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Around a Fortunate Series of Publications and Events

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I would like to particularly emphasize a series of events and books that are directly linked to the theme of our journal's first issue. It is perhaps not by chance that a significant number of manifestations (publications, debates, exhibitions) that took place during the last few years were looking back with increased interest upon the communist period. The almost quarter of a century that has already passed from the fall of the Iron Curtain allows a more critical and broader perspective on the story of architecture and of its authors from that period. It is this perspective that our issue would like to address.

A few essential publications for the understanding of the period have appeared in Romania during the last three years. Outstanding research in progress (or in print) by some of our most promising colleagues are yet to come out.

Following her previous research from 2003 that appeared in *Dacia 1300: My Generation* (with Tom Sandqvist; Bucharest: Simetria, 2003), Professor Ana Maria Zahariade published in 2011 an essential book: *Arhitectura în proiectul comunist. România 1944-1989* [Architecture in the Communist Project: Romania 1944-1989], (Bucharest: Simetria, 2011, 144 pages).

Carefully illustrated, the book follows a few directions, describing the evolution of the profession, as confronted and then destroyed during Communism, through its nationalization in 1952 and its progressive destruction until the 1980's. Following at the same time the development of a new rhetoric as reflected in architectural programs (dwellings, industrial and public building) and the construction of the socialist city, the author raises the difficult issue of the architects' (op)position to the regime (or its absence, for that matter), trying to understand the professional scene as it was left at the end of 1989, and the premises of its redemption after the fall of communism.

Another important publication is Alexandru Panaitescu's *De la Casa Scânteii la Casa Poporului. Patru decenii de arhitectură în București.1945-1989* [From *Casa Scânteii* to *Casa Poporului.* Four Decades of Architecture in Bucharest] (Bucharest: Simetria, 2012, 293 pages).

As stated in the title, the author places Romanian architecture during communism in between two emblematic symbols: *Casa Scânteii* and *Casa Poporului*, thus two landmarks for public architecture. The book shows how the evolution of Romanian architecture during the communist period has been largely dependent upon political, ideological and above all, propagandistic factors. Taking on the example of Bucharest, the main phases of Romanian architecture are discussed in parallel with an outline of the political and historical determining factors, essential in understanding how architects were transformed from independent professionals into employees of the state. The State's control upon architectural production thus affected all areas of construction:

from residential buildings to utilitarian and industrial structures and, of course, public architecture and urban planning.

Without aiming to provide an exhaustive presentation of the buildings in Bucharest between 1950 and 1989, the book dedicates the first part to a general overview of the history of the profession, to be followed by a look at the main categories of urban construction, through significant case-studies. Some examples (such as monuments) are regarded also in their post-communist fate. The book is accompanied by rich illustrations (plans, original drawings and photographs, as well as present-day photographs) and includes useful appendices and a concise list of architects active in Bucharest during that period, a list put together by Rodica Panaitescu.

Looking back at the resorts and ideological origins of the period, Augustin Ioan's, *Modern Architecture and the Totalitarian Project: A Romanian Case Study,* (Bucharest: Institutul Cultural Român, 2009, 226 pages) considers socialist realism from an utopian perspective, as one that attempts to re-write reality. Thus the virtual, utopian city is a double of the real one, and is conceived against the latter. The first victim of this conflictual double is of course the symbolical domain, the public one: monuments, street names, urban public spaces. The author states from the very beginning this bipolarity (in an almost clinical sense) of socialist realism: at one end, its political dimension, calibrating the ideological message and guiding the aesthetics. At the other end, its institutional dimension, manifest in the control of the artistic organisations and of the content of the art work. The author follows the trajectory of the censorship that controls the correct transmission of the work: Agitprop, the committees of the Politburo and the other intermediate filters that developed in the USSR after 1932. One of the 12 chapters is dedicated to the relation of the socialist realism to the avant-garde (seen by him as a destruction and not an accomplishment of the latter, as Boris Groys would suggest).

