Elisabeth and the Chocolate Factory

ausgeführt zum Zwecke der Erlangung des akademischen Grades
eines Diplom-Ingenieurin
unter der Leitung

William Alsop

E253 Institut für Architektur und Entwerfen

ingereicht an der Technischen Universität Wien
Fakultät für Architektur und Raumplanung
von
Iulia Danila
1128575

Wien, am 31. März 2014
Elisabeth and the Chocolate Factory is a project that tells the story of a potential evolution happening over a period of about 15 years in a neighbourhood of central Bucharest. In the actual context of the city this story might seem a fairytale; only time will prove its credibility. It all starts small and under the snowball effect it conquers first the entire surrounding area and then, little by little, the city. Elisabeth and the Chocolate Factory is about change and improvement in the life of the city.


Special thanks:

To everybody that has ever helped me.
To my dearest Ada.
To Sabina, Taja and Srdjan.

To the kindest and most inspiring person I have ever met in the University, Professor William Alsop.

Thank you.
That long and beautiful autumn we spent strolling together through Bucharest. I am one of the few people of Bucharest that knows and loves the city. We left close to the sunset searching for pathless streets pausing in front of some houses, discovering new neighbourhoods that grew over night, finding loved corners again, small forgotten public gardens and lonely pathways with climbing roses and morning glory. Two weeks we strolled through Cotroceni. We chose houses we would want to live in, we followed how the plane-trees disappear on a particular street only to reappear at the other end of the neighbourhood, we were looking at how the crude green is dimming and day after day the yellow and orange up to bright red tones barged in. …

I thought that, after she had been away from Bucharest for so many years and after she had discovered Italy, the city would weigh on her and would always remind her of the places she had visited. But she learned to love Bucharest just like me. She discovered it every day falling in love with the melancholy of its sunsets and the unreal clarity of its sky, with its old rain-washed side-walks on which steps sound so sad and lonely. There are so many tones of purple and grey on some streets and the carriage horse steps sound so clear that your heart shrinks at the thought that this islands of melancholy and silence might one day die drowned by the great river.

Mircea Eliade¹
Bucharest’s charms shine on those who get to know it. It is curious how Eliade foresaw the sad future of his beloved city, but there are still some silent lonely corners, painted by the autumn light in Bucharest. And even if there were all gone but for one we should still be able to love this city.
I chose Bucharest for my last project in the university because of a kind of responsibility and nostalgia I felt I had for the city I most love. And yes love sounds inappropriate in an academic paper written by a future architect but to be able to make people fall in love with the places they live in, is that not what our work is about? Bucharest used to be an adored city inhabited by joyful people that enjoyed the great number of cafés, restaurants, theatres, cinemas, gardens and the fervent street life.² Before the imposition of the communist regime in the country the capital city was a cocktail of tastes, sounds, colours with a heart beating in as many different rhythms as there were people. But I will come back to that later, let me tell you a little about Bucharest’s history.

A first look at today’s Bucharest reveals a first paradox, although it bears a long history the city has gradually erased most of its past traces and shows a rather newer appearance. Whether by natural causes (earthquakes, fires), wars or planned urban developments, the city seems to have little interest in preserving the past.
The first historical acknowledgement goes back to 1459 as the capital of the Romanian country under the reign of Vlad the Impaler, the man that inspired Bram Stoker’s vampire character Count Dracula in the 1897 novel *Dracula*.

But to put aside this dark powerful meaning I have to explain that Bucharest was originally a village that grew due to its location and importance in the commercial trade in this side of Europe.

The name of this village is said to come from *Bucur*, a shepard (in other descriptions fisher, trader or boyer). This name has a positive meaning as in the Romanian language, Bucur comes from the word *bucurie*, meaning *joy* in English. **Bucharest the city of joy.**
There is no other city that has ever changed so many times since its beginnings until today as Bucharest.
What brings most pride to Romanians is the comparison of Bucharest to Paris. At the beginning of the XX century foreign travellers have complimented Bucharest with the name of Little Paris. The truth is that this almost Balkan city had little in common with the capital of France. Except for the state representative buildings build by French architects or by their disciples in eclectic or neoclassical style that enriched Bucharest with this Parisian air, the city kept its village like look. Until the XIX century, with few exceptions, the houses did not pass the height of the ground floor.⁴

For centuries the city was actually a cumulus of little villages, each gathered around a church (mahalale). Bucharest, situated on what used to be a secular forest, was surrounded by gardens, orchards and vineyards that used to go deep into the heart of the city.

