

## RECONFIGURING SOCIALIST URBAN LANDSCAPES: THE 'LEFT-OVER' SPACES OF STATE-SOCIALISM IN BUCHAREST

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**Abstract:** The end of state-socialism has produced complex processes of urban change in East and Central Europe including the reshaping of urban identities and urban cultural landscapes in post-socialist cities. The geographical literature focusing on changes in the cultural landscapes of post-socialist cities has emphasized discontinuity from the state-socialist period. The removal and renaming of elements of the built environment and accompanying symbolic forms have been taken to be emblematic of the change of political and social system from state-socialism. While not denying the importance of these processes, this paper argues that such analyses overemphasize the degree and speed of change in the built environment and cultural landscape during the transformation from state-socialism to post-socialism. In particular, it emphasizes the importance of the persistence of elements of the cultural landscapes of 'socialist cities' after 1989 through a study of three such elements in Bucharest, Romania.

**Key words:** Urban landscapes, 'Left over' socialist spaces, Bucharest

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### Introduction

The end of various forms of state-socialism across the former Eastern Europe and Soviet Union from 1989 ushered in a period of complex changes in the geographies of cities in the region. Geographical research has sought to understand a variety of these processes including changes in urban governance, de- and re-industrialisation, the privatisation of urban land, property and housing, the rise in urban retailing functions, suburbanisation and the changing identities and cultural landscapes of post-socialist cities (see Stenning 2004; Czepczyński 2008). Much of the geographical literature which has focused on the issue of cultural landscapes in post-socialist cities has emphasized the

discontinuity of these landscapes. The removal of elements of the built environment and accompanying symbolic forms has been taken to be emblematic of the change of political and social system from state-socialism to various forms of emerging capitalism. However, in this paper, while not denying the importance of these processes, we argue that often such analyses overemphasize the degree and speed of change in the built environment and cultural landscape during the transformation from state-socialism to post-socialism. In particular, we focus on the persistence of elements of the cultural landscapes of 'socialist cities' after 1989 through a study of three such elements in Bucharest, Romania.

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## Political change and urban cultural landscapes

Human geography has developed a considerable interest in the relationship between power and the organisation of urban space and urban landscapes (for overviews see Hubbard 2006; Wylie 2007). Studies have traced how the organisation of the urban built environment and cultural landscapes of cities can be expressive of the ideals of a dominant political regime. As Lefebvre (1991) notes every society produces its own space or landscape, while Levinson (1998: 10) argues that “those with political power within a given society organize public space to convey (and thus teach the public) desired political lessons.” Mitchell (2000: 109) develops the link between power and urban landscapes when he notes that “Landscape[s]...are incorporations of power...They are made to actively *represent* who has power...but also to reinforce that power by creating a constant and unrelenting symbol of it.” Landscapes are thus ideological in Mitchell’s (2000) argument. Though this does not mean that landscape meanings cannot be contested, landscape in this view is “a way of carefully selecting and representing the world so as to give it a particular meaning. Landscape is thus an important ingredient in constructing consent and identity...for the projects and desires of powerful social interests” (Mitchell 2000: 100).

The organisation of space in state-socialist cities is a good example of this broader point. For socialist regimes the shaping of urban space was an important element of political projects aimed at creating new forms of society (French and Hamilton, 1979; Stenning, 2004; Dawson, 1999; Crowley and Reid, 2002; Sezneva, 2002). As Verdery (1999: 39-40) argues:

“...among the most common ways in which political regimes mark space are by placing particular statues in particular places, and by renaming landmarks such as streets, public squares, and buildings. These provide contour to landscapes, socializing them and saturating them with specific political values...”

This was certainly true of the extensive physical remodelling and renaming of central Bucharest, especially during Ceaușescu’s reign (see Cavalcanti 1992, 1997; Light et al. 2002; O’Neill 2009).

