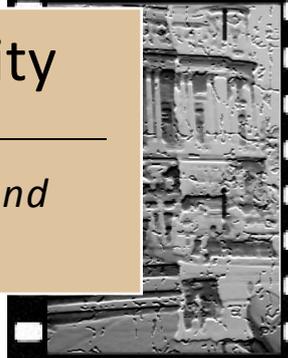




My very own Bucharest – imagining the city

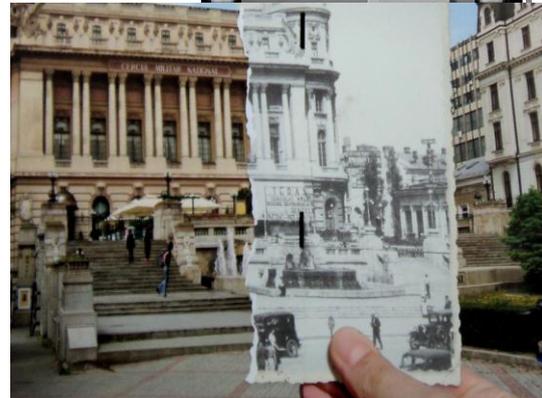
Building urban discourses through cinematic impressions and (lived-in) experiences



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MSc Thesis Socio-spatial Analysis

Supervisor: Assistant Prof. Martijn Duineveld



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Abstract

The present paper is the result of a long time interest for the human - living environment interactions. In this contemporary era of technology, media occupies an increasingly important role in the way people get to know and understand the place they inhabit, as well as places that they have never visited in person. Particular images of entire cities, towns or villages are formed in our minds as we interpret the things we read, see or hear in the local media. But how are these images actually constructed and how do the personal geographies that take form look like? Such questions are significant not only for researchers preoccupied with the social studies, but also for city designers, planners and policy makers, all aiming to shape high quality living environments and to boost local economies.

Inspired by pieces of literature such as M. Tournier's "Journal Extime" and I. Calvino's "The Invisible Cities", in which the image of the city is intimately intertwined with the experiences of place, my search for a thesis subject that would represent me took the direction of a collection of personal accounts around one city.

My fondness for the playful universe of films, producer in its own way of on-screen urban realities, had a determinant role in deciding on a research objective as I came to ponder the following: in our minds we hold constructed images not only of the places we inhabit or which we have visited at one time in our lives, but also of locations that we only saw on TV or read about in the local newspaper. In this sense, cinema has proven itself throughout time to be somewhat influential in what we know, better said, what we think we know about one city or another. But which exactly is the role that Cinema plays in producing discourses on the urban reality? And which are the mechanisms employed by individuals in creating these images of the city? These are the two main research questions that the present study aims to address in the larger context of producing space and place-making.

The present paper, product of six months of both desk and field research, explores the above mentioned mechanisms behind the production of discourses on reality and the constructed images of the city in the cases of a number of individuals having watched a film shot on location. The double case study selected for this research was the city of Bucharest, Romania along with the Romanian-French co-production, "Filantropica".

I began work on my research by constructing a theoretical framework based on relevant literature review. This laid the grounds for the two basic premises on which this thesis was to be developed. The first premise is that our interpretation and understanding of the world surrounding us is based on a mixture of cultural constructions and our personal perception of the world. The second premise

is closely linked to the first one, as this study will illustrate, and it assumes that we construct our image of the world and we frame what and how the reality we experience *is* by means of discourses.

Building on 24 on-field interviews from a diversity of people (un)familiar with Bucharest, all being asked to watch “Filantropica” for the purpose of the discussions, my thesis takes the form of a collection of personal (constructed) stories which merge together discourses on the reality of the city into one melange of colours, meanings and memories which reverberates the image of a Bucharest with numerous faces.

Keywords: semiotics, performativity, discourse, produced reality, the Cinema, image of the city

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“It is not what you look at that matters. It is what you see.”

(H. D. Thoreau)

1. Introduction

“The formation of identity is simultaneously the shaping of the city.”

(Nentwick, 2004, cited in Makeham, 2005, p. 152)

1.1 Setting the background

Mass media, as a form of communication and shared information, has long time instigated researchers due to the roles it plays in the lives of modern man and its subsequent effects (Atkinson, 2009; Cressey, 1934; Demerath, 1981; Katz, Gurevitch and Haas, 1959). When discussing some of these potential effects, E. Katz, M. Gurevitch and H. Haas (1959, p. 165) stated that “*people bend the media to their needs more readily than the media overpower them; that the media are at least as much agents of diversion and entertainment as of information and influence*”. In other words, mass media is said to have two major effects on its audience. On one hand, personal engagements with the various forms of media lead to the formation of dynamic inter-relations in which individuals use the media to satisfy their needs. On the other hand, communication devices employed by mass media influence to a certain extent the public’s understandings of the surrounding world.

Throughout the years, the categories of mass media have diversified and new forms of web-related public communication have emerged, described in the form of social media. Furthermore, the older interest in public – media relations remains unaltered. As a result of this on-going interest, recent studies on the mass (social) media still play on the effect that the new technological means of mass communication have on the public opinion, communication patterns and redefined proximities (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010; Ruiz de Querol et al., 2011). Not only that, but recent technological developments “*have opened up new ways of representing, accessing and theorizing space/place*” (Jaworski and Thurlow, 2010, p. 5). The emerging debates on the effects of media on everyday spatial representations (Conley, 2007; Hey, 1997; Jaworski and Thurlow, 2010) are highly relevant for this thesis in which the focus lies on the (constructed) images of urban living environments. Today’s mass media is said, according to some, to influence the way in which we perceive and experience our environment (Eco, 2005; Sadler and Haskins, 2005) and ultimately, the formation of community and individual identities alike (Hay, 1997). Nevertheless, the relation between mass media and change in perception and (lived-in) experiences has been insufficiently explored (Clarke, 1997; Eco, 2005).

Aiming to fill part of this knowledge gap, in this study I will focus on one type of mass media, the Cinema, and its effects on emerging forms and mechanisms of space interpretation and identity formation. I choose to base my case study on the cinema for a twofold reason. The first reason is academic, inspired by recent discussions around cinema as a device to boost local economies by attracting tourists and playing on community spirit (Hay, 1997; Sadler and Haskins, 2005). The second reason is a personal interest in the multi-faceted image of the city, an image which is built on everyday encounters and in-place narratives (Johan, Fredriksson and Johannisson, 2009).

Experience has shown that films have become rather popular throughout the years and that many of people's first encounters with a location and its in-place culture are often mediated by cinematic experiences. In this way, through films, individuals often gain access to unfamiliar places and, as a result, personal understandings of those particular locations are somewhat influenced by the on-screen reality (Sadler and Haskins, 2005). Unlike word-based languages, the predominantly visual language of cinema is, to a certain degree, un-translatable. Thus, the on-screen image, in its pure form, partly preserves the materiality of the original setting throughout the film's existence. According to U. Eco (2005) the image holds encodings specific to the context from which the film sprang. In this way, films are products of cultural construction. Nevertheless, their decoding becomes subject to individual tools of sense-making and adding meaning within the same culture as well as across cultures (ibid.). Because of this subjectivity in interpretation, encounters with the cinema result in different ways of engaging with the film and have various effects on the perception and (lived-in) experience of the everyday. A very good example of the cinema's effect on the everyday as a result of a particular type of cinematic engagement is the diversification of crime in the contemporary underworld as a result of violence related films (Brainz.org, 2010; Gambetta, 2009).

Information picked up from day-to-day reality is fed into the cinema and contributes to the creation of on-screen narratives. These very same narratives, be it micro or a metanarrative, take the form of alternative realities to the daily existence. As we will come to see by the end of this paper, the two realities, that of the everyday and the one on-screen, affect and (re)shape each other, resulting in alterations of the ways in which the surrounding living environment is perceived and interpreted. In other words, it is not only our image of the world and our understanding of being in the world that are affected by cinematographic realities, but also our sense of place and (cultural) identity. As this thesis will illustrate, the shift in-between on-screen and everyday realities is done precisely through mutated or emerging narratives which influence day-to-day discourses on our living environments. The above argumentation is in accord with J. Butler's (1990) theory that constructs become real

through discourse, a process which is intimately inter-related with processes of semiotics (added meaning). This lays the foundation of one of the basic premises of this study which is that, by assuming that meaning is constructed through discourse, than we can also argue that through the very same discourses, social and cultural constructs acquire a value of truth. This value of truth allows for certain discourses to be accepted by common consensus and to be taken for granted as fundamental pieces of knowledge or belief, while other discursive mechanisms are more individual and relate to processes of human perception, adding to the production of personal discourses.

Today's understanding of (urban) culture has experienced a paradigm shift, as both experience and recent theoretical approaches (van Assche, 2004; Z.S.I., 2009) have come to support. Looked upon in a much broader and complex context, culture incorporates "*means for social processes of sharing modes of behaviour and outlook within a community*" (Swindler, 1986). I will discuss in further detail this poststructuralist understanding of 'culture' later on, in the theoretical framework of this research. For the time being, it only needs to be noted that 'culture' as art has also experienced changes in the way in which it is delivered and the audience groups which it addresses. Culture is no longer found only inside buildings (museums, theatres, opera houses, galleries) and it is no longer for the delectation of a small elite category. Culture in its artistic representation has flown out in the street in forms previously unexplored, such as public manifestations, wall graffiti, art installations and (digital) artistic representations of our cities and societies. Culture has become about everyday life.

Most of today's cinematographic productions fit in the latter category, that of culture accessible to the larger public. As a result, there is little surprise that nowadays filmmakers are some of the strongest voices in contemporary culture (Kelen, 2009).

In his theorization of the film as "*the principal art form of our age*", I. Singer (2008) draws a parallel between the industry of motion pictures and the old (oral) tradition of storytelling. Thus, he believes that "*the art of film supremely lends itself to the transmittance of mythic themes*". Contemporary cinema plays often on certain community portraits and city images (Sadler and Haskins, 2005) which, through re-iteration, take the form of modern myths. Such cinematic myths are "Avatar"'s beauty of untouched nature, "American Beauty"'s revolt against the numbness of perfectly planned suburbia, "Lord of the Flies"'s rawness of civilized humanity. Individuals, communities even, are likely to react to the various types of cinematic myths and even engage with them, be it by resisting to them, submitting or co-creating them (Clarke, 1997). But does this truly mean that this form of mass media can play a role in either the image of a place or the image of self? And, if so, which is this role?

It has been long time discussed the fact that films are educational in the way that they provide information on geographies, histories, habits or practices, but they can also influence behaviour and the ways in which individuals perceive themselves and their environment (Cressey, 1934; Demerath, 1981). In this sense, the cinema can tamper with feelings of belonging and sense of place. Citing Baudrillard, N. Denzin (1991) writes that “*members of the contemporary world are voyeurs adrift in a sea of symbols. They know themselves through cinema and television*” (Denzin, 1991, p. vii). I only agree partially with the above statement: to a small extent, we do form a partial understanding of the world around us and our own place in it through on-screen realities. This premise lies at the base of this study. Furthermore, practice has shown that cinema has been a long-time device aimed to popularise city or town images in order to boost the local economy (Sadler and Haskins, 2004). In this context, it becomes highly relevant for disciplines as different as cultural geography, urban studies, media and tourism to better understand the mechanisms behind the discursive production of on-screen realities and how these realities and their interpretation affect experiences of the everyday.

Nevertheless, the relationship between the city as such and cinema has been only little explored in film and urban studies alike (Clarke, 1997). Aiming to address this knowledge gap, I chose to base the present research on a particular case study, that of the city Bucharest, Romania and its on-screen representation in the film “*Filantropica*”.

Thus, I come to raise the following twofold research question: *does contemporary cinema play a role in (re)shaping our image(s) of the city and, if so, which are the mechanisms employed to (re)construct existing discourses on the everyday reality?*

It is my observation that in the case of today’s Romanian cinema, a large numbers of directors and European awarded film productions take an increasingly critical position towards both the past and the established status quo. The cinematographic display of urban realities has an effect similar to that of a room full of distorted mirrors. The result is not a collection of mere urban representations, but more of a parade of cityscapes with diverse identities, each *speaking* in a different language, specific to the discourse to which they belong. The worlds taking shape on-screen have a number of recurrent elements, the Romanian city playing as background for contrasts, contested socio-cultural realities and characters always in the making. In my view, the common transparent myth here is that of a society struggling to recover from the haunting obsession of a communist past and the symptoms of a culture of vice. It is this same myth that “*Filantropica*” challenges (Film Menu, 2011).

1.2 Research objective

Individuals shape and are shaped in return by their environment (Shaftoe, 2008; Wylie, 2009; Gehl, 2010). This bipolar process affects people's interactions, the way in which they perceive and comprehend each other and their living environments, hence somewhat influencing behaviours and images of *the self/other* and *the city*. This human – environment reciprocal relation of transformation and the effects it has on the image of our surrounding environment come to support the fact that cinematic representations of 'space' may alter perception and even experience of place (Sadler and Haskins, 2005).

D. Clarke (1997) places the moral and symbolic origins of the Cinema in the postmodern man's quest of the Self and one's place in the world. Thus, according to the same author, the two urban realities on which the Cinema is built (that on which it started to feed and that which it came to produce), are always one and the same: the reality of "*the modern city*" as "*concomitantly, the world as experienced by the stranger, and the experience of a world populated by strangers—a world in which a universal strangeness was coming to predominate*" (ibid., p. 4). In D. Clarke's view, the concept of 'the stranger' came from a shift in human perception of the surrounding environment, resulting in a cultural abstractization of space. This approach to space as a cultural construction is based on the idea of the modernist world-as-a-whole ultimately fragmented by postmodernism into H. Lefebvre's (1991) distinct categories of space, on which I will develop later on. According to the present study's approach, 'space' does not pre-exist cultural construction and it is not a uniform product, with a universal form and understanding. 'Space' has become subject to the discursive production of reality.

Through representations, results of exposure to media depictions and personal imaginaries, the city's image is being continuously (re)shaped. The mechanisms behind processes of producing 'place' are the same which result in what J. Raban calls "*the soft city*" (1974, cited in Makeham, 2005, p. 152): "*The city as we imagine it, the soft city of illusion, myth, aspiration, nightmare, is as real, maybe more real, than the hard city one can locate on maps, in statistics, in monographs on urban sociology and demography and architecture*".

The basic assumption of this research is that discourses on the on-screen and everyday realities intertwine and alter each other. In the larger context of discussions on the influence that cinema, as a form of mass media, has on creating and popularizing models of community life, perception of

space and identity, I focus on a particular type of discursively produced reality – that constructed by watching the reality of a city unfold from the seat of a cinema theatre.

The purpose of my study is to explore the inter-relations, if any, between perception and personal experience of place, identity and cinematic representations of the city. Starting from a postmodern approach to a city's in-film reality, I will look into a number of aspects of the contemporary co-production of cityscape as 'place' and its adjoining mechanisms. As I have already mentioned earlier, the case study here is the city of Bucharest, Romania, and a Romanian-French co-production filmed on location, "Filantropica" (2002), a film whose subject, in the director's words, calls on what becomes of a society which has transformed human compassion into a business (Film Menu, 2011). As Bucharest's society reflects itself and populates the scenery of "Filantropica", the viewer may also translate his own understanding of the city and (old) identity into new forms through the lens of the camera and the cinematographic discourse on the city.

1.3 Study design

Building on the chosen case study, in the present paper I will bring together individual and socio-cultural constructions of Bucharest's images and "Filantropica"'s cinematically created model of the city. Playing on concepts of *culture* and understanding of place, this paper will document perceptions and (lived-in) experiences of a number of locations within the city prior and subsequent to watching the film "Filantropica". These recorded imaginaries will be gathered in a collection of personal stories, unique in their diversity as we will come to see, yet all telling one and the same tale – that of the city which inspired them. Drawing on this collection of stories, the research aims to explore mechanisms behind the discursive production of discourses on the everyday reality as it is altered or not by the cinematographic experience.

My study bridges over two theoretical approaches. The first is the poststructuralist premise that 'truth' and 'reality' are cultural constructions, products of individual discourses (Butler, 1990; Lefebvre, 1991). The second approach is anchored in phenomenology and considers landscape to be a lived-in environment, a place where people experience the material world and are interact with it, both perceptually and bodily (Carmona et al., 2003).

By using elements of *performativity* and *semiotics* theories, this paper's theoretical framework provides the base for understanding people's representations, perceptions and experiences of the self in report to the urban environment.

The first concept, *performativity*, will be used in its understanding as the (reiterated) actions and behaviours which make up the performance of everyday life within the materiality of the city. It is these interactions between people - people and people - physical environment which set the rhythms and dynamics of the city. This very idea is stressed by P. Makeham when, citing J. Raban, notes that what keeps the city's scene alive is "*the peculiar relationship between man and material that exists in the continual creative play of urban living*" (Raban, 1974, cited in Makeham, 2005, p. 153). The second conceptual backbone of this research, *semiotics*, looks onto "*human space as a signifying space*", whose significance "*is experienced in complete opposition to objective data*" (Barthes, 1988, p. 414 - 415). All the above concepts will be further detailed under the Theoretical Framework of the present paper. For the time being, I would only like to stress the idea that the conceptual lexicon which I will use throughout this study feeds back into the discussion on narratives and discourses touched briefly earlier in sub-chapter 1.1, "Setting the background". In other words, this research will look for mechanisms of the discursive construction of image of place and personal identity as part of different human-city rapports: as an inhabitant, tourist or stranger to the place.

Such a study approach to the city is not meant to fragment it or alter its *genius loci*. On the contrary, starting from the premises of contemporary cities being spaces of diversity and plurality (Madanipour, 2006), this paper does not look at the city from a collective point of view. The contemporary (postmodern) city allows for individuality (Pauwels, 2009), to be alone among others in an imaginary which escapes the everyday world of encounters. In consequence, the Bucharest which will let itself be *seen* in this thesis will take the form of a collage, the result of summing singular perceptions and (lived-in) experiences of the city.

By constructing this study around individual stories which echo the everyday city life, the research approach in this paper allows for what P. Makeham, paraphrasing R. Sennett, calls the citizens' "*opportunity to devise the narrative*" (Makeham, 2005, p. 153). Analogous to the concept of the palimpsest city, my aim is to portray the image of a city built up by overlapping multiple personas in which imaginaries inter-twine. Personal history, cityscape and representations of our living environment, all come together in creating fluid identities of the city and of those who experience it, in a perpetual state of transforming their features. These changing identities were reflected in the

told stories on which this thesis was built, stories in which the abstract lines demarcating *I, the other* and *the city* fade away.

The strategy behind this approach was to develop a flexible methodology that would allow to collect a diversity of spatial interpretations and understandings of identity, place and reality. Given the complexity of space imaginaries, the relation individual – space can be looked upon from Lefebvre's (1991) three categories of space: conceived, perceived and lived.

1.4 Thesis structure

The present paper is structured in six main chapters, each with its subsequent sub-chapters.

The content of chapter 1, "Introduction", places the research into a broader context by providing a brief general overview of its theoretical background and by identifying the existing knowledge gaps in the related literature. Subsequently, the scientific relevance of the study is pin-pointed in rapport to those theoretical areas insufficiently explored and both the aim and the research questions of my thesis are outlined.

Chapter 2, "Theoretical framework", is the result of the related literature review and it provides an overview of the theories based on which the research will be developed. The concepts of 'semiotics', 'performativity', 'culture', 'production of space' and 'sense of place' are presented in their larger understanding in distinct sub-chapters. Subsequently, their multiple understandings in the scientific literature are briefly looked into and set against each other in order to outline the theoretical perspectives that are to constitute the backbone of this paper. Based on the drawn theoretical framework, an appropriate research methodology is designed in Chapter 4 and ultimately used in the research's following two stages of data collection and analysis.

After having introduced the readers to the two-sided case study in Chapter 3, a short history of the city of Bucharest along with the plot design and director's approach in the film "Filantropica", Chapter 5, "Emerging geographies of the imaginary" brings together in a critical study the findings of the field data collection. The results are structured based on the methodological framework, according to distinct conceptual categories developed around the related scientific literature and the urban lexicon adopted by individuals during the interviews phase.

In chapter 6, "Discussion and conclusion", I analyse various modes in which individuals engage in practice with the various theoretical and conceptual dimensions and how personal discourses on the everyday reality of Bucharest are (re)shaped by the on-screen reality of "Filantropica". Consequently, I identify different in-place mechanisms behind the production of discursive day-to-day realities and how these mechanisms are set in motion by a cumulus of cultural constructs, perception processes and knowledge flows between the cinematographic discourse and the audience. Chapter 6 concludes with theoretical and practical applications for the present study and recommendations for potential developments of this paper's subject in further research.

2. Theoretical framework

“... cities as a whole can be understood as sites upon which an urban(e) citizenry, in the ‘practice of everyday life’, performs its collective memory, imagination and aspiration, performing its sense of self both to itself and beyond.”

(Makeham, 2005, p. 152)

The purpose of this study is to record personal viewpoints on the city of Bucharest, Romania, prior and post watching the Romanian film, “Filantropica”, in order to look into mechanisms behind the discursive production of realities and how the ‘image’ of the city is altered, if at all, by the individuals’ exposure to the film. For this reason, very often throughout this research I will use the terms ‘discourse on reality’ (in J. Butler’s understanding, as I will illustrate further down) and ‘image of the city’ (in F. Carrera’s understanding) as being interchangeable. As previous chapter outlined, discussions on both ‘discourse’ and ‘image’ of place are closely interlinked with the idea of experience of place. I will go into this point in more depth further along, as I browse through the scientific literature reviewed for the purpose of this thesis. Nevertheless, the relation discourse/image of place – experience of place is one of the basic premises of this paper, for which reason I draw attention on it from the start.