Further, the author elaborates on a parallel between postmodern and socialist realist aesthetics in architecture, at least (common points: its relationship to the avant-garde, to the international style of the modern, the reactivation of the classicist rhetoric). Seen from a broader perspective, of a European history of architecture, the socialist realist moment might be seen as a gap in the harmonious relationship between Eastern and Western European architecture. The book discusses, from the propaganda perspective, the relation of East European architecture with modernity (its slowing down, its reaction to the avant-garde, then its recovery of the late modern after 1954).

"Romanian Architects and the Communist Detention" – an exhibition and a series of lectures organized by Vlad Mitric Ciupe – is a project started a few years ago and supported by the Romanian Chamber of Architects. It reveals to be an ambitious and difficult one: it tackles the traumatic memory of architects imprisoned during the communist regime, along with an important part of the cultural elite of the mid 20th century. An important part of the research consisted in identifying more than 100 names of architects in detention, and interviewing those that survived prison or their families. Combining methods such as oral history and research of the political archives, the project is an essential step towards the recovery of a traumatic and still confidential, yet traumatic history of the profession during communism. We can only hope that the exhibition that took place in May at the Museum of Bucharest (Palatul Sutu) will be followed by a series of publications that would contribute to a very necessary work of memory. Exhibition and lecture, Palatul Şuţu, May 2013. Speakers: Radu Ciuceanu (Director of the National Institute for the Study of Totalitarianism, Prof. Sorin Vasilescu (UAUIM), Vlad Mitric Ciupe. Lecture, ICR, October 9th: Prof Sorin Vasilescu, Vlad Mitric Ciupe and Emanoil Mihailescu, architect, in political detention from 1958 - 1963.

Internationally, the interest for a critical re-evaluation of the period also seems to be growing, as the East European post-war modernity (in art and architecture) is becoming the object of an increasing interest among cultural historians.

The Royal College of Art, London organised in 2012 an important one-day symposium on "Designing Socialist Modernity – Perspectives on Material Culture in Post-War Eastern Europe." The symposium explored, as stated by the organisers, *the complex processes of emerging modernity in Central and Eastern Europe, including the GDR and the USSR. Within centrally planned societies, 'designing modernity' was an attempt to create a material and structural basis upon which communism could be achieved.* The event brought together a variety of approaches from design, art and architectural history, anthropology and material culture studies, spanning a wide geographical area, providing a basis for discussion on how designers, craftspeople, artists, theorists, engineers and other specialists attempted to create a material basis for modernity in socialist countries after 1945.

Sharing the interest in the recovery of Eastern Europe Modernism, the 19th edition of the Vienna Architecture Congress (Architekturzentrum Wien, november 2012) was dedicated to "Soviet Modernism 1955-1991. Unknown Stories." Starting around an exhibition with the same title, whose curator was Alexandra Wachter (Germany, Austria), the Congress gathered in a single place, for the first time outside Russia, the most important experts on this as yet little researched epoch of Soviet modernism. Architectural historians, urban planners, culture theorists and architects from the former Soviet republics together with other international experts examined in four thematic panels the areas "Capitalism versus Communism. Architecture of Modernism in East and West," "The Soviet Heritage: National or Russian?," "Local Modernisms. Centrifugal Forces in the Architecture of the USSR" and "Built Ideology" from the viewpoints of architectural history, politics and economics. As a further highlight, the Architekturzentrum Wien also hosted the "last Congress of the USSR Architects" – 25 years after the last assembly of the Union of Architects of the USSR in Moscow in 1987.

Involving some of the researchers, critics and architects present in the Vienna Congress, the cultural center SALT Istanbul organized in 2013 the exhibition "Trespassing Modernities" (May 8- August 11, 2013, SALT Galata - http://www.saltonline.org/en/524), and the conference on "Postwar Soviet Architecture." Curators & organisers: Georg Schöllhammer with Ruben Arevshatyan. Researchers: Oleksandr Burlaka, Boris Chukhovich, Olga Kazakova, Mari Laanemets, Samat Mambetshaev, Oleksiy Radynski, Yuliya Sorokina, Nano Zazanashvili.

