

## NO MEANS, NO MEANING OR HERITAGE VERSUS POLITICS IN ROMANIA

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**Abstract:** The article presents some effects of the discrepancy between the goals set by politics in Romania with regard to the preservation of the built cultural heritage and its real situation.

The text begins by approaching the built protected areas in Bucharest, enforced on a by far smaller area than the actual, present and future cultural resource, as this has been identified and delineated by the substantiation studies developed in 1997-1998. For instance, a rather large fragment of urban tissue in the North-West, beyond the Berzei and Buzzești streets, has been simply left out from the perimeter protected by the specific master plan, adopted to this purpose by the city council in 2000. The reason for basically ignoring these cultural values was already comprised in the general master plan, adopted the same year, and unfortunately belongs to those of its provisions that have been carried out. It may be of interest that the turning of the two mentioned streets into a freeway that passes the town centre has been done despite a supplementary study from 2006 that, on its turn, has discouraged the given urban planning operation. For reasons of a misunderstood urban development also the south-eastern part of Bucharest has been sacrificed, even if there, according to a recent mapping, the cultural resource of both properties and urban tissue could be still saved from destruction – if there was genuine political will to this end.

**Rezumat:** Articolul prezintă câteva efecte ale discrepanței dintre țelurile stabilite de politica din România cu privire la prezervarea patrimoniului cultural construit și starea de fapt reală.

În acest sens este abordat pentru început cazul zonelor construite protejate din București, instituite pe o parte sensibil mai redusă a orașului decât cea care încorporează resursa culturală, actuală și viitoare, așa cum a fost aceasta identificată și delimitată prin studiile de fundamentare din perioada 1997-1998. Astfel, de exemplu, o porțiune de țesut urban consistentă, situată la nord-vest de străzile Buzzești și Berzei, a fost pur și simplu eliminată din perimetrul protejat prin planul urbanistic zonal adoptat de consiliul local în anul 2000. Motivul pentru care aceste valori culturale au fost pur și simplu ignorate se găsește în planul urbanistic general al Bucureștiului adoptat în același an și se numără, din păcate, printre prevederile care au fost transpuse în realitate. Nu este lipsit de interes faptul că transformarea celor două străzi menționate într-o autostradă care străbate zona centrală a orașului s-a realizat în ciuda unui studiu de fundamentare suplimentar care, în anul 2006, a dezavuat direct operațiunea urbanistică în cauză. Pe altarul aceleiași gen de dezvoltare urbană greșit înțeleasă a fost sacrificată și resursa culturală din

sud-estul orașului, parte în care, însă, după cum o dovedește o cartare recentă, resursa culturală manifestă atât la scara imobilelor, cât și la scara urbană încă ar mai putea fi salvată de la distrugerea totală – dacă ar exista o voință politică reală în acest sens.

The following pages are about the discrepancies between the goals set by Romanian politics for the preservation of the built cultural heritage and its real condition. The exhibits illustrate, for instance, how the latter is being simply denied, despite all evidence, in favour of a misinterpreted urban development, as well the inconsistency of the supposed most powerful protection instrument i.e. the legal status of the historical monument. One major cause for such realities is the lack of any means which is demonstrated by statistics. Another reason which, in the end, leaves any preservation gesture without meaning is the fact that politics not only fails in fulfilling its own mission, but also tends to involve itself in the scientific reasoning and decisions regarding the area. As a matter of fact, instead of contributing to a more efficient employment of the contemporary use values of the cultural resource for the benefit of the many, politics tends to influence the cultural evaluation process itself, even when it comes to candidates for the World Heritage List.

### *Exhibit A or*

### *The (Un)Protected Areas of Bucharest*

Many historical centres of towns and villages in Romania have a recent deeply traumatic past. Clear intents to destroy these have been enforced already in 1952, when the communist party has adopted the so-called decisions regarding the “socialist building and rebuilding” of the towns,<sup>1</sup> including the capital one, Bucharest<sup>2</sup>. Hence, by the late ‘70s, the communist government, aiming to develop industry but also to impose its own interpretation of history, in order to leave long lasting imprints, has promoted the reshaping of the traditional cores of too many settlements.<sup>3</sup> As a natural consequence, after the regime change of 1989, experts spared no effort to widely introduce the concept

<sup>1</sup> Curinschi Vorona 1981, p. 313.

<sup>2</sup> Giurescu 1966, p. 243.

<sup>3</sup> A clear sketch of the entire process and its regrettable results is to be found in Giurescu 1989.

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