When discussing the concept of experience of place, there are two approaches which influence significantly such a study of human – environment interactions. The first approach looks upon ‘space’ and consequently ‘place’ as socio-cultural constructions (Butler, 1990; Rose, 1999) while the second approach treats ‘place’ as a (lived-in) experience (Karmanov, 2009). Nevertheless, the two are closely inter-twined and they are often used together in theories on the production of space and place-making (Lefebvre, 1991; de Haan, 2010). The two above approaches to the study of human-environment interactions overlap theoretical grounds in the point where they both argue that *“there is no objective world external to and separate from ourselves”* (Carmona et al., 2003, p.120).

The present paper will follow precisely this latter joint path of socio-cultural constructs and (lived-in) experiences in order to record and look into discourses on the city, as well as to analyse possible alterations of the experience of place as an effect of a cinematographic production. Socio-cultural constructs and (lived-in) experiences alike are tools engaged in the discursive production of ‘place’, as we will see further along, and they can be either direct or indirect, in other words, mediated or un-mediated (Carrera, 1998). This duplicity has me mentioning constantly in-between brackets the ‘lived-in’ nature of the experience of place.

This chapter is structured as follows: first, I will introduce the conceptual dimensions at the foundation of producing discourses on *meaning*, *city image* and *reality*. Second, I will follow related theories on which mechanisms of discursive production are based. Based on the literature review, I will introduce the concepts of 'space', 'place', 'sense of place' and '(lived-in)experience' in their larger theoretical context. By approaching the above concepts as discursively created constructions my aim is to understand them in their broader use and outline their particular roles for the purpose of this study. The scientific literature review here is used to develop a personalised theoretical backbone for this research. Since the existing theory on either one of the concepts is quite abundant and often contradictory in its basic assumptions, I will offer a general overview of the existing literature. Nevertheless, I will choose to use in my paper only certain theoretical elements which, in my belief, fit in with my own theoretical approach. As a result, as I adopt and fit in like puzzle pieces different theories based on those areas where they overlap, I will outline from the existing literature my own working definition for each of the concepts that I will use throughout this research.

For the purpose of this paper I start by introducing the concepts that I will be using in my research in their multiple theoretical understandings and uses. The reason behind this is that I want to provide the readers with a multilateral grasp of the conceptual tools I will be adopting and to explain why I have chosen specific theories and not others on which to develop this thesis.

One of the theories with which I base my research is one widely spread, but which I will come to challenge and ultimately contradict by the end of this paper. The above mentioned theory is F. Carrera's (1998) basic premise that, following the theoretical footsteps of K. Lynch (1960) and C. Norberg-Schultz (1979), "*a City is nothing more than structure and activity*" (Carrera, 1998, p. 4), where 'structure' includes both physical objects and their organisation and 'activity' refers to "*all human-related social and economic behavior, as well as mere presence and/or existence of human beings within the urban environment.*" (idem, p. 4). In the same author's definition, 'meaning' is one of the main devices behind mechanisms of building discourse/image of place. In F. Carrera's notes "*Meaning... is what we each attach to our perception of a place's identity, when we internalize what we see (but also hear, smell and, to a lesser extent, taste and touch), which may consist of human activity or physical elements of the built form, or both. Meaning guides our mental selection and archival processes.*" (idem, p. 7), where 'identity' is that particular characteristic of the city resulted from merging together 'structure' and 'activity'. By partially following the lines of the assumptions above, throughout this paper I will also look onto the characteristics of the physical environment and the quality and content of everyday activities. Nevertheless, as we will come to see, the meanings

assigned to places have a much more complex structure and are never pre-defined, but rather constructed through a network of signs, memories, sentiments and personal values.

Throughout this paper I will very often use the term 'meaning' as both condition and driver of the experience of place. As I noted earlier, I adopted 'meaning' in its triple definition given by F. Carrera (1998), but altered at places by my own interpretations and line of thought:

1. 'meaning' as 'intention', implying that meaning is embedded in objects – *“The original <intent> of shapers of urban space resides in the structures of the city and gives them “character”, moreover the structures also reflect some pre-existing meanings that are exuded by the natural setting in which building takes place”* (idem, p. 8). The idea of a pre-existing meaning does not imply a pre-given signification of one place or another, but rather the 'genius loci', the spirit of the place, a concept kept in a rather high regard in the practice of a representative number of landscape architects. 'Intention' as 'meaning' refers to concepts behind design and planning activities which assign to certain extents the characteristics, uses and sometimes even declare the symbolic content of a place.

2. 'meaning' as 'understanding', implying that only by grasping *“of the meaning of a word or an image, can we really say we understand that word or that image. Without understanding the meaning of a concept, we cannot really say we understand the concept. Thus meaning seems to be a **conditio sine qua non** for the understanding of the city”* (idem, p. 8, original emphasis).

3. 'meaning' as 'significance', implying that *“the significance of any encounter, with a city’s physical constructs or with a city’s inhabitants, depends not only on the innate significance of those structures and activities, but, to a large degree, also to our own internal state at the moment of the encounter. When we are happiest or saddest, the same street scene may acquire vastly different meaning to us. We evaluate the situation and assign a <weight> to our internal memory of it, based on the intrinsic qualities of the experienced objects and events, as well as on our internal <weighing mechanism> at that moment”* (idem, p. 9).

As we will come to observe further along, *meaning* is constructed through discourse, similarly to *images of the city* or *individual notions of reality*. The instruments employed by these production processes belong to the theoretical areas of *semiotics*, *performativity* and *cultural construction*, areas which provide the drivers, the tools and the mechanisms which create *meanings* and attach them to everyday life. In consequence, for the purpose of this paper and in order to develop a research approach to this study, I will use elements from theories of *semiotics* (Eco, 1979; Lefebvre, 1991),

performativity (Butler, 1990; Rose, 1999) and *culture* (van Assche, 2004; Swidler, 1986). The above mentioned theories lay the grounds for my own research approach, which is that the surrounding reality is discursively constructed, the same as all those things (traditions, gestures, habits, rapport relations and even meanings) which are commonly treated as taken for granted 'truths'. As a result, the reason I choose this particular set of conceptual dimensions to develop my study is that I consider it to be the most appropriate one when theorising on discourses on the surrounding environment (in this case study, the city of Bucharest) and how are these (re)shaped by everyday experiences and exposure to forms of media (in this case study, the film "Filantropica").

I will combine this first category of concepts with a second one, that of (lived-in) experiences as results of individual *perception* (Carmona et. al, 2003). The reason for this double theoretical approach is that I find it most appropriate for the object of this paper. By including *feelings*, *personal background* and *preferences* into the equation behind constructing day-to-day realities, what results is a more subtle and efficient conceptual tool-box to help identify and study the mechanisms behind everyday discourses on our surroundings.

As we will see throughout this chapter, lived-in *experiences* are consequences of sense of *place*, which, in its turn, is a personalised view on *space*. When developing the theoretical framework, I will outline the steps which lead to constituting individual discourses on a (film-location) city, in their process of becoming. Based on the chosen conceptual dimensions, I will first look onto the (discursive) *production of space* (Lefebvre, 1991). In the following stage, the element of perception is introduced and the discussion moves towards theories on *sense of place* and *belonging* (Ittelson, 1978, cited by Carmona et al., 2003; Lapsley, 1997). The last sub-chapter, 'Recreating the urban stage', constitutes a sketched bridge between theories of production of space, place-making and elements of cinema theory (Clarke, 1997; Eco, 2005; Singer, 2008), always using *semiotics*, *performativity* and *culture* to draw inter-relations and develop instruments for discourse analysis.

2.1 Conceptual dimensions

Through extrapolation from J. Butler's (1990) premise that constructs become real through discourse, concepts such as 'reality' or 'truth' are constructed through discourses which validate them in people's perception as being 'real'. Thus, by the means of discourse, one appropriates "*taken for granted truths*" (Swindler, 1986), results of socio-cultural constructions of signification, and

propagates them as variations of the personal image on reality. One of the inferences resulted from here is that individual (lived-in) experiences of the city cannot be discussed outside general discourses of identity, space and sense of place. What I mean here by “general discourses” is those commonly and widely accepted facts of truth, cultural constructions which are so influential in the production of personal discourses.

Discourses such as those on identity, space or place, produce the socio-cultural constructs mentioned previously which are used to describe by means of definition *what* and *how* an object is. As they are, discourses operate by means of cultural meanings and personal interpretations intertwined. Images and representations found in our immediate surroundings inform “*our sense of both self and reality*” and “*are a crucial factor in the reproduction and contestation of existing social practices*” (Lapsley, 1997). As this theoretical framework will illustrate, *sense of place*, this *sine qua non* of the human experience of place, is built on the above mentioned images and representations of our environment, through processes of reception, perception, signification and performance. I draw the attention here on a particular aspect: sense of place as such is not inherent to place itself, but always constructed within personal discourse. The reason I refer to it separately is because its particularly significant role in discussions on feelings of (non)belonging and (non)preferences of place.

In consequence, the discursive outcomes regarding *place* are dependent on personal preferences and sentiment, as well as culturally formed understandings. The outcomes of place-making processes affect spatial knowledge, emotions, sets of values, actions, gestures and other behavioural practices. As a result, we can say that experiences of place themselves are constructed through discourses. Within discourses, through their gestures and actions, individuals enact taken for granted significations of their environment. By translating these culturally constructed ‘truths’ into one’s own perception mechanism, one produces personal identities of *self* and of *place*.

To put it in other words, our understanding of the city is shaped on the base of the information we receive from external sources - such as media or culturally inherited facts of ‘truth’ (Swidler, 1986), but also on the base of personal appreciation – affecting individual ways to look at the city, make sense of its elements and add a meaning to them.

History has its say in the architectural and planning traditions, in creating landmarks and local icons, as well as in modelling certain habits and practices. In Hebbert’s (2005) view, although space may not have a collective meaning, it does hold certain significance in terms of collective memory (Hebbert, 2005). But this contradicts with discourse theories (Butler, 1990) and place-making theories (de

Haan, 2010; Relph, 1976, cited in Carmona et al., 2003), which argue against the objective notion of 'space'. Thus, 'space' as such can hold no significance as the moment it is perceived it becomes a distinct category, 'place'. For the purpose of this paper, I will refer to 'space' as the observed (physical) surrounding environment, one which is produced through socio-cultural signification alone. On the other hand, 'place' will always appear as space assigned with meaning through individual perception.

Only once it has been metamorphosed into 'place' can Hebbert's theory to 'place' apply. Through mechanisms which we will discover later on, places can be thought of as incorporating group memories as part of public commemoration sites and events. As a consequence of the latter and judging from a poststructuralist perspective, Lyotard's (1984, cited in Clarke, 1997) association of the *postmodern* with "*incredulity towards metanarratives*" stands valid. There are no universal narratives, only possible local ones in which smaller narratives overlap and create a somewhat generally accepted reality. Furthermore, building on J. Butler's (1990) and H. Lefebvre's (1991) theories, it will become clear in the present chapter that cultural constructs and discourses on production of space as well as, by analogy, on identity and place-making are co-dependent of the socio-temporal component. The meanings which come down through a historic path may relate back to larger-scale trends and movements, but they acquire their substance from the particularities of the object they designate – marking a specific place in a specific time and culture. Objects are not pre-given and, as a result, they do not pre-exist signification processes. In the moment in which we acknowledge them, that is to say that we see them, use them and talk about them, we also define them. In consequence, objects are culturally produced through discourses. To this embedded signification, our own interpretation of them based on our personal background, memories and feelings, empowers the object even further with a *personal meaning*.

In J. Butler's (1990) understanding, the meaning and interpretation of 'sex' lead to 'gender' as a cultural construct. By analogy, the same process of cultural constitution is experienced by other categories of identity, such as 'race' or 'class'. But is this not the case for all those elements by which we define *who* we are – roles within society, the city and family life? Not only that, but as it will appear later on in this chapter, 'space' and 'place' are themselves products of signification processes and personal discourse.

In order to explore experiences of place, a more in-depth understanding of identity and place construction is needed. Such an understanding relies on notions of *semiotics* - interpreting and

adding meaning to the urban, *performativity* – being and acting in the city, thus creating an identity of place, and *culture* – seeing and making sense of the world. Further down, I will take each of these concepts and present them in their broader theoretical contexts while at the same time outlining those elements which I will use within this study.

Semiotics

A more in-depth understanding of semiotics is important for this study in order to understand the process behind everyday signification of things, a process which affects mechanisms of producing discourses on reality and accounting for everyday (lived-in) experiences.

The theory of *semiotics* is the theory of signs (van Assche et al., 2012). Created on the base of societal established conventions, semiotics uses signs to describe or refer to a certain something. As a result, the meaning that they acquire in time is often unrelated to the understanding of the sign per se. In semiotics, signs are read and made sense of within context. Unrestricted to the realm of language, semiotics lies at the foundation of producing meaning and interpreting signs.

Signs are needed in order to tell something about another thing. By adding meaning to things, individuals produce knowledge about the world, a knowledge which is nevertheless framed by culture, in its postmodern understanding, personal background and experience. But significance is also, to a high degree, the result of the habit of practice, actions which re-occur systematically in everyday life until they gain a certain meaning – such as opening the door for

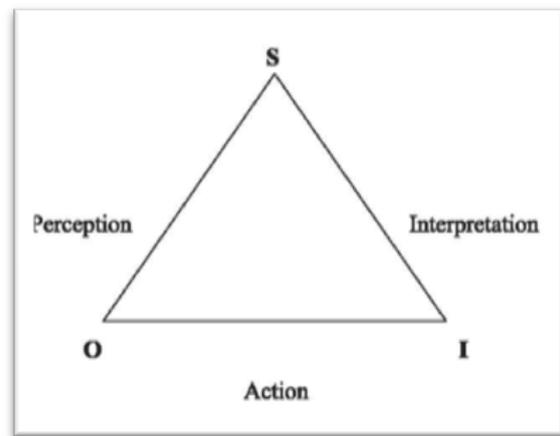


FIGURE 1: C. PEIRCE'S SEMIOTIC TRIANGLE
(MAATTANEN, 2007, P. 454)

entering or buying birthday presents (Lefebvre, 1991). For this reason, a discussion about signs and signification can only exist in the presence of an interpreter, someone who reads and adds a meaning to them. This line of thinking follows the footsteps of C. Peirce's theory of semiotics illustrated in the diagram on the side.

For Peirce, one of the influential theoreticians on semiotics, 'meaning' is 'use' and it is the habit of actions which adds significance to a semiotic relationship between sign (S), object (O) and interpreter

(I). In other words, the object, as used by the individual/interpreter, is perceived by means of the sign which describes it, a sign which is made sense of by an interpreter. As I shortly mentioned in the opening of this sub-chapter, objects come into being through signification and this signification can only be assigned by an individual who produces the object by means of discourse. Thus, signs (shapes, colours, proprieties) are ascribed to objects by common agreement in order to designate them. A 'bow tie' is a bow tie for individuals belonging to those societies where high-life comes with an image. In any other part, the bow tie as an object may well be a completely different item to use.

Because the signs which we encounter in our everyday life are often the result of conventions, they are structured in codes which are accessible to those familiar with the signifying language. Since processes of signification are subjective, the conventions, although previously agreed on, are not always passed on and understood in the precisely same way by all those reading the signs. All the more, different (sub)cultures imply sometimes differences in values and norms, as well as in signification content. As a result, when it comes to societal systems and the signs they use to regulate behaviour, differences may emerge between 'intended' message and the way in which it is received by those who interpret it (Carmona et al., 2003). Culture and personal experience play a significant role in mere interpreting the function of signs.

U. Eco introduced his theory of codes and signs production in order to bring into question human interpretation of space and the tools used to communicate people's image and identity of and in place. According to U. Eco (1979), anything can be seen as a sign and "*can be taken as significantly substituting for something else*", due to the fact that ultimately anything can have a meaning for someone at a certain point (van Assche et al., 2012). Based on U. Eco's (1979) theorisation of the semiotics field, the universe of signification becomes extremely complex and classes of codes come to include much more than language and visual images. Codes can be embedded in things such as taste, smell, tactile experiences, sounds, objects, plots and phenomena otherwise difficult to pin under common sign systems, such as behaviour, values or etiquettes. The semiotic modes thus developed by U. Eco hold significant value for the present study as they are means of signification processes and assigning individual meanings. As a result, they provide me with a wide palette of elements based on which (lived-in)experiences are accounted for and personal discourses are built.

Whether a sign is meaningful to someone or not is to a certain degree dependent on a type of knowledge acquired through socio-cultural means and personal experience. In this case, we can discuss about signs which are commonly valid throughout many societies (such as traffic signs), signs

which are deeply culturally embedded (such as the architecture-function relation within buildings or the form taken by socio-cultural norms) and signs which take on meanings only due to an intimate relationship between the object and the interpreter (such as things or places to which one reports himself through memory or personal affect), as the findings of this study will come to support.

U. Eco's theory of semiotics finds its way into western cinema theory by having a notable influence on film theoreticians, such as C. Metz or A. Guzzetti (1976) for whom an audience's engagement with the cinema is not completely illusion and has "*a certain impression of reality*" (ibid, p. 75). This interlink constitutes the headstone of the present study which treats film not as a work of fiction, but as yet another distinct discourse on reality. Semiotics' applicability to cinema is tested by U. Eco (2005) himself in a study on narrative devices in television shows, a study in which the author argued for the existence of juxtaposition mechanisms in the audience's understanding between on-screen and everyday realities.

In U. Eco's view, when creating iterative cinematographic realities, films rely on the use of intertextuality. Such a procedure assumes a specific world-knowledge of the film location that the spectator holds prior to the moment of watching the film. In-film allusions made by the director have more chances to be correctly understood in this case. In my opinion, the familiarity of an original topos through the lens of which cinematic imaginaries are being read and interpreted is closely interlinked with the production of space and identity as cultural constructs. The familiarity with an original cinematic topos means a familiarity with the language of signs and significations used within the film. As they are, on screen discourses on reality, acquire different value and are understood and appropriated differently from one viewer to another. This understanding and appropriation is based on the spectator's own personal background and whether this background coincides socio-culturally with that within which the film's discourse is contained.

For a better understanding of the concept behind semiotics, let us retake the example used by M. Duineveld and K. van Asche (2012, p. 4): "*If a (landscape) architect refers to the past of a place by means of a steel sculpture, then she does not only refer to the past of the place, but also to traditions of sculpture and steel sculpture, their typologies, topics, tropes and debates. The chosen sign system, in this case an artistic genre, shapes the communication between designer and audience. By means of sculpture, one can not express everything, and not everything expressed will be understood* (Howett, 1987; ledema, 2003)."

Within urban environments, elements of semiotics can be used with the purpose to outline a supposedly 'correct' (expert's perspective) reading, interpretation and understanding of the city by its users much in the sense in which K. Lynch theorises the urban attributes of 'legibility' and 'imageability'. Placing the problematic of codes within living environments H. Lefebvre (1991) introduces the notion of spatial codes based on which we read, interpret and produce the space that we live in. Since, as we mentioned above, signification only exists in the presence of an interpreter, a semiotic study of the city can only be performed through the multiple perspectives of the individuals who experience the urban environment. It is this very approach that I will take on in this study in order to record and study individual discourses on the city of Bucharest.

From a semiotic point of view, *"space becomes a thing, becomes place, as some geographers and anthropologists would say, when it emerges as a sign to something else -say, a historical event. That means that a certain place will be delineated, emerging from the background of other places."* (van Assche et al., 2012, p. 6). In order to be delineated, to be set apart from others, a 'space' becomes 'place' only once it has been invested with specific signification. This signification is closely inter-related with the discussion on everyday discourses, used to describe social space as well as to differentiate particular spaces from one another (Lefebvre, 1991). Again, sign, being in place, identity and the physicality of space are joined together through this complex process of interpreting the city and adding meaning to it. J. Raban (1974, cited in Makeham, 2005) characterises urban elements (buildings, clothing, cityscape) in terms of theatre and semiotics. The same author suggests that through signs and the act of signifying in the city, an urban vocabulary and semantics are being produced, an idea on which we will come across again later in this study. The urban language thus resulted is consequently used to articulate discourses of the city. In the author's own words, *"this kind of signification, communication, meaning-making, identity-forming, city-making is the "grammar of the city", and "the art of urban living" (ibid, p. 152).*

Referring back to K. Lynch, R. Barthes attributes to every city a *"basic rhythm of signification which is opposition, alternation and juxtaposition of marked and non-marked elements"* (Barthes, 1988, p. 415). According to the same author, signifieds, by which he means that they lose their initial signification, pass in time while signifiers remain and only take on understandings referring to a new thing. In other words, as objects may be taken out of use entirely taking the thing which they stand for along with them, signs remain in use by changing the object which they designated onto another one. This resembles J. Butler's (1990) approach to identities which are temporarily formed only to vanish later on. Such an example are Newton's sevenfold colours: red, orange, yellow, green, blue,

indigo and violet which use to stand for a meteorological phenomenon, 'the rainbow', constituted here as an object. Today, the same set of colours is world-wide associated with the gay culture. Imprinted on a flag, the seven colours are no longer relatable to an optical phenomenon alone, and *rainbow* as a language construct has become a symbol of a socio-cultural group. The signified has become the signifier.

