

URBAN MARKERS

2016

Project promotor



Project partner



With the support of



Copyright: © "Ion Mincu" University of Architecture and Urban Planning 2016
Editors: Angelica Stan, Irina Pața
Pictures: The students and experts involved in the project, unless stated otherwise
English translation: ?????
Design: RIZI Design / Alina Rizescu, Luciana Cotoi, Bogdan Ștefănescu

ISBN 978-82-995330-6-5

Supported by a grant from Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein and the Romanian Government



www.eeagrants.org / www.fonduri-diversitate.ro / www.uauim.ro

Urban Markers

Explorations, Tactics and Actions
into Brăila, Romania



Angelica Stan, Irina Pața / Editors

INTRO

p 6

I / 1

Sprawl & Shrinking:
a parallel

p 14

I / 4

The Growth and
development of Brăila
macro-structure and urban
landscape

p 40

II

**Explorations
Tactics
Actions**

p 86

III / 1

Urban markers
within the peripheral
context: a reactivation
framework

p 146

C

I / 2

Shrinking cities in
Romania

p 18

I / 5

The Landscape of
Brăila Peripheries

p 78

N

III / 2

Urban art. The pursuit
of identity

p 162

I

**The Shrinking
Context: Growth,
Sprawl, Decline**

p 12

I / 3

Adaptation and
hybridisation in the
evolution of shrinking
cities

p 32

T

III

**Urban Markers and
Other Intervention
Tools**

p 144

T

III / 3

Limits of Brăila:
markers of shrinkage

p 172

N

III / 7

Brăila Laboratory
A successful experiment
that highlights a community
with significant consolidation
potential

p 158

IV / 1

Public Space Crisis:
Empathy and
Complicity

p 212

IV / 4

About Young
Architects and Places
in Brăila

p 230

III / 4

Film as an
investigation tool in
landscape studies

p 180

O

III / 5

The Urban Laboratory
as Interface

p 190

IV / 2

Elegy, Laceration,
Sweet Decline

p 218

IV / 5

Edgelands poems

p 236

III / 6

Sustainable
micro-landscape

p 196

IV

**Echoes and
Multidisciplinary
Views**

p 166

IV / 3

Two interventions

p 226

S

Intro

EN

The present volume synthetically presents the results of the Brăila Laboratory Project (B-LAB) generated by the activities of the team of students and specialists, under the coordination of the 'Ion Mincu' University of Architecture and Urban Planning - Faculty of Urban Planning.

These activities were carried out between April 2015 and June 2016 and consisted of two main sections:

A) A brief research on the problematic of shrinking cities, on the relationship between urban growth and shrinkage, taking the city of Brăila as a case study. Why Brăila? Because Brăila is one of the

RO

Volumul de față prezintă într-o formă sintetică rezultatele Proiectului Laborator Brăila (B-LAB) generate de activitățile echipei de studenți și specialiști, sub coordonarea de Universității de Arhitectură și Urbanism "Ion Mincu"-Facultatea de Urbanism.

Aceste activități s-au desfășurat în perioadă aprilie 2015-iunie 2016 și au constatat în două secțiuni principale:

A) o scurtă cercetare asupra problematicei shrinking cities, asupra relației dintre creștere și declin urban, luând ca studiu de caz orașul Brăila. De ce Brăila? Pentru că Brăila este unul dintre

cities with a dynamic development beginning as far as the 14th century, from an economic and demographic point of view, as well as a socio-cultural and architectural-urban planning one. Known as one of the most important Romanian ports of the 18th century, as well as an influential industrial centre during the communist period, the city has evolved and has structured itself on the basis of these distinctive resources. After the fall of communism in '89, Brăila started to lose its economic power, whilst also suffering modifications in its social structure. With an aging population, the important multicultural trade centre of old no longer has the active urban life that it used to have, although it is still supported by remarkable natural, cultural and human resources, impregnated in an especially valuable urban form. Brăila currently bears the consequences of statistically proven shrinkage phenomena (decreasing population, migrations, and lack of jobs), manifested through different forms (poverty, loss of identity, environmental degradation, peripherisation processes, disparities and inequalities) but, at the same time, it hides a certain latent capital found in the urban structure, in the Danube landscape, in the customs and particularities of its inhabitants. The presentation of the general problematic of shrinking

orașele cu o dezvoltare dinamică încă din secolul al XIV-lea, atât din punct de vedere economic și demografic, cât și socio-cultural și arhitectural-urbanistic. Cunoscut ca unul dintre cele mai importante porturi din România în secolul al XVIII-lea, cât și că un influent centru industrial în perioadă comunistă, orașul a evoluat și s-a structurat pe bază acestor resurse distincte. După căderea comunismului în '89, Brăila a început să piardă puterea economică suferind totodată și modificări în structura socială. Cu o populație îmbătrânită, importantul centru comercial și multicultural de odinioară nu mai are viața urbană activă de altădată, deși este încă susținut de resurse naturale, culturale și umane remarcabile, impregnate într-o formă urbană deosebit de valoroasă. Brăila suportă în prezent consecințele unor fenomene de shrinkage dovedite statistic (scaderea populației, migrații, lipsa locurilor de muncă) și manifeste prin diferite forme (sărăcie, pierderea identității, degradarea mediului, procese de periferizare, disparități și inegalități), dar totodată ascunde un anume capital latent ce se re-găsește în structura urbană, în peisajul aferent Dunării, în obiceiurile și specificul locuitorilor săi. Prezentarea problematicei generale a orașelor shrinking și a Brailei în particular este realizată în

cities and of Brăila in particular can be found in Chapter I.

Part of this research was represented by the development of a study methodology based on the foundation and operationalising of the Urban Markers concept as an effective urban space intervention tool, in order to reconcile top-down and bottom-up planning. The proposed methodology allowed the implementation of an investigation triptych made up of exploration, tactics and small scale, punctual actions, focused on a certain locally detected problem, aiming to catalyse a change of perception among the population. Chapter III presents this instrument package of urban markers, next to other methods from different fields, but belonging to the same urban laboratory.

B) A second section is represented by the actual results of the workshop coordinated by the UAUIM, consisting of the urban micro-reactivation projects and actions organised in Brăila by architecture, urban planning and landscaping students (Chapter II). They confirm the fact that, between the classic urban planning scenario/strategy and the implementation of an urban planning proposal, there is an 'unseen', but necessary, stage: that of 'live' testing the intervention model in the urban

cadrul Capitolului I.

Parte din această cercetare a fost reprezentată de dezvoltarea unei metodologii de studiu bazată pe fundamentarea și operaționalizarea conceptului de Urban Markers ca instrument de intervenție efectivă în spațiul urban, în sensul reconcilierii planificării de tip top-down și a celei de tip bottom-up. Metodologia propusă a permis implementarea unui triptic de investigare format din explorare, tactici și acțiuni punctuale, de mică anvergură, concentrate pe o anumită problemă depistată local, vizând catalizarea unei schimbări de percepție în rândul populației. În cadrul Capitolului III este prezentat acest instrumentar al markerilor urbani, alături și de alte metode, venite din discipline diferite, care fac parte din același laborator urban.

B) o a doua secțiune o reprezintă rezultatele efective ale workshopului coordonat de UAUIM, constând în proiectele și acțiunile de micro-reactivare urbană organizate la Brăila de studenții arhitecți, urbaniști și peisagiști (Capitolul II). Ele atestă faptul că între scenariul/strategia de planificare urbană clasică și punerea în aplicare a unei propuneri urbanistice, există o etapă "nevăzută", dar necesară: aceea a testării "pe viu" a modelului de intervenție în spațiul urban, prin declanșarea și stimularea tactică

space, through the tactical triggering and stimulation of the local interest, with the purpose of a later implementation of a project that can achieve the participative purpose (a purpose that is rarely achieved generally, and almost never in Romania). To this end, one of our convictions was that there is a need for a synergy of knowing the city, for a common pool of languages and discourses from different fields, so that the (already too hard) 'shell' of urban planning can open into a broader palette of perspectives: anthropology, architecture, sociology, landscaping, literature, visual arts. Chapter IV of this book presents the way in which these multidisciplinary perspectives were captured, from a 'post-events' position, as testimonies on the process through which the actions of the on-site workshops took place.

Thus, the Brăila Laboratory project lead to the discovery of less obvious city resources, and the series of small scale, urban acupuncture interventions highlighted the unsuspected potential of urban spaces that are absent-mindedly consumed in daily life. The city peripheries, the ones at the physical edges of Brăila's urban structure, as well as the ones right in its centre, born out of continuous abuse, abandonment, aggression, and ignorance processes, represented

în teren, a interesului local, cu scopul ca ulterior, implementarea proiectului să poată ajunge la dezideratul participativ (deziderat care se atinge în destul de puține cazuri în general, iar în România, aproape deloc). Pentru aceasta, una din convingerile noastre a fost că este nevoie de o sinergie a cunoașterii orașului, de un fond comun ("pool") de limbaje și discursuri din (cât mai) diferite domenii, astfel încât "coaja" (deja prea dură) urbanismului să se desfacă într-o paletă mai largă de perspective: din antropologie, arhitectură, sociologie, peisagistică, literatură, arte vizuale. Capitolul IV al acestei lucrări redă modul de captare a acestor perspective multi-disciplinare, din poziție "post-events", ca mărturii asupra procesului prin care s-au derulat acțiunile workshopurilor în teren.

Astfel, proiectul Laborator Brăila a condus la descoperirea unor resurse mai puțin evidente ale orașului, iar seria de intervenții la scară mică, de acupunctură urbană, au reliefat potențialul nebănuț al unor spații urbane consumate neatenț în viața cotidiană. Periferiile orașului, atât cele din marginile fizice ale structurii urbane a Brăilei, cât și cele din chiar centrul acesteia, apărute prin procese continue de abuz, abandon, agresiune, ingnoranță, au reprezentat teritoriul predilect

the favourite territory for these verifications. The interventions put up for discussion not only the capacity to understand, but also the users' creativity in relation with problematic urban spaces and situations, born as a result of economic and demographic contradictions, of underestimating the heritage of the communist period and of the abandoned industrial patrimony. Appreciated, negated, or debated by various actors, the tested interventions underlined the urban potential for the community, as well as for the local administration. Fighting against the negative connotation and the tense atmosphere given by crisis conditions through actions that encourage the exchange of ideas and promote local culture, history, and individuality contributes to the awareness and acceptance of phenomena related to the current evolution of shrinking cities, as well as to taking on another approach in the design of public spaces by judiciously using local resources, in relation with needs and demand. These bottom-up interventions come to meet the centralised planning that suffers significant transformations in the case of shrinking cities, when the economic force can no longer sustain large scale investments. This kind of attitude in design can compensate for certain deficiencies

al acestor verificări. Intervențiile realizate au pus în discuție nu doar capacitatea de înțelegere, ci și creativitatea utilizatorilor în raport cu spații și situații urbanistice problematice, apărute ca rezultat al contradicțiilor economice și demografice, subevaluării patrimoniului din perioada comunistă și a patrimoniului industrial abandonat. Appreciate, negate sau dezbătute de diferiți actori, intervențiile testate au subliniat totodată potențialul urban atât pentru comunitate, cât și pentru administrația locală. Combaterea conotației negative și a atmosferei tensionate dată de condițiile de criză, prin acțiuni ce încurajează schimbul de idei și promovează cultura locală, istoria și individualitatea contribuie atât la conștientizarea și acceptarea fenomenelor legate de evoluția actuală a orașelor în declin, cât și la asumarea unei alte abordări în proiectarea urbană, prin utilizarea judicioasă a resurselor locale, în raport cu nevoile și cererea. Aceste intervenții de tip bottom-up vin în întâmpinarea planificării de tip centralizat, ce suportă transformări semnificative în cazul orașelor în declin, atunci când forța economică nu mai susține investiții la scară mare. O astfel de atitudine în proiectare poate compensa anumite lipsuri și poate stimula demersuri de acțiune imediată și eficientă în

and can stimulate immediate and efficient action steps in the urban space, steps that are confirmed by the city's dynamics and the need to adapt to new conditions.

spațiul urban, demersuri confirmate de dinamica orașului și nevoia de adaptare la noile condiții



The Shrinking Context: Growth, Sprawl, Decline

Sprawl & Shrinking: a parallel

Angelica Stan

Although having apparently contradictory meanings, the terms of sprawl and shrinking do not necessarily send to opposite phenomena, much less consecutive in the process of urban growth. But certainly they occur in a binomial, even “umbilical” relationship both for cities and their metropolitan areas, as well as for small and medium towns, both for strong dynamic situations, and for relatively stable settlements. Thus, if sprawl occurs in general for a long period of time, as an quasi-out-of-control phenomenon, leading to urban development in areas increasingly far from the generators centre/centres, shrinking is a reagent, slower process, sometimes corollary to the expansion, consisting of the decline of vulnerable areas within the city that generated the dispersion, or of the contraction of the entire locality, which loses massive population and capital.

Bucharest of years 1990- 2008 is a typical case of territorial expanding city, while both historical centre and certain semi-central areas (having not very favorable conditions for housing and public services), are losing population, or remain with an aging population.

Contraction in this case does not exist at the entire city scale (because, statistically speaking, it can even -demographically- grow) but, in a way that may seem paradoxical, at the level of fragments/ islands which first are de-vitalizing, and then enter into a process of decline and abandonment.

A slightly different case is that of medium-size cities, such Brăila: demographically, the city loses population, being obviously a process of shrinkage (through migration and negative natural increase) but spatially, it maintains its territory (with certain exceptions - areas very accessible, immediately neighbouring the built-up area). Within this process, the disparities between the center and the peripheries are getting worse, and the peripheries' decline becomes both part of the shrinking phenomenon, and the trend of overcoming this problem, that tries to capitalize on the growth opportunities afforded by the free land from the city's limits.

Thus, although some marginal areas shrink and decay, new outlying districts appear, not being much more comfortable than the first, and the city's offer, devoid of strategy and vision, drift into a sprawl (a lower level, but equally harmful), compromising the chance of recovery for the city as a whole.

Both sprawl and shrinking are considered phenomena related to the cyclical evolution of cities, being known in history similar cases of alternation between expansion and decline of large cities. However, both are seen as negative phenomena which must be corrected / controlled through planning, interventions of a certain type, and with a proper attitude. Sprawl is criticized mainly for its social and environmental consequences, detrimental to the cities' quality and identity, which states especially as dense and stable areas, both spatially and demographically. On the other hand, Shrinking Cities stresses the idea that not only cities that grow and extend deserves the specialists' attention, but also (or

mainly) ones that shrink. By this approach, shrinking is not only a consequence of urban sprawl, but a more complex phenomenon linked to an unfavorable economic context, but which could catalyze the regaining of a positive identity for new types of urban and cultural practices (Oswalt, 2002).

An important distinction comes on two phenomena even in how they are treated by specialists. It is considered that sprawl cannot be controlled “through inside”, but only by strategic planning, at the amplitude of the entire metropolitan and peri-urban territory. Its “stopping” cannot be done through pinpoint interventions, but only by concerted decision, through integrated projects, that can expect to bring urbanized territory to a more human scale and to a less car-dependent condition of living. On the contrary the phenomenon of shrinking cities, although emerged as a consequence of global trends cannot be resolved through still authoritarian planning. A specific feature of this phenomenon is that it requires a focus on what the decline could bring to light: an authentic, often ignored potential, linked especially to the people themselves which can be stimulated, educated and involved in projects at the local /small places scale, in order to re-appropriate their spaces and life abandoned along with the job losses.



Shrinking cities in Romania

Ilinca Păun
Constantinescu

General Context

In the last decade, the shrinking cities problematic, which refers to negative urban development (oxymoron or not), takes an important place in political and academic discourse. It deals with recent social and economic problems that, in the most unfortunate of cases, lead to the abandonment of buildings or significant areas of a city. Nevertheless, the urban abandonment phenomenon is not new, there are countless examples throughout history that support it. However, by oversimplifying, we can state that until the moment of industrialisation, which generated the urbanisation phenomenon, thus a generalised and unprecedented expansion of cities, the rises and falls of cities had been of a similar importance, and their alternations quite frequent.

The first theoretical awareness of the urban shrinking issue, relatively timid and describing particular cases, appears in the postmodern era, along with the beginning of the de-industrialisation of developed countries, a phenomenon that occurred with quite a large gap with

respect to communist countries, that insisted to carry on with production activities, ignoring the Western context of orientation towards tertiary activities. This is why, after 1989, the de-industrialisation of Eastern European countries happened more suddenly than the Western phenomenon, which was more nuanced and stretched over a longer time span.

This is the reason why a stronger discourse concerning shrinking cities started to take shape only in the years 2000, after the effects of the fall of the iron curtain had been felt. This discourse wishes to compare the shrinking manifestations of cities that had very different shrinking reasons, such as American and Western European cities (especially Great Britain or Germany), and postcommunist cities, starting from the premise of the observation that these symptoms show common features. Thus, compared to previous manifestations, the novelty of the recent discourse consists in showing the global scale of this process, as well as its multiple sides, that differentiate it from the linear decline through which de-industrialisation is generally understood. Its study, which has only thoroughly started in the last few years¹, is all the more interesting because it happens in a context of global urban population increase.

Schrumpfende Städte. Shrinking Cities. Genesis, Terminology

We could say that shrinking cities, which today wishes to bring together various types of urban decline, is first of all part of a German discourse, then part of a North American one, both originating around the 1980's. If the term became known internationally under its English version due to the Shrinking Cities Project, a cultural action led by Philipp Oswalt and supported by the German government in 2002-2008, the original German term, Schrumpfende Städte, had appeared twenty years before the English one. The urban preoccupations of

those years revolved around the industrial twilight and the economic and social problems triggered by it. One of the first contributions on this theme is the one led by Hartmut Häußermann and Walter Siebel through articles and books such as *Die Chancen des Schrumpfens*, 1985, *Neue Urbanität* in 1987 and *Die Schrumpfende Stadt und die Stadtsoziologie*, 1988. During a period of general prosperity, the authors discuss the problem of West Germany's industrial cities and the coexistence of urban growth and decline areas.

This is the moment when the issue that economic restructuring and demographic decline could have an impact on the constitution and development of cities was raised. There are discussions regarding a new form of city, the Shrinking City, that for the time being does not seem all that different from other cities, but there are suspicions that, in time, it will shape its specific economic and social profile. It is interesting that, even since the first publications, the type of decline of cities undergoing industrial reduction is not labelled as temporary, punctual or reversible, but as a long term process.

A much ampler debate truly starts with the unification of the two Germanies. The unprecedented depopulation of Eastern Germany, starting in 1989, brings again the phenomenon under the attention of German researchers and has as its strong point, in the years 2000, the questioning of growth oriented strategies. This time, the shrinking discourse starts to include demolition strategies², an acute problem in the former DDR, and the general and complicated idea of managing a contraction process. The mass abandonment of East Germany's buildings and the state of emergency triggered by it was actually a giant trailblazer in urban planning. The years 2000 mark the birth of a shift in planning methods, which try to become integrated, flexible and not exclusively oriented towards growth. At the same time, new specialised publications, which gather points of view from various parts of the world, disseminate

² 2001 marks the beginning of the "Stadtumbau Ost" urban demolition and restructuring program (EUR 2.5 bln. budget in 2002-2009, programs until 2016), "Stadtumbau West" started in 16 pilot towns - now 300 districts are included in urban re-development strategies.

the notion of Shrinking Cities globally, not as criticism or manifesto, but, even since the beginning, rationally oriented towards the constructive management of a deconstruction. 2005 Germany lays the foundations for an effervescent and fertile ground of urban contraction planning interdisciplinarity, gathering successful examples (contemporary or not) of collaboration between community and administration, between research, innovation and application.

Romania's Case

However, in Eastern Europe, little importance is given to the shrinking problematic, generally debated only within a small group of experts. The contraction is not held in high regard, especially by local politicians or administrations, that have economic growth and prosperity as their main themes. Some of the reasons due to which the topic is not widely discussed are that, first of all, the term is hard to translate, especially in Slavic languages, and, second of all, the connotation is a dishonouring one for the city. Even more so in Romania which - even though most of its cities are dealing, in the post-communist period, with a severe form of urban shrinking, as a result of (still unfinished) economic, social and demographic transformations after the centralised system - barely takes part in European initiatives related to Shrinking Cities in academia and even less so in politics. The identity crisis that cities are facing as a result of the radical changes that they have been subjected to, and of the application and removal of industrial labels is, first of all, a break from the natural course of things then, again, a need for reorientation. All of this is reflected upon the structure of the cities that, for the first time, start to lose inhabitants: over half of the country's cities have one fifth less inhabitants than in 1989.

By analysing census data, we notice that most cities reached peak population in 1989 and have since been

following a descending, and sometimes very sudden, trend. If the studies on European SCs consider drops of over 20% to be alarming, in the case of Romania, between 1989 and 2012, out of 320 cities and towns, 163 of them are in this situation, and 62 of them are facing drops higher than 30%. This is why, in order to understand urban metamorphoses and their management, the research of global decline and shrinkage of Romanian cities is paramount. The essential circumstances which have led to the beginning of the shrinking process come from two directions: on one hand from the communist heritage that leaves an urbanisation dependent on industrialisation (43 monoindustrial towns at the end of communism, half of the population employed in industry) and various faults in the structure of the towns. The second source is the entry into capitalism, which brings mutations to the determining economic and demographic factors. Economic restructuring and decentralisation, together with the modification of relations between the main sectors of the economy are complicated, very long term processes generating serious confusion and readaptation problems. To be part of construction in the name of modernisation is honouring, perceived as an evolution. The adaptation was done on the go, based on the "learning by doing" principle. However, accepting a deconstruction and adjusting to it is much more complicated. At the same time, the demographic problem (under all its aspects: rate of natural increase and net migration rate) is a very alarming one and too little brought up for discussion. These are only a few aspects of the two major impact factors, economic and demographic, that have also been through profound changes, driving the shrinkage process:

The inevitable and predictable industrial reductions designate an uninterrupted de-industrialisation, starting in force in 1996 and still unfinished;

Industrial abandonment, rising unemployment, and

poverty are effects of industrial devolution, which couldn't be fully compensated by other activities. These still have a profound effect on urban life - meaning space, as well as urban behaviour;

Long term identity problems (of the city itself and of the people), readaptation, and professional requalification also resulting from the cities' dependency on a restructured industry;

Adherence to the European Union and mega-trends such as globalisation and Asian influence, the atomisation of individuals, and the accentuation of social disparities;

Birth rate in continuous decrease, starting in 1990, as a consequence of the repeal of the law banning abortions and then a lack of an encouraging pro-birth policy;

The population ageing effect started without delay and is only going to deepen. Also, the increase in the number of pensioners in the 1990's, and the moment when the 1967 generation (deprecatingly called "decreței" - children of the anti-abortion decree) retires are going to create economic problems, by surpassing the numbers of the working population.

The waves of emigration that started with the abrogation of the isolationist policy in 1990, the opening of the international labour market in 2004, and the EU adhesion in 2007, the latter two opening the gates to a massive workforce migration (the recent categories of emigrants are on one hand workers, on the other hand young intellectuals, specialists or students; the problem of professional qualification and education in Romania, both much poorer than in other EU countries is also worth mentioning);

Internal migration: if the 1990's brought a strong migration from rural to urban areas, due to the interdiction regarding migration towards large cities being lifted, this settles down in the following years,



City scale



Demographic decrease



Internal migration



which have been represented by permanent returns or connections to the rural environment. Occurring in a relatively small (we are not talking about an exodus) but constant proportion, the return migration is a significant process. This happens on one hand due to the fact that the ties with the natal environment have never been completely broken (we remind you that in the 1970's one third of the urban population came from the rural environment), and on the other hand as a reaction to the industrial lay-offs, or to pure poverty, in order to work in subsistence agriculture.

Thus, Romanian cities have been confused by various factors. First of all, the radical change in functions: from service cities, to industrial cities, then again to service (with large proportions of banal tertiary sector). The industry decline, which caused these changes, is the origin of the lost of urban identity problem, a matter with long term effects. Other consequences of rapid urbanisation are, together with disturbances in the structure and network of cities, the shifts in urban hierarchy: mid-sized towns that climbed hundreds of steps during communism, and small to mid-sized towns that are falling vertiginously during post-communism.

We could comment on a few growth-shrinking typologies:

(1M) over 200000: Stable large cities (centres of regions), with a slow growth-shrinkage ratio (Cluj, Timișoara, Iași, Constanța, Craiova, Galați, Brașov, and Ploiești). These cities are relatively stagnating in the urban hierarchy. Among them, Brașov and Galați, which have known an abrupt industrial development are now shrinking the most, due to the bankruptcy of Tractorul and Rulmentul Brașov and the radical reductions of Steagul Roșu, and Sidex Galați respectively.

(1Mm) over 100000: Relatively stable mid-sized to large cities (large county centres) such as Oradea,

Brăila, Pitești, Arad, Sibiu, Bacău, Târgu Mureș, Baia Mare, Buzău, and Botoșani. Some of these grew a lot during communism: At the end of the communist era Bacău, Pitești, and Baia Mare had populations 5-6 times larger than at the beginning. The current decreases are varied, depending on several factors; most of them are registered by Bacău and Brăila, representing a third. Nevertheless, their degree of attractiveness and regional importance gives them high stability and potential, especially in the case of Brăila, with a very well preserved fin de siècle architecture.

(2mM) 50-100000: Stagnating or shrinking mid-sized towns (most of them are county centres declared in 1968). These, together with some of the 1Mm cities, are the towns that had the largest, most constant, and abrupt growth, whose interventions involved radical demolitions and images changes (Suceava, Slobozia, Slatina, Râmnicu Vâlcea, Deva, Zalău, Vaslui, Târgu Jiu, etc). Except for Reșița or Hunedoara, former prolific monoindustrial towns that are now losing 40% of their population and are dropping in the hierarchy, they are maintaining their hierarchical position and have average drops of 20% (close to the country average).

(2m) 20-50000: Unstable mid-sized to small towns. Here we have identified several typologies:

Abrupt growth and shrinking: Industrial towns such as Onești, Făgăraș, Mediaș, and Turnu Măgurele, which tripled or quadrupled their population and now, after the industrial closures, suffer from major drops, of approximately 40%.

Continuous regress: this category includes the former interwar capitals: Lugoj, Caracal, Sighetu Marmăției, and Câmpulung, with an artificial shrinkage during communism that has continued (thus, the former capital, Oravița, has little over 10000 inhabitants). These towns have currently lost about a third of their inhabitants. On

the other hand, the fact that they were not on the list of rushed and artificial developments spared them from uniformizing demolitions and reconstructions, largely maintaining their original character, a possible source of potential.

Abrupt growth and moderate shrinking: Slobozia, Moinești, Reghin;

(3M) under 20000: Shrinking /transforming small towns

Explosive growth, followed by abrupt shrinking: usually mono-industrial towns such as Bălan or Moldova Nouă.

Continuous regress: Small industrial towns such as Oțelu Roșu, Anina, Agnita, Brad, Copșa Mică, Ocna Mureș, Azuga, and Sinaia grow, but relatively timidly and are quickly surpassed by others.

Small towns with linear development. These are former villages with an agricultural profile, but had the chance to receive an identity and have had limited growth and low shrinking: Isaccea, Vânu Mare, Berești, Darabani, Babadag, and Curtici. These towns, although planned for restructuring, were initially left aside by communist interventions and have small end of the era constructions, materialised as urban dwellings and small industrial areas outside the town. These towns are generally in the plains, isolated from larger towns and cities and poorly connected to the infrastructure.

Small tourist towns, with slow and continuous shrinking. The population of tourist and service towns has stagnated or even shrunk during communism (Băile Herculane, Borsec, Băile Govora, Techirghiol, Căciulata). It is interesting that the drops in the hierarchy have a continuity in post-communism, especially because of carelessness, temporary or permanent abandonment of tourism facilities, some of them belonging to the architectural patrimony. Although their revitalisation seems the most obvious, it depends on administrative

and economic decisions. Thus, despite the visible regeneration potential, at the moment this category is in danger.

By overlapping our own research with the studies of the above mentioned groups, we could say that Shrinking Cities is a phenomenon that manifests itself quantitatively and qualitatively and includes the following aspects:

Social and cultural contraction: disappearance of facilities (theatre, cinema, gyms etc.), weak community relations;

Physical contraction: abandoned streets, houses, and spaces; demolitions are more frequent than constructions;

Economic contraction: lack of jobs, decreasing real estate value;

Demographic contraction: represents the global indicator, which measures population decrease in a certain period.

We could group the perception on Shrinking Cities phenomenon in the following categories³: ignoring it (a), observing it without accepting it (b), a certain acceptance without public communication (c), and accepting it, with all the necessary measures (d). The administrations of Romanian cities and towns are split between the first and the second category but, in the general perception, ignorance is dominating. Actions such as the Brăila workshops, which study the phenomenon explicitly under this name, carried out with the support of the mayor's office, are of great importance in gradually accepting this phenomenon and, even more so, its positive connotations.

Due to the fact that, in the end, the shrinking phenomenon is actually a driving force of modernisation and innovation, of reusing, of looking at alternative resources, of revaluation of interhuman relations. The

³ Farke 2005, Pallagst 2013.

transition crisis is a source of creation, in which reusing or even demolitions, can be opportunities for restructuring: there are already countless examples of this. “Thinkbelt Potteries”⁴ of one of the most influential and radical thinkers in architecture, Cedric Price, proposed in 1992 a real educational and social experiment, in which studying belnds with work, in a context of reusing that has become the source of countless projects applied to the present day.

Ruralisation of Romanian towns, noticed in many cases, should not be seen as an urban involution. The reorientation towards agriculture that we see in small towns or the switching off of certain urban attributes or facilities for economic reasons can be an opportunity to reactivate traditional rural life in a controlled fashion. In this context, German sociologist Bernd Hamm argues that agriculutre should be strategically introduced in planning. “Direct involvement is an essential part of planning”, state researchers of the shrinking phenomenon, such as Wiechmann, Rink, or Haase. This means an understanding and preoccupation of the administration regarding social life and real problems by activating and involving citizens in governance processes and in social economy, by creating co-services.

Furthermore, there still are open questions: is there a critical point, from which a shrinking city cannot return? What are the viable options for a shrinking city: redevelopment / makeover / conservation / greening / demolition / neglect? How can short term and long term strategies be combined efficiently, so that they can handle social issues?

Before any economic or social reforms, the first step is to accept reality and then shape a strategic vision. This vision starts from the idea of non-growth as an optimistic and realistic option. Moreover, the essential and durable change is the one that comes from within the cities, outside of the directives of the European

Union or others too far to know the real details of the problem. The starting point of shrinking cities should be that the negative integrated development project means focusing on improving the quality of life using existing resources. Through their applied approach of identifying and emphasising certain positive particularities in underprivileged, “periphery” areas and applying certain microprojects visible and accessible to inhabitants, this is exactly the direction that the Brăila workshops take, joining the ranks of research groups and proving that, despite the fact that the city will be smaller in the future, it can be vastly better.



⁴ Cedric Price (1934-2003), despite not having built anything, influenced, through his theories, Richard Rogers and Rem Koolhaas, who often mention him. Think belt Potteries - a reaction to the British “brain drain” of the 1960’s, to the conservatism of university education. Price proposes reusing industrial spaces, and unused railways for a type of alternative learning, accompanied by production and inhabitanacies activities.

Adaptation and hybridisation in the evolution of shrinking cities

Mihai Alexandru

In their evolution, regardless of alternations between moments of shrinking, prosperity, stagnation, etc., cities expose the space and time continuity of human presence and of its need to adapt – continuously, but not with equal consistency and intensity – to the condition of urban life, to actually live in the space chosen through personal option or imposed by certain conditions.

As far as, in certain evolutionary periods, the becoming of urban life is a reliable answer, and not necessarily a premeditated one, to an intense dynamic – growth or shrinkage, sudden and unforeseen, adaptation takes two possible forms, otherwise recognised in the history of the cities:

- The first form is the rational, anticipative, and planned reaction that, by working with current data, measuring the dynamics, and modelling the future, tries to give the fast and, sometimes, implacable answer, which is even endlessly repeatable for new

needs¹; the result of planning should have been the optimal operation of cities and, at the same time, the adequate answer to the stringent needs raised by the beginnings of the Industrial Age – overpopulation, densification, congestion, health risks, etc.

- The critique and the spread of this type of reaction of what – starting with Ildefons Cerdà – we call Urban Planning – are well known from large scale application, repeatedly throughout history, and sometimes repeating the mistakes made in the previous models; however, now we are in a time in which, also due to a sufficient distance from this approach, shortcomings and (certain) problems that it brings become much more obvious. The consequence of this state is the adaptation of urban planning itself in order to be better adapted to human presence and the way it occupies and uses a space. Even though the top-down approach remains globally dominating, with significant gaps between various geographical areas, we are nonetheless witnessing the emergence of a type of urban planning that thinks top-down but associates lighter implementation measures to this approach, revealing different degrees of participation regarding the public, common good.

- The second form is the reflexive individual (or small group) direct reaction to individual needs and to the limitations or intensifications offered by a certain space; it is an attitude geared towards a concrete, usually short term result, thought separately from the larger context of the city, reflecting a certain type of existence in a material form; known in the literature as organicity, the resolution, through one's own strength and resources, of this adaptation to a certain space often has a negative connotation, being blamed for causing problems

¹ Sufficient examples for this are the answers given to the housing problem at the peak of the Agricultural Revolution and the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, true social utopias such as the Phalanstère, the Familistère, etc. or, later, template-collective homes – multiplied, modelled, modulated and modular.

that are difficult to solve – through planning – and for malformation – when it happens on a large scale – on city areas or on the city as a whole².

The criticism launched against the result of this attitude often triggers a planning exacerbation³ or, as the case may be, a stigmatisation that holds the affected areas in a spiral of negativity: the negative image contributes to the perpetuation – even amplification – of the initial conditions and of the form of existence itself. As in the case of the first type of adaptation, in the wake of the effects of the economic crisis of the '70's and of the diminishing power of the interventionist State, looking for alternative solutions to the previous form of planning generated the need for another look over the existing one; the result of this search was, among other attitudes that used technological innovation, an overall reconsideration of city development, pay attention – still timidly⁴ – to the benefits of organic attitude and to certain lessons to learn from this form of adaptation.

