

arhipera monthly

architecture that care

Editorial team

Editors: Silvia Niculae, Lorin Niculae

Assistant editor: Sara Şofron

Design: Silvia Niculae, Irina Scobiola

Translations: Sara Şofron, Olga Niculae

Graphics: Silvia Niculae

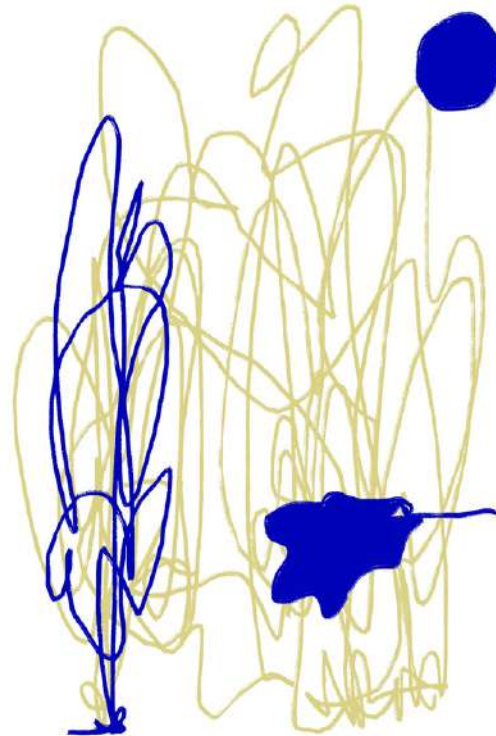
Fonts: Syne, Hershey Noailles, Open Sans

Arhipera Core team: Lorin Niculae, Irina Ursea, Silvia Niculae, Irina Scobiola

Owners of the pictures are credited besides them.

The Community Centre in Chiojdu is implemented with Chiojdu City Hall, supported by re:arc institute and in partnership with the Union of Architects from Romania and the "Ion Mincu" University of Architecture and Urbanism.

Project team: coordinator Lorin Niculae, stud. arh. Irina Ursea, stud. arh. Silvia Niculae, drd.arh. Irina Scobiola



Editors' word

A journal, but not a journal. A book, but not a book. A diary, but not a diary.

This publication will forever be a work-in-progress - as long as Arhipera exists, it will prevail as well. It is a open space, which hosts our ideas, projects, itineraries and, in general, things we've seen and felt the urge to share them with you, an unknown audience for us, yet a possible friend in the future. We're here for any updates, news, projects and images, and if you feel to share them with us, we're always interested in expanding our framework.

I hope you'll be invested in the pages that follow, and follow the multiple narratives that we propose in this publication. Some of them are still ongoing, other were isolated, but each one flows from on another.

The 4 proposed headings (for now) explore different themes of Arhipera's practice, from both an internal point of view, as well as from our existence in the world.

It is assembled with care.



The ArhiPera Manifesto

What is ArhiPera?

ArhiPera is architecture that manifests itself within the concept of Peras ($\epsilon\pi\rho\alpha\varsigma$, Gk. "limit"). It lies at the intersection between architecture and limit. It is architecture on the limit, and the limit can be spatial, temporal, conceptual or moral; it can be connected with the physical nature, including tectonics and biology; it can be imposed or assumed; it can be mobile or fixed. ArhiPera places itself on the edge, border or frontier that is built on the line where two distinct entities touch each other without merging. Its aim is to become possible and to belong to both sides. In another words, it has to open the limit, to annihilate it.

Architecture needs a context that may generate it. ArhiPera develops in a context which is unable of generating architecture: settlements affected by extreme poverty.

Architecture is function and form. ArhiPera proposes a minimal function and a form that is free from aesthetic compulsions. ArhiPera wants to achieve social inclusion and the creation of a model of urban and architectural intervention for the building of social dwellings in extreme situations.

Architecture negotiates the relation between the interior and the exterior. ArhiPera proposes a built

space that is pervious, flexible, adaptable, and an open space that can be converted into a room.

Architecture has got a determined outline, alongside with surface and perimeter. ArhiPera is in a constant evolution, it transforms itself, it undergoes metamorphoses, and it is heterogeneous. It is a growing matrix that has a fixed perimeter only at a certain point in time. It is a living being, an organism that develops itself organically.

Architecture provides an answer for an economic and social programme. ArhiPera is generated by the social aspect and it supports an economic programme. It aims to achieve a maximal social effect by using minimal material resources.

Architecture is conceived by the architect. ArhiPera is conceived by the architect and by the community; it represents the outcome of participatory design.

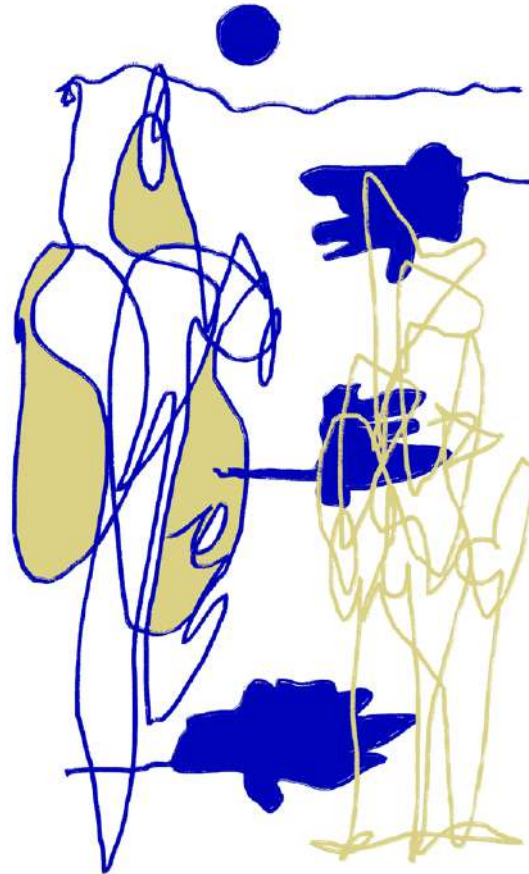
Architecture depends upon a budget whereas ArhiPera generates the necessary budget by means of recycling, reinterpreting and reintegrating.

Architecture must be maintained so as to keep its initial aspect. ArhiPera modifies itself with every intervention that it goes through; it reinvents itself during the use process.

Who is ArhiPera?

ArhiPera is enlivened by a group of young architects that bear its name, who decided that Romania is the place and now is the moment for ArhiPera. It is a reaction to the increasing level of ghettoisation that Romania goes through, to the growth of social lagging, to the isolation and the exclusion of vulnerable categories from social life. ArhiPera will take action in the places where there is a need for architecture but the human groups (the beneficiaries) are not able to generate it. Given this situation, ArhiPera will be capable to respond to this need and to consolidate the community potential.

At last, but not least, ArhiPera represents a manifesto meant to plead for the marginalized groups and to create the premises for improving their living conditions by means of community participation and public-interest architecture in Romania.



our journal,
but not quite

m o n t h

2 0 2 2



the need to communicate

Drumul Taberei 2030

Exhibition - Centre of Architectural Culture (Union of Romanian Architects)

Drumul Taberei 2030 was born out of the desire to imagine opportunities to develop the public potential of the neighborhood, in a future where the cars are parked in underground parking spaces located along the two large boulevards that delimit, to the north and south, the studied area: Timișoara Boulevard and Drumul Taberei Boulevard. Students from different years, who joined their ideas in the Arhipera summer workshops, began to imagine as early as August what the neighborhood might look like in the near future. In October, the students from Group 36 of the Faculty of Architecture, from the University of Architecture and Urbanism "Ion Mincu" joined the initiative, and started to study the neighborhood and develop project proposals.

The projects were coordinated by Lorin Niculae, Arch. PhD, Assoc. professor IMUAU, drd. Irina Scobiola and drd. Dragoș Gherghescu.

Drumul Taberei 2030 is an experimental project about the future. A greener, friendlier future.

DRUMUL TABEREI 2030

Vernisaj: 22 noiembrie 2022, ora 17:00

Centrul de Cultură Arhitecturală

Str. Jean Louis Calderon 48, București

Participanți:
Grupa 36 2022-2023
Ruxendia Andrei
Marius Alexandru Blaga
Miriana Alexandru Dru
Silvia-Cristina Duranosa
Ranodaca Laura Reher
Eliana-Andreea Pîrîu
Andrei Vișdimitr Gheorghie
Armand Mihai Gheorghie
Luciana-Maria Ghinea
Elena Antonia Grosu
Marta Grosu
Sofia Iatan
Sorana-Nicoi Inoveanu
Zlata-Mihail Ivana
Aniela Manea
Vlad-George Moldovan
Oana-Gabriela Nădă
Maria-Viviana Pătrașcu
Eliana Teodorescu
Alina-Eliana Diața
Mihaela-Pedro
Sara-Nicoiana
Alexandru Sava
Nadalină Soerian
Andrei-Răzvan Stănescu
Aniela Teșelari
Adriana-Eliana Toma
Catalin Tudor
Lucia Tudor
Anita-Ioana Vintila
Claudia-Georgiana Zaharia

Gazda evenimentului:
conf.dr.arh. Lorin Niculae,
UAUIM, Arhipera

**Invitat arh. Alex Avintu,
Garaj DESCHIS**

Miruna Liara Alexandru,
grupa 54, anul V
Silvia Niculae, grupa 41,
anul IV
Ivana Stefanica Petru,
asistentă, University
College London
Gabriela Petronela Staru,
grupa 50, anul IV
Andreea Ralea, grupa 50,
an V
Corina Stănicu, grupa 41,
anul IV
Eliza Voiculescu, grupa
48, anul IV

Coordonatori:
conf.dr.arh. Lorin Constantin Niculae | drd. Irina Scobiola | drd. Dragoș Gherghescu

ARHIPERA
Atelier 3G
Universitatea de Arhitectură și Urbanism "Ion Mincu"
LIGA ARHITECTILOR DIN ROMANIA



About the vernissage

22th of November 2022



We talked about the neighborhood, its development possibilities in the near future and the projects designed by the 36 students. We thank Mrs. Mihaela Ștefan, Vice-Mayor of sector 6, who presented the public policies in implementation for increasing the quality of life in the sector, as well as drd.arch. Alex Axinte, who created a creative, informed and informal space for conversation about the neighborhood.





Images ©Razvan Hatea

Drumul Taberei 2030

Lorin Niculae

These days, at the architectural Culture Center of the Union of Romanian Architects, there can be visited the student projects exhibition “Drumul Taberei 2030”. I invite you to see it because it proposes an urban vision designed on one of the most beautiful Bucharest neighborhoods, conceived by young and talented architects in a period of cultural and political openness of the unprecedented socialist regime, as it is about the 60’s. Practically, the architects invited to design the west extension of the capital had the freedom to imagine an ideal neighborhood, which they did, applying the principles of the Athens Charter’s modernist urbanism. Thus, the small “neighborhood units” that actually form the neighborhood were created, meaning the residential areas with isolated blocks, floating in vast green spaces and with urban equipment areas such as kindergartens, schools, high schools, polyclinics and shopping centers within a short distance. The favorite cinema remained, throughout the evolution of the neighborhood, its cultural pole. Efforts to catch a ticket to Star Wars or The Empire Strikes Back were rivaling, at that time, with all that was necessary to ensure an abundant Easter table with lamb, eggs and cakes.

The neighborhood turned out so well that Fidel Castro was walked along the Drumul Taberei Boulevard, and the Chilean refugees during Pinochet’s persecution

had a housing block built right there. However, since the 70’s, the neighborhood has experienced the phenomenon of thickening blocks and altering the guidelines of a “radiant city”. After the Revolution, the relative well-being of the inhabitants generated a higher number of cars than the neighborhood’s arteries could take, a problem now partially solved by the opening of the fifth metro line. However, an enormous number of vehicles must be permanently accommodated in the interstitial spaces between the blocks that had never been designed for this purpose. Large green spaces have been paved, in a paradigm where comfort of use takes precedence over quality of life.

Is there anything to do, can this paradigm change? Can we imagine a future in which a mother walking her child in a stroller or an old person returning from the market does not block the movement of cars in the twisting alleys beneath venerable trees? These questions were answered by the third-year students of the Faculty of Architecture at the University of Architecture and Urbanism “Ion Mincu” in Bucharest, and they did so with the enthusiasm of the age doubled by the energy and passion they have for the city, as a place of manifestation of urban life. By driving most cars into underground parking lots along the two major boulevards bordering the Favorit microdistrict,

the students thought of vibrant public spaces with a cultural vocation, designed to provide the inhabitants with those meeting and socializing places indispensable to a community. Growing green areas, creating nine-kilometer running and bicycle lanes within the neighborhood unit alone speak of a legitimate aspiration for a healthy and safe living environment, qualities that are added to the cultural and social character of spending time together.

An odeon opened behind the cinema, equipped with a public library, a vertical café that “parasitizes” the backwall of a four-story block, sports and play spaces, suspended community gardens located on the terraces of three low-block units, therapeutic gardens, artistic pavilions and exhibition spaces, venues for meeting and participating in the sports events of the neighborhood, esplanades and diffuse public spaces outline an active and dynamic approach to the public space. “Between blocks” is no longer a generic term for residual spaces paved and inefficiently occupied by cars that they can’t even manage through. It is replaced by a new meaning, that of a common territory in which the values of a community of prosperous and educated people are decanted and crystallized, which, through their way of relating to the public space, gives it accessibility to vulnerable groups also. After all, today’s adults who go to work by car, leaving in the morning and coming back in the evening, are the children of the elderly who moved to the new blocks in the neighborhood 50 years ago, and the parents of the children who go to kindergarten, school or high school. Both the pupils of the schools

and the elderly in the microdistrict travel very little by car, and the meeting and socialization places arranged by the City Hall of sector 6 are used throughout the day. The implementation of public policies regarding the urban life of the neighborhood naturally continues the utopian and generous ideas of architects who thought about not only a neighborhood, but a good place for the people. After all, this is exactly the purpose of architects, and the students, through their projects, proved that they understood it.



voicing communities

m o n t h

2 0 2 2



Chiojdu: Community Centre: visit of the future site of intervention

Photos of the site of our future intervention, as seen on the 27th of December. The Community Centre will be placed on the same site as the ex-C.A.P. of the area (seen in the pictures), now in a rehabilitation programme.



The Chiojdu Community Center project is implemented by the Arhipera Association of students and teachers from the "Ion Mincu" University of Architecture and Urbanism, together with the Chiojdu Local Council, supported by re:arc institute and carried out in partnership with the Union of Romanian Architects.

Design credits: Arhipera



Chiojdu: House with Blazons: Arhipera workshops of improvisation through movement

27 & 28th of December, coordinated by Valentina De Piante, teacher at “Ion Luca Caragiale” National University of Theatre and Film





The workshop aimed to support the participants to become more aware of the possibilities of expressive motricity, through games organized on music.



A wish for 2023

Lorin Nicolae

I would like for architecture to be healed of the schizophrenia that has encaptured it. On the one hand, in order to efficiently heat up the existing buildings, we clothe them in expanded polystyrene, destroying all their details, taking away all the beauty that their ancestors put in them for us to reach. The small delicacy of the cities, the very details you see when you pass them and that are a joy to witness, disappears, to be replaced with flat and poorly finished surfaces. And we do this because we live in an energy crisis and try to reduce the carbon dioxide emissions of modest and venerable homes. Elsewhere in the world, the cities that are now being built in the middle of the desert produce more carbon dioxide than ever produced on a planetary scale, and the same great architects who preach about saving of the climate (what an improper formulation!) are the ones who participate in its destruction, carrying out projects in which the idea of sustainability has become just a penile cloak of camouflage. Architects of remarkable stature, who have been the idols of many generations of students, show themselves to be just small, work tips amateurs, for which they would do anything. Literally anything. Including underwater hotels with full glass walls, or mountain resorts on the water-free heights of the world's deserts.

The greening of cities is another desideratum to which the architects have marched towards, thanks to anyone who speaks articulately about the future of our cities. And yet every piece of free land in the city is sold and built upon, as high and dense as possible, based on the projects made by architects. Everyone wants parks in the city, including the administration. But anyone who has a plot of land divides it and builds on it, with small but notable exceptions, because public parks, unlike buildings, do not produce money. In short, although they are kind of similar, a leaf is a leaf and a banknote is something else. This uncomfortable truth generates conflict, at least of ideas, and then they appear, saviors, architects, who through intelligence and innovation manage to green the city and plant 1,000 trees on just 100 square meters. How do they do that? Through means of invention: a vertical forest or, in other words, a skyscraper with large terraces where, at every level, or every 2 floors, trees are planted. The image of the vertical forest is appealing and I've rarely seen something more intensely promoted at exhibitions and fairs of sustainable architecture. However, basic intuition tells us that to load a high structure with hundreds of tons of soil and plant material, it requires additional reinforcement of said structure, a higher consumption of concrete and iron. No one is raising the

problem of a tornado, the possibility that the trees on the 15th floor will rip from the roots and land on the sidewalk. The leaves problem is not raised either. For any problem there is a plethora of well-known answers that, in fact, show that we are not talking about a real forest. The real forest disappeared somewhere, in a fourteenth-hand country, like Romania, in order to be able to efficiently exploit the iron beneath it, for the additional reinforcement of the “vertical forest” in a luxurious city, an example of sustainability.