As stated by the organizers, focusing on the immediate period after the death of Stalin in 1953, and the experiments in local architecture in various regions of the former USSR, the conference attempted to correct the one-dimensional Western view on Modernism and to demonstrate a Parallel Modernity made up of unique masterpieces, megalomaniacal housing structures and approaches to urban planning that imagined cities and public spaces as metaphor for socialist ideas for contemporary and future life.

The exhibition Tresspassing Modernities was dedicated to the legacy of post-war Soviet architecture. Although not very large, built as an artistic installation, the exhibition followed a few topics meant to illustrate an architectural landscape afflicted by inner contradictions. The 1960 knew a critical countermove to the legacy of Late Modernism, turning to a recovery of the historical town as a reference for the search of a regional (or national) identity. Curiously, this regional turn paralleled (with a different ideology) the international turn towards context and critical regionalism. This moment was followed in the 1970 by a return to the International Style, chosen by the leading modernist architects of the country. Large-scale urban extension projects

were built throughout the Union, while in the same turn the public space was being filled with monuments depicting Soviet ideology. This was followed at the end of the 70s by a postmodernist nationalistic turn (regional versus Soviet architecture) and later by a critical moment of the Paper Architecture of the Perestroika moment.

The 2013 edition of the Riga - Tallinn Architecture Biennale (4-9 September, 2013) under the theme "Recycling Socialism" explored the modernist and socialist architecture from the 1960s to the 1980s. As a part of the Biennale, the Curators' Exhibition invited the participants to offer a new interpretation of a Soviet-era building in Tallinn, aiming at opening a dialogue between modernist ideas and the contemporary urban space.

On a smaller scale, the conference organised in Prague by the National Heritage Institute (June 2013) focused on the rehabilitation of the socialist era architecture, under the theme "Architecture with a Red Star without Stigmas and Prejudices."

The Neue Gesellschaft für Bildende Kunst, Berlin recently (10 August – 1 September 2013) hosted the exhibition "Holiday After the Fall - Transformation of Socialist Holiday Resorts on the Adriatic Coast of Croatia." The exhibition offered a genealogy of large-scale tourist resorts on the Adriatic coast, including their physic and economic transformations after the des-integration of former Yugoslavia, the end of socialist self-management and the beginning of privatisation. The exhibition is one of the outcomes of a larger research project on socialist resort architecture, together with the book *Urlaub nach dem Fall. Geschichte und Transformation sozialistischer Ferienarchitekturen* [Holidays after the Fall. Seaside Architecture and Urbanism in Bulgaria and Croatia], edited by Michael Zinganel, Elke Beyer, and Anke Hagemann, authors: Elke Beyer, Anke Hagemann, Norbert Mappes-Niediek, Maroje Mrduljaš, and Michael Zinganel (Berlin: Jovis Verlag, 2013, 272 pages).

The book traces the various architectural and urban planning strategies that have been pursued furthering order to create and develop, beginning with the mid 1950s, modern holiday destinations. It looks at the architecture of the Late modernism as it has been promoted by the social tourism (resorts of sometimes remarkable architectural quality) and its fate in the aftermath of the fall of Communism.

Forthcoming Events

Tallinn, Estonia

'Socialist and Post-Socialist Urbanizations: Architecture, Land and Property Rights'.

International conference that will take place in May 2014 at the Urban Studies Faculty of Architecture, Estonian Academy of Arts in Tallinn, Estonia. The conference aims at engaging with the (still) ambiguous definition of post-socialism (understood as a societal condition after 1989) in its various contexts: Soviet, Czechoslovakian, Yugoslavian, Chinese and Vietnamese. According to the organisers, the conference directly addresses concepts such as socialism and post-socialism as well as ongoing debates of comparative urbanism in different geographical contexts.

Turin, Italy

The European Architectural History Network third international meeting that will take place in Turin, Italy - June 19-21 2014 dedicates one of its sessions to Ideological Equality: Women Architects in Socialist Europe (http://www.eahn2014.polito.it/singoli/Pepchinski.pdf). The session addresses feminist approaches to architectural history and the very specific context of gender issues in Eastern Europe.