In the urban reality the two forms described above coexist either in juxtaposition, superpositioning, or in a complex form of symbiosis, but what has radically separated the two attitudes, even when they are symbolic, is the level of awareness over the condition of urban life – sought in the first case, relatively intuitively reached, but in any case in a non-premeditated way, in the second case.

Although their coexistence is, in principle, recognised and more and more documented, it is only in the last two decades that there has been an attempt to study them in more detail but also, especially, to work with this reality; there is an emphasis on a whole practical preoccupation to make organic processes work for planning and, in parallel, to start urban planning processes from on-site understanding of the complexity and diversity of situations. This sort of hybrid approach actually proposes finding common consciousness/awareness ground

regarding city life, it is a more and more obvious practice in which the role of urban planners and architects – until recently involved in the planning sector as agents of the top-down approach – transits towards a mediation role that shows discreet potentials which, carefully observed and put up for discussion, are brought to light.

We actually attribute this role with an essential vocation, without which the inhabitants involved in organic practices would not see their urban purpose, only the individual one, and without which urban life would remain blind to the benefits of a form of practice that is actually very fertile.

This newly emerging role is documented under various forms: 'Tactical urban planning', 'informal urban planning', 'emerging urban planning', and urban acupuncture', etc. and pursues the catalysis of certain urban transformations, using minimal resources. However, this type of practice, being deeply anchored in the physical reality, is not based on predefined tools and on statistical analyses, but on tools developed on the spot and that, in time, evolve along with the respective urban condition.



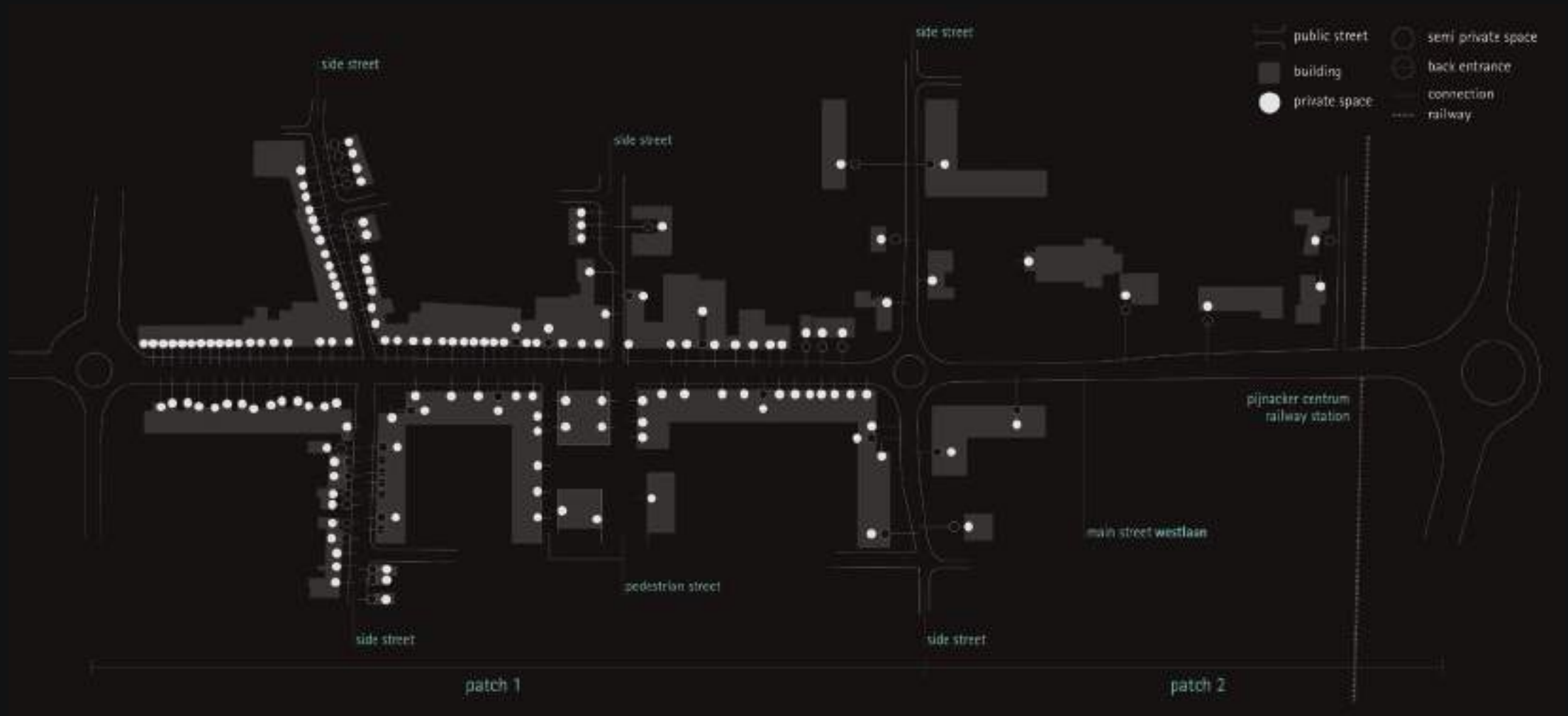
The new role of urban planners and architects is in the wake of Jane Jacobs' thinking, in which she exposed the non-linear character of the design and planning processes, in agreement with what Manuel de Landa documents broadly over several sciences and fields. However, it only reaches its palpability when the financial situation of many states registers a new moment of

2 The Favelas (Brazil), the Comunas (Columbia), the Hutongs (China), the Slums (Great Britain), the Bidonvilles (France), etc. are areas known for their various types of crime, social vulnerability, precarious living and health conditions, isolation, etc.

3 The history of urban planning has plenty of radical intervention examples for the 'eradication' of poor areas in cities.

4 Reputable urban planning history authors such as Jane Jacobs, Christopher Alexander, or Lewis Mumford start to document forms of physical and spatial organicity, while French philosophy, through Henri Lefebvre, starts to contribute to the shaping of fundamental ideas in the social organisation of the city.

Micro interventions project



public sector incapability and when, in this background of neglect and, therefore, multiplication of urban problems, alternative, hybrid initiatives appear and try to compensate the lack of resources with a creative approach to limited resources and even with showing as resources what was thought to be only objects with their own, static utility; the result is sometimes the recycling and requalification of certain objects and their de- and re- contextualisation in order to give them new meanings.

We are assisting, still at a low level, to the emergence of a 'micro urban planning' type movement, defined as a 'paradigm shift on urban philosophy, which suggests the existence of certain internal realities that need investigation in order to describe the way in which things interact and are coordinated on the scale of micro-reality, but which manifest the true spirit of the city and of its inhabitants. Every city has a particular constitution of micro-cosmoses, in relation with the natural environment and with the existing urban condition, that are more vital and more current than conventional urban structures in the sense that they expose the clear direction of contemporaneity (<http://www.microurbanism.net/english/index.asp>).

Among the representatives who assume this role, we list: Basurama, Urban Ecosystem Group, Atelier d'Architecture Autogérée, and others.

Their interventions put less emphasis on the physical component and more on the social and cultural-political one, giving real answers, created with minimal resources, adapted to the austerity condition imposed by the socio-economic reality, but also mediated by technological means at the disposal of professionals and inhabitants. Interventions in the sphere of urban art, ephemeral installations, events and temporary uses represent a more and more visible alternative to excessive planning, underlining the opening of brief moments of freedom, in

a sense of urban expression and even urban condition.

Characterised by spaces emptied of any activity, entered into decline and open to 'choice' (ethnic, social, economic, political, etc.), the industrial city seems to be located in a complex ecosystem (in a parallel existence) that determines a transformation of the urban environment from the inside, an endogenous, organic transformation; however, we notice the following lack of timing: while there is a surplus of unimplemented urban plans and documentation, the active and inherent potential of using free spaces through temporary uses is little explored. This new role of the urban planner-architect is affirmed here, where temporality also receives a more and more privileged position. Multiple interests of using the post-industrial context converge towards temporary uses: a municipality in search of resources, the emergence of various practices – artistic, agricultural, etc. that require a place to occur and for which urban planning hasn't found an answer, an intensification and a diversification of the uses of urban space, but also a noted situation in which various free lands, with or without a certain status, are apparent for the city.

From this point of view, a first aspect that deserves to be punctuated is the derivation of the use in direct connection with the human motive, not for the purpose of a projection into the future – of a mental, profitable use – but through direct expression that is, from many points of view, the expression of a direct engagement in the relationship with urban space.

The Growth and Development of Brăila

macro-structure and urban landscape

Angelica Stan
Mihai Alexandru
Cătălina Ioniță

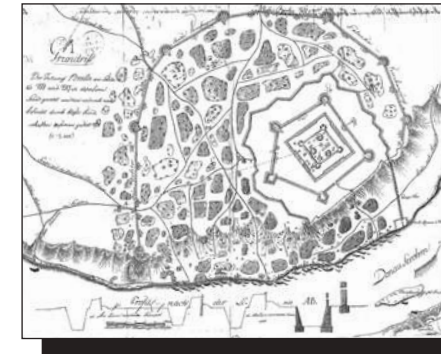
The role of Brăila within the regional territory

As a commercial port and one of the oldest urban settlements in Romania, documentary attested in 1368, Brăila owes its entire evolution of Danube.

At the moment, its development priorities are placed in the context of the EU document – The Strategy for the Danube Region, in which are specified four priorities:

- | 1 connectivity (intermodal transportation, culture and tourism, energy networks);
- | 2 environmental (water management, biodiversity protection and risk management);
- | 3 increasing prosperity Danube Region (education, research, competitiveness);
- | 4 improvement of governance (institutional capacity and internal security).

The relevance of this strategy for The General Urban Plan (GUP) of Brăila comes both from these 4 principles, as well as from the institutional system that will result from this strategy and that will positively influence the implementation of General Urban Plan of Brăila.



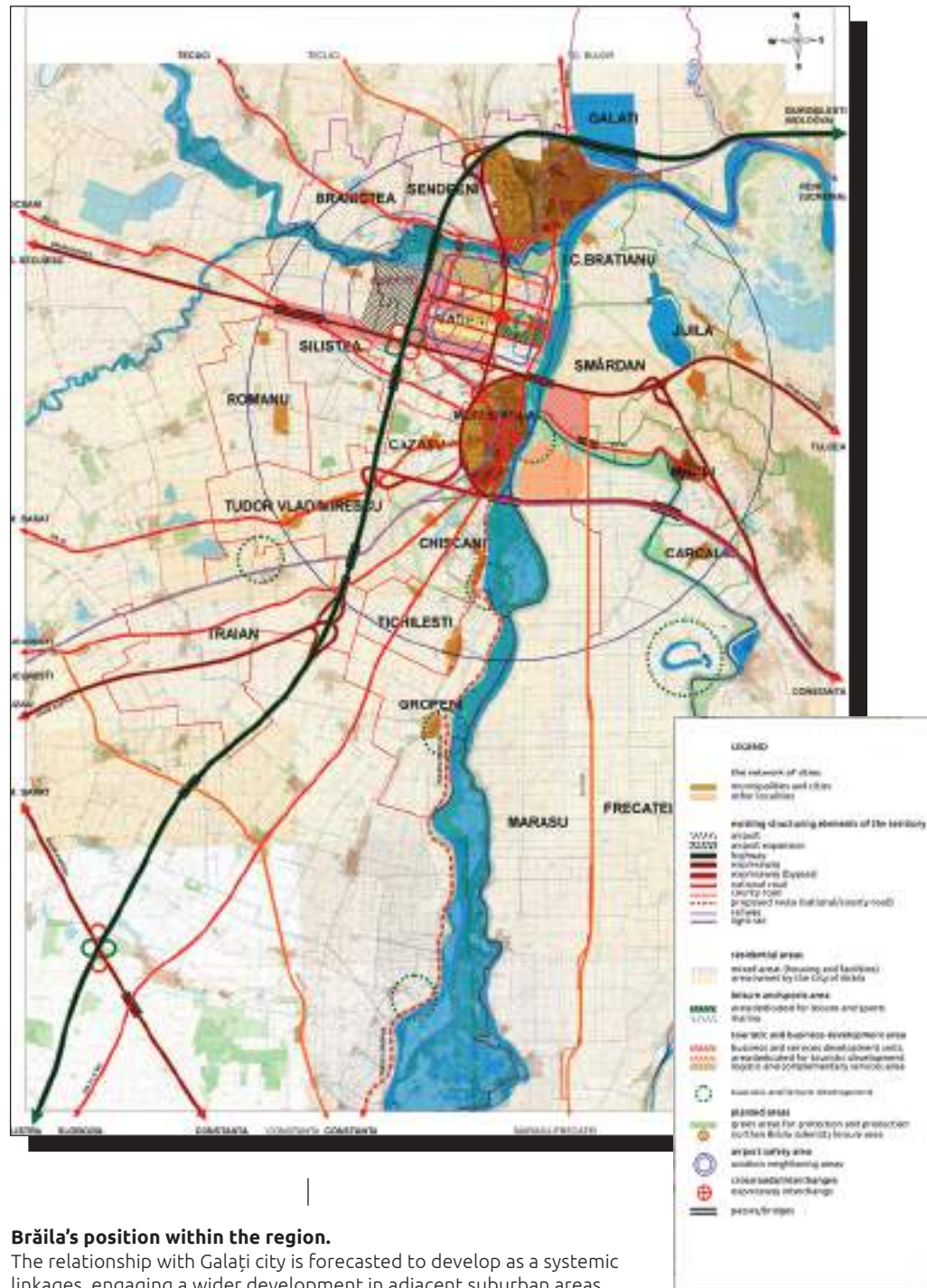
Plan of Brăila in year 1788.

The settlement was developed in conjunction with the opportunity provided by the water trade.

Source: Documentation PUZ "Historical centre Brăila" database
UrbanProject Buc

According to its degree of influence, Brăila city is categorized as "nodal centre" or "growth pole", having a sphere of influence that varies between 60 and 100 km, and over 100,000 inhabitants (this type of cities are also called "high economic convergence centres"). They dominate a hinterland, having relations on economic, social, cultural or commercial in this territory, and they tend to develop a sprawl periphery. Also, Brăila and its "hinterland" zone is a component of the Brăila-Galați urban system: the only one defined by the Law 351/2001 (Section IV, The network of settlements) representing the second urban agglomeration in Romania, after Bucharest. According to The Periurban Territory Development Plan, Brăila development due "of barriers" natural (Danube and Siret), has the "natural" a lead predominantly a westerly and southerly trend of increased compliance geo-morphological land in this area.

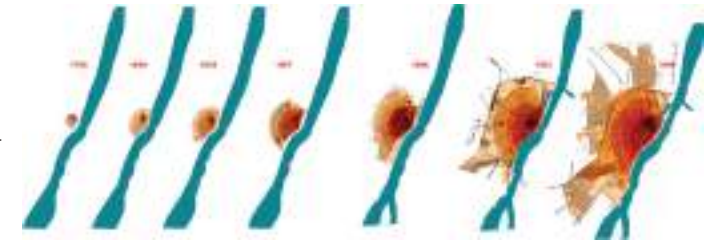
Through the privileged location at the crossroads of European commercial routes, with a wide opening to the



Danube, raising the urban potential for revitalizing (in favourable conditions), the urban system Brăila-Galați is a possible new gateway to the East of the European Union.

Urban growth of Brăila was quasi continue: each stage of spatial and economic development of the city preserves most of the part and values of the previous stage. A sudden leap occurred with the industrialization, since the 1960s: then, the urban structure was territorially expanded, but also was desified with the construction of collective housing neighborhoods. The intensity of growth in Brăila, was always ahead of its spatial extension, these have been made within a tissue compactness maintained so far, with few exceptions.

City structure hystorical evolution, during seven main stages, in permanent contact with Danube, from 1790 until present.



Source: Preliminary General Urban Plan of Brăila, 2013

Urban Microstructure Analysis

Currently, the central and peri-central area of Brăila – i.e. the historically and organically established areas, including the additions from the turn of the century period – are maintained and even continue to densify the tissue in the semi-circular limits that also mark the stages of the city's development. The younger areas of this tissue (i.e. the peripheral/marginal areas) develop in a tentacular fashion towards north, west and south, in the five directions that represent the most important road connections with the city's hinterland. However, the span of these tentacular developments is limited and cannot unbalance the compact area of the tissue; the

tissue densification availabilities inside the built-up areas are still quite consistent, so that the urban structure can be considered to be powerfully and harmoniously established enough not to require major reshaping and restructuring interventions.

The existing situation of the macro-built-up area is, however, a very special one in Brăila: together with the heritage values concentrated in the compact area of the historical centre, the semi-central areas have punctual ambient values, and the city growth axes, the 'rays' of the semi-circular shape are so strongly contoured, they are charged with buildings that want to be representative, even though they do not have exceptional architectural values.

From a macrostructural point of view, the peripheries of Brăila consist of a) urban extension tissues (residential parcels and constructions on individual parcels), b) absorption tissues (former rural tissues entered under the city's administration), c) non-residential tissues (ex-industrial, storage, farms) and large void surfaces, former farmlands, some of them the subject of large real estate development projects between 2000 and 2007, some already bearing the ruins of activities that went bankrupt in the meanwhile.

A completely special situation, defining the city's structure, is the way it contacts the Danube. Brăila's waterfront along the Danube is a spatial configuration element that impresses with some of the few kept elements (e.g. the Violattos mill), but especially with the huge potential of bringing back the memory of this active Romanian port, through the development potential that, starting from here, could change the development of the whole city.

Parcel Plan Analysis

In order to analyse the parcel plan, the method used was the multi-criteria morpho-topological analysis: 5 criteria were considered relevant for the studied tissue: shape, size, street frontage, side ratio, hosted function.

Thus, the parcel plan typology according to the above-mentioned criteria is the following:

Type 1 (irregular)



Very small batches (<150 sqm) resulting from the division, small street front (<10 m), aspect ratio $l/L > 1/4$, alveolar, predominantly housing.

Type 2 (regular)



Regular shapes of plots, small and medium (150 - 500 sqm), average front (10 - 15 m), compared sides $1/4 < l/L < 1/2$, linear orientation, predominantly housing

Type 3 (regular / irregular)



Large lots (500 - 1000 sqm), large front (15 - 25 m),
aspect ration l/L < 1/2, radial orientation, mixed functions

Type 4 regular / irregular

Source: C Ioniță, *Studiu de fundamentare PUG*, 2012



Large batches (>1000 sqm), large front (>25 m), aspect ratio $l/L < 1/2$, alveolar, mixed functions

Urban macro-structure of Brăila reflecting the main directions and symbolical axis, and the orientation to the Danube



Source: PUG, 2012

This typology makes way for a synthetic analysis on the urban tissue as a whole, resulting in four major types of parcel tissues:

Type 1 - organically constituted parcel tissue, with a maximum age, protected, made up of irregular parcels with varied openings to the street;

Type 2 - extension parcel tissue, ordered, balanced, with some obvious sub-types: a) extension parcel plan with medium-sized parcels and small frontage, laid out in rectangles, in repetitive islands, containing, on its main axes, certain structuring interventions carried out at a later stage and that allow for a greater construction occupation; and b) extension parcel plan with small-seized parcels and small frontage, laid out in rectangles, in repetitive islands, without remodelling interventions;

Type 3 - additional parcel tissue with regularly laid out islands, with medium and large parcels that connect the organic parcel plan to the extension one;

Type 4 - peripheral extension parcel tissue, of irregular shape and large size, in incomplete islands from the structure of farmlands.

Analysis of the Parcel Mode of Occupation

The parcel mode of occupation refers to determining the types of occupation of the existing parcel plan, identifying repetitive and singular elements in the built-up mass.

This analysis is useful to state the construction availability, but also to identify the tissue contractions in later interventions.

This analysis underlined the presence of a built-up area that is valuable not only due to singular, protected elements, but also due to ordinary elements that form a local particularity and are the results of a routine in territory occupation, of a historically verified and reinforced way.

| 1 According to the parcel mode of occupation within the confines of the property, we can distinguish:

— for parcels aligned with the alignment

- type 1 - isolated occupation (1%)
- type 2 - joining on one side (22%)
- type 3 - joining on 2 sides (12%)
- type 3 - joining on all sides – carpet (30%)

— for parcels retracted from the alignment

- type 1 - isolated occupation (1%)
- type 2 - joining on one side (14%)
- type 3 - joining on 2 sides (5%)
- type 3 - joining on all sides – carpet (14%)

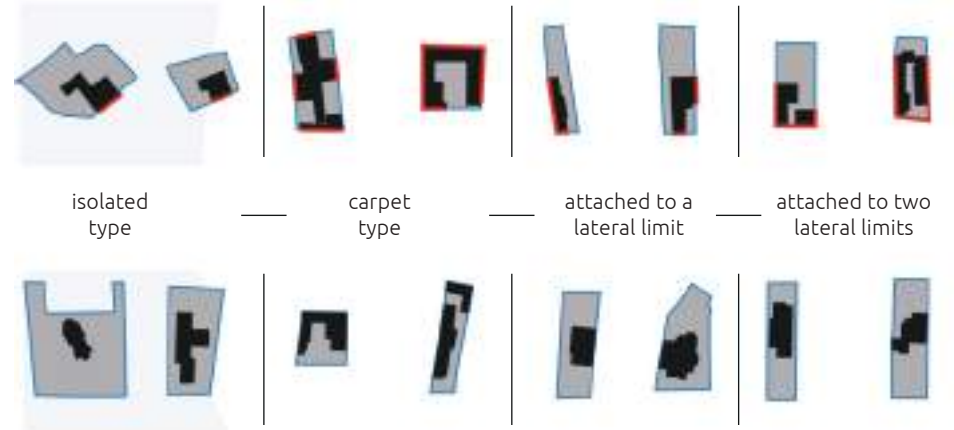
Source: C. Ioniță, *Studiu de fundamentare PUG*, 2012

Identified and spatial disposal of difficult to build parcels - the aspect ratio $<1/4$, small fronts (<8 m). They require special building conditionings and generates special morphological composition ("carpet plots"). Both can be considered as markers of vulnerability (problems at the level of neighborliness) and as opportunity markers (may be developed by punctual interventions).



The relevance of the type of carpet occupation (45% - along the alignment or with retraction) is a memorable feature for Brăila, notifying on an indisputable local particularity that is rarely found in cities in the south and east of the country, guaranteeing the compact character of the urban tissue. On the other hand, this typology needs punctual and flexible interventions, the maximum contextualisation of each new intervention, as well as the careful correlation of all urban indicators on the parcel. It is, in other words, a typology that is as clear in its spatial expression, as it is vulnerable to excessive interpretations, either in one direction - of exaggerated intensification of tissue occupation - , or in the other - of eluding the type and occupying according to a foreign template, keeping only the indicators of this occupation.

Buildings on the plot lineout



Buildings withdrawn from the plot lineout



Corner Type occupation - particular local element and a opportunity marker indicating potential functional reactivation using the ground floor spaces, open to the public with commercial activities.

Source: the author

Attached houses in semicentral area, adjacent to the historic center. Poor constituted urban front - poverty marker.



Analysis of the Parcel Mode of Occupation – LOP, LOC

OCCUPATION DENSITY - LOP (land occupation percentage – the built-up area on the ground/the area of the land/parcel) is a mathematical expression of land occupation on a horizontal plane and an indicator that is used to determine the load in certain areas of the city.

Except for the determining a maximum general proportion per sub-areas, this indicator must be correlated with other indicators such as maximum height, land use coefficient, etc.)

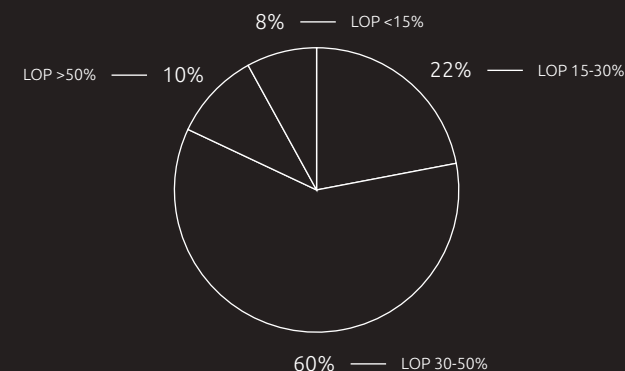
One can notice that the lands with higher occupation are grouped especially in the central area and irradiate through extension towards more peripheral areas, which is supported by the building typology in these areas (carpet type parcels or parcels very densely built horizontally due to the successive land division). The collective housing areas are less visible on this chart, they compensate for the lack of a large occupation percentage through the great height of the buildings. The table and charts on the left show the connection between the LOP categories and their proportion in the city. It is thus noticeable that the dominating parcels proportion-wise are the ones with 30-50% occupation (typically urban), even though they can mostly be found on small or medium sized parcels, which is emphasized by the overall area of these lands, which is smaller than the ones of lands from other categories.

Source: C. Ioniță,
Substantiation Study
PUG 2012

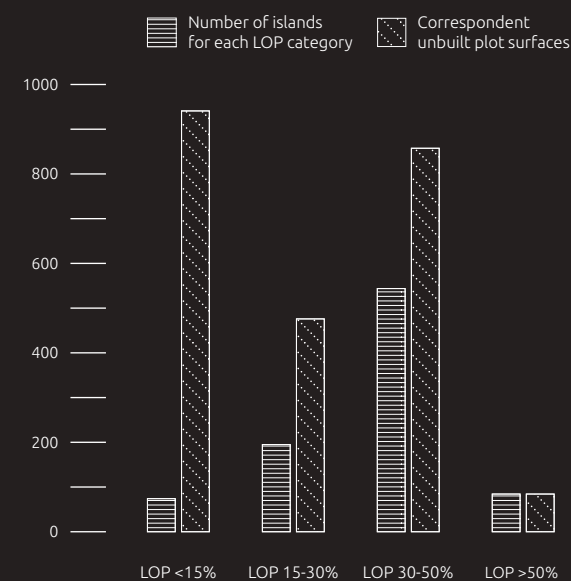
The distribution
of plots with high
occupancy (more
than 50%),



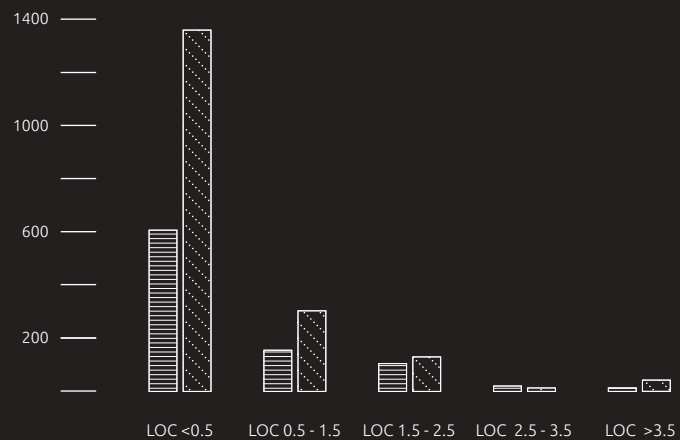
From the point of view of the occupied area in the city, the category with the lowest parcel occupation is the dominating one, which is partly due to the large industrial lands that have a low occupation.



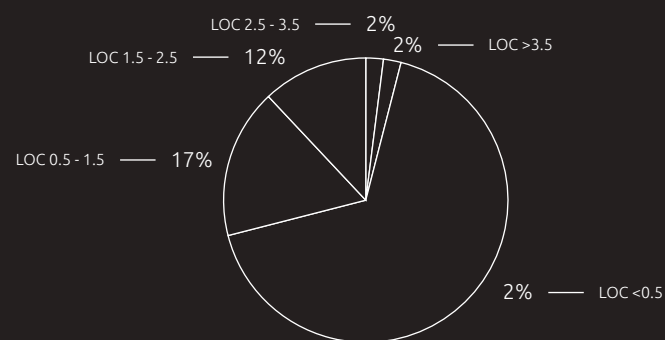
The percentage of urban islands depending on the buildings' occupancy on the ground



The relationship between share islands per LOP and as unbuilt plot surface



The relationship between percentage of islands per LOP and their share as non surface affected land



The percentage of urban islands depending on the buildings' intensity of occupancy on the ground

LAND OCCUPATION INTENSITY - LOC (land occupation coefficient - the net floor area of the building/the area of the parcel)

It is noticeable that the lands with higher occupation are especially grouped in the perimeter area of the centre, generally in the collective housing areas, which is supported by the building typology of this area (great height of the buildings in relation to the parcel per se, makes the density higher). These areas are obviously at the limit of the building capacity, the possible interventions are limited to improvements.

It is also noteworthy that high LOC areas are in a sort of complementarity (from the point of view of location in the city) with the high LOP areas, which can be explained by the fact that, generally, high LOP areas are either already overused, or they are too small to also support a great height.

It is thus noticeable that the dominating parcels from the point of view of proportion are the ones with an occupation intensity lower than 0.5 (typically urban), although they are found scattered all over the city. In fact, there is a directly proportional relationship between the number of islands and their proportion from the point of view of area in the city.

The Granularity of the Urban Tissue

Granularity represents a spatial indicator that highlights the degree of fragmentation of the analysed urban tissue. Understanding this indicator is important because, together with other indicators, it is a tool for making decisions on the basis of tissue compatibility. It is hard to make a large-scale intervention where the tissue is fragmented and vice versa.

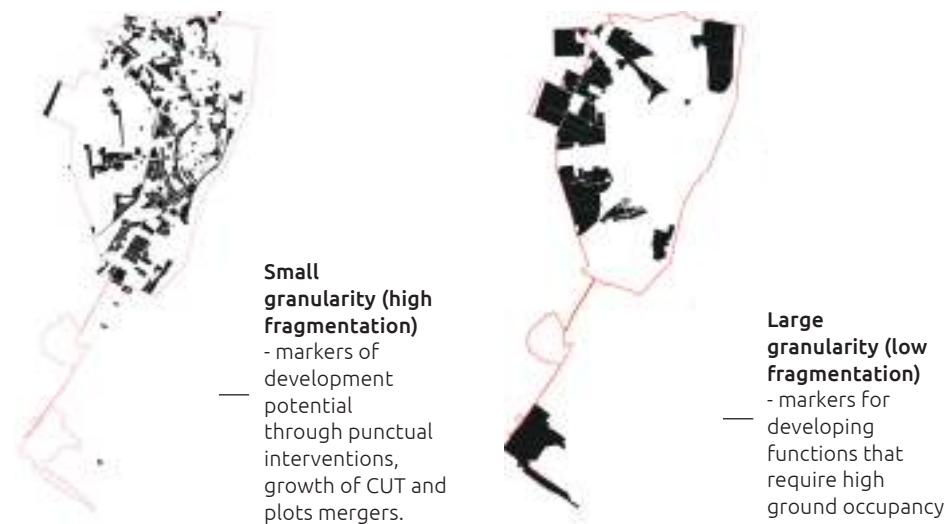
Second of all, granularity is a reading-key for the way the

city has been formed. The low granularity components were identified (large undivided lands), which are generally favourable to large investments, but which, due to their peripheral positioning in relation to the city in the case of Brăila, are more predisposed to future divisions, and it is preferable to keep some of them as strategic land resources for when the city can grow.

The analysis then carried out and extraction of medium or medium to large fragments and that are a very versatile land resource, due to the fact that they are predisposed to interventions for public institutions or shopping centres. Except for the advantage of better sizing, there is also the advantage of location, especially in tight connection with the accessible area of the city.

Currently, many of these lands are occupied, but this fact can help, through correlation with lands in the city that are not built-up, the identification of future areas of intervention (perhaps in partnership).

Very low granularity lands (i.e. very highly fragmented) are more predisposed to small interventions; in the case of larger interventions, complicated land operations are needed (amalgamation).



Analysis on the State and Value of Buildings. Heritage Elements

The analysis on building state revealed the predominance of buildings in medium state, but also a significant percentage – about 23% of the buildings that are in a precarious or subpar state. The criteria taken into consideration for this analysis were the ones related to: The structure building material, the outer closure building material, the type of construction, the degree of utility connections, the degree of living equipment and comfort and the degree of maintenance of the building as a whole. The types determined on the basis of these criteria, as well as the interventions needed to improve these buildings are:

- BUILDINGS IN GOOD AND VERY GOOD STATE - needing only maintenance interventions.
- BUILDINGS IN VERY GOOD STATE - needing interventions for consolidation, improving the quality of interior spaces, alignment reconfigurations, etc.
- BUILDINGS IN SUBPAR/PRECARIOUS STATE - needing restructuring, repairs, parcel reorganisation, planimetric and volumetric reconfiguration in order to increase the degree of comfort and equipment.
- BUILDINGS IN STATE OF DEGRADATION - needing urgent restructuring and partial demolition interventions in order to revitalize the urban tissue and to increase the quality of urban life.

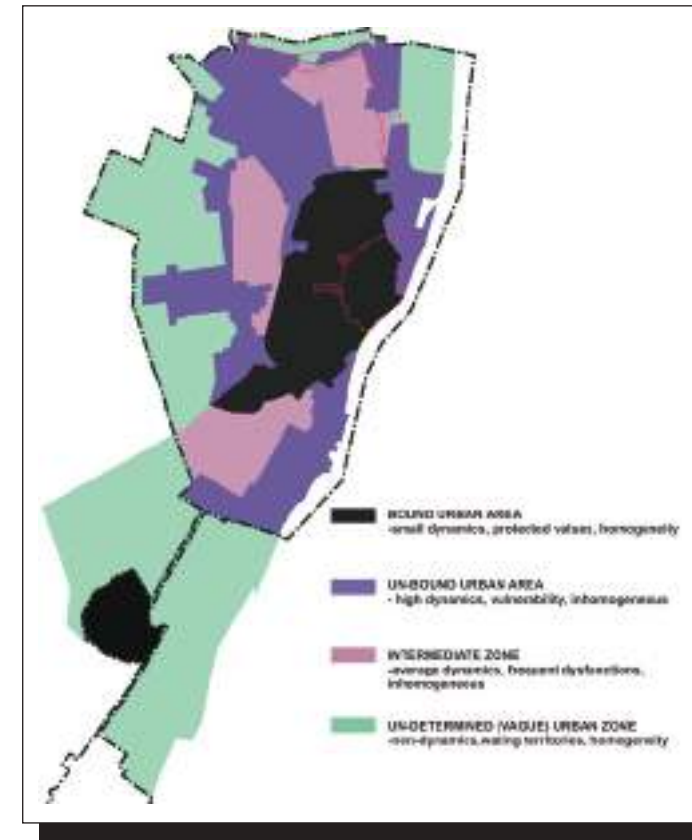
The analysis on the value of buildings started with the 'strongest' elements - classed monuments, and then continued with the rest of the composing elements and identification - buildings proposed for classification (according to The historical study of the local urban plan - the central area of the city of Brăila), buildings with

ambient, symbolic and spiritual value - religious buildings, buildings with no value.