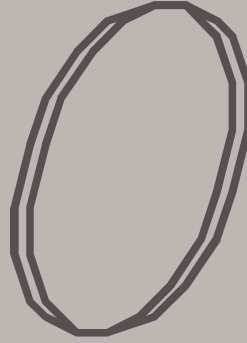
Not only the vertical forests but the underwater hotels as well are designed for money, usually a lot of it. When money is lacking, there are architects who design for the poor. By looking for cheap solutions, they sometimes manage to create ingenious projects that efficiently use recycled materials or tertiary industrial products. With a dexterity worthy of the true magicians of antiquity, the architects design buildings for the poor that cost 100 lei per square meter, while the underwater hotel costs 50,000 lei per square meter. While both are designed with the purpose of shelter, the difference of 49,900 lei per square meter is shown through representation, entertainment and vanity. Because, to put it honestly, their durability is pretty much the same: A few years at most. Why don't architects try to convince society that “show” is not the only thing that's worth money, but the social balance as well? That the show of architecture is nothing but a toy that's thrown in the trash after the second use by the ones spoiled by fate? That from a good and well-built house comes a child who goes to school proudly?

That instead of projecting clouds of concrete and glass that resemble enormous and deformed blobs, an architecture can be built to help a population that is currently suffering from hunger, cold and shortages of all kinds? Could architects be convincing in saying that we can save nature starting with the people who are suffering? Or are we, the architects, “saving the climate” and the planet only for those who take their holidays in the underwater hotel, hoping that they will still need our services, at least to carry their luggage, change the latch and make intelligent conversation at the same time?



m o n t h

2 0 2 3



psychology of built
environment

ArhiPera

For a public interest architecture in Romania

Lorin Niculae

In this paper I will try to delineate the set of principles that structure the approach of ArhiPera in practicing social participatory architecture for groups of people that live in extreme poverty in order to generate a public interest architecture in Romania. ArhiPera, a Romanian group of participatory social architecture, was founded in March 2011 that focuses on pilot interventions and creating an infrastructure of community design centers affiliated to Universities of architecture and urbanism.

Social participatory architecture is, very simply put, a type of architecture that addresses to groups that are in a state of vulnerability, and that is accomplished together with them. It is generated by the wish and will of the architect to involve himself in this manner in order to trigger social change. The objects of architecture produced would have never appeared in other circumstances. It is generated by the architect's capacity to adapt to the contemporary reality and to involve himself actively in order to create a systemic change at the level of the vulnerable group. But what innovation does social participatory architecture bring and how is it different from the social or the participatory ones?

With respect to social architecture, social participatory architecture changes the client, switching

from the authority that establishes the rules, manages and takes action to the group of representatives of the direct or indirect beneficiaries of the project. Practically, the social architecture that is made is no longer developed through mediators and third persons who analyze the needs and quantify them, but directly through discussions within the group. For this reason, social participatory architecture can respond to a given situation and to a specified group, starting from the existent real needs. The scale of a project is reduced to the dimension of the group and to its needs, unlike social architecture that can operate with large groups, with associations of groups that are visible only at the level of sociological investigations, charts and census. At the level of urban planning, in the situation of the regenerations of the built background, in places where the expansion of the intervention implies the involvement of several territories and of different groups or communities, the relation between the urban planner and the communities is put into effect by democratic representation. Thus, a community delegates its representatives who will take action horizontally, together with the representatives of other communities, in order to establish the dialogue with the urban planner.

By designing directly for the users and together with them, social participatory architecture, starting from the principle of equity, has in view the freedom of the beneficiaries through possession, involvement, creating a sense of belonging. Its propelling force is the solidarity among architects, as an intellectual and social elite, and the vulnerable groups, communities affected by extreme poverty and social exclusion, discriminated minorities etc.

In relation to participatory architecture, social participatory architecture brings the social dimension. In the case of the first, the group is self-aware, knows its needs and issues the command for architecture, having the means to materialize the project. Insofar as the second one is concerned, the group is, more than often, unorganized, unstructured. On many occasions, the lack of education and even illiteracy are serious impediments in the way of communication. The group does not issue a command, lacks the capacity of doing it and the possibility of materializing a project. The architect reverts to the role of community organizer, of catalyst, that generates, together with the group, the design theme, the project, the budget and gains access to the funds that are necessary for the project.

As a synthesis, I propose the following definition: social participatory architecture is the phenomenon of shaping space in order to fulfill the capabilities of human groups that are in a state of vulnerability, together with these. This definition, far as it is from comprising all the aspects of social participatory architecture, is a sketch that awaits its verification by grassroots practice, as

well as future refining. The fundamental values of social participatory architecture are: freedom, equity and solidarity.

Through public participation, architecture acknowledges ethics, and the project is a resultant of communicative action, its purpose being to achieve consensus around a common understanding of the groups involved on changing reality. This includes both the housing issue and the system of relations it generates. In this way, the architect takes on a moderator role, besides that of a technical expert, which is necessary due to contemporary social dynamics that leads to making architecture for vulnerable groups. Contemporary society is multicultural, making negotiation mandatory for joint projects. Civil society is active and organized and the rights of minorities and vulnerable groups are protected by organizations which must be involved in the design process.

Thus, in the practice of social architecture, citizen participation is a sum of communicative actions structured within a method, by means of which the group of beneficiaries acquires the genuine ability to become a partner in the design and can make use of it. Participation fosters community spirit and a sense of belonging for citizens.

Participation is a sine-qua-non condition of the architect's ethical action to design for vulnerable groups in extreme poverty. It gives legitimacy to the design process and produces the architectural solution, validated by deliberation. Collective consensus on

the desired reality, the common good, determined by participation, strengthen the individual freedoms and capabilities of the beneficiaries, protecting their right to housing by continuously validating the common good with the individual one.

Community building is a recent concept of social participatory architecture that relates to building a systemic framework of social and production relations at community level which would be capable of supporting the community; the relationship with the built environment occupies a central field. In other words, to replace the reality of extreme poverty housing in the territory with the desired reality of appropriate housing in terms of stability, aesthetics and comfort, it is necessary that this objective be part of a system of objectives which are mutually supporting one another and which converge towards sustainability. Community building integrates housing, employment, health, hygiene, education and culture. Employment supports housing as housing can give credit to employment. Seen in this way, community building represents an extension of participatory social architecture, integrating related areas. At the same time, it paves the way to sustainability.

The three words that make up the field of research are directly linked to a fundamental value. Thus, architecture relates to freedom on two levels: the beneficiary's positive freedom and the architect's negative freedom, his/her freedom of action. Freedom is expressed through autonomy weighted by proscriptive regulation. Possession, the ability to

use home architecture at will, is also an expression of freedom. Possession will ensure the regenerative capacity of architecture and its unfinished character. By determining the final form of the architectural object, the architect would deprive of possession and would inhibit the growth and regeneration of this object.

The social sphere interlinks with solidarity by including inside the "us" domain, the ones different from us. This enables an ethical relationship between the architect and the vulnerable group in extreme poverty, avoiding neo-colonialism and double-measure. Public participation is an equity guarantee, seen as premise for achieving the equality of capabilities within the society. The community coupled with the society, where joint members share common values, represents the communitarianism essence. It is the one responsible for the sense of belonging and identity of architecture.

Standing at the crossing of architecture, social and, respectively, citizen participation sphere, social participatory architecture acts according to the three fundamental values: liberty, solidarity and equity. Liberty becomes solidarity when pursuing the enhancement of vulnerable group's freedoms through responsibility. Architecture's freedom becomes ethical when using communicative rationality. The architectural gesture liberates from the fortuitous and rationally communicates with the users engaged within the project. When solidarity is achieved in the ethical sphere, more precisely, when generating equality in capabilities, one can rightfully speak of social justice.

Resuming the proposed definitions, architecture represents the consensus of the beneficiary's positive liberty and the architect's negative liberty. Social architecture emerges when architects act through solidarity. Social participatory architecture manifests when equity guarantees for liberty and solidarity. The three concepts (liberty, equity and solidarity) are imperative and sufficient for drawing both social participatory architecture and its products.

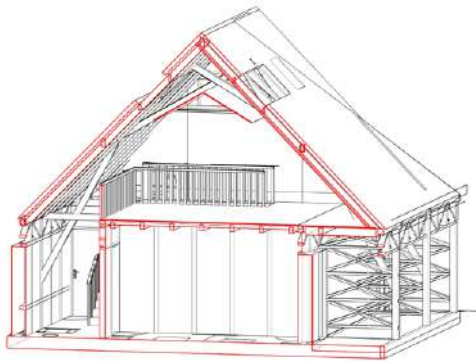
Architecture producing social change by itself, when practiced in a participatory system, may generate social progress towards solidarity and social inclusion. Just as there is a publicly appointed attorney for disadvantaged people when they cannot afford a lawyer, just as there is a doctor that relieves suffering for anyone, there must be, for those not able to work with an architect, there should be architects who could add value to the built space, often precarious, unhealthy and illegal, built space where large groups of people live. Through education, creativity and their vision, architects and urbanists must work together with central and local authorities, with citizens and with all stakeholders for placing public interest above individual good.

Therefore, I believe it is the contemporary architect generation's duty to create the architecture for the public interest, an architecture regaining precedence in the domain of space modelling through the importance of the undertaken position of the participatory action, one that warrants and increases social liberty, equity and solidarity.

Values	Social architecture concepts	
	Instrumental paradigm	Participatory paradigm
Liberty	Heteronomy	Autonomy
	Prescriptive regulations	Proscriptive regulations
	Post-use/demolition	Regeneration
	Project completion	Uncomplete, progress
	Rent	Possession
	Designing for the user	Designing with the user / communicative design
	Processes centralisation	Decentralisation
Equity	Hierarchy	Heterarchy
	Oppressive dwelling	Supportive dwelling
	Unique answer	Pluralism / Advocacy
	Contractual connection	Natural connection
	Unique decision	Synergistic consensus
	Implementation	Inter-subjective recognition
	Segregation	Integration
	Predetermined purpose	Focal variables
Solidarity	Deductive thinking	Inductive thinking
	Universal solution	Belonging
	Typification / prefabrication	Critical regionalism
	Societalism	Communitarianism
	Externalisation	Volunteer / localism

Comparative table regarding instrumental and participatory paradigm concepts, structured depending on the 3 key concepts to which they subsume to.

Concept evolution: Community Centre, Chiojdu



The Race

Lorin Nicolae

Calea Griviței, Bucharest. Cars sit at the traffic lights, hurrying to leave the children at school. White smoke rises from the exhaust pipes, hiding the scorched facades of the old buildings, covered by heath. One of them, the only one that has been recently renovated and had been painted pink has, just above the entrance, a white bas-relief: a lush nymph promises untold pleasure to visitors. Above it, the balcony and the Art Déco decoration evoke better, more indulgent times. In front of the building, a beggar in a wheelchair finished his slalom among the cars and counts the money, few, obtained from the drivers. He is no more than 40 years old, but his sad figure is marked by deprivation and disease. He wears a leather jacket, as shabby as the facades of the buildings in the area. The door of the adjoining house opens and a child appears, holding a scooter by the handlebar. They say hello, they both know each other, they are probably co-habitants. They speak, while the cars catch a traffic light, the second one, because there's a blockage on Buzești. Some drivers are already honking, but the two, enveloped by the exhaust gases, seem somehow protected, or are perfectly immune to the surrounding fog and simply capitalise on the resulting calmness.

Two more boys and a girl appear and they are all studying the scooter. The possessor is proud and praised, though the vehicle is old and, obviously, mercilessly used. The boy shows the wheels and explains the mechanics of the movement to the others, shows them the operation of the brake. But the man has more experience and reveals the more complex brake systems of the wheelchair. The larger wheels also catch more driving speed at equal rotation speed. The discussion gets heated, the boy does not give up either: it is true, his wheels are small, but they rotate very quickly, so the scooter is faster than the wheelchair. Impossible, says the adult, with wide hand gestures, while the cars catch the third traffic light, and the horn choir patently approaches, in an imposing and varied crescendo, a melodic stamp difficult to bear. The police car that arrives at the scene, with the siren turned on, looks like a Wagnerian soprano.

But the street, with its desperation, seems a world far from the sidewalk where the five set the rules for the race to take place. It starts at the start sign, from the intersection with Buzești-Berzei, where one of the organisers was already positioned. The end is at Cinema Marconi, under the strange and fallen reliefs of one of the most elegant former cinemas of the Capital, to which the second one runs towards. The

distance of 100 meters is not large, given the nature of the race, but not small. The girl sits in the middle to start. Second, a policeman descends from the car and occupies the middle of the intersection to drain the cars. He listens carefully to the station and coordinates with his colleagues. The first school hour takes place in the car, to the joy of the children, slumped in the benches, despite the noise of the horns and the kind words exchanged by some drivers.

The sun has risen, and the competitors at the start leave long shadows in front of them. The expression of concentration with which they look at the girl's hand is visible from a long distance. They are tense like arches. The hand falls and the two start quickly. The boy shoots like a rifle, but every canal cover on the sidewalk shakes him and slows him down significantly. After a slower start, the man proves a perfect technique, pushing the wheels at precise intervals and imprinting a linear and uniformly accelerated motion to the wheelchair. For drivers who forgot that their goal was to unload their children in front of schools and then reach the offices where ambitious challenges and deadlines await them, maturities and handover, but who now look at the race with great interest, it seems obvious that the adult will catch up and even surpass the child who, behold, has lost his breath, not knowing how to properly measure his effort. And, indeed, through the increasingly dense stream, crossed by the rays of the morning sun, the chair approaches quickly, meter after meter. However, the sidewalk is narrow and the has a rather sinuous trajectory on the last quarter. To overcome it, the man

must enter parallel carefully to avoid a collision. There are ten meters and the boy sees with his peripheric vision the wheels of the chair. He tries to accelerate, but he can't. It is clear that he will lose, but then an unexpected fact happens: The man no longer pushes the wheels and lets the scooter win.

Under the allegorical chariots and the unleashed horses from the bas-reliefs of the elegant Marconi cinema, which is now a ruin, like the whole neighborhood, the five reunited again. The competitors are still breathing hard, but they both have a pure happiness imprinted on their faces: "It was a great race! Well done, man! You are good!", and "You were very fast, about to surpass me." In the spotlight of the cars headlights and the dozens of eyes of an accidental audience, the two are no longer a beggar and a poor child, but two athletes who have put all their energy and skill to win a race, and one of them, more experienced, has been able to win a race. He gave up the victory he so much desired to encourage the youngest with a future ahead. As the cars finally move from their place to the wealthier views of the city, in the gentle and true light of the morning, the drivers who have watched the race are living a collective revelation: many of the ambitious challenges, deadlines, and surrenders of the day are, in fact, little nothings.

m o n t h

2 0 2 3



what happens after
saying sustainability?

Natural materials as a resource for creating a safe tactile ambience for psychological trauma affected individuals

Silvia Niculae

Materials, in architecture, have a deep meaning onto the spaces they dwell in. Since the first architectural spaces were created, there has always been a particular attention regarding the materials used for them. Materials have carried a message by their own presence; they expressed a status of the beneficiary, a choice of the architect, a function of a space or hardly an aesthetic preference.

Regarding people who have undergone psychological trauma, materials that define space gain an even wider sense. Several individuals who have experienced psychological trauma are increasingly sensitive to stimuli, due to emotional dysregulation and the fluctuations it causes in the body.¹ Even though

¹ HARRICHARAN Sherain, MCKINNON Margaret C., LANIUS Ruth A.. How Processing of Sensory Information From the Internal and External Worlds Shape the Perception and Engagement With the World in the Aftermath of Trauma: Implications for PTSD. [online article]. <https://www.frontiersin.org/> Frontiers in Neuroscience, volume 15. 16 April 2021 [ref. of 16 January 2023]. <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fnins.2021.625490>

some specific materials may induce memories of the traumatic event(s) to particular individuals, and those cannot be predicted accurately in the design of a building addressed to a community, throughout the paper there will be argued how natural materials have a higher influence on enhancing a supportive atmosphere which generally improves the well-being of people affected by trauma. As materials are carried with an inherent meaning, perception and experimentation, their role inside a specialized facility is to support the healing of the victims through a trauma-informed design.

Can be proven that the usage of natural materials in buildings can better support the healing of people who have undergone psychological trauma, than the industrial, artificialized materials? Or are, in fact, industrial, inorganic materials more suitable for the building of facilities addressed to this group of people? Throughout the paper, there will be explained the need of such natural materials in the assembly of a building addressed to people who have undergone psychological

trauma, and their relevance in such spaces.

