

Politics and its Impact on the Urban Physiognomy in Central and Eastern Europe: A Case Study of Bucharest

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Received: 19 March 2019; Revised: 1 June 2019; Accepted: 7 June 2019; Published online: 10 June 2019

Abstract: This article intends to outline the correlation between territorial planning policies and the urban physiognomy against the historical and geopolitical background specific to Central and Eastern Europe, in general, and to Romania, in particular. A representative case-study is Bucharest-City. From a historical perspective, analysing this correlation allows individualising Romania's Capital-city by six "architectural layers" with a homogeneous physiognomy and historically attested, which emerged and evolved in the geopolitical circumstances specific to certain mediaeval periods and influences. When the Romanian traditional architecture suffered by Turkish and Greek influences, as well as French ones (end of the 19th cent.-early 20th cent.). In the interwar period it was the American, the Soviet (1950-1960), the North-Korean (1980s) and contemporary (as of 1990) influences, globalising fluxes and the generalisation of Western architectural models being quite obvious.

Key words: urban physiognomy, architectural layers, political-ideological decisions, Central and Eastern Europe, Romania, Bucharest.

1. INTRODUCTION. TARGETS

The downfall of ideological barriers in Central and Eastern Europe led to deep-going economic and social changes against the background of accelerated globalising flows. In Romania, the rapid transition from an autocratic political system and an over-centralised economy to democracy and a free competition based economy led to an economic-social destructuring followed by a new restructuring [1], [2]. Speaking of the urban structure, this process developed in two major directions: *social*, by an upsurge of marginal phenomena grounded in unemployment and lack of viable alternatives for professional reconversion, corruption and "freedoms" wrongly understood and implemented, also *physiologically* through bankruptcy-induced closure of some industrial units and the development of new residential quarters and services areas [3], [4]. Thus, spatial reconversion produced new dependencies between production and consumption, new poles of population concentration in the large cities [5].

Against this background the present study aims at highlighting the recent changes in the urban physiognomy integrated within a broader historical context, with political decision-making being a decisive factor.

Research, focussed on studying the influence exerted by territorial management policies on the urban make-up, represents an important contribution to the theory claiming the uneven development of cities [6], [7]. Against this background, the stress falls on the characteristics common to cities in Central and Eastern Europe, influenced by the policies of central-based development specific to the latter half of the 20th century [8], [9], as well as by the territorial disparities that opposed successive conservation and stagewise development of the urban outline (the urban palimpsest concept) [10], [11] and the creative destruction in urban planning [12] to the policies of removing and building up, on the other [13], [14], [15], this topic generating vast polemical discussions within the Romanian scientific community even during the totalitarian period [16]. The case-study analysed herein comes from an area little approached in the international geographical literature, namely, Bucharest city, the capital of Romania.

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Political-ideological disparities would mirror in the built-up fond, basically in the “architectural layers” made of buildings with a similar physiognomy, raised within a certain time-period tributary to a given political-ideological cluster.

Since at the end of the 20th century, political-ideological constraints no longer existed, the urban development paradigm changed from a political-ideological one to that relying on economic-social constraints [17], where cultural influences, exerted by the globalising flows [18], [19], [20], play an ever greater role. Thus, the last section of this work tries to assess segregation of the urban space, based on socio-economic and cultural disparities, by evaluating the characteristic features of peripheral urban expansions as part and parcel of the current periurbanisation process [21].

2. METHODS AND DATA

For the purpose of this research, recognizable methods and approaches for collecting, analysing and comparing the data were used. For data collection, different sources were resorted to. Historical maps and pictures were analysed and compared to the present situation. Past and current laws and regulations concerning the discussed topic were examined. Contributions to the evolution of cities in Central and Eastern Europe were reviewed with special attention to researches into politics and their impact on territorial planning and urban physiognomy. Findings were compared to statistical data and publications of Romanian authors discussing this problem.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

There is a rich international literature devoted to the urban physiognomy as a result of territorial planning policies made in the course of time [22], [23]. By contrast, the ideological constraints imposed by the Central and East-European autocratic policies limited considerably both the frequency and objectiveness of this type of studies produced in these countries before 1990, except for some studies published West the former Iron Curtain [24], [25], [26]. Concomitantly, in Romania the first studies of systemic urban geography were being produced [27].

Beginning with the last decade of the 20th century, as ideological barriers came down and globalising fluxes got momentum, leading to vast socio-economic changes in this part of the Continent, the incidence of such studies increased and diversified [28]. The highlight falls on some issues of administrative organisation in the Central and East-European capitals [29], the relationship between urban morphology and local identity [30] and urban identity policies within a globalising context [31], the complex relations among cultural dynamics, social mobility and urban segregation [32], [33], or between cultural models and traditional management. Within this context, theoretical approaches to changes in the physiognomy of Romanian cities as a result of globalisation and economic and social restructuring, or to changes in the urban-rural relationships in metropolitan areas, started developing and diversifying [34], [35].

4. THEORETICAL GROUNDWORK. CORRELATION BETWEEN POLICIES AND URBAN PHYSIOGNOMY

Urban physiognomy covers all of the town external traits [36]; it is the cumulated outcome of the plans and shapes in which towns used to develop [37], of their morphostructure and parcelling, of the location of built-up areas, of green areas, of urban density, etc. It follows that urban physiognomy results from a complex of factors which act simultaneously and at intensities varying with the political and ideological context [38], its mental projection generating the urban image, that is, “a reality at town level filtered by a subject and highlighted as an information” [39], or an “integrated interface mediating the conflict of perceptions and acceptations of urban space” [40].