The superpositioning of the two building analyses – **state and value** – highlighted a hierarchy of urban tissue according to these sensibly different characteristics, thus needing interventions:

- AREA 0 - with predominantly valuable buildings from a historical and architectural-urban planning point of view, in medium or good state
- AREA 0.1 - with buildings having archeological and cultural heritage value, but that are in a precarious state
- AREA 1 - with buildings having a predominantly ambient value, average or subpar physical state
- AREA 2 - with buildings having average and subpar architectural-urban planning value and good physical state
- AREA 3 - with nonvaluable buildings from an architectural-urban planning point of view and precarious physical state

Viewing gathered data highlighted the presence of vulnerability areas in the existing buildings, in the sense that there is an accumulation of degraded buildings due to the lack of equipment, utilities, but also due to obsolete building methods, generating housing that lacks the necessary comfort. Most of these vulnerability points are in the peripheral areas, in the built-up areas of former villages, with a rural character, imperfectly adapted to the city, but what is also noticeable is the strong presence of the degraded buildings in the port area of Brăila, buildings that are valuable thanks to their position and history connected with the Danube trade activity



Street Network and Accessibility Analysis

The street network analysis was carried out following two relevant levels: the composition of the network(s) that make up the tissue and their configuration.

Several types were identified:

Type A - consisting of short streets, irregular layouts, variable road reservation, multiple directions. The configuration highlights multiple discontinuities, moderate connectivity.

Type B - consisting of straight streets laid out orthogonally on two directions, equal rhythm, and

constant road reservation. Configuration based on high connectivity, layout continuity.

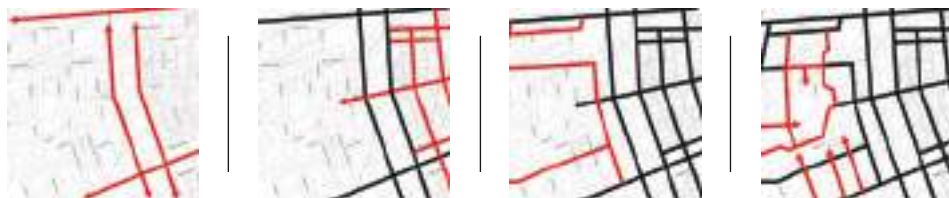
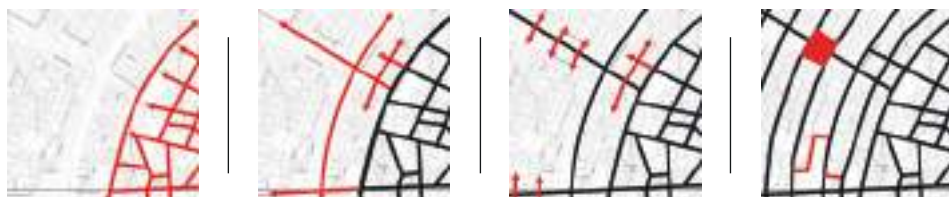
Type C - mixed composition - irregular/regular layouts, rectangularity, forms islands with regular exterior and irregular interior. Moderate connectivity, configurations with discontinuity points (dead-ends, T and X intersections).

Type D - consisting of straight, orthogonal layouts, with equal road reservations, arborescent on secondary layouts, with low connectivity beyond the major arteries.

The street network analysis highlighted the fact that, of all the analysed types, the type related to the old tissue has the best connectivity and the poorest connectivity is encountered in the marginal areas, usually due to poor layout development, the lack of necessary connections and the non-existing hierarchy of the existing ones.

Source: C. Ioniță, *Studiu de fundamentare PUG*, 2012

EXTENSION



DENSIFICATION

The proportion of urban islands of the total according to the LOC

Typological analysis of the street network in the city of Brăila

A



Mixed configuration (in X and T junctions), moderate connectivity due to frequent disruptions in street network

B



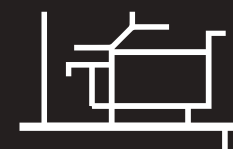
Orthogonal network with high connectivity due to streets continuity

C



Mixed configuration (intersections in X and T), moderate connectivity due to streets discontinuities

D



Mixed street networks containing large islands with low connectivity tree structures

On the basis of the corroboration between the analyses referring to the physical configuration of the street network and the traffic volumes highlighted by the traffic study, there is the possibility to map the global road accessibility of the Brăila street network, highlighting the areas with the best accessibility (well-connected street networks, permeable tissue, high volume of absorbed traffic) and the areas with the lowest accessibility (reduced connectivity street networks, large distances between the major traffic arteries).

Spatial - Configurative Framework **Analysis Number of Storeys,** **General Altimetry, Spatial** **Relations, Urban Scenography**

The spatial-configurative framework oriented analysis was carried out due to the necessity to detect the defining altimetry elements, as well as the elements, extracted from the whole urban structure, that are spatially conjugated and that make up what could be called the 'scenography' of Brăila - accents, marks, spaces and objects, textures, colours, and ambiances. For a city that wants to become a tourist attraction in the future, reinforcing its Danube waterfront as an emblematic element and the central area with important architectural-urban heritage elements, the amplification of this scenography and its application needs a detailed prior study of what already exists.

Brăila is located in the Danube Floodplain, on a terrace surrounded on the north, west and south sides by the floodplains of the Siret, Buzău, and Calmățui rivers, located at distances of up to 20 km. The lowest area of the city, located on the river levee, is 3-4 m above sea level. This is where most of the port installations are found. Then, there is an area that belongs to the Danube Floodplain, 4-6 m in altitude, which crosses to the Brăila terrace. This is where the Comorofca neighbourhood, the

former water plant, and the lowlands near the Vărsătura village are located.

Most of the city stretches into the terrace area, which has an altitude between 12 and 25 m and which rises over a slope parallel to the river, known as a riverfront. The Brăila terrace is flat, descending from the north, where the Brăila Peak (33 m) is located, towards the south, where it reaches 15 m, and from east to west the heights vary between 25 m in Grădina Mare and 10 m in the Lacu Dulce neighbourhood.

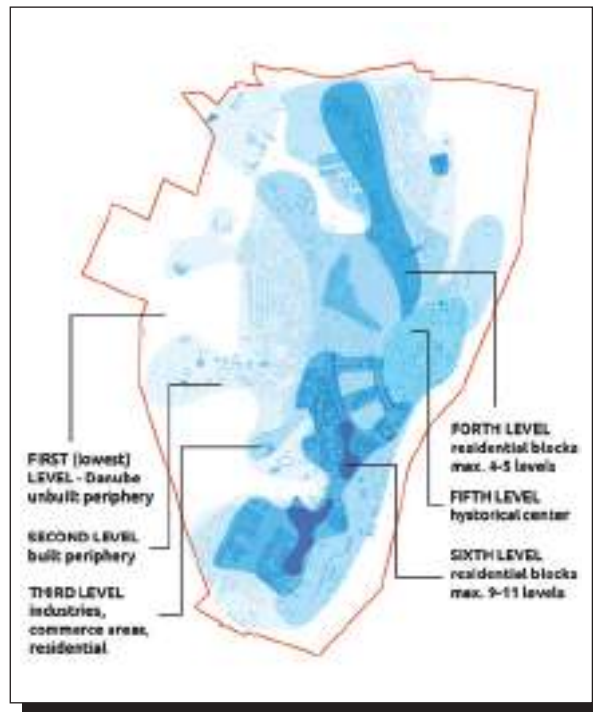


The city and the neighborhoods relief

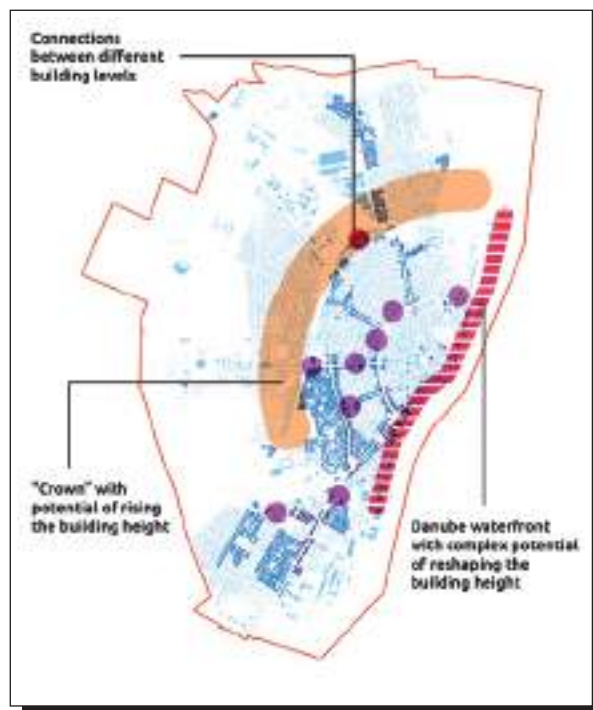
Thus, the general altimetry of the city gives an excellent possibility of building it in consensus with the gentle landscape in which it is located. The buildings in the central area have imaginatively speculated the city's opening towards the riverfront, offering, in the northern side, in the docks area, broad opportunities to continue this front towards the Danube.

Inside the urban structure, low and very low buildings (ground floor + 3 floors for over 70 % of the current

The heights of the built structure



General altimetry map of the city of Brăila: dark blue - the highest areas, light blue - the lowest areas and the altimetry potential map



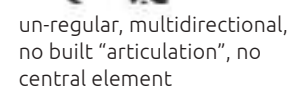
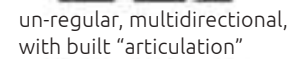
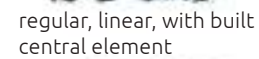
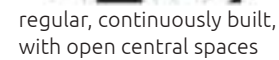
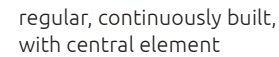
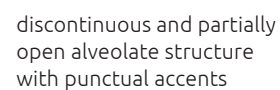
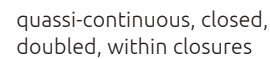
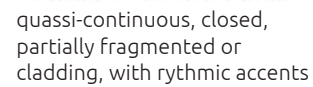
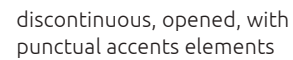
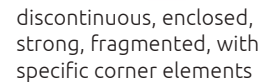
The potential of (re)configuring building heights

buildings) dominate the altimetry of the buildings. A few more important altimetry presences are noticed - the southern area bordering the central ring - with the building potential to complete the frontage and grow in height. Also, given the need to create a waterfront, it is necessary to find certain elements in the urban tissue, not necessarily in the first front near the water, but possibly in the farther fronts, high enough so that it can be 'read' in the city from the Danube. This kind of discrete, but efficient presences for the city's image from the river are already in its history - the water castle, the harbour master's building, the 'hexagon' blocks of flats, the Violattos mill, etc.

The semi-radial-concentric structure of Brăila offers a multitude of sequential visual relations, positive in the sense of the variety of the image, and the novelty of this scenography is worth using through altimetry marks on these routes. On the other hand, the penetrating/radial arteries are dominated by a monotonous image, due to the rectangularity and the great length of their layouts, so that the perspectives along these arteries are long and lack rhythmicity, without notable ends of the perspective. However, the planning of Brăila during the modern era aimed to reinforce certain significant areas in the city, the squares and the T and X intersections with corner profile buildings leaving its mark on the tissue and representing one of its important characteristics. The marker typology identifies simple markers, related to the architecture of the buildings themselves, spatial markers - remarkable, rhythmic urban configurations, mass markers and vertical accents.

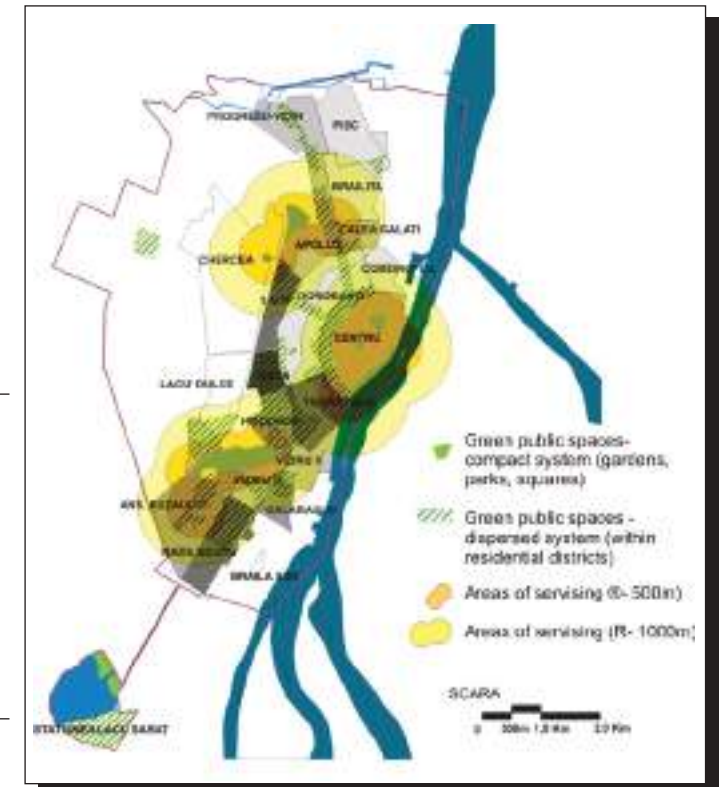
The frontage typology is also interesting, mostly including semi-fragmented continuous frontages (according to the enclosure/carpet mode of occupation), but also discontinuous (towards the semi-central areas), predominantly open frontages, and doubled continuous frontages (plating type).

SQUARES



Analysis of the Urban Green Spaces System

Brăila's green spaces system consists of a series of entities that do not form a whole per se, there are no visual or physical links (pedestrian paths) between them, except for the Big Garden - Hexagon Square - Trajan Square. The most important green areas in the city are: Monument Park - 53 ha, Danube riverfront and esplanade - 7.1 ha, Trajan Square garden - 0.63 ha, Public Garden - 7.5 ha, Zoological Park - 4.2 ha.



Map with the position and coverage of green spaces in the city of Brăila

The typology of public green spaces in the city of Brăila includes:

| 1 Public garden and square green spaces - Public

Garden, Polygon Garden, the Small Garden in Trajan Square

- | 2 Urban municipal park green spaces - Monument Park
- | 3 Green spaces along representative urban axes - Alexandru Ioan Cuza Blvd., Panait Istrati Blvd.
- | 4 Street alignment green spaces
- | 5 Neighbourhood park green spaces - Lacu Dulce, Lacu Dulce ANL, Brăilița, Vidin, Milcov, Caporal Mușat
- | 6 Promenade green spaces on the riverfront
- | 7 Dispersed public green spaces of collective housing neighbourhoods
- | 8 Specialised green spaces or green spaces belonging to sports grounds: The Zoological Garden, The Municipal Stadium, Vidin Stadium

- | 9 Green spaces belonging to public institutions - with limited public access (schools, hospitals, churches, cemeteries).

However, the analysis of green spaces revealed a whole, green infrastructure that is not necessarily located on public grounds, thus it is not counted as green space/capita, but it is formed by a sequence of green textures belonging especially to residential areas that support and form Brăila's image as a green city:

- | 1 predominantly mineral texture belonging to the old tissue
- | 2 predominantly vegetal texture belonging to parcel housing neighbourhoods
- | 3 predominantly vegetal texture belonging to collective housing neighbourhoods
- | 4 strongly mineral texture belonging to industrial/storage areas



1 Public Space-Private Space Relation



2 Distribution of Public Space and Connexion Possibilities

Source: PUG Brăila, 2012

Among the existing functions in the city, from the point of view of generating/creating a public space, we can distinguish between functions that produce or attract public space (cultural functions, education, food trade, green spaces, sports) and functions that inhibit the manifestation of a public space, even if it exists from a legal point of view (army, hospital, industry, storage, depot, etc.).

Thus, the typology of public spaces according to their purpose in the city was shaped according to a few markers:

- The degree of public attractiveness in the respective space
- The degree of accessibility (by public transport, by car, etc.)
- The degree of popularity (how known it is to the locals)

- The degree of representation (through history, architecture)
- The degree of equipment/facilities/setting (how well equipped the space is in order to favour public activities)
- Legal status (to whom does it belong to in fact - national/local public domain, city hall public domain, etc.)

The analysis identified attractive, valuable and friendly public spaces, well equipped public spaces, but with poor public animation, animated public spaces, but improperly equipped, as well as many public spaces lacking any coherence that could raise their degree of attractiveness, or public spaces where the buildings or the green spaces need serious interventions in order to be transformed in places of the city.

A few types of public spaces were extracted by relating the public space to the built-up space, among which the numbers are in favour of introverted public spaces - whether it's enclosures of blocks of flats, or homes built on parcels, joint/chained, or urban squares with a space firmly made up of continuous or quasi-continuous frontages, not lacking in spatial accents and short, strong axes. However, except for this type, there is also the opposite type – extroverted public spaces, with ample axes and diluted perspectives, sometimes unclearly bounded, with alveoli, or even diffuse.

Riverfront Industrial Area

Special attention must be given to the Brăila Free Zone. In order to promote international exchange, attract foreign capital, introduce new technologies, and raise the possibilities of using the local economic resources, the Brăila Free Zone has been created. The initiative was born in 1992 and was supported with several series of laws until 2000.

The overall planned area has 110.6 ha and consists of three perimeters, with a port area (with platforms, buildings, and units that can be easily adapted to the activities in the free zone), and the 4.01 ha port land extension, where the S.N. Petrom warehouses used to be.

The administration of the Brăila Free Zone is carried out, organised and functional on the autonomous public entity principle, on the basis of economic management and financial independence. The attributions of the Brăila Free Zone Administration are common to all Romanian free zone administrations:

The Brăila Port docks, considered in certain periods to be too small for the activity of the port, occupy a 50 ha area, consist of the dock basin, and the dock enclosure.

Major Problems/Breakdowns. Diagnosis.

- The industrial areas on the Danube riverfront do not currently represent an attractive, well defined territory, considering that the platforms occupied by specific functions (industry, trade, port, etc.) are in a relative state of functional and building degradation, disorder, and disorganisation;
- The physical continuity of functional spaces is fractured (shipyard, port, promenade, recreational, sports, etc.);
- Punctual attractions have an incoherence generating dispersion;
- Public spaces are either deteriorated or inconsistent;
- Specific activities are dispersed or have even disappeared;
- Traffic relations are very complicated or sluggish



Source: B-Lab photo archive

- (including the unsolved problem of car parks);
- Classed monuments are in an advanced state of degradation;
- The riverfront green spaces are uncontrolled - tall vegetation that has become chaotic obstructs the perspective towards the Danube or towards buildings and monuments
- The houses that accompany the traditional functions generate a rural image;
- The shore and riverfront image, seen from the water, lacks coherence;
- Some attempts to rehabilitate certain buildings are inappropriate: shapes and materials (removed chimneys, modification of the initial features, modification of the shape and materials for the coverings without keeping the spirit and expressiveness of the original buildings);
- The emergence of new buildings that cannot be formally integrated (the new the harbour master's building),
- Lack of urban furniture and integrated urban lighting;
- Visible degradation of the natural riverfront
- Indifferent relationship between the historical centre and the areas traditionally built as trade, industry, and services areas.

Urban Landscape and Public

Brăila's urban landscape is fundamentally defined by the city's relationship with the Danube that, as a potential element for its future, can contribute decisively to the restoration of its identity. Rich in green spaces, with

valuable particularity elements, disjointed in certain points and with a series of signalled breakdowns, Brăila's landscape is, however, a representative one, making Brăila a pleasant city, with a well-defined urban ambiance.

Beyond the immediate perception, in the current General Urban Plan Brăila's urban landscape problematic was approached on two levels:

- On one hand, it was presented in the studies referring to Brăila's territorial supra-context - in the Local Territory Organisation of the Peri-urban Area (PATZP) of Brăila, and the conclusions of these studies were taken into the General Urban Plan, with the adaptations needed for the city's 'resolution'.
- On the other hand, through analyses dedicated to this topic, in the Background Study Regarding Green Spaces, Urban Landscape, and Public Space, it was elaborated and explained, taking into consideration all the defining elements of this landscape, with all its sub-components.

The analysis of Brăila's urban landscape, viewed its entirety, revealed a few types related to the essential components of the urban ambiance and scenography that it creates.

For a quicker usefulness of this study in the General Urban Plan of Brăila, the **urban landscape** generated by the spatial-physical framework was especially taken into discussion, and the main types identified are:

- | a The landscape of organised green spaces - to maintain/protect/put forward
- | b The built landscape of the historical centre - to maintain/protect/put forward
- | c The landscape of residential neighbourhoods - to

maintain/put forward/reconfigured

| d The landscape of urban peripheries- to identify/reconfigure/put forward

| e The urban landscape of the Danube riverfront - to promote/reconfigure/put forward

However, a city's landscape is very dependent on space ambiance, and this is mostly manifested in the public space. The analysis of Brăila's public spaces was carried out following the markers of 3 decisive levels for its correct evaluation:

| 1 Conformation and distribution of green spaces;

| 2 Equipment, facilities and functional profile of the component entities of the green space system;

| 3 Institutional and management framework.

The above-mentioned study states the following priorities to take into consideration for the general Urban Plan:

- Establishing a balanced distribution of public spaces in order to increase comfort in residential areas and in central areas. This will have to take into account the densities of building land occupation, human load, activities and, last but not least, accessibility.
- Identifying certain key-locations meant to be reserved for representative public spaces that contribute to Brăila's overall image, with an increased identity role.
- Identification of possibilities to create a network of public spaces, connected with and in continuation of green spaces, that can create alternative routes to go through areas that are too busy, or to put forward certain attractive areas.
- Identifying and establishing the locations for public

spaces in socially fragile areas, in order to improve habitability

- Correlation of the public space with future investment areas, in order to insure their operation in relation to the city
- Recommendations for the rehabilitation of degraded public buildings, particularly in collective housing areas, in order to increase life quality
- Studying the possibility to increase pedestrian access in the central area, especially in the case of streets with heritage buildings
- Discouraging extensive city development by encouraging density increase in under-occupied areas and by avoiding the building of gated communities
- Discouraging the functions that reject public space in the densely built-up area of the city (military areas, industrial areas, etc.)

Landscape of Danube's Right Bank in Brăila

Raluca Pascu

In the micro-scenography of Brăila's landscape, the city opens towards the Danube like a fan, having the other bank as scene and set i.e. the portion of territory from the confluence of the Danube with the Harapu Arm to the confluence with the Old Danube and the Filipoiu Canal, with the Măcin Mountains on the horizon.

It is not an accident that the genesis and historical evolution of the city of Brăila is essentially owed to the right bank of the Danube, being the element towards which the city has always related to, developing by speculating a higher ground, less floodable compared to it. The building of the embankment in the '60's and of the so-called Great Island of Brăila have radically changed the

organically established intimate relationships between the two banks of the Danube - a vital matrix body that made the city landscape start from the Danube and come back to the Danube, curved like a rainbow.

The landscape and evolution analysis in the Background Study Regarding Green Spaces, Urban Landscape, and Public Space in Brăila highlighted the need to integrate this area, which at the moment does not belong to the administrative territory of the city, but which is historically validate as congenital to its becoming, in the development concept. The following were mentioned as **strong points**: the special lake character, the high biodiversity, the presence of markings from its history of operation as a place for recreation (the Regal restaurant), the size of the wooded area, the presence of the beach, and the water connexion with the city – pontoon crossing, the embankment and the road on the embankment. The **weak points** are: administrative unclarity, risk of flooding, weak urban equipment, insufficient water connexion.

The **opportunities** are, from the perspective of reconnecting the city to this territory, the following: - the chance to rebuild Brăila's identity starting from this element, - the chance to stimulate tourism through environmentally friendly and educational activities. The **threats** regarding this evolution of the analysed landscape are: risk of excessive anthropization due to the lack of a coherent development and organisation program, the risk of abandonment by ignoring the expectations of the population and the potential of the area, the risk that the territorial and administrative divisions involved might not cooperate, and insufficiency of funds.



The Landscape of Brăila Peripheries

Angelica Stan

"In the multitude of polarities that can be found in the philosophy of the whole urban phenomenon, the periphery is always in the middle, justifying and even validating the ambiguities of the term itself: Village/city, full/empty, natural landscape/anthropic landscape, resource/waste - interstitial area par excellence, intermediate space, mediation structure, interface. Most times, however, the urban periphery has been wrongly understood, in a simplified fashion, through black and white thinking, always in opposition with the centre, or it has been loaded with 'sins' that do not belong to it. Peripheral spaces are read hastily and pejoratively, the periphery landscapes are criticised before being deciphered, and this only obstructs the possible meanings of the urban periphery in relation to the new evolutions of the city".

A. Stan

*Peisajul periferiilor urbane: revitalizarea
peisagera a zonelor periferice, Ed. UAUIM, 2009*

Brăila has two edges, a water edge and a land one. The water edge is a city limit and, at the same time, a heart of the city - the encephalic membrane of the historical centre, of the nucleus of its entire structure. The water edge of Brăila was once the most important place, a meeting and departure point, on the Danube, to new horizons. Today's water edge of Brăila is a calm landscape, with a broad horizon, but without enthusiasm, apathetic, without the force to impress and attract, as it used to. It is no longer the place from where to leave and where to return, it is only space for aimless walks, or a transit space between the Belvedere and the Violattos mill. In rest, the water edge of Brăila is a desert, with clashing concrete and vegetation, ruins on their way to re-enter the great circuit of nature.

The land edge mostly coincides with the ring road and the farmlands and former farmlands, the ones that have entered the built-up area without having the quality to belong to it. This edge is actually a surface, a crown grooved by the zippers of road penetrations in the city, arching according to the shape of the ring road.

The city has grown organically in half-circles multiplied 3-4 times the size of the starting point - the fortress - finds its final frontier in the ring road. If this too will be crossed, it seems that Brăila will disintegrate in the endless field.

The stable compact shape, priding itself with the semi-circular boulevards unique in Romania, Brăila carries its peripheries with a sort of embarrassment, tries to hide them and fails. Their landscape is denied by the inhabitants of these spaces themselves: not even the term 'landscape' seems right for them to name the dry edges of Brăila, the poor houses, the railway that breaks a neighbourhood in two, the broken district heating pipe raised on pylons, the garbage, the overflowing sewers, the children playing in the street...

Brăila's peripheries make up a particular case not only due to the semi-circular shape of the city and to the radial structure of the major street network, but also due to the relationships within the peri-urban territory, dominated, on one side, by the close collaboration (tense and historically fuelled by mistrust, historically politically manipulated) with Galați and, on the other hand, the economic subordination of a broad county territory, with multiple entities with strong personality (e.g. The Small Island of Brăila).

The peripheries of Brăila are provocative places: located face to face to the City - compact, unitary, relatively homogeneous, continuous and contiguous in most of its composing entities - they reveal their still unclear, unformed, introverted personality, tormented by questions and frustrations kept secret for decades.

Their landscape feels the pleasure of the secret: camouflaged residual places, intermediate spaces between the topos and the utopos, between reality and fiction. Landscapes that are waiting for their future, without rushing it, without tempting it.

From a morphological, functional and ambient point of view, the peripheries of Brăila can be grouped into four types:

TYPE 1 - peripheral areas belonging to the main road penetrations into the city - 'entrances' - mono-oriented corridor landscapes, more often than not commercially 'printed', marked by the linearity of crossing them at speed.

Here, there are two completely different sub-types:

- The first one, predominating, is the one of a rural ambiance of national road that crosses the towns, a typical situation for southern, eastern, and south-eastern Romania. The corridor landscape is flanked by the owners' fences, reflecting their wish to be

emancipated, by the illegal/tolerated small trade on the edge of the road, by the poorly indicated crossings, etc.

Source: B-Lab photo archive

Peripheral space typically belonging to the entrance corridors from the national roads - here DN22.



- The second is a new kind of corridor landscape, belonging to the supermarket developments, from which Brăila has fully benefited. If there is a point from where we can say that Brăila's depersonalisation started, the loss of its trade port memory, with the sale of the goods near the riverfront, where the traders used to come, then this point of decline is right here, in the peripheral places that have become shopping centres. The image is frenetic and anonymous, once every memory is erased, the ambiance is an intensely consumerist and functional one but, paradoxically, these spaces are positively valued by the locals: it is a landscape 'as it should be', 'like abroad', clean, even if it has 'a bit too much concrete'.

Source: B-Lab photo archive

Peripheral space typically belonging to the supermarket shopping areas



TYPE 2 - 'crown' type peripheral areas, generated by the presence of the ring road and the semi-circular shape of the city. The image is marked by the broad-sequential perception; the content is quasi-void, of former farming or farming-industrial spaces, where the natural-anthropised succession is a dynamic, sometimes scenographic one.

The western periphery of the city makes up a broad and functionally complex landscape. The compact frontage of the high-density housing is in contrast with the free area of former, abandoned farmlands.

Source: B-Lab photo archive

Peripheral space typically belonging to the city ring road: crown space, broad, sequential perception



TYPE 3 - 'pocket' peripheral areas, belonging to interstitial and/or territories between the ring road and the established urban tissue - generally residential landscapes, camouflaged enclaves, islands marked by the wish to belong to the city. Especially present in housing on parcel areas, their landscape is distinguishable through:

- Rural life atmosphere
- Strongly vegetal spaces - but uncontrolled, unkempt vegetation, with alignment plantations
- Visual aggressions due to the precarious surroundings, overhead cables, electricity pylons, and garbage.
- Unkempt space; suggests disorder and community/individual lack of interest

- Lack of infrastructure for pedestrians and cyclists
- Abusive occupation of pedestrian traffic through car parking

People are mixed in this landscape, more heterogeneous than we could imagine just by looking at their houses, almost all of them precariously built, badly designed, practically 'without architecture'. Partially, they are people that have lived in the countryside their whole lives, in one storey houses, city inhabitants only by virtue of their documents, taking care only of their home and communicating only a little, because the 'village' (rural community) doesn't actually exist. The rural character is based here on individual behaviour and less on social relations. Peripheral in relation to the city (from a physical point of view), these people are also peripheral in relation to the village, to which they say they belong socially, but which does not have a spatial correspondent.

Then there are people who after living their whole lives in blocks of flats, now have their own house, making a property instinct visible one either side of the property, a wish to show-off a slightly above average status. They are people who maybe worked abroad, or sold an inheritance, or took a bank loan. However, they are not the dominating ones. Brăila's peripheries have not developed on the basis of a bank financed real estate program, maybe except for the National Housing Agency micro-inserts (state financed). The landscape generated by these inhabitants is an introverted, distrustful one, based on suspicion: it is the landscape of tall and opaque fences, of foreign cars parked in front of the house, on the pavement, of roofs with fake lofts and skylights, of neighbourhood shops that sell everything, or of a corner pub as a family business.

Nevertheless, there is a category of marginal people in every sense of the word, giving birth to a periphery living landscape below the poverty line: the ghettos of

the homeless, living in mud huts, near landfills, ignored and ignorant, invisible to authorities, excluded from the development plans of urban planners.

Peripheral space typically belonging to marginal residential areas, extreme southwestern area of Brăila, Old National Road, landscaped marked by private initiative, by the feeling of (well-being) personal property.



Peripheral space typically belonging to marginal residential areas, poverty pocket

Source: B-Lab photo archive

TYPE 4 - peripheral areas of the riverfront, waterfront landscapes also varying according to the activities that they host:

- Industrial subtype - metallic, aggressive, rusted, and almost abandoned landscapes. Most of this landscape consists of industrial areas in the north and south of the Brăila riverfront. They are a

disorganised appearance, in a desolating and destructive decline or marked by inconsistency. The Danube river, an important European naval path flows indifferently, only doing its duty as a border, and not that of natural presence that mobilises certain specific activities that have given vocation, tradition, and 'life' to the city. (Extract from the Background Study regarding the industrial areas belonging to the riverfront URBAN-INCDERC, 2011).

- Free subtype, vague, used as promenade - partially organised, partially not, impressive places due to their wilderness only a few steps away from the city centre, with peaceful images of the Danube, with floodable banks during spring.



Industrial/ port periphery, mostly inactive, inaccessible, unattractive

Source: B-Lab photo archive



Danube riverfront fragment in Brăila - southern periphery, abandoned space, sporadically used by fishermen.



Explorations
Tactics
Actions

Explorations Tactics Actions

The first stage – the exploratory one – from the series of workshops held in Brăila between December 2015 and June 2016 targeted discovering the city from a perspective cleansed from the scientific load of classical urban planning and the return towards direct, first hand perception on the reality of urban life.

To be aware of shrinking became a search for clues (markers) in an environment that is spatially, as well as (or especially) socially heterogeneous, because this term does not mean the same thing for all inhabitants of Brăila.

The condition of peripherisation was noticed from the beginning as an axiological and not a topological one. Peripheral areas of Brăila were investigated, taking into account marginal sites compared to the city centre, as well as peripheries in the qualitative sense, isolated or poor areas or areas only touched by the shrinkage syndrome, of abandonment of spaces and moral neglect. Former industrial areas, now abandoned or precariously used, rural looking neighbourhoods, the tram depot, Monument park, the edges of the Promex industrial zone, as well as various segments of the Danube riverbank – from the representative promenade of the central area to relatively wild parts that has

been returned (in a dangerous manner) to the natural ecosystems – were explored.