The future evolution Bucharest had in the communist era is considered a turnover as the hardcore characteristic of the people living there, this connection to the ground through their gardens was not just interrupted but dramatically stopped.

People of Bucharest had received a change in their genes; the free specie had changed to a socialist apartment “imprisoned” specie.
Bucharest in 1927
In his book, *Romania.Borderland of Europe* Lucian Boia makes a fine observation about the way the city evolved: *Bucharest developed against its past* and this might help us understand the visible roughness of its inhabitants.

This wasn’t though always the matter. Before the urban pains communist urbanism provoked, the city was enjoyed and the people of Bucharest, characterized as joyful and polite, independent of their social status. It is important to mention that the upper class was deeply influenced by the French culture (so much that French was commonly spoken in the houses). This represents another paradox as the Romanian royal family was of German descend; we have to notice that the Latinity of the Romanians weights more. Even though the French culture had a great influence, it could have never profoundly changed the Romanian way of living. To better understand this one should take a closer look at the traditional way of eating.

*Nothing is more revealing to a man’s soul than what he eats.*

French foods were served in restaurants or in the houses of the aristocrats but local cuisine inspired by the Balkan, Turkish or Greek cuisine were not dismissed. The path the dwellers of Bucharest chose to approach the German culture was that of drinking; there were many beer gardens and wine was usually preferred as a *spritz* and not plain how the French drink it. Maybe the most interesting example of way Bucharest blended western influence with oriental heritage were the pastry shops were a great multitude of tastes could be found.
Sunday on Queen Elisabeth Boulevard in 1941.
BUCHAREST WAS AN ANIMATED AND HAPPY CITY.

And as cosmopolitan as it could have been. ⁸

It was developing and growing in square meters (30 by the middle of the XIXth century) and population (it reached one million inhabitants during the second World War). The city had lost part of its village look, it resembled a modern city with boulevards and imposing buildings yet somehow it managed to keep its charming contradictions; Bucharest the city of contrasts.

Victory Avenue in the late 1920s.⁹
The most radical change happened during the communist regime.

The city tripled in size, occupying and destroying the surrounding villages and the population doubled in 50 years (by the 1990s Bucharest reached two million people).

The communist party, represented by the ruling family, wanted to create *the new man*, the duo had made it their credo to destroy the remaining bourgeois look of Bucharest. Scared by the 1977 earthquake Ceausescu decided he needed an indestructible house and so the plans for the *People's House* started. In order to build it a third of Bucharest was demolished between 1984 and 1986. Thousands of people were evacuated and a hill was cut off.

The second biggest building in the world arose. Definitely the most unneeded. **Bucharest the city of disaster.**
The demolishing of Uranus Neighbourhood, late 1980s
Socialism Victory Boulevard 1990s. Peoples House in the background
In post-communism Bucharest the lack of urban rules and the remaining communist short-fall of love for the city is changing the city even more, almost entirely in a wrongful matter.

Citizens lost their civic sensibility and common sense. Bucharest the city of more disaster.
View of Bucharest 2013
I have to be honest and admit that the site I chose for my project was aleatory. I was looking at the map of Bucharest and as an architecture student my mind panicked at the thought of how many changes should be made in the city I most love. Nobody has the explanation for the pain Bucharest is going through but some think about and try to make things better. And because there is so much to do in order to help the city I had to decide for my project on a place and propose my solution. I put my finger on a block in the middle of the city, on the first boulevard cut in Bucharest, Queen Elisabeth. And there is were it all began.
At the end the last half of the XIXth century under the reign of Romania’s first king, Karl I, Bucharest knew its first and most beautiful transformations.

As I have said before Bucharest used to be a garden like city that changed so much it was able to compare it to Paris.

The first boulevards named after the royal couple, Karl and Elisabeth represented the first East-West axis cut during this time, perpendicular to the historic Victory Avenue (Mogosoaia Wood-Paved Road).

Being older as the Queen Elisabeth boulevard, the most important buildings in Bucharest were situated on Victory Avenue, the Royal Palace, the National Theatre, the Romanian Academy, Romanian Athenée, Karl I Foundation, National Bank, CEC Palace, Post Palace, Telephone Palace, Justice Palace, Medicine University and Law University, Athenée Palace Hotel and at the cross between Victory Avenue and Queen Elisabeth boulevard the imposing Military Circle building. The National Archive building, the City hall and the city’s most important park, Cismigiu, are found to Queen Elisabeth boulevard.