The impact factors can be divided into two categories:

- *natural factors* (relief, seismicity, etc.), acting constantly and assigning the urban layout certain particularities (height, main building material, shape of roof tops, colour, etc.) since constructions should be adapted to the natural environment [41], [42].
- *anthropic factors*, basically political and ideological decisions that make urban physiognomy the outcome of will, the impact of which depends on the political and ideological context of a specific period of time, hence the *historical aspect* of the urban layout [43]. Thus, borrowing some political-ideological models ends up in assuming also their cultural patterns, that are reflected in literature, music, theatre, clothes, gastronomy and, last but not least, architecture [44].

“Urban physiognomy” is a term used mostly by the German anthropological school [45], while the French geographical school ([46]; [41]; [47]) opted for the term “forms of town concentration”, the Anglo-

American one ([48]; [49]; [50]) choosing to use “urban morphology”, which has been taken over by the Romanian geographical school, too ([51]).

Assuming a particular architectural style is tributary to a particular political - ideological model, characteristic of a certain historical period. At the same time, it is also the result of the dynamics of the urban population ethnical make-up, itself subordinated to political and ideological factors. A society based on a centralised political model, ideologically subordinated, will favour some immigration and culture-imported influences to the detriment of others [52]. This is the case of the East-European societies tributary to the Soviet cultural model after World War II, or of fundamentalist Islamic states which reject the Western cultural model. At the other end of the spectrum are the democratic states, which favour immigration and globalising fluxes from all directions, a reality visible in the economy, culture, and a modified ethnical structure through immigration and the emergence of ethnical neo-minorities [53]. What follows is the segregation of the urban space by preferential locations in certain quarters of the town, which thus acquire distinct architectural features (Bucharest hosts mosques, a Lutheran Church (founded in 1574), a Church of the Armenian community (first documented in 1685), a Bulgarian Orthodox Church (1841), a Greek Church (1893-1900), an Italian Church (1911-1913), an Anglican Church (1920-1945), and a Jewish Temple (first documented in 1866) [54].

