

Landscape Forum Bucharest 2015

A Future for the Colentina Lakes Chain

Landscape Forum Report

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Introduction

The 4th LE:NOTRE Institute Landscape Forum took place from 21st – 25th of April 2015 and included the participation of more than 110 spatial planning practitioners, educators, students and researchers from over 20 countries. The forum focused on imagining alternative futures for the landscape of the Colentina Lakes Chain in Bucharest. Four institutions organized the forum in cooperation with the LE:NOTRE Institute: Ion Mincu University for Architecture and Urbanism, the University of Agronomical Sciences and Veterinary Medicine, ASOP, the Romanian Association of Landscape Architecture and APUR, the Professional Association of Romanian Urban Planners.

What makes the LE:NOTRE Landscape Forum different from other European landscape events is the focus on dialogue, debate and discourse. It provides a unique opportunity to interact creatively with colleagues from a range of landscape disciplines in informal workshop and field visit settings. The aim is to create stimulating environment to promote the generation of both new teaching ideas and projects, for research and for collaboration between theory and practice. A joint publication will result from the meeting, to which all participants will contribute. To date, the forum has been organized three times: Antalya (2012), Rome (2013), Sarajevo (2014). Bucharest 2015 was the fourth edition this event.

The focal area of the Bucharest landscape forum was the chain of lakes along the river Colentina. The river transects the entire northern periphery. The plans for transforming this originally very swampy area outside of the urban core into a potential urban green belt were laid out already back in the 1930's, representing a remarkable case of forward-looking planning.

This green-blue line has huge potential for the sustainable development of Romania's capital city and represents high relevance for the forum's four focal themes:

- urban growth and peri-urban sprawl
- sustainable tourism and recreation
- heritage and identity
- urban growth and peri-urban sprawl

Working groups on each of these themes were established. The groups explored the Colentina Lakes Chain from different perspectives, trying to build a holistic picture of this urban landscape.



Pre-forum promenade

A two-day excursion was organized in advance to the forum in order to provide a possibility for exploring Romania's unique rural landscape. This offer was in particular addressed to visitors coming to Romania for the first time. The tour started on Sunday, 19th of April. After a visit to the old royal palace of Tîrgoviște the excursion group went to the commune of Runcu in the north of Dâmbovița county, which is part of the lower Carpathian mountain range. The pre-forum promenade was organized by Tourism Verde, the Romanian association for ecological tourism.



First forum day, Tuesday, 21st of April 2015

The forum started at Ion Mincu University for Architecture and Urbanism with the following activities:

- Forum participants' poster exhibition with contributions from research, education and practice
- Landscape research doctoral colloquium
- Innovative practice workshop with ESRI Romania on GIS-based visualization methods
- Forum introductory lectures
 - *Gheorghe Pătrașcu*, chief architect of the city of Bucharest referred to the objectives of the European Landscape Convention.
 - *Tiberiu Florescu*, dean of the urbanism faculty, presented some aspects of the General Urban Plan Bucharest 2035 that is currently under development.
- Exposition opening and award ceremony of the international student competition *(Re)Discovering the Emerald Necklace: the Colentina Lakes Chain, Bucharest*



LE:NOTRE Doctoral Colloquium: participants' interactive poster exhibition and public debate on how to design a good research question

International student competition: (RE)Discovering the Emerald Necklace

21 teams from eight different European countries imagined an alternative future for the Colentina Lakes Chain. The project ideas resulted from an international competition that was launched in advance to the forum in October 2014. The first LE:NOTRE Institute student competition aimed to support integrated approaches to the urban and peri-urban landscape. Multidisciplinary student teams elaborated planning and design proposals at various scales. Thanks to the forum sponsors, prizes with a total value of 1800 Euro could be distributed to the 6 winning teams.



The first prize was given to three Romanian students who are currently studying at the Technical University of Delft in The Netherlands: Maria Alexandrescu, Claudiu Forgaci, Anca Ioana Ionescu.

Project title: 342.914km scaffolding

The '342.914km scaffolding' proposed in this strategy builds on the hidden web of natural and spontaneous urban processes of the periphery. It aims to grow a continuous green-blue corridor and to consolidate its relationship with Bucharest. The key component of the strategy is an adaptable module, a scaffolding capable to adjust to the particularities of each lake and to connect it to its wider landscape. The scaffolding builds a structure that is shared by both city and nature (outer and inner rings pulled together with a set of radial links). It encourages social and spatial interaction by following pre-existing structures and by crossing communities.



