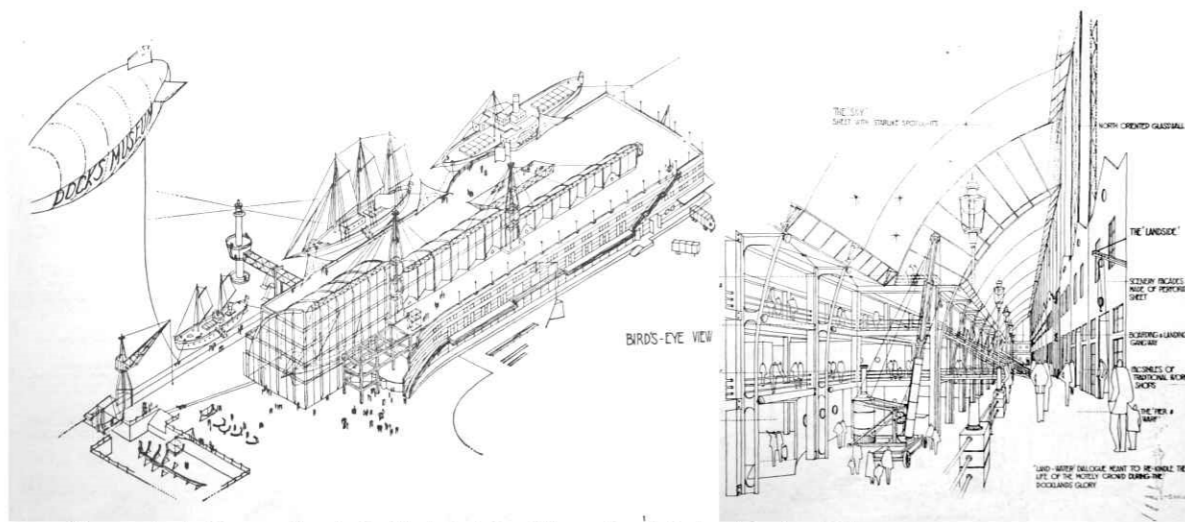


Study for a marketplace (arch. Niels Auner, Nicolae Spătaru, Adalbert Naiman; Libya; 1980).

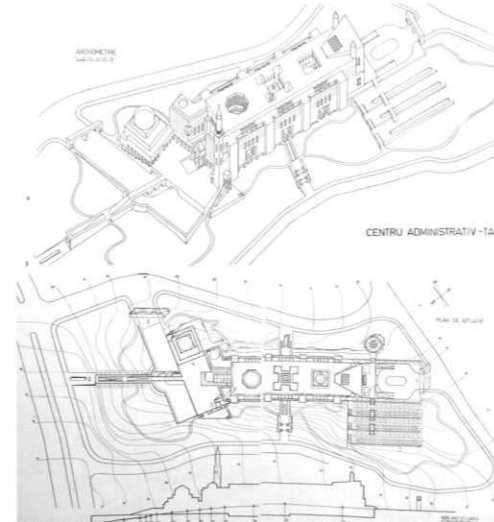


Project for the development of Les Halles district - international competition (arch. Ştefan Lungu, Viorel Hurduc; students Mihai Rădulescu, Nicolae Grama, Mihai Pricop, Mircea Beleiu, Cristian Iacob; Paris; 1979).

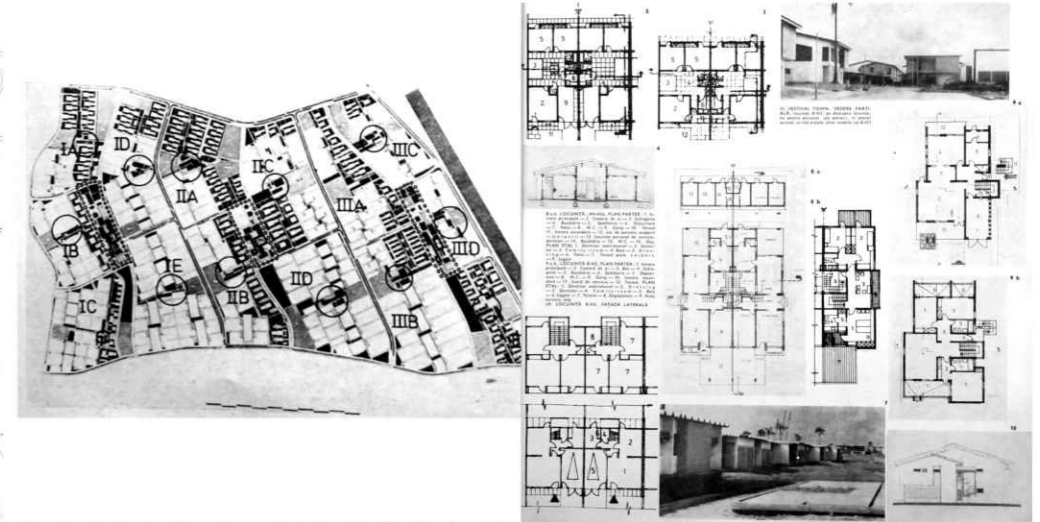
APPENDIX 9 - ENCOUNTERS WITH CULTURAL AND ARCHITECTURAL OTHERNESS. ROMANIAN ARCHITECTURE INTERVENTIONS ABROAD



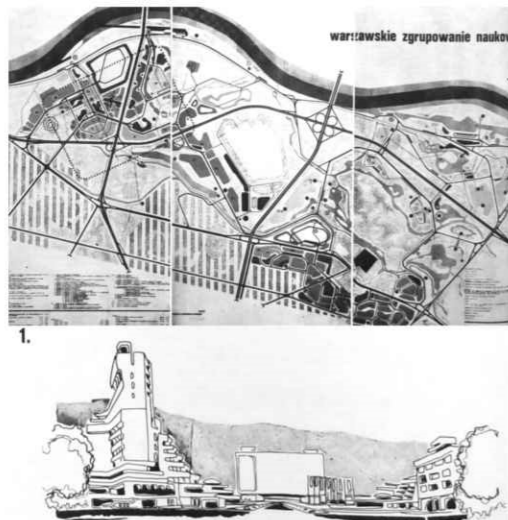
Competition entry for the Museum of London Docklands (arch. Dan Bolomey, Matei Lykiardopol; London; 1987).