Post-socialist transformation in East and Central Europe (ECE) involves a further remaking of urban space and identity to legitimate new political and economic trajectories and to reshape cities as suitable for integration into regional and global networks and flows. As the geographical literature demonstrates, such is the relationship between space and political order that any change in that order will result in a remaking of space and landscape. Levinson (1998:10) notes that “Changes in political regime...often bring with them changes in the organization of public space” (see also Lefebvre 1991). This is particularly true of urban areas, particularly capital cities, in ECE. As Sezneva (2002: 48) suggests, “the rush to rename and remake cities signals the centrality of urban space in the construction of post-socialist identities.” Among other authors, Verdery (1999) notes powerful processes of “reconfiguring space”, changing the meanings attached to it, under conditions of post-socialist change - “Raising and tearing down [socialist] statues gives new values to space (resignifies it), just as does renaming streets and buildings.” (39-40).

However, in this paper we argue that this process of remaking urban space and landscape under post-socialism is not as comprehensive as is sometimes portrayed in the literature. While some changes are quick and easy to achieve and have a high symbolic impact - such as pulling down statues or renaming streets and buildings - other changes are much more difficult to make. Large factory complexes and public buildings remain in the urban landscape, sometimes still in use. Vast areas of socialist-era housing schemes still make up a high proportion of the housing stock in many ECE countries. Socialist statues and iconography can still be found in many cities throughout the region, often *in situ* or resituated in museum spaces, and mundane spaces of socialism such as old shop-fronts and public parks persist in the everyday urban landscape. For post-socialist national

and urban governments other factors, such as social welfare, employment and the economy, may be higher priorities than the eradication of the socialist cultural landscape, a process which in any case may be too time consuming or too expensive. Large public buildings, housing areas and factories may be privatised and/or take on new functions rather than being destroyed. Furthermore, there is not necessarily consensus over the destruction of the socialist era cultural landscape, as the population may have different views from elites about the preservation of such landscapes and different everyday relationships to it than were intended by socialist and post-socialist regimes. People's everyday memories and practices may adhere strongly to such landscapes, such as the continued use of socialist-era street names even after they have been officially renamed.

A few authors have documented the social and political struggles over large-scale remnants of socialist cultural landscapes, such as Warsaw's Palace of Science and Culture (Dawson 1999) or the socialist new town of Nowa Huta (Dawson 1999; Stenning 2000), or have analysed how the socialist identity of certain cities cannot simply be erased (Young and Kaczmarek 2008). Czepczyński (2008) notes the persistence of many public buildings and other features of socialist cultural landscapes. He suggests that in addition to the removal of such landscape elements, other possible strategies to deal with these potentially awkward landscape elements include their renaming, rededication or reuse. However, Czepczyński also notes the existence of many 'left-over' spaces of socialism, spaces which have not been subject to removal or reuse, but which persist in the landscape, no longer functioning as parts of the cultural landscapes of state socialism, but not destroyed or altered to fit the demands of post-socialist states and cities either. This may be because they are geographically peripheral or the city authorities are unable to deal with them. Here we would argue that, in addition to Czepczyński's (2008) categorisation, other former socialist spaces may now also be classified as 'loose spaces' (Franck and Stevens 2006), abandoned and neglected or used in alternative ways, or as 'liminal' spaces (Shields

1991), ambiguous spaces which are neither relevant to the (no longer existent) socialist regime nor incorporated into the new socio-political order.

In this paper we wish to emphasize the persistence of such 'left-over', 'loose' or 'liminal' spaces deriving from state-socialist urban cultural landscapes and their continuity in complex ways under conditions of post-socialism. We do so in order to bring a more nuanced understanding to the reconfiguration of post-socialist urban space by considering the different trajectories and lives of elements of the urban landscape which persist from the socialist era, rather than focusing on those that were removed. To this end we present an account of three such 'left-over' spaces of socialism in Bucharest, Romania. The analysis reveals what they tell us about the relationships between urban space and political order during times of significant political change and explores the diverse fate of the material and symbolic legacies of state-socialism.