Miscellanea Events – Romania 2013

Publications and Exhibitions

As the architecture aficionados are already used to, the Zeppelin Association and editor of the Magazine have continued throughout the 2013 the series of **Zeppelin Evenings and debates** (in the main Aula of the Central University Library, as from 2011), an open platform proposing meetings with architects, designers and artists from all over the world. Another important part of the cultural mission of the Association is their exhibition programs, among which I would mention the most recent:

Recuperări [Recoveries] at the Casa Mincu (OAR, 19 Pictor Verona str.) – October 16th through November 16th. Grouped around a few main themes, such as the recycling of the urban modest architecture, the recovery of the post-industrial buildings and their turning into independent art centers and ephemeral interventions, the exhibition speaks about recovery as not only a trendy and cool direction in contemporary design, but primarily about its ethical dimension as a method.

Dincolo de oraş [Beyond the City], publication and exhibition at the National Museum of Contemporary Art (MNAC), September 25th through October 25th, aimed at looking at the radical, sometimes violent transformations of the Romanian countryside and rural landscape. Ştefan Ghenciulescu, editor in chief and co-curator speaks about the contradictions these changes involve, "from the villages in the Western Carpathians to the new suburbs around big cities, from rehabilitations and restorations that refer not only to architecture, all the way to new houses located in natural environments or built sensibly, from master carpenters and ironsmiths to eco farm vegetables sold on Facebook. Their desire for modernisation is a legitimate one, and the exaggerations of new buildings, as well as the rejection of old ones can be understood if we consider their need for compensation and the frustrations of a society which, on the one hand, is still building its identity based on a mythical rural character, and on the other, still uses the term 'peasant' in a derogatory way.
How can we reach a balance between the preservation of cultural assets and the inevitable development? How can we navigate between the economic potential, the resistance against the tidal wave of recent built horrors, the ever more potent ethno kitsch, as well as nostalgia for times gone by and the populist and touristic reinvention of the past?" (Published in Zeppelin no. 117 / Sept. 2013).

In a different register, the transformations of the rural is also the theme of the album and project **Mândrie şi beton [Pride and Concrete]** (authors Petruţ Călinescu and Ioana Hodoiu, 2013), launched in October at one of the Portico's Thursdays, series of events organized by the Bucharest branch of the Romanian Chamber of Architects (OAR Bucureşti, Academiei 18-20). The project tells the stories of the migrant workers commuting between France and Romania from Ţara Oaşului and Maramureş, and the transformation occurring in the traditional villages, now left behind by this massive migration abroad, in search for work.

Oraşul posibil. In(ter)venţii în spaţiul urban postcomunist [The Would-be City. In(ter)
ventions in the post-communist urban space] (Cluj: Ed. Tact, 2012, 295 pages) is a volume
coordinated by our colleagues Daniela Calciu and Elena Stoian started from a project conducted
by the PlusMinus association (based in Cluj) in 2011 and centered on Galaţi. The project
consisted of a competition for urban projects and essays that were further developed in small scale
urban interventions and experiments. The book was awarded the 3rd Prize for the Most Beautiful
Books in Romania, 2013.

The impressive monographic volume **Johann Schlatter: cultură occidentală şi arhitectură
românească (1831-1866)** [Johann Schlatter: Western Culture and Romanian Architecture
(1831-1866)] (Bucharest: Ed. Simetria, 2013, 250 pages) a book awarded with the Prize for
the 'Architectural Book' Section of the Annual of Architecture, Bucharest), authored by our
colleague and architectural historian Horia Moldovan considers the evolution of architecture in
Wallachia through the lenses of Schlatter's practice. Working in Romania for over two decades,
the Swiss architect had a major impact on the modernization of local architecture. With
extreme accuracy and great erudition, the author starts the inquiry from Schlatter's personal
book of sketches and the vast archives of his drawings. The volume is richly illustrated with
original drawings, and a very useful index of the architects contemporary with Schlatter. The
book was awarded the First Prize at the Annual of Architecture organized by the Bucharest
Chamber of Architects, 2013.

