Bucharest:
The Birth of a Landscape
1. Geographical Context
2. Historical Background
3. Green Structure and public spaces
1. Geografical structure
1. Geografical structure

City’s position on Dâmboviţa River and main commercial routes connecting European cities

Source: Harhoiu, Diana: 2001
1. Geografical structure

Bucharest City is part of the Bucharest-Ilfov region, located in the southern part of the country, in the central side of the Câmpia Româna region. The total surface of the Bucharest-Ilfov is of 1,821 km², out of which 13.1% represents the administrative territory of the Municipality of Bucharest and 86.9% of Ilfov County. The two entities which compose the region are also the smallest territorial and administrative units of Romania from the perspective of the surface.
1. **Geografical structure**

Topography and Hydrography of Bucharest shaped by Colentina and Dambovița valleys

2. Historical background
2. Historical background

Bucharest: The Birth of a Landscape

The generative axis:
- the river, its cornices, its tributary rivers,
- the Târgovişte road (W)
- Calarasi road (S-E)
- Moldavia road (Calea Mosilor) – N-E
- Mogosoaia road (Calea Victoriei today), toward Targoviste, follows a part of the northern (left) cornice and the southern (right) bank of the muddy river of Colentina

Source: Harhoiu, Diana: 2001
2. Historical background

1310 - Foundation, under Basarab I, of Valachia (or Țara Românească), kingdom - the first capital city is Campulung.
After, until the middle of 16th century, the capital city move periodically between Campulung, Curtea de Arges and Targoviste

North: 13-14th century: Hungary and Poland are fighting for territorial domination of the area between Carpathian Mountains and Black Sea and trying to keep the Tartars at a distance.
South: the Ottoman power is rising and developing
East: Tartar invasions

1453 – the fall of Constantinople. The «byzantinity» is retrieving towards the North - Byzantium after Byzantium, the local culture is dominated by the Byzantine heritage and orthodoxy

1459 – first première attestation of Bucharest in a document sent by Vlad Tepes from « the citadel of Bucharest ». Other previous documents are speaking of a citadel on the banks of Dambovita River (1368, 1397, 1458). The importance of commercial routes is changing under the pression of Ottomans and their control of the Black Sea and Lvov (in Poland) gains a key position as connection point between German cities and the Balkans. Bucharest is so placed at the intersection of roads connecting the North with the Black Sea and Istanbul
1545- Mircea Ciobanul (the Shepherd – 1545-1554, 1558-1559), named by the Ottoman power, reigns only at Bucharest. He is also the first to trace the city’s boundaries: *an enclosure of oak wood (more a limit than a fortification)* - after Hironim Ostermayer and Pierre Lescalopiere.

Source: Harhoiu, Diana: 2001
The city is developing toward North, mostly the commercial part connected to the prince Court, and also covers agricultural land, sprawling in the territory. Old rural settlements along Dambovita River are engulfed in the city structure and became *mahalale*.

*Mahala (plural-mahalale), from Turkish, word meaning neighbourhood (being it central or not). After 1830, once with the western influences, mahala stars to signifies the periphery and a life-style that is considered not-urban, opposed to the centre image.*
Bucharest lacks the fortification and, as a result, a core of a citadel. The city centre is marked by the presence of two main poles: Political – the Prince court Spiritual – the Metropolitan Church

At the beginning of the 17th century, after Mihai Viteazul (Michael the Brave) wars, the Ottomans forbid the construction of city fortification for all urban settlements in Valahia. The monasteries are keeping their right to build fortifications and so, the monasteries established on the hills of the southern cornice of Dâmbovița (Radu-Vodă, Mihai-Vodă, the Metropolotian Church) are now the strategically defensive structure of the city and country.