Materials not only appear to gain a significance visually, but also from a tactile and an olfactive point of view. They appeal to all senses, and reflect an immediate interaction with the surrounding environment. Subtly theorizing the sense of tactility and explaining a wider view on the receptors and their roles, Alain Berthoz writes in his subchapter "The Role of Toucher" ("Le Sens du Toucher") that " Our skin contains many receptors sensitive to different aspects of contact with the outside world. Some measure pressure - Meissner and Paccini receptors - and have more or less phasic properties: some are sensitive to rapid pressure variations, others to its prolonged maintenance, others, annexed to the hair, are sensitive to friction, to caress, and are activated by the inclination of the hairs, others detect heat and cold and actually constitute a class of thermoreceptors, and others finally give a sensation of pain, they are called «nociceptors»."² It is notably important the relevance of natural materials in this context, which appeal differently to the thermoreceptors mentioned by Berthoz, as they are indicating higher inherent specific heat values. I will therefore explain scientifically the heat differences among natural materials and inorganic ones. Wood, in itself, has an inherent specific heat of 1300 – 2400 J/kg C°, cellulose and cotton have 1300 – 1500 J/kg C°, clay/sandy has 1381 J/kg C°, brick has 840 J/kg C°, while, regarding materials realized by a composite of natural and inorganic elements, there are noticeable lower values: concrete has a specific

² BERTHOZ, Alain. *Le sens du mouvement*. Editions Odile Jacob. Paris, 1997. p. 36

heat of 880 J/kg C°, aluminum 897 J/kg C°, iron 449 J/kg C° and steel 490 J/kg C°.³ The inherent heat of materials creates a warmer interior atmosphere in the spaces of the building. The heat has a beneficial role during the flight-or-flight effects trauma survivors feel, by providing a safe environment, different from the one the trauma took place in. There are certain links between warmth and safety - "according to Sarah Lee, a UKCP registered psychotherapist who specializes in complex trauma, feeling warm and safe can promote feelings of relaxation and slow our breathing and heart rate."⁴

Furthermore, besides the tactility aspect regarding the thermoreceptors, there is also added the primordially of the natural materials which already exist in a so-called collective consciousness. In the case of traditional, vernacular architecture (the architecture created without an architect, built throughout centuries since the beginning of times) there have been used solely natural, local materials of certain regions. Above the tactility of these materials, there is also an underlying aspect of identity regarding them: a use of local, natural materials improves the sense of belonging in a community and, thus, provides a feeling of safety inside a community. In individuals who have faced trauma, the feeling of safety is increasingly important in

³ Information collected from the site https://www.engineeringtoolbox.com/specific-heat-capacity-d_391.html

⁴ MORGAN, Jessica. *The Surprising Benefits Of Warmth For Trauma Survivors* [online article]. <https://www.refinery29.com/14-April-2021> [ref. of 16 January 2023]. Available on: <https://www.refinery29.com/en-gb/warmth-trauma-survivors>

order to enable a healing environment.

“The dominant narrative positions connection with nature as restorative and stress-relieving; however, it may be equally valuable as a positive stressor (or eustressor).”⁵ Natural materials, through their multisensorial perceiving, add to the safety learning capacity the space can offer. Furthermore, the use of natural materials also reinforces the feeling of control one has over the surrounding, which is generated through the facile recognition of the material and increased predictability of its characteristics and development in time.

Consequently, the usage of natural materials in the interior of the building is advised to be correlated with exterior nature, determined by the perimeter of the building area. It is proven that diastolic blood pressure and heart rate levels decrease after looking at nature.⁶ Through windows and their filtration of natural light, the exterior calming space (nature) penetrates in the interior, by the means of the usage of natural materials. For instance, wood, one of the most commonly-used natural materials, provides the lowering of reactivity in case of the sympathetic nervous system.⁷ If the exterior view is related to the interior view through a smart use

5 OWEN, Ceridwen & CRANE, James. Trauma-Informed Design of Supported Housing: A Scoping Review through the Lens of Neuroscience. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*. 2022, 19, 14279. Available on: <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph192114279>

6 AUGUSTIN Sally, FELL David. Wood as a Restorative Material In *Healthcare Environments*. FP Innovations, 2015. p. 4

7 *Ibid.*, p. 17

of combination of materials, the general wellbeing is increased. Architects, urbanists, designers should all be involved in the process of designing an outdoor space which acts as a prolongation of the safe indoor space. “One of the first and most well-known studies, published in *Science* by Richard S. Ulrich in 1984, found that patients recovering from surgery in rooms with a window facing a natural setting had shorter hospital stays and took less pain medicine than did patients whose window faced a brick wall.”⁸ Facing nature, thus, increases the chances of a quicker recovery and, overall, generates higher levels of relaxation in the body.

Even though in several cases industrialized materials are easier to obtain and use in the assembly of building facilities, they undeniably put at risk the individuals’ wellbeing. Through the identity conferred by natural materials, their calming effects on blood pressure and heart rate levels, feeling of safety and control they confer to an architectural object, natural materials are deeply advised to be used in facilities addressed to people who have undergone psychological trauma.

To conclude, materials of natural provenience are profoundly linked to a community’s consciousness and feeling of safety in space. As Alain Berthoz stated, regularity, hazard and movement are fundamental to nature, but as well as to any individual’s perceptions of

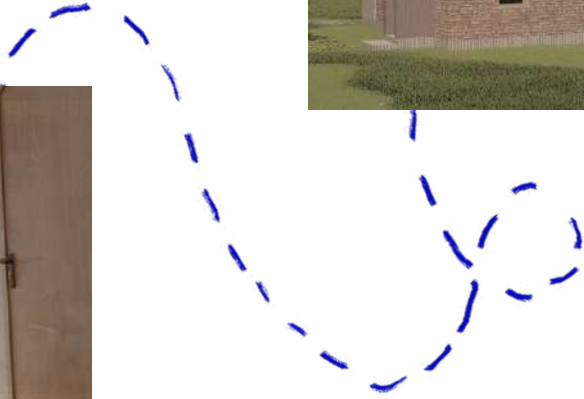
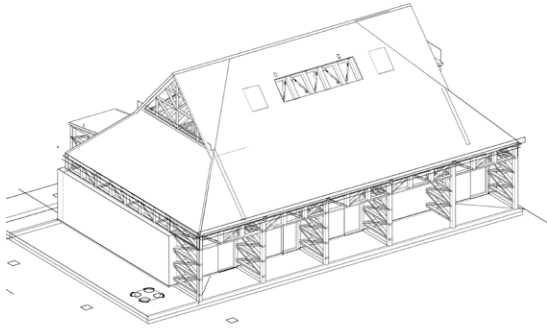
8 PHILLIPS, Anna Lena. A Walk in the Woods. [online article]. <https://www.americanscientist.org/> : July-August 2011 [ref. of 16 January 2023]. Available on: <https://www.americanscientist.org/article/a-walk-in-the-woods>

the surroundings.⁹ Natural materials provide the same predictabilities and irregularities as any individual's perception, to such a degree enhancing the sense of familiarity in relation to an architectural object. Materials of natural provenience are, finally, highly indicated to be used in buildings addressed to people who have experienced psychological trauma, in order to support them through a secure environment.

9 BERTHOZ, Alain. Le sens du mouvement. Editions Odile Jacob. Paris, 1997. p. 278
Trad. <<Ces trois éléments fondamentaux - régularités, hasard et mouvement - donnent à la nature son apparence. Ce sont aussi les éléments constitutifs de notre perception.>>

Evolution of our proposal for Community Centre, Chiojdu





Chiojdu: Community Centre: visit of the site of intervention

17th of February, 2023



We started the day with a conversation about the documentation necessary for the project with Mr. Mayor Gheorghe Neamțu. We spoke with local community leaders and showed plans and ideas of the project, which we discussed together. We then made a preliminary drawing on the site to check if there are any differences between the projected situation and the actual situation.





We visited the local deposit of wood, which we will further use in our project.



PREVI

Lorin Nicolae

In 1968, Peru launched an extensive program to rebuild 100,000 homes destroyed by the earthquake and triggered the first major and significant participatory social architecture experiment in the housing field. It appears, not by chance, in Lima and is due to an exceptional political, social and economic situation, probably unique in history. From 1930 to 1935, young Peruvian Fernando Belaúnde Terry studied architecture in Miami, and in 1935 graduated from the University of Texas in Austin. He first worked in Mexico, then in Lima, where he specialised in housing, then he founded the magazine *El Arquitecto Peruano*. He became a housing consultant to the Government of Lima, and in 1943 he began teaching at *Escuela Nacional de Ingenieros*, where he later became dean of the University's Department of Architecture and Civil Engineering. In 1963, following a prodigious political career, he became president of the Republic of Peru. From this position, Fernando Belaúnde Terry began, in 1965, under the aegis of the United Nations, an ambitious program to solve the problem of overpopulation of urban centers with migrants, a situation that had taken on such a large scale that the existing government programs had proved to be profoundly obsolete and objectively insufficient.

The English architect Peter Land becomes the director of the program initiated by architect President Fernando Belaúnde Terry and, from this position, organises a competition in which the most recognized architects of the moment in the field of social architecture worldwide are invited to participate: James Stirling, with his recent Runcorn New Town housing, The Japanese group of the *Metabolics*, the inventors of the living capsule, Charles Korea who had just created the model for residential architecture in Gujarat, India, George Candilis, former collaborator of Le Corbusier in Marseille and author of the horizontal city, Aldo van Eyck, one of the leading members of team X, Christopher Alexander, Herbert Ohl, Renowned German architect and designer, Danish architect Knud Svenssons, Swiss Workshop 5 and Spanish architect José Luis Iñiguez de Ozoño and Antonio Vázquez de Castro. They were seconded by Peruvian architects to carry out the projects of THE PREVI residential complex – Proyecto Experimental de Vivienda.

The architecture required for the project was metabolic, having the ability to take on changing needs in the life of a family; the regulatory model adopted for this future growth was proscriptive and not prescriptive, in the sense of John F. Turner's distinction, highlighting what cannot be done and leaving the users free choice of what can be done.

The importance of the PREVI experiment is major not only for participatory social architecture in particular, but for architecture in general. It was the second major experiment after the Weissenhof Estate, Stuttgart, dating back to 1927, which brought together the 17 best European architects of the time: Mies van der Rohe, as project director, Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret, Bruno Taut, Walter Gropius, Hans Poelzig, J.J. p. Oud, Hans Scharoun, Max Taut, Ludwig Hilberseimer, Richard Ducker, Adolf Rasing, Josef Frank, Peter Behrens, Adolf Gustav Schneck, Mart Stam, Victor Bourgeois.

Unlike Weissenhof, PREVI took the step toward the universality of the profession, inviting architects from Europe, Asia and America. Although Weissenhof wanted to create the prototype of the working-class home, in reality it did not. The homes designed by the plethora of modern architects have formally excelled, generating the architecture of the next decades, but at the same time far exceeded the budgets that the working families could have ever had. PREVI programmatically gave up the ambition to create models of architecture, assuming the creation of models of life, of its domestic evolution. If the Weissenhof moment tried to close a current in a sensitive form, modernism, PREVI tried, 40 years later, to open the formal boundaries of architecture and create a metabolic architecture capable of evolution and renewal.

PREVI remained the last great experiment and international contest capable of bringing together the greatest architects of the moment under the aegis of social habitation: progressively, the office tower,

the museum, the sports programs, the theatres have become the vehicles of innovation in the architectural form, bringing together the starchitects and generating architecture as a show or, perhaps even more, architecture as a dream. But Turner's practice in Peru in the 1950s inspired, among many others, Ghana's support programs for vulnerable groups, led by Abrams and Otto Koenigsberger, and the founding of Habitat for humanity in 1968 by Millard and Linda Fuller.

True to the idea that users of social housing should have the right to the autonomy of the built environment they live in, all the architects participating in the great PREVI experiment accepted the challenge of leaving an architectural object unfinished and seeing their work completed by the users. Each architect tried to observe this cultural identity by his own means: Alexander, for example, lived for two weeks in a *barriada* (poor Peruvian neighbourhood) and used few partitioning walls, observing how the inhabitants socialised; Van Eyck placed the kitchen at the center of gravity of the house, trying to give this space the importance he observed it has and thus consecrating and enhancing the role of women in the family.

Three winning projects (Metabolics, Atelier 5 and Herbert Ohl) were awarded, but the jury decided to build all the participating projects in a first phase of 500 houses, with the remaining 1,000 to be completed later. The exception was the German project, which, although a winner, was considered too difficult to put into action.

Unfortunately, like many other similar initiatives,

the second phase has never been started, due, in the case of PREVI, to Fernando Belaúnde Terry's dismissal from the office of president by a military junta in 1968. After plunging the country into economic chaos, the military junta held democratic elections, which led to the re-election of Belaúnde Terry in 1980, a position he held until 1985, during which time he continued the democratic reforms begun during his first term. In 2002, Terry dies at the age of 89 and is buried with the greatest honors in the history of the republic as the father of Peruvian democracy, with tens of thousands of Lima residents taking to the streets to pay him a final tribute. In my view, Belaúnde Terry was the architect who managed to overcome his profession and radically change the public sphere in his country and beyond, in the sense of its democratisation.

The project's stake consisted in the construction of houses capable of supporting further amplifications needed to accommodate a larger number of beneficiaries than the one for which they were originally intended. Even though there was no participation of the beneficiaries during the design (migrants did not form a community on the physical territory where the neighborhood was built, the community being formed only during the execution of the project, when the architects worked directly with the families), they were allowed to change their homes after they were put into use.

The new neighbourhood had to cope with a progressive densification, with each family considering

an increase in the number of members from 3 to over 10. Practically, at the time of the first 500 housing units in 1973, it was only a "platform for change. Housing was not the end, but the beginning, the matrix of change." – Justin McGuirk

The failure to continue the PREVI project with the second phase has led some critics to declare its failure, forgetting that 500 housing units are not nothing, anywhere in the world. The construction of no less than 24 different housing prototypes, each of which evolved differently, raised the issue of unsustainable costs for the economy and showed the impossibility of repeating the created model. At the same time, PREVI showed that when there is political will, such projects are achievable, learning from the lessons of the past.

Is it a success or a failure?

More than four decades after it was put into use, no family left the occupied home, but, on the contrary, enlarged it and shaped it through its use. Even if they don't remember the names of the architects, the inhabitants know that they live in the French or Japanese house, and at the world football championships they almost always support the team of the country from where the architect author of their house originates from, because Peru, for geographical reasons that makes it fall in groups with Brazil, Argentina, Chile or Uruguay, usually fails to qualify for the final tournaments.

HERO: Housing and Empowerment for Roma - A new approach to housing and financial inclusion of Roma in Romania

23rd of February, 2023

The President of the Association, Lorin Niculae, was invited during the round table at the end of the conference, in which organizations relevant to housing issues within Roma communities shared the experiences gained through the projects undertaken with community development.

We are very grateful for the invitation and we want to congratulate the team for launching such an important project!

“HERO is an EU pilot project that aims to help improve the lives of marginalised Roma families in Romania. Funded by the European Parliament and implemented by the European Commission and the Council of Europe Development Bank, HERO applies an innovative social investment model to counter the socio-economic exclusion of disadvantaged people, such as marginalised Roma communities.

HERO provides a set of diverse interventions in several areas of social integration. The main tools include micro-loans, professional trainings, coaching and mentoring services - all aiming to support people's

access to housing, employment, and financial services. The project promotes community-led development, empowering Roma communities via investing in social innovation.

Throughout 2023-2024, selected municipalities in Bulgaria, Romania and Slovakia will be introduced to the HERO project. About 3 million euro is available to support Roma families facing adversities in access to decent housing and gainful employment opportunities.”
- ROMACT Program Romania

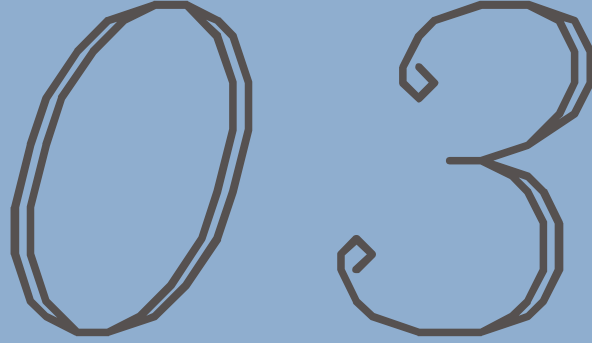


Image ©Programul ROMACT - România #ROMACT

universal design

m o n t h

2 0 2 3



Concept evolution: Community Centre, Chiojdu





Presentation: Chiojdu Community Centre @École nationale supérieure d'architecture de Paris-la Villette

22nd of March, 2023
at the invitation of teacher Viviana Comito

Stud.arh. Silvia Niculae and Irina Ursea (UAUIM) presented the work-in-progress community centre during the course <<Matériaux / territoire : cycles de vie et de ville>> (Materials / territory : life and city cycles), led by teacher Viviana Comito.

They talked about the design process, inspiration from local architecture and implementation of local materials, technologies and know-how.

The participating students had questions about the construction techniques, the materials found locally and the building process of the construction. Irina and Silvia were welcomed with great enthusiasm and also the desire to visit the Arhipera construction site and Summer School, 11th edition, 2023!

We are very grateful for the kind invite, warm welcoming and discussion that followed the presentation!