A stop and articulation point of the action at the urban “marker” concept was the pavilion structure of the Garage itself, installed on the riverbank near the Violattos Mill by our colleagues from the Norwegian team. Somehow, a few months before the event that inaugurated the presence of the garage in Brăila, the function of stimulating the debate, inciting to reaction and drawing the attention of the locals was re-tested. That moment, the Garage became – unknowingly, unplanned and provisionally – the signal-element for accessing the Information and Visiting Centre, a floating structure moored by the Administration of the Baltă Mică a Brăilei Natural Park right next to

it. Other markers were also identified as possible indicators of a shrinking and/or reactivation function in the city, signalling certain public management errors (the “La Pietre” area), regarding faults in caring for the surrounding area (gangways), certain possibilities to reinvent (tram stops), or a potential to give a new function (the former Muller brewery).

Thus, the urban laboratory created in Brăila uses “markers” as instruments of analysis that draw attention to problems, vulnerabilities, risks, or latent opportunities. They are identified on the so-called “molecular” scale of the city, studying microelements of urban space and social micro-relations, highlighting not only a state of facts, but also certain changes within the urban metabolism: varied and informal ways of using certain spaces, gradual abandonment processes, and temporary recuperation trends. The urban markers present in the life of Brăila often show much more serious problems, due to the fact that they are referential and in relations of interdependence.

The explorations within the Brăila Lab, which is based on direct observation and the punctual marking of

problematic places/situations, initiates a dialogue based on activating a change in attitude, creating the premise of a viable and realistic solution.

The following students participated to this action: Agota Barabaș, Ana-Maria Negru, Alexandra Mihaela Tudor, Alexandru Bunea, Andreea Simion, Andreea Toma, Cătălin Dumitrache, Cristian Andrei Bădescu, Cristina Zaharia, Elena Rus, Florin-Valentin Tănase, Marilena Brastaviceanu, and Miruna Drăghia (Faculty of Urban Planning), Alexandra Tornea, Doriană Gabriela Marășoiu, Georgiana Stoian, Marian Alexandru Zloteanu, Ștefan Sălăvăștru, and Vanda Dobrescu (Faculty of Architecture). The students were accompanied and guided with explanation on site and in the determining points by: Arh. Angelica Stan, Urb. Andreea Acasandre, Landscaper Irina Pața and Arch. Ilinca Păun - Constantinescu. The Brăila Mayor's Office was a useful and active guide throughout this exploratory visit, with the presence and help of Mr Marian Ion, chief architect of the Municipality of Brăila.



Re-use and re-imagine

Alexandru Bunea
Alexandra Tornea
Andreea Toma

A creative pop-up investigation on people's desired uses for different abandoned urban places, in a very central area of Brăila (the Mihai Eminescu pedestrian street).

The project addresses the issues of perception and expectations of Brăila's residents regarding the city's evolution. The first step was an interactive social study called "EuVreauAici..." (I want here...) which led to a series of conclusions about possible uses of abandoned spaces on the Mihai Eminescu pedestrian street. In the second stage, we proposed an interactive installation including five frames that "cut out" the main street perspectives and a number of boxes into which people look to a transformed image of the same street space, based on their own opinions. This installation - called "Think outside the box and look inside it" - was placed on a dynamic path in order to change the inhabitants' perspective on the transforming possibilities of street space. The project intends to make inhabitants aware that the observer's position is not sufficient to ensure an optimal urban development.

Shrinking cities is an urban phenomenon that manifests across most cities in Romania, such as Brăila. The B-Lab workshop aims to make a number of bottom-up interventions to help the city of Brăila regain its identity.

During our first visit to Brăila, we noticed that the main problems were the loss of local identity, the disregard for heritage and especially the conversion of some

central areas into peripheries. The attractiveness of the public space, the economy, and the social life are three elements that create a cycle with negative consequences.

We identified a number of elements with potential for change: Mihai Eminescu Street, the Danube Quays, the Brewery, the tram, the concrete fence in Monument Park, the Violattos Mill, and the former furniture factory (now abandoned and degraded). At the moment, some of the public space are not safe, are insalubrious, and have a dull atmosphere.

Explorations

City map landmarks



Due to legislative problems, the facades of the buildings declared monuments are to be demolished in order to make space for unsuitable insertions that contribute to the loss of the street's personality. Although this is a central area, the problems encountered

by the space on Mihai Eminescu Street are specific to the peripheries. The chosen site holds a lot of potential from an economic, cultural, and touristic point of view due to its central location, the large number of services, and the historical heritage.

Dysfunctions

- unsafe street
- low economic activities
- old buildings that need restoration
- loss of the street identity
- unattractive stories
- no interest in development
- too many cars for a pedestrian street
- insufficient urban furniture
- stray dogs

ambient —



Why this space? Mihai Eminescu Street is part of the historical area of the city. Access across the entire length of the street is allowed only to pedestrians, engineless vehicles and delivery cars for the services offered at ground floor. Nevertheless, there is almost constant traffic on the street. In order to make it easier to have a dialogue with the inhabitants and those using the street, we created a form of interactive survey called "I WANT HERE" through which the participants had the chance to fill in a panel with the change they want in that space along with some stickers with the same message placed across the entire length.



Tactics

Our plan

observ the space - interact with people - actions



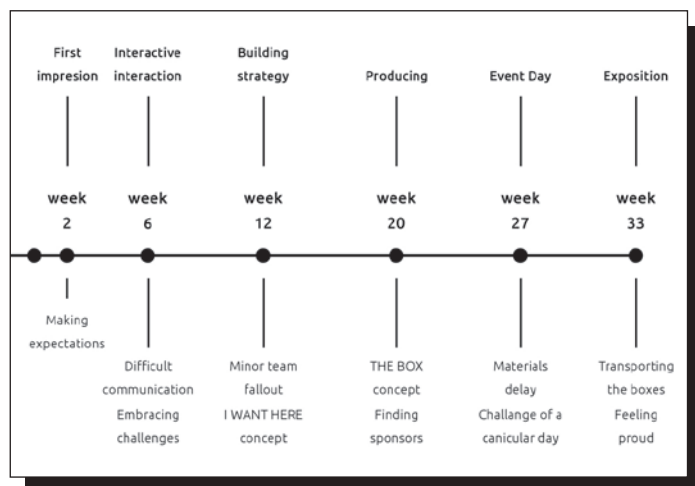
Talking with locals



Interactive opinions



Analyzing responses



A creative pop-up investigation on people's desired uses for different abandoned urban places, in a very central area of Brăila (the Mihai Eminescu pedestrian street).

In the first step of our project, the interactive survey "I WANT HERE", we didn't want to just hear the opinion of the locals, but also to raise awareness on the matter of public space development.

This concept allowed us to use a big bubble where people could write their answers directly, photograph it, clean it and write another answer. This made the bubble a very efficient tool.

In the second part of the concept, we gave away stickers with the bubble to be put around the city and along the street, to be photographed, and the photo uploaded to Facebook with #euvreauaici (#Iwanthere).

This way we got our answers, raised awareness on social media for the younger generation and in the street for everyone.

After we analysed all the answers we created 6 major groups: more terraces, public events, green spaces, urban furniture and installations, the renovation of the old buildings, and charity events.

Actions



Interviews

| 1 Five person samples

3 aged 15-25, 2 aged over 50

General considerations:

- Safe community interaction public spaces where exchanges of information and/or goods can take place are wanted
- Safe playgrounds are wanted in each neighbourhood
- Spare time or hobby activities for unemployed or retired people over 60 would be welcome – agriculture, gardening, walks, or other outdoor activities with their grandchildren
- An area where the people's preoccupation for the community is a point of support.

| 2 Ten person samples

5 aged 15-25, 3 aged 30-45, 2 aged over 50

General considerations:

- Safe community interaction public spaces where exchanges of information and/or goods can take place are wanted
- Spare time or hobby activities for unemployed or retired people over 60 would be welcome – agriculture, gardening, walks, or other outdoor activities with their grandchildren
- Young people want interactive spaces and spaces geared towards social trends such as shopping centres
- The area can be improved from a landscaping point of view, and people would be willing to take part in makeover activities for the park, they have ideas, but they lack financing and a starting point (an impetus).

- Spare time or hobby activities for unemployed or retired people over 60 would be welcome – agriculture, gardening, walks, or other outdoor activities with their grandchildren
- The community is united, but according to autonomous ethnic groups, with occasional collaborations

| 4 Field observations from the previous visit in November 2015 that were video recorded during the discussion had before returning.

- United community with association tendencies
- Need for public spaces for interaction and activities
- Landscape makeover through personal involvement tendencies



| 3 Two person samples

2 aged over 50

General considerations:

- Safe community interaction public spaces where exchanges of information and/or goods can take place are wanted
- Safe playgrounds are wanted in each neighbourhood

For the second part of the project, we had a hard time choosing the best intervention based on the answers that we received and on the budget that we had. In the end, we chose a social intervention, "THE BOX" concept, which is meant to transform people from observers into active residents by showing them how simple and well-made interventions can change public space identity.

The final part of our project involved creating 6 boxes, 4 transparent panels and place them along the street in the "problem" areas. We named it "THINK OUTSIDE THE BOX, LOOK INSIDE IT".

The boxes were made from pasteboard glued together with silicone and 3 of the boxes were standing on 4 cylindrical hard cardboard legs put together to form an independent structure. The other 3 boxes were suspended by ropes from the nearby trees. These types of structures allowed people to enter inside the box and see a 360 degrees photoshopped image of that area of the street. Each image had a different topic and a distinctive title. The titles were "Green river", "Umbrella street", "Living street", "People street", "Face on an era" and "Gathering space".

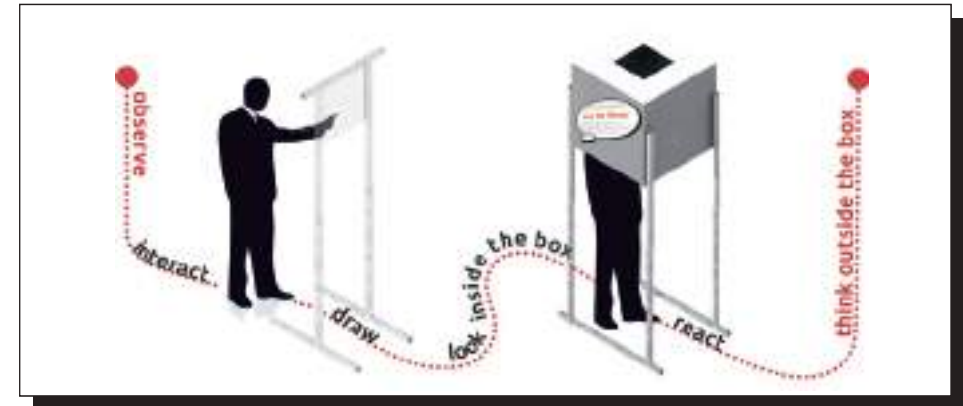
The topics reflected the 6 answer groups from the "I WANT HERE" part.

The transparent panels were made from plexiglas standing on 2 cylindrical hard cardboard legs.



The purpose was for people to stop and draw their vision of the street. After they finished drawing, we would photograph the result and clean the panels so another person could draw. This is called efficiency. The fact that surprised us was that it had a greater success with children living on that street.

Box map



What you see in reality



What you see in the box



Albina Link

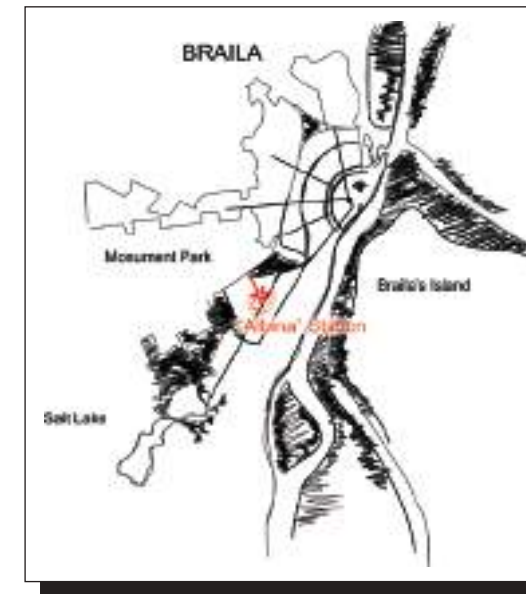
Green re-activation between two separated zones of Brăila

Simion Andreea
Tudor Alexandra
Bădescu Cristian

Parasitic green installation using an existing structure of a tram station (called "Albina") in order to relink two separated communities.

The project started from the observation of the southern periphery of Brăila and tram line 24 that separates two different residential areas - the blocks of flats and the houses. Revitalization actions have been proposed as a series of specific actions in order to increase the interest of residents for multiple possibilities of improving the quality of local public space, through actions that involve a minimal effort, but can have maximum impact. One of these "acupuncture actions" has been designed for the "Albina" tram-station, situated on the route of tram 24 (Grigore Alexandrescu Street). This route links the Salt Lake resort to Monument Park, two important green landmarks in Brăila. The revitalization consists in creating a green installation with plants and recycled materials, relying on the least cost of intervention. Therefore, the installation was made of recycled plastic bottles turned into pots for plants (by cutting and dyeing them), then suspended by ropes that served as support in the existing tram station. The plants used and the soil needed were purchased from local residents.

Creative ReActivation. The main objective of the project aimed to stimulate the civic spirit and initiative of the local community, underlining the development potential of the area and of micro-urban areas, such as trams.



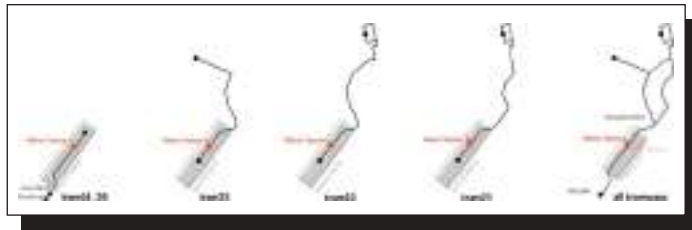
We chose "tram" because:

- it is the most used form of public transport in Brăila since 1897
- it represents the local identity, it is part of the residents' everyday life
- it offers a complete radiography of the entire city from the northern to the southern periphery.



What do we have?

- a line between two different types of housing
- a common place used by everyone but taken care of by nobody
- a tramline with a potential of a link-line
- people with local initiative



Sketches of the station area



Tactics

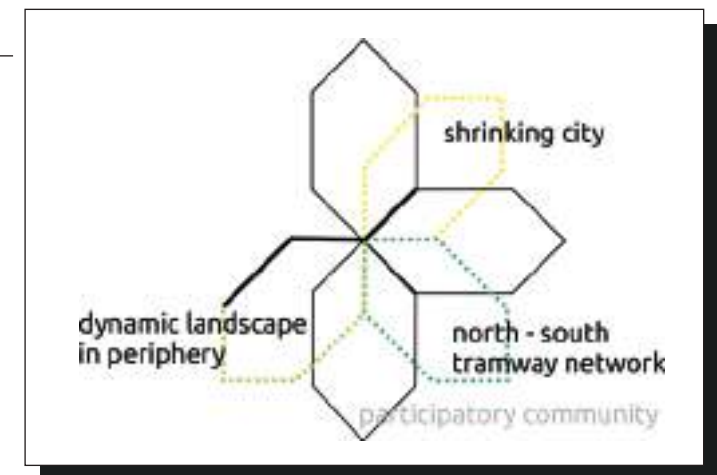
The project started from the observation of the southern periphery of Brăila and of tramline 24 that separates two different residential areas - the blocks of flats and the houses.

Revitalization actions have been proposed as a series of specific actions in order to increase the interest of residents in multiple possibilities of improving the quality of local public space, through actions that involve a minimal effort, but can have maximum impact.

One of these “acupuncture actions” has been designed for the “Albina” tram-station, situated on the route of tram 24 (Grigore Alexandrescu Street). This route links the Salt Lake resort to Monument Park, two important green landmarks in Brăila.

The revitalization consisted in creating a green installation with plants and recycled materials, relying on the least cost of intervention. Therefore, the installation was made of recycled plastic bottles turned into pots for plants, then suspended by ropes that served as support in the existing tram stop. The plants used and the soil needed were purchased from local residents.

From macro to micro.
Relations through
the city. Community
and places.

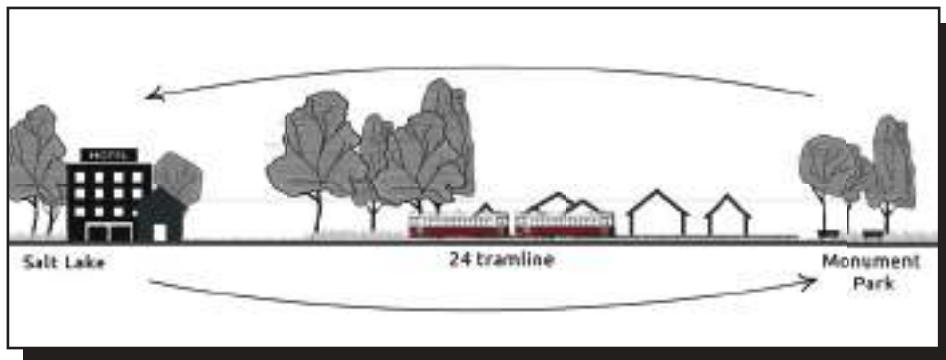


Tramline 24 concept. One piece of the potential plan

Taking into account the potential of this route, the connection between two natural elements (with the role as local landmark): Monument Park and the Salt Lake and the distinct profile of the street, this concept aims to increase the attractiveness of both the area and the resort.

Salt Lake Resort, with a history of more than 100 years, is 5 km away from Brăila, being linked to the city by tramline 24 and through a bus line. This is known nationwide for the properties of the lake water on the body, as well as for the existing treatment centres.

Monument Park is the main green area of the city; it is transited and intensively used by inhabitants and by the tramline, which crosses it, giving it a peculiar character rarely seen in other cases.

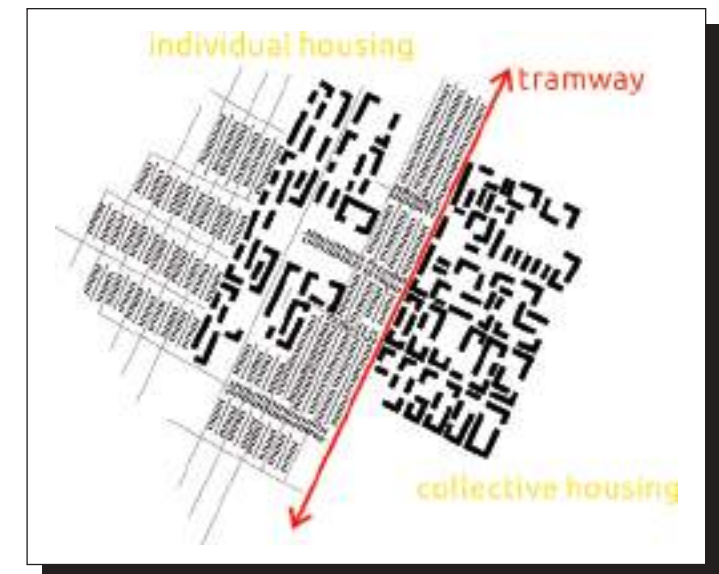


Thus, the concept consists of successive interventions on tram stops, which gradually draw the attention of local authorities and residents over the potential of the area. Interventions involving creative works (paintings, graffiti, and temporary installations) to provide a unique character to each stop. They are addressed to the local community, which, by being actively involved in this

process, can become more aware and more accountable to the space it uses.

The 24 tramline route could become a touristic one through the character of each stop, thereby improving the general image of the area.

The Albina stop was chosen on both physical positioning in relation to the city structure, and cultural identity, read as a landmark by the local population. The central location with the most important flow of people, the increased visibility due to terrain and the complexity of the stop component were the elements that the intervention was based on.



Albina stop was chosen for both its physical positioning in relation to the city structure and for its cultural identity, read as a landmark by the local population. The central location with the most important flow of people, the increased visibility due to terrain and the complexity of the stop component were the elements that the intervention was based on.

Actions

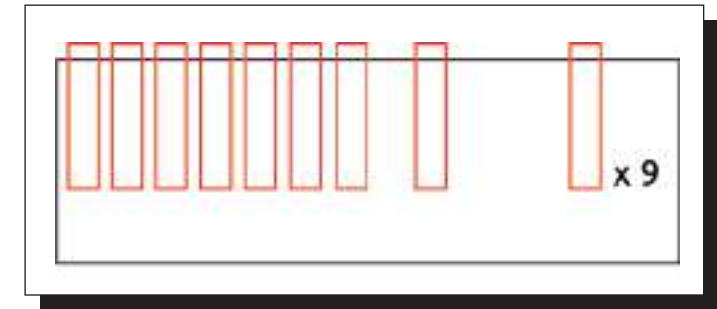
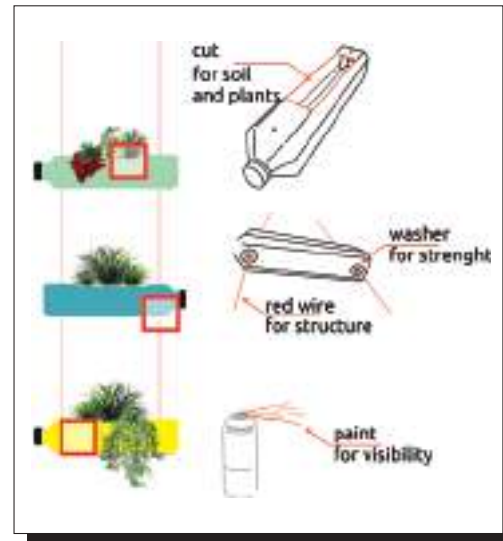
- Day 1 — Making of...
Testing
- Day 2 — Implementation
Finishing
- Day 24 — Still there,
assumed by
community

Reactions

"Very beautiful, but in the end we should vote for..." 35 year old man
(people were sceptical because this was in the middle of the election campaign and this kind of actions happen most of the time for a political reason)

"I'll believe it when I see it!" 49 year old man

"It will not last here. People will vandalise it." 40 year old woman



— 9 lines

— 4 bottles/line

— 3.2 m wire/line

Total: 36 bottles, 30 m of wire, 72 pcs washer, 10 pcs spray of different colors, 10 different types of plants.



14 volunteers involved, resistance over night and community help, resulting positive feedback and assumption by community.



Re-interpretation of an intermediate space

How a banal and unpleasant gangway could become an attractive urban space, linking a street to a square

Brastaviceanu Marilena
Tănase Florin
Stoian Georgiana

In Brăila, as in many other Romanian cities, gangways are places that degrade quickly, being perceived as spaces that nobody maintains, where someone can hide from public view, and which many of us bypass. But they are intimately part of the city tissue, providing the necessary links between spaces with different functions and ambi-ances. The project tests the possibility of “remov- ing” the gangways from the negative condition of hazardous and unpleasant places for residents. The punctual intervention relies on playful light and colour and on their alternative use as input for their opening to the communities that they connect.



In a city with long distances to travel and varied modes of transport, pedestrian paths are often cast aside, in favour of the car.

The way the Brăila street network is organised gives it representation, through wide boulevards and separation of traffic and pedestrian flows on either side of the area dedicated to the tram.

Calea Călărășilor, one of the most important streets of the city, that connects the Vizirului and Tineretului neighbourhoods and the Old Centre, is bordered by tall collective housing for about 1.3 km. The connection between the main traffic area and the inside of the neighbourhoods is made through gangways. These create a particularity in the central area and facilitate pedestrian access to various areas.

In the respective context, the gangs host separate shops or provide access to the upper floors of the buildings. The fact that they represent a residual, non-organised space, but are made for pedestrian access, causes a degraded, unfriendly aspect, often to be avoided.

The light from the end of the... gangway



The purpose of the project is to identify the problems of these gangways, particularly located in the civic centre of the city, the place most transited by locals and visitors, but also to find solutions to improve the urban image and local ambiance. Thus, we chose three of the gangways of Calea Călărașilor, located near the City Hall and the central shopping area, on the right side of the street.

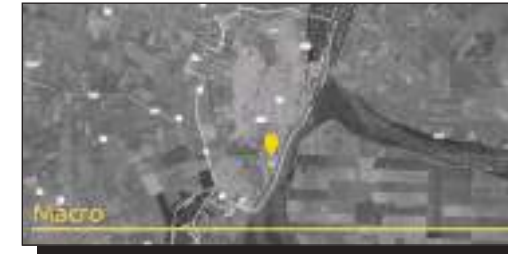
The urban public space in the studied area has a trade and services character, with porticoes and gangways, the latter making the connection between different categories of spaces. Thus, several types of gangs can be distinguished, either the ones that connect the shopping area to the residential area, or to the green area.



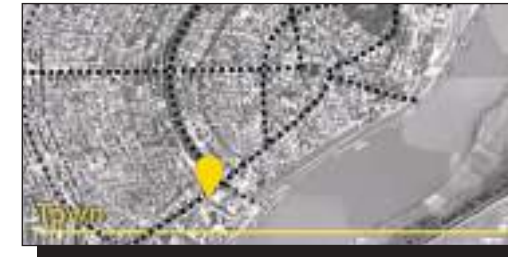
In the current situation, these passing spaces are dark, unsafe for people during the night, a favourable place for domestic waste or sheltering homeless people.

The objectives of the project are to create relationships between the opposite frontages and the pedestrian areas, to connect and reactivate the gangways, thus obtaining an internal network of pedestrian flows that redefine the aesthetic character and the local identity.

All this is possible through punctual interventions on the above mentioned residual spaces, in way that emphasizes the construction, the relation with the civic centre and the rest of the surroundings.



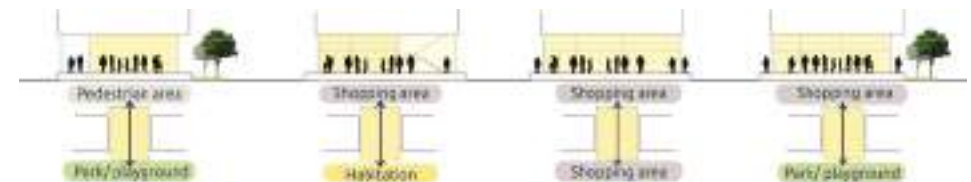
— Brăila



— The civic centre



— Collective dwelling



Tactics

| 1 Identity

Uniqueness, feature through objects, state of mind, ambiance, shades.

| 2 Creativity

Ideas, signal objects, textures, people's opinions.

| 3 Image

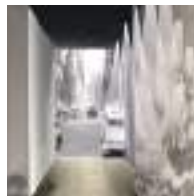
Landscape, modernity, appearance.

| 4 Art

Colors, human scale urban revitalization.

| 5 Dynamics

Visual effects, sounds, movement, transition.



Concepts and ideas —



Painting, projection, lights —

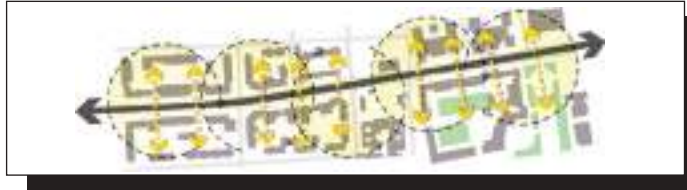


Rhythm, shadows —



Hypotheses

Establishing relationships between opposite fronts and pedestrian areas



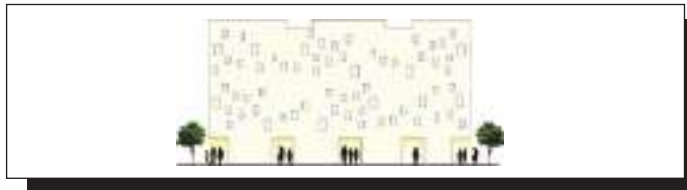
Connecting and activating the gangways



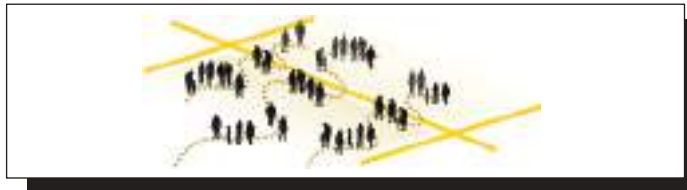
Creating an internal network of pedestrian flows



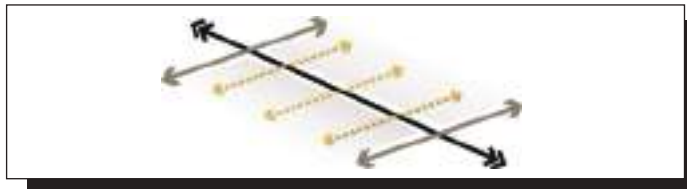
Defining the aesthetic of pedestrian spaces and the local identity



Establish links between different areas



Diversifying and increasing flows



Capitalizing the context



Networking pedestrians with the rest of the circulation



Thus, the project concept is based on the terms creativity, art, identity, image, and dynamics. By inserting colours, signal elements, surprising wall drawings the wish is to change the monotonous atmosphere of the gangs. In order to ensure the connection, visual, acoustic, and dynamic effects are necessary. The vitality of the place is shaped with the sensation of motion and the way transition towards other places is perceived.

The quality of urban life rises with the quality of spaces and the way they are organised. This is why forgotten and null spaces must be adapted to contemporary changes.

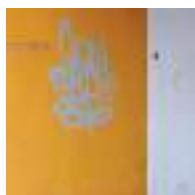


Graffiti as a tool of reactivation in peripheral sites

Urban reactivation of an abandoned public space, currently vandalized

Negru Ana-Maria
Sălăvastru Ștefan
Dobrescu Vanda

The project initially started from the observation of some public places in Brăila that have lost their qualities and have become vandalized, entailing a decline over the entire area. Graffiti appearing on walls, abandoned windows, parapets and banks are markers of a shrinking condition, due to a lack of activities, a loss of interest, or to an uncertain legal situation. The project aims to use graffiti as a tool for overturning the negative message of public places in decline, bringing young people - children, teenagers - to participate in a "taking into possession" of such abandoned spaces, through urban art and cultural exchange.

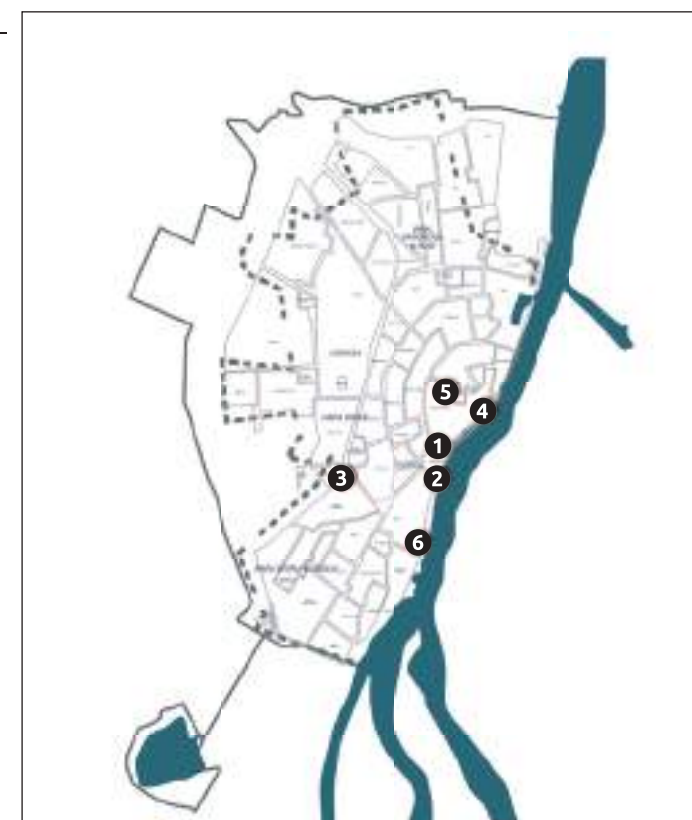


Explorations

The project initially started from the observation of some public places in Brăila that have lost their qualities and have become vandalized, entailing a decline over the entire area. Graffiti appearing on walls, abandoned windows, parapets and banks are markers of a shrinking condition, due to a lack of activities, a loss of interest, or to an uncertain legal situation. The project aims to use graffiti as a tool for overturning the negative message of public places in decline, bringing young people - children, teenagers - to participate in a "taking into possession" of such abandoned spaces, through urban art and cultural exchange.

Potential intervention sites

- 1 A square in the city centre
- 2 The abandoned skate park
- 3 The fence of the city's stadium
- 4 The old city mill
- 5 An empty wall of the pedestrian street in the old city centre
- 6 The old beer factory



1 A square in the city centre

We began by choosing a square on the Danube banks, which we thought as the most central abandoned space, that had already been sprayed on with graffiti, but we had trouble locating the owner in order to get his approval for organising an event. Our initiative would have resulted in a piece urban art with a meaningful message about the city's condition today. Unfortunately, even though we believed it would have been a great place to start, we had to give up on this particular spot.

The idea was to, first of all, tidy up the place with the help of the local community, hence creating an opportunity for the unused first floor commercial spaces to be reactivated and converted to different functions that would work together with the small square in front. Urban art would have then transformed the whole place into a lively skateboarding and graffiti venue.

2 The abandoned skate park

Facing the Danube, the place where there used to be a skateboarding park is now the victim of the ongoing shrinkage of Brăila. Targeting the younger local community that has scattered because the lack of a proper place to call their own, we thought about giving back the identity of the old skate-park and upgrading it to an urban art centre, revitalising it in a more connected way with the so-close Danube.

3 The fence of the city's stadium

A long empty wall stretches across the old national road and, at some point, it makes way for a relatively large green area. Apart from the opportunity to exhibit graffiti visible from the road and railway, the peripheral location is close to a number of blocks of flats that

could have made for the subject of an artistic event or happening.