The block I have aleatory chosen is situated between the Military Circle and Cismigiu Hotel. On the other side of the boulevard facing my chosen block is the fifth district hall because Bucharest, with its six districts has six small mayors each with his smaller mayors house and one general mayor with his bigger house. This part of the boulevard was dearly called Broadway or the Romanian Hollywood¹³, as not less that nine cinemas were here five of which still exist; the Palace Hotel (today Cismigiu), Capitol, Regal, Trianon, Eforia, Voiculescu, Odeon, Vlaicu, the Military Circle cinema.

By 1933 there were 50 cimenas in Bucharest showing seven representations a day meaning roughly that every fouth day a citizen of Bucharest could go to the movies.¹⁴

The other street delimiting my block, which I am going to call ex nunc Elisabeth, was known as Sarindar Street, after the Sarindar church, demolished in order to build the Military Circle.

The Sarindar Street, called today Constantin Mille, in honour of the Romanian journalist used to be one of the most fervent places in the city as it was the place were two of the most important newspapers in Bucharest were; Adevarul (truth) Palace a left wing newspaper and Universul Palace, representing the right wing.
Bucharest Broadway in the 1940s\textsuperscript{15}
Looking at Bucharest now it is hard to imagine the cosmopolitan lifestyle that used to run through it’s veins.

Maybe even impossible.

The last testimonies remaining are the hurt walls, empty palaces, the same old roofs.

Unrecognisable at first look but unforgettable after a deeper approach to it. Nobody can dispute the magic of ruins and the beauty found in death.
Bucharest 2013. View from the Fifth District Hall courtyard. On the right side the Telephone Palace¹⁶
I hope my introduction has not been too hefty, forgive me but I had to try to make visible the reasons why I am interested in Bucharest.

Now that you got a feeling of my interest, to cut the long story short

I will simply explain my project.
The project called, *Elisabeth and the Chocolate Factory* is actually a story; the story about the evolution of life in a neighbourhood in central Bucharest using architecture tools, plans, 3ds, perspective images, etc.

As you probably already guessed *Elisabeth* refers to the story of the development of the Elisabeth block and its close surroundings.

The Chocolate Factory part I will keep a secret until the end to increase the mystery; I can only disclose that it does have something to do with chocolate.

Having said that I can start. In the attached fan you will be able to follow a resume of the evolution of the project which I will expand on further on in the book.
here is how the story begins...

follow the evolution summary fan
As most beginnings in life this beginning was not able to sense the great impact it would have on the city and its people.

Further on I feel compelled to add that any resemblance between the characters of this story and real persons is or is not true.
One fall at the beginning of the second decade of the XXIst century one very famous Romanian film director, international award winning director (Cannes, Berlin, Oscars, etc.) tried and succeed in convincing one very rich and infamous Romanian politician to invest in the refurbishment of an old cinema building on Queen Elisabeth boulevard.

Nobody was more surprised of this success as the very famous director. It was luck they thought and did not spend much time thinking about it. In less than a year the cinema building had been renewed and was functioning.

Again luck they thought was the best explanation for what happened next. A very famous coffee man in Bucharest, maybe the most famous, he had been the shop boy of a very famous but sadly dead Armenian coffee man in the 40s and had written a book about goods trade during the communist era went one day to this cinema.

He had had a very bad day because he tried to expand his coffee shop and make a deal with this very famous Romanian thinker, writer and editor that had opened a book shop at the ground floor of the newly refurbished Cismigiu Hotel. Sadly the editor had already made his deal with a very famous Italian coffee provider and this broke the Romanian coffee man’s heart. As I was saying, he went in the cinema, he does not recall why exactly, he did not actually want to see any film.

The very famous movie director was also there and I think I do not have to explain that the two of them started a business together. And so it started. The first cinema in Bucharest with an always open coffee shop in front.
The next year other very famous and not so famous people of Bucharest stared buying buildings in Elisabeth.

The cinemas got refurbished and following the story of success each cinema owner got associated with, in order as follows, a wine seller, a whiskey seller and there was a tough silent war which went on for almost one year between a gallery owner and a cigar dealer.