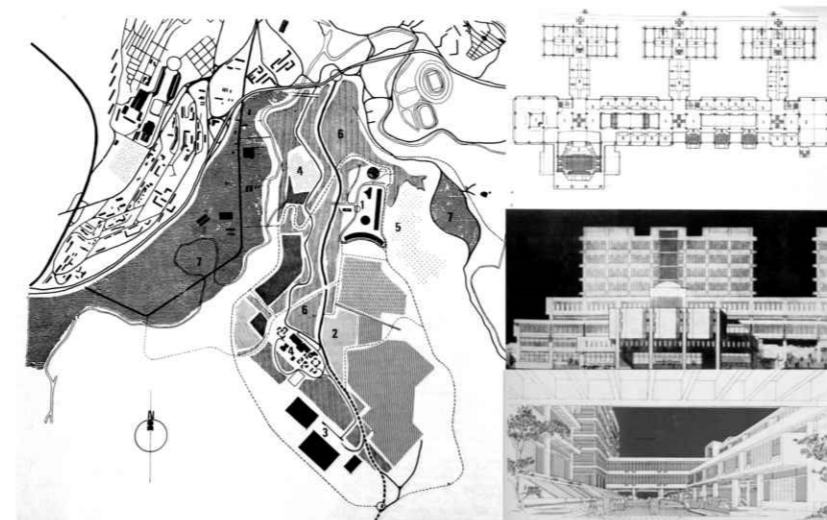
Ta'if administrative centre - diploma project (student arch. Ruxandra Gheorghiu; 1986).



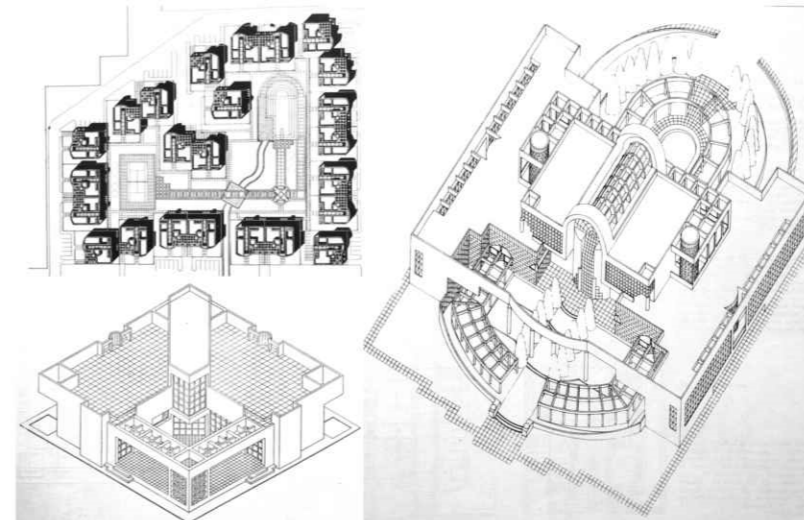
Housing for Festival Town, Lagos (arch. Bogdan Dărălat, Aurel Sârbu, Victoria Berceanu, Floarea Niculae, Lucilia Belei, Radu Slavu, Ștefan Datcu, Elisabeta Ghelesel, Gabriela Bălăniți, Dan Băncilă, Livia Murgeanu, and team; Nigeria; 1977-1980).



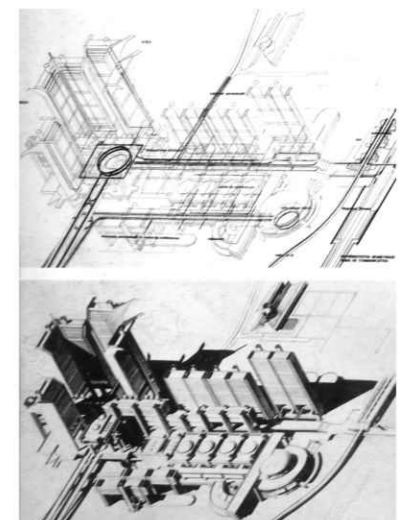
Prize-winning competition entry for a university campus and research centre (arch. Doina Cristea, Petre Derer, Victor Fulicea, Alexandru Sandu; Warsaw; 1975).



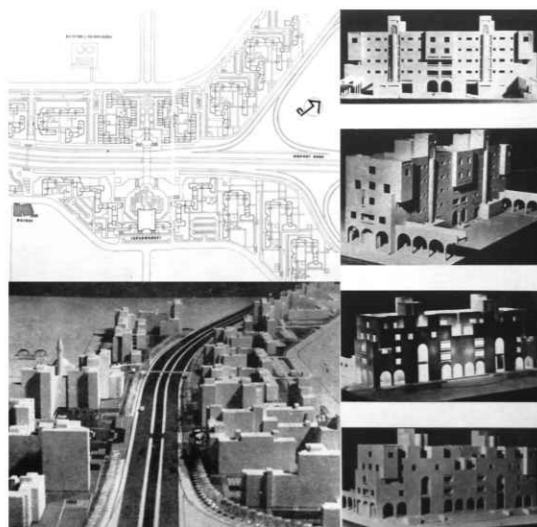
Constantine University Campus. Institute of Industrial Chemistry (arch. Petre Swoboda, Toader Panait, Nicolae Moiescu, Nicolae Constantinescu, Matei Nedulescu, Rodica Popa, Ecaterina Silvestru, Alexandra Stoian; Constantine, Algeria; 1972-1979).