By looking onto signifiers as symbols and onto signifieds as the objects that these symbols designate, this replacement of the first category by the second one reanimates the argument posed by M. Duineveld and K. van Asche (2012) stating that the structure and function of a sign belonging to a certain sign system at a given moment is dependent on the historical and cultural evolution of that and other systems. In other words, as values, beliefs, etiquette, functions, design and practices change over time, so will signs as things which describe things, along with their signification content and language of codes.

A. Jaworski and C. Thurlow (2010) regard meanings as constructions resulted from socio-cultural interpretation and conclude that "*all landscape is semiotic*" (Jaworski and Thurlow, 2010, p. 2) a statement which, as we will see throughout the second part of this paper, bears great importance to the ways in which individuals take in, understand and interpret their living environments. This understanding of added meaning to categories of signs which make up the landscape leads to considerations of K. Lynch's (1960) discussion on the legibility of the city as an influential factor in experiencing the city. His perspective is one which studies the urban elements always in relation to each other and to the individual who perceives and interprets them, so that they create a clear and coherent image of the city's spatiality. I will use K. Lynch's theory in building part of this study's methodological framework because it offers a good starting point (from an expert's perspective) to explore the relationship people – physical setting.

K. Lynch's theory has its value in the idea that people read the space they inhabit based on its constitutive elements and the relationships between them. Nevertheless, the approach has its limitations in the fact that it assumes that individuals understand space in similar ways and, as discussions with interviewees will come to illustrate, this is not the case. K. Lynch's argument for legibility is opposed by Carmona et al. (2003) who advise for diversification of urban experiences, introducing the notion of illegibility as a positive one. In the authors' view, people may very well like the element of surprise and mystery and to make their own sense of their surroundings. It is in this

point that my own ideas meet those of the authors and this will form the basic presumption in this study's collection of individual discourses on my chosen city.

In my view, such an approach on reading the city opens the way for a number of subsequent discussions on a language of the city, a language which is not metaphorical, but articulated through the signification of things within the city. Such a language *speaks* to inhabitants and tourists alike, based on levels of socio-cultural familiarity with both signs and their embedded meanings and allows for the city to make itself understood.

R. Vitiello and M. Willcocks (2008) take the theorisation of a city's language one step further, where each physical element takes on properties which are subject to our own understanding of it. For the above mentioned authors, urban semiotics related processes, such as reading, interpreting and adding meaning to the city are based on an urban lexicon, a vocabulary partly personal partly common to a number of individuals sharing values. This urban lexicon is based on the multiple combinations of urban details thought of as "*signs of a place's identity*" (Vitiello and Willcocks, 2008, p. 20) In their study the authors argue that both design and appreciation play a role in our representation and interpretation of things. In consequence, reading space involves signifying different physical elements in the urban realm and translating them into particularised discourses on the city. "*Each urban context projects its own alphabet of details – its Urban Lexicon. Our interpretation of these details combines to create a personal vocabulary of the city*" (Vitiello and Willcocks, 2008, p. 8). This idea of an informal urban lexicon is appropriate for the purpose of the present study and it will re-emerge later on both in the data collection and data analysis phases.

In R. Barthes' (1988) acceptation, discussing about the existence of an *urban language* is warranted by the understanding of the city itself as a discourse. Here, the lexicon is no longer reduced to metaphors and symbols of the physical space. The city as a whole develops means of communicating its identity. But is this to say that the city in its materiality holds an inherent set of codes and meanings? I believe this not to be the case. Indeed, there are historical, cultural and even social constructions which are in place in one city or another and they are most often taken for granted truths. As noted earlier in the previous chapter, our reality and systems of truth are products of convention, constructs which become real through the means of discourse (Butler, 1990). But discourses on the reality of a city are not built solely on cultural constructs. Personal history, background, affects and preferences play their distinct parts in what we *think* a city to be. Furthermore, as we will see later in this chapter, space itself is produced through discourse. If we

look at a city through the perspective of its geography, history, architectural styles, planning structure, objects which fill in the urban space, then seeing all these features as elements of a language belonging to that which is material in the city, does not seem impossible.

It is a fact that whatever meaning signs are given by a particular person in time and place is a result of culture, as well as personal background, memories and sentiment. Nevertheless, to a certain extent, the materiality of the city adds to our individual representation, interpretation and understanding of it.

Performativity

I will start by introducing the concept of 'performativity' in its broader (historical) context, as it started to form in the related literature. The reason for this is that I believe that an insight into the primary understandings of the concept and its evolution will be very helpful in grasping contemporary theories on 'performativity' and, more than that, in exploring and studying the theory and practice alike of *being* in the city.

The sociologist L. Mumford referred to the city in his work as "*a theatre of social action*", in which individuals play the double role of "*spectators and co-performers in the urban drama*". "*The city fosters art and is art; the city creates theatre and is the theatre*" (Mumford, 1937, cited in Makeham, 2005, p. 150). This way of looking onto the cityscape as an (urban) stage of performance has been subject for debates and reinterpretations in recent years, as we will come to see further on.

As P. Makeham notes, "*performance and performativity are intrinsic to urban life and design*". From his perspective, a "*mobile billboard; an illuminated building at night; a park fountain; an episode of road rage; a store window display; a queue – all of these comprise performative elements.*" (Makeham, 2005, p. 152). We will often see throughout the second part of this paper that people turn to this performative nature of everyday actions in order to create what J. Raban in the "*Soft city*" refers to as a mere appearance of a life with meaning.

In the context of living environments, performance becomes a fixer of identities, a marker of the desire for fixity and certitude (Edensor, 2006). In T. Edensor's study, performativity encapsulates scripts, roles, stage management, choreography, improvisation and reflexivity, all elements which belong to the language of theatre studies. My own views resonate with some of the author's

argumentations, namely that urban dwellers internalise norms to the degree of loss of self-consciousness. Their ways of behaving and inhabiting a certain city is the result of a know-how which has become the second nature of urban citizens. As this performance of being in the city is never purely visual and never static, it results that one's contact with the city is not one primarily through its physical space. Although this is not the dominant approach to 'performativity' that I will take in the present study, all the considerations above are worthwhile noting as they will prove to be valuable in the my study of individual discourses on a city's reality.

Performance in the city assumes a sensual experience, as suggests U. Eco's multiplicity of signifying codes to which I referred previously. Performing in the city means engaging with its functions, but at the same time appreciating its aesthetics, listening to its music, getting acquainted with its smells and tastes. The city becomes a stage where the scenography of the moving crowds, the cartography of mental mapping and the topography of personal imaginaries merge together in a specific set design in order to bring to life what, in the tradition of W. Whyte, T. Edensor calls "*place ballets*".

Starting from J. Raban's idea that through performativity we aim to add meaning to our lives, a meaning for which we look everywhere around us, including within the urban space that we inhabit, a close inter-link emerges between performativity and semiotics of the city. It is in this trial to belong to one's environment and, why not, to the world, that these two conceptual dimensions become intimately inter-related. D. Nentwick paraphrases J. Raban and notes:

"The city is soft, shapeable, moldable, like clay. It 'awaits the imprint of an identity'. It invites the individual to remake it, and the 'self' too; this process, of the formation of identity and the shaping/remaking of the city, is a dialogic process [. . .] in which the formation of identity is simultaneously the shaping of the city." (Nentwick, 2004, cited in Makeham, 2005, p. 152)

If the above theories inspired me throughout this study and had me draw a number of parallels in how I chose to research the subject and look both into the film case study and the collected field data, the approach to 'performativity' that I will be taking in this paper is one from a different angle all together. The theoretical approach I decided for in the case of this research is based on J. Butler's (1990) theory of 'performativity. By building on her influential work in the field, I designed what has turned out to be a significant backbone fragment of this thesis' conceptual structure. In J. Butler's understanding, performativity is inter-related to a way of being, bringing together a twofold understanding from the spheres of linguistics and theatricality. The way in which she defines it is

“that reiterative power of discourse to produce the phenomena that it regulates and constrains” (Butler, 1993). Influenced by M. Foucault’s theory on juridical systems of power which *“produce the subjects they subsequently come to represent”* (Butler, 1990, p. 4, original emphasis), Butler’s approach to gender is that it is produced through discourse, a discourse which in turn comes to control and regulate understandings of gender and related behaviours. Working within a theoretical framework specific for structures, subjects produced by a structure are also defined and regulated according to the internal laws and general discourse of that specific structure (Fuchs, 2001). In J. Butler’s own words, *“the subjects regulated by such structures are, by virtue of being subjected to them, formed, defined, and reproduced in accordance with the requirements of those structures”* (Butler, 1990, p. 4).

If through description, representation and subsequent signification, the body itself can be produced, then this perspective can be translated to other categories of identity which leads to the conclusion that *identities* as such are culturally produced through discourse. With ‘identity’ being a cultural construct, its meaning is ultimately specific to the cultural context from which it sprang. *“The universal conception of the person, however, is displaced as a point of departure for a social theory of gender by those historical and anthropological positions that understand gender as a relation among socially constituted subjects in specifiable contexts. This relational or contextual point of view suggests that what the person <is>, and, indeed, what gender <is>, is always relative to the constructed relations in which it is determined”* (Butler, 1990, p. 15).

To follow J. Butler’s line of thought, stating that one belongs to a certain gender, race or class is to fit one within different categories of identity constituted as a result of power relations, their naming and regulatory systems. This process of cultural construction makes *“the singular notion of identity a misnomer”* (Butler, 1990, p. 7). We can infer from here that the categories of identity to which we refer to define ourselves are mere representations which have become internalised to the point of naturalisation. To reiterate J. Butler’s question, what do we mean with the term of ‘identity’ and why is the assumption that an identity, once acquired, is preserved as a constant in time, defining one as a whole, in perfect accordance with a vision of self as part of society or the world?

(Pre)fixed assigned meanings to one category of identity or another, in other words, cultural constructions of identity, are taken on in personal discourses and used in the production of ‘the self’ and ‘the world’. This is to say that we define ourselves, our place in society and our understanding of the world around us based on the cultural constructs that we inherit socially. Signification deals

precisely with this act of inscribing things with a cultural meaning, so that things become objects that we can refer to. No object pre-exists signification. This inscription with meaning is a result of both determinism exterior to us and personal interpretation. Returning to the semiotic discussion on signifier and signified, signs and their meaning are generally agreed upon by consensus within a culture. Thus, significations behind performativity are embedded with a meaning which is partly the result of an informed decision, of those things we pick up from media sources or literature. Other meanings are passed down to us from previous generations and are often taken for granted truths. Nevertheless, the process of signifying is not purely conditioned by social constructs, subject to power systems. Personal background and sentiment also affect the interpretation of signs and our performance as individuals accordingly. The result is that pallet of multiple culturally constructed identities merged together in a discursive identity of being in place.

The understandings of personal identity and that of the surrounding environment are translated into physical expressions of our bodies. These manifestations, such as gestures, acts, enactments, are constructions produced through discourse as well and are inscribed with particular cultural meanings. It is precisely through this streak of signs and discursive mechanisms that identity is produced and supported. As a result, the above-mentioned manifestations (gestures, acts, enactments), meant as expressions of that identity, are in fact performative, reiterating the process of identity production. This performance of identity is simultaneously a performance of difference in the tradition of Deleuze (1986, 1989, cited in Clarke, 1997) and it is both an expression and reiteration of identity, of *being oneself*, through repetition of manifestations by which one is discursively (self)defined (Warren, 2008).

Culture

Culture can be regarded as a tool kit for symbols, stories, rituals, world-views (Swindler, 1986). In the sense in which J. Butler uses the concept when discussing 'gender' as a construct anchored in cultural meaning and interpretation, 'culture' takes on a determinant effect in shaping behaviour, habits, styles, as well as values and beliefs. As we will see further down, grasping 'culture' is very important for understanding better processes of signification and performativity and, ultimately, for understanding mechanisms behind the production of discourses on everyday reality.

The approach I take in this section of the paper is very similar to that of A. Swindler (1986) in whose view *“culture influences action through the shape and organisation of links, not by determining the ends to which they are put”*. Her interpretation links back to that of J. Butler when talking about a duality of free will and determinism marking the process of inscribing cultural meanings. As a result, it can be said that culture provides sets of inherited and popularised constructs and meanings which are internalised by individuals until they become what T. Edensor (2006) calls *“second nature”*. In other words, cultural interpretations pass through a process of naturalisation which transforms ideologies first into tradition and ultimately into common sense. In consequence, culture affects understandings of the world and a number of daily practices which in time become taken for granted (Swindler, 1986).

While A. Swindler looks onto ‘culture’ as a means to communicate and share behavioural modes in society and *“outlook within a community”*, she constrains the understanding of ‘culture’ to *“symbolic vehicles of meanings”*. These cultural meanings are somewhat vulnerable to being regarded as recurrent patterns generally valid, in the tradition of C. Levi-Strauss. Nevertheless, culture cannot be patterned nor generalised. It belongs to the specificities of the structures that it emerges from.

In his work, S. Fuchs (2001) brings a stronger emphasis on the discursive *production* of assigned meanings and identities within a culture. According to him, ‘culture’ is characteristic to any social structure which can be regarded as a culture in itself, with distinct assigned meanings, values, beliefs and habits. *“A culture produces its own history, self-observations, and modes of causation. Then it can no longer be understood as reflecting, say, economics, class, or politics. Rather, a self-organizing culture decides what matters to it, how it measures and distributes reputation, and how it explains its internal workings. Such cultures become observers, and self-observers, in their own right, and any <explanation> of culture should acknowledge this operational independence.”* (Fuchs, 2001, p. 59). This self-referentiality of social structures is the same one defining Foucault’s juridical systems of power and J. Butler’s performativity of actions and gesture which, through the use of signs and discourse, fabricate the precise identity they are said to express.

This understanding of culture as building its own representations, interpretations and meanings is taken one step further in K. van Assche’s (2004) poststructuralist approach, which regards ‘culture’ as the way in which a group sees itself and the world. Thus, culture is no longer embedded only in significations and mechanisms of assigning meanings. Culture itself is a manufacturer of identities and this idea will often reflect back throughout the rest of this paper.

Taking as an example the case of J. Butler's discussion on 'gender' as a cultural construct and a cultural interpretation of 'sex', we can draw the inference supported by the author that 'gender' does not exist prior to its cultural significance. Can we then say that other categories of identity also make sense only when inscribed culturally? And, if so, can there be a discussion on lived-in experiences outside cultural significations enacted through the performance of being, with all its multiple identities? It has become clear that this would be an impossible task, as it would mean ignoring the very operation of the four levels of perception lying the foundation for lived-in experience: cognitive, interpretative, affective, evaluative (de Haan, 2010).

Starting from the presumption that identity and signification do not exist prior to cultural inscription, M. Foucault does theorise an aprioric existence of the physical body. As J. Butler remarks, he "*appears to assume a materiality prior to signification and form*" (Butler, 1990, p. 166), but is this apriority really possible? Perhaps yes, insofar as the material environment is out there, exterior to us, for us to add further meaning to it. We can even discuss characteristics of a physical setting such as aesthetics, character or security. But, as we discussed previously, objects themselves do not pre-exist signification. The moment we encounter them, the moment we speak about them, they are turned into signified things otherwise referring to them would not be possible. As a result, J. Butler body is used as a surface on which words, actions and gestures manifest themselves, producing their effects of a self-assumed cultural identity. When translating the discussion on cultural constructions and meanings into the context of (lived-in) everyday experiences, the following question emerges: granting that space is materially aprioric to processes of personal signification, how can spatiality be understood in the broader context of producing 'realities' through discourse and performance?

2.2 Producing space

In a short study on performing spaces within which relations of difference are being produced G. Rose (1999) makes the transition from J. Butler's discursively produced identities onto space, produced and performed in a very similar manner, through the normative of discourse.

G. Rose defines space as "*the articulation of collisions between discourse, fantasy and corporeality*" (Rose, 1999, p. 247) where each of the three elements contributes in defining the relation self-other.

While “*fantasy mobilizes bodies and is expressed through discourse*” and “*discourse is disrupted by fantasy and interrupted by the bodily*” (Rose, 1999, p. 258), the three elements, discourse, fantasy and materiality inter-relate and interact, resulting in performances which produce space. This basic assumption can be traced back to J. Butler’s interpretation of identity as “*performatively constituted by the very <expressions> that are said to be its results*” (Butler, 1990, p. 33). Thus, according to G. Rose, space is produced with the same mechanisms used to produce identity and the body.

As used here, ‘discourse’ and ‘performance’ reflect J. Butler’s theory. G. Rose expands on the understanding of the body (that which belongs to the corporeal) as not meaning anything outside its cultural signification. Like in J. Butler’s work, the body per se lacks an inherent identity and it is itself a performance; this is owed to the fact that there is no certainty that two repetitive actions or gestures, or the same act and gesture performed by two different bodies produces one and the same thing, as they are intended to. In itself, performance *is* just while the act of performing takes place. “*The act must be repeated in order to reassert its meaning and power again*” (ibid, p. 250). As a result, discourse is based on re-enactment, on re-iterative performances, performances which are simultaneously a discourse’s expressions and its internal validations. In other words, discourses are justified by the same mechanisms through which they are expressed.

An interesting concept that G. Rose introduced is that of ‘fantasy’ as an imaginary space. Using ‘fantasy’ both as a cultural construction – the fantastic – and as a mental process – fantasizing, G. Rose takes the example of a film to illustrate the realm of ‘fantasy’ as a “*mise-en-scene of desire*”. ‘Fantasy’ as space is *produced* and *exists* only in the mind through discursive mechanisms similar to that of H. Lefebvre’s (1990) ‘mental space’.

As mentioned previously, H. Lefebvre (1991) considers spaces to be described and defined by means of everyday discourses. According to him, discourses on space “*correspond to a specific use of that space and hence to a spatial practice that they express and constitute*” (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 16). Thus, the signification of space is given through the practice of habit – its meaning is encoded in how we use that space and the recurrent frequency of this use. This encoding with meaning appears through the discourse which produces the space itself and it happens simultaneously with the production process of the coding’s corresponding space. In short, space and its assigned set of codes and signifieds are produced concomitantly as we will come to confirm later on in this study.

According to H. Lefebvre, codes are specific and they are always reported to the component of ‘time’. Thus, spatial codes are set at particular moments in history and they characterise specific

spatial/social practices. As a result, by the means of signifying codes, practices or rituals, the members of a society gain access to their own space and their own position in that space. “A society generates (produces) an appropriated space in which it can achieve a form by means of self-presentation and self-representation” (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 34). Through codes space can be read, understood and appropriated by individuals to the point of performing it, in the way theorised by J. Butler and G. Rose, and belonging to it.

Overlapping the normative of human society with historical encoding, Lefebvre theorizes three categories of space: *mental space*– compilation of thought, emotion and sensory data; *physical space* – container of materiality; *social space* – ensemble of social action and performance. These three categories lie at the foundation of both the methodological framework and the field data analysis in the present paper. The reason for this is that H. Lefebvre’s classification illustrates the different types of signification content that ‘space’ as a product can take and its different expressions of ‘reality’ as we will see further on.

Mental space is similar to the imagery realm found in G. Rose’s study, an inner space constituted through a display of dreams, affects, thoughts and memories. *Physical space* is that of materiality, where the body comes into being and acts. Lefebvre contemplates on the slow disappearance of this type of space, which he associates with the natural world. Thus, in his opinion, in an environment where everything is interfered with and (re)created by humans, nature ceases to exist. This argumentation can be nowadays easily contested based on emerging theories of ‘next nature’ according to which the *fabricated* has replaced the traditional idea *natural* (van Mensvoort and Jan Grievink, 2012). Last, but not least, *social space* “contains – and assigns (more or less) appropriate places to: - (1) the **social relations of production**, i.e. the bio-physiological relations between the sexes and between age-groups, along with the specific organization of the family; and (2) the **relations of production**, i.e. the division of labour and its organization in the form of hierarchical social functions” (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 32, original emphasis).

One of Lefebvre’s theoretical outcomes is a set of three conceptual models constituting levels where space is produced. The conceptual models are: *the perceived* – the level of spatial practices where the body enacts its materiality through members and sensory organs; *the conceived* – the level where images and understandings of space take shape as a result of the scientific knowledge and information acquired from the environment; *the lived* – the level where ‘culture’ embeds space with codes and signification.

The three models described above, when combined, reflect the complex process of production of space and build the foundation for discourses on space. Thus, 'space' is always in a state of becoming, dependent on its (historical) encodings and discursive practices. For the purpose of this paper, I will use this multiple-models approach to space in order to analyse through its prism the findings of the data collection phase and to identify mechanisms behind discourses on the quotidian.

2.3 Being in place

Visual signs and codes in the city encompass meanings meant to regulate behaviour. Words and images on billboards, colours, textures, indicators, they are all instruments of control, constant markers of social norms. Many of these signs are visible and their signification is deeply embedded in their function, in the habit of use developed around them by people, as H. Lefebvre (1991) notes. Whether their meaning is denotative or connotative ('chair' and 'throne' describe basically the same object, but the meanings attached to each term are very different), signs are encodings not only for the visible, but also for the invisible.

Within lived space, where one *is* in a specific place and time, things are charged with different significations. For this reason, experience of place is shaped and expressed not only through processes of signification, performativity and production of space, but also through lived-in histories conditioned by the *sense of place*.