In the end they made truce and shared the space as the cigar dealer was Cuban and had fantastic smuggling stories and the gallery did now need so much space anyway. And after all it was much more interesting to come to a gallery that is under a cinema, sharing space with illegal cigar dealers.
By the end of the third year since it all began four cinema buildings had been successfully refurbished and an unbelievable community was created around this buildings.

It was then that they thought to dream big.

They went to an architect and asked for a master plan of the block and its surroundings as they feared that maybe the city representatives might have plans that would interfere with theirs.

It was then when the MICRoMASTER plan was born.
existing
The architect’s proposal was challenging and so interesting that they could not have said no to it.

First it proposed to cut courtyards into the thick build tissue of Elisabeth following the model of the very successful Hackesche Höfe in Berlin. This would bring life and excitement into the block. Further on the architect proposed the renewing of the old Adevarul Palace building that bared beautiful details, golden wall paintings and beautiful spaces.

The other existing buildings on the Constantin Mille street were to be repaired and improved. Some new residential spaces for student, middle wage and very rich people were also proposed.

But what was the greatest most ground-breaking proposal was that of the farmer’s market in the fifth district city halls courtyard. They took a chance on the idea of revitalization through the multitude of people the market would bring together.

After all Bucharest is a city surrounded by fertile land and people without jobs. Agriculture was the solution they were looking for.
existing functions
MICRoMASTERplan proposal
It goes without saying it was a real success.

The market managed to bring fresh products to the city and financial improvement in the life of the farmers that had now the chance to sell in the centre of the city every day.
The only catch was that they had to pay a small to the city hall, used to improve the pavement and the garden near the farmer’s market.

The existing trees were preserved and terraces were created; they became little stages for the restaurants that opened there.
View of the Farmer's Market
Autumn 2017
Following the MICRo-MASTERplan in less than five years the buildings in Elisabeth were done.

A lot of new restaurants opened there giving the area the nickname of *Food HQ* of Bucharest.
View over the construction works on Elisabeth Autumn 2017
Tuesday morning in the Cinema Courtyard
Late Fall 2019
In the MICRoMASTERplan spaces for a gastronomic institute were proposed. It was the idea of one of the cinema owners, a very famous international film director that came once to the Bucharest Film festival, fell in love with the city and a Romanian and decided to stay.

What he enjoyed from the beginning in the city was that everything seemed cheap to him, he was after all a very famous international movie director. So it was him that got a little bored with the directing and thought to make a carrier change later in life and study to become a cook. It explains why he proposed the idea of a gastronomic institute.

It would have been the only one in this side of Europe and he would also study there. They brought the best cooks in the world to teach there. It was a success.
The plan developed with the help of the recent created Elisabeth community. Never before have the people of Bucharest been asked to participate in the life of the city. A brighter sky appeared over the city.

To achieve the urban diversity they were longing for, the framework scheme of the MICRoMASTERplan was developed by different architecture offices in the city and also international. Everybody wanted to be a part of it.

The rich mix of activities and architecture design, people, tastes, colours and rhythms put Elisabeth on the map. And the involvement of the community made them care about and identify with the project and the city.

Fresh breeze on Bucharest.
Afternoon by the Blue Moon  2021
To go back to this film festival I mentioned earlier.

After all five cinema houses in Elisabeth were up and running, the owners, mostly famous Romanian film directors decided it would be time to put Bucharest on the international film map.

Romanian films were after all very much appraised at international film festivals. And so it started this idea of the Bucharest Film Festival.

All cinemas in the city, without exception, participated in the festival. And from the first year a flood of movie enthusiasts came from all over the world to be part in this spectacle of people, films, food, drinks and cigars.
And now to go back to the MICRoMASTERplan, mix use of space was the key to the success of it.

Gastronomic institute, office spaces, re-tail, living, a pool, a beach and a green house overlooking everything, libraries, moonlight roof top and garden cinemas and dancing, yoga and other body related activity spaces were designed.

It managed to regenerate the heart of the city and from the tired and old Bucharest arose the new, happy and shiny, well not Little Paris, more like Little Sobo. The comparison brought pride to the Elizabethans of Bucharest.
Not anticipate but respond... \(^{17}\)
Sunset seen from the Greenhouse
Summer 2022
Everything was going smoothly...

Until one day when the city decided it was finally time to knock down the wrongfully build extension on the Telephone Palace, that was awaiting for the first earthquake to fall and build on that plot a horrible office building. Little over eight years have passed and a strong community has developed in and around Elisabeth.