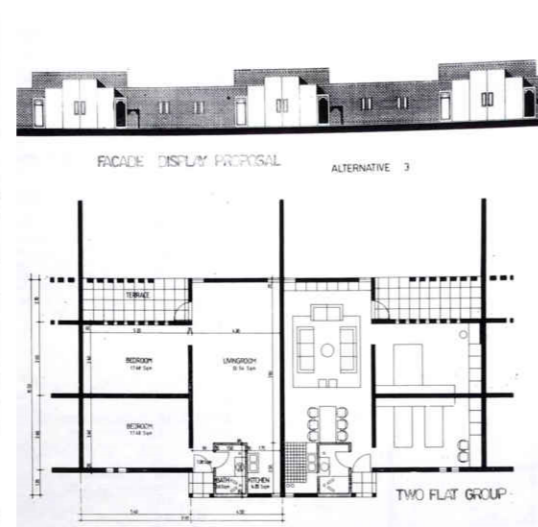
Villas in Abu-Dhabi, United Arab Emirates (arch. Viorel Trocan, Anca Oțoiu; 1984). Villa in Sabratha, Libya (arch. Andrei Drogeanu, Maximilian Zielinski; 1984). Palace in Amman, Jordan (arch. Vladimir Slavu, Liviu Hamza, Șerban Păcuraru; 1984).



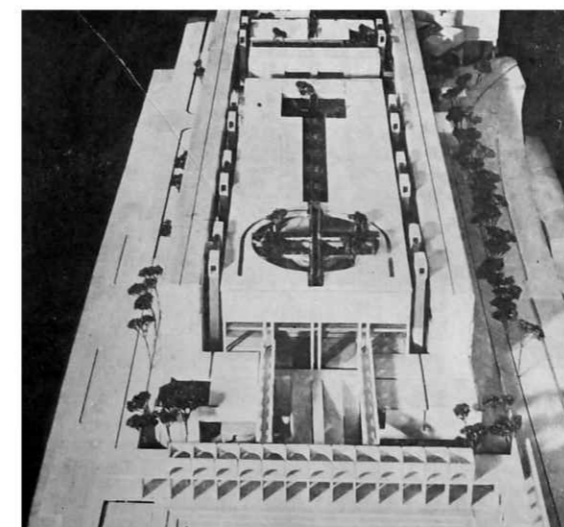
Urban centre design competition - IAEA & UNIDO Headquarters (arch. Ascanio Damian, Marilena Constantinescu, Victor Ivaneș, Toma Olteanu, Zoltan Takacz; Vienna; 1969).



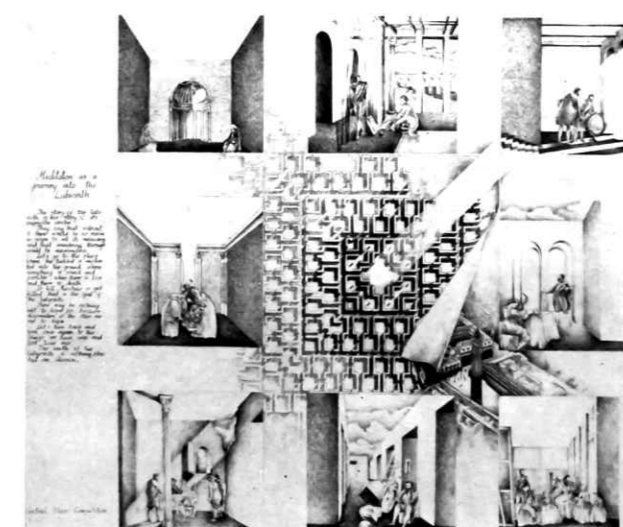
Urban planning - Airport Road, Tripoli (arch. Andrei Drogeanu, Maximilian Zielinski, Viorel Hurduc, Diana Hurduc Gabriel Iordăchescu, Gabriel Tureanu, Viorel Trocan; Libya; 1984).



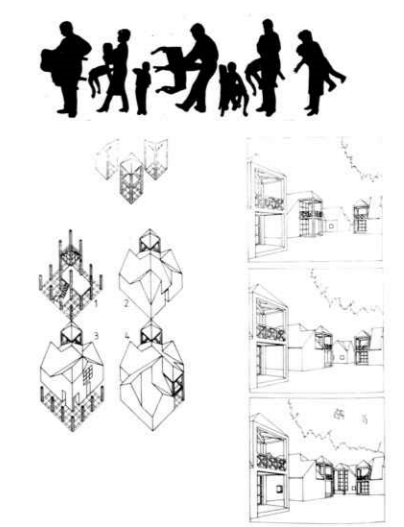
Study for low-cost typified housing (Gabriel Iordăchescu, Marius Răzvan, Suzana Boceanu, Radu Drăgan; Sudan; 1984).



Competition entry for the Tehran national library (arch. Dorin Ștefan; Iran; 1977-1978).

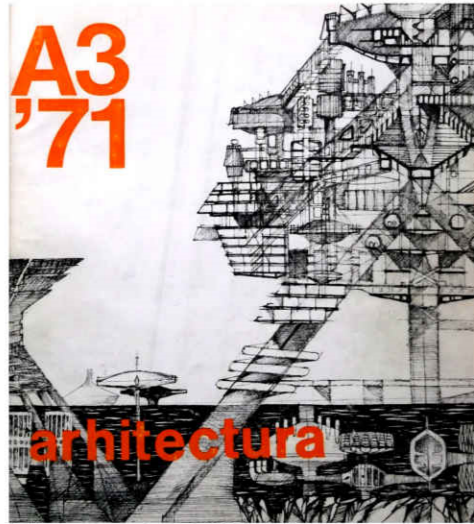


A meditative space - Central Glass International Architectural Design Competition (arch. Florin Colpacci, Ioan Andreescu, Vlad Gaivoronschi, Adrian Ionasiu, Claudiu Panaiteacu; Japan; 1981).

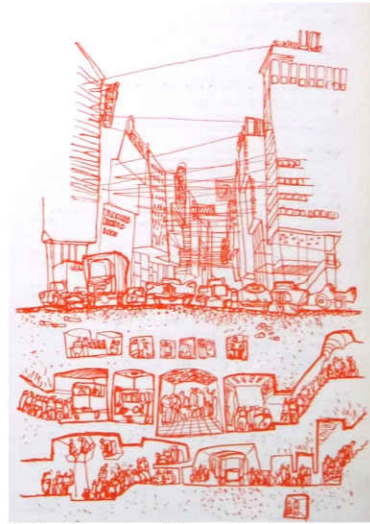


The evolving dwelling - silver medal at INTERARH '85 (arch. Florin Biciușcă; 1985).

