VISUAL URBAN CULTURES OF CONTEMPORARY BUCHAREST – BETWEEN IMAGINATION AND SOCIAL REALITIES

A paper by Miruna Tîrcă

Miruna Tîrcă is a social anthropologist, with a degree in Philology, Ethnology, Anthropology and Community development. She is a founding member and President of Komunitas Association, an NGO focused on applied social sciences and urban education, also an interdisciplinary laboratory based in Bucharest, with the aim of observing the city and making it more understandable to young people and. Miruna has initiated and coordinated one of the first urban education programmes for teenagers in Romania. She has done research and studies in the following fields: disadvantaged communities and neighbourhoods, alternative communities and urban squatting, oral history of 2 Mai, a Romanian seacoast village. She is also working with multimedia means, being interested in video activism and VJing.

1. A short introduction to the contradictory urban history of Bucharest

Among the former communist capital-cities, Bucharest has probably one of the most interesting urban histories, still maintaining its image as a city of all possible contrasts, outlined a couple of centuries ago. From the Byzantine-Ottoman urban layers, which influenced the city until the 19th century, to the fundamental changes oriented towards western values and Europeanization realized throughout the same century in all aspects of life, including urban planning, reaching the brutal age of communist demolitions, the city of Bucharest crossed various stages of development, destruction and remodelling.

In the memories of foreign travellers from 2 centuries ago, Bucharest with its contradictory landscapes mixing extreme poverty with signs of extreme wealth, luxuriant vegetation with a lot of mud and dust, made its mark as a confluence point between European and Asian influences, a place of fusion and meeting of both cultures. The 19th century marked a pronounced orientation of the Romanian Participates towards European values and the wish of detachment from the Ottoman dominance. Such an orientation will be felt in legislation, in daily aspects of life and especially in the new urban spatial models that will start to govern the city. This is the time when, under Russian influence, the first urban planning projects appear in Bucharest, along with regulations and centralized measures of urban development and control; at the end of 18th century - beginning of 19th century, Bucharest benefits from the first cuttings of big boulevards, the first arranged public gardens and the first civil works of public interest. The "Europeanization" of Bucharest in urban planning continues with Austrian and French influences, leading to a second name of the city as a "Little Paris". All in all, the end of 18th century - beginning of 19th century strongly marks the wish of the dominant political class of building a modern capital city. This "European dream" has become constant in the urban thinking of Bucharest and is still present nowadays, already being one century old.

The modernization of the city continued during the interwar period; interwar urban planning is dominated by the construction of villas residencies, parks and green areas, systematic approaches of the city, urban embellishment following French and German models. Time is passing and Bucharest goes through almost half a century of intense communist regime. Regarding urban planning, the 50's are bringing important modifications in housing policies; first districts of workers's housing appear, developed after soviet architectural model. During the 60's-70's, first big residential areas of collective housing appear, while the urban landscape is marked by what architects metaphorically have called "ply woods". The main city axes and boulevards are remodelled and rebuild according to the "ply wood" principles, being plated by long rows of collective housing blocks. Behind the boulevards and the new rows of blocks, are laying the old neighbourhoods and districts of Bucharest, that still manage to remain intact in most parts.

Along with all these architectural and urban modifications, there comes an essential change in the social landscape of the city. Hundreds of thousands of people are actually being "imported" from the countryside and rural areas, in order to populate the "New City" and the new residential areas of collective housing. These are the "New People" that the communist regime is struggling hard to create and to promote – they are persons who, apparently, become urban citizens, but in reality they will never adapt themselves completely to the urban lifestyle, thus constantly keeping the image of Bucharest as a "city-village". All in all, we can talk about multiple generations of urban citizens: the one that felt the demolitions as something very personal, a "collective life rape", in the words of a Romanian landscape architect, Ioana Tudora, and a generation of new urban citizens that was literally brought here and that never became attached or responsible towards the city.