It was what made possible to stop this city project.
People managed to inform the rest of Bucharest and raise awareness to this problem through huge marches for liberty of choice and right to an opinion for the local community through the centre of the city.

Up to 30 thousand people gathered, marched and blocked streets. It was enough to scare the officials into dropping down the horrible office building project. So they asked: What would you rather have instead?

The answer came unanimously: a market building. The farmers market project was going so well that it became a kind of tradition for instance for Bucharest people to buy there fresh products every weekend. And farmers from all over the country were coming there too. It became a little too crowded and that is was the community felt the need for a bigger market.

Their desire became reality and so after ten years since the beginning of it all people have managed to create a community with an important input in the city’s decision making process.

By now Elisabeth had been cured, it was well and thriving, the district hall farmer’s market with the garden and its terraces were working all wonderfully, they even created a small cinema courtyard on the other side of Corso cinema to watch movies outside in summer. And they brought life back to the Military Circles terrace. A redesign of the water fountain was necessary and people even managed to bring back the old telescope that was sitting there in the 30s and 40s.

The Constantin Mille street had been closed to cars and trees were planted in the middle of the street. The space became appealing to people wanting to sell used items and so a flea market was installed there; each Thursday evenings and weekends mornings.
View of the National Theatre, Telephone Palace and Otetelesanu Garden in 1935. ¹⁸ This photo inspired the *Elizabethans* to ask for an oval market plan.
Otetelesanu Garden in 1935. The *Elizabethans* were dreaming to revive this cultural hot spot of the 1930s.
Flea Market on Mille Street
Summer 2023
Mille Street
in the midnight
2022
By the end of the tenth year Elisabeth had changed so much it was unrecognisable and even the city changed under the influence of this central part.

Everybody felt it was time for another conquest. The community had its eyes set on the empty plot in front of the newly inaugurated market buildings. They once again went to an architect.

Together they found out that on the exact same spot the chocolate deposit of Maria Chocolate Factory’s Victory Avenue shops were.

This news came as a sign to them because they were thinking about expanding on this branch of the gastronomic area, namely the pastry and maître chocolatier field.
First of all the building had to continue the visual axis created through Elisabeth and the district hall building. It had to be able to connect the chocolate factory to Elisabeth and the market.

Then the building had to make the differentiation between its distinct learning stage students and it had to be able to connect each single space in the buildings to the other.
The Chocolate Factory was a try to recuperate Bucharest’s ruined atmosphere.

A diminutive work at the scale of the city, designed somewhat in a domestic and participative manner.

The architect worked with the Elizabethans, students from the architecture university and other people that felt they had good ideas. They thought the process of designing the Chocolate Factory, The BonBon Building as they all liked to call it, would take more time than usual but this strategy of gathering thoughts and feelings from the architecture non-professionals that would use the building turned out to be extremely efficient. After all they were not 100% non-professionals as the majority had already participated in the MICROmAsTERplan development strategies.

Exterminating the usual tool of architecture design gave the BonBon its autonomy.
The Chocolate Factory is house not only to the chocolate manufacture as its name already reveals but also to a pastry and maître chocolatier school to continue the new but strong line of the Elisabeth Gastronomic Institute.

The first and most important thing people unanimously decided on was that this building be open to the curious eye. They wanted to be able to spy on the maître, on the students and on the process on making chocolate. The factory and the school area were placed parallel, both looking into the long cherry courtyard-passage. This garden court-passage lined with cherries and the pilers of the factory was the special created guest area.

The factory and the school area were placed parallel, both looking into the long cherry courtyard-passage. This garden court-passage lined with cherries and the pilers of the factory was the special created guest area. The library tower, entrance gangway from the north side, is the only enclosed space that offers the perfect study and rest atmosphere.
Inside the Pastry School Lab
Short section through the Pastry school
Long section through the Library and Pastry Lab and School
Short section through the Chocolate Factory and the Pastry Lab

Long section through the Pastry school, Pastry Lab and Library
Roof Plan
Proud Pastry Student presenting his Diploma work - The Ice Cream cart 2028
This was the story of a series of interventions and layers that improved the Boulevard, the Block and the Neighbourhood making them comfortable and enjoyable and giving a feeling of normality to the City.

Spaces clearly defined, but not labelled made it possible for the project to evolve with the people.