### Case Study 1: the "Circuses of Hunger"

During the 1980s Romania's socialist leader Nicolae Ceaușescu undertook a large-scale physical and symbolic remodelling of centre of the capital city, Bucharest, in order to reflect his particular blend of the ideals of Communism, his cult of personality, and his version of Romanian nationalism (see Cavalcanti 1992, 1997; Light et al. 2002; O'Neill 2009). One aspect of this reshaping of urban form was the construction of standardised 'agro-alimentary complexes' based on the Western supermarket model (*Jurnalul Național* 21 Jan 2005). They were planned as places for intensive, collectivised food retailing, but would also contain canteens serving standardised menus. This was a typically totalitarian approach to the centralisation and regularisation of both the purchase and consumption of food. Six such complexes were planned, each serving an entire sector of the city. They were extensive structures, built to a standardised design and characterised by a large glass dome on the top of the building. At a time when Bucharesters

faced severe food shortages these structures quickly became the object of mockery and were sardonically nicknamed “Circuses of hunger” (*Circurile foamei*).

Only two of these structures were complete by the time of Ceaușescu’s overthrow in 1989. The rest were partially finished. They comprised a three or four storey concrete frame, with completed interior floors and partial roofing. The metal frames for the crowning domes were also complete. However, in 1990 building work stopped abruptly. These buildings were associated with a collectivised social agenda that was now repudiated. There was no future prospect of the buildings being used for the purpose for which they were originally designed and neither the new government nor the city authorities had any desire to resume building work. The buildings remained in state ownership but the state had no further use for them. Hence they were abandoned in a half-completed state. These were not industrial ruins comparable to those created by successive cycles of capitalist industrialisation and deindustrialisation (Edensor 2003). Instead, they were remnants of a now-discredited political order, frozen at the stage of construction reached at the time of Nicolae Ceaușescu’s overthrow. They were stranded in an indeterminate, liminal state, suspended between past and future, between socialism and capitalism and between use and rejection (cf Edensor 2005). For Bucharesters they were unwanted symbols, physical reminders of a period of austerity and deprivation that everyone wanted to forget. They were left-over spaces, landscapes created by state socialism which had no place in post-socialist Romania.

Once they were abandoned these structures were quickly robbed of anything of value. They were then left open to the elements and began slowly to deteriorate. They were also quickly reclaimed by vegetation, which progressively shielded the lower levels from public view. However, although abandoned, this did not mean that they were without use (see Edensor 2003). Along with offering possibilities for theft and

plunder, they also offered shelter to Bucharest’s increasing numbers of homeless people. They were, after all, large, solid structures that provided ample shelter. They became play spaces for children. They were also claimed by the city’s rapidly-growing population of stray dogs. The abandoned ‘circuses of hunger’ turned into dangerous, marginal places that most Bucharesters avoided or passed by without a second thought (Photo 1).

These structures were to remain in this state for many years. However, as a market economy established itself they came to be reappraised for their real estate value. They were large, solid buildings, usually surrounded by large areas of open space and so were ideally suited to a range of possible new uses. In 1999 one of these structures at Vitan in Sector 3 was converted into Bucharest’s first shopping mall. The city needed new retail spaces and the half-finished structure was ideally suited for conversion into a large retail complex. It was also an appropriate way of changing the meaning of the building: a former ‘factory’ of regularised and collectivised food retailing was turned into a temple of individualised consumption. As Verdery (1999: 40) notes “Another form of resignifying space comes from changes in property ownership, which may require adding...markers to differentiate landscapes that socialism had homogenised.” This model was followed elsewhere in Bucharest. A similar structure in Drumul Taberei in Sector 6 was also converted into a mall (Plaza Romania) which opened in 2004. Another, in Rahova in Sector 5, survived in an overgrown and derelict state for 16 years after the overthrow of Ceaușescu until it was demolished to make way for a new mall (Liberty Center Mall). These left-over socialist spaces have now been fully claimed by capitalism: the former ‘circuses of hunger’ have disappeared from the landscape of Bucharest. However, while they no longer exist in material form they persist in popular memory among the generation of Bucharesters who lived alongside these structures and despised them for that political order that they represented.