"For Heidegger and Lacan living is a way of being in relation to others where that relationship of care and desire can never finally come right" (Lapsley, 1997, p. 188). Building on Heidegger's theory of the city as both metaphor and site for the events unfolding within, R. Lapsley (1997) studies the urban environment always in relation to the Other, similarly to G. Deleuze (1986, 1989, cited in Clarke, 1997). In reasserting an identity of self, one sets him/herself apart from everything which is not belonging to this core. This is the conceptual level where the act of signifying and that of performing merge in order to create coherent discourses of the self and the world. This very notion of *otherness* is also that on which J. T. Warren (2008) bases his argumentation for a performance of difference through which, by repeating acts and gestures, one reiterates one's identity. The question of *the self* and *the other* requires a more in-depth understanding since they are primary to developing and articulating one's sense of place and belonging when building individual discourses on the city.

We have become already familiar with the idea of a contemporary (postmodern) world in which notions of identity are perpetually challenged and (re)defined (Butler, 1990) in an almost existentialist quest for the Self. In this context and that of D. Clarke's city experienced as a stranger among strangers, the conceptual notion of *the other* appears as a logical outcome of a society defined by a postmodernist culture and self-referential thought. The *Other* in R. Lapsley's work has romantic connotations and it is from this relationship that feelings of (non)belonging follow. One is continuously looking for a co-shared existence. As H. Shaftoe (2008) argues, the company of others is fundamental to one's sense of existence and belonging. G. Rose's (1999) idea of fantasy as the expression of desire finds its predecessor in R. Lasley's study. Thus, the interaction with the Other is the one which configures reality through its on-going quest/illusion of the I – Other complementary relation. The Self and the environment are permanently redefined from the perspective of the lived *reality* of a (dis)enchanted world (ibid.) in which one struggles to reassert one's identity independent of the non-self. As a result, the Self becomes permanently (re)enacted within social relations and understandings of space.

Nevertheless, a significant part of the related scientific literature does not reduce the city to a mere passive actor, background to human interactions and object in (trans)formation. The urban environment is often regarded as actively participating in (re)shaping its inhabitants and their enactments of *being in the city*. In his opening to "The image of the city", K. Lynch notes that "*nothing is experienced in itself, but always in relation to its surroundings, the sequences of events leading up to it, the memory of past experiences*" (Lynch, 1960, p. 1). As a result, images that we have about our living environment are impregnated with our own memories and meanings which we attach to it.

Feelings of identity and belonging are deeply rooted in our immediate surroundings. To feel at ease in one place or another, to feel like fitting in and like being part of a larger community are emotions interrelated with the sense that we make of our environment. Adding meaning and referencing the physical characteristics of a given space back to our own experiences and memories are the elements which lay the foundation of place-making processes.

As previously noted, we affect our environment and are in return affected by it (Carmona et al., 2003; Shaftoe, 2008; Wylie, 2009; Gehl, 2010) and this constant re-shaping is dependent on perception processes. The transformation from the category of 'space' to that of 'place' is related to a switch in perception. Space becomes place when it ceases to be objective and alien to the viewer

and it starts to be looked upon from the subjective perspective of the individual. Place is space subject to personal interpretation and experience. As Relph (1976, cited in Carmona et al., 2003) notes, lived experiences are those which change space into place.

Introducing the perceptual dimension in the study of the city M. Carmona et al. (2003) argue that there is no clear demarcation where sensation ends and perception begins. For the authors, experiencing the city through perception can only be multi-sensorial and it is a process taking place at four levels: cognitive – enabling people to make sense of their environment, affective – involving feelings, interpretative – adding meaning and associations through the use of memory and evaluative – attributing values and preferences to space (Ittelson, 1978, cited by Carmona et al., 2003).

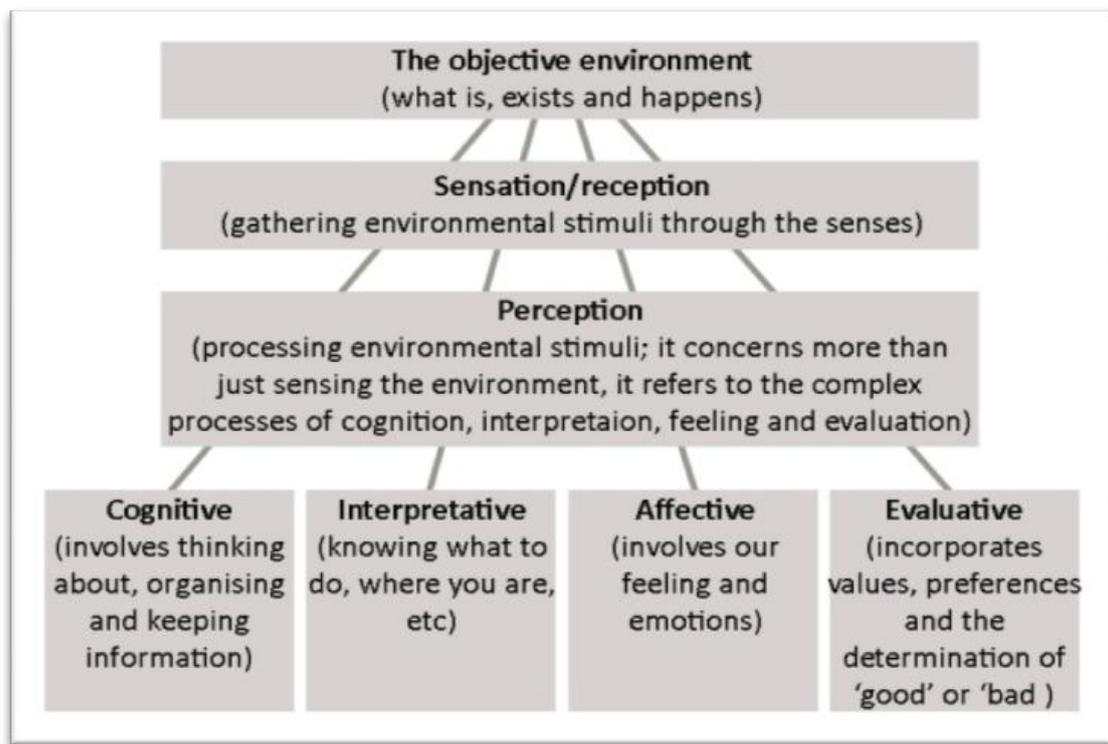


FIGURE 2: THE EXPERIENTIAL LIVED-IN EXPERIENCE (DE HAAN, 2010)

All four levels noted above co-function in creating mental maps or, in other words, individual interior worlds. This process of signifying and experiencing place is diagrammatically illustrated in Figure 2. Three out of the four levels – cognitive, interpretative and evaluative – can be critically addressed and discussed in terms of this thesis’ main theoretical approach, the discursive production of reality, by using conceptual tools already introduced in the present theoretical framework. Nevertheless, for a better grasp of the affective level, I believe an extra theory is needed. For the object of this paper,

aiming to have a clearly structured methodological frame for field data collection and result analysis alike, I have chosen to use here Plutchik's wheel of human emotions, as depicted in Figure 3.

Although an approach to understanding space which is based on perception processes is in the opposite corner from the theories of both J. Butler and H. Lefebvre, I consider it here as I find it valuable for the purpose of this paper. As I argued previously, discourses on the everyday environment are partly based on cultural constructs and produced significations, but the second part comes from personal interpretation by means of senses, sentiment and personal values. I do not agree with the existence of an “objective” environment as it contradicts

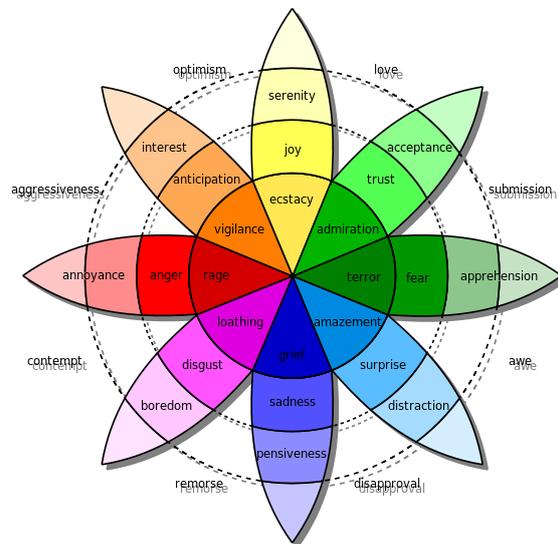


FIGURE 3: PLUTCHIK'S WHEEL OF HUMAN EMOTIONS

theories on semiotics and performativity that I opted for in this study. Nevertheless, in my belief, processes of constructing an image of place and the referencing to (lived-in) experiences, both fundamental to the production of everyday discourses, do involve *perception*.

By creating what M. Carmona refers to as mental maps do individuals not also build their own image of certain places? As shown above, mental maps are based on selective snapshots of reality coming in the form of impressions. Based on processes of perception, “such images are **partial** (not covering the whole place); **simplified** (omitting much information); **idiosyncratic** (each individual's place image is unique); and **distorted** (based on subjective, rather than real, distance and direction) (Pocock & Hudson 1978: 33). Image is thus a combination of place identity and how the place is perceived by the individual (i.e. it includes that individual's set of feelings about and impressions of the place)” (Carmona et al., 2003, p. 112, original emphasis).

In short, our image on the city is conditioned by its identity of place and our own perception of it. Nevertheless, as discussed previously, the image that we have about our living environments or any others for that matter is not purely a result of personal perception. Our opinions and interpretations are also consequences of the urban representations and information which we receive from sources outside ourselves, such as mass-media, mouth-to-mouth stories, popular beliefs and so on.

In discussing the perceptual dimension of the city Carmona et al. (2003) address a number of issues, such as symbolism and iconicity, sense of place, territoriality and personalisation, the dimension of place and placelessness. All of these themes lie at the foundation of debates on place-making processes. Generally associated with *genius loci*, 'sense of place' is a concept which deals more with place in the phenomenological tradition of Heidegger, a place which is experienced with all senses and through one's consciousness.

Full awareness of the world one lives in and understanding it as being subjective to its core since we invariably see it through our own perception, are two elements which lead to the need to belong. Through personification individuals mark their territory and their belonging to a certain place. As a result, symbols and icons are introduced in the living environment in order to add meaning to the world and thus find one's own place in it on the side of socio-cultural constructions.

This desire to feel like part of something (a community, a city, the world) is fundamental to human beings (Shaftoe, 2008) and it is closely inter-related with feelings of identity. Identity of self and place within this discussion on sense of place joins together J. Butler's and H. Lefebvre's understandings of constructing 'reality' through cultural signification and discourse, with D. Karmanov's phenomenological approach to the landscape. In this context, personal identity is influenced up to a certain point by the identity of place. Relph's (1976, cited in Carmona et al., 2003) seven existential modes (see Appendix I for descriptions) illustrate this co-dependency very well: our emotional attachment to a place and questions of "outsiders" versus "insider" often go hand in hand with levels of familiarity of place. These seven identities of place merge together added meaning, socio-cultural values, personal preference and experience of place in order to define categories of (non)belonging.

As Carmona et al. (2003) underline, the dimension of place has a wide range of understandings. Nevertheless, out of the different theories that the

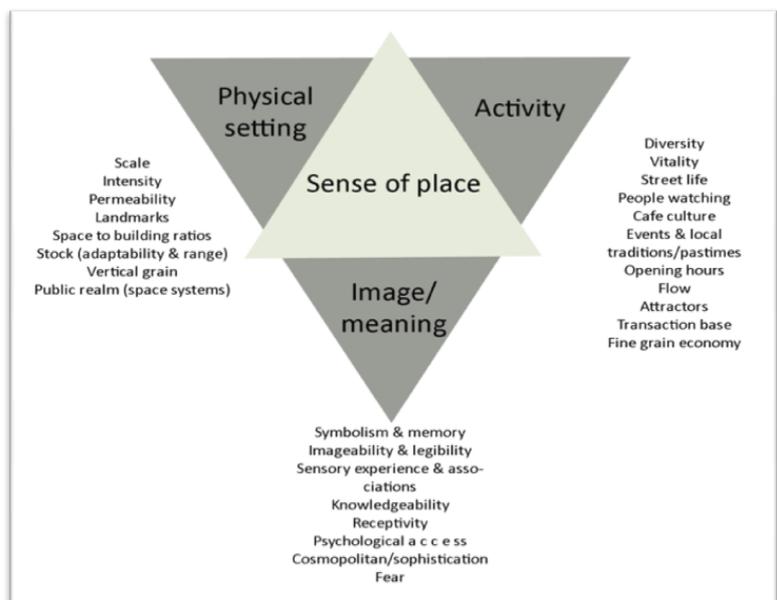


FIGURE 4: SENSE OF PLACE (MONTGOMERY, 1998, CITED IN CARMONA ET AL., 2003)

authors review, one in particular caught my attention as it added an interesting element to my own considerations on 'sense of place'. This theory is that of Montgomery (1998, cited in Carmona et al., 2003), who merged together different theories and translated them in terms of elements of urban design. The result was a diagram which illustrates how sense of place can be preserved and enhanced through urban design (see Figure 4). I will refer back to this diagram later on in this study, where I will re-interpret it according to the overall theoretical framework and purpose of this study in order to process the collected field data.

This discussion on feelings of belonging and place-making is closely related to that on the production of space through socially established conventions and personal experience. Thus, the dimension of place becomes yet another category which feeds back into debates on the semiotic of space. If meaning is attached through information received from the environment, but also through the habit of use and personal attachment, then cultivating a sense of place is an outcome of spatial semiotics. By reading and interpreting space, we live it and thus produce new images and discourses which are no longer purely spatial. They define a new semantic category, that of place.

Like 'space', 'place' is also produced through discourse. Nevertheless, as shown previously, discourses on place involve much more than historical encodings and cultural meanings. They relate deeper with processes of lived-in experiences and emerge from personal histories. Thus, in signifying and performing 'place' individuals make use of existing cultural constructions, memory, affect and values to produce and describe their experience of place.

2.4 Recreating the urban stage

In the present sub-chapter I will try to bridge over theories on the city, on producing space/place and creating sense of place in order to briefly introduce some cinematographic theories. The reason for this is that, for the purpose of this paper, a better theoretical understanding of film in the context of its location-city is required as well as how these cinematographic productions may feed into everyday discourses on the reality of specific film urban-settings.

When describing the city simultaneously as an urban stage and a performance, P. Makeham (2005) looked onto the rhythms and dynamics of everyday life from outside, from an external witness's view on the drama unfolding before his eyes. Whether that drama is performed within the four walls of a

theatre or out on the streets of the city, makes little if no difference to P. Makeham who takes the position of an omniscient observer of the city's scene.

As A. Blum notes on the same urban stage, "*if a scene is being played there must be both actors and audience*" (Blum, 2003, cited in Makeham, 2005, p. 152). In the city, we are both actors and audience, switching roles as we move from one 'scene' to another. Nevertheless, as an audience we are rarely fully aware of our 'observer' standing points as we are never truly outside things that happen around us. By the simple act of witnessing a scene, we *become* part of it. We interact with space, urban props and individuals as the scene unfolds and we are, very often unconsciously, characters, even though actively passive, of what we see/hear/smell/feel. This is *being* in its most basic phenomenological understanding, where through a physical body interacting with the surrounding environment, we build new significations based on lived-in experiences and already appropriated cultural constructions. We look at the city, read it, interpret it, understand it and act in it, in short, we *are* in the city in a way which is a consequence of those internalised discursive and performative devices. Through discourses and performances transformed into second nature we create the *real* (Butler, 1991) – a reality which is *collective* as far as it is shaped by cultural constructs and becomes *personal* once the mechanisms of perception and signification come in.

This twofold idea of life as drama and the city as a stage simultaneously inspires and is inspired from the performance arts such as the theatre or the cinema. In the cases of the latter, for the duration of the dramatic or cinematic performance, we participate in the scene, but we are also conscious of not being part of it *de facto*. The events in front of us do not concern or affect us directly and this captures the attention of an actor/spectator who becomes a spectator/actor. The audience is engaged by means of semiotic devices through which the cinema *articulates* its own discourses. U. Eco (2005) study on intertextuality offers an interesting collection of cinematographic discourses in TV series. Furthermore, U. Eco's approach to these discourses adds to I. Singer's (2008) theory that films are creators of myths. U. Eco's arguments here are that receiving and understanding the content of cinematographic mythical themes requires a shift in the public's aesthetic level. The reason why this idea is significant for this research is because the arguments of a shift in the public's perception become highly valuable for the field data analysis, when I will discuss mechanisms behind processes of (re)shaping individually constructed images of the city after watching a film set on location.

The spectator witnesses the events, emotionally involved, feeling them as *real*, and still aware that they are not part of his *own reality* (Singer, 2008). G. Rose (1999) argues within the same theoretical

approach to film study when she states that “*Since the subject is at once watching the fantasy and participating in it, the subject is simultaneously inside and outside the scene*” (ibid, p. 256). This double positioning of the viewer is highly relevant for U. Eco’s (2005) two categories of spectators: the naïve – valuing *what* is formed within the film - and the critic – valuing *how* things are formed within the film. Based on these distinct categories of viewers, cinematic decoding and signification alike happen within different semiotic systems. The “*state of inattention*” characteristic to the reception and interpretation of nowadays cinematographic messages (Eco, 2005, p. 14) affects the production of personal imaginaries and, by extrapolation, the experience of place. By being simultaneously inside and outside the film’s fantasy, the individual interchanges on an interior level the two reference systems: that of an actor with that of a spectator.

The *imaginary*, ‘fictive’ character of a play or a film lies precisely in this partial outsidership of the viewer from the *reality* pictured on the stage or screen. Space is imagined when we are no longer the ones actively producing it. Rather than constituting a *representation* of space, the film (re)produces what D. Clarke (1997) calls a *virtual* space. Building on Deleuze’s theory of difference and the Other which I introduced earlier in this chapter, Clarke interprets cinematographic space as a space which repeats itself as it is outside the cinema. As a result, in Clarke’s approach “*cinema works alongside the body (Shaviro, 1993), and alongside the city*” (ibid, p. 7). In this context, “virtual” bears the same connotations as G. Rose’s imaginary space assigned as being fantasy.

The cinema does not create conceived spaces in H. Lefebvre’s tradition, but a simulacrum of *reality* (ibid.). As a result, films produce space not as a mere expression of acquired scientific knowledge, but through an actual discourse of their own. The outcome is space as a *virtual* product as it lacks materiality, but *exists* nonetheless in its mental form and, like any other category of ‘space’, it is in a continuous process of becoming throughout the duration of the film. These spatial imaginaries are either utopian (Sadler and Haskins, 2005) or dystopian (Doel and Clarke, 1997; Krutnik, 1997) interpretations of the (*real*) city (McArthur, 1997) and, as we will see later on, they are often products of cinematographic marketing devices.

Understood from this perspective, the imagined plot is a different way of performing the stage set (the character’s identity and the space/place that the character inhabits). Thus, the play or the film becomes yet just another discourse on identity and space.

Whether cinematic discourses on space and identity belong to the imaginary and affect only one of H. Lefebvre’s categories – mental space - is something challenged by D. Clarke (1997) in his

multidisciplinary study on bridging the realm of the *real* city with that of the *cinematic* one. Starting from J. Baudrillard's (1988) view of the American city, in its materiality, having stepped out straight from the cinematic screen, D. Clarke considers it to be "*unthinkable that the cinema could have developed without the city, and whilst the city has been unmistakably shaped by the cinematic form*" (Clarke, 1997, p. 1). Thus, "*in everyday experience, cities frequently seem to possess a cinematic quality*" (ibid, p. i). Throughout the volume the two physical environments are found to bare an increasing number of interchangeable features. In consequence, the passing from one *reality* to another is slowly blurred.

J. Hay (1997) takes one step further in the discussion on the cinematic production of space and draws the attention away from the subject of film as spectacle and its audience and shifts his focus towards the inter-relations of a dissociated space: within and outside the cinema. J. Hay associates the *cinematic* with the relation between sites (material space culturally embedded with significance) and the flows characterising these sites (flows of people, information, significance). In Hay's view, the potential effects of cinema go beyond those largely agreed upon by the related scientific literature and taken on in the past few decades in works such as those of Cressey (1934), Demerath (1981) or Denzin (1991). In consequence, Hay's interest is not found in pondering on representations and mystification of landscapes which may draw the public in and affect its consciousness through aesthetic form and ethic-educational message. His focus lies in capturing the nature of sites popularised and institutionalised through cinema in order to produce change. What the author does is that he takes the example of Fascist Italian cinema to contemplate on the historical formation of a "*<national popular culture> constituted partly of film practices*" (Hay, 1997, p. 223).

Throughout the study, cinema is outlined as a *social practice*. But, in H. Lefebvre's view, social practice was embodied in spatial practice. Better yet, for social practice to come into being, it requires all the mechanisms of perception. Based on this perspective, cinematic space assumes all the qualities of Lefebvre's last two categories of space: physical and social.

If this is the case, than the obvious conclusion we are likely to draw from here is that *cinematic* space is produced by the same devices as is *real* space. Such a reckoning is supported by J. Hay's argumentation of a cinematic agency and arguing for the idea of sites simultaneously conditioning and being conditioned "*by the **reshaping** of landscape, environment, and territory (and social subjects' relation to **them**)*" (Hay, 1997, p. 223, original emphasis). The two versions of one and the same environment, within and outside cinema, mutually form and determine each other.