For the first time in years a place of desire was could be found in Bucharest.
Instead of a conclusion.

In the process of making my diploma project I, as many others before me, have found myself swimming in the depths of depression, struggling with the futility feeling of my work and with the idea of failure. In the end, what am I doing of such great importance? I am not going to chance Bucharest with my small project. I have since tried and somewhat managed to get passed my great expectations and made peace with the fact that I will probably change nothing and my thought might not touch anybody. Still I want to go a step further in my honesty attack and share some thoughts I have written in November 2013, usually by night, almost entirely sad. There are short stories with no value for my actual work except for that, that they helped me and by helping me I was able to continue.
The beginning

It stopped snowing. Just a few strain snowflakes were floating in the court yard. They were listening to Sinatra's Christmas songs. He loved Christmas times ever since he was a boy crying about every injustice his bigger brother made. He loved it now more as a father. He loved telling unbelievable stories to his girls, baking with his wife and putting the Santa costume on. It was after Christmas dinner, when sitting in his chair next to the window, sipping his cognac and looking at the still night that he thought about buying a cinema. His girls were sleeping and he had to wait awake all night to snap a photo of Santa, he had promised them. He put his old man beard and the red pants and his wife instructed him where to stand near the Christmas tree. She was thinking they were having more fun with this than the girls. Later that night he told her about his plan. She, just like Alma Reville, always supported her husband’s decisions with blind faith.

By Easter they had found the architect to restore the building they bought on the boulevard and by the end of summer the first movies were playing. For the entire neighbourhood it all started when the film director decided to buy a building on the Broadway of the city. He had always dreamed about owning a cinema, even before becoming a director. Overwhelmed with dreams and expectations he bought 19 Queen Elisabeth Boulevard, the old Cinema Royal, one of the first cinema houses in the city that knew intimately the glorious rise and the cruel fall of the city. Soaked in mould, gasping for light the walls and the furniture suffered enough he thought. It was time for a revival, it was time to bring back the luscious life that one filled this space. The opening night they invited a cellist, one of Rostropovich's students to play Bach on the stage of the cinema before the film. The air was suddenly filled with imperial, soul uplifting, almost palpable bourgeois feelings. The acoustic was perfect in the cinema. Without introduction and without conclusion it was a marvellous surprise that kept everybody talking about the opening night for weeks in the city. In a few minutes their bad memories, their years of cold scepticism were showered away by the mild rain coming from the cellos insides. That night remains in the memory of everybody as the night of the ideas. The moon and the stars mixed and mingled until they produced the perfect state for business. The gala of cinema turned into the gathering of the future saviours of the block. First there was the champagne dealer for the night that saw how much everyone loved his champagne and how much space there was at the entrance to the cinema. The second day, very early in the morning he called the director. He wanted to rent a few square meters looking towards the street and a few in the cellar. He explained he would put some tables, chairs and a sofa and it would be perfect. Sip champagne before or after, before and after the movie. He was so charmingly excited that the director could not refuse him. After all it didn't seem like a bad idea, no loss for him. The other days he received a number of phone calls from his director friends. They all wanted to know how he did it exactly, step by step from the buying of the old building to the opening night. It was well-known that opening something in the city was followed by the burial of life as it was. Complicated procedures, bureaucracy and landlord mafia stopped each eager for change heart.
He would never tell anyone his secret so they all suspected he had bribed the officials, he always denied this accusations, after all he couldn't have, he wasn't rich at all. But he always gave recommendations. He loved that people were interested in this block, he had a lot to win if the other buildings were restored and functioning. Until the end of the year two friends of him had bought the cinema buildings next to his and were working on the final.