Photo 1: The abandoned 'cercul foamei' at Rahova (sector 5) in September 2006.  
It was demolished shortly after this picture was taken

### Case Study 2: the *Centrul Civic*

Bucharest's *Centrul Civic* (Civic Centre) is one of the starkest and most notorious illustrations of the relationship between landscape and totalitarian power. The *Centrul Civic* has its origins in a state visit made by Nicolae Ceaușescu to China and North Korea in 1971. The landscape of Pyongyang – in particular its monumental buildings, large ceremonial squares and boulevards – made a deep impression on Ceaușescu who returned to Romania intent on remodelling Bucharest in a similar manner. In 1977 an earthquake in Bucharest caused considerable damage and this gave Ceaușescu the opportunity to 'modernise' and systematise the landscape of the city centre. In order to build a new socialist Civic Centre it was necessary to eradicate the previous symbolic order (Salecl 1999) and destroy what was already standing (largely an area of 19<sup>th</sup> century housing, which also included a range of other historic buildings including churches and monasteries). In total an area of five square kilometres was razed, necessitating the forcible relocation of 40,000 people (Cavalcanti 1992, 1997; O'Neill 2009).

The new landscape of the *Centrul Civic* was distinctively totalitarian and utterly unlike the historic architecture that it replaced. Its central axis was *Bulevardul Victoria Socialismului* (Victory of Socialism Boulevard), an avenue 120m wide and 3.5km in length that was intentionally longer and wider than the *Avenue des Champs-Élysées* in Paris. The Western end of the boulevard ended in a large semicircular open space (said to be large enough for half a million people to gather) above which stood, on a low hill, a huge monumental building – *Casa Republicii* (House of the Republic), the defining materialisation of Ceaușescu's cult of personality (Oțoiu 2009) and practice of governance (O'Neill 2009). At the opposite end of the boulevard was a similarly large open space (*Piața Alba Iulia*), while approximately mid-way along the boulevard was a large square (*Piața Unirii*) around which a massive shopping complex was built. The section of the boulevard between this square and *Casa Republicii* was lined by large 10 storey apartment buildings, intended to house the Party and state elite. Between *Piața Unirii* and *Piața Alba Iulia* various monumental buildings were planned including a national library and a vast cultural centre (*Cântarea*

*României*). There were many other huge structures scattered around the margins of the *Centrul Civic*, including a House of Science and Technology, a 'Radio House' and a building intended as a hotel. The *Centru Civic* also included buildings intended to be government ministries, embassies and apartments (Cavalcanti 1992, 1994).

Most of the *Centrul Civic* project was unrealised at the time of Ceaușescu's overthrow. The central boulevard was complete and the apartment buildings at the western end were almost finished. However, most of the remaining buildings were still under construction. Some were substantially completed externally, while others had progressed little beyond foundations. *Casa Republicii* was about 70%-80% complete (Amariei 2003). The 1989 Revolution brought an immediate halt to construction work and Ceaușescu's vision for remaking Bucharest was widely denounced (Leach 1999). For Bucharesters it was a reminder of a totalitarian past that they wanted to forget, while for those whose homes had been destroyed by construction work the project was associated with personal trauma. Romania's post-socialist political leaders had other priorities, particularly consolidating their hold on power and preparing for elections and economic reforms to introduce a market economy. The *Centrul Civic* was so large a problem that there was no obvious answer to the question about its future. None of the possible options – removal, renaming, rededication or reuse (Czepczyński 2008) – could immediately be implemented. The easiest course of action was therefore to do nothing.