The '80s will bring brutal modifications in the urban textures of Bucharest; before the '80s, the new residential areas have been built on vacant spaces, usually in old rural peripheries or they have been limited on plating the main axes and boulevards of the city. From now on, they will occupy and destroy huge parts of the city textures, with the precise aim of erasing and replacing the old neighbourhoods of the city. The 80's urban planning meant a declared war of everything that was built before. The dimensions of the demolitions that followed was a huge one; as it can be seen in the pictures below, the surface of the demolitions can be compared with the surface of the city Venice. These processes have irremediably affected the inners urban structures and general image of the city, being a sad and uncomfortable legacy at present.

Left: demolitions in Bucharest in the 80's (marked in red) overlapped on the map of the city Venice - taken from the website www.ideiurbane.ro

Right: demolitions in Bucharest in the '80s (marked in red) – taken from the website www.ideiurbane.ro

Nowadays, following the same pattern like in the past, Bucharest is a city with multiple identities and multiple social realities coexisting in the same spaces and locations. Although this aspect might look like a formula for diversity, for a colourful urban life and a rich visual context, it actually represents a certain generator of various urban problems, conflicts and a low quality of public domain. In addition, most of the inhabitants, inheritants of the „imported" generations of „new people", lack responsibility towards their own city, do not perceive it as belonging to them and do not participate in urban planning decisions.

There is little communication between local administration and citizens, very few participative planning practices, lack of transparency in decision-making and consulting practices towards the citizens, and lack of young people's involvement in the way the city looks like.

Generally, the negotiation of public spaces tends to be in favor of private interests rather than to collective ones. As architects Ştefan Ghenciulescu, Constantin Goagea and Kai Vöckler remark in their book "*Magical blocks-scenarios for the collective housing from the socialist period in Bucharest*", urban life nowadays runs between a public interest, marked by half a century of communism, "*a time when everything connected to urban spirit and communal life was destroyed and replaced by a so called equalization, and a private one – which seems to dominate and monopolize*". The city is perceived by most of his inhabitants as "*an ugly and polluted organism, full of thieves, corruption and dangers – while home is perceived as a safe place*". Behind the door is safe, not outdoors in the public space. That is why the quality of public spaces is low and people do not assume them, do not understand that it is their right to negotiate and shape them. On the contrary, citizens perceive as familiar public spaces the malls and other good consuming places that have risen up all along the city throughout the last years.

Also, as the same architects remark, the free spaces of the city became a kind of no man's land, "*a hunting ground, incoherent temporary or permanent constructions, abusively framed parking lots, plots turned into individual gardens – disjointed puzzle of territories and wastelands*". Most of the time, decisions made by local administration regarding urban planning or public space arranging get to the city dwellers too late for them to have a word or a suggestion to say. As experts from the Resource Center for Public Participation, a Romanian NGO, affirm in a guide about public participation published in 2007, central and local administrations tend to organize public debates in the final phases of a decision-making process. Thus, the inhabitants support a long row of decisions which remain unknown to them until the moment of their concrete application, although the law implies public consultation regarding approval of the urban projects. This aspect has a huge impact on the way the city develops and looks like.

2. **Visual regimes of contemporary Bucharest**

Before making a short scan of the main visual regimes of contemporary Bucharest city, I will start with the assumption that there is a visual potential to be explored in every aspect related to urban practices and urban life in general. Thus, when talking about visual urban culture, we can think of an assemblage of random images and urbanscapes related to areas such as: architecture, urban landscape, public spaces, ways of habitation, street fashion, behaviour in public spaces, neighbourhood's practices, transportation, shopping, advertisements, street art, various signs, specific districts etc. All of them are different forms of the city's visual manifestations, represented in predictable or unforeseeable aspects of everyday practices, behaviours, inhabiting places and styles, subcultures, political initiatives, urban development decisions and processes, conflicts, which compile all together the visual puzzle of the city.