By placing cinematic space in the broader conceptual understanding of the city as a palimpsest, Hay stresses on the importance of films as markers of the relation between an (urban) site which transforms into something else: the new replaces the old in a twofold process which produces both space and social practices (memory). This idea of space producing memory is common to a number of other works such as I. Chambers (1997) and P. Makeham (2005). The way in which these memories are created is through processes of mapping. For J. Hay the film itself serves as a map for those sites engaged by the cinematic scenery in order to create a cultural topography, patterned and identifiable in national cinematography. At a different pole, I. Chambers places the maps emerging from within films outside the realm of the purely visual. For him, another sense, hearing, contributes in outlining topographies within films and thus, the focus of his study becomes the object of aural maps, specifically those topographies drawn by the sound of music.

Approaching films as mapping devices from Chambers' perspective rather than that of Hay, has the process of mapping leaving the field of classic cartography. This shift between conceptual understandings of *mapping* makes the subject of T. Conley's (2007) 'Cartographic cinema'. Conley starts from the presumption that films are a particular category of maps.

In this sense, films perform their cartographic role as locating one place in the world and distinguishing it from all the others which make up contemporary geography. What the film does on top of that, nevertheless, is something which exceeds the functions of cognition. By means of gazing in Conley's case, in the way that Chambers uses hearing, audiences engage differently with cinematic geographies and, as a consequence, with geographies outside the cinema as well. As a result, while films imprint physical environments with a sense of difference and add to them something of an identity of place, everyday processes of mental mapping are being altered. Paraphrasing J. Lacan, "*subjectivity is characterized by an oscillation between a narcissistic, <jubilatory> celebration of our presence in the world and a <paranoid realization> that we are here for nothing, and no doubt, too, in our own personal and professional spheres, that most of the films we study and cherish belong to a fragile construct of mental geography*" (Conley, 2007, p. 4).

K. Lynch's sequentially organised mental mapping was based on a perception processes dependent on lived-in experiences. By contrast, in Conley's study, the lived mental mapping is doubled by a secondary level of perception where the bodily is not actively engaged. Although by consensus film as a form of mass media is regarded as providing the public with information (Cressey, 1934; Demerath, 1981), this transfer of knowledge does not have the film audience as a passive receiver at

one end of the relationship. The spectator filters, interprets and evaluates the in-coming pieces of information based on the construct cultural frame within which she/he works and her/his personal background. The result is twofold: the individual becomes a topographer of both an imaginary of space (Clarke, 1997) as well as of an inner geography (Denzin, 1991; Conley, 2007).

I will make a short detour here from the theorisation of cinematic perception in order to expand briefly on mechanisms employed by films to co-create spatial imaginaries alongside the (post)modern viewer as contoured in the paragraphs above – a spectator taking on the persona of a topographer. Such an endeavour is fundamental for a better understanding of the devices through which this the space/identity/place triad is being produced and their related final product – the imaginary of experiencing place.

As films came to be discovered and understood as the specific category of urban maps which they had the potential to be, an increasing number of television productions and later on big-screen films as well became “a means for some cities to reproduce themselves, historically and geographically” (Hay, 1997, p. 227). This very same process of mystifying space in order to insure the consumption of places within the framework of contemporary popular cultures, constitutes the subject of a number of studies (Barber, 2002; Johan, Fredriksson and Johannisson (eds), 2009; Sadler and Haskins, 2005). I will shortly introduce here the work of W. Sadler and E. Haskins, as it is highly relevant in this context. The two authors do not simply mirror the cinematic and the non-cinematic space in a portrayal of continuously transforming public imagination. What their work does is provide the reader with an insight on city-experience based on five television series and a set of tools specific to urban studies – K. Lynch’s (1960) five anchoring elements: paths, edges, districts, nodes and landmarks.

W. Sadler and E. Haskins’ approach is based on the premise of the *postcard effect* which many films create around cityscapes which constitute film-sets. In doing so, the study illustrates a form of space production/consumption through what the authors refer to as the tourist gaze of the audience. For the public with no experience of place prior to witnessing and taking in such a cinematographic space, the pictured cityscape *becomes* the experience of that particular place itself. As outlined repeatedly in the chapters above, space is a *product* which in this case is produced in the absence of lived-in perception. This is where T. Conley’s notion of a secondary level of perception becomes extremely significant as it explains a specific category of space signification and performance. We often come to be attracted or dislike cities by their mere cinematographic personifications. We

become familiar with recurrent cityscapes and as we start to recognize them on the screen and identify them with things in our memory as spectators, we *feel like* we already *know* them. Thus, the viewers achieve a particular form of space production and a fragmented experience of space based on city snapshots. As a result, when visiting that very city in its material form, individuals' performativity of space and, implicitly, their experience of place is affected by things *seen* on the cinematographic screen (Sadler and Haskins, 2005).

Linking the discussion above back to the subject of perception, it becomes clear how an extended understanding of perception processes re-asserts D. Clarke's argument that within given cultural contexts, there is a shift in the theorisation of perception mechanisms, a shift similar to the paradigm shift (Wikipedia, 2011) in the scientific field and in the arts (Eco, 2005).

As observed earlier, the reception devices used in cinematography to trigger perception related responses has the audience engaged in the film through two senses alone, *hearing* and *sight*. Out of the two, the latter reaches un-natural dimensions in cinematography. As M. Blanchot (1981, cited in Clarke, 1997, p. 10) argues, the visual becomes somewhat of a primordial sense when watching films, thus constituting the principal means through which the spectator establishes contact with the world on screen. Through sight, other senses, such as touch, smell and taste, are performed as well.

These sets of marking changes in perception affect each person nominally different by building on individualities (Benjamin, 1969, cited in Clarke, 1997). The idea of this paradigm shift in perception is also stressed upon by S. Shaviro when saying that "*Cinema is at once a form of perception and a material perceived, a new way of encountering reality and a part of reality thereby perceived for the first time*" (Shaviro, 1993, cited in Clarke, 1997, p. 2). D. Clarke builds both on W. Benjamin's and S. Shaviro's theories when arguing for a mutually determining relationship between perception mechanisms and films as devices which potentially sensitise the public to things previously escaping human careful observation. This same idea of films bringing forward as focal points both abstract and physical objects which were once unnoticed, constitutes the conceptual foundation of T. Conley's study. The implication here is that through films the visible becomes invisible and vice-versa. As a result, processes of production of space and place imaginaries alike are potentially altered through the cinematographic experience. Whether experiences of place themselves are mutated by cinematic discourses on both identity and space is a subject which remains yet to be further explored.

3. Setting the scene for the case study

Where is the cinema? It is all around you outside, all over the city, that marvellous, continuous performance of films and scenarios.

BAUDRILLARD, 1988, Clarke, 1997, p.1

As specified before, the present paper looks into the discursive production of space and place by taking the example of one city, Bucharest, and that of a movie filmed on location, “Filantropica”.

The present chapter will briefly introduce both elements, city and film, and outline those inter-relations that I will consequently use to build my case study.

3.1 A short history of Bucharest

Bucharest, situated in the South-East of Romania, is a capital-city. With a surface of 228 km² and a population of 1,677,985 inhabitants, apart from its joining agricultural county – Ilfov, this city is the largest in Romania and the major political, economic and cultural centre of the country (Wikipedia, 2012).



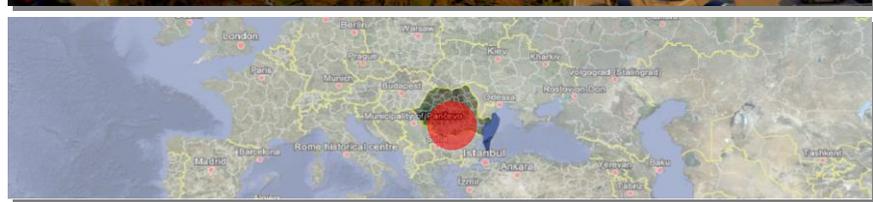
1717 panorama, copper engraving



1900 panorama, engraving after photograph



Contemporary panorama



2012, Bucharest - city location within Romania and in the world

FIGURE 5: OVERVIEW OF THE CITY BUCHAREST

According to the local legend, the city was founded around mid-fifteen century by a shepherd (in other less popular versions he was either an outlaw, a prince, a fisherman or a hunter) named Bucur,

on his way down from the mountains to find a place to keep his heard over winter (Bucurestii vechi si noi, 2010). This founding myth entered the national historiography around the XIX-th century, being taken over by the local inhabitants from foreign travellers who were popularising the story (ibid). In fact, in the old Dacian idiom, 'bucur' meant shepherd, passer-by, wonderer, a traveller leading his heard towards a winter stay. Subsequently, 'bucura' meant the shepherds' meeting place, changing its meaning in modern times into the verb 'to rejoice'.

Archaeological researches have shown that the present area of the city has been lived on since Palaeolithic times and proof of both Dacian and Roman settlements were found on site. Nevertheless, Bucharest is first referred to in an old document dated the 20th of September, 1459, by Vlad Tepes, prince of Wallachia (The Encyclopaedic Publishing House, 1993). At that time, the Wallachian capital was in Targoviste. As a consequence of the ongoing Ottoman attacks and plundering taking place in this area, it was a royal decision to build in these parts a fortress meant to weaken the foreign invasions. Placed by the Dambovitza river, the new defence town had its core on the same grounds on which today's Bucharest old city centre unfolds (Costescu, 2005).

Growing in economic and political importance, the city became Wallachia's permanent capital in 1659 and the capital-city of the Romanian state after the union on the 25th of January, 1859. Released from under the temporary German occupancy in the First World War, Bucharest became the capital city of Romania after the Great Union in 1918.

The city experienced significant economic and cultural growth between the two world wars in what is commonly known in the Romanian culture as the 'inter-war golden period' of Bucharest, when the city was often referred to by inhabitants of those times as "The small Paris". In 1944, as a consequence of a coupe d'etat, Romania turned arms against Germany and in 1945 the communist troops took over the city of Bucharest. The result was forty four years of totalitarian leadership, ended in December 1989 with the national Revolution. The communism years left a strong mark on both Bucharest's design and layout, as well as in the collective memory, having the generations brought up in the communism era often mirroring the past and the present. To this day, Romania's governance is defined by democratic principles.

Throughout the years, Bucharest's (urban) landscape changed dramatically mainly due to the instable political environment, but also due to shifts in the national economy and cultural trends which affected not only everyday behaviours and attitudes, but also city (layout)design and categories of production of space. Below, a selection of photographs following the subsequent changes

experienced by areas in the city illustrate clearly the dramatic (re)shaping of the city in a period covering little over two centuries. As the theory in Chapter 2 marks and the findings in the following chapter will come to discuss. It is precisely this process of becoming which moulds personal experiences and identities of place alike.

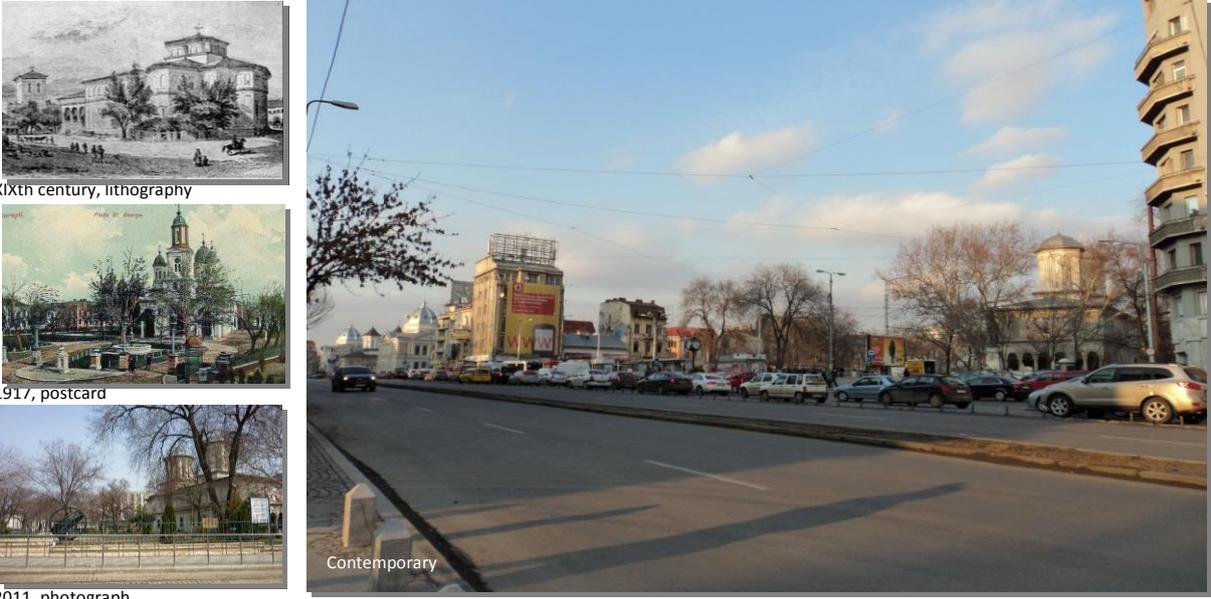


FIGURE 6: BUCHAREST OVER THE CENTURIES – THE SQUARE OF SF. GHEORGHE CHURCH



FIGURE 7: BUCHAREST OVER THE CENTURIES – THE SQAURE OF THE NATIONAL THEATRE



1911, photograph



1978, photograph



1982, photograph



Contemporary

FIGURE 8: BUCHAREST OVER THE CENTURIES - TODAY'S URANUS NEIGHBOURHOOD



1974, postcard



1982, photograph



1984, photograph



Contemporary

FIGURE 9: BUCHAREST OVER THE CENTURIES - TODAY'S THE HOUSE OF PARLIAMENT'S AREA

3.2 The film “Filantropica”

“Filantropica”, title translated internationally as “Philanthropy”, is a film written and directed by Nae Caranfil and released in Romania in March 2002. A Romanian-French co-production, “Filantropica” was released all over the world within various film festivals, the most recent being the Lubuskie Film Summer, Poland in June, 2011.

The film received a number of distinguishing awards, such as the Audience Award in Paris, France, in Wuertzburg, Germany and in Montreal, Canada, the Jury’s Special Award in Wiesbaden, Germany and in Bratislava, Slovakia, the Jung Jury’s Award in Mons, Belgium, the Best Screenplay Award in Newport Beach, USA and the Best Francophone Film in Athens, Greece.

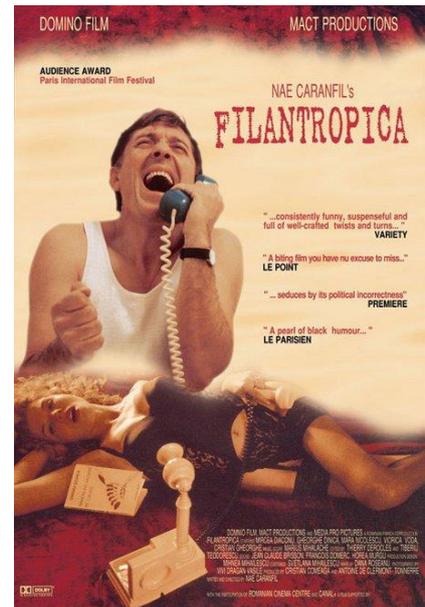


FIGURE 10: "FILANTROPICA" - FILM POSTER

“Filantropica” owes this high degree of appreciation to its cinematic qualities, but also to an ability to stand out from amidst contemporary Romanian filmmaking. It is for this very reason that S. Zizek, guest festival director at the Telluride Film Festival in 2008, chose to include this “*expertly crafted comedy*”, “*quite distinct from the dark Romanian fare that we have become accustomed to*” (Secrets of Home Theater and High Fidelity, 2008).

N. Caranfil’s cinematographic work is inspired by one of his early tutors in the art of scriptwriting, the Czech Frank Daniel who used to say: “*Don’t try to have style. Copy the reality. The style will emerge naturally from your invariably erroneous vision of reality*” (Film Menu, 2011). In the same interview, the director says of his own approach to filmmaking in the larger context of Romanian cinema that:

“In this moment, we are witnessing a crusade within the Romanian cinema to capture life’s truth in its pure state and, personally, I have no problem with this. My position is not against this approach, but simply outside it, because from my point of view in everything that inter-human communication assumes – and art itself is such a type of communication – the lie is equally important as the truth is. I believe that any partner in dialogue can be legitimately manipulated, because manipulation is part of the game, all the more so in art; in consequence, my position as a cineaste is that of using all the possible ingredients, all the buttons which the toy named cinematograph can put to my disposal in order to create a

world of my own, which contains manipulation as well as lie, but also truth.” (Film Menu, 2011)

The above citation encompasses the director’s professional statement, the *raison d’être* behind his cinematic identity. Such a perspective fits in well under the earlier discussion on the discursive production of both space and reality (see Chapter 2), where individual experience and perception play the final role in articulating identities and in distinguishing between categories of ‘truth’ and ‘lie’. In this context, the film itself may turn into G. Rose’s ‘fantasy’, in which a personal imaginary is translated somehow into the material world of the visible and the audience is left to interact with this ‘reality’ according to its own imaginary. The question of these emerging realities and transforming imaginaries within their given discursive framework constitutes the subject of a later discussion. The focus of this sub-chapter is on the film synopsis used for the present case study.

The film starts as do most stories in children books: *“Once upon a time there was a city whose inhabitants were divided into princes and paupers. In-between these two worlds there were only homeless dogs. They formed the middle class”* (*Filantropica*, 2002).

The first scene opens on a pack of vagabond dogs going through a pile of garbage; in the background, a Romanian folk tune playing softly. This first part of “*Filantropica*” appears as an in-frame story, where the events leading up to the starting scene are narrated by the story’s anti-hero.

The film’s storyline focuses on Ovidiu Gorea (Mircea Diaconu), a high-school teacher and an “*amatory*” writer who still lives with his parents although he is well passed his mid-age. After meeting Diana Dobrovicescu (Viorica Voda), a young model used to a high-expenses lifestyle, Ovidiu realises that his “*wretched professor salary*” does not suffice to go ahead with this romance. As a result, he makes the acquaintance of Pavel Puiut (Gheorghe Dinica) and Miruna (Mara Nicolescu) and enters an entirely different Bucharest, that of the underworld where making that extra buck takes a whole other dimension. Pavel Puiut is an influential character in the underground city life. He is a writer, an artist in his own terms and writes *texts* for those using pity to earn a living. He is a storyteller aiming to move his audience – inhabitants or passers by inhabiting the city - and to make money along the way for himself and for those who contract him. His artistry lies precisely in his intuitive text writing, exploiting those stories which would sell best to the greater public.

Thus, Ovidiu and Miruna embark on a swindling scheme in which they go to expensive restaurants and while they barely serve anything, they find accomplices in the waiters who extra over-charge the

bill. A whole act is put on by the pretending couple aiming to raise charity, which it almost infallibly succeeds – someone in the restaurant takes pity on them and cover the bill. The money is subsequently split between Ovidiu, Miruna, the waiter and, of course, Pavel Puiut. This arrangement has Ovidiu going ahead with his plan to woo Diana and live an expensive lifestyle until his lie is discovered by the young girl who leaves him.

Things take a wrong turn when Ovidiu and Miruna try their scheme outside the usual arrangement. The choice of place, time and waiter is poor and the scheme fails, ending with a beaten Ovidiu in the hospital. The situation grows complicated for the main character from here onwards as Ovidiu steals money from Puiut in an attempt to help who he thought was Diana's brother.

In a brief moment of moral hangover Ovidiu wants to give everything back and return to his old life, but instead he finds himself once again in the company of Miruna and Pavel Puiut, appearing on national television and in the newspapers as a social example of "*what is wrong in this country*" (*Filantropica*, 2002). They are presented to Romanian society and the world, as a couple just like any other, who tries to make a living on the small salary of a professor, but has its actions constrained by contemporary economic and social powers.

Ovidiu is a relatively common character leading a relatively common life. The uniqueness lies in the set of circumstances in which he finds himself and the actions which he takes. Nevertheless, his is the story of an individual among others living in the city, a story which never leaves the ordinary.

The film closes cyclically with a scene having a content Pavel Puiut driving away in his expensive car in a dark and empty alleyway; following the car, a racing pack of homeless dogs who may very well be the same ones that the audience saw in the beginning of the film. Life in the underground Bucharest remains unaltered.

3.3 "Filantropica"'s Bucharest

The events which the audience is about to see unfold on a stage set from the very beginning of the film, in a frame having "*Le petit Paris*" ("The small Paris") written on a restaurant's front banner in the foreground. In my personal view and that of a majority of individuals subsequent to the interview discussions, this is an ironic allusion to the nickname given to the in-between the two world wars Bucharest, and I say that it is ironic due to its cinematic placement within a scene constituted of

vagabond dogs and piles of garbage. This allusion to the city’s golden years, as they are commonly referred to to this day, translated in the setting of contemporary Bucharest speaks to those familiar with this historic-cultural fact, element of a quotidian topos.

This cinematic device of involving the audience into the cinematic world itself is that to which U. Eco (2005) referred to when noting that in order for a spectator to understand and enjoy an allusion, he must know the original topoi. *“The ironic quotation of the commonplace”* (ibid, p. 7) is used throughout the film to establish a relationship with the audience and lure it to participate in the events of the narration. Thus, the entrance song, the dictator’s portrait hanging up in the classroom, the television show and even some of the location snapshots (the park in front of the train station or the “Fitze” terrace-club by the lake front) are allusions to the quotidian of 2002’s Bucharest and are still relatable even today to both collective and individual memories.