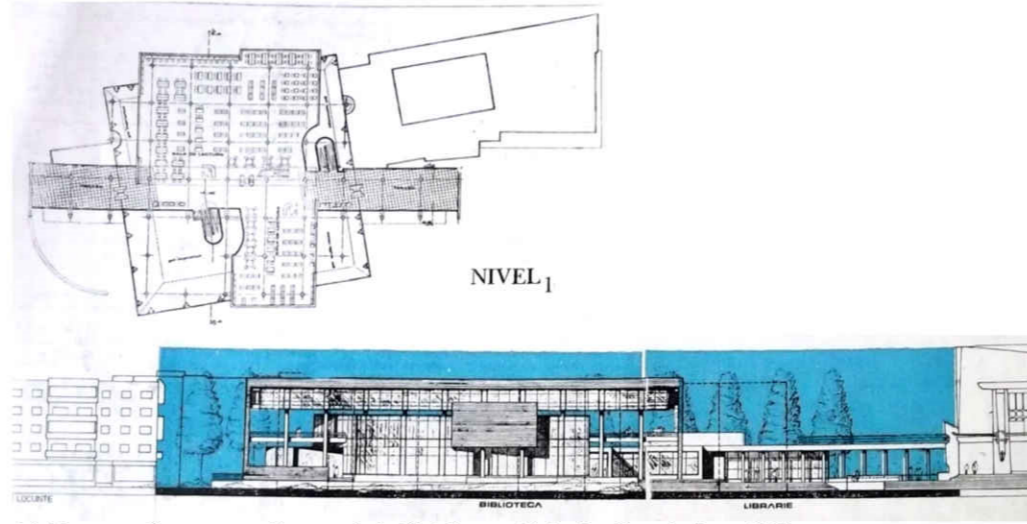
APPENDIX 10 - EMERGENT CRITICALITY AND ALTERNATIVE METHODOLOGIES. RESEARCH, STUDENT PROJECTS, AND YOUNG GRADUATES IN PRACTICE



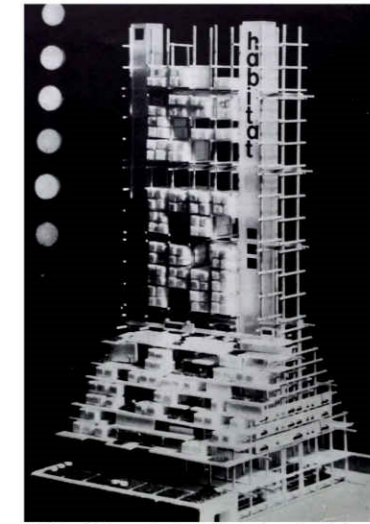
Arhitectura cover, issue 3 (1971), depicting marine, mechanical cities (arch. Adrian Panaitescu).



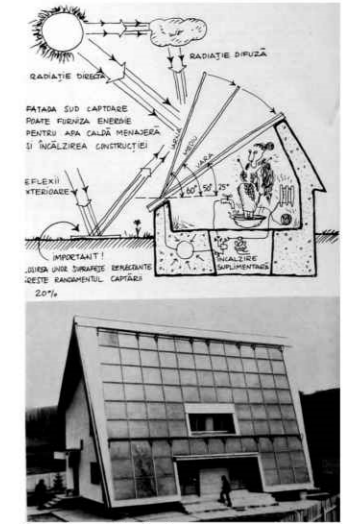
Untitled illustration of dense urban layering (arch. Adrian Panaitescu; 1971).



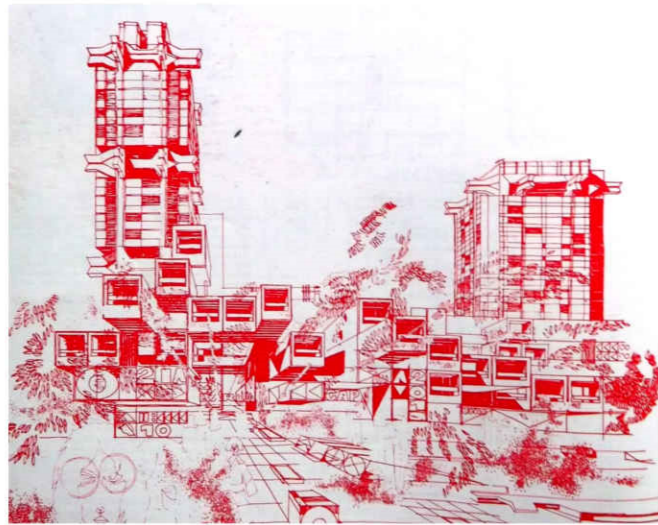
Baia Mare county library - competition entry (arch. Mihai Pienescu, Cristina Ene, Alexandru Boroş; 1984).



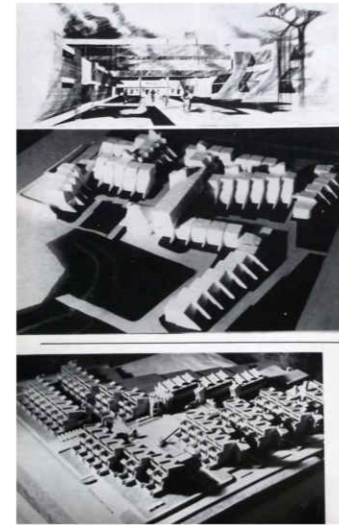
Habitat '99 - vertical neighbourhood - diploma project (arch. student Tomnița-Mihaela Dinu; Bucharest; 1972).