Source: Harhoiu, Diana: 2001
2. Historical background

Sec. 18th

... a loose, spread city, developed mostly toward the North and limited to the South by the hills and the fortified monasteries chain.
Comparison between Bucharest’s and Istanbul’s 18th Century urban tissue in (cf. Dana Harhoiu): the same morphological elements of the urban structure: *maidane* and *mahalale*

“Bucharest is almost round, with a quite large circumference, yet the number of inhabitants doesn’t overpass 50.000 and don’t correspond to the place as the houses are spread and isolated from one another, like islands, each one with its yard, a kitchen, a barn and, unusual, a garden with fruit trees that give a pleasant and merry look to the city” (Del Chiaro, in Parusi, *Cronica Bucureștilor*, Bucharest, 2007, p. 72)
1714-1821 - The Phanariot City

As a result of the independent politic of the most part of Valachia princes, the Ottoman empire decides to replace the autochthon princes with rulers emerged from the bureaucratic class of the Phanar Greek neighborhood in Istanbul. The Romanian throne is successively occupied by members of the main Greek families of Mavrocordat(os), Racovita, Soutzos, Ypsilanti, Moruzzi and Ghica – the last one considered afterwards as a Romanian family.

In Romanian history this phanariot period is considered as one of brutal occupation and political regression dominated by a huge taxes, bureaucracy, moral decadence, isolation from European countries. However in this period the French influence became more and more important despite the political orientation towards Istanbul.

Source: public archives
2. Historical background

- A free expansion of the city in the territory
- Large agricultural lands within the city limits

Source: public archives, Frantz Purcel: 1789 – city plan/detail of the central area
2. Historical background
Between Occident and Orient influences... ~1800

19 July 1794 - Sir Robert Ainslie ‘s visit, received by Al. Moruz

1788 - Voda Nicolae Mavrogheni

1789
Saxa-Coburg marshal received by the mitropolit and the boyars

Source: public archives
Bucharest: The Birth of a Landscape

Elementary schools and house in Stelea *mahala*

Bucharest street and view over the city from the Metropolitan Hill
2. Historical background

1859-1918 – Beginning of the city modernization

At the end of 18th century the city is developing in an extensive manner, thus in 1810 general Kutuzov describe it as “a city so large that is overpass all Russian cities beside the capital”

The Bucharest’s society is marked by a strong Orient ambiance and manners, mostly notable in the upper classes behaviour, fashion or houses. With the Phanariot period knows a rapid acculturation (absorbing the western influences), where the French influence will play a determinant role. This process is present at every level of the Romanian society and is strongly reflected in the city’s structure and architecture.

At the beginning of 19th century Bucharest has a surface of 1250 ha for 60,000 inhabitants (Vienna had, in 18th century 1800 ha for 200,000 inhabitants – a double density)

Around 1830 Bucharest reach 30 km², almost 54,000 local residents, 10,000 provincial residents, 1044 foreigners. It is the largest south-eastern European city (Athens has, in 1836, only 14,000 inhabitants; Belgrade has, in 1838, just 12,900 inhabitants)
2. Historical background

The large agricultural surfaces of Bucharest are belonging, for there most part, to the aristocracy and to the Church, a small part being divided between inhabitants that are working the land individually or in commons.

In **1886** Le Cler noticed this atypical urban space “where, with the exception of two or three streets with contiguous houses, the dwellings is sparse, isolated, standing in-between the yard and the garden. The lost terrain takes nine tenth of the entire surface of the city. Each family, even the poorest, has its own house.”

Bucharest viewed from Filaret hill at the middle of the 19th century
2. Historical background

1856 — the Paris Congress propose the unification of Romanian Principalities. The Russian protectorate is replaced by the common guaranty of the Great Powers (Austrian Empire, France, Prussia, Russia, and the United Kingdom). The *Ad hoc* Assembly demands the unification of the two Principalities.