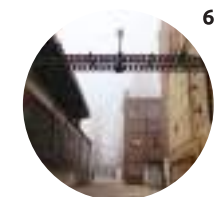
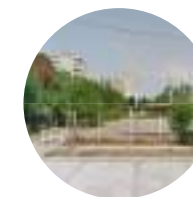
4 The old city mill

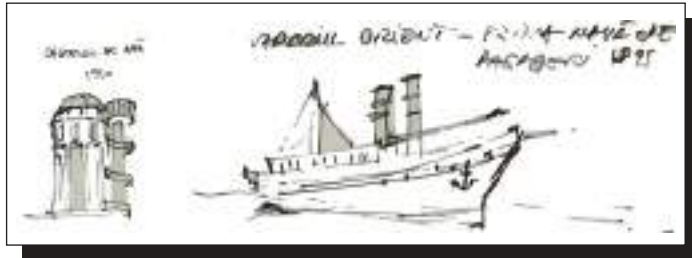
The Violattos Mill came into our attention because of it being a local landmark, giving us a reason to draw people in and raise awareness on the potential of the surrounding abandoned streets. The grid-like structure near the mill would have made for a perfect open space exhibition (taking into consideration the necessary rehabilitation and work concerning safety).

5 An empty wall of the pedestrian street in the old city centre

6 The old beer factory

The former Nova Brewery. Other than its convenient location, inside of the city but part of an industrial zone, in this situation we found the support we needed in order to fulfill our vision and the space big enough to accommodate more than an urban art happening, the reason for the need of a bigger team and a more complex set of activities. In this situation, we found the support we needed in order to fulfil our vision.

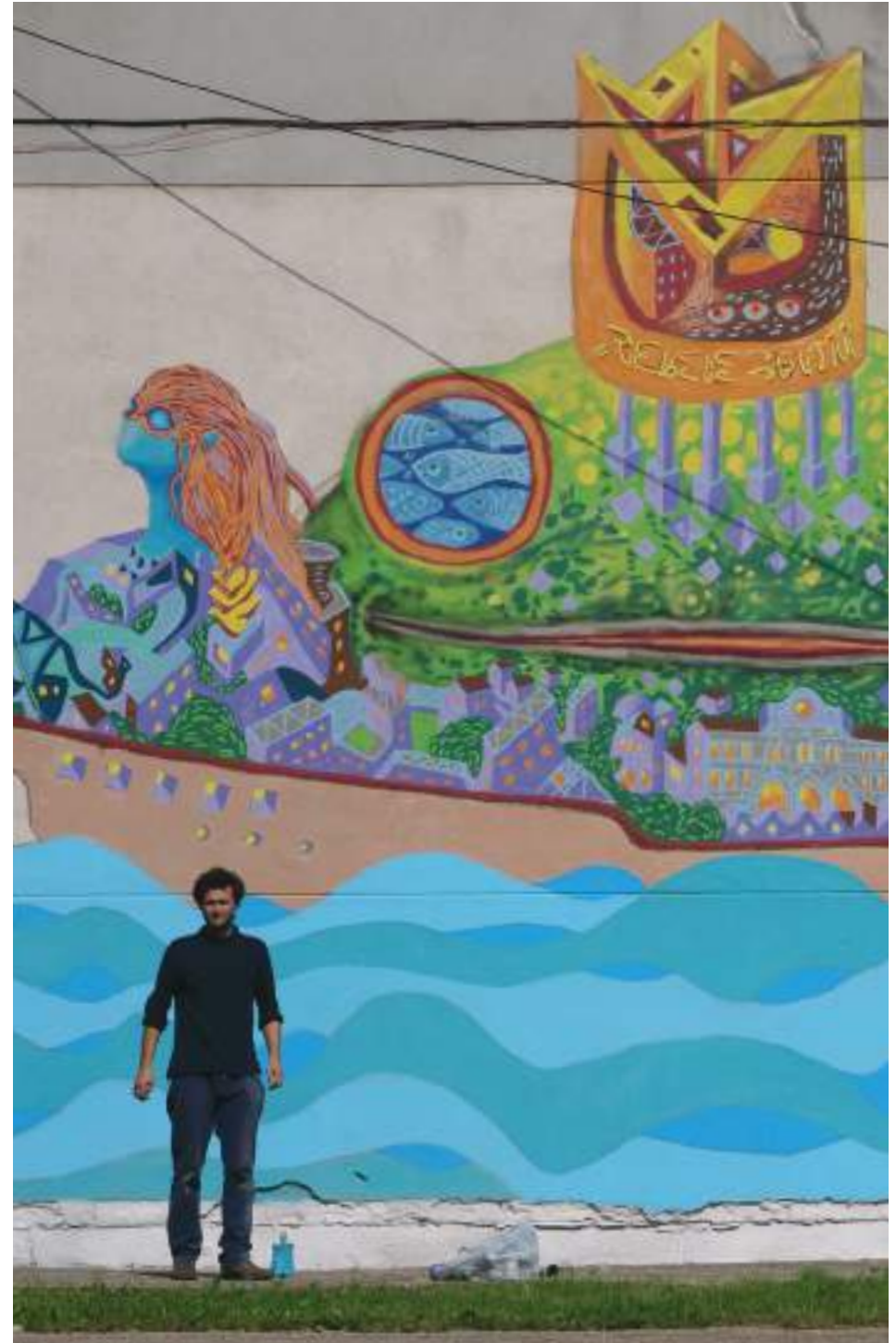




The Former Nova Brewery was chosen due to its historical and architectural heritage, and the fact that the degradation process is still in its early stage. As a whole, it maintains its presence in a very degraded, peripheric area near the docks.

Street art graffiti

The Street Art Graffiti activity was intended to create a visual impact and raise awareness on the Danube's historic relation to the city and the importance of this link to nature. Its visual effect was aimed towards the population as a whole, from toddlers to elders.



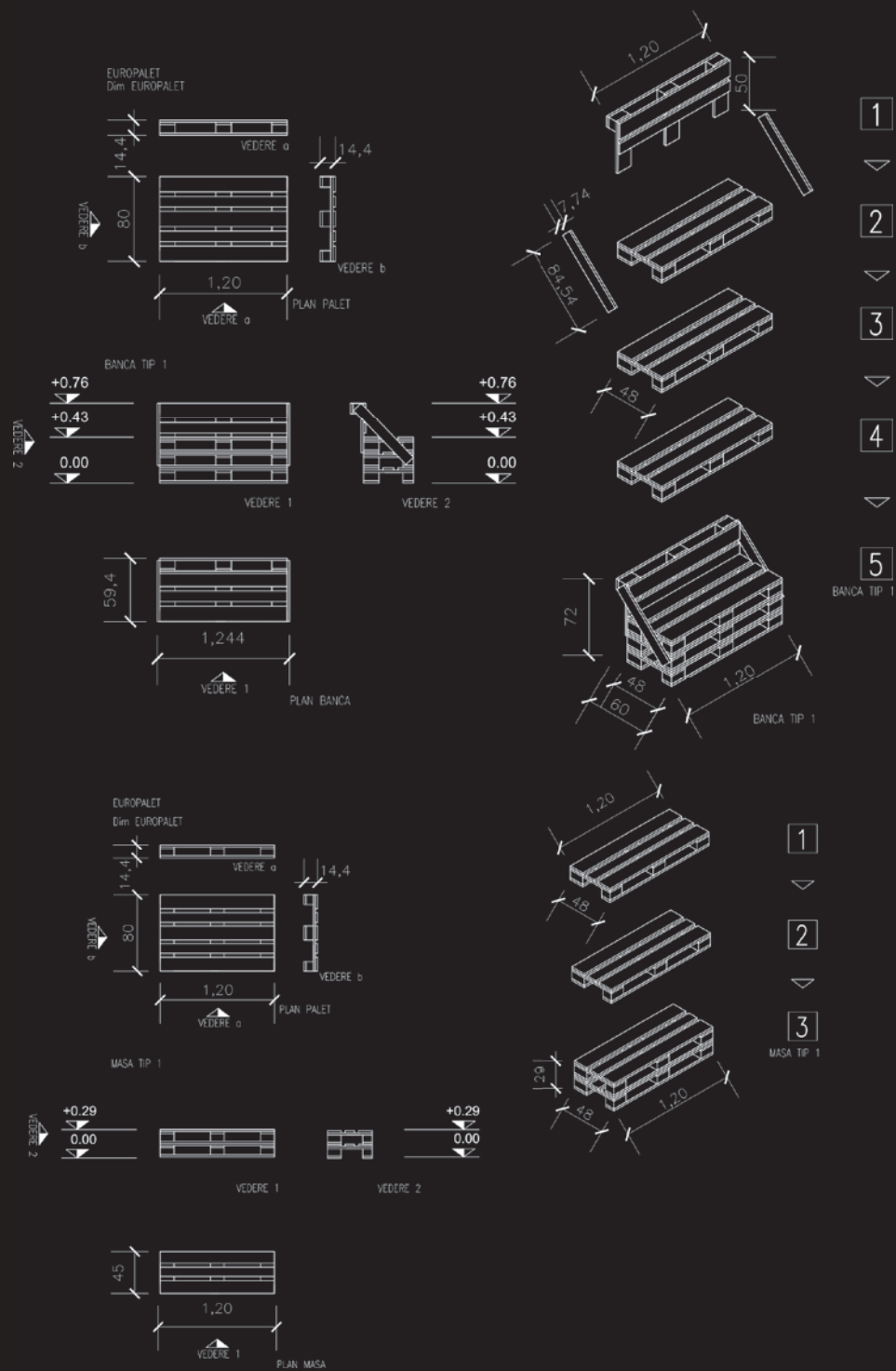
Community garden in a post-industrial site

Agota Barabaş
Miruna Drăghia
Marian Zloteanu

How to reactivate an ex-industrial site of Brăila - the old Muller brewery - and transform it into an unconventional public place for theatre, music and performance.

The project refers to the situation of ex-industrial urban sites, abandoned or used only sporadically, which have become unpleasant peripheries and dangerous places with poor quality, although they are in close vicinity to the centre. Looking closely at the potential hidden behind fallen walls, destroyed fences and vegetation reconquering the ex-industrial ruins, the project reactivates the main resource of the place, which is its memory, as not very long ago many residents of Brăila worked and earned their living in such productive spaces. The tactic is to make people remember some of their past or, for the younger ones, know the history of the former city's industry not from textbooks, but through unconventional artistic events, developed in the same places.





Re-activation through recycling

Cristina Zaharia
Doriana Mărășoiu
Elena Rus

How the recycling of small ordinary objects can become a creative way of looking at peripheral urban places, shifting them from waste to resource.

The project starts from the need to make the local population more aware of the necessity to reuse both spaces and objects from everyday life. Garbage - something that infects Romanian cities and especially the peripheries - is the product of people, but is also the product of the inability to look in a creative way at what results as waste of urban life, but can be transformed into a resource. Recycling, reusing, reinterpreting: another way to tell the story of Brăila's peripheral places, which may reinvent their identity through a new relationship between resource and waste.



Outdoor lighting installation

The fireflies lighting installation was aimed mostly towards toddlers and youngsters, combining the symbol of the firefly, which produces light, and the indoor lighting installation, thus creating the comfort of light and link to nature through the design.



Brăila “ReAct”

Ana-Maria Negru
Ștefan Sălăvaștru
Agota Barabaș
Miruna Drăghia
Marian Zloteanu
Cristina Zaharia
Doriana Mărăsoiu
Elena Rus



Brăila “ReAct” was carried as a collaborative action developed in the courtyard of the old Muller brewery (General Gh. Avramescu Street), part of the former industrial area in the south of the city. This territory has been in a decline process for more than fifteen years and many units - buildings, land, industrial machinery - are closed, abandoned or are in an advanced state of decay. Although it is located very close to the central area, and tangent to the Danube River, this territory is perceived by residents as a periphery - an inaccessible place, with an unattractive and dangerous, if not repulsive, image. However, when looking carefully and opening to the true potential hidden behind fallen walls

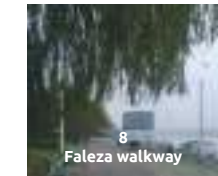
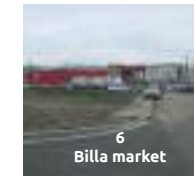
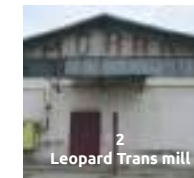
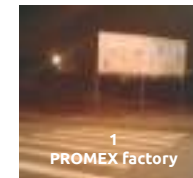
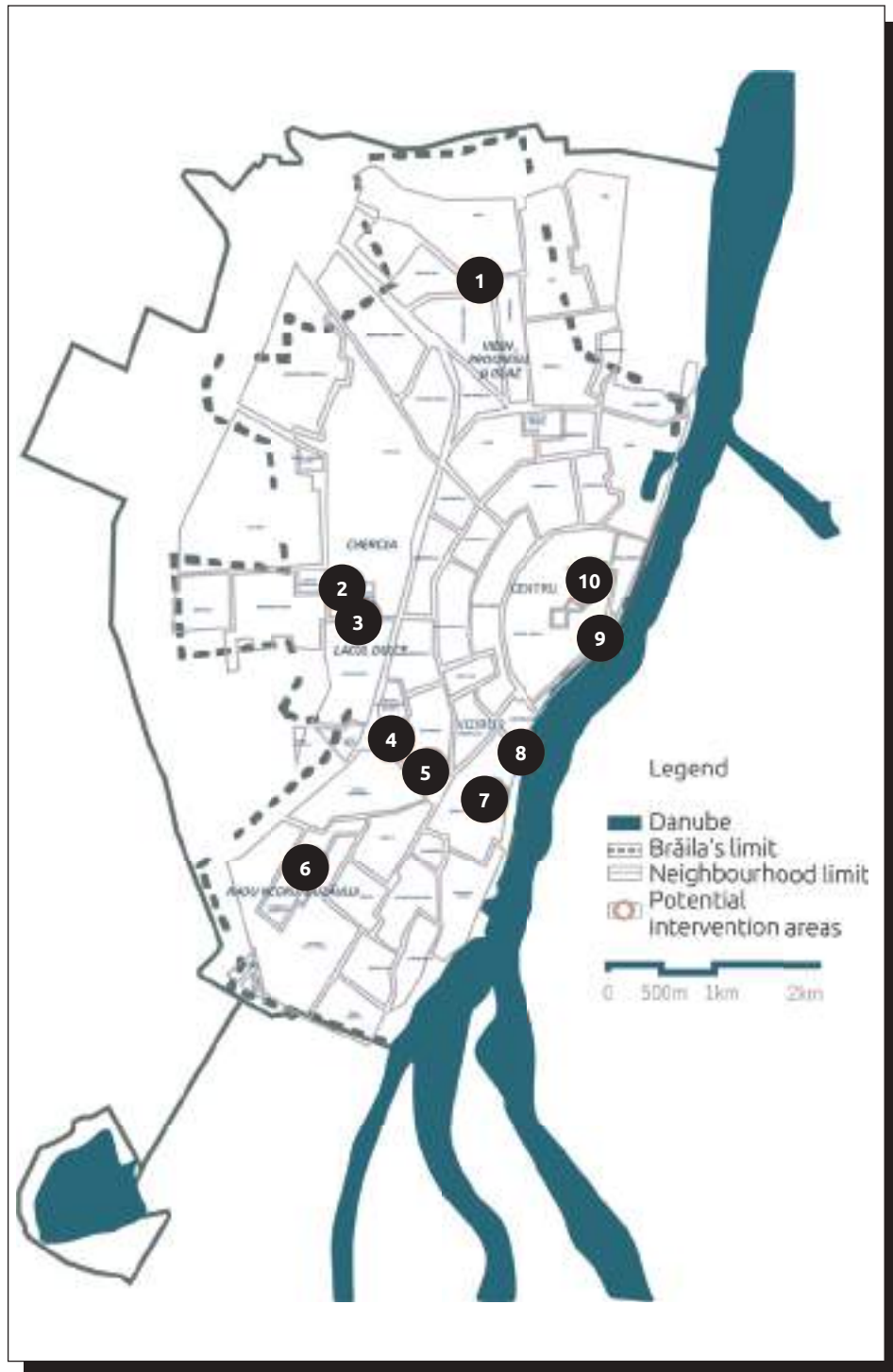
and fences and vegetation regaining the space, there is sufficient evidence that qualify this place for reactivation. Together with pupils from the “Hariclea Darclée” Art High School and from the “Vespasian Lungu” Popular Arts School, the UAUIM team created an event - both recreational and educational - that included workshops, artistic performances, and outdoor screenings, in order to draw attention to this site and to its creative development potential. The concept of the event was to create an “urban living-room”, setting out as framework for the show and the performance offered by the pupils involved. Thus, the workshops were focused on making urban furniture (places to sit - sofas, benches and tables), a lighting installation made from recyclable materials, as well as graffiti (on the wall of the former factory), conducted by the visual artist Sandu-Milea Lucian, with the support of the “Hariclea Darclée” Art High School students.

Explorations

The exploration phase of the project brought to our attention the hardship and needs of a shrinking city such as Brăila. The pearl of the Danube has the most impressive amount of well-preserved architectural and natural heritage, a garden city design, and a high amount of green spaces throughout the city, all blinded by the fact that economic depreciation, population decrease and peripherisation have rendered it lifeless, separated from its natural genesis element (the Danube), without an identity, and struggling for survival.

Shrinking city

At a glance, Brăila resembles an abandoned city, concentrating most of its activities in the city centre. As a shrinking city, abandoned ex-industrial sites, vacant places and population decrease are its common characteristics.



Identity loss

Exploration revealed that Brăila was not only losing its population, but it was losing its identity as well. A former industrial city grafted on a garden city design, with an impressive and well-preserved urban tissue, which is now plagued by ruin.

Peripherisation

Economic depreciation determined the population to shift towards subsistence and other living facilities, same as with the small businesses. The result rendered a city with non-functional areas, gentrified and unattractive neighbourhoods.

Neglected heritage

Throughout the exploration phase, the worst thing about the city was the fact that its multi-layered architecture and traditions were left to die. Important landmarks that pinpoint Brăila's historic moments are in ruin.

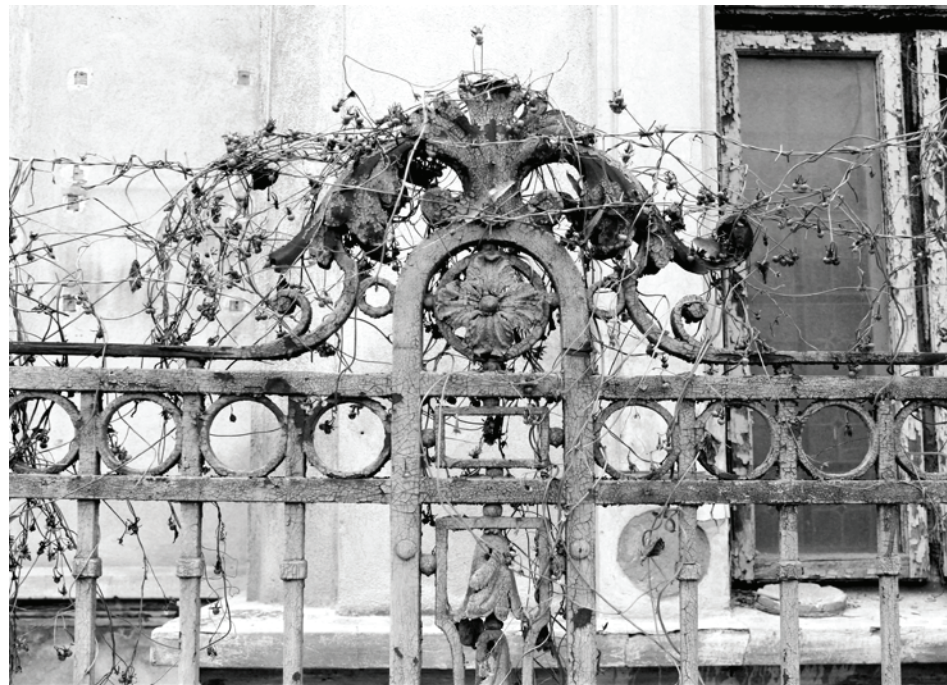


Tactics

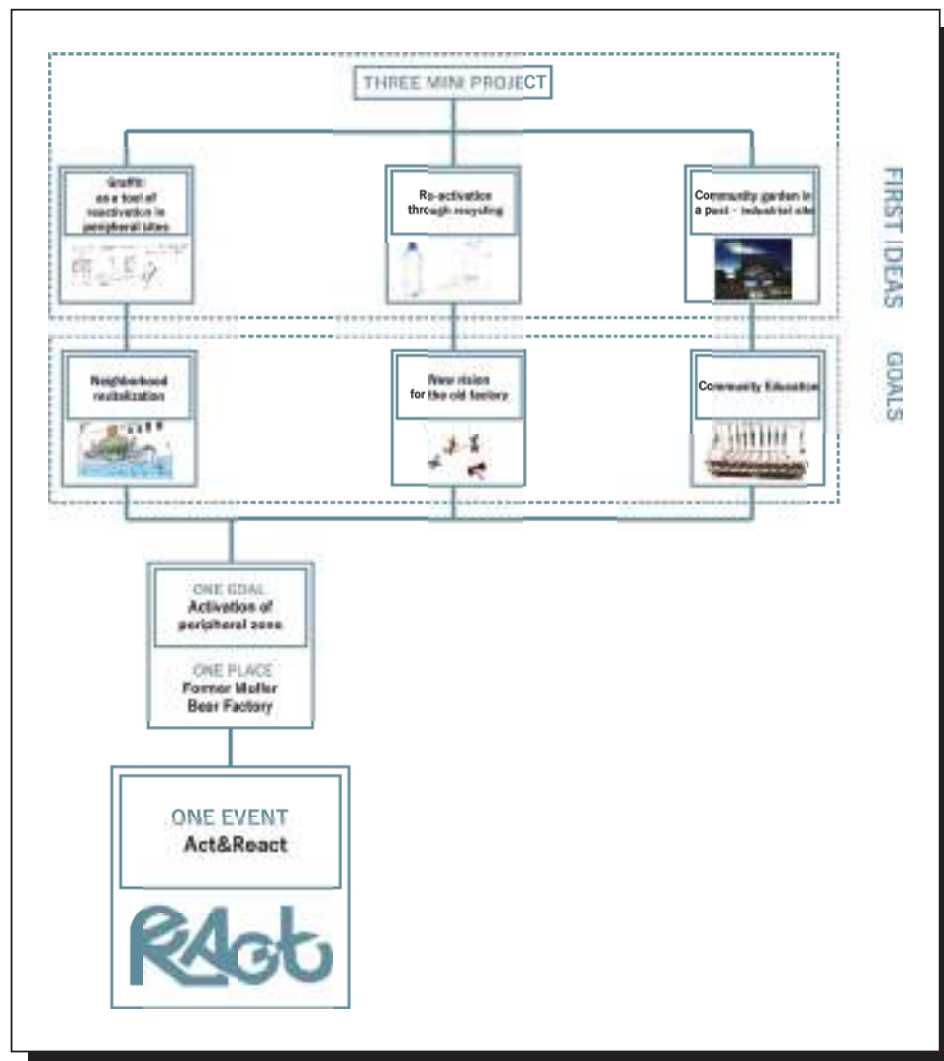
Projects which can produce interesting results are aimed at reuniting all population categories: from children with creative ideas, teenagers that can enrich the experience and bring those ideas to life, to adults and elders who can provide their know-how and advice, all wrapped in urban interventions such as revitalizing green areas and abandoned spaces with cultural heritage value, creating new green links and recreating bonding links with the Danube. Urban events dedicated to Brăila's community, which aim to reactivate former landmarks. Involving the local community and gathering both recreational and educational activities which can be reproduced anywhere in the city offering various results.

B-LAB

Urban event organised by students from the "Ion Mincu" University of Architecture and Urbanism, supported by the active involvement of the local community,



represented by the “Hariclea Darclée” High School and the “Vespasian Lungu” Art School.



Workshops

The first two days, which consisted of workshops (May 26 and 27), were conducted by students from the “Ion Mincu” University, guiding and assisting students from the “Hariclea Darclée” Art High School in building outdoor furniture and lighting and urban installations.

Street Art Graffiti

The Street Art Graffiti activity was conducted by Lucian Sandu-Milea, an expert drawer, who created the initial draft of the graffiti design and then guided the students from the “Hariclea Darclée” Art High School in painting the wall and making the graffiti.

Artistic performances

The third day (May 28) was entirely dedicated to artistic performances, which consisted of: a theatre play, music and dance performed by students of the “Hariclea Darclée” Art High School and of the “Vespasian Lungu” Art School and outdoor screenings of the project’s implementation process.



Intervention concept

Actions

“When I saw BRĂILA REACT staged, it became a confirmation that when we truly want something for our community where everybody can pitch in and make it happen. I hope this event will be an impetus for the city of Brăila to reactivate forgotten spaces and a first step taken

Hericlea Darclee
High School Teacher

by the local community in assuming these spaces, as well as a sustainable way for our young people to reclaim our heritage."



**Resident and
parent of one of
the performers**

"I saw everybody being enthusiastic and excited about this initiative, and this is the most important. The way in which the public and the community responded in a positive way to Brăila REACT confirms that the event was a success. For us residents, this kind of activity is stimulating and reminds us of the collective values we lost."



"It was one of the biggest challenges I have faced so far in a workshop, and the results were beyond expectations. The time to organise the event was relatively short, and quite a few problems occurred along the way, but I think we managed to overcome every challenge, and we prepared a moment that could be enjoyed by both the residents of Brăila and our team. When I saw the BRĂILA REACT event staged, it became a confirmation that when we really want something, the entire universe conspires to fulfil our dream."

Miruna Drăghia

I hope this event was an impetus for the city of Brăila to reactivate forgotten spaces and a first step taken by the local community in assuming these spaces."



"We were faced with a terribly changeable weather and a relatively short time, but from my point of view, the organizing team of students and partners, expert illustrator Sandu-Milea Lucian, the high school students, and the coordinating teachers from the high school have managed to carry out the mission and successfully deliver the event in the most nonconformist way possible, and of course supported by the Brăila Traditional Arts School students. It seems that no impediment was too large to stop the community's desire for involvement, people's thirst for culture, and their love for each corner of the city. I hope that this event and others like it from the B-LAB project do not remain a memory/shadow, but open doors to new activities dedicated to this wonderful city."

Cristina Zaharia

Agota Barabaş

"The Brăila REACT event was one of the most interesting experiences; I learned, on the one hand, technical things related to the construction of furniture in lightweight materials, and on the other, practical things about how we assisted the local community in reactivating a forgotten place. The event was a great challenge for me personally, but I think that with the team, we managed to exceed

expectations, to tie new friendships, and to improve old ones."

Doriana Mărășoiu

"Brăila is my hometown, so I have a special bond with its community. It was an incredible opportunity for me to be able to take part in such an urban reactivation project. Brăila is a city that has lost, in the last 10 years, a significant percentage of its population. I believe that such interventions are needed to better the local community that, unfortunately, no longer identifies with the city. There was potential in such industrial spaces, and I believe that we have demonstrated this through the Brăila REACT event."

Ștefan Sălăvăștru

"Brăila REACT is an important step for the community, representing a direction towards which the town of Brăila has to move, in order to rediscover and reinvent itself. During the project, I had the opportunity to work with a dynamic team, along with professional partners, and an audience that was very open and responsive to our actions. I saw in Brăila an enthusiastic and excited audience, bound to this initiative, and this was what is most important. The way in which the public and the community responded in a positive way towards Brăila REACT confirms that the event was a success. "

Ana-Maria Negru

"Enthusiasm, curiosity, availability, joy and interest are just some of the emotions we have seen during the event, from both the team and the participants, sponsors and partners. I hope the project in which I participated and the event that we have made, together with my colleagues, to be a beginning for other interventions of this kind and an example for the community of Brăila, to appreciate and take advantage of the local heritage and to try with baby steps to contribute to positive change in the city. It was a project with and for Brăila, trying to raise a question and give an answer by the reactivation and reuse of industrial heritage."

"Working together with people from Brăila interested in improving the atmosphere of their city, we managed

Marian Zloteanu

to reactivate a place near the centre, but yet considered peripheral, hoping to create a precedent by a number of alternative actions that should put the urban space in motion. I think this kind of approach, that combines the education-formal field with every day life, promotes a proactive, participatory, community involvement in Brăila towards raising awareness and improving its current situation."







Urban Markers and Other Intervention Tools

Urban markers within the peripheral context: a reactivation framework

Angelica Stan

**The periphery condition and the
urban markers as operational
concept**

“Periphery” is a condition increasingly common to cities today, as long as by this term we understand what “comes out” of the system or is neglected, abandoned and felt as useless by the system. In Romania, speaking on peripherals condition in urban areas involves a twofold approach: first, the topological one, related to the physical dimension of growth, and second, the axiological one, in relation to the centrality understood as a optimum measure of development. Beyond this, at the micro-scale level, periphery still manifests as a diffuse phenomenon that affects both sites and places that are traditional in marginal areas, and in the hyper-central, or new central nucleus in suburban areas. Also, spaces and peripheral conditions emerge both in large cities with relatively good urban management, and in small ones, and especially in shrinking cities where undergo a socio-demographic and economic process of decline. Even this is the case of Brăila, a city in a demographic

decrease accelerated since 2005, and which has many such “peripheral cases”, coming to contradict its high quality compact urban form, crystallized in centuries of evolution.



This paper explores the relationship between the state of physical, economical, cultural and socio-demographic contraction specific to shrinking cities as Brăila is, and the periphery as paradoxical condition: on the one hand, as “wanted” expansion (even sprawl), and escaping from city (sometimes re-creating the city beyond its existing limits), and on the other hand, as decay and abandonment of the “inside city”, generating a continuum decline in the small-scale space and urban life. Our research raises necessary questions related to new methods and tactics able to mediate between the top-down and bottom-up planning. Three such methods are presented here, aiming to lie at a crossroads between urbanism, urban art, architecture and civic action, advocating for a synergy of these fields and pooling their specific languages and tools.



The periphery of the intermediate spatial condition

Most of the cities and their growth within the hinterland shows that the periphery is emerging as a “traveller space” - creation of different types of limits (natural or manmade) that the city perpetually generates, by moving and transforming them in the territory. The history of the marginal spaces of cities (i.e. the topologic periphery) overlaps the cities’ history itself: from the continuous linear limit as wall or stockade (the case of traditional/ pre-modern cities), to fragment - limit (the case of satellite towns -garden cities & new towns, during XIX century), to the surface - limit (the phenomenon of “boom suburbs” and sprawl during XX century), to actual diffuse, intermediate limit.

This last type of limit defines a pattern of spatial production, based on both economic and political forces, with strong social implications (social enclaves, gated communities, segregation by living standards, etc).

The new understanding of the periphery leads to the concept of the in-between territories, a “middle landscape”¹ a tertiary landscape, a “third condition” of the city². Named in different ways, the periphery is in fact the very condition of the intermediary, of residual, neglected, vacant or “pending for something” spaces, a condition of ex-use (ex-industrial, ex-commerce, ex-social housing, ex-infrastructure). Peripheries could become ghettos or luxury villages, but deep in their essence are the same conditions of refuses/rejecting everything that the city cannot metabolize. The difference between peripheries from the margin and those from the centre is only a difference of political outlook. When cities are blooming and expand, it arises the problem of the space expansion management, the outer peripheries. They enter on the neo-liberal agenda. When cities are decreasing and declines, the main issue is of the inner peripheries, as result of social inequalities and

¹ Rowe, P.G. 2003. “Making a middle landscape” MIT Press

² Clément, G. 2003. “Manifeste du Tiers Paysage”, Lausanne

socio-spatial fractures, and therefore they enter on the socio-democratic agendas.



Brăila's shrinkage: a loss of balance

Brăila city has grown and developed relatively organic, as each growing stage have assimilated the ones before. This process has been relatively continuous and natural up to 1965, with the communist period of forced industrialization. Then, a lot of disparities occurred, and have appeared fractures at all levels - at economic, social, cultural, and ecological one. The city resources were being either over-valued (as the industry, the agriculture), or terrible undervalued (tourism, culture).

Demographically, the population of Brăila is steadily growing until 1990, due to the centralized national policies, specific to the communist regime, which obliged the workforce (generally absorbed from the rural space), to settle where the large industrial units were implanted. After 1990, besides the loss of population due to birth



rates declining (linked to a national similar phenomenon), it appears a strong wave of migration towards abroad³.

The loss of Brăila's population is correlated to a loss of jobs, as long as many of the former state industrial units have been privatized quickly, without consolidated business plans, or by too little feasible methods. Basically, we can say that demographically, the shrinking of Brăila manifests strongly since 1991, with some accents in 2000- 2005⁴. followed by a period of improvement in terms of population loss through emigration, once with the country's entry into the EU.

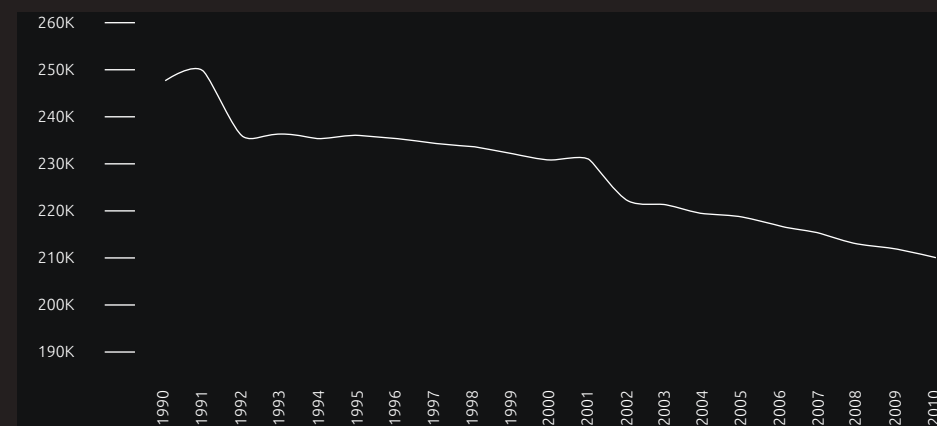
Compared with other cities of the same waist in Romania (over 200 000 inhabitants in 2010), Brăila is not in a high disadvantage. The (yet) harbor profile, the position at the Danube, the regional association with Galați and Tulcea, the varied access (road, rail and river), and the traditional multi-ethnic opening made from Brăila city quite attractive place for investors - especially in trade, urban services, and small dimensions production units.