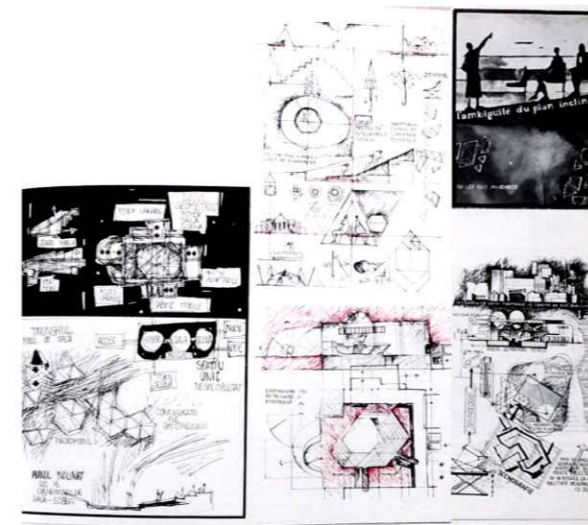
Experimental solar house prototype (arch. A. Streja; Câmpina; 1977).



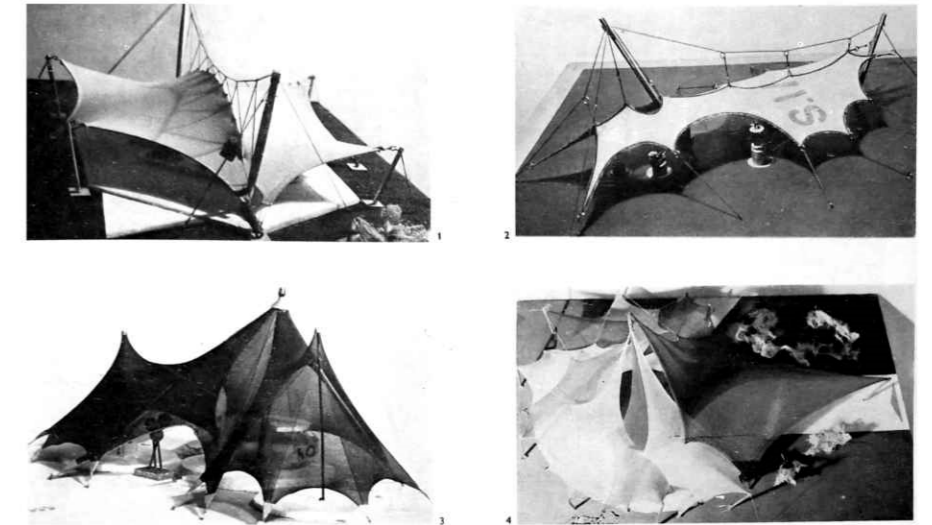
Experimental housing study - diploma project (arch. student Roxana Savin; Bucharest; 1971).



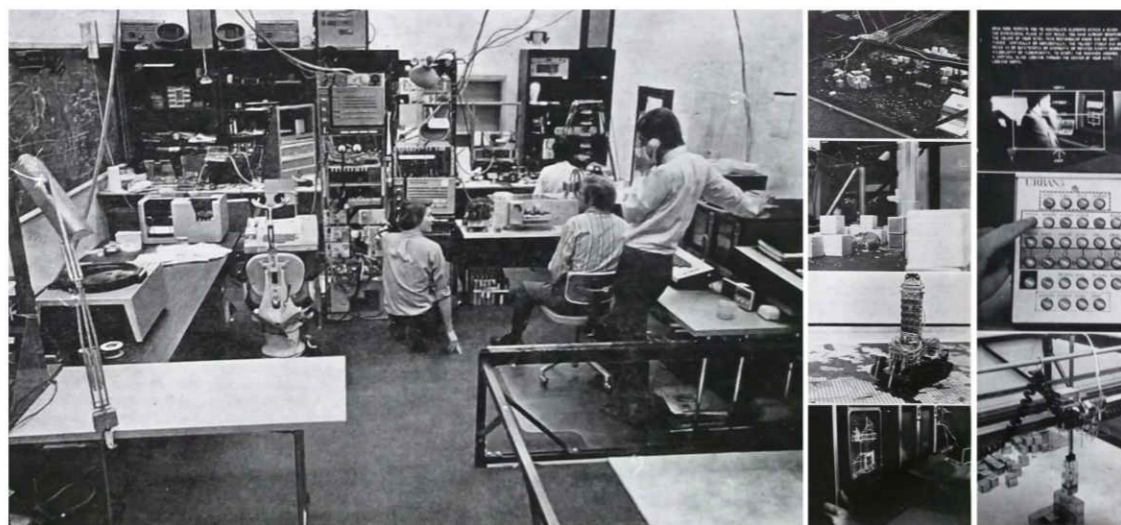
Competition entries for a studio and housing complex for artists (Bucharest, 1972).



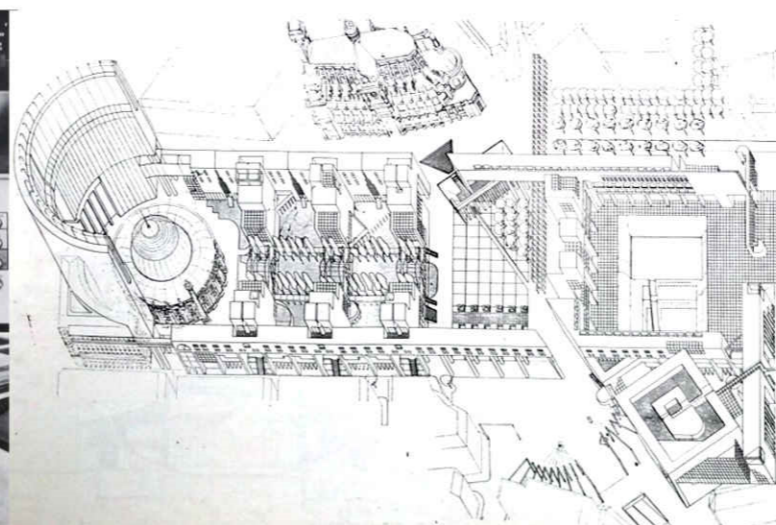
International Theatre Competition - Theatre Box (arch. students Cristina Ene, Cristian Ionescu, Ștefan Mănculescu, Mihai Pienescu, Constantin Berechet; Paris; 1977).