Thus the various construction sites were abandoned and the whole landscape of the *Centrul Civic* was 'frozen' in an 'in-between', liminal state. This was most apparent in the numerous tower cranes which simply stopped moving after 1989 (*România liberă* 7 September 2002). Like the 'circuses of hunger' this was another unfinished and 'left-over' landscape of socialism. It had been conceived in an entirely different political context. Yet, there was no consensus regarding what to do with the ensemble in the post-socialist era. The various structures were half-completed

but not fully usable, yet were too large to be demolished. They had been intended for different functions but were now obsolete. In this indeterminate state the various building sites were again plundered for anything of value (see Ionescu 1990). For Romanians this was both a way of protesting against the project and receiving some sort of repayment for the hardships they had suffered under Ceaușescu. Once abandoned the various buildings, like the Circuses of Hunger, were utilised by the homeless and stray dogs and slowly reclaimed by vegetation.

It was not until the mid 1990s that the new regime turned its attention to reconfiguring the landscape of the *Centrul Civic*. Initial attention was focused on *Casa Republicii*. Demolition of such a structure was impossible so the government was faced with trying to re-use the building. Various alternative uses were suggested, including a casino, a museum of totalitarianism, a theme park and a shopping mall (Ioan 1999). However, the government eventually decided that the building would become the home for Romania's post-socialist parliament and resumed building work. The building was formally renamed *Palatul Parlamentului* (the Parliament Palace) and the lower chamber of the Romanian parliament moved into the building in 1996. Since the building had swiftly become Bucharest's biggest tourist attraction a part of it was opened to visitors (Light 2001).

At a later stage attention turned to the abandoned landscape of the rest of the *Centrul Civic*. In 1996 an international architectural competition – 'Bucharest 2000' – sought proposals for the reconfiguring of the entire area around the central boulevard. This was an attempt to address the unfinished landscape of the Civic Centre as well as opening Romania to international currents in architecture and urban planning after years of isolation (Barris 2001). The winning proposal by a team of German architects proposed to negate the symbolic impact of *Palatul Parlamentului* through the construction of tower blocks around it. It also proposed to break up the central axis of the boulevard by creating a lake in the central square. This project would have enabled Romania to

demonstrate its allegiance to international architectural styles as well as creating a new business space for the rapidly growing market economy. It was a form of “symbolic re-appropriation” (Leach 2002) that reworked the totalitarian landscape created by Ceaușescu to create a new space orientated around the workings of a post-socialist capitalist economy.

However, like many other proposals in post-socialist Romania, *Bucharest 2000* came to nothing. The project would have required around US\$18 billion of investment (Ioan 2006). Faced with numerous other demands on its budgets the state was unable to spare such resources. Similarly, there was little prospect of the private sector providing such investment. As a result the *Bucharest 2000* project was quietly abandoned after a change of government in late 2000. However, there was no attempt to put anything in its place. Once again, the task of remaking the landscape of the *Centrul Civic* had proved beyond the central and local state. However, parts of this area were transformed by private capital. The eastern end of the main boulevard developed as an informal banking and finance district, largely due to the relatively plentiful office space. The central square (*Piața Unirii*) emerged as a key retailing centre while the apartments around the area soon became the most expensive real estate in Bucharest. One huge building behind *Palatul Parlamentului* was purchased by Marriott and turned into a hotel which opened in November 2000. A further proposal for a massive development on the *Cântarea României* site was launched in 2004. Named ‘Esplanada’, it proposed to create a mixed development of offices, hotels, and retailing space as well as two iconic towers (*Adevărul* 22 March 2004). This is to be a public-private partnership and once again it seeks to reconfigure the ‘left-over’ space of the socialist *Centrul Civic* by creating an iconic urban landscape made in the image of global capitalism. However, as of Spring 2009 building work was yet to commence.