Bucharest is by far a peculiar mix of various visual regimes, still keeping with obstinacy the image of an "all contrasts" city, sketched a couple of centuries ago. A careful and socially trained eye will notice that at least two main cities are coexisting in a single location. Actually, these symbolic cities are more than two, but we will only focus on these ones in the paper. On one hand, we can talk about a **formal Bucharest**: a city aspiring for a global statute but only managing to stay in a semi-global state; a city using delayed and old fashioned urban development policies that are considered expired and ineffective in other countries, but interpreted as "modern" by the city officials and urban planners. Such urban planning policies include the building of subway and over ground passages, penetration roads, urban plans containing high ways that might cross even the city centre, constant demolitions and lack of interest towards the historical buildings, total ignoring of alternative transportation and pedestrian's rights, approval without negotiation for collective interest of private urban plans

with the aim of building huge commercial and business complexes in the city centre and in protected historical areas.

Simulation for "Dambovita Center" – a commercial and business private project designed to be placed not far from the city centre, approved without any negotiation for collective interest by the City Hall and challenged in court by the civil society. Among the side effects of this visually nicely packed project are: cutting of hundreds of trees, huge increase in car traffic and pollution, in an area already problematic with these things; affecting the activity of a near-by hospital, through noise pollution; affecting the phreatic zone as a result of huge building foundations which will be immersed in the groundwater, thus regularly flooding the basements of the houses from the neighbourhood (Google images)

Also, we can talk about questionable embellishments of the urban landscape, in many cases completely non-functional, but advertised as "beautiful, civilized and European" by the city administrative authorities. Commonly, these design improvements are only a visual expression of private business belonging to companies directly linked to members of the City Town Hall or their family members.

A few **examples** of such interventions are: urban furniture placed with no preliminary analysis of space and citizens' needs, such as rows of benches situated along busy and polluted boulevards, oriented towards traffic; poorly maintained ornamental pots, which, sometimes, prove to be a really good sleeping place for stray dogs; touch screen panels placed in the metro station that do not work many times; non-accessible green spaces placed right in the middle of busy traffic junctions; other non-functional interventions with pure decorative but senseless role or whose initial roles are embezzled, as you can see in the picture below – an urban decorative cage, which is transformed by a homeless person into a shelter; etc

Left: stray dogs sleeping in ornamental pots - Bucharest 2012 (taken from Google images)

Right: improvised shelter made by homeless person in an ornamental urban cave; the homeless person is sitting in the middle of the intersection, next to the tram refuge – Bucharest 2013 (personal archive)

Non-functional embellishment of public spaces, situated in a busy junction – Bucharest 2013 (personal archive)

Besides the visual aesthetics of the civilized formal city, there is attached a public discourse promoted not only by the city officials, but also by large segments of population; most often, such a discourse speaks in terms of civilization, modernization, alignment to the European norms, removing the dirt, removing the "rat-like" and "gypsy-like" neighbourhoods. Sorin Oprescu, the actual Mayor of Bucharest, has created for himself the image of a civilizing hero, thus clearly winning elections 2 times in a row, although there are massive irregularities in the way he manages and develops the city. At concrete urban planning level, this civilizing and modernising discourse is in reality just a mimesis of real practices and actions, or a substitute for wrong urban planning decisions, which directly affect other citizens and residential areas.

For example, the same civilizing discourse keeps asserting for years about the eradication of the stray dogs' problem, being unable to actually find a solution, a thing which does not stop the dogs from also enjoying their city, as it can be seen in the picture below:

Stray dog travelling with a tram in Bucharest – 2013 (Google images)

The same discourse totally excludes the citizens with various disabilities; there are almost no facilities for people with disabilities and Bucharest can be a totally unfriendly city for such persons.

Also, the same civilizing discourse validated and approved a series of disastrous private urban projects, such as the office building tower from Armeneasca area, which burned down due to pronounced irregularities in the construction plan, thus affecting a whole neighbourhood and also the structural strength of a famous near-by church: Armenian Church, a strong symbol of the Armenian community from Bucharest. At present, the burned tower keeps on remaining a ghostly presence in the neighbourhood, bringing an unwanted visual character to it.