Looking of the city's evolution after 1990, we can say that Brăila's profile is shrinking significantly within the

³ www.insse.ro

⁴ Ibidem

Brăila population evolution between 1990 and 2010



"The Substantiation Study of socio-economic analysis" - The General Urban Plan of Brăila, URBAN - INCERC, 2012

demographic plan, proven by statistics, but does not reflect identically in the other plans of urban life. In other words, the growth of Brăila, although negative, did not correlate with its development, which has continued to occur (with a low speed, indeed), but on a positive trend. Nonetheless, many other fields did correlate to the specifics of a decay process, most poignant and painful being the cultural, and the built heritage protection⁵.

As in other Romanian cities with economic difficulties, many other negative forces have rounded the picture of decline: the corruption of public administration and justice, the agriculture decay, the lack of vision and coherency of city development. The decline - even possible to be accepted in the demographic plan, was rolled over the social, economic and cultural plans, amplifying the statistical data with specific quality issues. The urban space, as a clear mirror of this phenomenon, reflects (especially in the public domain) the lack of responsibility, the demagoguery and corruption. The abandonment, the ruin, the scattering of precariousness modes of building and planning, the worthless architectural formulas, the void of marks in spatial plan, led to the installation of a decline image, even more striking than the statistics.

Between desire of expansion and abandonment of inside values

The loss of balance in the development of Brăila appeared with the increasing of the illogical distance between the desire of territorial enlargement of the administrative territory, and the ignoring of the values contained in the existing urban fabric. Starting with 2000, the surface of Brăila city begins to increase, although its population is declining. The phenomenon is not unique, but a real trend in many Romanian cities, as long as local governments are thus trying to broaden the tax collection base, not thinking about the spatial and urban

consequences, of including into the city limit of the agrarian territories, without any urban utilities⁶.

The city peripheries become places of a huge both spatial and social experiment, with consequences still difficult to estimate. Partially urbanized areas appear, or simple implants built into an uncertain territory. At the micro-scale, the scattering of city boundary transforms the peripheries into a porous field of ruptures and goals, leading to lose of city's power of expression resides in its form, stabilized through centuries in a compact and complex pattern.

⁶ Stan, A. 2015. "Brăila inside its limits", presentation at Bergen School of Architecture, Norway (unpublished)

The new method of ACTION-planning - A tactical mid-position between top-down and bottom-up urbanism

One of the possible mechanisms of recovery from the past mistakes and loss of values consists in encouraging the self-urban management, thereby surpassing the decline and its associated state, among which vulnerability in terms of safety, bureaucratic corruption, weaknesses adaptation, etc. If we accept what Fuchs said in 2002, that the social (urban) system, compared with the living systems in general, possess the ability to be consciously self-creative⁷, this implies that individuals and communities have the power to create new structures, changing rules, values and behaviours. Social self-management may also entail intention or purpose, where a group of individuals deliberately engage in self-help, self-empowerment or self-determination, in order to change their own social condition⁸. Urban regeneration of a city means regaining the essential instincts at the psycho-social level, among which are the self-government and cooperation⁹. These would include, inter alia, the self-management and autonomy, as an expression of collective action which are not necessarily hierarchically made, but with a certain clarity in

⁷ Fuchs, C. 2002. "Concepts of social self-organization". INTAS Project Human Strategies in Complexity-Report. HSIC Paper (4). Research, 16(2): 133-167.

⁵ General Urban Plan of Brăila, public document, in course of approval, www.primariaBraila.ro

establishing the necessary relationships between groups. Somewhat similar NGOs, urban society that organizes itself considering that what makes official organization fails, can be refilled through creativity and through individual involvement in solving real problems. And in this way, rules and regulations are not contradictory to city's order, but are the result of another system: one that signals a problem, invite to find solutions and creates the example that can be followed for final resolution. It is known from socio-psychology that "evidence of caring inspired further caring" and "evidence of neglect invites further neglect"¹⁰. Only the norm that is not imposed top-down, but emanates from the individuals or communities behaviour themselves it's the one that can be adopted and that planners need to support and care for it, in a creative way. The creativity has here a tactical position: one of the renewal (of values, norms, of uses, etc.), and one of the maintaining of those have proved to be resilient (as in any living system, where the development is carried out both through storage/maintenance, and by removal / loss). "Encouraging the participation of inhabitants at the self-management of disused urban spaces, over passing contradictions and stereotypes by proposing nomad and reversible projects initiating interstitial practices which explore the potential of contemporary city (in terms of population, mobility, temporality)"¹¹. Finding the optimal position between top-down and bottom-up is a matter of tactics - ie a way to plan directly on the "playing field"- or action-planning- and not by strategies imposed from above, by authoritarian projects. This approach has been generically called "tactical urbanism" and it generally promotes a "grassroots, participatory, hands-on, do-it-yourself vision of urban restructuring, in which those who are most directly affected by an issue actively mobilize to address it, and may continually mobilize to influence the evolution of methods and goals. For this reason, tactical urbanism is often presented as an open-source model of action and as a form of re-appropriation of urban space by its users"¹².

⁸ Kemp, R., Loorbach, D., & Rotmans, J. 2007. "Transition management as a model for managing processes of co-evolution towards sustainable development". The International Journal of Sustainable Development & World Ecology, 14(1): 78–91.

⁹ Fuchs, C. 2002. "Concepts of social self-organization". INTAS Project Human Strategies in Complexity-Report. HSIC Paper (4). Research, 16(2): 133–167.

¹⁰ Ibidem

¹¹ uneven-growth.moma.org/ The Museum of Modern Art, New York

¹² uneven-growth.moma.org/ The Museum of Modern Art, New York

Urban markers as planning tool

The concept of Urban Markers starts from the idea that "the evidence of caring inspires further caring and evidence of neglect invites to further neglect"¹³. The Urban Markers are here tools for putting in evidence the decline, the neglected places and poor situations, in which people - as individuals or groups and communities - should involve and see the potential of transforming and improvement. Once identified within the large "field" of urban situations (macro-scale), the urban markers are able to provide a wide range of qualitative data related to space, people, lifestyle, mobility, problems and development potential (micro-scale).

More than the statistical indicators, the urban markers warn us about vulnerabilities, risks or latent opportunities existing in marginal or central urban areas affected by decline or contraction. They are used both at the macro-level of opportunities given by the role of the city within the supporting territory, and at the "molecular" scale of the city itself. Here, the urban markers are studying the micro-elements of urban space and micro-social relationship, highlighting their functions of changes in the city metabolism. On the other hand, the urban markers play an active role: either they extract from the urban reality a certain configuration and put it into a new context, in order to generate a critical and challenging discourse, either they re-create or simulate a specific state of the city or area, implementing an "intrusive" element, in order to activate the local changing potential.

¹³ Fuchs, C. 2002. "Concepts of social self-organization". INTAS Project Human Strategies in Complexity-Report. HSIC Paper (4). Research, 16(2): 133–167.

Three different types of Urban Markers

UM are used here at the "molecular" scale of the city, studying the micro-elements of urban space and micro-social relations, highlighting their functions and changes

within the urban metabolism. The Urban Markers either extract from the urban reality a certain configuration / situation by putting it into a new context, in order to generate a critical and challenging discourse, either re-create / simulate a specific condition of the city, implementing an “intrusive” elements, in order to stimulate and activate the potential of diffuse urbanity. We identified types of Urban Markers:

- | 1 “Tumor” Markers - highlighting problems, symptoms due to a specific “illness” already manifest in the city, eg. Extensive abandoned areas/ buildings, ghettos areas
- | 2 Risk Markers - highlighting the possibility of a risk, at spatial social or environmental level, eg. places under / over used, historical building in risk of forgetting memory
- | 3 Opportunity Markers - that highlights the latent potential of certain areas or social conditions, either for further development or immediate uses, eg. Unused paths or lands expecting an investment, unused or temporary used objects/ buildings, advertisement objects, etc.



Source: Angelica Stan

Urban Markers and their functions

The main functions of urban markers are: warning, stimulation, challenge, activation, comparison, testing and verification. These functions should be understood in relation to local conditions, as they need to be confirmed by the “tactics”, either it’s about improvisation, spontaneous interventions on site, interviews with local population or small-scale intervention for inducing a challenging attitude. Urban Markers could act independently or they can overlap one to other, and co-operate, indicating the ideal place to intervene in order to reveal a potential of changing in a declining or shrinking situation.

This disposal of Urban Markers are conceived in the spirit of the experiments realized within “Uneven Growth” exhibition promoted by MoMA (The Museum of Modern Art, New York) for which tactical urbanism promotes “a grassroots, participatory, hands-on, do-it-yourself vision of urban restructuring, in which those who are most directly affected by an issue actively mobilize to address it”⁸. Starting from the main issues of this exhibition which produce a real wave of similar experiments all around the world, our approach has also included its critics which shows that in some circumstances, this kind of discourses and actions risk to “slip” to utopia, or to become ineffective, elitist or inappropriate to real urban life.

Urban Markers as responsibility mirror

For this last reason, this paper stresses on the idea of keeping a positive balance in relation to classical planning based on master plan (so much denigrated as being an expression of “that” urbanism that gave birth to unsustainable developments in last decades). By fortune, in Brăila is not the case of a total disruption

between the urban rules stipulated by General Urban Plan and this alternative approach, but a open attitude and complementary position. Using this as an opportunity, the UM tries to initiate a dialogue, to create the conditions for a change of attitude towards a place, object, or situation that are often ignored or impaired. Also, UM used during the project facilitate the communication between different urban actors involved in specific experimental actions, meant to explore and analyze certain aspects of daily urban life.

The approach aims to support also a horizontal responsibility between architects, planners, artists, sociologists, environmentalists, landscapers, engineers, meaning recovering a positive attitude towards the city, in finding solutions to the major problems of urbanization today “grounded in the inability of institutions of urban development to more meaningfully engage urban informality, socioeconomic inequity, environmental degradation, lack of affordable housing, including public infrastructure, and civil participation”⁹. In the future, Urban Laboratories should become just such an integrative a strengthened space of discourses and actions, now still in the emerging phase.

In this context, the main functions of Urban Markers are: warning, stimulation, challenge, activation, comparison, testing and verification. This functions should be understood in relation to local conditions, as they need to be confirmed by the “field tactics”, either it’s about improvisation, spontaneous interventions on site, interviews with local population or small-scale scenarios for inducing a challenging attitude. Urban Markers could function independently or they can overlap and co-operate, indicating (by mapping them at the scale of their neighborhood), the ideal place to intervene in order to reveal a potential change.

This disposal of Urban Markers are conceived in the spirit of the experiments realized within “Uneven Growth”

¹⁴ uneven-growth.moma.org/
The Museum of Modern Art, New York

¹⁵ Ibidem

Conclusions

exhibition promoted by MoMA¹⁴ for which tactical urbanism promotes specific projects which evolve fluidly in relation to broader shifts in political-economic conditions, institutional arrangements, or coalitional dynamics. These qualities of malleability and open-endedness are widely praised in discussions of tactical urbanism, generally in contrast to the comprehensive plans, formal legal codes, and rigid blueprints that were characteristic of modernist-statist projects of urban intervention”¹⁵.

The results of this both research and educational project, materialized in students work, but also in interviews, videos, photos, and especially in the effective actions “on the field”, have demonstrated few things that were not so obvious: namely, that the population of a shrinking city not worth to be abandoned to a shrinking attitude, of the aging peripheries, marginalization and abandonment, but it must (and can be) stimulated. A shrinking city population becomes creative and interested in their own urban spaces, and this is a good prerequisite for residents’ involvement in more complex projects. But for this, the condition is the closeness between those who conceived and those who use the urban spaces, and the transparency, interactivity and professionalism. For urban development to take place with endogenous resources and potential social and human alike of the city, it’s need to reduce the discrepancies between the micro and the macro thinking, and approaches as this should take place continuously.

Urban art. The pursuit of identity

Ana Oprea

Urban art is easy to accept, accessible and encouraged in many countries, sometimes even remunerated by local authorities. However, in Romania, especially after the Revolution of 1989, most public spaces were filled with commemorative monuments, expressions of state authority, crowded in city centers, without being integrated into the overall image of the city, volumetric items of a questionable value that have not been received with sympathy by the general public. The most well-known example is the "Memorial of Rebirth – Eternal Glory to the Heroes of the Romanian Revolution of December 1989" located in Revolution Square, the work of designer Alexandru Ghilduș, nicknamed "The Potato".

Therefore, "at the potato", in the city center, at the statue, at the University fountain, at the underground passage or at the she-wolf statue are daily urban landmarks – we all know them as a social reference: we use them as meeting points, we sit on their pedestals, we turn our backs to them while we wait for the bus, we spontaneously use them whenever there is a protest or a concert takes place but few of us truly think about the history or the meaning of the relationship between the

object and the supportive public space.

Today, urban installations are not just bearers of their own symbolic but also of the meanings of the urban landscape of which they are part of – they make people think, they generate reactions and new links with the support public space. The humor and irony of the works, that use the public space for to the loss of the art galleries, lead to the reinterpretation of the public space or, most of the time, to a simple signaling/observation of the urban landscape. Artists like Alice Aycock¹ present the "Park Avenue Paper Chase" (2014) project as a suggestive visual metaphor for New York City, physically transposed into a series of massive silhouettes that represent the force and dance, the chaos and the beauty of the winds and air currents in New York.

¹ Alice Aycock, artist, sculptor from New York, represented by the John Weber Gallery since 1976 up to 2001, having exhibited around the world (USA, Europe and Japan), during her final years she turns her attention towards the concept of art in a public space, art that is removed from the museum and takes place in a public area where it can cause all types of reactions.



Park Avenue Paper Chase, project of the artist Alice Aycock – New York 2014

Source: www.aycock.com



Another artist that manages to uniquely attract the attention towards the public space in cities around the world is Janet Echelman² – her projects activate the urban landscape through elements that belong to the cultural landscape and reinterpret techniques and crafts by using today's technologies and abilities. Urban sculptures are based on fishing nets, anchored in key spaces in the city and underlined and amplified by the lights of a nocturnal light show.

2 Janet Echelman, artist, sculptor, preoccupied with reinterpreting the urban space, promoter of the idea that image must be taken seriously, she was awarded within numerous galas dedicated to visual arts, urban landscape and innovative arts.



Urban sculptures
by Jane Echelman,
in Amsterdam,
Sidney and Denver

Source: studio Echelman



3 Kurt Perschke is a British artist known for his sculptures, video collages and installations located in public spaces. His most well-known and awarded project is the RedBall Project, an urban work/art form that takes place in public places around the world and has the purpose of allowing the viewer to gain awareness of the urban landscape and the importance of social interaction in public spaces.

The Red Ball Project belongs to artist Kurt Perschke³, and it consists of an over-sized red ball that appears in unexpected places and spaces. It was very well received in cities like Barcelona, Sydney, Taipei, Abu Dhabi, New York, Chicago or Toronto. The visual impact of the work itself and wish to raise the value of certain selected public spaces are not the artist's sole objectives, another important element being social interaction. Both the inhabitants of the cities involved in the project as well as the tourists have had the opportunity to lean on the giant ball to photograph themselves, have hugged it, kicked it and had fun with its elastic surface. The reactions caused by this project also include invitations to offer suggestions as to where to place the giant red ball, and residents of various cities are sending their suggestions to the artist, arguing why a certain space is more suited than the other. The artist believes that "the invitation and the willingness to get involved, the collective initiative are the essence of the Red Ball project". He also highlights the importance of the moment when art consumers become more than simple spectators and turn into active participants to the creative process, regardless of age, culture or their background.



RedBall Project
in Toledo, Chicago
and Taipei

Source: redballproject.com



Although predictable to a certain extent, the tumultuous historic changes in Romania's capital city have also had a profound influence on the elements that gave identity to the urban landscape. Hidden under multiple cultural layers, the balance lies between two ideological systems and today it has a negative impact on the identity of the city – the opposition between the old landmarks and the new ones disturbs the perception of the elements that have the ability to create the identity of the city and leads to confusion and detachment from anything that might be labeled as culturally valuable.

A certain state of discomfort lingers while you walk through most of the areas in Bucharest – a feeling generated by the unconvincing and random images that are being offered by the existing public spaces. The feeling is also caused by the fact that the needs of the community to which the spaces are addressed to are completely ignored, by the lack of a functional solution and by the eternally arguable aesthetical qualities of a newly built décor. Within the research *[ANOTHER TYPE OF] URBAN VULNERABILITY THE VULNERABILITY OF THE URBAN LANDSCAPE – CASE STUDY: BUCHAREST CITY*⁴ a large number of the interviewed individuals mentioned the central area of Bucharest; it was either referred to as a standard for an appreciated system of pedestrian spaces, either as an expression of being disappointed in the fact that these spaces have been excessively privatized. The actual situation in Bucharest's old center seems to better indicate an overlap of immediate objectives and the lack of a specifically organized vision – and the inhabitants are aware of this. An atmosphere that was, until recently, a rigid one now becomes the birthplace for temporary esthetical projects of which some survive and grow and some disappear, leaving behind scars in the developed value background.

The streets are and will remain landmarks in the process of contouring urban landscapes, they are both physical and mental delimitations – they are the spaces that offer

us transit corridors to work, support for our walks, our events, our protests, etc. When streets are functioning well and they are supporting the daily experiences they are also providing more opportunities for social interaction than any other public space. Apart from the aspects related to traffic and the safety of the pedestrians, one of the challenges our generation is faced with is managing the exchange of information between the individual and the built environment, with the public space playing its own important role.

Although the graffiti movement in Romania has been gaining momentum since 1992, the public perception of this type of expression has not changed; it is still seen as a form of vandalism and not as an expression of art. This belief is mostly kept alive by the fact that graffiti artists create their designs in a few minutes or illegally sign various surfaces throughout the city, whether they are tram seats, apartment building walls, church fences, monuments or others.

When asked what makes street art so attractive, artists often answer: the element of surprise. "Street art appears in places and contexts where you wouldn't normally expect it to be. Street art does not collide with preconceived expectations because there is no pressure from the buyer". The pressure from a can of spray paint makes graffiti artists very fast in their work. There is no care or hesitation and there are no rules when approaching a work. Using a spray paint denotes a high dose of clarity. The movements that can be achieved with a spray can be ampler than those that can be made with a brush; there is a certain lightness that gives rhythm to the creation process. Local graffiti artists are to be appreciated because they do not consider the spray paint to be the modern equivalent of the paintbrush; they do not want their drawings to be appreciated as artwork, however, they are voluntarily contributing to the city's image.

⁴ Urbanism doctoral thesis, author Ana Opreș, scientific coordinator Florin Machedon

Annoyer example of an urban installation that has a major impact on the public space and a role in raising awareness regarding the public landscape is Cityscope -An Urban Kaleidoscope, a project signed by Marco Hemmerling⁵. The project consists of a multifaceted structure that reflects light and mirrors various fragments of the urban space in which it is placed (architectural details, front segments, stairs, pavements, people, etc.) - Cologne, Germania. The reflected images do not change while moving around the structure, thus the viewer becomes part of the installation and seemingly participates in the multiplication of the various fragments of the landscape.



All of these international examples teach us that the landscape area in which urban art “moves” is the public space with which we interact on a daily basis – a dynamic and ever-changing place, rich in information or partially depleted, a place that is sometimes inert and other times bustling with life, completed by the daily urban tensions that drive the attention and behavior of the inhabitants.

The artist tries to gather information, opinions, and reactions from the landscape areas with he can later use to conceive answers. From a direct social interview that takes place in a more unusual place to an artistic

⁵ Marco Hemmerling is a German designer with works in architecture and visual arts, author of the Cityscope-An Urban Kaleidoscope project, Cologne, Germany

action, the means used for this purpose are approaching the rigid art from the contemporary art museums and translating it into the noisy but communicative public space vortex; art can make room for itself in the city.



Source: Christian Doppelgatz

Cityscope
An Urban
Kaleidoscope,
Cologne, Germany

Bucharest is such a platform that provokes experimentalist artists to use their creativity but does not have the necessary structures to encourage them to collaborate with the public local authorities.

How well can we explain this process without words? By using three extremely accurate elements:

- | 1 A dynamic city: Bucharest;
- | 2 A large graffiti that is highly visible in the public space;
- | 3 the public: residents, passers-by, tourists, etc. // “we mix” them all together and we look for/investigate the reactions.

In august 2015, the mural signed by SweetDamageCrew stirs up the curiosity of the passers-by as early as its first hint of color. Although during the first few days the team of artists is quietly blueprinting the new work, some

people stop and curiously stare from a distance. The next week the wall that is being decorated becomes a topic of discussion both in the physical public space as well as in the virtual public space – images from Eremia Grigorescu Street are receiving hundreds of views as soon as they are posted and attract curious young people to that certain location.

For many of those who come to observe or photograph the work, Eremia Grigorescu Street is no longer just the “small street that connects Lahovari Street to Icoanei Street”, instead, it has become “the graffiti street”. The new graffiti quickly gains an urban landmark character and increases the attractiveness of the area. A few weeks after the wall is decorated it becomes a subject of discussion, a rendezvous location, a background for photo shoots and even décor for TV commercials. When they are asked what is the first thing that comes to mind when a passer-by sees the work signed by them, the members of SweetDamageCrew say that for them it is enough if their work manages to draw attention and raise questions like “What was this artist trying to do here?”. It is enough if they just look up from their smartphones and notice it.

backgrounds and it challenges them to interact with each other, being aware of the advantages offered by a quality public space. Thus, together with the urban landscape, the various forms of urban art are evolving, sending messages, creating reactions, asking questions and sparking the interest of the passers-by towards the public spaces that were until now, transited without any emotion. Therefore, if a city’s public space can be defined by the way people perceive and experiment the city, the items that determine social interaction between the residents become essential.



Blind wall
decorated by
SweetDamageCrew
on Str. Gen.
Eremia Grigorescu,
Bucharest

Urban art brings together a very wide range of techniques: murals, pastiche, stencil, installations, sculptures, public space shows, etc. At the same time, it also brings together different types of people: young and old, women, men, people with different

Limits of Brăila: markers of shrinkage

Angelica Stan

Brăila is a city broken into multiple fragments, by strong different limits. There are limits that separate, breaking the urban fabric into incommunicable islands, and limits that join and mix up things and make them endurable. There are wall - limits, passages - limits, holes - limits, (open) field - limits, textures - limits (porous, fluid, or fringed). First, Brăila limits are a matter of the physical space, related to the built environment. In the same time they become - either as consequences or causes- limits acting at social and community level. Whether physical or rooted in social and psycho-mental field, limits are markers of different urban situations: of tension, tolerance, of (direct or tacit) conflict, or of (rarely) communion.

Identifying them is exciting. Ignoring them can be dangerous. Using them in urban development is a challenge.

| 1 The most important limit of Brăila is the waterfront to Danube. This is as an umbilical cord of the city, from which started its entire evolution. For Brăila, the Danube is a limit which historically connects and opens the city

in terms of economy and culture. As physical space, the contact limit of the city with the Danube's water is partially a strong built limit (inside the historical center), and partially (in north and south part), a fluid and empty limit.



Source: A. Stan, personal archive, 2011

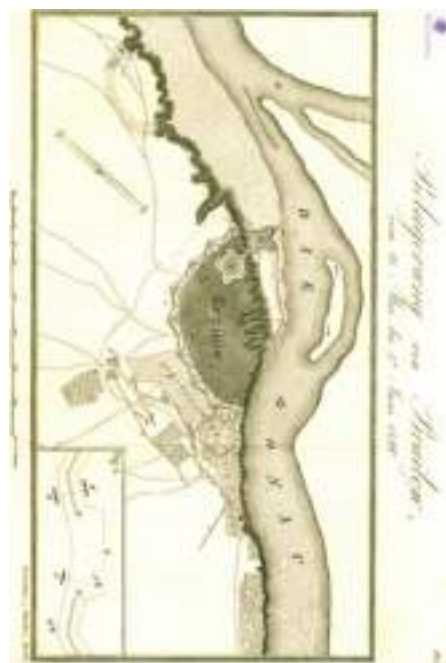


| 2 The historical center of Brăila is a protected area with many architecture monuments. The first ring of the historical center determines a zone of the oldest city memory: its limit is less obvious, but it determines the way in which some activities take place within - the

commerce, the events, the pedestrian and car circulation, etc. There are invisible limits, but strong in their effects generated by their respect.



Source: A. Stan, personal archive, 2011



| 3 The densely inhabited districts composed a discontinuous pattern of limits that encounter the main boulevards of the city. They are fragments of life packed into communist block of flats: there, people are in search for a deeper relationship with the land and property, and the sense of lost properties often alters good neighborly relations. Into this blocks districts, there are thousands of smaller limits - an indefinite texture of behaviors, tensions, conflicts, hope, etc.



Source: A. Stan, personal archive, 2011

| 4 At the very margin of city structure there are isolated fragments of urban fabric - as the former heating station (CET Chiscani) dimensioned to support a large industry, or the touristic resort Lacul Sărat. They act as "markers of question" for our investigation: who and why let them die? what future have these structures? who and how might be used their huge potential?



Source: A. Stan, personal archive, 2011



| 5 The city of Brăila is divided into two halves by the railway: at the micro scale of the physical connection within the urban structure, this limit is acting as a wall, with very few "doors" to pass through. At the larger scale within the regional/ national railway system, the railway it's an important element of engaging Brăila in a regional development. But what a pity that because of the lower conditions of travel, and of the lack of flexibility, Brăila train is becoming less used in expense of cars and minibuses.



Source: A. Stan, personal archive, 2011

| 6 The territory outside the city - an almost empty periphery. But here are in fact the hope of most citizen of Brăila to re-starts their life, in a house on earth. The ex-agricultural Brăila land is still an "waiting territory", a "ghost" of dreams created through many development plans, but which evanesces in 2008-2009, with the crisis. We could call them Landscape -Limits: places from where you can see the built facade of the city facing its emptiness.



Source: A. Stan, personal archive, 2011



| 7 Port and industries: they are limits for public access, unpleasant images that reject most of the people, except those which are working within. Very few industries rest active in Brăila. They are "islands" of a broken domain that was dominant in the past, as Brăila was an important industrial center during communist times. Part of this ex-industries are now ruins, people accept them as they accept an incurable disease and only the wild vegetation seems to be successful for their salvation.

With many of these limits, the city historically co-exists and co-produces itself. In many cases, there are positive limits - those which enhance relationships and collaboration with the parts nearby. But there are also negative limits, leading to urban decline, to fracture, to ruin and insulation. Many limits are considered as fatalities, given by the belief that "nothing can be done", that "everything's useless", or that "everything is already compromised". Worst limits are in the people's minds. From there, the city are seen deprived of chances and trust.



Source: A. Stan, personal archive, 2011



Film as an investigation tool in landscape studies

Irina Pața

Of all the arts, cinematography has the closest relationship with the city. Since its beginnings, it has mirrored the urban society and the way it exists; it is a new technology of representing the environment for a world that experiences constant changes brought upon by the Industrial Revolution.

The relationships between film and landscape can be approached from various perspectives based on how one relates to the interacting fields: cinematography, architecture, urbanism, geography, imagology, semiology, sociology, etc. Some of these will represent a starting point in researching the relationship between landscape and film as instrument of representation.

*"The architectural pedagogy based on analysis of artworks was initiated by John Hejduk at the Cooper Union School of Architecture in New York during the 1970s, and has been advanced by his former disciples like Daniel Libeskind and Dan Hoffman and, subsequently, a host of their students. In many schools of architecture around the world, the most recent interest is cinema. Films are studied for the purpose of discovering a more subtle and responsive architecture."*¹

¹ Pallasmaa, J., 2000. Lived Space in Architecture and Cinema. [online] First chapter of the book: *The Architecture of Image: Existential Space in Cinema*. Rakennustieto: Helsinki. Accessible at www.ucalgary.ca/ev/designresearch/publications/insitu/copy/volume2/imprintable_architecture/Juhani_Pallasmaa/index.html [22 August 2014].



Film – Educational instrument

The high accessibility of both video recording devices, as well as editing technologies and editing software, raises the question if *film can be seen as a viable option for the educational process* (both theoretical and practical) in architecture². Boake argues that the study of film techniques and their applicability in the making of short videos can help students *to develop a critical eye*. As an exercise, she suggests making montages of 3-10 minutes long that represent a certain architectural space based on a previously selected song. This process resembles the search for/selection of a setting for a film, an architecture for a certain context. Boake concludes the article *Architecture and Film: Experiential Realities and Dystopic Futures* by emphasizing **the ability of the film** (along with the classic information in the field) **to raise the understanding level** (through the experimental character in exploring space) and **to generate a critical discourse about architecture and the urban environment, about past, present and future**.

² Boake, T.M., 2005. *Architecture and Film: Experiential Realities and Dystopic Futures*. [online] Accessible at www.academia.edu/3437846/Architecture_And_Film_Experiential_Realities_And_Dystopic_Futures [1 September 2014].

The online DMUD-RNYU, 2014³ platform offers two online courses during the *Master of Science Architecture and Urban Design* at the *Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation*, Columbia University and it follows RNYU, 2011. The two courses – *Digital Modelling for Urban Design* (DMUD) and *Reading New York Urbanism* (RNYU) – are complemented by a third direction that is widely used in urbanism, GIS Analysis (Geographic Information Systems), and together they form a variety of instruments for the representation of urbanism and landscape architecture projects. The final results presented on these platforms are short videos that make use of resources from all three directions and illustrate the results of various urban analyses or the structure of future design proposals.

The RNYU course features an interesting **relationship between film and urbanism and between film analysis and urban analysis** (developed under the guidance Michael Szivos, Adjunct Assistant Professor, Elizabeth Barry, Adjunct Assistant Professor, Phu Duong, Adjunct Associate Professor (coordinator) and Sagi Golan, Digital Assistant). The course (RNYU, 2011; DMUD-RNYU, 2014) focuses on urban design representation emphasizing the ephemeral and existential dimensions of the city by appropriating cinematic techniques for the production of short videos (this includes 3D model animations, video and audio montages). The topics featured in this course include the consecutive steps of the way in which camera and city might interact. These steps are:

- Video site mapping (60-90 seconds);
- 3D modelling of the general structure of the site;
- Film analysis on three levels: technical, narrative and plastic;
- Developing a storyboard as a method for montage planning;

³ DMUD-RNYU, 2014. *Digital Modeling for Urban Design - Reading New York Urbanism Course*. [online] dmudrnyu.com/about/ [19 June 2014].

RNYU, 2011. *Reading New York Urbanism Course*. [online] Accessible at rnyu2011.com/about/ [19 June 2014].

— The final montage – developed in three sequences.



Storyboard used as tool in realizing a landscape video. Reading New York Urbanism Course, 2011

⁴ *Scenario Studio* it was realized through *Jokerweek Revisited 2007 Program* by *Universiteit Gent* in partnership with *Universitatea de Arhitectură și Urbanism "Ion Mincu" Bucharesti, Ecole Nationale Supérieure d'Architecture de Paris la Villette, and Hochschule für Technik und Wirtschaft Dresden*, between 12th and 16th of February 2007, Gent, Belgium

Another example is the **Scenario workshop⁴** that was aimed at investigating to what degree can the *film representation be an instrument for urban design for the purpose of sketching a vision/an attitude/a developing scenario* (according to the final report of the workshop). This workshop promoted alternative methods of reading and working with the public space and *film in urbanism other than as a tool for documentation and control⁵*. Although it is not acknowledged as a design instrument yet, Christophe Girot underlines the importance that film has in the evolution of the visual culture in the field⁶.

Christophe Girot, from the *Landscape Architecture Department* of the ETH, introduced the concept of *Video Landscape* during the studies of landscape architecture. He wrote articles⁷ and asserted constantly, through student exercises (Girot, 2014b), the necessity of extending the instruments of landscape analysis and interpreting to moving images. The department continues these studies through the *Wahlfach MediaLab* platform. *Serendipity. Landscape Video* by attempting to

5 Popescu, T., 2007. Șapte povești în căutarea unui loc. Scenariu de film ca instrument alternativ de lectură a spațiului public. In Zahariade, A., M., Oroveanu A. eds. 2007. ACUM2. Spațiul public și reinserția socială a proiectului artistic și arhitectural. Editura Universitară Ion Mincu: Bucharest. p. 204.

6 Although it is not considered as a tool design yet, but rather as one as reporting and analysis, video can positively contribute to an evolution in the visual culture of landscape architecture. Giro, Ch., 2014a. Landscape: Beyond the Margin of Vision. In Deriu, D., Kamvasinou, K., Shinkle, E., eds. 2014. *Emerging Landscapes: Between Production and Representation*. Ashgate Publishing: Farnham, Surrey, England. p. 52.

7 Giro, C., 2006. Vision in Motion: Representing Landscape in Time. In: Waldheim, C., ed. 2006. *The Landscape Urbanism*. Princeton Architectural Press: Princeton. pp. 87-103.

transform the landscape investigation process into a film montage.

*"The advent of new media such a digital video has propelled visual research and communication to yet unforeseen levels in the various design disciplines, particularly those dealing with outdoor space, [...] the potential impact of the moving image on both urban design and decision-making processes is considerable. It is of particular interest to urban landscape architecture to consider the extent to which such a mode of visual thinking can affect the shaping of future sites."*⁸

Giro⁹ points out that there are four ways in which his students choose to express their vision of a landscape (as a compositional expression of a specific quality or atmosphere) through moving images:

— Traditional still frame view – offers a fixed contemplative frame on the landscape that draws attention to the countless human patterns and movements that vitalize an otherwise mundane place. The contrast between the stillness of the camera and the motion in the frame emphasize the complexity of the contemporary human infrastructures.



Source: Lindenhof, Angela Hottinger, giro.arch.ethz.ch/videoblog/?cat=391

Giro, Ch., 2014a. Landscape: Beyond the Margin of Vision. In Deriu, D., Kamvasinou, K., Shinkle, E., eds. 2014. *Emerging Landscapes: Between Production and Representation*. Ashgate Publishing: Farnham, Surrey, England. pp. 81-94.