**CUZA PERIOD (1859-1866)**

- 24 January 1859 – the unification of Moldavia and Valachia take place under the rule of Alexandru Ioan Cuza (elected in the both countries).
The unification is recognised as fact by the Great Powers and by the Ottoman Empire.
- 22 January 1862 – the first common Government of the two Romanian countries under Lascar Catargi.
- 1863 – Secularisation of the churches and monasteries wealth
- 1864 – Agrarian Reform
- 1866 – Cuza is forced to abdicate

**CAROL I PERIOD (1866-1916)**

- April 1866 – Carol I of Hohenzollern is seated on the Romanian throne and recognised by the Ottoman power.
- 1 July 1866 – the first Romanian Constitution.
- 9 mai 1877 – Declaration of Independence and participation in the Russian-Turkish war.
- 1878 – San Stefano treaty and Berlin treaty – the Independence is recognised.
- 14 March 1881 – Romania became kingdom.
The large city perimeter and its uncontrollable extension were always one of the major concerns of the reigning princes and later of the majors and councillors. Most of the time the city limitation attempts failed. During the years the limits of the city were pushed by the alcohol taxes as the taverns and pubs were moving at the outskirts of the city thus generating new *mahalale* around them. The north was always the growth direction.

The modernisation of the city was linked to the expansion control and, inherently, to its densification.
2. Historical background

Cuza’s City: 1859-1866

The new capital of the Romanian Principality
2. Historical background

Main urban legislation influencing the modernisation of the city

The Organic Regulations period – 1831-1856
1831 – the Organic Regulations was accompanied by the Regulations for Sanitation, Beautification and Good Order Maintenance in the City of Bucharest
1847 – Regulation for the division of the capital in three districts
1848 – Regulations for alignments and constructions, followed by Regulations for constructions and others in the I,II,III districts (1850, modified in 1860)
1856 – Regulations for the opening of new streets in the capital

The beginning of the ancient kingdom (1856-1877/1878) – the “concelead” modernisation
1864 - The Civil Code
- The Communal Law – 7 August 1864 Bucharest’s City Hall is founded
- The Expropriation Law for Public Interest
- The Law for the Metric System
1865 – two main normative acts are concerning Dambovita River: the Law for the removal of mills on Dambovita and the Law for quays creation on the two banks of Dambovita in the inner city.
As a result the course of the river was dramatically modified and geometrised, the swamps were drained, and the river was transformed in a narrow channel
1866 – The Constitution
1874 – The Law for the Health Service organisation: hygiene conditions to respect in buildings construction
1875 – The Regulations concerning insalubrious industries
1868 – The law concerning the slaughterhouses, halls and markets
1877 – The law for the removal of cemeteries from the inner city
2. Historical background

Rudolf von Borroczyn Plan
The first cadastral plan and topographical elevation of Bucharest - 1846-1852
1863 - an important moment in the history of the city modernisation is the secularisation of churches and monasteries

The law was adopted despite the strong international opposition – mostly the Greek one as they controlled the most part of wealth coming from the Romanian Principalities. This secularisation allowed the acquisition of land for the further development of the city.

“Between 1866 and 1877 the population raised with 15 302 inhabitants (from 162 000 to 177 302), meaning a medium growth of 1391 people per year; is little compared with the following decades. (...) Parallel to the growth of Bucharest people, the number of houses also raised. Statistics show that in 1878 there were in the capital 31 037 houses, most of them in the Black district*: 5681, followed by the Blue district with 5175, then the Yellow one with 4857 houses, the Green with 3891 and the Red, central district comprising the commercial area, with only 1430 houses. Between 1850 and 1860 3.673 houses were built, between 1860 and 1870, 3.730 and between 1870 and 1880 only 1.889” (cf. C. Giurascu)

*Bucharest districts were designated by colours: red, black, blue, green, yellow.
2. Historical background

1878-1914- The active modernisation period

The Regulation for the Wholesomeness of Constructions and Dwelling (elaborated in 1876 by dr. Iacob Felix and promulgated in 1878) details a methodology of implantation of the Law for the Health Service Organisation from 1874.

1878 - Regulation for construction and alignments

1882 – the Law for construction of public buildings
2. Historical background

Density variation between the centre and the periphery

At the end of 19th century the total surface of the city covered by buildings was of 423 ha, the public spaces covered 251 ha while the orchards, vines and vegetable crops occupied 717 ha (cf. Jannescu’s *Romanian Encyclopaedia*).