Twenty years after the fall of Ceaușescu the landscape of the Civic Centre is a curious hybrid. Some features clearly testify to the totalitarian origins of this project and have

barely changed in appearance. They include the principal boulevard, with the monumental *Palatul Parlamentului* situated at one end. Similarly, many of the huge buildings – such as the unfinished National Library and the House of Science – have changed little since 1989. At the site of *Cântarea României* almost nothing has changed since 1989 except that the tower cranes have been removed and the site has been reclaimed by vegetation – this is a truly left-over space, abandoned at the end of the socialist era (Photo 2). On the other hand some parts of the complex, particularly around *Piața Unirii* and *Piața Alba Iulia* demonstrate how a totalitarian landscape has been reclaimed by private sector investment to create a distinctively modern and capitalist townscape. The *Centrul Civic* complex demonstrates the difficulty in reconfiguring the vast landscapes created by state socialism. Individual buildings have been completed with state funds and the private sector has claimed the buildings that are of use to it. However, the state and local authorities have lacked both the funds and the vision to produce a coordinated plan to remake this landscape. At a time when post-socialist regimes have numerous other priorities some landscapes inherited from socialism are simply too large for the state to tackle. Hence, these socialist spaces persist for much longer than might be expected.

### Case Study 3: The Communist Mausoleum, Carol Park

After taking political control of Romania at the end of December 1947 the Romanian Communist Party acted swiftly to consolidate its rule. As one means of legitimating and institutionalising the new political order the Party was eager to celebrate its own history and heroes. Thus in 1948 a museum dedicated to the history of the Romanian Communist Party was opened in Bucharest (Berindei and Bonifaciu 1980). A decade later the leadership took the decision to build a huge mausoleum in Bucharest dedicated to the memory of the activists who had struggled to bring the socialist state into being.



Photo 2: The unfinished foundations for the Cântarea României building on Bulevardul Unirii (September 2008)

The location chosen was *Parcul Libertății* (Freedom Park) in the south of Bucharest. The topography of the park was ideally suited for this purpose, since the elevated plateau at its southern end allowed the construction of a monument that would dominate the park but also be visible from throughout the city. This was also a way of reconfiguring the meanings of a public space that was closely associated with the pre-communist regime. Until 1948 this park had been named *Parcul Carol I* (Carol I Park) after Romania's first monarch. It was also the site that in 1906 had hosted the *Expoziția Generală Română* (Romanian General Exposition), a grand and extravagant celebration of nation, commerce and industry (Teodorescu 2007). The construction of a large monument in the park was a way of erasing the symbolic and material legacy of the earlier political order and stamping a distinctly socialist set of values onto this landscape.

However, *Parcul Libertății* was already established as a place of collective memory. The high plateau of the park had, since 1923, hosted Romania's Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. Therefore, the construction of the

new memorial complex necessitated the dismantling of the tomb in 1958 and its removal to a new location at Mărășești (Stoenescu 1997). In its place arose a striking new landscape. Its central feature was a mausoleum intended for the top leadership of the Party. Entitled *Monumentul eroilor luptei pentru libertatea poporului și a patriei, pentru socialism* (Monument to the heroes of the struggle for the freedom of the people and of the motherland, for socialism) it featured a central rotunda, with space inside for 14 coffins. Above the rotunda five semicircular arches, faced with red granite, rose to a height of 48m (Photo 3). Surrounding the mausoleum was a semicircle of graves, each faced with a black marble slab. These were intended for Party activists and politicians. This, in turn, was surrounded by a single-story hemicycle intended for the deposition of burial urns of party activists. The whole complex was set in a ceremonial plaza and was the focal point of a broad ceremonial axis running the length of the park. The construction of the memorial complex radically transformed the landscape of the park.