Two second prizes were issued to projects with an equal evaluation rate.

The second prize (A) went to Miruna Drăghia, Elena Rus, Agota Barabas and Andreea Toma, students at Ion Mincu University for Architecture and Urbanism, with a proposal titled **Green Infrastructure and Water Management**.

The second prize (B) was given to Rini James and Adriana Pápic, students at Weihenstephan-Triesdorf University of Applied Sciences in Germany. Their project was titled **Maidan takes shape**.

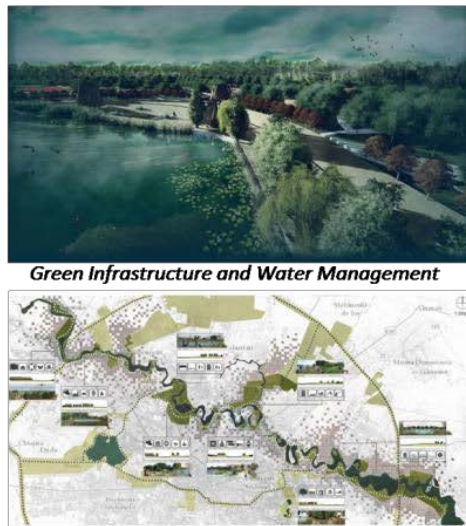
The third prize won Kinga Jánossy, Andreia Oshiro and Anna Szilagyi-Nagy from Nürtingen-Geislingen University in Germany, with their **Productive Periphery Matrix**.

The fourth prize went to Anca Andrei, Ana-Iulia Pandele, Florentina Costache and Mariuța A. Sitaru who study at the University for Agronomy and Veterinary Medicine in Bucharest, with their concept for a **Bucharest Garden City**.

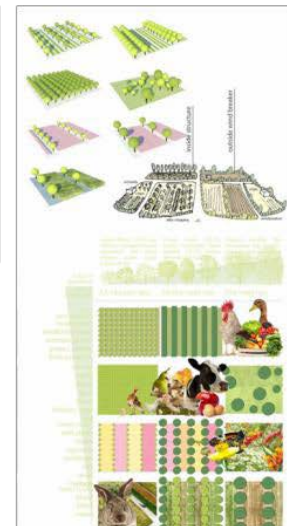
The fifth prize was awarded to Andreea Daniela Machidon and Cristina-Daniela Baltoi, students at Ion Mincu University for Architecture and Urbanism, with a project titled **Integration and Connection**.



342.914km scaffolding



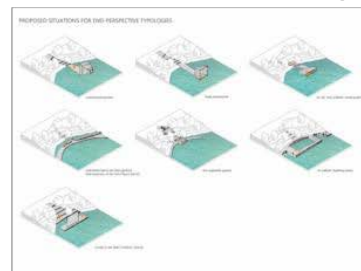
Maidan takes shape



Productive Periphery Matrix



Bucharest Garden City



Integration and Connection

The official forum opening day, Wednesday, 22nd of April 2015, was dedicated to the European Landscape Convention and its implementation in Romania. The Romanian minister for Education and Research, Sorin Mihai Cîmpeanu, opened the event confirming his support for the forum objectives. The international and local development of the European Landscape Convention was presented by Maguelonne Déjeant-Pons, executive secretary for the European Landscape Convention at the Council of Europe, and Anca Ginavar, general director of the territorial development unit of the Romanian Ministry for Regional Development and Public Administration.



The presence of these personalities underlines the relevance of adding landscape to the political agenda, which is the core objective of the European Landscape Convention. It was underlined that landscapes contribute substantially to human well-being, which is why their protection, planning and management needs to be developed and strengthened at all levels. This includes adding landscape as an educational theme to the curricula of primary and secondary schools.