“Filantropica”’s physical Bucharest is easily recognisable in spite of the passing years since the film’s release. The reason for this is that while the urban design changed punctually, the overall city looks today very much the same as it did back in 2002. “Filantropica” is filmed on fourteen different locations in Bucharest, out of which a large majority are iconic for the city. Such an example is Gara de Nord, the main train station in Bucharest and a landmark in the city.



FIGURE 11: BUCHAREST OVER THE CENTURIES - GARA DE NORD CENTRAL TRAIN STATION

Specific to the discourse to which it belongs, “Filantropica”’s Bucharest is unique its own way. The characters performing on the urban scene, together with their actions, gestures and identities impersonate a city where charity has become a resourceful business. This in-film Bucharest, as we

will see in the following chapter, is not always familiar to the audience, but it is nevertheless infallibly recognised as being authentic to various degrees in the words of the public.

As the director himself states in an interview, “*Filantropica*” is “*a deeply immoral movie. I think that this is how it should be, a politically incorrect film, because I wanted to shake some preconceived ideas, thought by people who go to church to buy their morality.*” (Film Menu, 2011). The film tells a story permanently hinting on ambiguous personal and societal values, but at no point does the tone turn moralizing. Events and characters play themselves along as the cinematic city life unfolds.

The director recognises in another interview (LiterNet.ro, 2002) that his is not a cinematic piece documented on location. There was no field data collection per se. The context was thought purely intuitively and the plot was based on two elements: the first, a newspaper article on an ex-convict re-inventing himself as text-writer for beggars and the second, an overheard story about a 10 years married couple who found itself in a restaurant with insufficient money to cover the bill, thus temporarily becoming the hostages of an angry waiter (ibid). Based on these two stories “*Filantropica*” was developed as a film whose theme was the industry of compassion.

The individuals inhabiting “*Filantropica*”’s Bucharest do not set examples in themselves. They are neither purely negative nor are they purely positive. Ovidiu, the anti-hero, is a simple man entangled in his everyday needs and concerns, easy to empathize with, who is nevertheless perverted from the moment he chose Pavel Puiut’s way out of a troublesome state of things. In the same way, the two women are striving to build an easy life for themselves never leaving the sphere of the convenient day-to-day ordinary. When it comes down to it all, Pavel Puiut is merely a business man exploiting those societal niches with potential for earnings. His underworld has begging as a yet another way to make money. Thus charity becomes a business. Throughout the film the audience hears time and again a number of key catch-phrases which condense the laws of this alternative Bucharest:

“The outreaching hand with no story to tell, receives no alms!” (Filantropica, 2002)

“You think petty: there is nothing shameful in asking, shameful is not receiving” (ibid)

“Your dignity? With the money that you have, you can still afford having dignity?” (ibid)

“There are professions in the world: opulence, poverty and sex” (ibid) or

“Do you feel pity?... I’ve snatched your money!” (ibid)

In Romania “*Filantropica*” was received with contradictory reactions. While the Romanian film critics thought the film to be representative for the country and pre-nominated it for the Best Foreign

Picture at the Academy Awards, the local audience had mixed feelings between the widely appreciated cinematic qualities and the problematic societal portray that the film illustrates. Nae Caranfil himself recalls (Film Menu, 2011) about a gentleman sourly approaching him after the first film screening on “Filantropica”’s bitter status quo, unintelligible to all those living outside Romanian society.

As the film reviews and ratings show (IMDB, 2012), Romanian viewers embraced this black comedy as being a film whose rhythm, cast, setting and overall plot detach themselves from the well established typology of the Romanian cinema. The Romanian audience regarded the film either with humour or with the perplexity facing a national societal drama, but it nonetheless invariably applauded the stage-manager’s skills and the authenticity of the on-screen Bucharest and, by extension, overall Romania (ibid). The same cinematographic qualities and context genuineness appealed to an enthusiastic foreign audience as well.

Widely seen on a national level as a representative film for the Romanian faulty status-quo, „Filantropica” raised a particular kind of problem. The question posed by ongoing comments and reviews was no longer about the film’s cinematic qualities, but about the Romanian image that it popularises. Whether the film was to be valued or not turned into a debate on accepting a state of things and a letting a shameful ‘truth’ to be appropriated and to travel around. To say that „Filantropica” was a *good* film was a coin with two sides for the larger public, admitting to itself and the world a specific kind of reality that it perceived itself as living in. While for a significant group of (sceptical) spectators this admission was done with bitter humour and irony, for others, watching the film and sharing it to an international audience turned into a question of national pride.

Cinematic and everyday realities of a *soft* Bucharest in J. Raban’s tradition collide in a flow of discourses on local and national socio-political *truths*. The film is not a mere representation, but, in the manner of D. Clarke (1997), it re-produces a virtual space, a simulacrum which overlaps the Romanian individual imaginary. The society and city on the screen, with the aspirations, needs and problems of the characters, become relatable to the point of deep empathy. As a result, “Filantropica”’s discourse on Bucharest interferes with personal dreams and nostalgias as well as individual and national identities. As underlined earlier, “Filantropica”’s micro-narratives are ordinary. They could be everyone’s in general and anyone’s in particular. It is this quality which makes them influential for a socio-cultural national meta-narrative.

4. Methodology

“Memories are built as a city is built”

(Eco, 1986, cited in Hebbert, 2005, p. 581)

The present study is a qualitative one. The focus here is not to generalize the hidden mechanisms behind discursive production, but, on the contrary, to observe and explore the diversity of mechanisms that different people engage and make use of in order to create their individual discourse on reality, and thus, their individual sense of the world. Each personal discourse on the (lived-in) experience of Bucharest is registered as a unique type of space, and consequently place, production. By saying unique, my intention is not overlook mechanisms of cultural construction or similarities between processes of producing (sense of) place. It is my belief that the particularities of memories, emotions and significations on which personal discourses on reality are constructed make each and every one of these discourses singular in its way, although the mechanisms employed in discursive productions may well be common to a number of individuals. The interest of this study lies in the particular, in the diversity within a collection of city-related stories. Only once the stories are collected and differences and similarities outlined, will I note and contemplate on patterns and mechanisms of producing *reality*, in the situation in which such conceptual recurrences can be found among the collected field data.

My methodological framework is based on J. Katz's (1983) theory of analytic induction, with no fixed design or formats to produce statistics and representativeness of data; this gives me the opportunity to permanently revise the research design. The methods and tools used to carry through this research are mainly developed on the base of the theoretical framework expanded on in Chapter 2.

Cinema itself, the film “Filantropica” and even the city of Bucharest, as objects of study, are of no interest here. My focus is the nature of discourses around ‘sense of place’ and the mechanisms used to build (personal) reality. Within this study, space is looked upon as a lived-in environment. For this reason, when looking at the city and one's relation to it, I build this case study on theories of experiencing place both physically and perceptually.

The city of Bucharest is a mere example of study location. By introducing the issue of film watching in a process of overlapping discourses on ‘the truth’ about a city and its reality, my aim is to create a type of experiment, with a very small scale of impact. The question here is how individual realities are altered (if at all) through exposure to an example of cinema on location. “Filantropica”, due to its

multi-layered plot and the large number of economic and socio-cultural issues that it raises, was for me a good film example which would help built up my case study.

Living experiences of place cannot be discussed and analysed outside processes of: representations of space, perception of its physical characteristics, cognition, spatial knowledge and sense of place, since each individual's experience is unique in its own way. It is for this reason that I approached the human –city interaction in the case of Bucharest by using a large palette of conceptual tools and introducing both in interviews during field data collection and in the data analysis notions of perception and habit, as well as meaning and (non)belonging. My recordings are attempts to capture and understand cognitive, affective and behavioural reactions when bringing together two imaginaries of a specific cityscape: the personal and that of an *other*. This study approach to lived-in experiences resembles that of the psychological paradigm found in the work of D. Karmanov who uses notions from phenomenology to “*understand cognitive, emotional and behavioural responses to landscapes*” (Karmanov, 2009, p. 16) and to analyse a set of lived-in landscape experiences.

The present chapter accounts for the conceptual frame behind this study and how the field data was gathered, assembled and finally interpreted in order to answer the project's main research question.

4.1 Conceptual tools

Throughout this paper, I often use the term of ‘interpretation’ of the physical environment. This notion is used in its wider understanding, where associations are not made exclusively based on memories, but also on feelings, values, preferences and an understanding of the physical surroundings. Based on the literature review, I made a selection of criteria which were to be used in order to record (lived-in) Bucharest experiences and reactions to watching “Filantropica”.

My main conceptual tools fall into two major concept categories: the *(lived-in) experience* and the *discursive production of reality*. Under the first category come concepts such as *sense of place* (Carmona, 2003), *perception* (Ittelson, 1978, cited in Carmona, 2003), *signification* (Eco, 1979; Peirce, 1931-1966, cited in Maattanen, 2007) and *performativity* (Butler, 1990; Rose, 1999; Warren, 2008), while the second category uses notions of *production of space/place/identity* (Lefebvre, 1991; Butler, 1999) and *culture* (van Assche, 2004). Based on these groups of concepts I developed my two sets of interview questions.

For the purpose of this study, the correlation between experience of place and the physical space per se is developed on the base of K. Lynch's (1960) theory of urban legibility. As I will come to discuss further down in Chapter 6 of this thesis, at times, this approach did not fit in well with what was observed in practice and had its limitations. Nevertheless, a set of principles was required based on which to select the film-locations on which to discuss and I opted for the theory of K. Lynch. A second reason for choosing his theory was that it was at the foundation of a study influential in this part of my thesis, namely that of W. J. Sadler and E. V. Haskins (2004).

As a result, the interview questions referred both to discourses on Bucharest in general, as well as to eight specific locations within the city. These eight spaces were chosen from among "Filantropica" s on screen locations by following the approach used by W. J. Sadler and E. V. Haskins (2004) in their study on metonymy and the city of New York. Thus, on screen locations anchoring the cinematic action within the city of Bucharest were selected according to K. Lynch's five elements of urban legibility: paths, edges, districts, landmarks and nodes. The test interviews were helpful in choosing these eight spaces of focus for the study. By enquiring during the test interviews on recognizable locations in the film I opted for those spaces which belonged most often to the audience's topoi and which were among the strongest place-naming signifiers in the film. Appendix II includes a photographic list of these locations of focus in a double representation, as shown to the interviewees during the field data collection: an in-film snapshot and in an on-site photograph.

It became clear during the test interviews that the interviewees were finding it difficult to understand and develop answers to questions around 'experience of place' or 'perception'. For this reason, the interview questions were re-phrased in such a manner to adjust to the interpretation lexicon adopted by interviews during the tests. As a result, the questions were focused around three concepts: 'thoughts', 'feelings', 'meaning'. I am fully aware that the three latter categories are not mutually exclusive. Throughout the test interviews I noticed that sometimes pieces of information criss-crossed from one conceptual category to another and other times the different concepts overlapped. Nevertheless, having all three in the interviews turned out to be extremely helpful as it provided me with much richer discussions, both in terms of content and nuances of understanding and subsequently, a better insight into the mechanisms employed in the discursive production of realities. None of the three concepts was detailed or explained to the interviewees. The reason for this is that personal interpretation was considered to be key factor in this study.

4.2 Data collection

Methods and techniques

Spaces are read and understood by individuals in different ways, based on factors like memory, emotions, acquired knowledge and culture, thus developing into singular “*mindscapes*” (de Haan, 2010). In the present study, these mindscapes are presented in the form of personal stories. As a result, one of the final outcomes of this paper will be a collection of individual joint images, and by extension discursive realities, of Bucharest prior and post watching the film “*Filantropica*”.

I chose the ‘case study’ as technical design and related measurements procedures. The latter consisted of a triangulation of sources - scientific literature, cinematic blogs/websites and discussions with the study groups. The method used was the experiment – discussing with people before and after watching the film chosen for this case study. The main technique used in this research was the interview, accompanied by participant observation and on site photographs. For the purpose of appropriately recording the data needed for this research and consequently translate and interpret it, I used personal notes and a coding book for the interviews.

The element of bias in gathering and interpreting the data was diminished to a minimum by relying as much as possible on the conceptual tools and avoiding personal reflections which may result from my own familiarity and perspective on both Bucharest and “*Filantropica*”.

Sample selection

The interviewees were selected somewhat randomly from amidst groups of family, friends, acquaintances and acquaintances of acquaintances. The reason for this was to cover a broad palette of gender, age, nationality, educational and professional background in order to minimise the socio-cultural bias among the interview responses. As a result, the collected field data fits in well under contemporary concerns on diversity and plurality within today’s cities (Madanipour, 2006).

For this study a number of 24 people have been interviewed (for an expanded list of the interviewees, see Appendix III). Both males and females were selected for the interviews in a relatively equally proportional number. The individuals taking part in the interview were adults between the age of 23 and 58 years old out of which a very small number had no graduate studies, a

few did hold a graduate diploma while others had also post-graduate studies. All individuals were coming from various educational and professional backgrounds. Interviewees were selected in such a way that the list included Romanians born and still living in Bucharest, Romanians who at different points in their lives either moved in and out of the city or continue to live there, Romanians and foreigners who visited Bucharest, Romanians and foreigners who never visited Bucharest. Out of all these interviewees, some had never watched “Filantropica”, while others did. For the purpose of this paper, people in the latter group were asked to re-watch it in-between the two sections of the data collection interviews.

The study has its methodological limitations, such as the probable manifestation of the Hawthorne effect among the interviewees (Cloke et al., 2000) or the researcher’s bias, as already mentioned. These aspects were dealt with as careful as possible within the field research protocol and the recorded participant observation in a research diary.

As far as the question of ethics is concerned, according to the consulted scientific literature (Kumar, 2005) all the interviewees gave their consent to take part in this study, as well as to have a photograph included in the Appendices of this paper (see Appendix III) – which most of the people e-mailed themselves. Furthermore, the best interest of the study group was at no point overlooked and comfort zones and boundaries were never crossed. Overall, the confidentiality and privacy of the interviewees’ answers have been guaranteed.

Interviewing

The field data was mainly collected by means of semi-structured interviews. The reason behind this was the type of information required for this study, as well as the relatively short amount of time allocated to travelling on site and collecting the data.

Both the structure of the interview and the correspondent protocol were designed according to the suggestions made in their studies by T. Zorn (w.y.), H. R. Bernard (1995) and L. Wagner (2011) (see Appendix IV for detailed interview protocol and questions).

The interview format was structured into two parts, one prior to watching the film “Filantropica” and the second based on the interviewees having seen the film. The questions developed within the interview were built on the research subject and the related conceptual dimensions which were

adopted for this study. The first part of the interview has 14 questions centred on the city of Bucharest and individual (lived-in) experiences or appropriated knowledge on the city and eight film-locations (see Appendix II) within the city, while the second part has 7 questions focused on responses to “Filantropica” and consequently (non)altered images of the city. Overall, the first part of the interview lasted up to 30 minutes, while the second part lasted up to 20 minutes. In between interviews, participants in the study were asked to watch the Romanian-French co-production, “Filantropica”, a film with a length of 111 minutes.

The interview was first tested on the 1st of March, 2012. Tests were performed within a period of three days on 5 interviewees with different ages, genders, nationalities and relations with Bucharest. After making the appropriate changes in both interview protocol and content, the interviews themselves were carried out over a period of approximately three weeks, up to the 1st of April.

Following the guidelines of Bernard (1994), the interviewees were left to lead the discourse. The pre-set questions were used more as a back-bone for the interviews and at times I found myself needing to intervene with short secondary/help questions in order to get more in-depth answers and create a more relaxed atmosphere which would have people talking. Given the subject and layout of the interview, I found it was most efficient when people were interviewed in a relaxed environment, while having a cup of tea, in the manner of a friendly chat on a city and film which happened to be filmed there.

As I noticed a somewhat reluctant attitude while talking to the group of individuals who were only little acquainted with Bucharest, by having visited it, I decided to call for an informal meeting when interviewing the group of people who were strangers to the city. Thus, they were given paper and pen and asked to note down ideas and keywords in answer to the interview questions and group discussions were held at the end of each interview section. Thus, the information acquired was not only larger in amount, but also richer in content and nuances.

The interviews were taped on a recorder and key words or verbal triggers were also registered in the form of written notes. Subsequently, the interviews were worked out literally in transcripts. In order to develop the codebook, I consulted both the literature review chapter, as well as the notes taken on the side of the interviews.

4.3 Data translation

In order to analyse the collected data and interpret it in the form of appropriate results, the findings first had to be translated into classes of information which could be synthesised and studied.

Coding

Throughout the on-site interviewing phase, as I mentioned earlier, questions were formed around the dummy concepts of: 'thoughts', 'feelings', 'meaning', concepts which were inspired from Ittelson's theorisation of the perceptual dimension (1978, cited in Carmona et al., 2003) and K. Lynch's image-experience correlation.

As a result, 'thoughts' as a concept was designed to incorporate references to urban legibility and imageability, memories and personal evaluations. 'Meaning' refers to identities (both personal and of place), symbolism and mental associations made by the interviewees. 'Feelings', the third concept used to enquire on the experience of place, was used as an equivalent to capture types and degrees of affect. Plutchik's wheel of human emotions (see Figure 3) was used in this case to identify and draw relations between the different human feelings.

On the theoretical side, based on H. Lefebvre's and C. Peirce's semiotic theories, as well as H. de Haan's (2010) diagram of the experiential lived-in experience and M. Carmona's diagram on sense of place, I designed a personal diagrammatic interpretation of assigning sense of place through lived-in experiences and discursively constructed realities (see Figure 12 below).

Starting from the physical (material) environment as it was theorised by M. Foucault and J. Butler (1991) alike, I overlapped concepts from the above mentioned theories according to which cultural and personal significations are being assembled through sensory experiences and perception processes. These acts of signifying lie at the backbone of future constructs of reality. M. Carmona's three urban design elements: physical setting, activity and image/memory (adapted from Montgomery, 1998, cited in Carmona et al., 2003) act as filters between processes of signification and those of performativity.

I call the physical environment to be 'objective' not in the traditional sense found in the related literature (Duineveld, 2010; de Haan, 2010), but in the lay, broader understanding of the term, that is, an evaluation of the characteristics of the physical setting in its materiality, described by

interviewees as being independent from emotions and encoded meanings. Nevertheless, as we will see in the “Discussion and conclusion” chapter, these types of evaluation are far from objective and remain subjects to personal interpretations. It is in-between the act of *adding meaning* and that of *being in the world* that discourses of reality are forming.

Based on these discourses which define personal truths, identities are being both produced and (self)validated in J. Butler’s tradition. The result is that sense of place, together with feelings of (non)belonging.

When coding the interviews gathered throughout the field data collection, I placed the three conceptual classes used on site (‘thoughts’, ‘feelings’ and ‘meaning’) next to the diagram of the discursively created sense of place above. As was expected during the interview design phase, when describing experiences of place, references falling under the categories of ‘thoughts’, ‘feelings’ and ‘meaning’ fitted in inevitably in either one corner of M. Carmona’s ‘Sense of place’ triangular diagram: ‘physical setting’, ‘activity’ and ‘image/memory’.

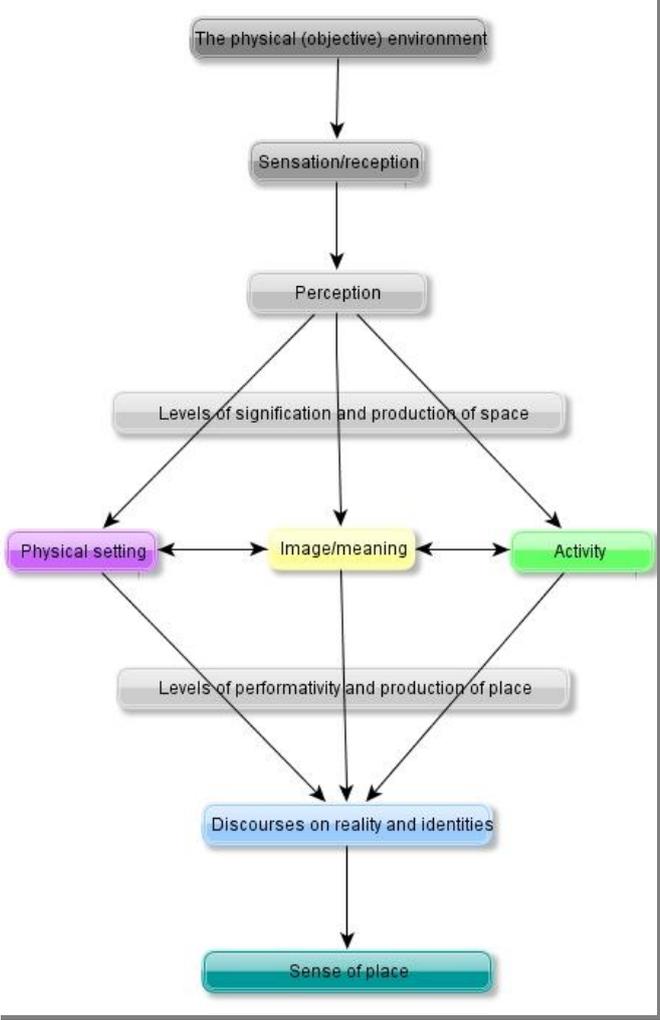


FIGURE 12: DISCOURSES ON REALITY AND SENSE OF PLACE DIAGRAM

Inspired by R. Vitiello and M. Willcocks (2008) who created a specific urban lexicon for their study out of buzz/key-words used during their on-site interviews, I created a list of indicators for the research concepts. The result was a two levels code book (see Appendix V) used to translate the data gathered on the field. These two levels are represented in the table below:

TABLE 1: THEMES AND CODES USED FOR THE CODEBOOK

Themes	Physical setting	Activity	Image/meaning
Code 1	Aesthetics	Rhythm	Imageability/legibility
Code 2	(Historical)character	Street life	Symbolism
Code 3	Function	In-place culture	Memory
Code 4	Relation between architectural and urban elements	Local traditions/ past times	Semiotic modes
Code 5	Security	Habit of use	Image of self

The first level is a set of three themes as adopted from M. Carmona’s diagram, while the second level includes reference - codes as they emerged from the interviews when describing (lived-in) experiences of place.