Photo 3: The communist mausoleum in Parcul Carol I (May 2004)

The mausoleum complex was inaugurated with great ceremony on 30 December 1963, to coincide with the 14<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the proclamation of the Romanian Peoples' Republic. To mark the occasion the coffin of Dr Petru Groza (Romania's first Communist Prime Minister who had died in 1958) was moved from a cemetery elsewhere in Bucharest and interred within the mausoleum. Similarly, the coffins of two early socialist activists (Ion Frimu and Ștefan Gheorghiu) were reburied in the graves surrounding the central mausoleum (*Scînteia* 31 December 1963). The Party now had a dedicated space to honour the memory of its own activists and the memorial was periodically 'activated' following the death of senior Party figures. The coffin of Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej (General Secretary of the Romanian Workers' Party between 1944 and 1965) was interred in the central mausoleum in 1965 and was later followed by that of Constantin I. Parhon (titular head of state between 1948 and 1952) in 1969. Other party activists and senior leaders were buried in the graves surrounding the mausoleum. The

memorial regularly hosted ceremonies on the anniversaries of the deaths of the people interred there. Access to the memorial was not restricted but the presence of a permanent guard at the mausoleum deterred many people from venturing close. This was now a 'Party space', a material and symbolic statement of the constant presence of the Party that the users of the park would have been unable to ignore.

The status of the monument changed dramatically after the 1989 Revolution. The Romanian Communist Party was discredited and was declared illegal on 12 January 1990, and its former leaders and activists were disavowed. The monument was suddenly redundant. Moreover, as a place intended to honour and commemorate the activists of Romanian socialism the monument embodied narratives of remembrance that were starkly at odds with Romania's new political orientation. However, short of demolishing the structure there was little that could be done with the site. Consequently, in common with the other case studies considered in this paper, the response of the post-socialist administration was initially to do nothing. At some stage in the early 1990s (Pipiddi (2000) states that it was in 1992) the bodies of Groza, Gheorghiu-Dej and Parhon were removed from the rotunda of the mausoleum and reburied in cemeteries elsewhere in the country. However, this appears to have been less a deliberate attempt to reconfigure the meaning of the mausoleum and more a deference to the traditions of the Romanian Orthodox Church which considers that a 'proper' burial is below ground in a cemetery. However, the graves surrounding the central rotunda were undisturbed and their black marble headstones remained in place. Little else changed at the site (although the park itself returned to its original name of *Parcul Carol I* in 1993) and the mausoleum survived as an impressive piece of socialist architecture that was now without any obvious use or function in the post-socialist era. It was another 'left-over' space of socialism.

The first serious proposal regarding reconfiguring the mausoleum space did not appear until 2004. Unusually this came not from the state but from the Romanian

Orthodox Church. Rather than attempt to reconfigure the monument so as to change its meaning the Church proposed to demolish it altogether. This proposal had its origins in the long-standing plans of the Church to build a Cathedral of National Salvation (*Catedrală Mântuirii Neamului*) in Bucharest (Stan and Turcescu 2006). The elevated site in Carol Park that the mausoleum occupied was seen as an ideal location for such a cathedral. Moreover, demolishing the mausoleum and replacing it with a church would have been a way of symbolically reconfiguring the site through erasing the material legacy of socialism and erecting a structure that asserted the resurgence of Christian values in Romania.

However, although the government transferred the land on which the mausoleum stood to the Church, the cathedral project did not proceed. Civil Society leaders organised a protest against the Cathedral arguing that it would destroy one of the few remaining pieces of green space in Bucharest. Moreover, 14 years after the end of state socialism attitudes towards socialist architecture had softened so that there were many calls to preserve the mausoleum for its architectural merits. Others argued that a society could achieve little in dealing with an unpleasant past by simply demolishing a monument associated with that period. Instead, there were calls to reuse or reconfigure the monument in some way, perhaps turning it into a memorial for the victims of communism (*ibid*). The strength of opposition was such that the proposal to build the cathedral in *Parcul Carol I* was eventually abandoned with a new location for the cathedral being offered behind *Palatul Parlamentului* (the Parliament Palace). However, what is significant about this event is that it demonstrates that the left-over landscapes and monuments of socialism are not always the focus of public disdain. Indeed, in this case there was considerable popular support for the preservation of the mausoleum by those prepared to acknowledge its architectural and aesthetic value, and in the post-socialist period there is more scope for the contestation of the projection of the values and desires of political elites into the landscape.