The new legislation aimed to modernise the city, following the western model, and the main tool was the densification of the city on the agricultural land that was regarded as a rural, peasant feature of the urban space, inappropriate for an European capital.
The changes in constructive types:

- The individual houses types: villas (rich dwellings)/ inexpensive houses – depending of the area prescription (zoning)
- The proportion of contiguous houses of low height (10-11 m) lost importance
- The collective housing became quite usual, mostly in the central area and represents the main element of urban modernization
- The volumetric configuration of the central area and the character of residential areas are clearly defined and generated by the 1928 Regulations for Constructions and Alignments
The new urban axes
New industries and manufactures
Bucharest: The Birth of a Landscape

Railways Development – the North Station (1872)
2. Historical background

The beautification of the city ~ 1914

The beautification of the city is made by creation of large planted boulevards, by constructing quays on the river crossing large public places and squares with fountains, by monumental buildings and also by lighting of the public space.

New regulations concerning the city express a tendency for a new unity of the urban space.
2. Historical background

The first urban zoning plan – Arch. Al. Zamfiropol- 1931

The first urban zoning plan: around central area, new residential and industrial areas are foresee.
2. Historical background

The first “systematisation plan” of Bucharest: A new synthesis of an urban modern problem – constructions typologies / classes - 1935

1938 - 1939 - Regulations for circulations, constructions and alignments
2. Historical background

The obligation of paving the yards is reprised by the major Pache Protopopescu in his *Regulation for construction and alignments* from 1890 (uniting the two regulation acts from 1878) that, for the central district rises the building percentage of plots form 66% to 80%, thus reducing the gardens and yards to almost nothing.

**Regulations for the construction of boulevards and quays**
- 1891 - The construction rules for boulevards divided by segments
- 1892 - Modification of regulations for constructions on Dambovita quays and boulevards
- 1896 and 1897 - Conditions for constructions on boulevards and quays

**General laws**
- 1882 – Law for building foundations and public constructions
- 1892 – Law for the conservation and restoration of public monuments
- 1893 - Law for the creation of the Works House of the City of Bucharest
- 1893/1894 – Law for the organisation of urban communes
- 1895 – Law for the delimitation of the city
- 1901 – Law concerning the rural land of Bucharest
- 1910 - Law for the construction of inexpensive dwellings
- 1911 - Law for the foundation of Communal Society for inexpensive housing for the city of Bucharest
- 1912 – Law concerning the sanitation of Herastrau Lake on Colentina River
2. Historical background

large durable houses
Dambovita – regularised, covered, the first quays as public spaces
Bucharest: The Birth of a Landscape

French eclecticism, symbol of modernisation: Al. Marghiloman house (arch. Petre Antonescu), arch. Nicolae Petropol house, Bals house (arch. Dumitru Herjeu), Ghica palace (arch. Xavier Villacrosse), Cantacuzino palace
The “French model” in mahalale
2. Historical background

A new monumentality – the Tribunal, the National Theatre, the House of the Army, the Royal Palace
2. Historical background

The Haussmann’s Paris model of the *etoile* – Victoriei Place in 1927
University place in 1927 – with the North-South axis still unfinished
2. Historical background

The city’s modernisation reflected by the urban tissue:
- Opening and closing of streets
- The houses alignment
- The height of the buildings
- The relation between the buildings and the street

1893 – Gramont parcelling / 1852-1911 plans - transformation of urban tissue generated by new regulations
2. Historical background

Growth of the city between 1831 and 1895
The major urban structure and axis at the middle of 19\textsuperscript{th} century
2. Historical background

**20th century: Greater Romania**

1916-1918 – Romania participates at the World War
1918 – Greater Romania – Transylvania became part of Romania
15 December 1918 – the Agrarian Reform
16 November 1919 – the Universal Suffrage
1920 – Trianon Treaty and Paris Treaty
1923 – the new Constitution