Reduced mobility

Lorin Niculae

The first time I traveled to Germany, in 1994, I was stunned by the large number of wheelchairs on the street, in markets, in shops. Actually, I was shocked, because on the streets of Romania you could only see a stroller here and there. In it would be a person with reduced mobility, having a sad and resigned figure. In Germany, there is no such thing. The owners of the strollers moved briskly, crossed the streets, entered the shops, smiled, laughed and conversed with others. The first justification of the reality I thought of, wrongly, like most first impressions, was that Germany was a country with a lot of people with disabilities, compared to Romania, and that this was probably due to the unhealthy diet, full of hormones and pesticides. Then I started to see other differences. First of all, the cleanness of the streets. For a successful group photo, the German professor who accompanied us laid down on the asphalt. Then he got up nonchalantly and didn't even shake, because he literally had nothing to shake, he was as clean as before the stunt that, in Bucharest, would certainly cost him the whole suit.

The curbs were low and rounded, and the sidewalks and streets seemed smoother, without being slippery. The whole city had a slightly artificial air, with the alleys perfectly swept by leaves and the smell of detergent in the air, almost like a well-maintained play. Crossing

a tree square in autumn, you had the feeling that the yellowish leaves knew how to detach, how to float seemingly randomly and fall only on the lawn, never on the alley. And then I saw the secret. A retired man who was walking by had leaned over, picked up a leaf from the ground and threw it into the grass. Thus, the leaf that had been missing the lessons about falling and had shown a mediocre civic conscience had been put in its place before making anyone slide on it at the first rain. And indeed, when the rain arrived at the beginning of November, I noticed that very few of the townspeople's customs had changed. Apart from opening the umbrellas, people were doing the same things, which was hurrying around. I was stressed that my shoes and muddy pants would get dirty, but that didn't happen. It felt like it was raining in the washing machine, not a bit of brown, nothing that could stain. People with locomotor disabilities seemed to even be in an advantage during the rain, because they had umbrellas fixed to the cart, and most of them were motorized, moving smoothly and silently.

Later, in the years that followed, I visited many homes of low-income people that were faced with poverty in Romania. Very often, I would meet a person with locomotor disabilities occupying a bed in one of the smallest and most remote rooms from the

entrance. And then I understood that it was not the healthy hunt of immortal Dacians that made the vast majority of Romanian townspeople nuzzle their shoes and pants through the mud, but rather the poverty and indifference of a state that did not intend to solve one of the most important problems of the city, its accessibility to everyone. The people with reduced mobility whom I did not meet on the street were, in fact, invisible, silent and resigned witnesses of a blazed, ignorant and deaf reality.

25 years after my visit to Germany, the cities of Romania do not appear better, with some notable exceptions that remain, however, exceptions. High curbs have become even higher, and people with locomotor difficulties cannot use public transport easily. The sidewalks remained equally unfriendly. They try to get you hooked, at every corner, with sharp metal armature, cut with a disc, with pits and discontinuities that test even the youth.

No one seems to think of those who can no longer raise and bend their legs well, who have balance problems, who have to move in a wheelchair. They remained as few on the streets of Romanian cities as they were in the past. Stroller ramps have inclinations that defy even legitimate athletes, for there is nothing more dangerous than a steep, slippery slope. And so, our city, of all, offers itself in reality only to the powerful and vivacious elite of Romania, and the elderly and people with reduced mobility remain subject to mockery, death is looking for them at home but they can't be found.

By humiliating those who need us most, we are preparing for an old age of late, lying, and useless regrets.

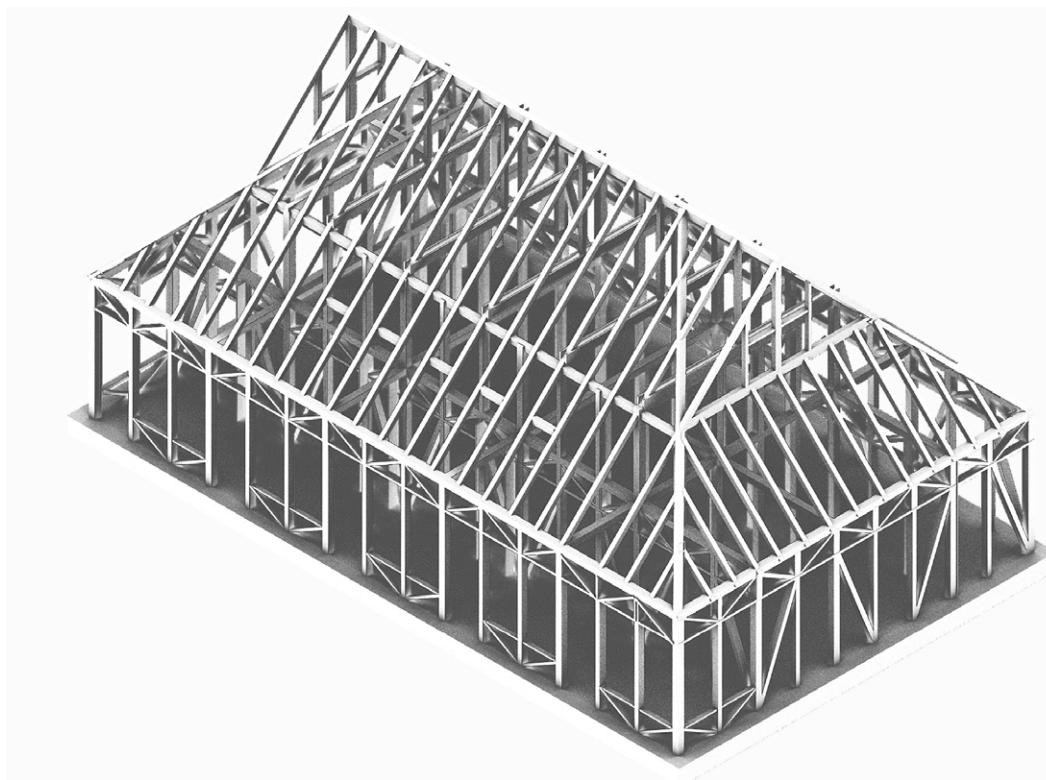
m o n t h

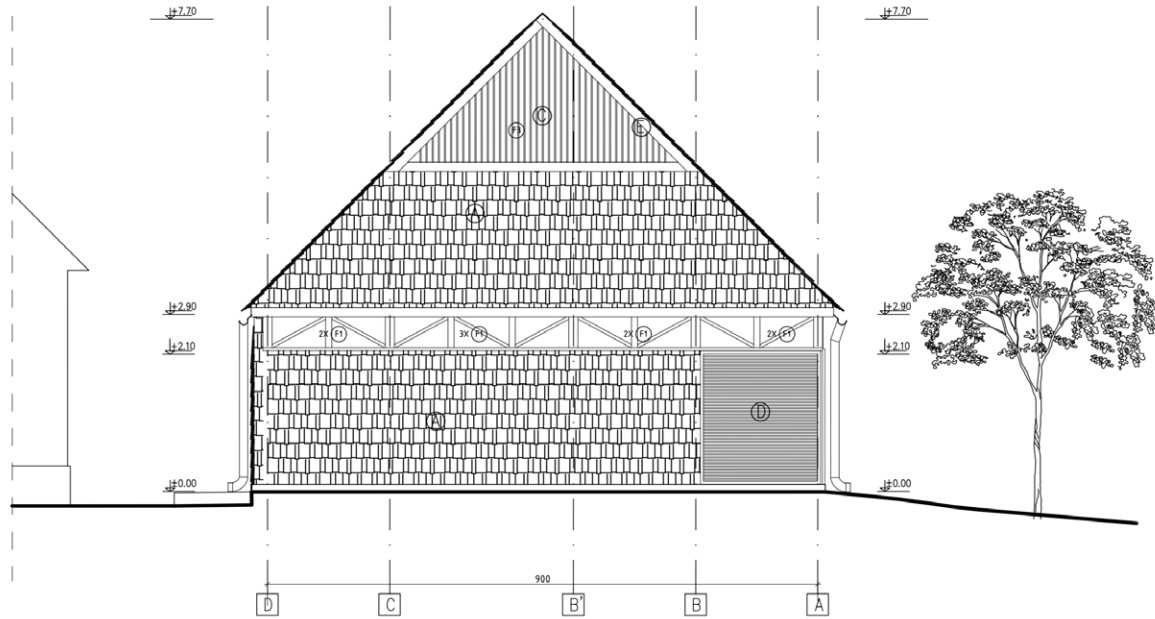
2 0 2 3

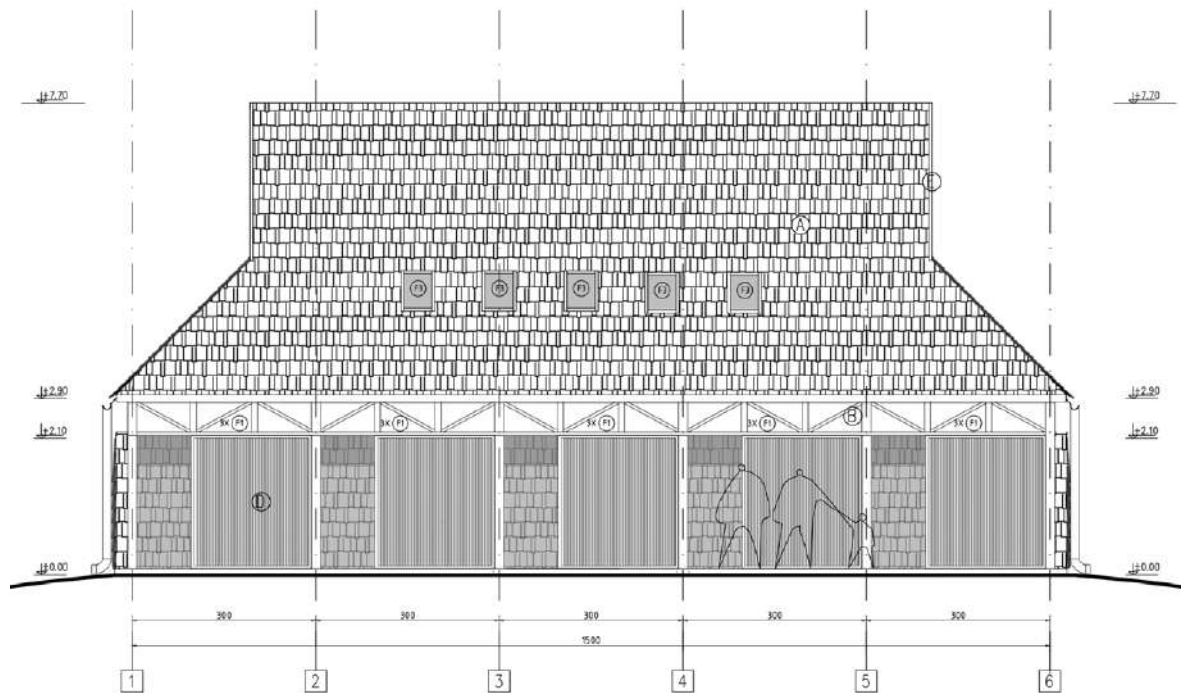


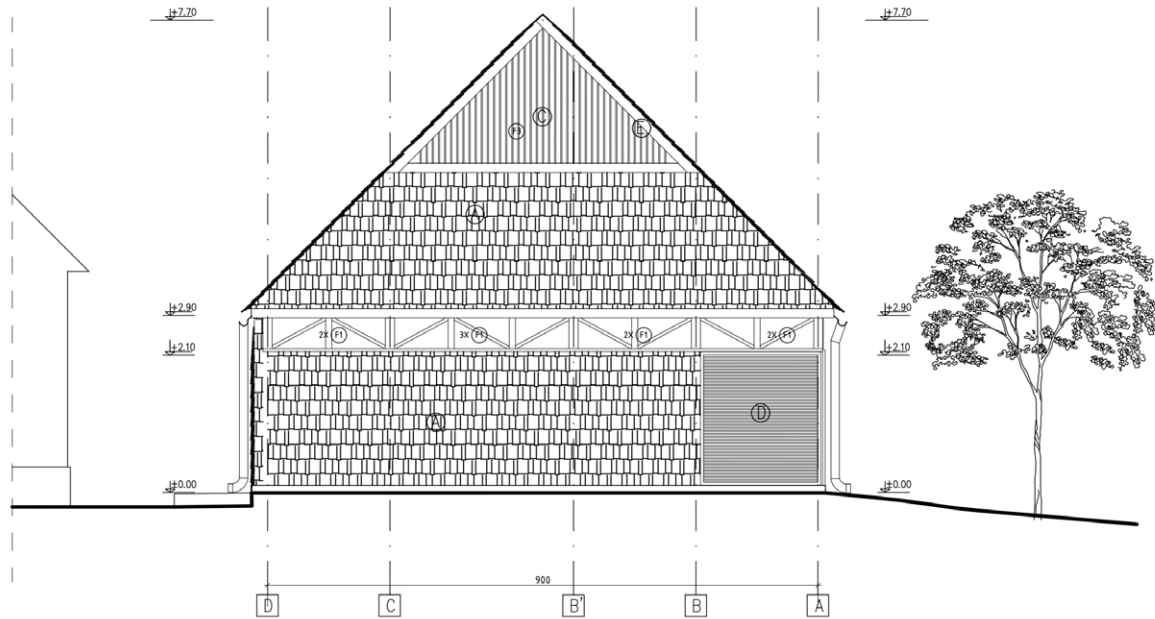
springtime for new
architectures

Concept evolution: Community Centre, Chiojdu











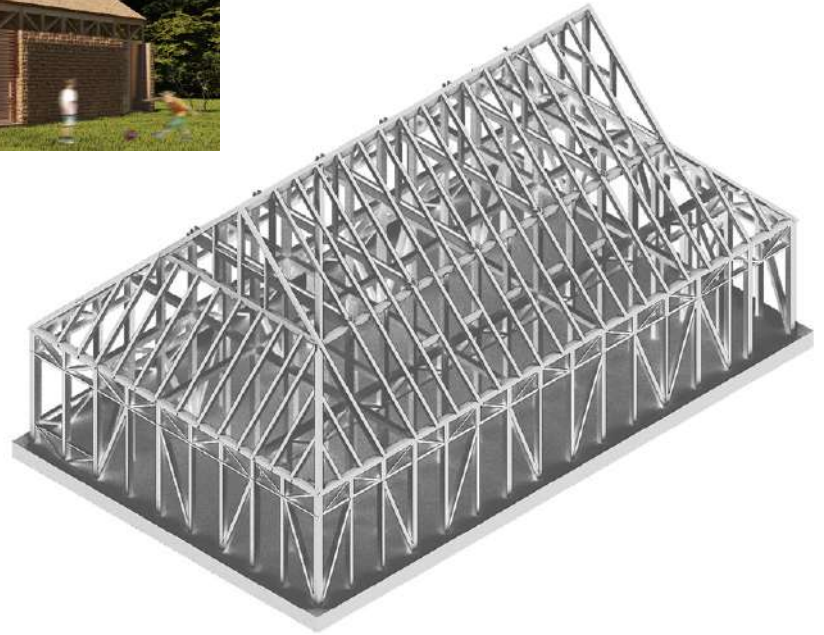




Photomontage on the site of our intervention



Handwritten blue scribble.



A bridge and a few learnings

Lorin Niculae

Kamza is a city in Albania, a few kilometers north of Tirana, a city that should not have existed on the map. On the lower part of the plateau between the mountains first came some families for whom life in the capital would have been way too expensive. Then more and more came, in successive waves, coming from different geographical areas and bringing along their own customs. People occupied empty free land, claimed by no one, and built modest living spaces at first, but which extended as the families themselves grew. In time, the ways for the drays became lanes and then streets, and you can walk a lot through Kamza without finding a dead end, because all the streets flow into each other, in the natural way of the movement of people and goods. The people organized themselves, establishing their own customs and habits that helped them live together and build communities animated by solidarity, capable of defining their own common interest and protecting it.

Across the river, a family in the vicinity built a bridge. Without having any structural engineering studies, people built the bridge as they had seen other bridges, using recovered materials: they mounted the pillars, they stretched the cables with horses, they welded and braided, and spun and woven wires, until the bridge became strong enough. Then they laid planks on it, in fact pieces of boards and wood. And people started to

cross the bridge, this new route shortening everyone's path, but especially the children's way to school. After a while, the family who had built the bridge moved away, and when a flood broke down the bridge, the people realized that they themselves not only had to rebuild it, but also to maintain it. And so they started, small and big, to straighten up the pillars, to make new wires, to weave and weld, to bring new planks.

In the end, the bridge was again usable, and with its rebirth a new custom emerged: every man who crossed the bridge left a penny for its maintenance, so that it would not be taken away by the waters again. No one in particular has imposed the bridge fee. Simply, just as they had traced streets without any knowledge of urbanism, people had understood the value of the bridge without being forced by anyone. In a few tens of years, Kamza has grown to more than one hundred thousand inhabitants and has acquired the status of a city, a status that has never been craved since all its inhabitants had settled in the outskirts of Tirana, where they worked and where they wished to live. With its rise to the status of a metropolis, public works began involving the demolition of vast residential areas because, from the point of view of the administration, those houses did not exist, just as the bridge did not exist. Decades of autonomy have ended, replaced by a

heteronomy imposed by force, which, although aimed at the common good, does so by coercion, without making the inhabitants truly happy.