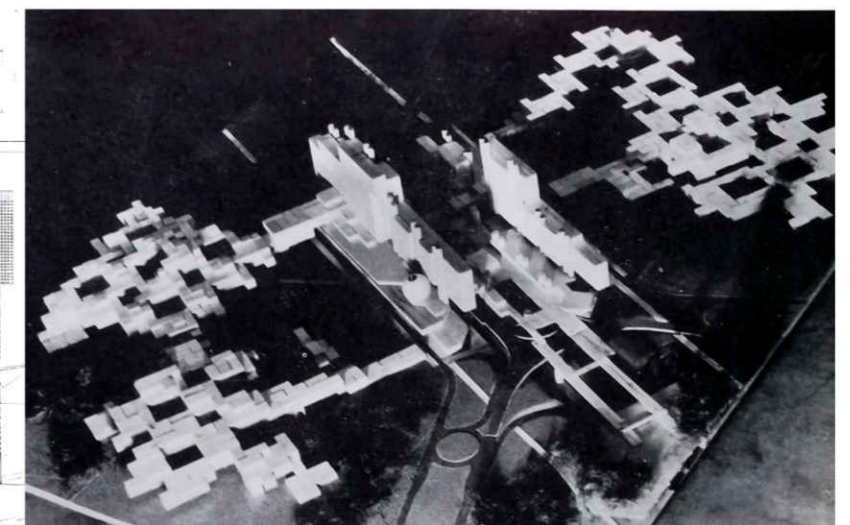
5th year project for temporary pavilions on tensile structures (arch. students Mihai Ionescu, Dan Bolomei, Gabriela Petrescu, Adriana Cosmescu, Gabriela Tabacu; Bucharest; 1978).



Architecture Machine research group led by Nicholas Negroponte, focused on computer-assisted participation design. The research methodologies of the group were presented at the International Architecture Seminar held in Bucharest in 1971 and organised by the Ion Mincu University. Negroponte also wrote an article for *Arhitectura*, introducing the capabilities of CAD as conceptual methods, not only visual tools.



Competition project for the regeneration of Les Halles District, Paris (arch. Dorin Ștefan; Paris; 1979).



Homogeneous systems - housing study - diploma project (arch. Francisc Echeriu, Romeo Simiraș; Bucharest; 1972).

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Fig. 86

- Iuga-Curea, Viorica, ed., *Arhitecți în timpul dictaturii: amintiri* [Architects during the dictatorship: memories] (Bucharest: Simetria, 2005), p. 127

Fig. 87

- <http://arhitectura-1906.ro/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Universitatea-01_duotone.jpg>
- <http://arhitectura-1906.ro/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/691-03-Orsova_duotone.jpg>

Fig. 88

- *Arhitectura* 6 (1972), pp. 17-18

Fig. 89

- *Arhitectura R.P.R* 8 (1957), p. 40
- <https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/3/30/Expo58_building_USSR.jpg>
- <<https://i.pinimg.com/originals/50/b8/9f/50b89f05796c04e168356a8ef1458c7a.jpg>>
- <http://www.pavilon-expo2015.cz/thumbs/620x465c/2014-10/09_expo_1958_brusel_a.jpg>

CONCLUSION

Fig. 90

- <https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/c/c9/Expo_Milano_2015_-_Pavilion_of_Romania.jpg>
- <http://www.expo2015.org/archive/cs/Expo/1397671406528/DETTAGLIO_GERMANI.jpg%3bfilename_%3dUTF-8%27%27DETTAGLIO_GERMANI.jpg>
- <http://www.expo2015.org/archive/cs/Expo/1392232689901/DETTAGLIO_POLONIA.jpg%3bfilename_%3dUTF-8%27%27DETTAGLIO_POLONIA.jpg>

Fig. 91

- <<https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/6/64/Ileana%2BCezarLazarescu.jpeg>>

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- *Arhitectura* 4 (1954), p. 11
- *Arhitectura* 8 (1956), pp. 5, 7
- *Arhitectura* 10 (1956), p. 2
- *Arhitectura* 2 (1957), p. 10
- *Arhitectura* 9 (1957), p. 9

- Ionescu, Grigore, *Arhitectura în România în perioada '44-'69* [Architecture in Romania between 1944 and 1969] (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Republicii Socialiste România, 1969), pp. 34, 67, 69

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- *Arhitectura* 5 (1973), pp. 2-3, 5, 12, 15-16
- Ionescu, Grigore, *Arhitectura în România în perioada '44-'69* [Architecture in Romania between 1944 and 1969] (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Republicii Socialiste România, 1969), pp. 71, 81, 115, 122
- Lupu, Mircea, *Școli naționale în arhitectură* [National schools of architecture] (Bucharest: Editura Tehnică, 1977), pp. 149, 175

Appendix 6

- *Arhitectura* 4 (1962), p. 30
- *Arhitectura* 2 (1972), p. 53
- *Arhitectura* 3-4 (1972), p. 115
- *Arhitectura* 1 (1974), pp. 26, 30
- *Arhitectura* 1-2 (1978), pp. 36, 50, 69
- Ionescu, Grigore, *Arhitectura în România în perioada '44-'69* [Architecture in Romania between 1944 and 1969] (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Republicii Socialiste România, 1969), pp. 101, 144, 148

Appendix 7

- *Arhitectura* 1 (1961), p. 38
- *Arhitectura* 6 (1971), pp. 23, 29, 32
- *Arhitectura* 2 (1972), pp. 34, 37, 41, 42, 57
- *Arhitectura* 6 (1976), pp. 39, 42
- Ionescu, Grigore, *Arhitectura în România în perioada '44-'69* [Architecture in Romania between 1944 and 1969] (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Republicii Socialiste România, 1969), p. 160
- <<https://3.bp.blogspot.com/-hbrXwN1H-O4/USDtLTtLnJI/AAAAAAAAARzA/Y3THiVUhiP0/s1600/img890.jpg>>