The man

He opened the door to a dream. It was as nothing he had ever seen before. He shook his umbrella and walked in with his head lowered intrigued by the pattern on the floor. The cold rain washed light, shaped by the window curtains got warmer and warmer until it finally blended with the caramel coloured lamp above the bar. He noticed everybody was smiling but no one was talking. A choir of angels and classical music was playing so loud he could feel the vibrations in his chest and the smell of freshly baked bread and coffee took him back to the first warm bread he had ever smelled. He searched with his eyes for a place to sit. The music was very peaceful, he was sure he had heard it somewhere before. The rain grew stronger by the minute, he was lucky to find this place open so early in the morning. He was soaking wet and dripping like a bag of tea. With her head turned to the kitchen a woman was coming in his direction. Smiling and sending flying kisses into the kitchen she handed him a blue towel and without noticing his confused grin turned around and ran as if to see if her kisses landed well. He sat in the back at a window table, looking at the rain, whipping his hands with the towel when she came back. She brought him coffee, milk, butter and funny shaped slices of bread. He tried to explain he hadn't ordered anything yet but she wasn't listening; she turned and left again slowly balancing her body, moving her blue skirt to the music. Was she dancing, were they crazy here or were they playing a joke on him? Some artist wannabes for sure performing some unnatural behaviour at 7 o'clock in the morning. It was a part with just the clarinet, he found it extremely beautiful and the steaming bread in front of him smelled unbelievably. He gave up trying to catch her attention and started buttering one slice. There were three girls at the bar, having coffee, an old lady at the table in front of him and a couple by the entrance. They all had coffee, bread and butter, milk and honey. By the bar were the girls sat was an orange squasher which they used to make there juice. He was a bit confused with this familiar atmosphere in the café and slightly bored with this friendliness he leaned on the back of his chair and stopped carrying about everything when he took his first bite. All of a sudden he sat up straight surprised of what he felt. The bread tasted so welcoming and close, so crunchy and yet so soft… and the butter, the butter was everywhere in his mouth; such a powerful taste of soft and utter joy he just enhanced with a sip of coffee, full, nutty and thick flavoured. It was all so good, so delicious, so unbelievable. This magical bite disappeared in his mouth; in an instant turned from tangible bread to a cozy feeling. He had his hand on it, he put it in his mouth, he felt it on his tong but he didn't recognize it as food. It was if he could imagine it, the food of gods. He tried to calculate his bites, to enjoy each and every one and didn't even notice he lost a smile to this breakfast attack. He surprised himself, he didn't know he could feel fulfilled by butter. He could even smile, but no, he couldn't allow that, he is not them. Before he knew it he had finished his bread and was now taking small coffee sips, looking out the window and glimpsing at the other people in the café. He saw what he hadn't seen when he came in. In front of the café there was a garden with white metal chairs and very small round tables under coated umbrellas. Someone was smoking there with his back at the café window. The rain was falling so peaceful and he was getting warmer and very comfortable. The music piece was reaching at the end, he could feel it changing in intensity and just like a directed ballet something that looked like an army of children descended on a round staircase he hadn't even noticed. Screaming, laughing and pushing they drifted as a bank of fishes to trap the woman in blue skirt. They were all fighting and pulling to get to her first to hug and kiss her. She knelled down and disappeared in the sea of little hands and heads, trying to fit them all in her arms. From on top the bar counter a man that seemed to be the cook was looking down and smiling. He turned and on his way in the kitchen he was infamously surrounded and was pulled in by the overwhelming lure of the hands hurricane. The smallest of the children, boy or girl, he couldn't tell because of the peculiar overall he or she had on, was of course the greatest victim of this battle. Bumped and bashed by everyone it was just a matter of time until the child finally started to express by mean of tears and high tone cries the injustice done against it. The child had found support both physical and moral in a big black dog that overslept and failed to participate in this morning's action. But this wasn't a novelty, this happened every day, still it would had been nice to be a part of
this. Tomorrow I’ll sleep next to the door. They will wake me up. The black dog had a harness on, probably for this type of situations, but the smallest child finding it difficult to keep balance clenched a small yet certain hand directly in the Elaine fur proceeding with tearful complains. Because of its small stature and disillusion chocked cry its message got with a delay to those who could restore righteousness. The wait was worthy of any difficulties on the road and the price of tears was not to big as the child was finally observed by the cook and elevated on top of all the other heads in the room with a small chunk of Elaine’s hair in his hand. Elaine didn’t seem to mind at all, wise and rational she knew it is always better not to complain for that will feed the spirits of war and she just wanted to have breakfast, it was 8 o’clock. The café was filled with people now and they all seemed to know each other. Some sat at the bar some on the couches and the rest at tables. They were all helping themselves to coffee and bread, went into the kitchen for more butter. You wanted honey? Oh, I am sorry, I forgot you drink your coffee with honey, I’ll go bring it. The cook, the lady with blue skirt and the troop of children had settled at the biggest round table in there. A young man came in from the rain, shaking the water off his coat and apologizing for something and ran into the kitchen. He came out with what seemed to be the biggest stalk of eggs a person could carry in his hands. He looked around and started breaking the eggs, some in bowl, some in a pan, some in boiling water. He then placed small plates on the counter and with a professional darts player precision started aiming the cooked eggs into each plate. One of the girls having coffee at the bar took the plates to the tables. Everybody was thanking, smiling and eating. When he finished with the eggs the young cook poured himself a cup of coffee and started showing his morning charms to the girls at the bar. Giggling and blushing they looked at the clock on the wall. They had to go. They waved to everybody, passed by the main headquarters, the big round table, where they showed a piece of paper to the woman and left in a hurry. At the main headquarters there were nine chairs, all of the same size, but all with distinct features. For example the chairs had different size pillows to help the different size children to reach the plates on the table. Each chair was also painted in a different color and had names carved in them. Also you couldn’t find two alike plates on this table. They all had different size, shape and color. The glasses, the covers, the napkins were all different. It was the table of diversity and absolute display of ownership.