It is very interesting that the total freedom of the inhabitants of the troubled years 1990 did not generate an urban anarchy, because the progressive densification of the rural area of Kamza led to the appearance of a real city, with places of worship, schools and shops where, even though the inhabitants were poor, at least there was hope. And this hope led the inhabitants to build houses as well as they could, but also bridges that would link the houses to each other. The demolition of labored homes means the end of a dream and the replacement of hope with strategies, of freedom with submission obtained by force. The banishing of the people who built the bridge means the dismantling of communities whose existence in itself represented an immaterial heritage that the city could have continued to make use of, if only it had chosen dialog instead of bulldozers.

The administration's gesture of force is not made without varied historical and geographical precedents, which nonetheless does not make it excusable. Looking back, I try to find examples of when the peaceful, underprivileged people have been called to negotiations by the powerful ones of the day, and only a very few come to mind...



architecture without an architect: Kamza, Albania





m o n t h

2 0 2 3

05

with and about students

CASA Arhipera exhibition @Pixelateria, Romanian Design Week - Design Go!

CASA: community, architecture, sustainability and accessibility

Arhipera @Pixelateria, Intrarea Aurora 17A, Bucharest

14-21 of May

Arhipera Association has carried out numerous architectural projects created by architecture students. At Pixelateria, there are exhibited 3 recent projects, with panels and models, created under the guidance of arch. Lorin Niculae: Drumul Taberei 2030, Ceramic Oven and Community Center in Chiojdu. There is also the Din Lut Româneesc ceramics exhibition. "CASA" is part of the Design GO! satellite event program in Romanian Design Week 2023.

Short descriptions of the 3 showcased architectural projects:

1. Drumul Taberei 2030 is a project imagined by 37 students. It emerged from the motivation to create public spaces for the residents of the neighborhood.

2. The ceramic furnace in Chiojdu is designed in the courtyard of the House with Blazons (of the Union of Architects of Romania). Inspired by local vernacular architecture, the project will be used to burn clay creations, thus revitalizing the local pottery craft.

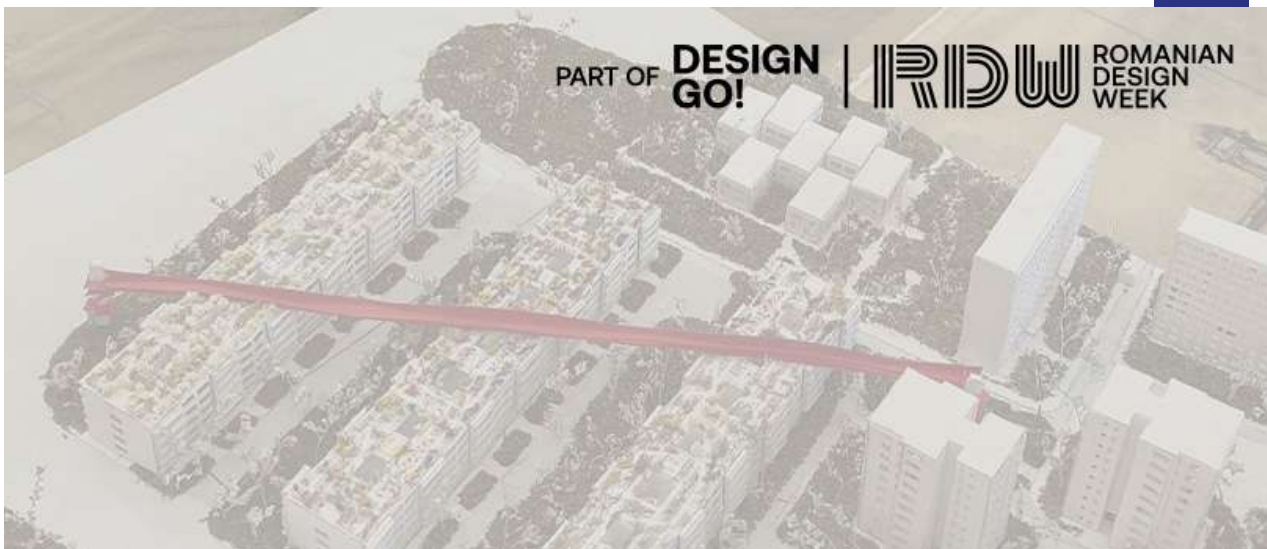
3. The Chiojdu Community Centre will be built in

2023. It aims to solve a need signaled by the local community, with the means of architecture. The project is carried out together with Chiojdu Town Hall, in collaboration with UAR and UAUIM and supported by re:arc institute.

Along with these architectural projects, the design project Din Lut Româneesc is also present, with creations that propose a different reading of ceramics.







Curator: Silvia Niculae | Students creative team: Drumul Taberei 2030: Grupa 36 2022-2023: Ruxandra Andrei, Marius-Alexandru Blaga, Miruna Ruxandra Dinu, Silvia-Cristina Durancea, Francisca Laura Feher, Diana-Andreea Frîncu, Andrei-Vladimir Gheorghe, Armand-Mihai Gheorghiad, Luciana-Maria Ghinea, Elena Antonia Grosu, Maria Grosu, Sofia Iatan, Sorana-Nicol Inoveanu, Alin-Mihail Ivana, Amalia Manea, Vlad-George Moldovan, Oana-Gabriela Niță, Maria-Viviana Pătrașcu, Elena Petrache, Alina-Elena Pređa, Mihnea-Teodor Sarighioleanu, Alexandru Sava, Mădălina Severin, Andrei Răzvan Stănescu, Antoina Tasellari, Adriana-Elena Toma, Cătălin Tudor, Luca Tudor, Anita-Ilona Vintilă, Claudia-Georgiana Zaharia

Arhipera students: Miruna Liana Alexandru, grupa 54, Silvia Niculae, grupa 41, Ioana-Ștefania Petre, University College London, Gabriela Petronela Stan, grupa 50, Andreea Ralea, grupa 50, Corina Staicu, grupa 41, Eliza Voiculescu, grupa 48

Ceramic furnace in Chiojdu: Irina Ursea, Ana Alecu, Gabriel Radu, Ștefania Schilizzi

Chiojdu Community Centre: Irina Ursea, Silvia Niculae, drd.arh. Irina Scobiola

The projects were created under the coordination of arh. Lorin Niculae.

May, RDW and Bucharest

Lorin Niculae

Until May 28th, you can visit one of the most important festivals dedicated to design in Romania, and by that I mean the eleventh edition of Romanian Design Week (RDW), a The Institute project, presented by the Unicredit Bank. Actually, we're talking about an absolutely impressive number of exhibitions, debates and related events dedicated to design and architecture, which try to highlight the fields of their manifestation. In the Amzei Square pavilion (Bucharest), you can visit exhibitions of architecture, interior design, graphic design, illustrations, product design and clothing design, all which totals to no less than 162 projects. To these, 128 projects selected projects are added to the online digital archive dedicated to examples of good practice.

This year's festival theme is Connections, and its choice puts in light the need for relationships in a constantly changing world. Although the word itself has become a commonplace in recent decades, becoming a mantra of contemporaneity, RDW manages to give it meaning and shape by organizing over 100 related events that highlight the hugeness and diversity of cultural practices in the field of design. Taking place in the Bucharest Creative District or in the Cotroceni, Dorobanți-Floreasca, Ioanid-Icoanei neighborhoods, or in many other places of Bucharest, these events are not only an opportunity to interact with designers

and their creations, but also an opportunity to literally visit, their workshops. Located, for the most part, in old houses, the creative workshops shed light on the city itself, and their discovery involves strolling through it, entering courtyards which are usually closed, stepping on thresholds of venerable buildings, where wooden floors creak underfoot and peeled coatings show successive layers of murals that tell stories about past generations, animated as well by the love for beauty.

The same aspects apply to the old and beautiful house in the Aurora Entrance where two creative initiatives are carried out born from the passion of the architects Anca Crețu and Lucian Călugărescu: the MyArchitect MyDesigner architecture design office and the Pixelateria studio. I stepped in there for the first time on Sunday, for the opening of the exhibition of projects made by the University of Architecture and Urbanism „ Ion Mincu ” and the Arhipera Association, in partnership with the Union of Architects of Romania, Chiojdu Local Council and re:arc institute. I stepped into, as I said, a bright and clear space, where the exhibition happily twinned with a library specialized in the fields of design, architecture and construction, a majestic stove and an unmistakable creative air. In fact, the real value of visiting a design studio is to directly experience the promoted design, because any architects or artists

arrange their office by their image and resemblance, regardless of the means at their disposal or the time they have to do so. Anca and Lucian created a beautiful place, full of imagination, in which the architecture students presented with ease their projects, alongside the very young ceramic designer Gregorio Petru from dinlut.ro, who tries to bring back the wonderful craft of pottery, unjustly forgotten by many.

The walk through the city, with the purpose of visiting the exhibitions, puts into light a branch, an arch in time between the epoque when the city was starting to take the form which gave it the reputation of "Little Paris" and the present moment when the creative practices in the area of design and architecture try to materialize, to shape and generate the future. RDW manages, every year, to bring into the spotlight an impressive number

of artists, designers and architects, but we must not forget that they need our support and appreciation, as a society, for the rest of the year.

I invite you not to miss the opportunity of these two weeks in which the beautiful weather of May is entwined with the beauty of the city and the value of some projects we all need, whether or not we are aware of it. And this is because, ultimately, design is the creative process of turning an existing reality into a desired one and, without design, it would be harder for us on Earth.



Project evolution: Community Centre, Chiojdu



The cutting of wood has started, for the construction of the Community Center, in Chiojdu!

The wood is cut according to the list of quantities, is of local origin and put into operation by local craftsmen.





collaborative practices

m o n t h

2 0 2 3



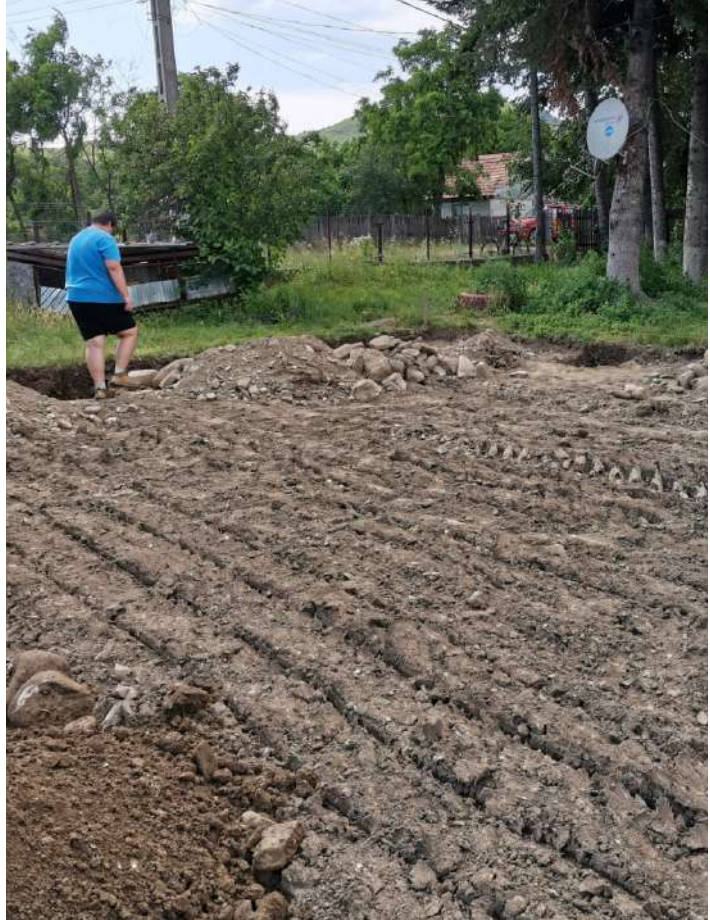
Project evolution: Community Centre, Chiojdu



The Community Center in Chiojdu, in full execution!

After the delivery of the execution project in May 2023, the Local Council organized the auction and based on this process we selected the local contractor responsible for the execution of the project.





Closing symposium COST Action 18126

TU Delft University, Netherlands

2nd of June

On the 2nd of June, we participated at the closing symposium of the European Cost Action network "Writing Urban Places", at TU Delft University in the Netherlands.

The symposium was organized in five different categories: cities, working groups, city walks, movies and books. The president of the association, associate professor, Lorin Niculae, was part of the discussions and told us with great emotion about the end of this project, which has lasted over 4 years. We express our

gratefulness to the entire team COST Action 18126 for this beautiful experience!

Photo @mattias.malk



The city between the rocks and the waters

Lorin Niculae

What could be wilder and more indomitable than a rock? In Helsinki you can leave the apartment to climb granite rocks. It seems that the people here built the city to preserve the wild areas of it, in a repression full of modesty and wisdom of the temptation to acquire your entire territory, deeply understanding the direct relationship with nature and its need.

The city was held responsible from the very beginning, with large reserves of free space, where children can play unstructured, self-organizing themselves. School means only three hours of learning, daily. Otherwise, it is dedicated to activities in which children learn by doing, watching or exploring nature. Walking down the street, I could see the children playing during the break. Some ran, others fought, screamed, and behaved in an agitation that evoked my own childhood breaks. It wasn't until later that I realized that I was watching the scene just because the fence of the school yard was a meter high and wasn't even made of wire mesh.

All balconies are greenhouses, so the facades of buildings are often covered almost completely in glass. It is amazing that it is perfectly clean, and this is not due to the fact that thousands of Finnish people wash the windows day and night, but because the rain is clean. I

mean the drops, weirdly enough, don't stain. In Helsinki, mothers come with a baby stroller on the beach, spread a rug and start doing yoga, no matter how cold or wet it is outside, because Helsinki is also the city of saunas, where the heat of the steam and the smell of pine bring you back to the cold you endure.

The capital of Finland is the city of open libraries where you can spend days studying without an ID. It is the city of brushes with three wires fixed next to the entrance of buildings to brush off the snow from your shoes. Between rocks and waters, Helsinki lives the life that was given to them with dignity, illuminating the darkness of winter not only with lamps and lanterns, but especially with freedom and culture. The architecture of the 1900 style, predominant in the central area, means freedom, because it means exploring nature, going out to sea. The buildings are neat, painted in bright, shiny colors. There are parks and esplanades everywhere, and the winter garden, a large greenhouse with exotic plants, built of metal and glass in the second half of the 19th century, is accessible to anyone, even as a picnic spot. In fact, inside, the alleys are flanked by tables, chairs and benches, so you can stay inside for a few hours, and food, drinking and work are allowed.

There is no smoking in Helsinki, in any case not outside. I didn't see any passers-by smoking. Instead, I saw an elegant lady walking her dog in the park, stopping by a trash can and lifting a cigarette butt with her fingers. She crushed it well next to the trash, then carefully inspected it to make sure it was really extinguished and only then threw it away. Here the fine for throwing a cigarette butt on the floor is 80 euros. In Helsinki, the musicians of the Sibelius Philharmonic go out in front of the institution and hold free music classes for children and parents.

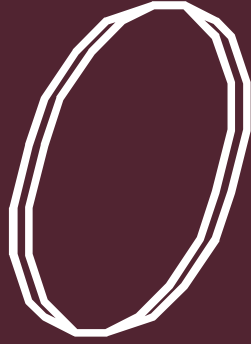
On the street, pedestrians have absolute priority. There are few traffic lights, most crossings are only signaled. Drivers also stop when you are two meters from the zebra and wait quietly for you to cross the street. Helsinki is a city without noxious substances. The air is simply clean. That is, without microparticles, without dust, without smells. Just pure.

There are probably other shortcomings in Helsinki, other than the darkness and the cold of winter, but I did not have time to identify them. Visiting the city, I had the feeling, more than ever, that I was in another country. One in which the central and local authorities are at the service of the citizen.

learning from our peers

m o n t h

2 0 2 3



Project evolution: Community Centre, Chiojdu



Arhipera Summer School starts soon in Chiojdu!

Meanwhile, here are some images of the evolution of the execution of the Community Center in Chiojdu, where steel fittings and the necessary formworks are made.



Arhipera Presentation @Greenhouse, Copenhagen

4th of July, CPH, Denmark

Silvia Niculae and Irina Ursea presented the Arhipera Association at Greenhouse, Copenhagen, at the invitation of @rearc.institute.

The two students spoke about Arhipera and the main directions of the association: education, community empowerment, participatory and open construction, cultural identity and integrated intervention. They presented numerous projects of the association, carried out from 2011 until now.

And because Arhipera is a team, we want to hereby mention what we also said in the presentation in Copenhagen: all these projects and initiatives could not have existed without the participation of all members, volunteers, collaborators, beneficiaries of Arhipera, who contributed to their creation, under the coordination of Arhipera teachers and practitioners and associate prof. arch. Lorin Niculae IMUAU, who has been guiding Arhipera since 2011.

We are extremely grateful to have had the opportunity to present our work to an audience so interested in our methodology! Thank you re:arc.institute!