Destroyed office building tower in Armeneasca area from Bucharest – 2009 (left) / 2013 (right) –Google images

But besides the formal city with all its statements, aspirations and inner contradictions, there is also one **informal Bucharest**, which lives after its own urban fluxes and rhythms of life, using its own visual codes and modalities of accessing the statute of urban citizenship.

I will shortly mention a few chapters from this hidden but also visible informal city, starting with the **local street art**, a domain which hugely caught the attention of younger generations in the last years, including children. Street art is getting more and more visible on the city's walls, while Bucharest's metro is famous in the international street art world, attracting every year artists from other countries who come to (illegally) paint the trains, as it is one of the few places where you can still find old school trains, but also modalities to get to paint them, without being caught, as Bucharest has not developed yet a detailed surveillance system of public spaces. However, in the last years, street art development is becoming "arrested", as more and more cool hunters, incorporated in forms of private companies, advertising agencies and even public authorities are trying to coop ate young artists in order to serve their own goals, such as creating a cool urban image for themselves, of socially responsible actors, preoccupied and interested in the future of the city. In all this complicated game, street art manages from time to time to function as a way of protesting and contesting contemporary urban development policies, as it can be seen in the expressive and clear message of the picture below, realized in 2011 by a collective of street artists:

Piece of street art (whole piece and detail) – Bucharest 2011 (personal archive)

Place making is also a typical visual and practical manifestation of the informal city. Most commonly, place making literally means that, in various neighbourhoods of Bucharest, residents are using similar practices of arranging their own public spaces, a process which can take various forms: building their own urban furniture, with the precise aim of creating spaces for socialising with their neighbours; arranging and keeping small gardens in front of

the blocks or in peripheral areas of the city (illegal urban gardening); bringing tables and chairs from their homes outside in the street, thus creating temporary new public spaces used for socialising, drinking, eating, playing chess and different other games; organising barbecues either in front of the block, or in the close neighbourhood of it (but

there are no special places officially arranged for barbecues); organising open air big parties and celebrations (ex: weddings), with powerful sound systems and musicians – this is specific for the Roma neighbourhoods in Bucharest.

Picture above: Improvised street party in Ferentari, with no authorisation from the City Hall, in one disadvantaged neighbourhood from Bucharest, inhabited mainly by Roma population – Bucharest 2009 (personal archive)

All these aspects are related to the very intimate structure of the city; they will never be mentioned in a touristic guide, or in the official image of the city that some urban actors are trying to promote. An untrained eye or a passerby in the city will hardly notice them. Although some of these practices have a real potential which could be used and integrated in the urban development strategies, they are not recognised or valued as powerful local resources. They remain collective or individual strategies of adaption to a city that either excludes some of its residents, or it does not take them into account, in does not respect them and does not ask for their opinion when drawing the lines of its urban policies. Thus, these people are creating their own "city legibility", in the sense of the word used by Kevin Lynch in his famous book "Images of the city". Such a personal legibility offers its creators comfort, a sense of belonging to the city and a sense of security.

Another significant aspect that deserves to be mentioned is related to the informal use of **urban waters.** Although there are plenty of lakes in the city, Bucharest does not treat well its waters: most of them look dirty, poorly maintained or even dried. There are no waterfront developments and the banks of Dambovita, the main river crossing Bucharest remain undeveloped and not used at their full potential. However, the city waters are valued by the residents and used through informal or illegal practices, like swimming and fishing. For young people living in poor neighbourhoods, that have no occasion of getting out of the city and spend a holiday somewhere, these turbid waters represent the perfect public space, a reason for joy and entertainment, despite the old-looking placards forbidding such an activity. In similar ways, for adults with reduced social and economical possibilities, urban fishing becomes a free or inexpensive way of spending their free time, also a good opportunity for socialising and exploring other parts of the city than their neighbourhoods. Urban waters are also welcome for the street kids and the homeless people, who use them often for their personal hygiene, although other people consider this an unbearable fact, which should not be seen or permitted.