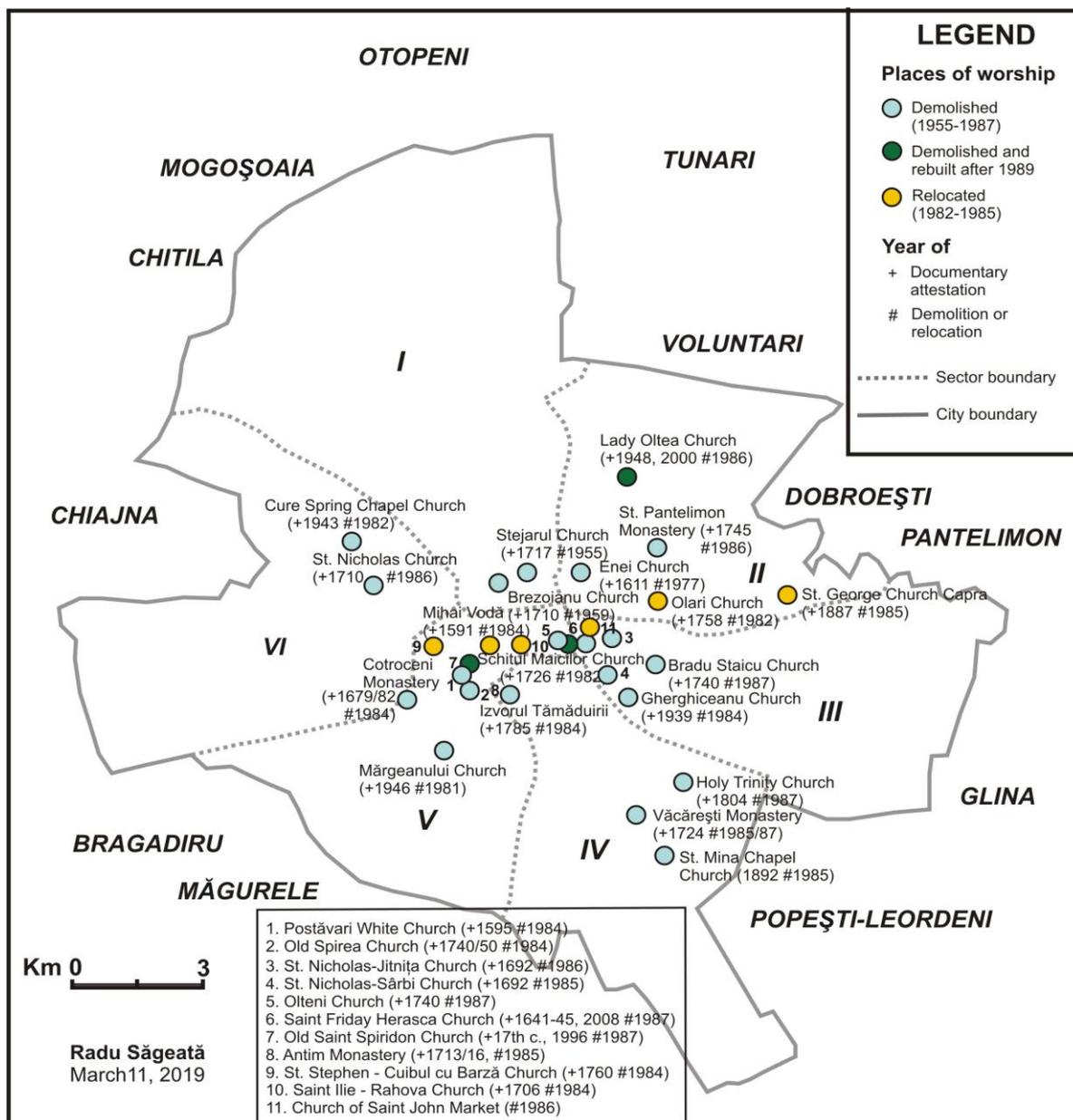


Figure 1. Places of worship in Bucharest demolished or relocated between 1950 and 1989 by political-ideological decisions (Source: author, 2019)

Therefore, the “architectural layer” can be defined as an ensemble of residential and industrial buildings raised in a particular historical period at time and political and ideological context. They are testimonies of the urban history, of a city’s development stages and of the different influences it has suffered in the course of time [55], [56].

The political and the ideological will decided both on the building of architectural structures, influencing their physiognomy, and the demolition of buildings, which alongside natural disasters, have marked the whole urban history. Well-known worldwide are the Buddhist statues in the Bamiyan Valley (Afghanistan) demolished by order of the Taliban fundamentalist-Islamic authorities, or the numerous places of worship in Bucharest that had the same fate (especially in the 1980s) in the light of the “urban planning” policy promoted by President Nicolae Ceaușescu [57] (Figure 1).

The fall of the communist system and the elimination of ideological barriers created the premises for a closer connection among the urban systems in neighbouring countries [58]. Big cities tended to assume the role of cosmopolite cities due to an increasing ethnical diversity, as well as to the development of specialist services and the large-scale assimilation of consumption products of the global culture that go beyond cultural frontiers [59], [60], which was reflected by a homogenization of their urban physiognomy.

5. DISCUSSION. ARCHITECTURAL LAYERS IN BUCHAREST

Romania’s Capital, Bucharest, situated in the south – south-east of Romania and inhabited by a compact Romanian population, has led to the specific organisation of the territory, primarily of the pattern of communication networks and the layout of the other regional metropolises.

City with a long-time history and with many architectural influences ever since [61], [62], which is the consequence of its lying at the cross-roads of Eastern and Western cultures [63], Romania’s capital-city belongs to the physiognomical make-up specific to the great European metropolises featuring a wide-range of architectural styles [64]. These had a greater or lesser influence on the built-up fond in terms of its specificity, time-length and intensity of territorial-management policies succeeding one another for a long interval, and individualising what we named “architectural layers”.

5.1. The foundation and development of Bucharest in the Middle Ages. Mediaeval architectural Layer

Although first documented as a small settlement at the time of Prince Vlad Țepeș’s reign (1459) (Figure 2-a), and first recorded as a town in 1533, Bucharest had its ups-and-downs until the first half of the 19th century, having suffered numerous natural and man-made disasters: sacked and burnt by the Turks (1554 and 1595), the Tartars (1596, 1659 and 1738), hit by epidemics of plague (1706, 1718, 1738, 1792, 1812-1813) and cholera (1831), famine (1660, 1718), fires (1658, 1719, 1804, 1847), earthquakes (1793, 1802, 1838, 1892, 1940 and 1977), floods (1839) and wars (1769-1774, 1787-1791, 1806-1812, 1916 and 1944). So, despite having been proclaimed the permanent Capital of Wallachia (1659), its population dropped significantly from some 100,000 inhabitants in 1640 (Bakšić, cited by Ghinea [65]) to half that figure in the late 1600s (Anton Maria del Chiaro, cited by Ghinea [65]). In 1831, the city’s population was estimated at 58,794 inhabitants [54]. The Turkish-Phanariote regime being removed in 1821, and a native ruler (Grigore Ghica IV, 1822-1828) brought to power in Wallachia revigorated Bucharest’s political and administrative role and had a major impact on the city’s urban development (Figure 2-b).



Figure 2. Mediaeval architectural layer in Bucharest: **(a)** The Old Princely Court (“Curtea Veche”), the oldest testimonies of Bucharest (13th cent.), **(b)** Manuc’s Inn, built in 1808 by an Armenian entrepreneur, Emanuel Mârzaian, better known under his Turkish name Manuc-bei (Source: author, 2018)

Therefore, what characterises the mediaeval architectural layer is, on the one hand, the diversity of styles (e.g. Brankovan, Wallachian) and the architectural influences, on the other, its discontinuity wrought by subsequent destructions and demolitions. This consists of the oldest buildings in Bucharest, raised in the city's historical centre and discharging mostly cultural-religious functions.

It is in that period that streets were stone-paved, numerous palaces built (Ghica, Suțu, Știrbei), Eforia Spitalelor (Hospital Administration) (1831), Filantropia Hospital (1839) were set up and a modern water supply system was developed (metal pipes) (1844) [66]. So, in less than three decades, the city's population doubled (121,734 inhabitants in 1859) [67].