Augustin Ioan, **Arhitectura memoriei: noua frontieră a spaţiului sacru** [The Architecture
of Memory. New Frontier for the Sacred Space] (Bucharest: IglooMedia, 2013, 135 pages).
The author addresses the question of memory and its embodiment in the sacred architecture,
memorials and monuments as expressions of the public space. Memory is understood primarily as
an instrument of anticipating to what extent future architecture could incorporate and continue
tradition. The book was launched at the MNAC (National Museum of Contemporary Art) and
presented with the installation Utopia /Dystopia, whose curator was Ruxandra Balaci, consisting
of three videos (Augustin Ioan's competition entry for the National Orthodox Cathedral, Dorin
Stefan's entry for the Taiwan Tower competition and the 1992 film Architecture and Power -
Nicolae Mărgineanu and Augustin Ioan).

An editorial event worth mentioning is the translation into Romanian (by Magda Teodorescu) of
the now classical **Collage City**, by Colin Rowe and Fred Koetter (Ion Mincu, 2013), a very useful
reading for our students in architecture and for anyone interested in the theories and discourses
about architecture and the city. The volume will be launched at the UAUIM, exhibition hall, on
November 14th.

Conferences & Events

Li=ke every year, the Bucharest Branch of the Romanian Chamber of Architects organized in May-June the Bucharest Architecture Annual. This year the theme of the Annual was "GLOCAL: Local-Global," and included, besides the exhibition and competition of projects (grouped around a few topics: socio-cultural buildings, dwellings, interior design, object design, heritage conservation, urban project, student diplomas, photography, drawing and books) a series of lectures and debates involving professionals and cultural personalities, workshops and seminars on connected themes. An event worth mentioning is the workshop called Playing Architecture, around the cultural project developed by the Association *De-a Arhitectura* and aiming at raising awareness about the built environment among children (7-10 years).

The UAUIM (Ion Mincu University of Architecture and Urban Planning) and DK Events organized in May (15-17) this year the second edition of the *Romanian Convention of Architecture and Design* (ROCAD). The event took place, like the previous edition, at the Palace of the Parliament/House of the People. It involved prominent personalities from the international architectural scene, such as Phil Ayres (Denmark), Miguel Baudizzone (Argentina), Peter Blundell Jones (UK), Dan Sergiu Hanganu (Canada), Masayuki Kurokawa, Daniel Libeskind (USA), Marvin Malecha (USA), Dominique Perrault (France), Brian Spencer (USA), Benedetta Tagliabue (Spain), Keisuko Toyoda (Japan), Arturo Vittori (Italy), Andreas Vogler (Switzerland). The debates, grouped around the theme "Experiences and competitions in architecture" were accompanied by two exhibitions: "The Heritage of Frank Lloyd Wright" – curator: arch. Brian Spencer (USA) and "From Pyramids to Spacecrafts" – curators: Andreas Vogler (Switzerland) and Arturo Vittori (Italy). One of the highlights of the event was awarding the Honorary Doctorate to the international star architects Daniel Libeskind and Dominique Perrault.

Eastcentric Triennale. Bucharest, 10-27 October 2013 (Palatul Stirbey and Palatul Mogosoaia) Organized by the Arhitext Foundation, the Triennial is dedicated to East and Central European Architecture and critique. Under the 2013 theme "Trans(ap)parencies," the Triennial included several manifestations: an essay competition, a series of lectures and debates involving important personalities for the recent architectural debate, and the East Centric Arhitext Awards. Being curated by critical theorist and poet Bogdan Ghiu, the Trans(ap)parency is defined not as "a concept, but as an instrument of political and epistemic visualization of architecture and by architecture. Such as a mobile camera, it offers, precisely by its instability, the possibility of multiple views on the architectural processes from the Eastern, South-Eastern and Central Europe, articulating (trans-architecturally, in a manner to make things less opaque) architecture as an implicit expression of political drives, from which the increasingly higher trans-aesthetic and meta-technical responsibilities of architects also derive."

A highlight of the Triennial was the presence and lecture delivered by the famous phenomenologist and Finnish architect Juhani Pallasmaa, who also acted as president of the jury for the essay competition.