Urban summer swim – Bucharest 2013 (Google images)

3. Contemporary demolitions – towards a new image of the city vs. conserving the former images of the city

In a respectful tradition towards its sad past, contemporary Bucharest is assaulted by a **second wave of demolitions**, with the aim of gentrifying old neighbourhoods and making place for modern signs such as new roads, office buildings, commercial buildings and new residential areas. When it comes about the contemporary demolitions, the public discourses follow two main paths. On one side, there are the strong voices, lead by the city officials along with private investors and embraced by a large segment of population, stating that the city should get a new face, a modern and civilized one, eliminating its old neighbourhoods and wretched houses, invaded by rats and occupied by Roma squatters. Unfortunately, this discourse has also real manifestations, with illegal demolitions of historical buildings performed in the middle of the night and evictions taking place in wintertime. On the other side, there is a public discourse belonging to a fragile civil society, stating that the city should keep its old buildings and neighbourhoods, along with its former image as a "Little Paris" and its real identity from the "golden age", identified as the interwar period. Unfortunately, this discourse impregnated with touches of nationalistic pathos is only about the beauty of the buildings, completely ignoring or minimising the problems of the people who are directly affected by demolitions and evictions. Usually, these are poor people, often Roma squatters or persons with difficult socio-economical situations. In between these two types of discourses, there is hardly any other official position regarding the fate of targeted neighbourhoods and their residents. More, this fragile civil society rarely manages to stop or prevent brutal acts such as demolitions and evictions.

The most famous case situated in this register is represented by the demolitions from Berzei-Buzesti, an old neighbourhood from Bucharest situated not far from the central railway station, which will become the crossing point for a new urban highway with 6 lanes, plated on both sides with new office and commercial buildings. Actually, this is considered to be the biggest urban infrastructure operation taking place in Bucharest in the last 23 years, having as a main aim drawing a diametrical car traffic axis, which will allow crossing the city from north to south in about 20 minutes, linking various strategic urban points.

This case has polarized large segments of the local population and has been inflated by the media, by the city official and by its oppositional movement. The urban plan behind this City Hall initiative included numerous demolitions of buildings (123 houses, out of which 13 historical monuments) situated along the location of the future high away section, and, generally, a radical transformation of the whole area. For a few years, since it was

announced, this urban plan has been contested in all possible ways: through regular protests, through court cases, through official positions taken by important professional organizations such as The Architects Order and The urban planners Union, through boycotting the public meetings held on this subject at the City Hall, through media campaigns, through conceiving and presentations of alternative urban planning developments for the area, proposed by some of the most famous local planners. What happened in the end was the fact that Sorin Oprescu, the actual Mayor of Bucharest ordered the demolitions without really having the necessary authorizations and despite the whole public opposition and disapproval. Most of the demolitions took place during the night or during very cold weather; these acts were accompanied by wintertime evictions of the population inhabiting these houses (some being owners, some renting and some illegally occupying them).

The climax of the story was reached by the demolition of Matache Hall – a historical monument of architecture defined by the XIX century engineering, built by the Municipality of Bucharest between 1887 and 1899. Matache Hall, a former public market emblematic for Bucharest, was a typical structure of the nineteenth-century European halls, made of riveted steel, smooth and perforated, covered on sides with large areas of glass and timber closures. Matache Hall was also the strongest symbol of the fight against the megalomaniac urban plan including its demolition. On 25th March 2013, during a cold and windy night, Matache Hall was brought down by the bulldozers, leaving an immense feeling of helplessness to hundreds of people who got involved in a few years long fight against its demolitions, along with dozens of other historical buildings.