The unification of the two Romanian Principalities (Wallachia and Moldavia) and the choice of Bucharest as their Capital (1862) played a decisive role in pushing it to the top of the urban hierarchy, its demographic evolution being constantly positive: 177,646 inhabitants at the time of the War of Independence (1878), 184,488 in 1889, 282,078 in 1899 [42] and 341,321 on the 30th of December, 1912 (census data) [68] (Figure 3). Referred to the second largest city, the ancient capital of Moldavia (Iași), the hypertrophy index registered a spectacular rise, from 1.21 (1831) to 4.27 in 1912.

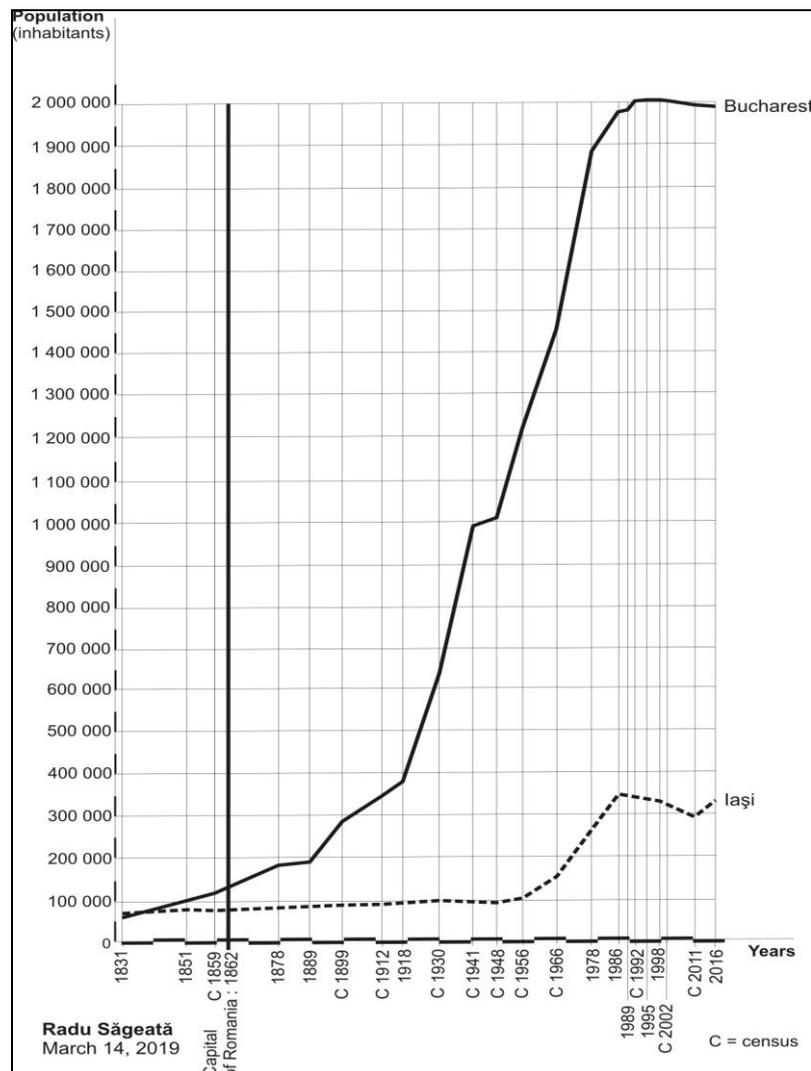


Figure 3. Comparative demographic evolution the capital-cities of the two Romanian Principalities (1831-2016)
(Source: author, 2019)

5.2. Bucharest in the modern period. Developed as a result of capital investment and the impact of the French cultural model

If until the 6th and the 7th decades of the 19th century, the city still looked quite rural, full of mudbrick houses, while cattle moving about in the central streets was a common sight, becoming a capital-city (1862) and the capital of an independent state (1877) had a many-sided impact, entailing not only a significant demographic growth, but also a sustained building and urbanistic activity in line with its new

city function of a European metropolis [69]. The French cultural model gaining ground at that time, did influence the Romanian society recently emerged from under the Eastern cultural orbit and shifting towards the Western cultural values.

New streets were being built and paved, more brick-made buildings and imposing edifices were being erected (Figure 4-a,b): The University of Bucharest - 1869, Filaret Station - 1869, Northern Station - 1872, Foişorul de Foc (Fire Tower) - 1890, The Palace of Justice and the Carol I Foundation (Central University Library) - 1893, The Ministry of Agriculture Palace - 1898, The Romanian Savings Bank Palace, The Post-Office Palace (currently the “National History Museum” of Romania) and the Cantacuzino Palace (the “George Enescu” Museum today) - 1900, the City Hall Palace - 1910, etc., new squares and public gardens were opened, public gas (1871) and electric lighting (1882), as well as public transport (horse-tram, 1894) were introduced, and in 1880-1882 complex works of correction, modernising and deepening the Dâmboviţa River were undertaken, and a vast network of bridges and canals was being built to prevent the effects of floods and epidemics; at that, time Bucharest was called “Little Paris” [70].



(a) **(b)**
Figure 4. Representative buildings for the French Cultural model in Bucharest:
(a) Romanian Athenaeum (1886-1888), **(b)** Palace of Justice (1890-1895)
 (Sources : [71] ; [72])

The French cultural influence laid the premises for the penetration of architectural styles fashionable in Western Europe, e.g. Gothic, through the neo-Gothic and Romantic currents: the Şuţu Palace, 1935, the Universitarii House, 1860, the St. Joseph Cathedral, 1883; neo-classic: the University, 1857-1869, the Romanian Athenaeum, 1888; eclectic: the Palace of the National Bank, 1885, Palace of Deposits and Consignments, 1900, or the French Academic Style, representative for the Central Army House, 1911-1923. In addition, there are some buildings with commercial functions, e.g. the Central Markets-House (Unirii Market, 1872), built in the Paris Markets style.