Within the area described by the little arms of each child the intrusion of foreign objects was forbidden as it was the taking, borrowing or kidnaping of anything found under the sacred protection of this space. Any try of snatching was instantly reported through shouts and tears to the leading faces of this early meeting, the cook and the woman with blue skirt. After a few minutes of fussing and crying, reports of ill behavior and utter unhappiness they all found peace in the beautifully scented omelet they received. Fluffy yet moist with the golden color of the first sun rays shining on the feathers of a baby chick. Absorbed and hungry like they hadn’t eaten in decades they lowered their heads, bringing them so close to the plate they could have discarded the forks. It was odd how all seven of them liked their eggs like that. It wasn’t actually that they all liked scrambled eggs, it was the fear that the one sitting next would ask for a bite to try what you are having. This taste in scrambled eggs developed in a time and it is not that they like it just because of the taste, but because everyone was having it. It happened with boiled eggs, fried eggs, poached eggs and its variations. They all had the same taste as the cook. This wasn’t the case for beverages and that is why on that table you could find a large range of tea, hot chocolate and juices. On the side of the table, each having under 10 square centimeter of space the figures of authority sipped coffee and taking turns they supervised and helped smoothen this delicate operation. In between their chairs Elaine found silence and tranquility and her bowl of scrambled eggs which she had to share with Jenny and Tom, this two baby cats living with them since last week. It wasn’t her ideal breakfast but someone had to take care of the cats. The children had went to their rooms and for an hour or so were sound asleep. The last people in the bistro had left. She was turning out the lights. He changed the music. All of a sudden the sad bandoneon sound woke them up in Buenos Aires. He sometimes played tangos at the end of the day and they danced under the dimmed light of the Blue Moon and the hypnotized eyes of the ones sitting in the café vis-à-vis. They had danced together for a long time, they have gotten good together.
Notes

5 http://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fi%C8%99ier:Bucharest_in_1927.jpg
7 http://altmarius.ning.com/forum/topics/fotografii-din-bucurestiul-interbelic-ii
9 https://www.facebook.com/rezistenta/photos/
   lui-paris-vezi-era-locul-casei-poporului-1_50bdeb717c42d5a663c5f5af/index.html
   pb.451541878253415.-2207520000.1396277109./585553461518922/?type=3&theater
11 http://metropotam.ro/Locuri-de-vizitat/Atunci-si-acum-Casa-Poporului-art5172725370/
12 https://www.facebook.com/BucurestiRealist/photos
   /a.362383980546960.1073741827.326136594171699/362384003880291/?type=3&theater foto. George
   Niculescu
15 http://turistinbucurestiro.blogspot.co.at/2012/11/bdul-elisabeta-1925.html
16 https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.362383980546960.1073741827.326136594171699&ctype=3
17 prof. William Alsop
18 http://bestofromania.eu/palatul-telefoanelor-cv/
19 http://bestofromania.eu/palatul-telefoanelor-cv/
20 photo copy right http://reptilianul.blogspot.co.at/2011/06/cladirea-abandonata-romtelecom. html

Bibliography

Andrei Pipidi, *Case si Oameni din Bucuresti*, Humanitas 2008-2012
Tudor Arghezi, *Cu bastonul prin Bucuresti*, Minerva 1972
Gregory J. Ashworth, *The Tourist – Historic City Retrospect and Prospect of Managing the Historic City*, Pergamon
   2000
Denis R. Judd, Susan S. Fainstein, *The Tourist City*, New Haven 1999
To be continued