Throughout this time, the public discourse of the City Municipality, represented by its Mayor Sorin Oprescu orbited around the ideas of civilising the city, modernising its urban structure, creating the image of an European city, cleaning up the misery and "rat-like" aspects of old neighbourhoods, having done with poor squatters communities, while the oppositional fight did not manage to coagulate and become really strong, bringing together not more than a few hundred persons and being preoccupied about the fate of the buildings rather than the fate of the targeted people. All in all, the image of a clean, civilised and modern city imposed itself in the public opinion, thus justifying the illegal night time demolitions and the authoritarian way of implementing such an urban plan.

Berzei Buzesti area in 1944, during Second World War bombardments (taken from Google images)

Berzei Buzesti area in 2011-2013, during demolitions performed by the City Hall (Google images)

3. Other regimes of visibility superposed with regimes of invisibility

A lot of people who visit Bucharest for the first time invariably notice and are surprised by the huge **commercial pictures** which dominate all possible sites of visibility, especially the city centre, but not only. Commercial advertisements are situated in all kind of strategic points, including residential buildings, whose walls and windows are massively covered by banners, thus preventing their inhabitants from getting natural light and a street view. However, this happens with the accord of residents, who are being paid in order to accept these banners covering their walls and windows for months in a row.

As well as the endless number of Malls which have spread all over the city, commercial advertisements easily imposed by themselves, as a result of the general acceptance of capitalism and the agreement taken for granted that there is no other possible alternative. Thus, commercial advertisements have visually and symbolically been dominating the urban environment for more than 2 decades, without any attempt from the city authorities to regulate their appearance or to impose a minimal set of rules.

Meanwhile, the rest of the citizens became slowly but surely passive observers of the commercial advertisements visual conquest, and also indirect consumers exposed daily to their subliminal messages.

In the last few years, the commercial pictures have invaded the public transportation means and even some public schools. Although these pictures represent a maximum visual aggression of the city and of its public spaces, they are being tolerated by almost everyone, and the critical discourses towards them have seldom happened.

The accelerated privatization of the visual public space goes hand in hand with the privatization of some public buildings, free spaces and land lots, along with losing green spaces in favour of new construction projects. All these processes are intensifying year by year and there is no attempt from the city officials of regulating or controlling them somehow.

Piata Unirii – central area from Bucharest (Google images)

In the same time, we can say about Bucharest that, here and there, it has become an **European city**, especially in some central parts. In comparison with 20 years ago, the city is richer, livelier and more developed, with the specification that "developing" is a very relative word, meaning different things for different perceivers.

Bucharest night life is one of the most active from Eastern Europe, attracting more and more young people from other countries. Cultural life has massively developed too. Young people are connected to the latest fashions, lifestyles and trends. All these aspects are extremely visible if you take a walk on the central areas of the city or in the districts that are considered to be "good" or luxurious.

Travelling into **peripheries or to disadvantaged neighborhoods** can, in a second, bring another light to things and "development" processes. "Bedroom-districts", as most of the communist collective inhabitance residential areas can be metaphorically called, completely lack any cultural life and organized communitarian activities (except the informal methods of place making and socializing in between the neighbors). Residents wish they could fight for their rights as urban citizens, for improving their life quality but they do know precisely how to do such things and they do not have the necessary instruments. Fragile initiatives of community organizing have started to spread in various districts, under the coordination of NGO experts, but they are not yet strong enough to form a civil movement.

On the peripheries, large pieces of space look underdeveloped or deserted. The buses become more and more crowded. Informal commerce and subsistence types of small economies are present. Otherwise, informal commerce can be also found in the city center, being systematically harassed and asked for invisibility. Activation of the public spaces from the "bedroom neighborhoods" or from peripheries does not seem to be a priority on the city

agenda. Ghettos, although they are not too many in Bucharest, also seem to be symbolically. invisible. For example, Ferentari is perhaps the most disadvantaged in Bucharest inhabited mainly by Roma people, a kind of "no-go" place, inexistent in the mental maps of most city dwellers and considered to be totally non-attendable.