**Modern Bucharest**

1921 – the first **General Urban Plan** of the city
1921/1927 – Regulations for allotments, streets, passages and alleys opening
1925 – Law for the Administrative Unification
1926 – Law for Communal Administration Organisation of Bucharest city – replaced in 1929 by the Law for Administrative Organisation of Bucharest Municipality
1928 – Regulations for Constructions and Alignments for the sub-urban communes of Bucharest
1931 – Law for Bucharest’s Surroundings Beautification
1933 – Law for State Forests Development in the Capital’s Proximity
1935 – The first “systematisation plan” of Bucharest
1939 – Law of Bucharest’s Municipality Organisation
1939 – Regulations for constructions and alignments, with modifications in 1943 and 1944
In 1926 is drawn the drainage and improvement project for Colentina River. Considering the low flow of the river more solutions were proposed including the total drainage of the river, its transformation in irrigation channels for agricultural land or its transformation in a small creek to be discharged in Dambovita River. The final solution proposed a channel to bring water (mostly in August - October drought period) from Ialomita River (north of Colentina) to Buftea reservoir and to supply the entire Colentina River.

Engineer Nicolae. G. Caranfil, director of Communal Plant Bucharest (UCB), took in charge the execution of drainage works. He defend the lake-creation solution giving as example Dambovita River, transformed in a petty channel that crosses the city centre almost unnoticed. The lakes planned by Caranfil were conceived to serve for water supply for industry, irrigation, fishing and leisure.

The works started in 13 November 1933. UCB realised the Bâlciureşti-Colacu channel from Ialomita and Bolovani channel from Ilfov. Also were realised the Băneasa, Herăstrău, Floreasca and Tei lakes.
2. Historical background

The growth of the city by densification

Pantea guide - 1923 and Fredi Wahnig guide – 1934

An entire green-blue network is built in the North of the city
2. Historical background

1947-1974

Bucharest – the progressive city under Communism

Floreasca district

Guide of Bucharest at 1962
2. Historical background

1952 – Decision regarding the construction and reconstruction of the city and the organisation of architecture activity:
- Projects Institutes (one in each judet / department and one in Bucharest)
- the Institute of Architecture Ion Mincu, Bucharest
- the Architects Union and Arhitectura review

1958 – the plenary session of CC of PMR (Central Committee of Romanian Working-class Party) on economy and buildings’ industrialisation
- the official modernism
- theory concerning the urban construction based on the soviet model of microraion

New dwellings in Vatra Luminoasa  the new Ferentari neighbourhood
2. Historical background

Floreasca neighbourhood built during the ‘50es in conformity with the soviet cvartal model (blocks organised around community green spaces, somehow similar with the Viennese Hof model. It combines modern and national architecture
2. Historical background

The new soviet-inspired cvartals
*Infratirea intre popoare* – in Bucurestii Noi, close to Grivita Lake, 1954-57
The new experiment of Catelu neighbourhood – 1955-1957- the beginning of the social-nationalist discourse – the revalorisation of “popular architecture”
2. Historical background

The official modernism (started in the ‘60es until ‘70es) – the official inspiration is the soviet architecture although all the principles are those of Athens Chart

1960-1965 – the five-year program foresee the end of dwelling crisis
1965 – Nicolae Ceasescu became the chief of the Party

Floreasca neighbourhood – the ‘60es intervention
the new North-South axis – Calea Grivitei
The pride of the modern urbanism – the Palace Place
2. Historical background

1974-1989 - the Destroyed city under Communism

The area demolished in the ‘80es in order to build the new Civic Centre and the limits of the historical city (cf. Dana Harhoiu)

Almost one third of the old city was demolished

No law was applied. People living in the demolished houses were sent in small apartments at the outskirts of the city, often in unfinished blocks
2. Historical background