Photos by @mishaelphillip



New Modes of Participation @Greenhouse Sessions, Copenhagen

5th of July, CPH, Denmark

On the 5th of July, during the Greenhouse Sessions, Copenhagen, organized by re:arc institute, Silvia Niculae represented the Arhipera Association, in a conversation about new participatory practices with Ana María Gutiérrez, Organizmo. The discussion was moderated by Nicolay Boyadjiev, Practice Lab @rearc.institute.

The purpose of the conversation was presenting the grassroots work, debating participatory practices and the constructive and educational history of the two organizations, in Romania and Colombia. We talked about what we learned from the participatory design with the beneficiaries, the long-term sustainable approach to housing and the importance of this practice in social architecture around the world.

We are grateful to Ana María Gutiérrez @organizmo for the insightful conversation and Nicolay Boyadjiev for the thoughtful and caring questions. Thank you re:arc institute for bringing us together and creating this creative and collaborative space where we met so many other inspiring initiatives and practitioners!

Photos by @mishaelphillip



About Greenhouse Sessions

“We invite you to join re:arc institute—a new philanthropic organisation supporting architectures of planetary well-being—in celebration of the opening of The Greenhouse: a UIA Pavilion in the form of a new, youth-focused environmental education space in Copenhagen.

For this occasion, re:arc will present a two-day series of multi-format conversations with architects, designers, and activists working at the intersections of ecological design and spatial practice, to imagine how we might together transform our relationships with the natural environment.

In Conversation:

New Modes of Participation

By facilitating meaningful conversations with different stakeholders in decision-making processes, and de-centering the ‘Architect’ and other authoritative figures, we can begin to see the critical roles of knowledge exchange, mutual recognition, social collaboration, and discursive design principles in participatory design praxis. In this conversation, we will explore the challenges of top-down approaches in participatory design, redefine the formalities of civic infrastructures, engage with regenerative frameworks, and learn about methods that may enhance creative

dialogue with local community members. Join us as Ana María Gutiérrez, Director of Bio Architecture and Alternative Technologies at Organismo, and Silvia Niculae, Communications Director at Arhipera, discuss the importance of bottom-up participatory design interventions to address spatial inequalities and the well-being of our social and ecological fabrics in their respective regions of Colombia and Romania.”



Text and image from: <https://greenhousesessions.rearc.institute/>

The city of crossing flyovers

Lorin Niculae

Over time, the city had grown beyond measure. Lots of people had come in search of illusory sources of income, and they had settled there, each as they could. The houses of the old neighborhoods had first been raised by one floor, then by two and even three, so that the light barely reached the level of the ground floor. On the old streets, cars crowded together with tiny drays drawn by donkeys, cyclists, street vendors, among piles of sand and materials, scaffolds and falsework that supported older buildings. The car horns made such a deafening noise, and the forward speed was so slow that often cars were literally abandoned around the corners. These neighborhoods had also crammed into each other and almost into the periphery, suffocating the center where government institutions, embassies and large hotels had become increasingly isolated, in greenery so that they could only be reached through the sky.

After careful analysis, objective research and carefully thought-out feasibility studies, the municipality decided to build enormous bridge road-passages, which would link the periphery to the center and ensure fair traffic flows for an expanding city. Ambitious projects have been implemented, and over the poor neighborhoods, at a height of 30-40 meters, real highways appeared, with five lanes each way, protected by enormous fiberglass parapets. The pillars of the suspended streets had

been constructed by demolishing the houses under the judiciously drawn route, as well as the passageways that, like colossal tentacles, captured the cars in order to introduce them into the optimal traffic flows designed by the most skilled specialists.

The fact that thousands of families had been expropriated and moved by coercion to new residential units did not matter much because their opinion did not matter anyway, and the public interest in a fast and smooth circulation was indisputable. The small dramas of impoverished people, such as the displacement to an unknown place where you know no one, the disintegration of social networks of subsistence, the uncertainty of the homes, had failed to be heard, and the shadow of the great highways had grown rapidly and in a protective manner in the sky clouded by the dust fog of the piles of debris that had been, earlier, the modest homes of families without means.

And indeed the opening of the passages led to millions of vehicles crossing them daily, and the success of the fluidization of circulation was properly celebrated by the authorities, because, in addition to unlocking the city, a large and unskilled workforce had been drawn into the infrastructure field, and the economy was taking a new boost, starting from the extraction of resources for the production of raw

materials and up to the attribution of colossal contracts to the quickly selected entrepreneurs. Everyone had to benefit, including the population of the poor areas under the suspended highways, because, isn't it so the borders of the major road routes must be judiciously brokered by advertising messages capable of increasing the sales of strategic producers who annually allocate substantial advertising budgets. So, on the left and right of the great passages, as high and 40 meters, advertising panels were built even higher, as wide as the school wall, constructed on three-meter thick metallic tubular pylons or on lattice joists structures scientifically designed to take over all the load of wind that was weighing onto the panels at dizzying heights.

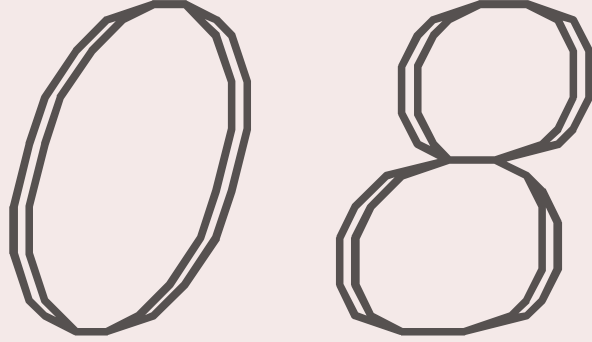
In order not to block the narrow streets from below, where light could not shine through, but only dust, the pillars of the panels were directly piercing the houses, counter some satisfactory rents.

Under the passages that led tourists and clerks to the five-star hotels in the center, the homeless people had built modest dwellings that took advantage of the solid reinforced concrete roof and grew from top to bottom, sometimes touching the soil or terraces of old houses, resembling sparrow nests built out of wood, leftover iron pieces, textiles and other debris recovered after the demolition. The side panels of the passages, sometimes shattered by the wind, reached the floor, where they were quickly recovered and integrated into the labored work, bustling by the paradoxical enthusiasm of hopelessness. Through the resulting holes, tourists, clerks and officials saw a city that was

impossible to understand, immersed in darkness and dust, poor till' the muds marrow of the unsanitary houses, a nightmare city where, unbelievably, the people who met each other in the miserable streets embraced and smiled, seemingly having time for one another.

m o n t h

2 0 2 3



summer school time!

Arhipera Summer School, XIth edition

Chiojdu, Buzău County, Romania, July 30 - August 5 2023

The XIth edition of the Arhipera Summer School took place in Chiojdu, House of Blazons (Casa cu Blazoane), between July 30 - August 5, 2023. The activities considered a sustainable and informal application of architecture, through a proactive and democratic approach.

We activated on 4 levels:

1. Participatory execution of the Chiojdu Community Center. During the 7 days of the School, students participated in the construction works of the Chiojdu Community Center, taking part in informal discussions and activities with the local community. In addition, the program contained transectual visits in the village and its surroundings, in order to facilitate the recognition of the local built and unbuilt heritage.

2. Participatory design of execution details. Students developed innovative details regarding the contemporary use of traditional materials in actual and sustainable forms. The design was guided associate professor dr. arch. Lorin Niculae (IMUAU) in accordance with the necessary of the Community Center.

3. Lectures on sustainability and architecture of the public interest, held by the guest professors of the

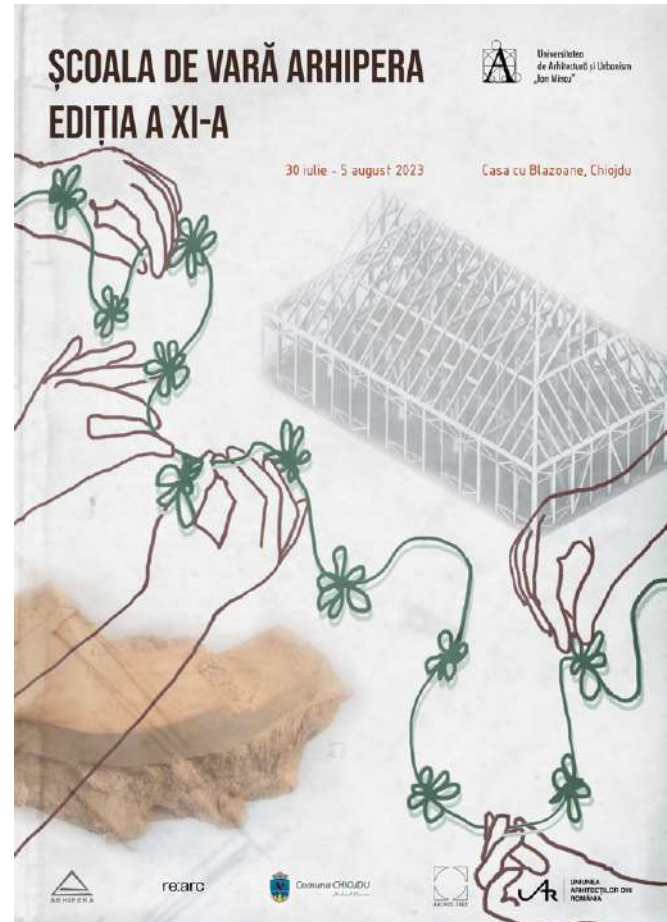
summer school. There were held 5 guest lectures, on the following subjects: the reutilization of spaces for sports, by drd. arch. Ruxandra Balcanu, architecture and affectivity, by drd. arch. Ioana Radu, guerrilla architecture, by dr. arch. Ionuț-Laurențiu Dinu, accentuated degradation of cultural monuments caused by climate change, by drd. arch. Silvia Costiuc and Arhipera projects, by Arhipera alumni arch. Anca Crețu, together with drd. arch. Irina Scobiola. Besides the guest lectures, there were several lectures held by associate professor dr. arch. Lorin Niculae (IMUAU), coordinator of the Summer School.



4. Education at the grassroots level with the pupils of the community. We organized the intensive artistic workshops “Sustainability through art and architecture”, which took place Monday – Friday, twice a day.

Pupils gained a better understanding of the local materials and the conditions that act on an architecture built in the paradigm of sustainability, by approaching these in an intuitive, holistic manner, through experiences that further aimed to develop their creative field. Participants began discovering these materials and used them in an imaginative way, by creating artistic installations inspired by the 6 elements that govern local architecture: wood, stone, earth, and the pre-existing ones that are the base of the first materials: water, light, air. The participants had an age range between 5 and 18 years old.

The workshops were coordinated by visual artist Silvia Niculae, together with students who supported the design-build process of each team and their installations: Corina Staicu (Wood team), Roxana Maria (Light team), Ioan Leahu (Stone team), Irina Ursea (Air team), Mario Costea (Water team) and ceramics artist Gregorio Petru (Earth team).



Summary, on days

Sunday, 30.07.2023

The 11th edition of Arhipera Summer School has started!

Today we met at Chiojdu, Casa cu Blazoane, to welcome the first day of Summer School with enthusiasm. There were three main lectures: an introductory lecture by associate professor dr. arch. Lorin Niculae (IMUAU), a presentation on the Arhipera Association by Silvia Niculae and a short introduction on the Chiojdu Community Center by Irina Ursea. We started to get to know the village and had the best meal: at Pensiunea Melania!



Monday, 31.07.2023

The second day of Summer School was full of activities!

We started the day with two lectures: the first on architecture and affectivity, held by drd. arch. Ioana Radu and the second one about the reuse of spaces for sports, by drd. arch. Ruxandra Balcanu. The lectures generated very interesting debates related to the histories of the built space and the possibility of their integration in the rehabilitation process. The day continued with a surprise from Mrs. Flori, who brought nuts for all the students, including the equipment needed to crack them!

Associate professor dr. arch. Lorin Niculae (IMUAU) moderated a debate in which the topic of architecture's identity occasioned an introduction to the etymological substrate of some frequently used, but less understood words: problem, project, research. Mr. Florin Drăguliu held a guided tour of the historical monument of the House of Blazons (Casa cu Blazoane) where the Summer School takes place due to the educational partnership with the Union of Romanian Architects. Mr. Drăguliu recounted about the spirit and the several narratives of the monument and local surroundings.

Also today, we organized the first workshop of the Summer School dedicated to the pupils from Chiojdu,

which aims to the creation of architectural installations. The pupils are coordinated by the visual artist Silvia Niculae and after an introductory presentation about sustainable installations, the participants drew the first conceptual sketches of the creations.



Tuesday, 01.08.2023

The third day of the Summer School took place almost entirely outdoors!

We started the morning with participatory work on the construction site at the Community Center, Chiojdu. Mr. Florin Drăgulin presented the techniques for the correct use of the materials and technologies on the construction site, along with a safety instruction explained by associate professor dr. arch. Lorin Niculae

(IMUAU). The students extracted screws and nails and took care of cleaning the wooden boards, which were obtained from stripping the foundations' temporary wooden walls. The boards will be reused in the roof framing of the Center, in an attempt to use as few resources as possible for construction.

The courses of architectural art installations for the pupils of Chiojdu continued in the first part of the day with the completion of concept sketches and the determination of the required materials. Coordinated by the visual artist Silvia Niculae, together with drd. arch. Ruxandra Balcanu and drd. arch. Ioana Radu, the pupils made a trip to the river bank in order to pick up local materials (stone, discarded branches, wood), which they are going to use in installations that apply the principles of sustainability.

The afternoon began with a lecture by associate professor dr. arch. Lorin Niculae (IMUAU), on the role and categories of foundations, considering also a wider understanding of local building traditions and examples of good and bad practice. The architectural art installation workshops continued in the second part of the day, with a course on clay modeling, held by the ceramics artist Gregorio Petru, from Din Lut Românesc (www.dinlut.ro). The pupils were accompanied by their teachers. The workshop aimed to facilitate an elemental contact with this locally extracted material, at first by explaining how the soil becomes clay, by crushing, sifting, and combining with water. After this applied way of understanding the material, pupils were guided to create their own clay bowls, and then houses. Thus, by using a natural and local resource, we aim to interpret a traditional craft in a new way.

The day ended with an artistic program initiated by the local pupils, with whom we sang songs and laughed until the evening! We thank the entire Chiojdu community for such a beautiful and productive day spent together!

The Chiojdu Community Center project is implemented by the Arhipera Association of students and teachers from the "Ion Mincu" University of Architecture and Urbanism, together with the Chiojdu Local Council, is supported by @rearc.institute and carried out in partnership with the Union of Romanian Architects.



Wednesday, 02.08.2023

The fourth day of the Arhipera Summer School was very dynamic!

We started the day with a presentation by associate professor dr. arch. Lorin Niculae (IMUAU) on the development and content of construction documents (Pth, DTAC, DTOE), structures and installations files. We started on the site of the Community Center with the preparation of the wood collected from the foundations' striking which will later be mounted on the roof framing. A team of students made the wood bases for the artistic installations designed by the Chiojdu pupils.

At the House of Blazons (Casa cu Blazoane), the workshops with the local pupils continued! Silvia Niculae, together with Irina Ursea, guided them towards a first conceptual layout of the artistic installations, using local materials. The participants created sketches in coordination which they placed the selected local materials on the wooden bases.

Associate professor dr. arch. Lorin Niculae (IMUAU) held a lecture on the design of architectural details, and the students began the elaboration of the execution details for the Community Center.

Due to the unforeseen storm, we had to cancel the architectural installations course in the second part of the day, as the activities are held outdoors. Pupils from the community participated in a creative drawing workshop, coordinated by stud.arch. Corina Staicu. Through imaginative exercises, they explored the links

between the 6 proposed elements: wood, earth, water, air, light and stone.

The day ended with a lecture by the guest of the Summer School, dr.arch. Ionuț-Laurențiu Dinu, about guerrilla architecture, through which he presented the principles of social architecture, its determinants, and examples. The presentation generated discussions about the rapid intervention of architects in contexts where their practices are needed, through a non-formal approach that diagnoses problems and identifies dynamic solutions at the local level.



Thursday, 03.08.2023

The fifth day of the Arhipera Summer School was focused on outdoor activities!

The site of the Community Center in Chiojdu continued to be crowded with students, who assisted the site works.

At the House of Blazons, the art installation workshops continued with students from Chiojdu, coordinated by Silvia Nicolae. For each pupil team there was assigned a student coordinator to support them throughout the day in the pragmatic construction, design-build process of the installations. Thank you to all the students involved: Corina Staicu (Wood team), Roxana Maria (Light team), Ioan Leahu (Stone team), Irina Ursea (Air team), Mario Costea (Water team) and ceramics artist Gregorio Petru (Earth team)!

We visited the Chiojdu Visitor and Information Center, where Mrs. Lenuța gave a brief presentation of the mountain trails in the area. We hiked to the Trovanti, to identify the natural heritage of the area. Through this route, we observed the landscape, local flora and fauna and the downward perspective on the village.

Drd. arch. Silvia Costiuc held a lecture about the accentuated degradation of cultural monuments caused by climate change. We reflected on the need for in-depth research on the effects of climate change and the necessary management in the field of

climate, through international authorities that analyze its risks through a multidisciplinary expertise. There were explained national and international examples where the climate crisis has effects on cultural heritage and ways to intervene on them.