On the base of this double coding book, the interviews were coded as exemplified in Appendix VI. Following this, pieces of the written down interviews were noted down under their corresponding code based on the thoughts, feelings and meanings assigned and associated by interviewees to each of the three encoded themes: the physical setting, the activities and the image of Bucharest in general and of the eight chosen city-anchor sites in particular.

Grouped in this way, the collected data was structured as presented in the following chapter, “Emerging geographies of the imaginary”, and later on analysed in Chapter 6, “Discussion”.

Data processing

As stressed in the previous chapter, I choose an approach similar to that of R. Vitiello and M. Willcocks (2008) and that of D. Karmanov (2009) in translating the collected information and I based most of the field data coding on the interviewees’ own words and criteria when describing their (lived-in) experience of place.

These mental and verbal associations were subsequently interpreted in the “Discussion and conclusion” chapter by referencing the analysis back to the literature review. As a consequence, the on field findings were analysed based on *place making* and *discourse* theories as found in the work of J. Butler (1990), U. Eco (1979), H. Lefebvre (1991), G. Rose (1999), K. van Assche et al. (2012) and P. Makeham (2005).

To begin with, in prior to translating the data and reflect on the results of the interviews, I noted down the findings and structured them according to the chosen research conceptual themes: *thoughts*, *feelings* and *meaning* and are organised based on three major different categories of interviewees: those who have been living in the city throughout their life or at least for a period longer than six years, whom I will call *inhabitants*, those who only visited Bucharest shortly, labelled as *visitors*, and those who never saw the city with their own eyes, to whom I will refer as *strangers*. The reason I chose to organise the data around these three different types of urban encounters (those of *inhabitants*, *visitors* and *strangers*) is that I thought this to be an appropriate structure for the purpose of this thesis as, during the interviews, I observed the emergence of specific mechanisms within each group in producing discourses on Bucharest’s image and their experience of the city.

As we will come to see, the ‘thoughts’ and ‘feelings’ that the interviewees hold for Bucharest or particular places within the city, as well as the ‘meanings’ that these places take on, often overlap in the answers collected during the interviews. For this reason, quotes in one sub-chapter, may very well include elements which would fit better in one of the other two sub-chapters. Nevertheless, the data was clustered according to how the interviewees themselves phrased their answers to the questions.

In the phase of data interpretation, I placed remarks and reflections expressed during the interviews into thematic clusters. As a consequence of that, different patterns in mechanisms of association and inter-linkage between elements within the three categories of *thoughts*, *feelings* and *meaning* started to take shape on paper. The interviews’ answers illustrated transparently that the interviewees’ (personal) interpretation of the three dominant concepts led to the formation of new adjacent groups of sub-concepts. By arranging together answers based on recurrent themes and sub-themes, I was able to outline diagrammatically a general network of associations drawn out when formulating answers on Bucharest both prior and subsequent to watching the film.

This diagram includes elements and their adjoining relationships which are engaged in order to express (lived-in) experiences of the city, opinions, reflections, preferences, drawn parallels or values. In short, the diagram illustrates a general path-like form taken by the process of mapping elements in the city when building (individual) images of the city and (re)producing their related discourses.

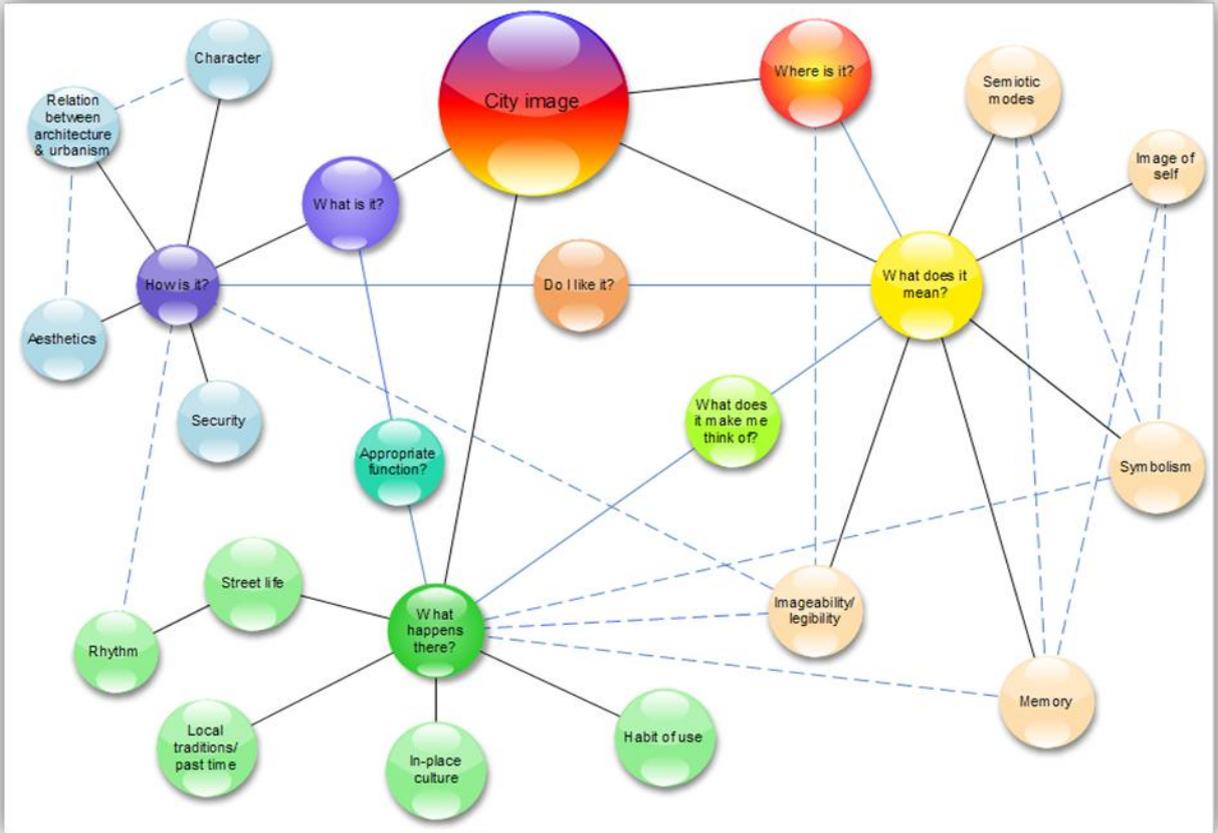


FIGURE 13: DIAGRAMATIC NETWORK OF DISCURSIVE ASSOCIATIONS

The above diagrammatic mind-map uses different rank-types of inter-relations. The first rank links (represented by the black continuous line) are those which connect the main concept ('City image') with the four secondary conceptual domains ('Where is it?', 'What is it?', 'What happens there?' and 'What does it mean?'). The latter four domains become sub-themes which gather around clusters of sub-concepts linked back to the 'mother domain' through the same type of first rank links. Thus, the 'Where is it?' domain stands on its own, while each of the other three incorporates five sub-concepts as follows: 'What is it?' includes 'Aesthetics', '(Historical) character', 'Function', 'Relation between architectural and urban elements' and 'Security'; 'What happens there?' refers to 'Rhythm', 'Street life', 'In-place culture', 'Local traditions/ past times' and 'Habit of use'; while 'What does it mean?'

reflects on 'Imageability/ legibility', 'Symbolism', 'Memory', 'Semiotic modes' and 'Image of self'. The three clustered domains are interlinked through second rank links (represented by the blue continuous line) which may or may not always be in place and elements within the different clusters seldom inter-relate with each other based on third rank links (represented by the blue dashed line) which, again, are drawn only by some of the interviewees.

A brief overview of the three conceptual domains led me to observe that answers during the interviews very often overlapped with the three corner points proposed by M. Carmona et al. (2003). Thus, as the diagram on the right illustrates, 'What is it?' coincides with 'Physical setting', 'What happens there?' marks the field of 'Activity' and 'What does it mean?' contains mentioning on 'Image/ meaning.' As a result, I will organize my analysis of the on- field findings chapter based on M. Carmona's three latter conceptual categories.

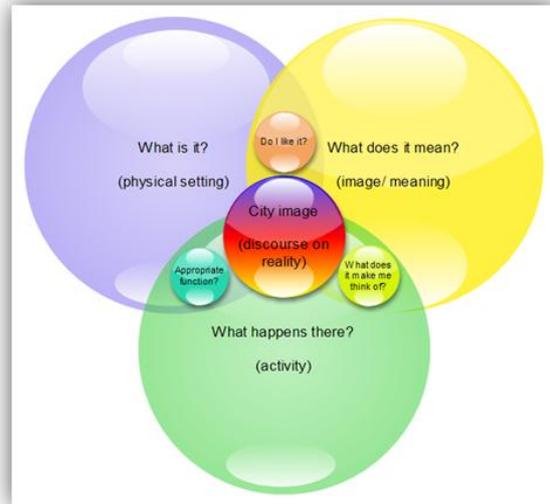


FIGURE 14: DIAGRAMATIC CORRELATION BETWEEN INTERVIEWEES' ASSOCIATIONS AND THEORETICAL CONCEPTS

For the purpose of this thesis, the field data was organised and analysed based on three major different categories of interviewees: those who have been living in the city throughout their life or at least for a period longer than six years, whom I will call *inhabitants*, those who only visited Bucharest shortly, labelled as *visitors*, and those who never saw the city with their own eyes, to whom I will refer as *strangers*. The reason for this is that, although discourses on the surrounding reality were constructed based on processes which showed similarities from one interviewee to another, the interviews' study has revealed that a number of discursive mechanisms were specific only to one of the interviewees' categories and I considered it appropriate to analyse them separately.

5. Emerging geographies of the imaginary

“To know a place well requires long residence and deep involvement. It is possible to appreciate the visual qualities of a place with one short visit, but not how it smells on a frosty morning, how city sounds reverberate across narrow streets to expire over the broad square, or how the pavement burns through gym shoe soles and melts bicycle tyres in August.”

(Tuan, 1975, cited in Carmona et al., 2003, p. 122)

In the present chapter I bring together the findings which emerged during the interviews taken on the field. The results of the interviews are structured around the main conceptual categories adopted in the methodology: ‘physical setting’, ‘activity’ and ‘meaning’. For the purpose of this paper the data and my subsequent interpretation of it is organised based on the three groups of interviewees: ‘inhabitants’, ‘visitors’ and ‘strangers’ and their image of Bucharest prior and post watching the film “Filantropica”.

The field data was gathered by using, as I mentioned in the previous chapter, interview questions developed around the chosen research conceptual themes: *thoughts*, *feelings* and *meaning*. As we will come to see, the “thoughts” and “feelings” as expressed by the interviewees for both Bucharest and its particular locations, as well as the “meanings” that these places take on, often overlap in the answers collected during the interviews. Because of this, interview notes and discussions in one sub-chapter, may very well include elements which would fit better in one of the other two sub-chapters. In spite of this overlapping and occasional repetition of arguments, for reasons of non-bias the data was clustered according to how the interviewees themselves phrased their answers to the questions.

The final sub-chapter contains reactions of the interviewees after watching the film “Filantropica” and how they reported this cinematic experience to their image and experience of the city of Bucharest. The findings gathered from the interviews constitute the base for the ‘Results’ chapter of

“I moved here in 1986... 26 years; 26 is a number... which I spent travelling in the city – by walking, by public means of transportation, by personal car ... so ... 26 years are 26 years.”

this paper. The interview data provides for a deeper understanding and subsequent interpretation of the mechanisms adopted when building discourses of (personal) truths and when producing immediate realities, as well as identities of self and place.

The interviewees’ familiarity with Bucharest is most often gained through direct contact with the city.

People were born and lived there throughout their lives; others came to study or work and ended up spending five, then, twenty years of their life in Bucharest, making it the place for their day-to-day jobs and family lives. Out of these people, some of them found their own place in the city, while others still consider the city as not being “theirs”. Nevertheless, only about two thirds of the interviewees have personally experienced the city. Thus, group of people was chosen among those who only had brief encounters with the city, visiting for days or even weeks at a time, either as

“It’s a stressful city... I’d move to a quieter place.”

tourists or with a different precise reason to be the city (work travel, visiting family), but always with one step on the train or plane platform. The third group, the group of those who never visited Bucharest, is constituted of those who built their image of this city based on media sources –

out of things seen/listened to on the news, read in newspapers and/or books or heard in some songs – or simple hearsay from stories travelling from mouth to mouth in the groups with which that category of interviewees interacted.

5.1 Physical setting

Inhabitants

To start with, the city was anchored in the discussion through the tie that brought interviewee and urban environment together: “I’ve been living here since...”, “it’s my home”, “I came here to study” and so forth.

In the interviewees’ words, the thoughts on Bucharest as a city in general most often regarded the physical environment of the city. People discuss the city’s character, ambiance, rhythm, aesthetic value or level of safety. Although they stated they reckoned that the city had “some very nice places”, there was a majority of other locations which were referred to as being unworthy passing through and even less knowing.

Many of the interviewees born in Bucharest or having been

“There are very few things which make Bucharest a pleasant city. Rather, unfortunately, in my opinion Bucharest is a kitsch city, an architectonic mix which doesn’t take into account any harmony. It is a sordid city, a messy city, a city in which people are grim, ugly... “

living there for a period over six years described the city as being “noisy”, “agitated”, “busy”, “dirty”, “messy”, “crowded”, “grey”, “sad”, full of “rude” and “sad” people. Only very few of these interviewees spoke appreciatively about the city. In their definition, the rhythm, the speed, the eclectic character and mixed ambiance of Bucharest as a whole were all elements which gave the city its personal charm. Bucharest and in-city locations alike were very often described **aesthetically** by means of emotional correlations. Thus, a place took on attributes which brought it closer to an almost human impersonation and in consequence it could be “sad”, “grey”, “pleasant”, “happy” and even “boring”.

What appeared to be “beautiful” and “interesting” for some, was described as “ugly” and “messy” by others, which made descriptions of Bucharest very illustrative as to which were the preferences and values of those interviewed. Whether a location had positively or negatively appreciated physical characteristics had very much to do with the type of experience (either positive or negative) that the interviewee related to that particular place. I take as examples here different descriptions given by individuals for two distinct film-locations.

I will begin with one such example and take the first image, that of “The Writers’ café” on which one interviewee’s response was: *“that was a place where to skip school and have a beer.”*, another one said *“it doesn’t emanate neither the intimacy, neither the ... I don’t know how to put this ... the rather original spirit of the writers, neither ... And I don’t see it populated by writers. To me writers are special characters which deserve more exceptional interiors, at least in terms of originality if not something else. This one seems ordinary, common, a sort of public dining hall”*, while a third answer was musing: *“I remember my friend Cristi saying: “Here (the Writers’ café) is where all the failed writers come together.”*

The second example is the last image, that of “Kisselef Boulevard” to which two different interviewees referred as follows: *“coming back on a Sunday evening from Brasov (home town); dead tired, but it was pleasant to see all the little lights lit.”*, *“this road I take every day when I go to work and I’ve seen it in all its states and seasons. I remember this one day this autumn ... It’s like you’re not even in Bucharest”* and *“Here it feels like not everything is blocked and that it can develop in any direction, in any way. You feel that you are breathing... There is a feeling of freedom of independence. It gives you the sensation that that place allows for you to be yourself independently of whichever obligations that you would think that others can call on you... There you can be yourself.”*

Character of place was most of the times interpreted as an ambivalent of ambiance and **security**, while historical character constituted a separate category altogether which emerged only in a few interviews. Expressed emotions often turned out to be illustrative not only for considerations on the aesthetic quality of a location, but also on the value of character. Feelings expressed for both Bucharest and its particular inner locations were very often mixed. Personal preferences were articulated in terms of “likeness” and sometimes, “love”

“... you are assaulted by posters, you are assaulted by presences which are offensive without having to say one word, you are, whatever, assaulted in general and you have to be very inwardly balanced not to take notice and to survive a walk in Bucharest.”

in statements such as: *“It’s a city that I like very much”* or *“This is my city and I love it”*. In their description, these positive feelings taking the form of acceptance are often accompanied by “sadness”, “disappointment”, “disillusion” or “disapproval” owed, according to them, to a faulty administration and management of the city: *“Of course there is disappointment and sadness. I hope that one day all this grey will disappear”*. In a few cases, the interviewees stated a powerful “annoyance” with the city they “didn’t like it”, as they would *“move elsewhere if this were possible.”*

Only a couple of the interviewed individuals, having lived throughout their lives in Bucharest, expressed their “love” for the city itself, beyond their personal ties to it: *“... the city in itself is a character. I love it separately”*.

When shown the images of the eight film-locations, most interviewees stated they had no particular feeling for a majority of the sites captured in the photos. Seldom, individuals would use feelings such as “sadness”, “nostalgia” and “fear” to describe both locations they were not particularly acquainted to, as well as a large number of those places to which they were linked through specific memories. Nevertheless, throughout a great majority of the answers gathered in this section, people spoke about “liking”, “joy”, “serenity”, “interest” and, only in a very few cases, “admiration” was also mentioned. Familiar physical settings were often transformed into containers for both past and present experiences and sentiments. Those places with which the interviewees were well acquainted were instantly associated with other people, (un)pleasant past times, occasional habits and, more seldom, with one specific memory at one particular moment in the interviewees life in the city: *“This place makes me think of Arde and Silviu. We used to go there sometimes. That was a place where to skip school and have a beer”* or *“‘Caru’ cu bere’ is a VERY (original emphasis) interesting building. It is*

a building in which I enjoy going, a building in which I had a good time quite a few number of time, a building in which you can listen to interesting music sometimes”.

Relations between architectural and urban elements is a class of concepts which recurred most frequently when discussing most of the film-location photographs with individuals coming from a Landscape Architecture or Urbanism educational/professional background.

When asked about the eight specific chosen film-locations (see Appendix III) in the city, the interviewees belonging to this group first mapped the spaces geographically – *“Where is this?”*, *“I don’t know this place!”* or *“Aah, here we are at...”* and only subsequently provided a few words around the chosen sites. The locations represented in the images were described in terms of character and aesthetics – *“It’s a very nice place!”* or *“I never had the time or the intent to walk through it and even less to stay there.”* Consequently, a majoritarian number of the interviewees reported the location to their vicinities in answers such as: *“This is next to Kretzulesc Church, isn’t it? And the Royal Palace. This is a nice area.”* or *“That there in the background is Casa Presei Libere. And the Village’s Museum should also be here somewhere.”*

Function or better said, *the appropriateness of function*, was expressed most often in terms of personal preferences and feelings, whether the locations were familiar to the interviewees or not: *“This restaurant makes me think of good Romanian food and huge pint of beer, not to mention fancy people”*, said one of the interviewees, while another one stated on the same location that *“In some regards it looks like a building with a number of architectonic claims which are not made justice to by the actual function of the place. By looking at it it’s like, you don’t think that inside one eats sausages and drinks beer (laughs), no matter the quality of the sausages or the that of the beer. To me, it creates a sort of antithesis, a sort of discomfort between elegance, style and the prosaic level of filling one’s belly with sausages and beer. It is a small contradiction, but this doesn’t keep me from going back there times and again with pleasure.”*

Visitors

In the case of the visitors, the physical setting – interviewee associations were constructed in ways similar to those of the inhabitants. Subsequent to identifying their report with the city (*“I went there as a tourist”* or *“I have been there a few times to visit my sister”*), answers first placed the different

locations within the city. The city was very often described as a capital city, defined by its politico-economic status, its architecture, services and facilities.

"I was there quite a few times throughout the years. The longest I've been there is a week... it's a beautiful city. I think it's a beautiful city... to walk... I'd even like to live there."

In this part of the interviews, the physical settings of Bucharest in general and its inner locations in particular were described much more in terms of their architectural and urban qualities. **Aesthetics** and **character** played a significant role in the discussions. The city was described as being "interesting", "nice" and "worth visiting", while for others it was "deteriorated", "too busy" and "sad".

Those who spoke positively about the city did so by talking about the urban character and ambiance as being the main assets of Bucharest. In their words, Bucharest was large, busy, dusty, but it still held some intriguing "something" which calls for a future return in the city. The eclectic style and architecture, the mixed functions and the duality of Bucharest were said to give the city its "specific character". In the interviews, this specificity of character was to be accepted and appreciated as such by people or on the contrary, it became the source of a considerable number of disturbing elements found in the city: high traffic, tramp dogs, crowded places, pollution, dirt, the grey of so many of the residential neighbourhoods. A small number of the Romanian interviewees referred to Bucharest as being "a beautiful city", a city where they would not exclude the possibility of living if that would be somehow possible. On the other hand, others stated that the city was "too crowded and too loud" to ever be anything but a temporary destination for them. In the case of non-Romanian visitors, the possibility of returning to the city was linked to a different tourist experience: "I would come back with some local person, but probably not alone again."