Ms Ginavar presented the following achievements towards implementing the objectives of the European Landscape Convention in Romania:

- Development of a method for identifying and evaluating landscapes by means of a pilot study in the commune of Bordușani
- Publishing dissemination and information material on rural heritage
- Publishing information material on the built heritage in the urban context
(http://www.cjalba.ro/wpcontent/uploads/2013/10/Reglem_urbanistopt.pdf,
<https://www.bnab.ro/2012/proiecte/7/69/>,
http://www.cjalba.ro/wpcontent/uploads/2013/02/regl_Valea_Sebesopt.pdf, <http://propark.ro/images/uploads/file/publicatii/Ghid%20P%20Craiului-extras.pdf>)
- Greenways along the Danube, a pilot study for landscape-based tourism on the Danube
- *Common Strategy for Sustainable Territorial Development of the cross-border area Romania-Bulgaria* (<http://spatial-cbc.eu>, <http://spatial-branding.eu/>, <http://www.spatial-landscapes.eu/>)

After this opening discourse on the European Landscape Convention representatives of the organizing institutions welcomed the forum participants: USAMV prorector Florin Stănică, UAUIM rector Zeno Bogdănescu, AsoP president Alexandru Ciobotă and APUR president Gabriel Pascariu.



In the following, Richard Stiles, president of the LE:NOTRE institute, informed in detail about the forum objectives and its working method.

The LE:NOTRE institute has been established under the auspices of ECLAS, the European Council of Landscape Architecture Schools, as an umbrella organisation for interdisciplinary collaboration between education, research and innovative practice in the landscape field. The goal of the institute is to develop and strengthen the links between landscape education, research and innovative practice, in the public, private and not for profit sectors. It aims to achieve this by furthering and facilitating communication, collaboration and cross-fertilisation of ideas on an interdisciplinary and cross-sectoral basis, in order to promote the wider and deeper understanding of the cultural, environmental, social and economic role of the landscape for the benefit and well-being of society.



The morning session was moderated and concluded by Simon Bell, president of the European Council of Landscape Architecture Schools, who underlined the importance of the forum for further developing landscape architecture academia in Europe.

Excursions along Colentina and working groups

The entire Wednesday afternoon was dedicated to conducting field trips to the different workshop areas along Colentina. The interdisciplinary working groups went to the following destinations: Citila (urban sprawl group), Floreasca neighborhood (heritage group), Pantelimon (rural group) and Cernica (tourism and recreation group). The following day was used for reflecting and analyzing the respective area of study and concluded by various roundtable discussions with local stakeholders.



Some impressions from the field trips: Cernia lake and forest, Floreasca neighborhood

Thematic lectures on Friday, 24th of April 2015 – During the morning session four invited keynote speakers presented their views and experiences on the forum themes. The working group continued in the afternoon. A regional meeting of ISOCARP was held in parallel.

- **Urban growth and peri-urban sprawl:** *Milica Bajic-Brkovic*, president of ISOCARP and urban planning professor at the University of Belgrade, talked about the challenges of the post-socialist city.
- **Sustainable tourism and recreation:** *Liisa Tyrväinen*, Finnish forest research institute, spoke about the multiple benefits of natural areas, in particular for public health.
- **Heritag and Identities:** *Irina Tulbure-Moldovan*, architect and lecturer at Ion Mincu University, gave a presentation on Romanian architecture in the period 1944-1960.
- **Rural fringe and productive landscapes:** *Giovanni Scudo*, Milan Politecnico, gave a lecture on sustainable local food systems with examples from Northern Italy.



The closing day of the forum, Friday, 25th of April 2015

This morning session included the following activities:

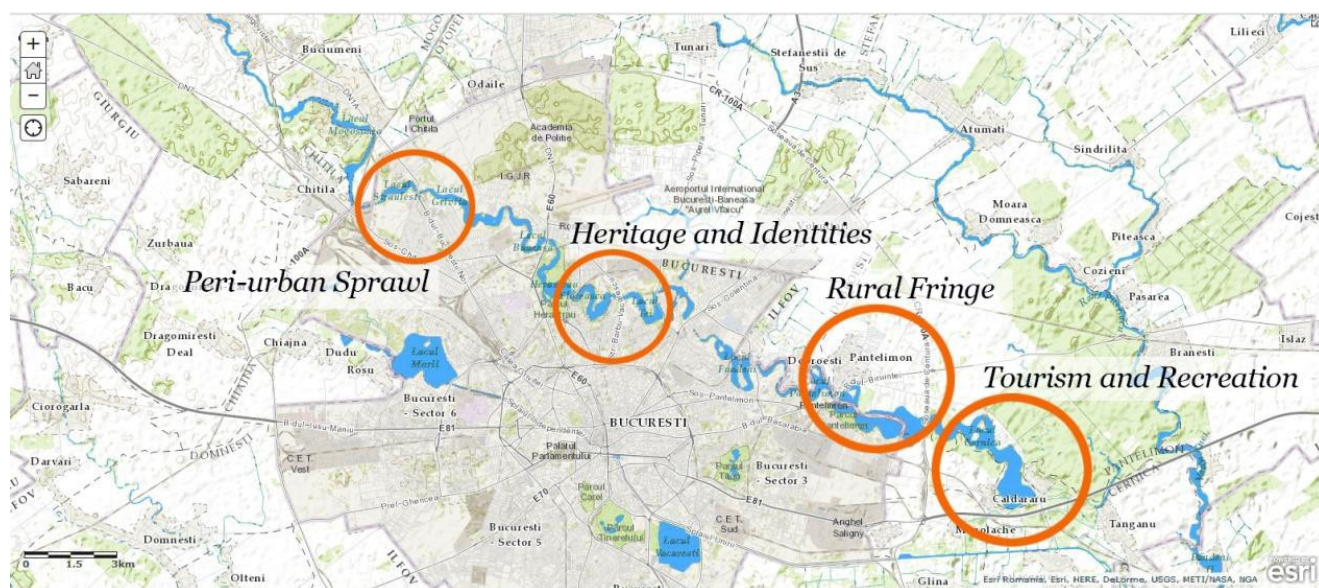
- Presentations of the working groups' findings
- Presentation of the draft forum outcome statement (A Future for the Colentina Lakes Chain)
- Interdisciplinary roundtable with representatives from public authorities, NGO's, civil society, academics and researchers. Roundtable participants were asked respond to the outcome statement and to outline their ideas for enhancing an alternative future for Colentina. The discussion was very constructive and profound. A full documentation will be included in the forum publication.
- The forum finished with a poster session in the Ion Mincu exhibition hall.

Forum outputs

The landscape forum has two principal outputs:

- ***Outcome statement: A future for the Colentina Lakes Chain:*** The forum outcome statement seeks to provide guiding principles for restoration of the Colentina Lakes Chain for the ecological, social and economic benefit of the entire city and environs. The document is meant to initiate a public dialogue about the future of the lakes.
- ***LE:NOTRE Landscape Forum Bucharest 2015 Publication:*** this document will contain the full results of the four forum working groups with additional input from the keynote speakers and invited experts. This publication will be presented at the 5th LE:NOTRE Landscape Forum in Cyprus in March 2016.

Preliminary working group outcomes



Urban growth and peri-urban sprawl

The peri-urban working group explored the theme of urban peripheries and dispersed urban settlement starting with a direct observation of the north-western part of the Colentina chain of lakes. The study area was located between Bucureștii Noi, Chitila-Mogoșoaia following the lake shores of Grivița, Străulești and Mogoșoaia. The working group was composed of different landscape researchers and professionals coming from 14 European countries. The urban periphery is certainly not discussed enough and was an interesting theme for everyone. A zone of contrasts, ambiguities, remnants of former structures, different architectural styles form various periods, industrial ruins, vegetation in a more or less good state, degraded ecosystems and biological niches and many more. The site visit and the discourse that followed enabled the group to create a portrait of this fragmented landscape. In the following, the group divided according to three themes: 1) morphology and spatial perception, 2) environment and ecology, 3) socio-economic dimension, governance and administration.

The analysis developed primarily around the idea of preserving and enhancing the landscape potential of the area, following the recommendations of the European Landscape Convention, according to which any landscape is relevant, not only the outstanding ones but also everyday and degraded landscapes. A roundtable discussion was organized on the second workshop day which was very important for the working groups' discourse. Various local experts and stakeholders representing local and central administrations, landscape education and research, real estate and civil society were present and responded to the participants' question.

The working group achieved to articulate a conceptual diagnosis of the area of study and to draw up a strategy for rethinking the cities relationship to the lakes chain in order to regain this important resource for public space. The team underlined the need for an integrated, inter-communal management plan in order to balance the competing needs of urban development and natural resources.