5.3. Bucharest in the inter-war period. The influence of the North American cultural pattern

The city’s urbanistic development went hand-in-hand with the increase of its population and the enlargement of the built-up area. Between the 1912 and 1930 censuses the population doubled again, up to 639,040 inhabitants, and the degree of hypertrophy versus the second largest city rose from 4.27 to 6.21. At the same time, the built-up area grew from 2,714 ha in 1894 to 3,741 ha in 1935, due especially to migrations to the Capital during the First World War.

Table 1. Enlargement of Bucharest Municipality built-up area (1894-1934)

Period	No. years	Initial area (ha)	Final area (ha)	Enlargement (ha)	Growth rate (ha/year)	Causes
1894-1911	17	2,714	2,802	88	5.18	Small enlargement as the City Boundaries Law came into effect (1865)

1911-1929	18	2,802	3,741	933	52.17	Marked enlargement in the wake of World War I migratory flows to the Capital.
1930-1934	4	3,741	3,860	119	29.75	Small enlargement as the Law of the Organisation of the Communal Administration of Bucharest came into effect (1929)

(Source: Master Plan of Systematising Bucharest Municipality, 1935 [73])

It was at that time that the first laws were passed to limit chaotic development within the city bounds (the “Law of Bucharest Delimitation”, 1895 and the “Law for the organisation of the communal administration of the City of Bucharest”, 1929) (Table 1). For all that, the built-up area had a chaotic character, stretching out to the marginal perimeters of the core area and alternating with large agricultural spaces.

Industrial development, associated with West-European and North-American investments of capital in the inter-war period, favoured the import of the North-American architectural model (skyscraper buildings) which, given the powerful US industrial development in the early 1900s, was adopted also by the large European and Asian cities.

In Bucharest, this architectural model usually materialised, in the building of 10 storey-high blocks-of-flats, or offices along the main central streets and boulevards (Calea Victoriei, Magheru Blvd.) [74], influenced by the architectural current fashionable at the time (Art Deco, modernism, bauhaus, cubism, etc).

A representative building for this architectural model, in the style of inter-war North-American skyscrapers (Art Deco) (Figure 5-a), The Telephone Palace (Figure 5-b), was erected between 1929 and 1934.

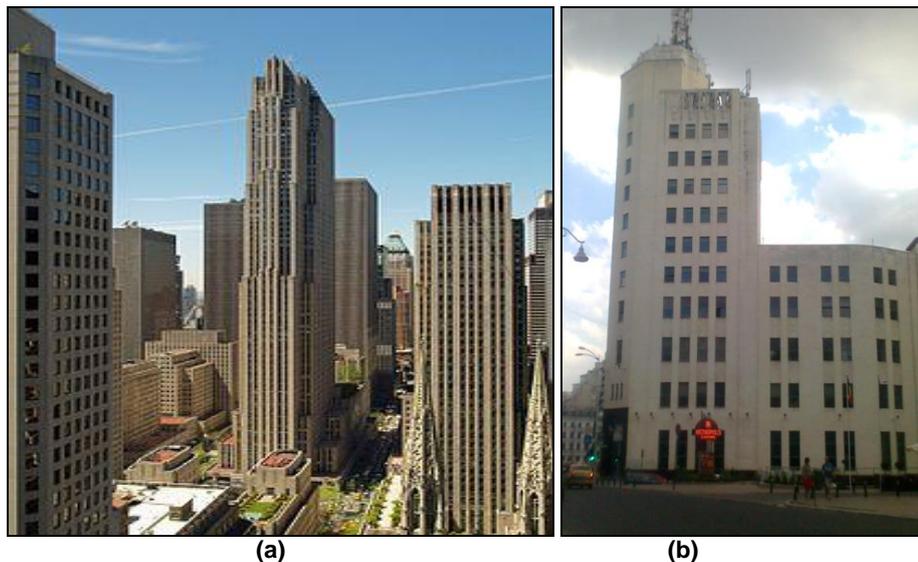


Figure 5. North-American architectural model in the first half of the 20th century: **(a)** The Rockefeller Center (the first building opened in 1933), in Manhattan, New York), **(b)** The Telephone Palace, built between 1929-1934 in the style of North-American skyscrapers
(Souces: [75]; author, 2018)

5.4. The influence of the Stalinist-Soviet architectural model

The ideological and political discontinuity, created at the end of World War II, affected all the economic and social aspects of life, and no less so the built-up area, by imposing, often brutally, a new foreign architectural model: the Stalinist-Soviet one [76]. Its implementation was also facilitated by the damages produced by the November 10, 1940 earthquake the Anglo-American bombardments of April and July 1944 and the German ones of August 24, 1944.

Planned development, subordinated to the political factor, state-imposed control over the means of production and exchange, orientation towards the egalitarian development of all administrative and territorial units irrespective of their potential and specificity, barring the expansion of metropolises by

limiting immigrations, the imposition of collective agriculture, the close correlation of production with the economic and military needs of the “Big Brother”, promoting autarchy and breaking with the Western world, elaborating ambitious programmes of economic and social development and modernisation engendered an original geography peculiar to the East-European countries [77].