Giro, Ch., 2014b. *Wahlfach MediaLab. Serendipity. Landscape Video*. [videoblog] Accessible at giro.arch.ethz.ch/videoblog/ [26 August 2014].

8 Giro, C., 2006. Vision in Motion: Representing Landscape in Time. In: Waldheim, C., ed. 2006. *The Landscape Urbanism*. Princeton Architectural Press: Princeton. p. 89.

9 Giro, Ch., 2014a. Landscape: Beyond the Margin of Vision. In Deriu, D., Kamvasinou, K., Shinkle, E., eds. 2014. *Emerging Landscapes: Between Production and Representation*. Ashgate Publishing: Farnham, Surrey, England. pp. 91-92.

Transcriptions - Opening Speech and Introduction to the Topic

— Slow locomotion through landscape – a technique that depicts locomotion through a landscape using slow means of locomotion. It has a much more subjective character as it emphasizes the individual choice of direction and motion through a site. It focuses less on general frames and more on elements specific for the site, textures, details, underlining the sensory perception and the haptic dimension of the landscape.



Source: www.multimedia.ethz.ch/conferences/2010/landscapevideo/01_transcriptions [12:41-14:32]

Transcriptions - Opening Speech and Introduction to the Topic

— Fast movement – by car, airplane or train that causes an accelerated perception of the landscape (a reduced and dimmed perception, in fact) through contemporary means of locomotion, a perception specific to the commuting phenomenon. This occurs on two levels, one in the foreground and blurry, the second one in the background and sharp, with numerous juxtaposed textures, a reversed perception compared to the classical concept.

Source: www.multimedia.ethz.ch/conferences/2010/landscapevideo/01_transcriptions [12:41-14:32]



- Creating a montage – that doesn't depict a 'real' image necessarily but offers the possibility of a personal and complex vision of landscape (by making use of symbols, contrasts, and by compiling metaphorical images that emphasize the features of the landscape).



Strange Incident on Bucheggplatz,
Ozan Engisal

The tendency to use film as an instrument of analysing and representing landscape can be noticed in Visual Essay assignments that were fulfilled during IP Erasmus 2013/2014¹⁰. Students were assigned the task of creating a visual essay about the suburb of the city that they lived in, studied in or visited. The students were free to choose their preferred technique and (re)presentation method (drawing, sketch, comic book, photos, videos, installations, audio recordings etc.), and the workshop coordinator encouraged them to express themselves in a personal and diverse manner. The assignment is not supposed to consist of an urban analysis of the suburb but it aims at highlighting the identity features and the specificity of the landscape.

The results were diverse, but what is significant is the rate in which film has gained ground in student preferences (from 23% in 2013 to 34% in 2014). They found it to be more expressive than classical languages and wanted to experiment with the landscape through moving images. The quality of the videos varies a lot from a production point of view, as well as from the

Department of Landscape Architecture. Case studies: 2013 - Bucharest // 2014 - Brussels.

ERASMUS Intensive Programme, 2014. Integrated Planning and Design for Sustainable Urban Peripheries in Europe [online]. Accessible at european-peripheries.imla-campus.eu/Main_Page [27 August 2014].

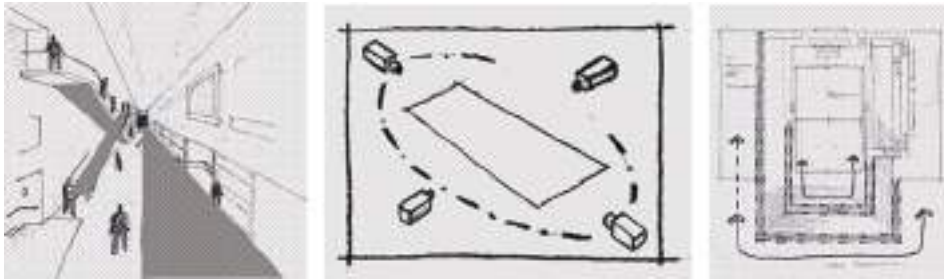
¹¹ Cairns, G., 2007. *Crossing the boundaries of film and architectural pedagogy*. *Journal of Pedagogic Development*. [e-journal] 2(2). Accessible at www.beds.ac.uk/jpd/volume-2-issue-2/crossing-the-boundaries-of-film-and-architectural-pedagogy [27 August 2014].

capacity of the presented concept to reflect the identity of the peripheral landscape.

A few categories can be identified:

- Static images edited as a video, with or without a soundtrack. The images can be drawings, sketches, analysis plans or photos. In this case, they only used film as a way of presenting the essay publicly.
- Film sequences recorded on location and edited through different principles. These are interleaved or superimposed, most of the times, with lines of text that explain or give details about the visual image. In this case, the soundtrack can be diegetic or extra-diegetic.
- Editing sequential photos in order to underline the dynamic concept of the landscape.
- Various combinations of the techniques presented above.

Graham Cairns¹¹ gives details in the Crossing the Boundaries of Film and Architectural Pedagogy article about the experience gathered over ten years in which he tested the potential of film as educational instrument in architecture design. Cairns researched the way in which students have the capacity to analyse a film and to understand how the director looks at and uses space. Also the way in which students transpose the cinematographic qualities of a place in architectural design proposals. He militates for the exploration of the relationship between film and spatial design and underlines the potential of interdisciplinary design in an educational context. The workshop suggests crossing from film to architecture in five steps that entail: using the storyboard as a spatial research tool, using the camera as an investigation tool, and the translation of film effects and principles into architectural stylistic effects or spatial organisation principles.



Source: <http://www.beds.ac.uk/jpd/volume-2-issue-2/crossing-the-boundaries-of-film-and-architectural-pedagogy>

The number of architecture/urbanism film festivals has risen significantly in the last years, showing more and more intense attempts to relate the two fields. We will give the Cinacity Architectural Film Project - Architectural Ideas Explored in One Minute Films¹² film, short film, architecture and urbanism festival as an example.

The fifth edition was in 2014, was held in Australia and was part of the series of events in the *Australia Institute of Architects Conference*. The presented videos had to be 60 seconds long, filmed in a continuous shot¹³, and had to answer to the *Making theme*¹⁴. 30 of the received films were discussed by an interdisciplinary jury consisting of Zaha Hadid, Tony Hill, Geoffrey London, Francois Penz, Penelope Seidler, Emma Williamson (among the members of the jury in the previous years were Bernard Tschumi and Juhani Pallasmaa, personalities that support the interdisciplinary between architecture and cinema). The videos were varied, strongly conceived due to the technical restrictions and accompanied by a short explanatory text.

The existing theoretical background mostly leans towards the relationship between architecture and cinema (Cairns, Eisenstein, Godard, Higham, Koolhaas, Nouvel, Pallasmaa, and Tschumi), the landscaping perspective is less analysed (Bruno, Girot, Hopkins). The film, as a tool, is based on the transfer of processes, concepts and meaning, develops the critical spirit over

the way in which one views a film, it has a documentary role and it explores other relationships regarding landscape analysis and representation. It supports a new, recently debated method of designing space, especially in academia, experimentally, more in architecture and with shy attempts towards urban planning and landscaping. It is another tool, with other principles, that has the capacity to enrich perspectives and attitude towards the designed space:

"[...] it is very hard for us to accept that it (the attempt to probe the urban phenomenon) can also be a synthetic one, that one can also start the other way around, that the careful decoding and organisation of urban life aspects is not the only way in which it can be mastered. [...] the film attempt is an essentially synthetic one... it does not decompose, but it recomposes... the whole can be seen other than as a sum of its individual components".

¹⁵ Popescu, T., 2007. Șapte povești în căutarea unui loc. Scenariu de film ca instrument alternativ de lectură a spațiului public. In Zahariade, A., M., Oroveanu A. eds. 2007. ACUM2. *Spațiul public și reinserția socială a proiectului artistic și arhitectural*. Editura Universitară Ion Mincu: Bucharest. p. 205.

¹² Cinacity, 2014. *Architectural Film Project. Architectural Ideas Explored in One Minute Films*[online] Accessible at www.thecinacityproject.com/ [4 September 2014].

¹³ Structure connected to the first documentaries of Lumière Brothers - „50-seconds actualities”.

¹⁴ [...] making architecture, which extend upon traditional practice approaches, challenging relationships between architecture and the cultural, the economic, the social and the political.

The Urban Laboratory as Interface

Angelica Stan
Cătălina Ioniță

In a conceptual sense, the Urban Laboratory is considered here as an interface between the science of the city (naming it as urbanism, encompassing its specialized practice and language, norms and rules based on specific data), and the living world of empirical research of cities, consisting of small pieces of urban life and space-situations, relying on co-generated solutions, ad-hoc interventions, using creativity of inhabitants and opportunistic actions. There is already a critical mass of “guerrilla” actions in this direction, but they remain parallel in discourse and efficacy compared to the state urbanism, and this, in the given crisis conditions, are not leading to better cities.

Looking back, the idea of laboratory as a critical interface between science and life opportunities, can be found earlier at Bruno Latour, in 1983, in his work entitled “Give Me a Laboratory and I Will Raise the World”³. There have been raised the question of the output from the “shell” of scientist laboratory experiments based on clear evidences, and their extension to the wider context of indeterminacy, of exceptional cases, of social

unpredictable, ie. of life. “Since scientific facts are made inside laboratories, in order to make them circulate, you need to build costly networks inside which they can maintain their fragile efficacy”⁴. In this way in fact, Latour argues a necessary link between the scientific tools and the empirical ones, a reconciliation. The “fragile efficacy” of the laboratory shows that its technical evidences used in scientific experiments needs to be strengthened by opening to the social and humanistic researches. Through this, city should be questioned not only quantitatively, but also qualitatively, not only with the intention of spatial or social objectivity, but preserving the original interpretation, perhaps subjective, derived from individual exploration.

Building on this assertion, the Urban Laboratory as interface is seen as a necessary „device” for understanding the adaptation required within the new relationships between cities and networks⁵. The changes of geographical scale, the fast development of technologies, the faster speeds of communication and liberalization of network utilities are creating an evolving context coming with new challenges for small networks, as for big networks. Planning within these networks in a more and more complex urban environment is a matter of scale and balance between different resources, needs, options, politics, etc. All this require an interdisciplinary and an open framework in which different approaches need to be well gathered. Urban Laboratory can offer this, as long as they are organized as partnership between public administration, private owners and civic societies, and they work on creating bridges between state mechanisms and societal needs.

⁴ Latour, B. 1983. Give Me a Laboratory and I will Rise the World, Sage Publication, 166

⁵ Dupuy, G. 2008. Urban Networks- Network Urbanism (red. et introd. J. van Schaick et I.T. Klaasen), Techne Press

³ Latour, B. 1983. Give Me a Laboratory and I will Rise the World, Sage Publication

The Urban Laboratory as tactical markers disposal

In many examples of urban laboratories in the world, a set of concepts is preferentially used as tools to explore and express the working ideas. For the urban laboratory developed within The University College of London⁶, the activities filed the research currently focus on five key areas: housing and dishousing; ecology and metabolism; change and crisis; imagination and design; and date and place. The main and the most frequent concepts used here are: creativity, sustainability, participation, cross-disciplinarily, small-scale interventions. In many other urban laboratories, affiliated or not to schools or universities, the idea of innovation, experiment and testing solutions for the city is implicit, based on actual data of urbanity crisis, in all or only in certain aspects - mostly economic, social, and ecological. Generally we can notice also that ULs are tangent to architects thinking, and their involvement in active research and innovative experiences is huge, but meantime we see that architects' thinking meets, in these laboratories, a metamorphosis not being so interested on the built object itself, but to the context and its evolution process in particular urban situations.

For the Urban Laboratory developed within the previously mentioned project, the tools used are the Urban Markers (UM), covering a wide range of functions and possibilities to be applied in many different interventions, at many different urban scales. The Urban Markers are conceived here as tools for city's analysis, which warns about problems, vulnerabilities, risks or latent opportunities, existing in peripheral areas (marginal ones or those that are central, but affected by decline).

As long as the tactical urbanism uses immediate almost spontaneous and "acupunctural" interventions, at small scale (both in terms of space and on time) - even

⁶ www.ucl.ac.uk/urbanlab



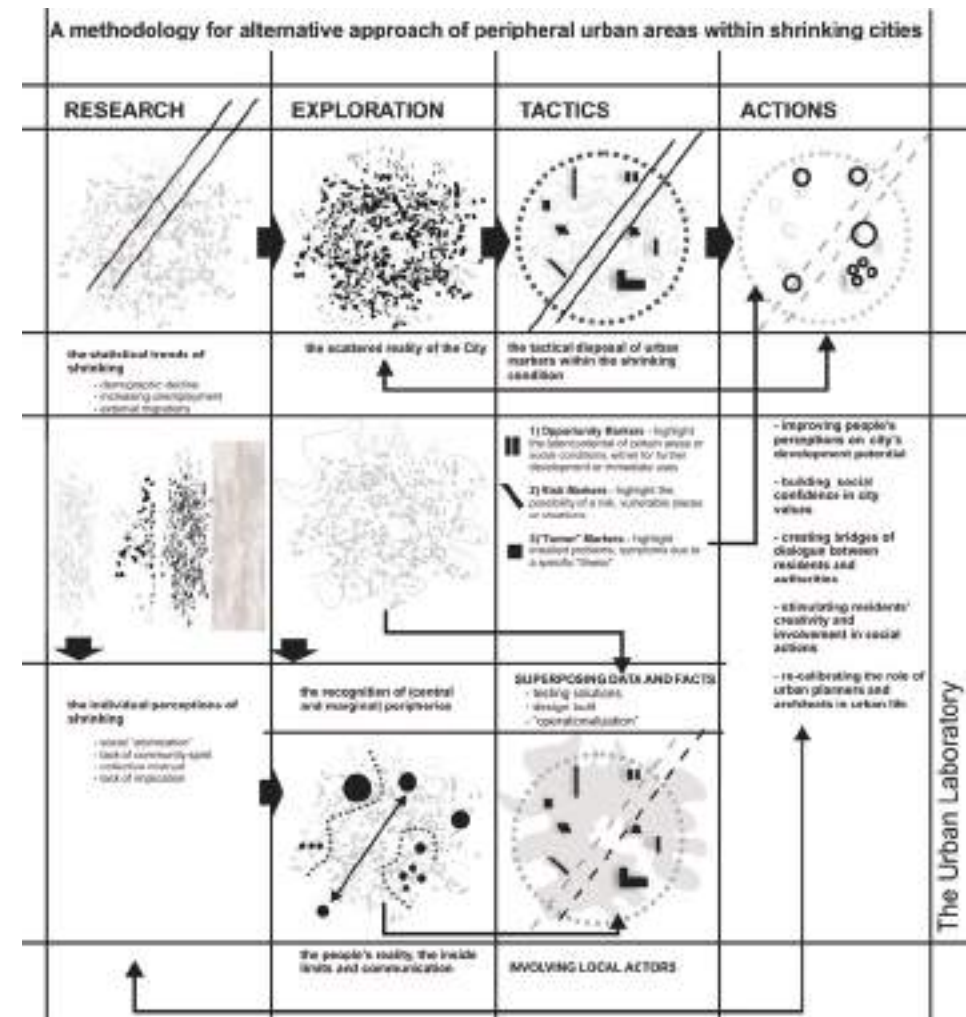
counting on the temporality as a possible solution - UM come to follow from inside these actions, often impulsive and conceited. By their disposal in the research methodology of Urban Laboratory's, UM help the tactical gesture - often purely artistic and self-sufficient - to become aware of the responsibility to pass from the intentions, vision and utopia, to the new rule and policy register: "a new role for progressive policy, (...) a more efficient, transparent, inclusive, and collaborative form of government."⁷ Thus, Urban Markers are negotiators for the new rules of urban space, counting more on co-generation, involvement and people creativity, coproducing the city as well as new models of cohabitation and coexistence to advance agendas of socio-economic inclusion.

⁷ Burdett, R, Cruz, T, Harvey, D, Gadanho, P. (ed). 2014. Uneven Growth: Tactical Urbanisms for Expanding Megacities, Moma, NY

Conclusions

The research developed within "B-LAB" has situated itself in the same formula of the emergence of ideas and concepts, coming from different areas of exploration - architectural, urban, sociological and artistic, following the expertise of the project team. Given that the project is still in progress, research has not reached final conclusions, but possible partial openings offered by the ideas already tested and implemented, such as the laboratory, the urban markers, the tie breaker of the decline between macro and micro scale, and revealing the peripheral situations as possible opportunities. Also, given that this project is being conducted in parallel with the urban master plan of Brăila and with the municipality support, it is perhaps a unique case of the conjecture of steps which usually reject, or ignore each other. By opening of the local authority, was built an approach that does not negate development based on master plan, but tries in a joint effort to reach viable sustainable and equitable solutions for the city.

A previous version of this article have been published within the proceedings of Central and Eastern European LUMEN Conference: New Approaches in Social and Humanistic Sciences: NASHS, 2015



Sustainable micro- landscape

Andreea
Nicoleta Bunea

Introduction

Urban shrinkage is noticed when urban development is affected by economic, demographic and political processes that lead to decreased local population. The most obvious link between this phenomenon and the economic downturn is deindustrialization. Deindustrialisation itself is considered a major factor of economic and demographic decline reported in many cities in South Eastern Europe (and not only), cities that had major economic power from the 50's to the 90's. Besides the obvious implications that this phenomenon has globally, it also generates locally a series of specific problems / situations. For example, in some cases, abandoned brownfields, often located in the proximity of the city's centre, are home to abandoned or inefficiently used buildings, thus limiting the possibility of a viable economic development.

In other situations we can talk about abandoned land belonging to former industries, which constitute a significant land reserve. Introducing these spaces

(buildings and land) into the circuit of used spaces is a topic that can be viewed in the light of sustainable interventions, whether it is sustainable architecture (in the form of reconversion), or, it may be *sustainable landscape design / landscaping*.

The context of contemporary landscape design

Contemporary landscape design / landscaping encompasses a number of practices that have developed in the context of environmental problems associated with climate change but also due to the evolution of vernacular landscaping¹ elements. How can we define vernacular landscaping? According to the Foundation for Cultural Landscape² "vernacular landscaping" in this context refers to a cultural landscape that has evolved through use by the population of who's activity or simple living created that specific landscape.

In other words the term "vernacular landscaping" refers to those simple rules of compliance of space related to the building, which have contributed in time, either by certain models of landscaping, or by creating rules of positioning the building in relation with the natural surroundings and environmental elements, to the increase of comfort inside the building. And the manner in which these vernacular concepts can contribute today to defining standards of sustainability is detailed within a more ample research regarding³:

- Terrain, topography,
- Existing / proposed vegetation,
- Position related to the sun,
- Acces to a water source,
- Positioning towards air movements etc.

¹ collocation introduced and explained in detail in the doctoral research entitled THE CONTRIBUTION OF LANDSCAPE DESIGN TO DESIGNING SUSTAINABLE BUILDINGS, conducted by the author in the period 2011-2014

² tclf.org/content/vernacular-landscape

³ doctoral research entitled THE CONTRIBUTION OF LANDSCAPE DESIGN TO DESIGNING SUSTAINABLE BUILDINGS, conducted by the author in the period 2011-2014

Over time the use of vegetation played a singular role in the energy efficiency of buildings, since areas planted with tall trees or average height vegetation (~1,6 m) provide shaded areas for summer, increase the thermal comfort and also protect from cold winds. The contribution of façade vegetation is known for hundreds of years in relation to thermal comfort, while placing vegetation in the immediate vicinity of the building instead of paving or concreting surfaces can significantly reduce ground temperature. Vegetation can also be used to mask or integrate the building's mechanical systems.

All these aspects lead to the assumption that the need for a bidirectional link between anthropogenic and natural elements is becoming increasingly evident, between the building (energy efficient) and environment, which may materialize in the form of landscape design. Integrating these two aspects and their cooperation for a better contribution to build energy efficient is important. Landscape design / landscaping can play an important role in generating energy efficiency, in the context mentioned above.

Sustainable landscape / landscaping of spaces in close proximity to the building – defining elements

Whether it is waste space remaining after construction of the building, or green spaces configured as such in the process of urban planning (squares, parks, public gardens, planted strips, private gardens, etc.) they can be designed by integrating sustainability concepts. These resulted landscape designs can influence the quality of life in buildings and even in the city. The elements that define sustainable landscape design and can help improve the thermal comfort of the building are (not necessarily exposed in order of importance):

— The use of native plants, *xeriscape*, landscaping

attempting to eliminate the need for supplementary irrigation by irrigation systems. Xeriscapes is successfully used in areas where there is no easy access to water sources, leading to a barren landscape image, which can be a disadvantage. The advantages of using this type of landscaping are: reduced irrigation water consumption, minimal maintenance and money saving;

Xeriscape in an
arid zone of the
United State



Source: www.hoffs.com/Xeriscape.aspx



Source: personal archive

**Xeriscape "by
mistake"** at Jina,
Sibiu, 2014.

- Vegetation layout to maximize the positive effects of sunlight in winter and at the same time to minimize the negative effects of the sun in summer and to build a barrier against unwanted air movement;
- The use of permeable pavement is a sustainable landscape design measure, it allows the rapid transfer of rainwater to the aquifer. In a sustainable landscape design the use of recycled onsite materials for systems alleys, or other areas that need paving is advised. Permeable paving uses a series of sustainable materials and techniques in order to create a pavement that allows water passage and water filtration at the same time. Permeable paving can be used successfully for low traffic roads, alleys, bike trails, etc. Permeable paving allows vegetation in urban areas to grow higher at an appropriate height, as water infiltrates quicker⁴. Permeable pavement can be of several

types: permeable concrete pavers, plastic netting systems (used for LEED certification), porous asphalt, gravel, bricks;

- Use of renewable energy, including solar lighting, the use of mini-wind turbines etc;
- Water is an essential presence in everyday life and in the context of sustainable development it is considered a valuable resource. Over time, ponds, artificial or natural lakes, were a common presence in landscape design because of the advantages they offer. Whether it is the aesthetic value of a body of water, of fountains or waterfalls, water as transportation route or the importance of water for adiabatic cooling, it has always been a valuable element, natural or designed. Water management can take various forms and uses that can have significant contributions in improving the environmental problems we face today, and can help improve the microclimate. We must consider the natural water cycle in nature and to avoid blocking it, as it happens in the case of areas heavily urbanized, where water can not infiltrate because of the high percentage of impervious surfaces and lack of vegetation, which can cause floods and poor management of rainwater that enters the sewer system afterwards. Integrating water management in landscape design to maximize its effects can materialize as *retention ponds* or *rain gardens*. Besides the aesthetic benefits, *rain gardens* filter rain water, recharge underground water resources, provide habitats for birds and bees and control the possible flooding of a landscape design. Including surfaces of water in landscape design / landscaping greatly improves the microclimate. Water ditches, large lakes, small lakes and rooftop water surfaces are helpful for evaporative cooling. For the natural cooling of a building, only space cooling in the proximity of the building is needed, through

⁵ Reed, S., 2010. Energy-Wise Landscape Design. Gabriola Island: New Society Publishers.

⁶ a variation of green roof, made by coating of the envelope with local natural materials, like gravel, which allows the growth of plants and attracts insects to support local biodiversity.

⁷ Russ, T. H., 2009. Site Planning and Design Handbook. New York: Mc Graw Hill Professional.

adiabatic cooling - which involves evaporation of the water or spraying it over a surface⁵.

- Use of green / brown⁶ roofs;
- The use of vertical landscaping - vertical green walls, originally appeared as a result of a need to use the space as efficiently as possible, as urban green wall provide shade and cooling by evapotranspiration. Green walls absorb carbon dioxide and convert it into oxygen⁷ may have an aesthetic contribution, save water, conserve energy by insulating the building, and can be a source of food in case of edible vertical gardens;
- Recycling of materials found on site, for a possible future integration within the landscape design;
- Use of local, renewable materials.

Conclusions

Over time the use of vegetation played a singular role in assuring thermal comfort in the building, as areas planted with high trees or average height vegetation offer shade in summer, which contributes to thermal comfort and also protects from cold winds.

The mere favorable positioning in relation to the sun, shading, wind, precipitation, etc. can have a significant impact on thermal comfort but also psychologically. To all those elements of vernacular landscape design / landscaping interventions, contemporary landscape design elements (green walls, green roofs, rain gardens, etc.) are added, generating what may be contemporary landscape design's answer to the attempt of adapting / combating climate change on the one hand, and on the other hand can meet the needs generated by the deindustrialization phenomenon associated with *shrinking cities*⁸.

⁸ URBACT, 2013. *Cities of Tomorrow – Action Today, URBACT II Capitalisation. From crisis to choice: re – imagining the future in shrinking cities.* [pdf]

Brăila Laboratory

A successful experiment that highlights a community with significant consolidation potential

Andreea Acasandre

Introduction

The “BRĂILA LABORATORY - Alternative approaches to urban peripheries within a shrinking city” (B-LAB) project addresses the significant problem of cities that are confronted with the loss of population and acute demographic decay. Brăila is an example of such a city which, as a result of the des-industrialization, lost a large number of its inhabitants, many of them choosing to live in the country or to relocate in other larger cities of Romania (as Bucharest, for example, situated not far away from Brăila), in search of more possibilities for employment.

This process of *abandonment of the birthplace*, together with the *acute demographic decay* that is noticed in current societies, has led to major changes in the life of the cities. Because of the recent communist past, cities like Brăila used to be developed in order to accommodate a large number of inhabitants. In the context of a population that chooses to abandon the city, a large surface of the built environment, both

housing and production areas, remain unused. Thus, its maintenance becomes a challenge for the local authorities and for the community.

Purpose

In addition to the serious problems that burden shrinking cities, which transit a phase of redefining their identity and rethinking their economic engines, through which they will be able to maintain and, possibly in the future, increase the number of their local population, the effect of *shrinking city* generates a secondary, more subtle, problem. The alienation from the social space, which makes inhabitants abandon the idea of contribution to raise the standard of living and quality of urban life and, as a result, makes it more easy and quick to make the decision of *abandonment*.

Aware of this risk, the “BRĂILA LABORATORY - Alternative approaches to urban peripheries within a shrinking city” project had as a secondary objective, from a sociological perspective, *the intensification of social connections through the identification of some local markers (social/spatial) and the involvement of inhabitants in the improvement of their urban life*. The purpose of the project was to develop alternative education methodologies and to exchange experience regarding the cultural diversity of urban peripheries within a shrinking city.

Methodology

“*The Brăila Experiment*” acted as an acupuncture system, in which students of BAS and UAUIM, together with experts and teachers from both Universities, identified some points thought to have potential/zones of risk/zones of “tumour” in the city and decided an intervention. As a participative experimental approach,

the interventions were very different in terms of areas. Thus, there were interventions that represented the planning of an urban park with the help of the local resources, interventions that aimed for the intensification of the relation between the inhabitants of Brăila and the Danube (an important resource of the city), proposals of improving the image of a tram stop (Albina) or events organized in key spaces of the city (the brewery or a pedestrian street in the centre of the city).



The experiments – a sociological perspective

The results of the project initiated by UAUIM ("Ion Mincu" University of Urbanism and Architecture) in collaboration with BAS (Bergen School of Architecture), and with the support of the Brăila Municipality represent a series of interventions, at different scales. Thus, in the first part of the project, the Norwegian students proposed and designed 9 types of punctual interventions in the urban

fabric of the city. In addition, they proposed a pilot-project, the garage situated on the Danube waterfront, which had the symbolic purpose of signalling the latent urban potential of Brăila, a potential which can be found even in the unloved elements, considered as symbols of a regime that needs to be forgotten or of the uncertain period that followed it.

This experiment, of the garage, deserves a special attention, as it managed to reach its main purpose better than any other intervention: **the purpose of generating reactions**. Even though they were controversial, the reactions were very interesting and long lasting, drawing attention to the place where the garage was positioned. As a result, this space, which was initially without precise coordinates, diffuse, became a place, clearly defined, supported by the symbolism that is associated to it now, being identified now in the collective memory as *THE GARAGE*.

In the second part of the project, the events and interventions proposed by the UAUIM students were implemented. The first action was organised **inside the former Mullerbrewery** (General Ghe. Avramescu Street), a part of the former southern industrial zone of Brăila. This territory has been in a process of decay for more than 15 years, many units – buildings, lands, industrial utilities – being closed, abandoned and in an advanced degradation process. Even if it is situated very close to the central zone of the city, with a tangent to the bank of the Danube, this territory is perceived by the inhabitants as a periphery – a place that is difficult to access, with a repugnant image, unattractive and dangerous. However, as we look carefully and openly towards the hidden potential behind the fallen walls, behind the fences and the vegetation, there are sufficient elements that could be reactivated. The local resource is very rich, considering especially the memory of these spaces where, not very long ago, people used to work and earn their living.

The actions of the students from UAUIM aimed the idea of testing some tactics and micro-strategies of approaching this kind of spaces directly, discovering their potential value and trying to reposition them in the consciousness of the population, as elements that need to be reactivated and reused. **The event named “Brăila ACT&REACT”** was thought as a unique action dedicated to all inhabitants of the city, gathering **workshops, artistic events and outdoor screenings**, organized in the courtyard near the street of this former brewery, now sporadically used as warehouse and repairs workshop.

The actions were carried out with the help and direct involvement of the students of **the “Hariclea Darclée” Art High School and the “Vespasian Lungu” Popular Art School** from Brăila. The students built and exhibited small urban furniture elements, lighting installations made out of recycled materials and *a street-art graffiti* was painted on the wall of the factory, the work of the artist Lucian Milea and which can still be admired on General Ghe. Avramescu Street. The most talented students of these two schools from Brăila danced, sang, and acted in a theatre play, enjoying an unconventional space organized by them. The event aimed to **re-activate this neglected place** of the city through some cultural and artistic “gestures”, stimulating the creativity of the young people and their desire to get involved. The first two days – 26 and 27 May 2016 – were dedicated to the construction of the furniture elements and of the installations made of recycled materials, and in the third day, the 28th of May, the space was opened to the public, who were very thrilled and participated in an impressive number.

The second urban event, very different but also unique and equally appreciated by the inhabitants, was organized in the **“Albina”** tramway stop in Brăila. Starting from the observation that this tramway line separates an individual housing zone from a collective housing zone, situated in the same territory of the city, the students

imagined a way in which they could make these two parts communicate through this separating line. The **“Albina Link”** action suggested a concept of intervention in such a way that the inhabitants of the two residential zones are encouraged to communicate again and to become aware of the need to use places as the tramway station in common, responsibly.

Here the students built a **green installation** using **plants and recycled materials**. Students of the “Ion Mincu” University of Architecture and Urbanism in Bucharest (some of them even from Brăila), specialized in Landscape Architecture, Urbanism and Architecture, improved the image of this tram stop, using a **minimum of resources** – recycled materials – and drawing attention to the **potential for improvement of micro-urban spaces of this kind**. The impact of this event was felt immediately and passers-by, inhabitants of the area, youngsters and children were also involved in the organization and revitalization of the tram stop, willing to contribute to changing the look of this transit point located between two not very well linked areas. The action had the purpose of **stimulating the local community spirit and civic initiative**, through the **recovery and creative usage of the urban public space**, especially a small neglected space, situated at the periphery and frequently commonly used by a large number of people.

The initiators of the project, students of the “Ion Mincu” University of Architecture and Urbanism in Bucharest, together with their tutors, experts in architecture, urbanism, landscape architecture and anthropology, transformed the Albina tramway stop, during a two-day work time, in a workshop and platform of debate, together with those who were transiting the zone on the 24 line and with the inhabitants from the two neighbourhoods. In addition to the improvement of the image of the stop (which became a way of drawing the

passengers' attention), the discussions, comments and small interventions realized in situ revealed the state of awaiting, the capacity of interpreting, the creativity, hope, but also the lack of belief of some inhabitants in the possibility of improvement of their city.

The third implemented project was organized on the Mihai Eminescu Street in Brăila. Here, students of the UAUM, together with the experts and teachers, implemented, during a two-day work, in four zones of the street, places of interaction with people, where they could propose different types of interventions or urban insertions and, at the same time, could see alternatives of transformation and organization of the pedestrian street which they were transiting.

There was a fourth project, which was not implemented, which proposed the reactivation of some other representative spaces for Brăila and which can be considered as local markers in some zones: **the gangways**. The proposal of the initiators of the project suggested the transformation of these spaces, with the help of streetlights and street art, into attractive spaces for the inhabitants towards the semi-private zones which are found behind them and which have a great potential for gathering and stimulating the community spirit and for intensifying the social links.

Conclusions

Brăila has a latent community potential, which is found in the desire of the inhabitants to help in the process of its development. The interventions of the students had the role of drawing attention to this social and spatial potential, generating reactions from future public or private investors, and creating active spaces and zones, with both economic and relaxation purposes.





Echoes and Multidisciplinary Views

Public Space Crisis: Empathy and Complicity

Elke Krasny

The public space crisis gathers speed. Public space has come under attack. At the time of this writing we witness a global public space crisis. Recent attacks, such as the 14 July 2016 Nice attack with a 19 tonne cargo truck driven into the public celebrating Bastille Day on the Promenade des Anglais, testify the weaponization of individuals. Everyone can turn into a deadly weapon and put himself or herself to use in an undeclared violent war on public urban space.