It is located at the periphery, which weakens the social ties with the rest of the city and carries a heavy social stigma, multiplied by both residents of the neighborhood, by residents from other neighborhoods and mostly by the media, which often focuses coverage of the increased crime and less on poverty and its effects. The main problems faced by young people in this neighborhood are: aggressiveness of the communication codes, daily exposure to financial need of their families (some of them dismembered, with one or both parents in prison), consumption and acute drug trafficking in the area, lack of access to culture and social ties with young people from other social spheres, low access to a quality educational process, adapted to their needs.

Kids in Ferentari – Bucharest 2010 (personal archive)

To the invisible regimes of the city there must be added the **homeless people and the street kids** sniffing glue while living in underground tunnels, an old and shameful problem of Romania, but still present. According to official estimations, there is a number of approximately 5000 homeless people in Bucharest, but it is supposed that, unofficially, their number is much bigger, while the number of beds from night social shelters is of 330 at the level of a whole city! These people, having the awkward statute of being a visible unwanted urban presence in the same time with being invisible, are not to be found in the social and public official politics. In Bucharest, there is only one single NGO that provides social, medical, psychological services, sanitation and medicine to homeless people. They can only

assist a reduced number of persons. Thus, the homeless people have to fight for their surviving and visibility in the urban environment. The city's scraps and deserted places, also its urban furniture becomes valuable resources for them. Staircases of blocks, abandoned caravans or cars, train stations or underground channels become their homes, while remaining invisible for most of the city residents.

The main conclusion that imposes by itself in the end of this paper fragment is the fact that registers of invisibility are as numerous as the registers of visibility. They are also part of the big puzzle that we call city life, urban and visual culture. In order to be correctly understood and translated, all this visual urban puzzle must be profoundly researched and afterwards made available not only to an academic public but also to a non-academic one.

Bibliography:

Banksy, *Arta la zid (Street art)*, Vellant Publishig House, Bucharest, 2009

Hadley Dyer & Marc Ngui, *Watch this space! Designing, defining and sharing public spaces* Kids Can Press, 2010

Jan Gehl, *Viaţa între clădiri (Life between buildings),* Igloo Media Publishig House, Bucharest, 2011

Marc Gottdiener, Leslie Budd, *Key Concepts in urban studies*, Sage Publication, 2005

Ştefan Ghenciulescu, Constantin Goagea and Kai Vöckler, *Magical blocks-scenarios for the collective housing from the socialist period in Bucharest*, Zeppelin Publishing House, 2010, Bucharest

Ciprian Mihali, *Artă, tehnologie şi spaţiu public (Art, technology and public space*), Paideia Publishig House, Bucharest, 2005

Jans, M., *Children as Citizens: Towards a Contemporary Notion of Child Participation. Childhood*, 2004

Kevin Lynch, *Imaginea orasului (Image of the city),* Urbanismul Publishig House, Bucharest, 2012

Kaplan, R. (1983). The role of nature in the urban context. In I. Altman and J. F.Wohlwill (eds.), *Behavior and the Natural Environment*. New York: Plenum, pp. 127-161.

Ruggiero Vincenzo, *Movements in the city*, Pearson Education, 2001

Ioana Tudora, *La curte – gradina, cartier si peisaj urban in Bucuresti (Gardens, neighbourhoods and urban landscapes in Bucharest),* Curtea Veche Publishing House, Bucharest 2009

Urbanismul Magazine, Bucharest 2011-2012; edited by Urban Planners Association from Bucharest

Talen, E. and Coffindaffer, M.,*The Utopianism of Children: An Empirical Study of Children's*

Neighborhood Design Preferences. Journal of Planning Education and Research, 1999

www.pps.org
www.orasul-nostru.blogspot.com
www.urbanspaceinitiative.com
www.asociatia-komunitas.ro