This “ideological export” was reflected on the political, ideological, social, institutional, cultural, psychological and architectural plane. All East-European towns have the same physiognomy determined, on the one hand, by the uniformity of the outskirts (Figure 6-a,b,c), with their big Soviet-like prefab structures, and by the presence of Soviet-style monumental constructions (Figure 7-a,c), on the other. “The Scânteia House” (today “The Free Press House”) (Figure 7-b), built between 1952 and 1957 to host the publication of the “state press”, especially of the daily “Scânteia” newspaper of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party, is a hallmark of this architectural model.

The consistency of this type of architecture is far more obvious in the residential quarters, because it was at that time that the large residential area of Bucharest was conceived: block-type structures for workers in Ferentari district, standard dwelling-houses in Bucureştii Noi district, new dormitory districts in Titan, Drumul Taberei, Berceni, Colentina, Pantelimon, Militari, or the apartment-blocks planted along heavy traffic arteries: Mihai Bravu, Ştefan cel Mare, Griviţa, Rahova, Giurgiului, etc [78].



Figure 6. Residential architecture of the Soviet-Stalinist type in “Drumul Taberei” area **(a)**, **(b)** and in “Eroilor Sanitari Boulevard” area **(c)**
(Source: author, 2018)

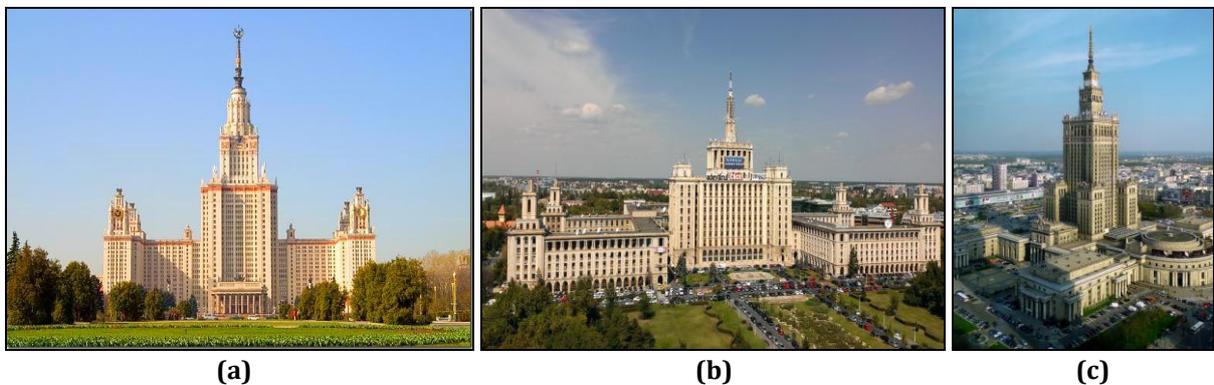


Figure 7. Soviet architectural model reflected in the administrative buildings:
(a) “Lomonosov” University in Moscow, **(b)** “The Free Press House” in Bucharest, **(c)** The Palace of Culture in Warsaw
(Sources: [79], [80], [81])

Bucharest's large residential area displays quarters built in communist time, that have a relatively circular layout, the local convergence thoroughfares being the main entrance axes to the city [82]. This area has generally over eight-storey-high buildings, housing approximately 60% of the city population ([83]. It follows that this zone is particularly important, having maximum demographic concentration, hence the highest human pressure of the city [39].

Concomitantly, the population would steadily grow, from 992,536 inhabitants in 1941 and 1,041,807 in 1948 to over 2 million in the 1980s, but the degree of hypertrophy between Bucharest and the second largest city (maximum value 8.83 at the end of the Second World War), started narrowing down [39] (Table 2).

Table 2. Evolution of the Bucharest hypertrophy index (1831-2016)

Year	Hypertrophy Index	2nd-rank city
1831	1.21	Iași
1859	1.85	Iași
1912	4.27	Iași
1930	6.21	Iași
1948	8.83	Cluj Napoca
1956	7.61	Cluj Napoca
1966	7.36	Cluj Napoca
1978	6.67	Iași
1986	5.7	Brașov
1989	5.8	Brașov
1992	5.89	Constanța
1998	5.79	Constanța
2002	6.00	Iași
2002	6.05	Iași
2016	5.81	Iași

Source: Processed data based on Censuses and Statistical Yearbooks [84]

5.5. The end of the communist period and the North-Korean architectural model in Bucharest

The tendencies to reform the communist political system in the 8th decade of the 20th century made Bucharest politically open to the North-Korean-type of communism, then the only one still compatible with that in Romania. Once extrapolated to architecture (Figure 8-a, b), this tendency led to adding North-Korean elements [85] to Bucharest’s architecture, strikingly visible in the entire architectural perimeter between Unirii, Libertății Boulevards, and Alba Iulia Square (Figure 9-a).