Saskia Sassen has pointed out that “the theatre of war” has reached the “cities”¹. Following Sassen we can speak of an urban war carried out in public space. These public space attacks are aimed both at the idea of urban public and material public space. Yet, such individual incidents of weaponization as well as the permanent structural militarization carried out by state agencies, are by far not the only causes for the public space crisis. It is not a single cause crisis. Public space has for decades been afflicted by neoliberal urbanization. Of interest here is how public art is complicit in the dynamics of conspicuous urban consumption through the creation of spectacular public art effects. In the late 1990s sociologist Sharon

Zukin observed the urban core strategy of “re-aestheticization”². Public art commissions, especially spectacular and event-like temporary monumental sculptures, such as the Mayor of London funded Fourth Plinth Series on Trafalgar Square with participating artists like Hans Haacke, Katharina Fritsch or Marc Quinn, expose this complicity with the re-aestheticization strategy. Public art on Trafalgar Square turns to the effective reanimation of the nineteenth century plinth with its historical dedication to the Empire and the heroic public celebration of war heroes. Today’s temporary monuments mobilise and celebrate— with each of the fourth plinth sculptures in place for roughly a year’s period – the square as a site of massive touristification and urban spectacle culture. Events are ephemeral. Equestrian monuments and statues of emperors are permanent. The crossing of permanent monument and ephemeral event led to the contemporary ephemeral monument, or put differently, the permanent event. Taken together, ephemeral monument and permanent event, result in the public art effects vital to the urban attraction economy appealing to tourists and locals alike. They take to the public space to stage themselves as participants in the massification spectacle. Yet, even though fully complicit in the public art effects of neoliberal urbanization, these large-scale temporary monuments equally inspire technologically enabled and social-media circulated expressions of mass empathy. Smartphones in hand, users of public space understand each other.

For the last part of this essay, I will turn to self-initiated and non-commissioned public art determined to politically counteract public space crisis conditions. In her 1958 *The Human Condition*, Hannah Arendt has introduced the influential concept of the space of appearance „where men (...) make their appearance explicitly”³. I suggest here that political public art is involved in making the space of appearance explicit.

² Ibid

³ Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958, pp. 198-199.

¹ Saskia Sassen, “A New Model of International Governance: Why Cities Will Lead the Way” at the 2013 Strategic Foresight Forum, www.atlanticcouncil.org/news/transcripts/transcript-2013-strategic-foresight-forum-a-new-model-of-international-governance-why-cities-will-lead-the-way, accessed 4 August 2016



While Arendt has emphasized the space of appearance as temporal, work-based and only existing in “the actuality of the movement which brought it into being”⁴. Judith Butler has worked out the importance of material public space. In a 2012 text titled “Bodies in Alliance and the Politics of the Street” Judith Butler writes that “we must insist on there being material conditions for public assembly and public speech”⁵. She argues that “the square and the street are not only the material supports for action, but they themselves are part of any account of bodily public action we might propose”⁶. And, most importantly for my purpose here, Butler writes: “Human action depends upon all sorts of supports – it is always supported action”⁷. What if the support, i. e. public space, is under attack? What if the access to support is restricted? What if material support and human support fail? Political public art relies on the access to all sorts of support. The politics of such public art expose the crisis conditions attacking systems of support which are ultimately necessary to enable that working toward the space of appearance can take place. In 2013, a Turkish performance artist became known as Standing Man. On June 13, 2013, from 6 p.m. to 2 a.m. Erdem Gündüz stood still on Taksim Square facing the Atatürk cultural centre. Others joined him. Counteracting the authoritarian politics of neoliberal urbanization, his space of appearance action demonstrates both, the material support system necessary to stand on, and the support of others joining in. His public art action also evidences that an individual’s body work can mark the beginning of the space of appearance. On March 8, 2008, Italian performance artists Pippa Bacca and Silvia Moro set out to hitchhike from Milan to Tel Aviv. Their live art project was called Brides on Tour. They turned themselves into living peace symbols. Their “performanceart/journey was a female remapping across a topography of war that dared to imagine peace with the proverbial hopefulness of a new bride. That vision remains the alternative to all cultures of violence”⁸. The two artists relied on the

⁴ Ibid. p. 199.

⁵ Judith Butler, “Bodies in Alliance and the Politics of the Street,” In *Sensible Politics. The Visual Culture of Nongovernmental Activism*, eds. Meg McLagan and Yates McKee, New York: Zone Books, 2012, p. 117. Butler’s text was written in the wake of the uprisings against regimes in North Africa and the Middle East in 2011.

⁶ Ibid. p. 118.

⁷ Ibid. p. 118.

⁸ Joey Skee, “Pippa Bacca, performance artist, is murdered during ‘Brides on Tour’”, www.italy.org/1684/pippa-bacca-performance-artist-murdered-during-brides-tour, accessed August 4, 2016.

support of private transport through public space. They sought to demonstrate that the space of appearance devoted to a politics of peace can be created as a living artwork built on the empathy of others counteracting the toxic geographies of war and violence. On April 11, Pippa Bacca’s snaked body was found “in some bushes near a Turkish village (...) Although an official cause of death has not been given, local Turkish authorities said Ms. Bacca had been raped and strangled”⁹. Empathy was destroyed. The assumption or the trust that there is support for living peace art was most violently attacked.

Despite the fact that public space is under attack, that human support and material support are under threat, it is of importance to not give up on public space and to continue working towards the space of appearance. Living public art dedicated to the space of appearance exposes both the structural violence of complicity in political and economic regimes and the deadly risks of testing out support systems built solely on strategic empathy. Everyone can turn himself or herself into a living artwork of resistance or a living peace artwork. Everyone has the agency to mobilize the space of appearance. Yet, under the current public space crisis conditions, this means that such politically involved living art takes place in a potentially violent and deadly territory. Working in public space as a Standing Man or as Brides on Tour means that one becomes part of the theatre of urban war in order to uphold the possibility of working toward the space of appearance and the politics of peace.

⁹ Elisabetta Povoledo, “Performance Artist Killed on Peace Trip Is Mourned,” www.nytimes.com/, April 19, 2008, accessed August 4, 2016.

Elegy, Laceration, Sweet Decline

—
Mihai Duțescu

Brăila is not Moldova, we've all had history classes, but after all Buzău is not Moldova either – and we know well how they speak in Buzău, therefore the discussion about whether it is/isn't Moldova should be over briefly and without much artifice. On the other hand, we have been to Moldova too; it's not really a trip to the circus anymore, on the contrary, I'd say; in many respects, Moldova – and I'm going to indulge myself here and abusively include the counties of Buzău and Brăila, though Brăila and Buzău residents are not Moldavians, yes, I know... - Moldova, therefore, has provided and continues to provide more people of a minimal public or cultural relevance than other, more distinguished historical Romanian provinces, and in a dusty town in Moldova one eats better than in many well-off places in Romania, just as, unlike the counties in the witless south of the country, some counties in Moldova, to which we will add the counties of Buzău and Brăila out of an inexplicable pleasure, have been leading the national top of baccalaureate graduation for years.

Yet, when I get to Brăila - oh, less and less often lately - I feel I have one foot in our sweet Moldova. Not only the

softened and unobtrusively high-pitched idiom of Brăila residents, but also their mild sluggishness, their mild inadequacy, the apparently willful positioning against the grain when it comes to reality, to the palpable materiality of everyday life, send me to a cultural space as recognizable as Moldova. You're going to tell me: you haven't been to Galați... wait and see the Moldova there! I've been to Galați too, it's twenty kilometers from Brăila, but infinitely uglier, from the accent to the city itself, mutilated by boutiques and PVC windows, I have also met enough people from Galați - most of them having remained in Bucharest, like all of us, strangers - and, statistically speaking, I think they're among the biggest jerks I've ever met, or, more exactly, the ones I've met and whom I've interfered with enough have been like that. I have also met people from Brăila, the guys were either sort of wimpy or sort of chavvy - perhaps not as chavvy as those from Teleorman or as Constanța boys, or as chavs from Brașov: there are dozens of shades here, there are various chav typologies, they can be grouped by county too. Strictly speaking, there are basically two types of Brăilachavs: either those from Lacul Dulce who set their dogs on you and cut you with their swords, or the boys who, when faced with a problem, call their friends from Lacul Dulce to cut you with their swords - finer boys, possibly university graduates, possibly graduates from the "Dunărea de Jos" University of Galați, outdoor café boys, who, as undergraduates, burn with impatience to come home every weekend, and for the summer, on holiday, "home, in Brăila...", and to spend their time with friends at an outdoor café – to run their cars by the City Hall, take a spin to Lacul Sărat and then step on it to get back to the café in time to catch some game - anyway, I've also met Brăila boys who wear only Burberry T-shirts and shirts, and usually lift up their T-shirt collar for the plaid pattern to be seen clearly. And who drive a Porsche Panamera, among others - with, you've guessed it, Brăila license plates: what could be more beautiful than this?



There are still countless things more beautiful than this in Brăila. They say the girls are beautiful ("Well, yeah, Moldavian girls are generally beautiful"), others say the bygone multiculturalism of this city is beautiful - but something is still left of it, at least by the fact that there's a Greek church, there are still Lipovans, Muslims, Jews - and, more recently, some Italians have strayed to Brăila, some with agribusiness, others simply come for *bungabunga*, possibly called over by the first - *c'èbungabunga di altaqualità a Brăila, gualio'...*

I'll make an effort to go beyond the area of gratuitous trivialities, though perhaps I shouldn't, because I was just beginning to feel good. That is, I think one must say with maximum responsibility something that has been said by others before, perhaps: Brăila is the most beautiful lowland city in Romania. And people are also included here, exactly the way I've described them, with their sluggishness and little contemplative jams, with Porsche Panameras and raids to the mall in Galați, and then back by way of Călărăși St, with their provincial phrases (*maleta*¹, *veil rail*², *to straiten, wait till I shew you, you tried to peek her up...*), with the fish market and the boulevards with green pedestrian paths in the middle, or with a tram and a pedestrian path in the middle and wide, deserted streets, where cars pass very rarely, because Brăila is Brăila, time flows fondly, the air is more viscous and the amount of spleen is larger - streets which make way for a church and hug it so, from every side - and heavy, gorgeous mansions, which flank these wide deserted streets with Dacia 1300s parked on the right side since forever, covered with tarpaulins lest they spoil, truly beautiful streets and houses, and many trees, not necessarily acacias, but rather chestnut trees, with villas and houses with slightly excessive, slightly decadent adornments, now peopled by the new bourgeoisie as well, the boys with little Burberry maletas and degrees from the "Dunărea de Jos" University, at that - so, too, the yards with cracked pavement, crossed by laundry

¹ Turtleneck.

² Curtain rod.

strings and the smell of fresh laundry, in those shabby streets in the old Turkish slum, which lead directly into the Danube, descending steeply here and there, with willows and danewort and packs of dumb, completely ineffective dogs, slow, very slow, completely asleep, lost in a sad ramble among the ruins of industrial buildings two centuries old, ancient furnaces and silos, beautiful, abandoned - the more beautiful for it - and the half-abandoned, slow, nearly-no-use Danube.

Elegie, sfâșiere, dulce declin

RO

Brăila nu e Moldova, am făcut cu toții istorie, dar până la urmă nici Buzăul nu e Moldova - și știm bine cum se vorbește la Buzău, așa că discuția despre dacă e Moldova / nu e Moldova ar trebui să se încheie scurt și fără prea multe figuri. Pe de altă parte, am mai fost și noi la Moldova, nu mai e chiar circul circului, ba dimpotrivă aș zice, în multe privințe Moldova - și aici am să-mi fac bucuria să includ abuziv și județele Buzău și Brăila, deși brăilenii și buzoiarii nu sunt moldoveni, da, știu... - Moldova așadar a dat și continuă să dea mai mulți oameni cu o minimă relevanță publică sau culturală decât alte provincii istorice românești mai cu ștaif, iar într-un orașel prăfuit din Moldova se mănâncă mai bine ca în multe locuri înstărite din România, după cum, spre deosebire de județele din sudul imbecil al țării, unele județe din Moldova cărora le vom alătura dintr-o inexplicabilă plăcere și județele Buzău și Brăila conduc în topul promovabilității naționale la bacalaureat de ani buni.

Cu toate astea, pentru mine, când ajung la Brăila - oh, tot mai rar în ultima vreme - mă simt cu un picior în dulcea noastră Moldovă. Nu doar graiul înmuiat și discret pițigăiat al brăilenilor mă trimite într-un spațiu cultural atât de recognoscibil cum e Moldova, ci și ușoarea lor lentoare, ușoara inadecvare, poziționarea parcă voit în

răspăr față de realitate, față de materialitatea concretă a vieții de zi cu zi. Îmi veți spune: n-ai fost la Galați... stai să vezi acolo Moldova! Am fost și la Galați, e la douăzeci de kilometri de Brăila, dar infinit mai urât, de la accent și până la orașul propriu-zis, mutilat de buticuri și termopane, am cunoscut și destui gălățeni – majoritatea rămași prin București, ca noi toți, venetici – și statistic vorbind cred că sunt printre cei mai nesimțiți oameni pe care i-am cunoscut vreodată, sau mai exact cei pe care i-am cunoscut eu și cu care am interferat suficient de mult așa erau. Am cunoscut și brăileni, băieții erau fie cam pământași, fie cam cocalari – poate nu la fel de cocalari ca teleormănenii sau ca băieții de Constanța, sau ca cocalarii de la Brașov: sunt zeci de nuanțe aici, există felurite tipologii de cocalari, se pot grupa și în funcție de județ. La rigoare, cocalarii de Brăila sunt în principiu de două feluri: fie ăia din Lacul Dulce care pun câinii pe tine și te taie cu săbiile, fie băieții care atunci când au o problemă îi cheamă pe prietenii lor din Lacul Dulce să te taie cu săbiile – băieți mai fini, eventual absolvenți de studii superioare, eventual absolvenți de studii superioare la Universitatea „Dunărea de Jos din Galați”, băieți de terasă, care pe perioada facultății ard de nerăbdare să vină weekend de weekend acasă, și la fel peste vară, în vacanță, „acasă la noi, la Brăila...” și să stea la terasă cu prietenii – mai își plimbă mașina prin față pe la Primărie, mai o tură până la Lacul Sărat și-o calcă după aia înapoi ca să ajungă la timp la terasă să prindă vreun meci – în fine, am cunoscut și băieți de Brăila care poartă doar tricouri și cămăși de la Burberry, și de obicei își ridică gulerul la tricou să se vadă bine carorile. Și care conduc printre altele Porsche Panamera – cu numere, ați ghicit, de Brăila: ce poate fi mai frumos de-atât?

La Brăila sunt totuși nenumărate lucruri mai frumoase de-atât. Zice-se că fetele sunt frumoase („Păi da, moldovencele sunt în general frumoase”), alții zic că e frumoasă multiculturalitatea apusă a acestui oraș – dar ceva, ceva tot a rămas, măcar prin faptul că există o

biserică greacă, mai sunt lipoveni, musulmani, evrei – și mai nou și ceva italieni pripășiți prin Brăila, unii cu afaceri în domeniul agriculturii, alții pur și simplu veniți la bunga bunga, chemați eventual de primii, să vină și ei – c’è bunga bunga di alta qualità a Brăila, gualio’...

Am să fac un efort să depășesc zona trivialităților gratuite, deși poate n-ar trebui, pentru că abia începusem să mă simt bine. Cred că trebuie spus cu maximă responsabilitate, adică, ceva ce poate au mai spus și alții: Brăila este cel mai frumos oraș de câmpie din România. Și aici includem și oamenii, exact așa cum i-am descris, cu lentoarea și micile lor blocaje contemplative, cu Porsche Panamera și raiduri până la mall la Galați, după care înapoi pe Călărași, cu regionalismele lor (maletă, godiză, stai să-ți arat, ai încercat s-o agați...), cu piața de pește și bulevardele cu pietonal verde pe mijloc, sau cu tramvai și pietonal pe mijloc și străzi late, pustii, pe care trec foarte rar mașini, pentru că Brăila e Brăila, timpul curge duios, aerul e mai vâscos și doza de spleen e mai mare – străzi care fac loc câte unei biserici și-o îmbrățișează, așa, de jur împrejur – și case boierești grele, superbe, care flanchează străzile astea late pustii cu Dacii 1300 parcate dintotdeauna pe dreapta, cu prelată pe ele, să nu se strice, străzi și case cu adevărat frumoase, și mulți copaci, nu neapărat salcâmi, ci poate mai degrabă castani, cu vile și case cu decorații ușor excesive, ușor decadente, ocupate acum și de noua burghezie, băieții cu maletuță Burberry și studii la Dunărea de Jos, la o adică – după cum și curțile cu pavajul spart, traversate de sfori de rufe și miros de rufe splălate, pe străzile alea sărăcăcioase din vechea mahala turcească, ce dau direct în Dunăre coborând pe alocuri abrupt, cu sălcii și bozii și cete de câini blegi, complet ineficienți, lenți, foarte lenți, complet adormiți, pierduți într-o tristă deambulație printre ruinele unor clădiri industriale de acum două secole, furnale și silozuri vechi, frumoase, abandonate – deci cu atât mai frumoase – și Dunărea semi abandonată, lentă, aproape-de-niciun-folos.

Two interventions

Adrian Schiop

In Bucharest, a place like Muller Brewery would become cool rapidly. Why? First, there is pretty close to the city - is about ten minutes walk. Secondly, it has a very special atmosphere, a post-apocalyptic one, gathering an extinct history, about to be covered by nature: in the left side, an industrial building installed between the world wars, made from red-brick, similar to the Bursa de Marfuri on Piata de Flori (Bucharest); across the road, an industrial area drowned in vegetation, built in last years of socialism, but robbed in the 90's and broke, piece by piece, by the scrap metal collectors, the last shackle, but the most precarious one, of the food chain that close up the socialist industry. This zone has a special charm, because it is invaded by vegetation and it seems destroyed by a termite colony.

The intervention consisted of a graffiti depicting Terente and a set of tables with benches, made from pallets. The question that arises at this point is whether the intervention parasites/colonizes the place - or, conversely, it is stilistically fitted in the landscape. My answer is yes: graffiti is an art associated - in social

imaginary - with vacant, hidden or devastated spaces. To choose Terente, "the king of marishes", as a symbol of Brăila gives a touch of subversion and clandestinity; in the underground culture, Terente is likely to become a pop icon (being a controversial figure, bandit and killer, but also a kind of outlaw), but Panait Istrati (official symbol of Brăila) has less chances - because although kind of pop writer in his time, he became part of the local aesthetic official canon, confiscated by the city Hall festivities.

The benches, then, was assembled from wooden pallets. In a decrepit industrial space, furniture improvised from rough materials makes more sense than a new one, IKEA style; besides, the wooden pallets are also included in an industrial circuit, diverted to another functionality. Needless to say, the furniture was painted in naive / folkloric way, in the southern romanian manner.

The question is - is Brăila, a pauper city, prepared for such interventions? They find an audience? In Bucharest, aesthetic revaluation of buildings and industrial parks has been done since 2004, when hipsters organized the first parties in disused factories; in 2010 there were a boom of such parties. They appeared in a prosperous city, which came on an ascending economic curve even in the early 2000s, having therefore 15 years in that the city has enough time to change its face, to fill with glam facade and brand new constructions. In a city that fills slowly with the aseptic spaces, with no history behind, devastated and decrepit spaces inherited from socialism can be revalued aesthetically, offering an escape from the monotony of shimmering real estate.

But what we can do with vacant spaces in a city where the ruins of socialism industrial projects are over-represented? They appear to have a potential cool for locals - or their post-apocalyptic poetry is visible only for visitors? In such stagnant cities, middle class that dictates market of cool is, on the one hand, underrepresented

and - secondly - the escape occurs in places rather glamorous or that “looks like in the West” (Irish pubs, trattorias etc.). The recovery of thrash aesthetics take a later age, the time when the town became economically prosperous, with social enclaves that have passed the stage of primitive accumulation and conspicuous consumption.

On the other hand, it is undeniable that students of the college of arts that were invited to the project felt good (they danced, sang, etc.), so it seems that the suggestion of a cool space worked. Two of adolescents even commented that the area looked epic - when I asked what it was epic they told me that the place looked like in the video clips. Clearly, they understood the intent of the project.

The second project tried to revitalize tram station Albina, “by making a green instalation with plants and recycled materials” (cf. press release of the project). In this project, the intervention was minimal and consisted of some flowerpots related to rain shelter roof of the station; pots were made from plastic bottles, painted in bright colors. Tram line it actually separates two communities, discreetly antagonized - one side is a set of blocks, and the other side a street of houses. By the nature of things, in this part of the street, people are richer than those who live in apartments blocks. The intervention intention to engage the communities - but except for some teenagers, people have just preferred to watch and comment, not to help. The project has managed to stir reactions and attitudes - that the City could invest in such projects, that such projects are not expensive, that young people who vandalize urban furniture should be punished, that under communism people were forced to do voluntary work around the block and the idea was pretty good.

Not bad. But Romania really has a problem with community building and civic solidarity - statistics

revealed a very low level of social trustness; people have negative expectations from their neighbors, restricting solidarities at the family and relatives. Anthropologists say that we are part of a culture, a Mediterranean one, where the lack of solidarity outside the family sets the norm and that confusing transition from socialism to liberal capitalism made the problem of distrust even greatly, people retreating in blind individualism of family life. Only in big cities, and only in the middle class, tiny islands of civic solidarity began to emerge after 2010 (date is approximate); but those communities are not based on neighborhoods, but on hobbies like social and political issues (associations against deforestation, ecoanarchistic or leftist groups etc). So the problem is systemic; I would not be at all sure that such microscopic interventions could change something.



About Young Architects and Places in Brăila

Lucian Sandu Milea

Romania has four architecture universities: in Iași, in Cluj-Napoca, in Timișoara and in Bucharest. After the highschool graduation exam, a lot of students choose one of the above mentioned universities, they go to classes, they participate to workshops, they try to find a job in an architecture office and to integrate in the city's life. After they finish university, many of them find work in other professional domains or they emigrate in other countries in Western Europe, America, South-East Asia, Australia or the Emirates. A few of them return to their home town to find a job there. I talked with four young architects from Brăila, aged 25-35, to find out what they feel about their hometown and how they plan to involve in its development as future architects.

Grandparents' House

Cristian was born in Brăila and grew up in Ghercea neighbourhood. When he was nine, he and his family immigrated in Toronto, Canada, where he studied architecture. He then continued his studies in Sweden and Norway. The life and atmosphere of the

neighbourhood followed Cristian in his theoretical research and his career until now.

Situated on the other side of the railway, Gherceais a peripheral neighbourhood of Brăila, that makes the transition between the rural area to the urban, communist and post-communist one. Therefore, the neighbourhood conserved rural traditions and values that intertwined with new, modern aspects. After 1989, many houses were turned into small workshops. The neighbourhood had a natural evolution and is continually evolving, in spite of the poor economic background. The interior and exterior spaces are very flexible. Among the shops and the supermarkets, there are also gardens and animals. There isn't a clear line between the private and the public areas, so many public spaces are sometimes used privately. The inhabitants are interested in their community, but they also have individualist tendencies. In their struggle to attain their personal interests, they sometimes manage to cultivate a sense of community.



The former house of Cristian's grandparents

This neighbourhood hosts the former house of Cristian's grandparents, which the young architect restored for his family. In the same way that locals plant a vineyard in the public space in front of their houses, Cristian extended his architectural experiment in a space around the house

and he built, together with the rest of the community, a playground for children and a space for socialization (during the B-LAB workshop that took place in 2015). The informal atmosphere of the Gherceaneighbourhood influenced Cristian's work style in Norway. He restored a house in a semi-urban area and extended the restoration for eight other houses in the neighbourhood. The owners, a bunch of intellectuals with a passion for gardening, were more than happy to open their private properties and turn them in a big vegetable garden and a meeting place for the neighbourhood.

"On the rocks"

For Ana Maria Negru, Brăila is a beautiful city to grow up in, but it offers you very few possibilities for spending your free time, so she used to dedicate her leisure time to studying. Like in many Romanian towns in the communist period, in the town's center there was an administrative building that had a few stone benches in front. "On the rocks", like the locals called it, was the place where Ana and her teenage friends would gather to talk, drink or skate until morning.

Ana thinks that Brăila is a place with a lot of potential that is, unfortunately, neglected. The young people leave for the bigger cities and never return or return just to take over the jobs or the houses of their parents. Ana was involved in the summer university and the B-LAB workshop in 2015, both projects that seek to put to good use abandoned areas of the city. In 2016, together with other colleagues, teachers and art students, Ana participated to the restoration of the old beer factory Muller, where they organized cultural events. Ana said she might go back to Brăila one day and work as an architect because she prefers a quiet life in nature and Brăila can offer her that. But that will not happen in the near future, because she would have to make a lot of compromises and she is not that kind of person.

„On the rocks” is now surrounded by fountains, wooden benches, greenery and a cross. After the restoration, the place is visited by grandparents with their grandchildren and whole families, so the teenagers don't identify with it anymore.



Unirea

Until after highschool, for Cătălin, Brăila meant a neighbourhood that extended all the way to the park. When he grew up and started to use the skateboard, he discovered the town beyond the park. Then he left for university and the skateboard was replaced by a car; the meeting place became „The Rainbow”, on the Danube quay, near the former flour mill Violates. He and his childhood friends gathered there every time they returned to the hometown in holidays, to share new music and show off their new cars. But two years ago, they were chased away by the neighbours and the police and they moved somewhat further, on the quay near the port. In the meantime, Cătălin studied

architecture, urbanism and landscape architecture and realized that Brăila's potential is being destroyed. The city has had few useful interventions and the lack of vision and of a strategy is destroying the town's identity. He doesn't want to go back to Brăila to work because the town doesn't offer him many opportunities. His former colleagues are working in different professional



— Source: the author

— „The Rainbow”, on the Danube quay

fields and want to emigrate. Brăila's rolling mill and a big factory were closed and the town's economy is completely falling apart. Cătălin thinks that the town's catacombs network is a valuable resource, but it is not protected so a part of it disappears everytime someone builds a new building. There are, though, a few future projects for Brăila, such as the afforestation of an area between Galați and Brăila, the restoration of the buildings on Mihai Eminescu street and the transformation of the Salty Lake into a spa. There is also an idea to unite Galați and Brăila and turn them into the municipality of the south-eastern Romania. In the meantime, years have passed and the city council hasn't

decided the spot where to build the bridge over the Danube. First they wanted to build it closer to Galați, then closer to Brăila, but they haven't started building anything yet. There are also plans to build a mall in Galați and one in Brăila, but these are separate investments that are not part of a unitary strategy.

Home

Alexandra lived between Ghercea and the Old Area. She studied 12 years in the same school and she knows the way from the school to her home like the back of her hand. She used to spend her teenage years "On the Rocks" and around "The Balconies". "The Balconies" is a small space behind the Town Hall, situated between the stairs that go down to the quay and an old house with a big balcony. Nowadays, the place is still populated by teenagers. Alexandra left for university and, during the classes about the patrimony, she discovered the urbanistic history of Brăila and they way the patrimony buildings could help the town evolve, as places with a big potential. When she was in highschool, she thought she would return to her hometown and do a lot of great things for it. She is in her last year at the architecture university and is willing to work for projects in Brăila, as she did when she participated to the B-LAB workshop. But, for now, she doesn't want to move back to Brăila and work there because the town cannot offer her financial stability.



Edgelands poems

—

Angelica Stan

hala 10

cândva aici era o hală imensă
în care se producea ceva.
mașinile-unelte mergeau în
continuu. se înșurubau
se pileau și se strunjeau niște vieți
ca niște false lingouri de aur.
fără să știe, se nășteau "Șoimii
Patriei".
pe strunguri
în mirosul de metal așchiat
în vibrațiile cimentului din podea
în uleiurile sintetice amestecate.
acolo mamele
zbierau de se crăpau cerurile de
fierbeton.
dar nimic nu trecea dincolo de
zgomotul înalt
și continuu.
nici o ursitoare nu pătrundea în
"Hala 10"
neagră precum o vale a morții.
nimeni nu presimțea nimic.
acum e pământ, iarbă grasă
și niște cartoane de vagabonzi.
o haită de câini amușină viitorul.



there was a huge hall here
where something was
manufactured.
machine tools were running
continuously. they threaded
and filed and turned some lives
like false gold ingots.
unaware, "motherland's hawks"
were born.
on lathes
into the smell of chipped metal
into the vibrations of the concrete
floor
into synthetic mixed oils. there,
mothers
were screaming until
the reinforced concrete heavens
cracked.
but nothing went beyond the high
and continuous noise of machines
no fate got inside "Hall 10" black as
a valley of death.
no one foresaw anything.
now it's dirt, fat grass,
and some tramps' cardboards.
a pack of dogs sniffs the future.

zone ambigue tranzitorii

ambiguous transient zones

nebulose marginale
bariere cândva puternice
limite dizolvate în teritorii nesfârșite
spectre ale unor corpuri vagi
percepute în depărtare
fragmente/ superpozări /juxtapuneri
dislocări de aure/ filtre/ oglinzi
discontinuități / dizarmonii/ ezitări
praguri /gropi/ pliuri/ resturi /urme
ale trecerii prin stadii succesive
agonice



și totuși un animal încă viu
formându-și organele sub ochii mei:
atracție și respingere
durere/ mutilare/ cicatrizare
urât și frumos precum la o naștere
privind
posibil cândva fericit la o vârstă
anume
- ziceau ursitoarele.

nebulous edges
once powerful barriers
limits dissolved into endless
territories
spectres of some vague bodies
perceived far off
fragments / superimpositions /
juxtapositions
deployments / filters / mirrors
discontinuities / disharmonies /
hesitations
thresholds / pits / folds / debris /
traces
of a passage through successive
agonizing stages

and yet an animal still alive
forming its organs under my eyes:
attraction and rejection
pain / mutilation / scarring
beautiful and ugly as in a birth
happiness as a possibility at a certain
age
- said the fates.

humus de vise

la periferia acestui oraș s-au depus
de decenii

visele neîmplinite ale locuitorilor lui:

cerșetori și oameni cu carte

borfași și poeți

petrecăreți și curvari

neamuri de țigani de evrei de unguri
sași

lipoveni și armeni

și cine mai stie câți alții

plecați/ne-plecați

întorși/ne-întorși

chemați/ ne-chemați

dar visele lor au ramas la fel de moi

la fel de pline de sevă

precum bulbii de floare primăvara

- cu ele s-a îngroșat pământul acesta
bine tănuț

între ciment și iarbă

între pânzele norilor și pânzele de
cort

ale tarabagiilor

departe de foamea orașului

aici s-a format un humus de vise

în care dacă ai pune o sămânță
oarecare

ar răsări

peste un veac

o istorie.



humus of dreams

for decades on the city outskirts the
unfulfilled dreams of its inhabitants
were deposited:

beggars and men of letters

crooks and poets

revellers and fornicators

generations of Hungarians Gypsies
Jews Germans

Russians and Armenians

and who knows how many others

departed / not departed

returned / not returned

called / not called

inspired / not inspired

but their dreams have remained as
soft

as full of sap

as the spring flower bulbs

thickening this land

well-kept secret between cement
and grass

between the clouds' cloth and that
of the stallholders' tents

far from the city's hunger

here they formed a humus of
dreams

in which if you put any seed

a history

would spring

a hundred years from now.



List of contributors

alphabetical order

Adrian Schiop

PhD Anthropologist and Novelist

Ana Opreș

PhD Landscape Planner, Teacher Assistant at “Ion Mincu”
University of Architecture and Urban Planning, Bucharest

Andreea Acasandre

PhD Soc. Urban Planner, Teacher Assistant at “Ion Mincu”
University of Architecture and Urban Planning, Bucharest

Andreea Nicoleta Bunea

PhD Landscape Planner, Teacher Assistant at “Ion Mincu”
University of Architecture and Urban Planning, Bucharest

Angelica Stan

PhD Architect and Urbanist, Assoc.Professor at “Ion
Mincu” University of Architecture and Urban Planning,
Bucharest

Cătălina Ioniță

PhD Architect, Teacher Assistant at “Ion Mincu”
University of Architecture and Urban Planning, Bucharest

Elke Krasny

Curator, cultural theorist, and writer, Professor at the
Academy of Fine Arts Vienna, Austria

Ilinca Păun Constantinescu

PhD Architect, Teacher Assistant at “Ion Mincu”
University of Architecture and Urban Planning, Bucharest

Irina Pața

PhD Landscape Planner, Teacher Assistant at “Ion Mincu”
University of Architecture and Urban Planning, Bucharest

Lucian Sandu Milea

Architect, and Artist, Freelancer

Mihai Alexandru

PhD Urban Planner, Teacher Assistant at “Ion Mincu”
University of Architecture and Urban Planning, Bucharest

Mihai Duțescu

PhD Architect and Writer, University Lecturer at “Ion
Mincu” University of Architecture and Urban Planning,
Bucharest

Ágota Barabás

Student - Faculty of Urbanism - “Ion Mincu” University of
Architecture and Urban Planning, Bucharest

Alexandra Tornea

Student - Faculty of Architecture - “Ion Mincu” University
of Architecture and Urban Planning, Bucharest

Alexandra Mihaela Tudor

Student - Faculty of Urbanism - “Ion Mincu” University of
Architecture and Urban Planning, Bucharest

Alexandru Bunea

Student - Faculty of Urbanism - “Ion Mincu” University of
Architecture and Urban Planning, Bucharest

Ana-Maria Negru

Student - Faculty of Urbanism - “Ion Mincu” University of
Architecture and Urban Planning, Bucharest

Andreea Simion

Student - Faculty of Urbanism - “Ion Mincu” University of
Architecture and Urban Planning, Bucharest

Andreea Toma

Student - Faculty of Urbanism - “Ion Mincu” University of
Architecture and Urban Planning, Bucharest

Cristian Andrei Bădescu

Student - Faculty of Architecture - "Ion Mincu" University of Architecture and Urban Planning, Bucharest

Cristina Zaharia

Student - Faculty of Urbanism - "Ion Mincu" University of Architecture and Urban Planning, Bucharest

Doriana Gabriela Mărășoiu

Student - Faculty of Architecture - "Ion Mincu" University of Architecture and Urban Planning, Bucharest

Elena Rus

Student - Faculty of Urbanism - "Ion Mincu" University of Architecture and Urban Planning, Bucharest

Marian Alexandru Zloteanu

Student - Faculty of Architecture - "Ion Mincu" University of Architecture and Urban Planning, Bucharest

Marilena Brastaviceanu

Student - Faculty of Urbanism - "Ion Mincu" University of Architecture and Urban Planning, Bucharest

Miruna Drăghia

Student - Faculty of Urbanism - "Ion Mincu" University of Architecture and Urban Planning, Bucharest

Ștefan Sălăvăștru

Student - Faculty of Architecture - "Ion Mincu" University of Architecture and Urban Planning, Bucharest