Sustainable Tourism and Recreation

The working group on sustainable tourism and recreation went to the most eastern part of the Colentina chain of lakes which is the landscape around Cernica, known by the local population for its beautiful monastery. The area is characterized by many different landscape elements all of which have potential for recreational activities. The lake itself is a big asset as well as the huge Cernica forest, both are even part of the EU's Natura 2000 network. In addition to these strong elements there is still a lot of hidden potential such as the Neolithic settlement sites. However, strong changes are under way due to new road infrastructure and commercial building to be constructed in the near future. The objective of this workshop was to outline an alternative future for the Cernica landscape, a future that would include recreational activities primarily for the citizens of Bucharest but also for tourists. After a half-day field trip the group tried to obtain a deeper understanding of the landscape by identifying its strengths and weaknesses as well as the major driving forces that are putting pressure on this area.

Based on these findings a sensitivity analysis was conducted in order to find out which areas would be negatively influenced by increased leisure activities. These findings were overlaid by another layer showing areas that would be suitable for various forms of recreation. This way, the capacity of the landscape for recreational use was identified. On this basis, a strategy can be built for increasing the recreational activities, with all positive economic benefits related to this, without harming or even destroying the landscape potential, which is the fundamental capital for tourism.

It was found that the Cernica landscape has much hidden potential that deserves better articulation and connection to the wider context of Bucharest. It was not possible to go into more depth during the workshop itself but the forum publication will include all findings and ideas in more detail. Clearly, the Cernica landscape needs a coherent vision across the various administrative boundaries crossing its territory. Ideally, a future strategy would relate the area to the wider context of the Danube region to which it can be a connector. The Colentina river links further to the Dâmbovița valley and is even crossed by a railway leading southwards to the Danube.

Heritage and Identities

The heritage group concentrated its work on the Floreasca neighborhood near the homonymous lake which is part of the Colentina chain. The quarter was built by architect Corneliu Rădulescu in two phases: 1956-1958 (72 blocks with 2100 apartments) and 1958-1959 (57 blocks with 1342 apartments). The project was realised in the Stalinist period (the Realist Socialist period), influenced by the soviet model of cvartal – an urban unit of dwellings organised around community spaces, with low-rise buildings and a very strong presence of community facilities (schools, kindergartens, cinemas). The objective of this workshop was to reassess the value of the architectural communist heritage in order to overpass common stereotypes and to make room for an objective perspective. It was taken into account that next to the architecture also the community structures and the open space patterns are part of the socialist heritage. The group discussions focused on three major aspects: the maintenance of the landscape and open space structure, the stakeholders to be involved and the need for better connectivity to the surrounding urban landscape. The group thus defined the specificity of the Floreasca landscape patterns as the actual heritage of this area. Important elements of this are the large empty and vegetated spaces between the blocks, which enhance social activities and sense of community. These voids are under threat as they are increasingly filled with private uses and related constructions. Elements of such an enhancement strategy could be: fostering the value of the historic planting design schemes, development of thematic walks, connections to a wider urban bicycle network. The ‘street corner society’, as a public space pattern, needs to be enforced and space needs to be reserved for this. The group continued with developing different change models for the neighborhood which will be further specified in the forum publication.

Rural fringe and productive landscapes

The theme of the rural group related to the development in the urban fringe and local food production. With a group of 20 academics from seven different countries we analysed the rural landscape in the municipality of Pantelimon. Information was provided by the local experts from the municipality of Pantelimon, academics of the organising universities and by the Ministry of Agriculture. But the team was also informed by local shepherds, herding their sheep and cows, the manager of the dairy farm and the vendor of local products in the monastery. The group developed several strategies for improving the landscape and environmental quality and the social and recreational possibilities in the area. The first strategy builds upon the power of the dairy and educational farm and the monastery. The idea is to transform the farm into a multifunctional estate, producing milk, cheese, vegetables and fruit and a circular flow of materials, waste and energy. This strategy links the farm to the community and creates new jobs in Pantelimon. The second concept aims to improve connectivity by developing the green and blue infrastructure, social collaboration and networks of recreational paths. A case study of Milan served as a

reference for the idea of forming associations of inhabitants together with small farmers. This would include the creation of a network of small local producers, local markets and related agro-food producers and industry, as well as forming a strong brand for the Pantelimon dairy farm and the Cernica Monastery. The third approach implies an overall strategic plan that includes landscape quality, quality of urban open space and diversification of residential and business areas. There are two processes: discussion and debate on the governance level and capacity building among the local stakeholders: residents, producers and enterprises. These three strategies can help to develop the existing qualities of Pantelimon and empower the local economy.

Further Links

Website LE:NOTRE Institute: <http://www.le-notre.org/>

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