Figure 8. Administrative buildings in Pyongyang (North Korea) (a, b)
(Sources: [86], [87])

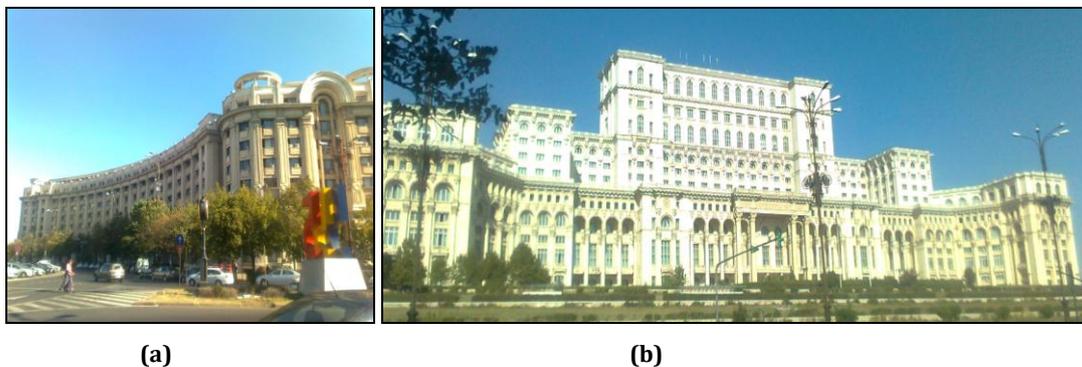


Figure 9. Representative buildings for the North-Korean architectural model in Bucharest : (a) residential buildings in the former “Uranus” neighbourhood, (b) The Parliament Palace, the biggest administrative building in Romania
(Source: author, 2018)

In this great architectural ensemble, the Parliament Palace (“The People’s House”) (Figure 9-b) occupies a central position; the building works started in 1983, are still unfinished. This building is the second largest administrative structure in the world after the United States’ Pentagon in Washington. It has approximately 1,000 rooms, among which 440 offices, over 30 halls and salons, restaurants, etc.

5.6. The fall of ideological barriers. Generalisation of globalising fluxes and ethnical-social segregation of the urban space

The political-ideological fault-line that marked the collapse of the communist political system in 1989 also reflected in architecture, in that the North-Korean model was abandoned and the contemporary North-American model would gain ground.

In other words, the last 20th-century decade witnessed the globalisation of the North-American architectural model, the natural outcome of the fall of ideological barriers in Romania, too. Concrete and glass-made buildings, mainly services-oriented (bank headquarters, offices, hotels, etc.), similar to, but not that tall as those of the great North-American, European and Asian cities (Bucharest being prone to seismic risks) became customary [88], [89] (Figure 10).



Figure 10. “Asmita Gardens”, placed on the banks of the Dâmbovița River, new residential complex, representative for the contemporary North-American layer
(Source: [90])

As the building area has been developing due to globalisation and foreign direct investments, the phenomenon of urban space segregation, with two distinct components, an *ethnical* and a *social* one, has become obvious [83], [91].



Figure 11. Social segregation in the urban physiognomy
(leftside image: workers’ blocks of flats built in the 1960s-1970s mostly for single persons, in response to the development of an industrial zone in the west of Bucharest city; presently, it is low-income families that live there; rightside image: “West-Gate”, a new residential and business quarter developed after the year 2000, inhabited by families with over-average incomes. Note: separated by a concrete wall)
(Source: author, 2018)

The *ethnic* component is the result of ethnical neo-minorities discharging commercial and business activities in the city (around 20,000 foreigners live in Bucharest now, each having chosen its own quarters where the business is located, e.g. the Chinese have the Obor - Colentina - Voluntari area (Red Dragon Shopping Centre), the Arabs have the Crângași - Militari - Drumul Taberei district (Grozăvești & Regie Student Campus) [92]. Hence, social and spatial segregation of the urban structure [93].

Social segregation is based on financial segregation. On the one hand, are the communities facing serious social problems (unemployment, deficient technical-urbanistic infrastructure, high crime rate, etc.), on the other hand, is the high-income population which tends to migrate towards the periurban areas, creating *gated communities* of the wealthy elite who can afford good quality urban environments and cut themselves apart from the rest of the population (Figure 11). In the beginning, like districts had developed in the north of Bucharest (Pipera, Primăverii, Tei, Băneasa) where the corresponding infrastructure existed before 1990 (high concentration of embassy headquarters and diplomatic missions, residential and different services areas that attracted over-specialised services for a wealthy clientele), later such communities extending (new real estate projects) to other city areas [94].

Although more comfortable and having a larger living space than the pre-1990 dwellings, reaching the new residential quarters (Figure 12) is not an easy matter given that roads are narrow, partly not asphalted, basically unsuitable for the present-day traffic [95].



Figure 12. Land parceling and urban expansion in Chiajna – Bucharest’s ring road area
(Source: author, 2018)

The action of updating them, which is the task of the local sectoral authorities, has not been coordinated with urban development [96]. Beside these dysfunctions, there is a shortage of car-parking places, in many cases there are no public transport connections with the central areas; moreover, education and sanitation facilities are missing and wherever they do exist, they are usually privately owned and in many cases costs are prohibitive, or it is usually only the dwellings of the respective residential quarters which are intended for the people living there.

6. CONCLUSIONS

This outline of Romania’s capital-city current landscape is the result of numerous influences, a temporal impact of various intensities and variable interaction periods. The determinant factor that marked the complex process of interactions is the political one which acted either directly, through the “import” of some foreign architectural models (Figure 13) fashionable in a certain historical period, as an integral part of a politically coordinated development alternative with a complex economic and social impact, or indirectly through the intermediacy of some immigrant communities (political or economic refugees, the economic factor being in this case tributary to the political one, economic evolutions being the consequence of political developments).