- <http://2.bp.blogspot.com/-sMwKLPAgqVs/Us0wp3rZtBI/AAAAAAAAAsSE/Ug6_FhgjmQI/s1600/img806.jpg>

Appendix 8

- *Arhitectura* 4 (1969), pp. 21, 41, 44, 48, 51, 69
- *Arhitectura* 2 (1974), pp. 25-26
- *Arhitectura* 3 (1975), pp. 25, 29, 31
- Lupu, Mircea, *Școli naționale în arhitectură* [National schools of architecture] (Bucharest: Editura Tehnică, 1977), p. 150

Appendix 9

- *Arhitectura* 3 (1971), p. 68
- *Arhitectura* 3 (1975), pp. 70, 72
- *Arhitectura* 5 (1979), pp. 61, 62
- *Arhitectura* 6 (1979), pp. 17, 20, 22, 32, 33
- *Arhitectura* 5 (1980), pp. 18, 19, 20, 21, 25, 26, 36, 37, 48
- *Arhitectura* 6 (1980), pp. 23, 24, 28, 30
- *Arhitectura* 2 (1982), p. 73
- *Arhitectura* 3 (1984), pp. 19, 20, 23, 26, 29, 30, 36
- *Arhitectura* 3 (1985), p. 14
- *Arhitectura* 6 (1986), p. 51
- *Arhitectura* 2 (1987), pp. 64, 65, 70

Appendix 10

- *Arhitectura* 3 (1971), front cover, pp. 5, 52
- *Arhitectura* 3-4 (1972), pp. 81, 110, 127-29
- *Arhitectura* 3 (1978), p. 73

- *Arhitectura* 4 (1978), p. 19
- *Arhitectura* 3 (1985), p. 15
- *Arhitectura* 4 (1985), p. 8

PUBLISHED WORK

Ioana C. Popovici, 'Star-Topped Spires and Cardboard Heroes. Soviet Socialist Realism in *Arhitectura R.P.R.*', *studies in History & Theory of Architecture*, 1 (2013), pp. 60–77.

https://sita.uauim.ro/f/sita/art/4_sITA_Popovici.pdf

Keywords: Socialist Realism, Romanian architecture, Soviet architecture, *Arhitectura R.P.R.*, architecture theory, architecture practice.

Abstract:

This article examines the portrayal of Soviet Socialist Realism in *Arhitectura R.P.R.*, and its effects on the development of Socialist Realist architecture in Romania. During the first three years of post-war publication, the numerous articles on the subject featured in *Arhitectura* amounted to a theoretical guide to the method of Socialist Realism (illustrated with recurring Soviet architecture models), meant to facilitate translation into local architectural language. But this call for the creative discursive exchanges needed to attune Socialist Realist principles and local cultural context elicited less critical engagement than expected, as suggested by the period's theoretical works and architectural production. The portrayal of Socialist Realism in *Arhitectura* contributed to this outcome.

In theory, Socialist Realism remained entrenched in ideology and political jargon, operating with terms relevant in a Russian cultural context (radiance, clarity, optimism), perpetuated in Romanian interpretations of key theoretical texts as conceptual abstractions with little formal implication. Practice, however, was ruled by economic and technical constraints, and hinged on deference to the Soviet architecture canon, despite *Arhitectura's* promotion of Socialist Realism as method calling for conceptual and formal flexibility. This contrast (and distance) between theoretical permissiveness and the rigid framework of practice further destabilized the discourse of Socialist Realism in Romania.

Romanian Socialist architecture was one of modest construction volume, inconsistent quality and bipolar expression (mass vs. unique programs) - a quick response to external demand, rather than an adaptation sprung from critical engagement with the actual method. A contributing factor was the miscommunication of Socialist Realism's potential for architectural versatility, as demonstrated in Catherine Cooke's study "Beauty as a Route to 'the Radiant Future': Responses of Soviet Architecture". *Arhitectura's* promotional campaign reveals a partial, theoretically cryptic and culturally un-filtered transmission of the original message, highlighting the distance between the method's pre-war conceptual flexibility and the limited scope of its local application during Stalinism. Architecture theory was under-represented, steeped in political jargon, and overshadowed by concrete examples from Soviet practice. The predominant perspective was Romanian, but one lacking enough information to

unearth the conceptual core behind the jargon, and attempt a translation of the spatial implications carried by concepts which were self-explanatory in a Soviet cultural context. Crucial ideas like flexibility in manipulating space, contextuality, distinctiveness, appealing to the collective imaginary through creative use of local spatial precedent, became secondary to the accurate transmission of propagandistic messages, which focused the argument on formal representation.

Socialist Realism was a total vision of irradiating power and order at an urban level. In architecture, the initial method also carried a realistic, humanistic dimension – in the sense of an appropriateness and adaptability of scale and image to place, program, user, and an honest expression derived from addressing complex functions in a clear, classical language. Through the dynamic, uplifting movement of representative building silhouettes, and polychrome exterior decoration (halfway between idealized depiction of life under socialism and the vivacity of popular art), the built environment was also liable to positively influence the psychology of inhabitants. Ideally, Socialist Realism was to be culturally tailored to each new environment – and this was the profile emerging from the pages of *Arhitectura*. In Eastern Europe, however, it was introduced not only at a time when, in the USSR, the discourse had entered an authoritative stage (architectural language played decoration to ideology), but also as an instrument of sovietisation, used against local spatial traditions.

In *Arhitectura*, this confusing contradiction came across quite strongly: a utopian vision of unprecedented scale, whose Muscovite iconography substituted itself to the permissive theory frustratingly alluded to, but inaccessible for a critical adaptation to the Romanian context. The use of 'national forms' reclaimed from progressive traditional architecture was inadequate compensation. Symbolically nullified by excessive, decorative use, they did little for the cultural contextuality of Socialist architecture. Until 1952, Romania's wide-scale heavy industrialization and modern infrastructure development barred Socialist Realism from architectural exclusivity. Ill-suited to the technical requirements of industrial, transport or health architecture, it gravitated towards grand-scale, representative urban programs and mass housing. This helped maintain a duality of architectural discourses, transferring the modernist aesthetic across the Stalinist period.