Friday, 04.08.2023

The artistic installations about the 6 elements (water, air, water, light, stone, wood), made by the pupils from Chiojdu, coordinated by the students of the "Ion Mincu" University of Architecture and Urbanism, have been completed.

The work on the Community Center site continued with great energy, coordinated by the team of local contractors.

During the afternoon, the students worked out the technical execution details of the Community Center, taking into account the construction requirements.

We ended the day with a campfire, where we talked about the experience of this Summer School and burned the students' clay creations, made during the previous year's Summer School, on an open fire.



Saturday, 05.08.2023

The last day of the Arhipera Summer School, the 11th edition, was a festive day!

Today's lecture was about the Arhipera projects. Arch. Anca Crețu, together with drd.arch. Irina Scobiola, both Arhipera alumni, presented the projects carried out in the team: the completed ones and also those that remained only on paper, conceptually. The architects talked about grassroots participatory work and interactions with vulnerable families and communities. They discussed the particularities of the Arhipera projects, from the design phase, materiality, to the execution phase.

We ended the week full of workshops with a celebration in the courtyard of the House of Blazons, where the participating students presented their artistic



installations based on the 6 elements: wood, stone, water, air, light and earth. The students who coordinated them told about the process of creation and construction of the artistic objects. We thank the Union of Romanian Architects for the gifts given to the pupils!

We rejoice from the bottom of our hearts for this week spent together!

Thank you to all participating students, pupils, teachers, our hosts at House of Blazons and the community for welcoming us with open arms, as always! Thank you for all the openness, for all that we learn from each other year after year, and for all this beautiful friendship.





The New Village of Matteotti

Lorin Niculae

Considered one of the most emblematic examples of Italian residential architecture, the neighborhood called "The new village of Matteotti" in Terni, by the architect Giancarlo De Carlo, is also a prestigious application of the participatory architecture methods. The history of the housing of metallurgical workers in Terni begins in 1888, with the construction of the five-level block with 89 apartments on Brin Street. The building had shops and canteens on the ground floor and apartments on the other four floors, with an unsanitary design, unventilated kitchens, a fountain in the yard (until the 1920s, when the building was equipped with a running, drinkable water network). Already, at the beginning of the twentieth century, the block, whose hygienic-sanitary conditions were precarious anyway, had overcrowded, housing about 600 inhabitants. In the political context of 1939, the decision to disperse the workers in the city was made and the construction of 72 semi-rural dwellings at Italo Balbo (I Matteotti) was started, meant to offer the possibility of practicing agriculture instead of the gatherings that the workers made on the ground floor of the building. Their poor-quality execution needed a first rehabilitation intervention in 1955, after which Società Terni entrusts the project of this new workers' district to De Carlo. True to the principles of participatory architecture, De Carlo demands a consultation process with the buildings' future users, followed by the creation

of a formula of six principles that generate exceptional spatial-volumetric conformation of the ensemble and its formal richness:

1) Pedestrian routes separated from road routes, with intersections as rare as possible where strictly necessary. Car access to each gate and adequate equipment with garages and parking lots. Pedestrian trails measured according to individual psychological requirements: spaces of immediate perception, variation and suggestion of routes, presence of nature, fineness of detail;

2) Each apartment with its own green area, swiped as much as possible from the collective control. The composition of private green areas so that they can be perceived within the residential complex as a massive green area (privatization on the apartment level produces a collective advantage);

3) The creation of common green areas for community use and services;

4) On the neighborhood level, the formation of public services intended not only for the immediate service of the inhabitants, but also for the attraction of the interest of the inhabitants from neighboring areas;

5) Its construction typology neither fragmented nor

monobloc. Typological solutions capable of providing a clear organization of the environment, without limiting the private space of each social nucleus, be it minimal;

6) The type of apartments that differ, depending on the family structure, flexible interior designs, able to support, in the most appropriate way, changes in the use of space.

De Carlo transcribes in architectural language the primordial needs of people for intimacy, security, variety, flexibility, relationship with the natural environment and, last but not least, quality and beauty. De Carlo's detractors, including the German architect Hermann Schlimm, claim that the author of the new village of Matteotti had made his six points in his workshop in Milan, and the participatory meetings had only had the role of convincing future users of the viability of the solutions proposed by him. In support of the theory comes the very image of the residential complex, too architectural to be the fruit of a participatory process, unless it had been so well set up that it had turned all its users into architects. However, regardless of these legitimate suspicions, De Carlo managed to differentiate each apartment from the others, generating four functional typologies of buildings of six apartments each, with 45 different types of apartments.

If the interior allowed users to make subsequent changes, the exterior was designed to preserve its original appearance by the very contract of possession. At this point, the architect could be accused of a double the measure: on the one hand he encourages the

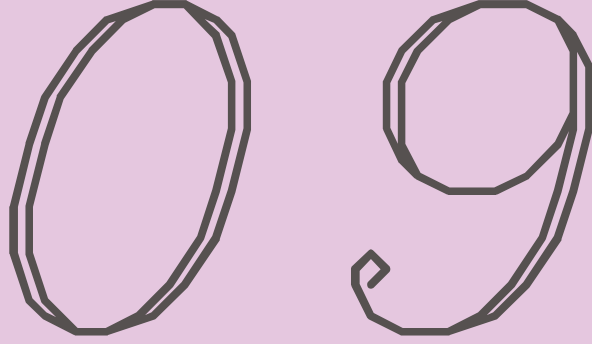
creative vivacity of users when designing the ensemble, but kills it immediately after execution. Basically, in this way, the new village of Matteotti becomes a "frozen" moment of the creative existence of the community, the transformations during the experience of use, being limited only for the inside. The formal richness of vernacular assemblies is transposed by the architect, once and for all, in built volume, not giving credit to its users. In this way, the architect assumed the classic role of the architect, a decision that can be doubted in terms of the ideals of democracy expressed by the author in different taken positions and manifestos.

However, despite the visual permanence of the outdoor space, user satisfaction is great in Matteotti's space, even today, due to the fact that each home has a unique aspect that individualizes it in comparison to the others, it benefits from a private green space and it enjoys, within the built ensemble, a specific to traditional architecture visual interest. Moreover, the fact that the outside cannot be altered is perceived positively by its inhabitants, which feel sheltered from a possible constructive verve that could increase the density of living by adding attics, closing terraces and transforming them into living rooms, closing porticoes etc. Was Giancarlo De Carlo so visionary that he deliberately limited the inhabitants' freedom to build in order to achieve a higher collective goal?

interconnectivity

m o n t h

2 0 2 3



Project evolution: Community Centre, Chiojdu



Wood preparation for the Community Center in Chiojdu continues! The shingle creation has begun.

Support for a vulnerable family in Argeş

Emergency services architecture

We visited a family from Argeş County, who lives in extreme housing poverty.

The family of parents and 2 children (and the third in the mother's belly) lives in a room of 10 sqm, built by Florin with his own hands.

Arhipera Association has decided to support this family with pro bono design, in order to expand the existing construction with a room, a kitchen and a bathroom, which can be accessed together from a closed porch. During the visit, we discussed together the possibilities for enlargement, assessing a solution that the family enthusiastically agreed with.



The Arhipera initiative comes in response to the request of Life Call, which actively supports the family.

Fundraising Arhipera @Vasile Lascăr Fest

Vasile Lascăr Fest, 2-3 September, Bucharest

The collaboration with Vasile Lascăr Fest, in partnership with the Grădina Sticlarilor, represents a fundraiser for supporting with architectural projects vulnerable families who need housing. We participate with the ceramic design creations Din Lut Românesc (www.dinlut.ro), which are offered in exchange for a donation to the Arhipera Association.

Thank you for everyone who came by and donated!



Arhipera @La Biennale, Venezia

North Macedonia Pavillion

At the Venice Architecture Biennale we had an extremely pleasant surprise!

The theme of North Macedonia's participation is a retrospective of the Summer Schools organized by the Faculty of Architecture "Saints Cyril and Methodius" in Skopje. We were impressed by the quality of the exhibition concept, which abstractly summarizes the educational experiences of these schools. Among these, the 2009 "Terristories" School had as guests and directors of the school: Klaske Havik (TU Delft), Sebastiaan Veldhuisen (Tilburg University) and the president of the Arhipera association, Lorin Niculae (IMUAU)!

Going through the excellent graphic quality catalog of the exhibition, we were even more surprised to discover a portrait from 2009, a time when Arhipera was just starting to take shape!

For Arhipera and the "Ion Mincu" University of Architecture and Urbanism, the colleagues from the "Saints Cyril and Methodius" Faculty of Architecture and those from TU Delft are, in fact, friends, with whom we have a long tradition of collaborative educational projects (such as the Arhipera Summer Schools, COST „Writing Urban Places") and whom we are happy to invite to be part of the juries of the diplomas in Bucharest.



We want to thank the organizers of the North Macedonia exhibition for the joy of meeting again in this special way and to thank Klaske and Sebastiaan for their friendship and the invitation to participate with them in the "Terristories" School, North Macedonia, 2009!



Arhipera @La Biennale, Venezia

Romanian Pavillion, Giardini

Arhipera & friends at the exhibition of the Romanian Pavilion, La Biennale di Venezia!

The Arhipera Association is part of the exhibition of the Romanian Pavilion "Now. Here. There" with the project of the house for the Marian family (2016). The project was participatively designed by SIASPA students (Arhipera International School of Participatory Social Architecture, 2015-2016) and completed during the Arhipera Summer School, 5th edition.

"The fifth ArhiPera house for vulnerable families in Belciugatele proposes a contextual response to the challenges of the theme. The beneficiary of the home is a family in extreme poverty. Thus, the house is robust and easy to maintain, with simple and cheap

constructions. Located in the extreme environment of Bărăgan (hot and dry summers and harsh winters), the house does not oppose the environmental factors, but understands and uses them. The project is the result of a participatory process with the beneficiaries of the house.

The traditional porch is replaced by a high and shaded area, protected in the winter by a snow guard system that turns into a shed in the summer. The masonry is woven so as to produce shade on the south and west facades. Rainwater is collected for household irrigation, and a mini-wind turbine, manufactured from waste, produces electricity."

The Romanian Pavilion is coordinated by architect Emil Ivănescu, created together with Simina Filat, Cătălin Berescu and Anca Păsarin.

The Romanian exhibition can be visited until November 26, at the Pavilion in Giardini di Castello. The curator is Lesley Lokko, and the theme of this year's biennial is "The Laboratory of the Future".

We thank the organizing and curatorial team and the Arhipera team of students and teachers who created this house, together with the beneficiaries who designed it in a participatory manner.





BUNES

Location: P

SCHOOL

Malureni, Rom

Two houses in the village. An exhibition,
demonstration, workshop, etc.
Specially built for the school.
Necessary for the school to be able to
provide, maintain and improve

Concept idea - CO-BUILD - Back to
School

COST Action CA18126

Bucharest Closing Event, Local Organizer: Arhipera, 8-9 September 2023

On 8-9 September, Bucharest hosted the members of the Cost Action CA18126 Core Group for a two-day gathering. The purpose of the meeting was two-fold: to evaluate the results of the project and to discuss future opportunities for expanding the Writing Urban Places community.

The project evaluation sessions were held at the Council Room of the University of Architecture and Urbanism "Ion Mincu" (IMUAU), on the first day. The university's leadership attended the meeting, including the director of the Doctoral School, Angelica Stan, the dean of the Faculty of Architecture, Horia Moldovan, and the rector of the University, Marian Moiceanu. Klaske Havik, the Chair of the Action, presented the project results and its potential for continuation in a public meeting. The session was moderated by Lorin Niculae, member of WG3, vice dean of the Faculty of Architecture and president of the Association ArhiPera, the event's local organizer.

At the end of the first part of the day, the organizers offered a tour of the "Ion Mincu" University. This university is the main and oldest institution in Romania that trains architects and urban specialists and traces back to 1892 when it was established as the School of Architecture by the Society of Romanian Architects.



During the project presentation that took place in Bucharest, a special event was organized to showcase movies, at the Center for Architectural Culture of the Romanian Union of Architects. Working Group 1, which was in charge of scientific communication, invited several members of the Action to record their thoughts and findings in videos, following Jorge Mejía Hernández's initiative. The goal was to use movies as a communication medium to reach a wider audience. Three movies were selected for the Bucharest Film Event, which was part of the National Biennial of Architecture – Romania's 2023 program.

_The Hundred Columns of Skopje, Antonio Paoletti

_The Birth of the Quometry Method, Tuulia Soininen and Elina Alatalo

_The City that was not Supposed to be on the Map, Büşra Dilaver, Diana Malaj, Elsa Paja, Holly Dale, and Klodiana Millona

In his opening remarks, Jorge Mejía emphasized the transformative potential of films in shaping our perception of individual human beings, no matter where they may be from.

The three films have different approaches and were created within different contexts. The Hundred Columns of Skopje focuses on the changes that occurred in the city between 2010 and 2014, with the construction of new buildings, facades, and public



FILM EVENT

Friday, September 8th 17:30 -19:00

- 1** **The Hundred Columns of Skopje** – Antonio Paoletti
- 2** **The Birth of the Quometry Method** – Tuulia Soininen and Elina Alatalo
- 3** **The City that was not Supposed to be on the Map** –
Büşra Dilaver, Diana Malaj, Elsa Paja, Holly Dale and Klodiana Millona

Writing Urban Places

New Narratives for the European City

Center of Architecture Culture, Union of Romanian Architects
Address: Str. Jean Louis Calderon 48

from the hollow rock. cold as ice.




Poster by Sanne Dijkstra

spaces in a neoclassical style. The film is the outcome of the Cost Action STSM. The Birth of the Quetry Method explores the perspectives of people from different backgrounds in understanding the city, based on a fieldwork event organized in Hiedanranta. Finally, The City that was not Supposed to be on the Map is one of the six captivating documentary films crafted during and after the Training School in Tirana and Kamza. It experimented with psychogeographic walks and ethnographic film as research-creation methods to explore the tension between two concepts – the planned and the unplanned, aiming to dismantle this dichotomy by looking beyond it. The movies were also presented during the well-known international film festival Dokufest in Prizren.

In all cases, be it in Skopje, Tampere, or Tirana, these videos bring down general perceptions of the scale of individual human beings and show how urban reality, in all its beautiful complexity and contradictoriness, can be grasped in the stories people tell. During the Q&A session, Silvia Niculae (Arhipera Association) moderated the discussion. The session included a panel of members from the Action, who were either authors, co-organizers of training schools, or fieldwork events that resulted in films. The panelists included Willie Volgel, Elina Alatalo, Jorge Mejía, the initiator of the movie project, and Klaske Havik.

The next morning, on September 9, Casa Melik, built in the late 18th century that serves nowadays as the Museum “Theodor Pallady,” was the perfect setting for sketching ideas for future projects for the Writing



Urban Places Community. The participants visited the museum and then had a brainstorming session in the Melik House’s verandah, where they discussed the future of Writing Urban Places. After the session, some of the participants visited the painter Francisc Chiuariu’s workshop, where the artist kindly welcomed the group and talked about his creative process. He also showcased a number of his projects and explained their evolution over time. Others explored the Armenian neighborhood in Bucharest.

Local Organizing Team: Lorin Niculae, “Ion Mincu” University of Architecture and Urbanism, Arhipera Association, Silvia Niculae, “Ion Mincu” University of Architecture and Urbanism, Arhipera Association, Onorina Botezat, UCDC

Text written by: Onorina Botezat, Lorin Niculae

Arhipera @Consolid8 Festival

Stud. Arch. Corina Staicu about consolid8 festival, Braşov

Arhipera members and volunteers at the consolid8 festival, Braşov! Arh. Anca Cretu, stud. arch. Corina Staicu and stud. arch. Gabriela Stan participated in the two days of the festival dedicated to sustainability.

We were happy to take part in the presentation of the most current ideas in the field of sustainable development, able to change the design environment, both in Romania and globally.

The first keynote, supported by Daan Rooseveltaarde, was a presentation of projects that had light as an essential element in environmental design and activism.



The projects pursued focus on various aspects such as climate change awareness and technological innovation with applicability in architecture, health and agriculture. Thus, we noticed the use of light beams in the simulation of submerged spaces, then reflective particles used as a sustainable lighting method and I learned about light-UVC technology with viral capabilities, which can become a necessity in the hospitals of the future.

The next keynote was held by Neil Harbisson, an artist born with a lack of color perception. It is helped in this sense by an artificial sense organ - an antenna that captures the vibration of color and translates it



into sounds. We learned about his pioneering in the field of artificial sense research and the applicability of discoveries in a perhaps not distant future.

At the same time, the panels were captivating. We attended discussions between specialists who addressed topics such as: actions to improve climate change that Romania can carry out, the energy community and its role in energy decentralization, nZEB house and passive house, innovation in environmentally friendly business and ways to get support for their prosperity.

Thanks @consolid8festival for the invitation! We enjoyed this opportunity to learn about sustainability innovations!