In 2006 the Romanian Ministry of Culture issued proposals to comprehensively reconfigure the Carol Park memorial. The plans involved retaining the physical structures at the site but giving the entire complex a new meaning by turning it into a monument dedicated to the 'Heroes of the Nation' (*Memorialul Eroilor Neamului*). The first stage involved reinstating the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in approximately its original (1923) location (in 1991 the Tomb had been returned to Carol Park but was placed in a different location on the principal avenue of the park that leads to the mausoleum). Subsequently, between 2006 and 2008 the coffins of the activists and politicians buried in the graves around the central mausoleum were removed and reburied in cemeteries elsewhere in Romania. The final stage will involve the conversion of both the hemicycle and central rotunda into a museum presenting the history of the activities of the Romanian army in the 1877 War of Independence and the First and Second World Wars. This project will transform the complex from a site dedicated exclusively to the Romanian Communist Party to a place of collective memory for the whole nation. Moreover, from being dedicated to the elite of the Party and the socialist State, the memorial will now commemorate the ordinary soldiers who fought and died for Romania. This innovative strategy of rededication and reuse (Czepczyński 2008) illustrates how the physical structures of socialism can be retained but inscribed with entirely new meanings that are appropriate for a post-socialist country.

In common with the other two case studies considered in this paper, the Carol Park mausoleum illustrates how the process of remaking space after a revolutionary change in political order can be a longer term process. It took the socialist regime 10 years to set about comprehensively remodelling Carol Park so that the landscape accorded with the new ideology. However, two decades after the revolution which overthrew Nicolae Ceaușescu very little has changed at the memorial complex in the park. The monument still looks substantially as it did during the socialist era and it persists as a

socialist landscape in a post-socialist city. Moreover, the monument is still widely known as the “communist mausoleum” by the people of Bucharest. This demonstrates the persistence of socialist spaces, both as physical entities in the landscape and also in the popular memory of Bucharesters.

## Conclusion

In this paper we have analysed the reconfiguration of post-socialist urban space in Bucharest. Our purpose has been to trace changes in the urban cultural landscape associated with post-socialist transformation. However, in our analysis we have also sought to explore the extent to which regime change brings about a *complete* reconfiguration of space. We do not deny that in many post-socialist cities there have been extensive reshaping of the urban landscapes of socialism in order to create a new space, a new landscape appropriate for a post-socialist political order. However, we wish to bring a more nuanced understanding to the literature on the reconfiguration of post-socialist urban space by considering the different trajectories of elements of the urban landscape which persist from the socialist era, rather than just focusing on those that were removed.

In the case of the built environment of Bucharest a series of ‘left-over’ socialist spaces have been identified which persisted for significant periods of time in the urban landscape after 1989 before they were altered. These spaces subsequently underwent a variety of changes, including Czepczyński’s (2008) processes of removal, renaming, rededication or reuse. However, we also identified spaces which had a life as ‘loose’ or ‘liminal’ spaces, or which were simply abandoned and marginalised, and which persist in the urban cultural landscape of Bucharest today. Such left-over landscapes are more common than often supposed. Remaking space is not quick and straightforward. After a few dramatic, rhetorical, proclamative changes which are relatively easy to achieve (such as pulling down statues or renaming streets) the process of creating a new space or landscape is

protracted and contested. And it should be added that here we have mainly considered the material component of these persistent socialist urban landscapes. Research should also consider memories of socialist spaces and how everyday practices are influenced by personal relationships to place, such as the continued use of socialist street names which have been changed. Overall we would call for a more nuanced approach to the reconfiguration of post-socialist urban space which focuses on specific cities in different contexts and considers the full diversity of change – or lack of it – in socialist urban landscapes.

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