1977 – the earthquake – beginning of city’s destruction
2. Historical background

The “plating” – Pacii (Peace) boulevard
2. Historical background

The “plating” – Colentina avenue
2. Historical background

The two images of the system: the impressive “popular demonstrations” and the miseries of every-day life
2. Historical background

After hiding the old city a new solutions impose itself: the demolition
The erasure of a city, of an urban culture, of any memory of the past
2. Historical background

The urban void
The House of the People, the civic centre, the forbidden city, the void
1989 – "The Revolution"
The first residential developments of the ‘90es – condominiums and gated communities in the north of Bucharest

(cf. Samuel Rufat – *Les « résidences fermées » à Bucharest : de « l’entre-soi » à la fragmentation ?* – Arches no. 6)
The landscape of peripheries

The urban sprawl over the natural areas and public domains
The landscape of peripheries

... dominated by hypermarkets, gas stations and improvised commerce is overwhelming and covers the entire city.
Villas floating around the city in the middle of nowhere. The new non-urban luxury juxtaposition of private spaces and ignores public realm, even the basic streets are absent.
The growth of the periphery – mostly by destruction of natural areas (forests, lakes shores).

Sprawl of gated communities: luxury without infrastructure or public services.

The security obsession
The nouveaux riches’ architecture in the middle of natural areas thus privatised.
3. Green Structure and public spaces
3. Green Structure and public spaces

Plan of Bucharest and surroundings, 1864

Blue-green sistem components
A fragmented green structure, located mostly in the central area
Historical parks and gardens

Cismigiu Park, 1852, peis. Wilhelm Mayer
Re-designed bt Rebhun, 1958

Carol I - international exhibition Park

Carol Park, 1900, Edouard Redont

3. Green Structure and public spaces

3. Green Structure and public spaces

Icoanei Garden, peis. E. Redont, 1873-1900

3. Green Structure and public spaces

Kiseleff avenue and garden – 1932, peis. Wilhelm Mayer

3. Green Structure and public spaces
3. Green Structure and public spaces
3. Green Structure and public spaces

1953 - The National Stadium and the National Park
The old urban beaches: Straulesti, Grivita, Baneasa, Studentesc, CPB, Bordei, Floreasca, Tei, Tineretului (Studentesc2), MApN
3. Green Structure and public spaces

The Circus park, 1961
Titan Park, 1970
During the communist period the Colentina Lakes project was continued by IPACH (the Institute for Improvements Plans and Hydraulic Constructions) and ISLGAC (the Institute for Systematisation, Dwellings and Communal Economy). Chitila, Străuleşti, Plumbuita, Fundeni, Dobroiesti, Pantelimon I, Pantelimon II and Cernica lakes were realised during the '70es. Also public parks were planned along the lakes like Pantelimon and Plumbuita and a many urban beaches (strands) on Straulesti, Grivita, Baneasa, Floresca and Tei lakes. All of these strands are abandoned, demolished or included in privatised circuits today.

In all 17 lakes were realised on Colentina: Buftea (188 ha), Flămânzeni (30 ha), Buciumeni (40 ha), Mogoşoaia (66 ha), Chitila (35 ha), Străuleşti (33 ha), Grivița (53 ha), Băneasa (36 ha), Herăstrău (77 ha), Floreasca (70 ha), Tei (80 ha), Plumbuita (55 ha), Fundeni (88 ha), Dobroieşti, (93 ha) Pantelimon I (120 ha), Pantelimon II (260 ha) and Cernica (341 ha). Among them 11 are included in Bucharest’s administrative territory in-between Străuleşti Pantelimon II, the other six being part of Ilfov County administrative territory.
3. Green Structure and public spaces

The evolution of Colentina River planning project – the final version foresees the largest water surface
Herastau Lake before and after the swamps drainage and regularisation of the river with dams
Herastrau Park in the ‘40es
3. Green Structure and public spaces
3. Green Structure and public spaces

Tineretului Park, 1953
Note

Bucharest plans and images whose sources are not specified on the slides are accessed from public archives.