The space of creative manoeuvrability afforded architects in the original method – and promised to Romanian architects in *Arhitectura* – was lost in (mis)translation, precluding within-the-rules architectural experiment and critical discussion – limited though they may have been due to political intervention in architecture practice during the delicate stage of socialist regime consolidation. Socialist Realism as promoted in *Arhitectura* had two destabilizing traits, affecting the emergence of a Romanian Socialist architecture: a grandiose vision of fast-paced, total transformation of the built environment (practically unfeasible at the time, and perceived by the professional milieu as a distant utopia), and a mandatory deference to a Soviet architecture model (built on Russian cultural and architectural precedent), which worked against a possible local adaptation of the method.

Ioana C. Popovici, 'Architecture competitions – a space for political contention. Socialist Romania, 1950–1956', *Journal of Architecture and Urbanism*, vol. 38, 1 (2014), pp. 24-38.

<https://doi.org/10.3846/20297955.2014.891561>

Abstract

This is an account of the relationship between architecture and power in Romania during the Stalinist period. A cursory glance at *Arhitectura* – the only specialist magazine to resume publication after the change in regime – suggests compliance with political direction, and professional interest in translating the theoretical method of Socialist Realism into a specific, culturally localized architectural language. Architecture competitions are a medium of intersection between theory and practice, power and the profession, ideology and economy – a space where political contention based on professional knowledge becomes possible even in totalitarian regimes. Between 1950 and 1956, *Arhitectura* published several competitions which, far from reinforcing Socialist Realism as the dominant architectural discourse, exposed the method's internal contradictions and utopianism. In the ensuing confusion, there emerged a creative, practice-based counter-discourse centered on previously hegemonic dialects (the 'national'). Based in equal amounts on the pre-established dynamics of professional culture, and on the willingness and ability of the architecture field to speculate the rules of the political game, this counter-discourse gradually led to the dismantling of Socialist Realism into alternative readings of Socialist architecture.

Keywords: Socialist Realism, Romanian architecture, Stalinist architecture, architecture competitions, architecture practice, professional culture

Ioana C. Popovici, ' "... the city as a part of nature, and concrete as a kind of earth". Japanese Architecture Meets 1960s-1980s Romanian Modernism', *studies in History & Theory of Architecture*, 2 (2014), pp. 116–39.

https://sita.uauim.ro/f/sita/art/06_Popovici.pdf

Keywords: Japanese architecture; Romanian architecture; modernism; metabolism; post-modernism; lyrical functionalism

Abstract:

In May 1985, Kisho Kurokawa alighted in Bucharest for the opening of his eponymous exhibition of architecture and design. Comparable only to Kenzo Tange in terms of media representation and professional appeal, Kurokawa's visit was the pinnacle of nearly 15 years of constantly rising fascination with Japanese architecture. Published in *Arhitectura* somewhat regularly since 1972, the projects, completed works and excerpts from the theoretical writings of prominent Japanese architects - Kenzo Tange, Arata Isozaki, Kisho Kurokawa - had enthralled the Romanian professional audience.

Here was an architectural culture of undeniable otherness, but an otherness perceived as kindred in spirit and desiderata. This alien discourse was incontrovertibly modern, though based on a reinvention of the traditional vernacular which conferred it an aura of cultural specificity. It deployed advanced technology to drive urban planning and architecture to unprecedented feats of conception and construction - cities on the sea, arboreal towns for millions of dwellers - yet worked metabolically, and prized symbolism and humanity above all else. It was, in a word, inspirational.

This paper traces the dissemination of Japanese architectural discourse in the context of Romanian modernism, facilitated by *Arhitectura* magazine, focusing on lyrical functionalism (late 1960s and early 1970s), and the post-modern aesthetics of the 1980s.

Ioana C. Popovici, 'Two Churches and A Hat: The National Bucharest Theatre or the Mythology of Post-War Romanian Architecture', *PARSE Journal*, 3 (2017), pp. 109-128.

<https://parsejournal.com/article/two-churches-and-a-hat-the-national-bucharest-theatre-or-the-mythology-of-post-war-romanian-architecture/>

Abstract:

The National Bucharest Theatre (NBT) is in its third architectural reiteration. All three have been gestures of political and cultural appropriation, but also of selective erasure and reconfiguration of the past, dictated by desired shifts of identity in political as well as cultural and architectural discourse, cast into built form. In socialist Romania, reiterations in cultural production often illustrated the recalibration of the relationship matrix between the local socialist system, Moscow and the West, as well as between cultural milieus and the political, social and economic spheres. Designed and built during the 1960s, a time of politically-sanctioned cultural openness, the original theatre epitomised the obsessive focus of Romanian cultural production: national specificity. During the 1980s—the height of Ceaușescu's campaign to mould Bucharest to his aesthetic vision—the NBT was interred behind a neoclassic facade. Out of sight—but never out of mind—the original NBT accrued a wealth of meanings, values, and even post-factum memories, gradually becoming synonymous, for the architectural milieu, with resistance to mediocrity enforcing cultural policies. Each new generation of architects acquired, through the University apprenticeship system,¹ memories of the unseen, augmenting the visually inaccessible reality of the NBT to the status of architectural myth. In 2010, works began to unearth the theatre from its concrete sarcophagus. Two years later, the grand unveiling brought professional and personal expectations to a heart-breaking crash.

Using elements of self-analysis, interviews with Romanian architects, and theories examining collective—and collected—memories, this paper investigates myth construction in post-war Romanian architecture, based on the case study of the NBT. The characteristics of collective professional memory thus revealed underpin the formulation of contemporary professional identity, with significant—but troublingly undiagnosed—effects on current architectural praxis. In a professional climate of silent erasure of the recent architectural past, it is vital to examine these mechanisms in order to better reconfigure contemporary praxis.