The phenomenon itself is by no means a new one, being deeply rooted in the communist period, when the policy of “internationalizing the left”, made Romania promote a vast campaign of attracting foreign students, mainly Arabs originating from areas, which at that time had fallen into the orbit of socialist development, or which embraced this trend (Palestine, Syria, Algeria, Libya, Iraq, etc.). In addition, there were the flows of refugees (Greeks, Poles, Chilians, Kurds, Somalians, natives from the Congo Democratic Republic, Korea, etc.). After 1990, these people would become engaged in commercial activities, developing small entrepreneurial businesses located in the proximity of students’ camps, subsequently concentrated into commercial complexes.

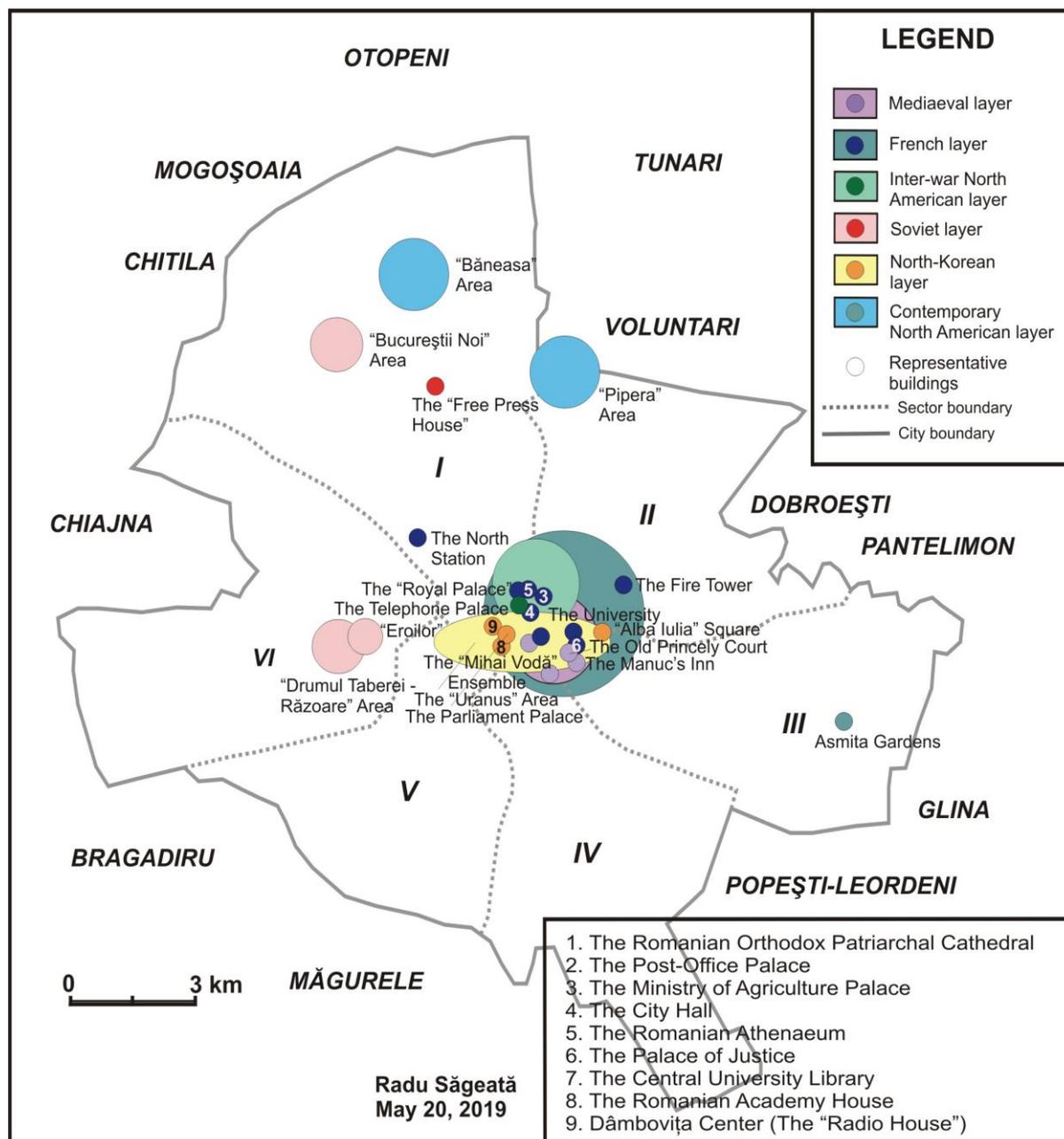


Figure 13. Architectural layers in Bucharest
(Source: author, 2019)

On the other hand, industrial-restructuring led to the dissolution of some industrial units, which through deficient management and corruption were closed down, hence unemployment, while the respective areas were taken over by house dealers, the groundwork for housing investments.

Future evolutions indicate a similar trend i.e. Romania's EU integration, and prospectively its joining the Schengen Area, makes this country an attractive destination, particularly for the emigrants from less developed countries outside the European Union, Romania becoming a gateway to it. In view of this situation, Romanian towns, and the capital-city in particular, will become ever more cosmopolitan by taking over, often uncontrolled, some influences alien to this country and extrapolating them to the urban physiognomy [97].

7. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The research for this paper was conducted under the research plan of the Institute of Geography of the Romanian Academy "Geographic Studies on the population Dynamics in Romania".

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