Public participation in architecture

Lorin Niculae

In these past few years, citizen participation has become a commonplace, mainly due to the transfer of the model on the European directive level. All administrative decisions are guaranteed by the participation of civil society representatives and, apparently, democracy works on the institutional, central or local level, especially in the form of public hearings. But Paul Davidoff has suggested since 1965 that, for a real citizen participation in urban planning processes, they should be delivered by accessible and intelligible language, and not by using the coded language of architectural practice. The best representation of the level of citizen participation is given by the model "Stair of participation", first stated by Sherry Arnstein in 1969, which suggests, by comparison, the various degrees of participation. From the bottom to the top, it can "climb" from non-participation to the delegated power of the citizen, going through manipulation, therapy, information, consultation, reconciliation, partnership, delegated power, citizen control. With the apparition and theoretical outline of participatory discourse, starting in the 1960s, this began to migrate from the public sphere of non-governmental organizations to the one of public authorities, now becoming their official discourse, sometimes grounded, sometimes only to mask undemocratic decisions. For example,

recent cases of evacuation and displacement of the poor have been handled by the local authority by using a specific language in which the words "partnership", "consultation", "delegation" played a central role, whilst the actions covered by these words were, in fact, pressure, orders, threats and influence.

A peculiarity of public participation is the wide conceptual umbrella that it opens above the concept itself. As long as we adhere to democracy and want the practice of architecture to be democratic, then we will consult the vulnerable groups we design for. But how? Who participates to the consultations? What form can participation take? Is the expression of opinions participation? What is the degree of the involvement of the community that is taken into account as a real participation? How much control can be transferred to the community? Is the transparency of processes, in itself, a guarantee of participation, under the conditions of coding the language of architecture? The list of questions can continue, and the amount of possible answers marks the difficulty of conducting the processes and the hardship of an evaluation of the outcome of the participation. The phenomenon was observed by the famous Kenneth Frampton, who formulates one of the most articulated pieces of criticism brought to the participatory social architecture; the critic denies it the

status of discipline, since citizen participation is difficult to define, impossible to quantify precisely, and the methods used are, at best, vague. Indeed, participatory social architecture, although it produced examples of high aesthetic quality (SAAL, for example, which we talked about previously), did not produce a set of participation methods similar to the modernist pentalog (the five rules), but many successful participation results which, each derived from a particular case, used conjunctural methods, adapted to each situation. This particularism of the participatory social architecture results from its application in each situational field, to the characteristics of the group, to the nature of the existing built, the economic and political situation of the country, the existence or lack of public authorities concerned about housing, the existence of financing sources etc.

However, resolving each situation can be seen as a lottery in which successful interventions are the fruit of the architect's charisma, involvement, ingenuity and communication capacity, rather than the discipline applied in itself. If the result of a project depends to such an extent on the decision taken by the architect on the spot, on his abilities, it means that the result of an intervention cannot really be anticipated. Hence, such a project can be financed only to the extent where it can demonstrate that the anticipated result will be put into operation, and this will be the outcome of a real participation and not of a false one, in which the architect convinces the community of the righteousness of his proposals, instead of integrating in the project

the conclusions of the dialogue with the community representatives.

At the same time, if participation is the most uncertain and difficult thing to justify in participatory design, then how can a model of practice that can also be extended in the territory be created?

The sum of these thorny questions has generated, over the decades, articulated answers and structuring attempts, not without receiving hard criticism, which however failed to stop architects from continuing this difficult and often ravaging path of a democratic practice, so different from the traditional one, the one of the architect placed in the sphere of power. I will discuss some of them in the next article.

A sustained effort to structure the participatory projects design came early, especially from the United States of America, where democratic tradition is an essence of the state, and participation legitimizes the political action. Concerned about a real citizen participation, the US institutions have defined standards of consultation and methods of participation capable of supporting any public initiative, from referendum to community design. Henry Sanoff adopts the definition which says "participation is a general concept that covers different forms of decision by a number of groups involved in the process". It's a definition which, in my opinion, covers only the proximate genus, without explaining the specific difference between "different forms of decision".

Later, in 1981, the German philosopher Jürgen Habermas published **Theory of Communicative Action**, a large-scale philosophical work that substantiates public participation, by applying a “communicative rationality”, seen as the sum of the processes by which different claims of validity are brought to a satisfactory common denominator, with consent and by acting on the three worlds level: subjective, objective and social. Habermas further defines the understanding between the parties and the communicative action as follows: “gaining understanding functions like a mechanism for coordinating actions only through the interaction of participants who reach an agreement on the claims for validity of their statements, that is, through the intersubjective recognition of the claims of validity which they raise to each other. (...) The concept of communicative action assumes the use of language as an environment in order to kind of gain understanding, during which the participants, relating to one of the worlds, raise mutually acceptable validity claims that can be accepted or rejected”. Through communicative action, participants define an action plan, in which the actions are validated through agreement. The communicative action is “a type of interaction coordinated by communicative behaviours, but also, does not coincide with them”. Thus, communication supports action, it is not replaced by it.

The critique of rationality and communicative action comes from Michel Foucault and is based on the empirical observation that communication is a

consequence of power relations between participants. The French philosopher says supporting claims for validity from different hierarchical positions is nonsense. Indeed, in the practice of communicative design architecture, we encountered situations in which the beneficiaries, without understanding the functional arguments we set out, submitted to the authority's argument. The result was the rapid acquisition of my ideas, without real participation. However, this situation can be avoided by effective community consolidation and the creation of local government, by setting up community development groups to form a deliberation partner on an **equal, non-hierarchical position**.

Another critique comes from the area of phenomenology, which argues with the communicative action because it loses sight of the interiority of the individual, its uncommunicable characteristics. However, both criticisms lose sight of an essential feature of the criticized object, namely the praxiological side. If social change is needed, then social action is needed. Non-action, the withdrawal of post-structuralists in Lyotard's language games, cannot generate social change, just as hermeneutics cannot. When imperative, well-intentioned action, even imperfect, is preferable to inaction.

If we eliminate the obligation to participate provided by the European legislative framework (in Romania, public participation is regulated by only two laws), it remains to weigh what we lose and what we gain using it in the situational context of an intervention of urban regeneration or housing construction for a

community in extreme poverty. Not resorting to public participation, the method of relating to the beneficiary becomes **instrumental** and **normative**.

Contact with the community is lost, its characteristics being analyzed by a research apparatus foreign to the profession. The design processes become opaque to the public, and the architects' decision will be viewed with anxiety and possibly challenged. We find ourselves in the authoritarian paradigm, the architect becoming an executor under the authority that coordinates the processes. We can no longer be talk about democracy strengthened by architecture.

On the contrary, **through public participation, architecture assumes ethics, and the project becomes a result of communicative action, its purpose being to build consensus around a common understanding of the groups involved on changing reality.** This includes both the inhabitation and the system of relationships that generate it. The architect thus assumes the role of moderator, in addition to that of the technical expert, and this is necessary in terms of contemporary social dynamics that determine the design of architecture for vulnerable groups. Contemporary society is multicultural, making it mandatory to negotiate for joint projects. Civil society is active and organized, and the rights of minorities and vulnerable groups are protected by organizations that must be involved in the design process.

Thus, in the practice of social architecture, citizen participation is a sum of communicative actions

structured in a method, through which the group of beneficiaries acquires the real capacity to become a design partner and makes use of it. Participation heightens the community spirit and the sense of belonging of citizens. Participation is a sine qua non condition of the architect's ethical action whom designs for vulnerable groups. It gives legitimacy to design and generates the architectural solution, validated by deliberation.

The collective consensus on the desired reality, on the common good, established through participation, strengthens the individual freedoms and capabilities of the beneficiaries, protecting their right to housing, by permanently validating the common good with the individual good.

together

m o n t h

2 0 2 3



Arhipera @ARCHY FEST

ARCHITECTURAL HYPOSTASES FEST, 1st Edition, 30 September - 1 October 2023

For 3 days, Arhipera Association has been present on Edgar Quinet Street.

We organized two workshops for children: "Innovative exercises on sustainability", through which we approached imaginative drawings that encouraged the care for natural, unbuilt and built heritage and the Architectura Ludens - „Design as play ", where we made sketches, then toys, from reused materials from the architects' construction sites! The workshops were coordinated by Silvia Niculae and Corina Staicu, together with the volunteers Archy Fest.

In addition, the demonstration workshops from dinlut.ro took place, where the ceramist artist Gregorio Petru showed how he creates his creations in clay, through an open dialogue with those interested in his artistic practice. The project Din Lut Românesc (www.dinlut.ro) is part of the association's initiative to reevaluate sustainable local crafts, in order to have a circular and respectful approach to the environment. Each ceramic creation is unique and is made with passion and the desire to create a connection between artist and user, this connection being not only utilitarian, but especially cultural.

We were present on the Archy Fest stage with the ARHIPERA TALKS discussions, moderated by Silvia Niculae.



“Sustainability architecture in the perspective of the next generation of architects ” has revolved around the sustainable development of architecture, through the prism of local materials, the accessibility of built spaces and community involvement. Students of the „Ion Mincu” University of Architecture and Urbanism Irina Ursea, Corina Staicu, Mihai Munteanu, Mădălina Severin and Teodor Sarighioleanu represented the projects Drumul Taberei 2030, Ceramic Oven and Community Center in Chiojdu.

The second discussion “Participatory Social Architecture and Arhipera ” with associate professor arch. Lorin Niculae had a special guest: drd.arch. Silvia Costiuc. The conversation addressed issues such as social, economic, environmental sustainability in the context of architecture for vulnerable groups, unequal damage to the built environment by the effects of the climate crisis and, last but not least, explaining the grassroots participatory process of architectural practice.

We thank the Archy Fest organizational team and Cristia Chira for this first edition that we will always remember with pleasure! Thank you to all those who supported the Arhipera fundraiser! Thank you to the Archy Fest volunteers for the friendly collaboration: Anna Noni, Raghad Al-Iryani, Antonia Zahiu, Cătălina Francu!





Chiojdu pupils @IMUAU

During the National Architecture Biennale, 5th of October

Pupils who have participated at the Arhipera workshops "Sustainability through art and architecture" from the School „C. Giurescu" from Chiojdu, came to Bucharest, at the „Ion Mincu" School of Architecture and Urbanism, during the National Architecture Biennale, 15th edition!

We were very pleased to see the pupils who worked side by side this summer at the artistic installations coordinated by the Arhipera team during the Arhipera Summer School, 11th edition. We visited the exhibition of the National Architecture Biennale, 15th edition, which was explained by associate professor, Lorin Niculae.

We presented the "Ion Mincu" University of Architecture and Urbanism in a guided tour of the school spaces. At the University Library we were greeted by the library team. Ms. Cosmina Grafu organized an immersion in the history of the study space, of the old books and their thorough organization. „Are there secret doors in school spaces? ", asked a pupil. Ms. Claudia Popescu, at the Museum of the School of Architecture, told about the chronology of the profession of architect (and architecture student) in Romania. The pupils carefully noticed the old drawings, student pens and architectural etchings from the last century.

We ended the tour with a lunch at the best canteen, Kantina Arhitectura!

The pupils' trip was supported by the Union of Romanian Architects and was organized within the National Architecture Biennale, 15th edition. We thank all the students present and the IMUAU team for the thrilling welcome!





Arhipera @Radio Antena Satelor

Vrem Să Știi!, series by Claudia Ruse, 6 October

What does the future of the Romanian village look like in the age of globalization?

In this context, we ask ourselves how can the Romanian rural space keep its identity, architecture, traditions and customs and especially what needs to be done to save the spirit of these areas? A discussion about the identity and sustainable development of the Romanian village.

“Vrem să știi!” (“We want you to know”), a series made by Claudia Ruse!



Project evolution: Community Centre, Chiojdu





Monitoring visit on Chiojdu Community Centre site

The Arhipera team did a monitoring visit to the execution works, within the site tracking program.

Several specific situations were resolved and it was decided on the order of certain batches of works. Risk analysis was performed and site opportunities and threats were assessed. The head of the Lazlo craftsmen team also discussed all the details of the execution, in order to grant the project with the technological solutions of the Timha Wood team, which deals with the structure and development of the building.

The works advance at a sustained pace, according to the execution schedule, estimating the closure of the envelope in a maximum of 3 weeks. After this moment, work will be done exclusively indoors during winter.









Arhipera @20 ARCHITECTURAL EXPERIENCES

International Conference, FAI, 31 October

On October 31, we presented the Arhipera Association at the international conference "20 Architectural Experiences"!

Assoc. dr. arch. Lorin Niculae made an introduction about projects addressed to vulnerable communities in rural areas, in the presentation "Arhipera: for an architecture of public interest in Romania". Silvia Niculae talked about her involvement, as a IMUAU student (and since high school), in the participatory activities carried out by the association.

A round table with the theme "Reimagining Design", attended by associate professor designer Michael Sans, (ArtCenter College of Design, Pasadena, USA), associate professor dr. arch. Lorin Niculae, associate professor dr. Arch. Radu Muntean (UTB), designer Voicu Cretu (North Arin), dr. Arch. Iris Popescu (AMAIS), eng. Eugen Ursu (Graphein) and moderator dr. arch. Ionuț Anton. The discussion started from pedagogical models that support accessibility in design. Speakers stressed the importance of designers understanding a universal design, starting with architectural school benches. Beneficiaries' participation was also specified as a necessary practice for the development of sustainable projects. Last but not least, speakers mentioned international examples of good and bad practice.



The event was part of the cultural project: 20 Interior Architectural Experiences conducted by the University of Architecture and Urbanism "Ion Mincu" - Faculty of Interior Architecture.

Photos: Mihai Gheorghe

Together

Lorin Niculae, curator of the XVth edition of the National Architecture Biennale

The XVth edition of the National Architecture Biennale is in full swing and there are only three weeks until the beginning of the galas that will take place in Bucharest, Baia Mare, Cluj-Napoca, Craiova, Iași, Sibiu, Târgoviște and Târgu Mureș. More than 700 participants registered, which confirms that the Biennial is the main event in the architects' world, on a national level. Located under the auspices of sustainability, participation and social inclusion, the Biennial offers all Romanian architects the opportunity to get in touch with their confreres, to see and appreciate their contribution that goes into creating an indispensable collective culture on a national level, because architecture is the one responsible for creating the built environment that influences and determines the lives of all. In addition to the projects' competition that benefits from carefully selected juries, consisting of remarkable professionals, the Biennial offers numerous collateral cultural events, from film screenings in Bucharest, to the Craftsmen's Fair, in Sibiu, visiting trips to nominated buildings, conferences, lectures, creative workshops and round tables with renowned architects from the country and from abroad.

The 15 sections of this year's Biennial (Individual homes, Collective Housings, Industrial, administrative, tourist and sports/loisir buildings, Socio-Cultural Buildings, Restoration, Heritage Recovery and Identity

Interpretation, Interior architecture, Public and community space, Rural revitalization, Architecture Publications, Architecture Photography, Ephemeral, Diplomas – aspiring and affirming architects, Visionary projects, Summer Schools of Architecture, creative camps) cover the field of manifestation of architecture in our country and, as a premiere, have a transversal evaluation criterion, common to all, sustainability. Moreover, the Biennial manifesto expresses a credo of the profession which, although in perpetual change in the framework of manifestation, approaches and perspectives, remains faithful to the principles designed to support communities, to protect nature and educate, because what else can explain more clearly what good means, other than a good environment, an architecture that does good and the people who create it, day by day. The axiological character of the principles of architecture, its foundation in the sphere of values, generated this manifesto which calls for solidarity, concord and mutual respect:

“TOGETHER we dream of a green, competitive and inclusive Europe.

TOGETHER we rethink the resources of the planet and conclude a new Pact with nature, based on regeneration and common sense.

TOGETHER we defend the health of the planet and its inhabitants.

TOGETHER we manage climate change and make buildings, neighborhoods, cities and landscapes resistant to its impact.

TOGETHER we learn to have a restorative, regenerative and circular approach.

TOGETHER we understand the city, anticipate the needs of groups in environments and with diverse identities.

TOGETHER architects, urban planners, landscapers, designers, developers, customers and owners, researchers, students, entrepreneurs, we find lasting solutions for all.

TOGETHER specialists from many professions, we work as a team to create a lasting and inclusive future.

TOGETHER women architects and men architects, young and old, students and teachers, we are a profession that society needs more than ever.

TOGETHER we harmonize individual values and beliefs with collective ones and build a predictable future.

TOGETHER we learn from the past, we build in the present and look towards the future, we encourage visionary spirit and experimenting, we use state-of-the-art technologies and we learn from local traditions.

TOGETHER we educate creative freedom, based on ethics and solidarity.

TOGETHER we succeed and leave no one behind.

TOGETHER we make an architecture that brings together and unites, reconciles and heals.”

What we can do together is always much more than the sum of our individual achievements. For me, together means being and feeling that I am part of a whole that represents me. The more we succeed together, the more significant the whole becomes in society, with beneficial consequences on each of us. The architecture in Romania is the ever-changing whole we are part of and which we, architects, continually define through common values, understanding and respect for the environment. Architecture is our path and, like any road, it is more beautiful to walk through together.