Discussions on the film-locations aimed to determine their (lack of) knowledge as to the whereabouts of one particular place or another: "(The image) doesn't tell me anything because I don't know the place. It just makes me think of an educational institution" or "I know this – it's the first place where I step when I reach Bucharest by train. It's a big train station and an important place in Bucharest; it gives me a feeling of joy because I'm meeting my family, people that I care about".

Locations, whether familiar or not, were also often described in terms of their **function**: "I don't know this. It's a restaurant.", "it makes me think of educational institutions" or "I know this is the main train station and probably an important place in Bucharest." Most of the individuals had little if

nothing to say in relation to the chosen interview locations, with the very few exceptions of overall considerations on the urban **character** sprang from evaluations based on the interview images. As an example, one interviewee stated under thoughts on Bucharest that: *“I would have not a good impression of the city by looking at these pictures. But the lack of people (scale) fits with the previous experience.”* In the case of specific sites familiar to the interviewees, the photos were described by resorting to memories.

“(the city is) melancholic, deteriorated, grey and monumental.”

Interviewees in this section showed themselves very reluctant in assigning *feelings* to either the city or its various unfamiliar locations in statements such as *“I’m not familiar with this place; I can’t have feelings regarding it”* or *“I’m not good probably in expressing feeling for a place. Probably for the people...”*. Nevertheless, emotional associations were indeed made in the attempt to capture the character of specific locations by using keywords such as *“sad”*, *“pleasant”* or *“just like any other”*. In the very few cases in which the interviewees expressed feelings for a particular site, the discussions drew parallels between the location in the image and a second one, familiar to the interviewee.

Furthermore, physical setting was very often related in the interviewees’ words with the emotional states experienced during different moment of their city experience. As a result, the urban environment’s characteristics were the ones which took the blame of for feelings of discomfort, melancholy or joy. The following interview quotations are relevant in this way: *“... Sometimes high buildings and massive blocks turn the place uncomfortable”*, *“... it’s nice to know that there are places where people with the same abilities get together”* and *“...culturally it’s a beautiful city. I noticed many cleavages between the historical part of the city which is well kept and the surroundings where there is a lot of poverty.”*

In a relative majority, people expressed *“interest”*, *“acceptance”*, *“surprise”* and *“admiration”*: *“In the old city part it’s amazing... it’s like you are in another era”*. On the other hand interviewees manifested *“disapproval”*, *“sadness”* and *“contempt”* for different city elements: *“I experienced a little bit of sadness for example for the condition of the animals that are a characteristic of this city as I have seen and... what else... there are big diversities between people living on the outskirts, in the suburbs and those in the centre of the city.”* In most of the cases, the two categories of feelings are joint together when referring to the city: *“Visiting it was both pleasure and sadness.”*

Strangers

The group of strangers taking part in the interviews very often gave only brief appreciations of the physical setting as such. A predominant number of people in this group described Bucharest pretty much in the same manner as do those who only visited the city. In this category, the interviewees'

"... a place to go and see."

first attempt was to place the city geographically - *"does the Danube cross Bucharest?"* In a large number of cases Bucharest was said to be the *"capital of Romania"*, with only very few people describing it as having *"the second biggest building in the world"*.

Attributes such as *"nice"*, *"sad"*, *"grey"* or *"empty"* appear frequent in the interview answers and the term *"space"* appears much more often than in other parts of the interviews; succinct considerations combined both **aesthetics** and **character** of the city as portrayed in their imagination, as well as it was depicted in the eight film-location photographs.

Answers on thoughts on the city were most often related to Romania in general and Bucharest in particular being part of the former eastern-European block of communist countries, thus constituting an example of the *"contrast east-west"*. The city was described as having *"big buildings"* and being *"grey"* by a couple of the interviewees, while another one stated that: *"I imagine it as a new median city with rich architecture and style."* Among the Romanians who took part in the process of data collection, there was the exception of a person who had not visited Bucharest. According to the interviewee's statement, the city had *"a lot of green spaces"*, but was still *"very dusty"*. The answers during this section of the interviews included short discussions on aesthetic qualities, zoning and functionality and only marginally referred to the city's character: *"There are some places that I would like to visit and others that don't inspire anything positive ... like certain neighbourhoods that I know from the hip-hop songs that they are a bit ... questionable."*

Seldom, the discussions included appreciations which mixed *aesthetics/character* with appropriateness of the site-**function**: *"I don't feel like walking there"*, *"it could be anywhere at home, so it feels as normal as it could"*, *"feel like having a warm coffee."* or *"it disturbs me, it's poor."* .

"Don't feel anything. Seems very empty."

Such remarks were illustrative for the interviewee's preferences for one place or another as they describe the physical setting through the lens of projected emotions. On a few occasions associations

were made between the photographed film-locations and sites belonging to the interviewee's personal memory: *"It looks ok! What can I say, a café for artists! We also have something similar in my hometown"*. We will discuss this aspect further down, under the third sub-chapter, "Meaning".

Reactions to watching "Filantropica"

The reactions to watching "Filantropica" were very diverse between members of the different groups and sometimes, within the three group themselves.

Among the group of inhabitants, the Bucharest portrayed in the film was very much like the one they knew from the everyday experience of the city. Whether discussing about the city at large or particular locations, either more or less familiar to the interviewees prior to watching the film, it was generally agreed on the fact that the film did not change the individual image of place. Many interviewees saw "Filantropica"'s Bucharest as *"reality"* and in only one case, did the portrayal of the city seem like an exaggeration, with reference to the packs of homeless dogs roaming through the city. The same general view was valid for the different in-city locations. There was, nevertheless, one major notable exception, which was the park near 'Gara de Nord' (see Appendix II, Figure 18). In this case, individuals having watched "Filantropica" previously stated that they were avoiding the park as a result of the *"what is happening there"* in the film. Similarly, individuals who first watched the film on the occasion of the interview expressed their surprise in *"realising"* the state of the park and made clear a certain reluctance of crossing the park sometime in the future.

As a result, the park near 'Gara de Nord' is intimately associated with "Filantropica", which cannot be said about any other of the film locations. On the contrary, independent on the actions or depiction of their physical settings, this group of interviewees looked at the various film-locations through the perspective of their own (prior) image and attachment to them. Illustrative for this is the fact that a large number of the interviewees simply did not realise where a scene was unfolding while watching the film, even in the case of the most familiar locations. Furthermore, individuals who had seen "Filantropica" prior to the interview admitted that they did not recognise most of the film-locations when they first watched the film and most likely reason for which they did recognise a number of them was due to the previous interview discussions on eight film-location photographs.

As far as the group of 'visitors' was concerned, Bucharest and its particular inner settings did not take on different characteristics or values for people after watching the film. On the contrary, the city and

its locations were said to reflect very closely the urban image they had built during their visit(s). As it came up during the discussions, individuals having visited the city after watching the film did remember it while passing through a certain location and this fact was supported by another interviewee stating that, most likely, in the eventuality of a future visit in the city, certain *places* will bring back the film in their memory due to the impression that certain scenes made on the audience.

Nevertheless, throughout watching “Filantropica” and the subsequent conversations, individuals referred to the different locations through the lens of their previous experiences of the city. The on-screen Bucharest was mentioned as a mere ensemble of stage locations in which the depicted *spaces* resurrected lived-in experiences; in their turn, the same locations in their day-to-day presence were *places* which acted as film settings and thus contained information on “Filantropica” seen as a cinematographic piece.

The situation was quite different in the case of the interviewed group of strangers. Although generally agreeing that neither the photographs, nor the film changed in any way the image previously held on Bucharest, the questions which emerged during the discussions would suggest otherwise. Reflections such as *“it’s more middle-European than I thought”* or *“I thought it (the city) would have much larger buildings; Russian style”* illustrate small alterations of previous city-images which, nevertheless, appear to be un-notable in the eyes of the interviewees. This may be because, while elements of **aesthetics** and **relation between architectural and urban elements** did come out different than *“thought of”*, the overall city atmosphere was very much like previously imagined and this fact weighted much more in constructing the urban image than did pure form.

Furthermore, numerous questions emerged during this section of the interviews coming to support, once more, the relatively strong impression made by a Bucharest depicted by “Filantropica”. Reactions such as *“is it really like this?”* *“and the dogs... Are they really so many?”*, *“I had the feeling that there were lots of shallow feelings... I don’t know. Maybe it’s a perception, but sometimes I have the impression that it’s also reality so... is this only a parody?”*, *“Are there really so many beggars?”* or *“is this city safe to walk through?”*, all illustrate the destabilizing effect of the film’s city depictions and how these, in fact, do alter previous images of the city. As we can see, it is only here that real issues of *security* emerge. The same goes for the specific film-locations which were interpreted differently from the photographs, as we could see in the previous chapter. Both in terms of **character** and **security** the image of different physical settings became questionable.

Admittedly, for many of the interviewees “Filantropica” was to be linked in their minds with Bucharest, even if just as a film-location city. Granting the fact that the film was (most-likely) and exaggeration, the availability that people had to see the city in the beginning of the interviews shifted towards the end. Thus, the general conclusion was that a probable visit to Bucharest *needed* to take place in the company of a local acquaintance or, even better, a friend in order to ensure the possibility of a positive experience of the city.

5.2 Activity

Inhabitants

In their description of the city all of the interviewed inhabitants very often referred to the **rhythm** of the city and its **street culture**. Attributes such as “*busy*” or “*crowded*” were common to most answers, but they held different values from one interviewee to another. While to some, these

*“I like its rhythm and style.
I’d get bored anywhere else.”*

constituted negative features of the city, for others they were part of that *something* which made Bucharest an interesting and appealing place to the point where in many cases it represented the very reason for choosing to live there and not in a different city in Romania.

The **rhythm** of the city often coincided with the inner rhythm of the individuals and the way they felt life should be carried on. Answers such as “... *it’s a large city, a diverse city, very crowded, grey and sore... it often gets me upset*”, “*it’s too crowded, too agitated; it’d move somewhere else if I could*”, “*the place where I can find myself... I like the entire bustle here and the quotidian of every day... I just came from spending a week in Germany. I thought it was really monotonous. No!*” or “*My wife and I find ourselves here. We couldn’t live in a tranquil city although we tried. It’s clear! I mean, the pulse of everyday life, we like to feel it the way it is in Bucharest and not elsewhere.*” associated the urban pulse and vibration with feeling of (non)belonging. In similar way, the **street life**, can concomitantly be reason for both liking and disliking Bucharest.

In-place culture and **local traditions/ past times** often come up as points of interest at city level. Theatres, Opera house, cultural events are very often mentioned as attractions of the city, by comparison to other cities in the country. The same logic applies to the familiar film-locations where

patterns of being in place emerge. Thus, summer walks in 'Herastrau' Park, shopping at 'Humanitas' library, having a beer in a slightly dressed up style in the 'Caru' cu bere' restaurant or taking the train in the over-crowded, "colourful" 'Gara de Nord' are recurrent elements in the interview answers. *Being* in a certain way in specific settings in Bucharest appears often as real initiations. As one interviewee stated upon her moving to Bucharest, in her mind "whether you were from Bucharest or not depended on your knowing how to buy train tickets from 'Gara de Nord'". Growing familiar with, for example, the city's beggars, with the hang out places or with ways of being in the city and assimilating things are all 'must-have-s' in order to "survive a walk in Bucharest".

"I used to go in Herastrau regularly ... we had a day a week when all of us, classmates, used to get together there."

Habits of use emerged regularly throughout the interviews almost inevitably interlinked with specific memories or personal meanings, as we will see in the next sub-chapter. If the film-location itself was not familiar enough as to suggest much to the interviewee, connections were very frequently made with nearby places which held particular importance in the individual's memory in statements such as "I don't know this, but I remember I used to love the tram trip coming down from the centre to this area. The houses and the trees in summer...". It became transparent throughout the interviews that it was the repetition of specific activities, a repetition which very often led to in-depth familiarity with the site, which marked certain places as being memorable over others, independent of the interviewee's preferences for those particular locations.

Visitors

In the answers collected from the group of visitors, references to **street life** and **habit of use** were not notable. Activity - location inter-relations were drawn specifically in the manner of memories of place (whether bringing forward an event, someone's particular company or a memorable experience semiotic-wise). On the other hand, urban **rhythm, in-place culture** and **local traditions/past times** were all elements of difference and city identity. Whether taking on a positive or a negative value, the hustle of everyday life, the mixture of activities overlapped with their unlikely location, even the city's "grey"-ness were to various degrees points of interest.

In the eyes of the passer-by, Bucharest appeared as the socio-cultural and architectural collage which was often perceived by the city's inhabitants as well. The difference lays in that, unlike the latter, the former sets himself at a certain distance from all this eclecticism. While in the above section of the interview a wide pallet of sweet-bitter sentiments made itself obvious, in this part, Bucharest's visitors looked upon the city with a (rather reluctant) appreciation.

As I mentioned previously, individuals in this group often avoided to attach any type of sentiment to either the city or its various locations. Nevertheless, notions of "*interest*" and "*contrast*" were often expressed as drivers of emotions which, in the interviewees' words, were not feelings *for* the city itself, but rather reflections of their own states of mind, be it of discomfort or pleasure, during different moments of their visit.

Strangers

The discussions with the interviewees group labelled as 'strangers' centred predominantly around ***street life*** and ***local traditions/ past times***, while overlooking considerably issues of urban ***rhythm***. The reason behind this fact may very well be the limited familiarity of the interviewees with the city in question, which would also explain the brief approach taken by individuals in dealing with the questions. Answers were very often based on inferences drawn from hearsay and forms of media.

Comments on ***in-place culture*** took a much more personal perspective as interpretations and impressions on locations were very often expressed on the base of drawn parallels between the photographic film-locations and other familiar sites which were brought up by the images.

Statements on particular locations were bringing together considerations which, although centred around in-place culture, did reflect back on issues fitting under the character and aesthetics of the physical setting, as well as personal meaning. Such an example is the set of remarks gathered on 'The Writers' Café', which included: "*It makes me think of a café in Rome; a warm coffee, nostalgia.*", "*It reminds me of some places from home. Makes me feel comfortable, at ease*". Such remarks dealt marginally with the issue of ***habit of use***, although not in the specific give film-location, but translated into another setting. Nevertheless, it is easily noticeable that this reminder of *another*, yet familiar, place transposes Bucharest's photographically depicted sites into more accessible and positively valued locations.

Reactions to watching “Filantropica”

In terms of activities, Bucharest’s interviewed inhabitants had reactions which belonged to two different spheres. The first was that of *in-place culture* and the second was that of *habit of use*. Nevertheless, it needs to be noted that discussions in this section of the interviews were very often anchored in reflections on meanings and image of the city and its inner locations. For this reason, below I will present only briefly the findings emerged around the concept of ‘activity’ and will expand on them later on, in Sub-chapter 5.3, “Meaning”.

“The film brought forward the reality and this thing with the begging is the biggest disappointment ... as an industry... so that I now come to realize that this is an organized thing.”

As far as the *habit of use* is concerned, the result had two end points. The first, a minor one, regarded the use of the park near ‘Gara de Nord’, which most of the interviewees took note as to avoid as much as possible in the future. The second alteration on the habit of using certain locations took a much larger scale as it affected previous consideration on beggars on the city, namely giving charity to those living on the streets. This alteration was mentioned by a majority of the interviewees and while some stated they would be much more careful and critical of those to whom they gave money, others went as far as to decide to themselves simply not to give charity anymore from that point onwards. This resolution had been already installed by many of those who had watched “Filantropica” prior to the interviews and were strongly impressed by the event portrayed in the film.

The first category, that of alterations of *in-place culture* images, was a result of encountering the film’s organised network of beggars. I will not expand too much on this here, as it relates much more to the subject of the following sub-chapter. Nevertheless, for the time being, it is extremely important to note the “*realisation*” of a majority of interviewees that such a network was very likely to be in place, to the point where a few individuals took it as granted information. ‘Beggars’ as a social group already existed, but the experience of the film transformed it into a more palpable *culture*.

Once at the periphery of city experience, objects that the greater majority of city inhabitants sought to ignore, beggars were brought to the centre of the discussions and images of Bucharest as a result of watching “Filantropica”. Not only did they become more ‘real’ by staring in the face of the audience, but they came with a baggage of gestures, actions, ways of being in the city. More than

that, they appeared with their own possible reasoning and a company of manipulative figures workings as nodal points in what could be described as a 'true' industry of charity. More than that, the film offers snapshots of one type of students (spoiled rich teenagers), professors (struggling by whichever means possible to surpass their present unpropitious condition), youth (young materialist girl using her looks to get ahead in life) and even the public of late evening entertainment shows (individuals concerned with the civic wellbeing and setting examples in a "faulty" country). All these snapshots contributed to the alteration of in-place culture as they were previously understood by individuals.

Changes regarding the perception of *in-place culture* were also the most notable in the cases of the 'visitors' and 'strangers' groups alike. Nevertheless, considerations in these sections were not so radical. Among the Romanian visitors as well as strangers from the city, the image of the begging networks had a similarly strong impression, but, although characterised as "*something which probably happens all over the country*", the repercussions on their day-to-day habits of giving charity to beggars was not affected that much. They invariably advocated for more precaution in the future as to whom one is showing pity, but this was to be decided from one particular case to another. This impaired reaction, compared to that of many of Bucharest's inhabitants, might have been connected to something suggested by one of the latter in the interview: "*It's a repulsion generator; no one can like something like this! And when this happens in the city of your birth, it's not pleasant at all!*". In this sense it could be argued that the proximity of the on-screen events, their likelihood in the individuals immediate surrounding had made them much more sensible to the film's plot.

Furthermore, this argument could be supported by the lack of reactions on the matter coming from the groups of non-Romanians, visitors and strangers alike. Individuals belonging to these categories were indeed left with a huge question mark regarding the "*real*" value of it all, but the fact did not reflect back onto their day-to-day habits.

The secondary *in-place cultures* addressed by the film, those of the educational system and social value that I mentioned earlier in this sub-chapter also suffered some alterations among the interviewees. It was interesting to observe that among Bucharest's inhabitants references to these sub-cultures were predominantly made by those connected to them in their day-to-day encounters in the city. Thus, young people were mostly concerned with the student life, the sub-group of adults reflected more often on "*the state of the school today*" and civil sense, such as "*calling to this kind of evening shows and give money thinking to help some poor bastard who is in fact a charlatan*", while

the very few individuals involved in the teaching profession manifested their disappointment and anger at the possibility of academics *“stooping so low”*. This illustrates clearly the part that personal as well as professional background can play in processing in-coming information.

In the case of the (non)Romanians interviewees, nonetheless, it became obvious that the secondary *in-place cultures* made a much stronger impression than that of the city beggars network. The numerous considerations on the shallowness of Bucharest’s population and, more generally, that of Romania and even the eastern-European world are very relevant in this way. The ‘reality’ of the charity industry, although possibly in-place, was overrun in importance by the image of a larger part of society characterised by a sense of superficiality, limited emotions and questionable values.

5.3 Meaning

Inhabitants

Talking about meaning, the interviewees very often mentioned in their answers habits, events and/or people placed in the context of Bucharest in general and the film-locations in particular. The interviewees spoke about Bucharest as *“your city and that’s where the longing comes in. You think that that’s where you lived part of your life, you have friends... there are many things that tie you to it. You also walk down the street and you see there the little bench on which you had your first kiss”*, Bucharest as *“a place that I like to discover. And I often get frustrated, but that’s not a constant feeling”* or Bucharest as *“the place where I can find myself... I like the entire bustle here and the quotidian of every day... I just came from spending a week in Germany. I thought it was really monotonous. No!”*

The dominant meaning that Bucharest’s inhabitants attached to the city resulted from the type of relation they had to the city. Answers like *“it’s my home”*, *“I was born and brought up here”*, *“this is where I work and have my family”* or *“I used to study and now I work here”* are illustrative in this way. Interesting enough, labelling the city as *“home”* was a note encountered often in the interview responses.

Thus, Bucharest was said to be “home” by most of the in-the-city born and raised individuals as well for a considerable number of those moved into the city, particularly by those with certain seniority of having lived there. Furthermore, it came through in many of these occasions that there were individuals who, although having been born and studied up to their adult life (say until 20, even 25 years old) in cities other than Bucharest, when asked where they were from the answer was: “from Bucharest.” This created a contrast with those stating things such as: “I’m from X, but now I live in Bucharest”, individuals who expressed more often in their responses a general dislike for the city. For this latter group, the city was a location in which to work, to study, to have one’s family, to make one’s relations. In other words, it was a certain categorisation of the dominant habits of city use which appeared to generically pin-point Bucharest in the inhabitants’ minds. Interview statements coming to support this inference are: “this is pretty much the only place in the country where you can still find a job nowadays”, “while I can still work, I will stay here, afterwards I’m moving to the countryside for sure”, “this is well I have my family and all my relations”, “it has many theatres, cafes, the opera, the operetta, the Ateneu, and I can allow myself all these pleasures that that I would probably miss anywhere else”

“I feel like home here. I mean, I have no nostalgias after Rădău, where I was born, Galați, where I followed the University or Slatina, where my work-placement was allocated. I feel at my best home, in Bucharest.”

As it resulted from this section of the interviews, *meaning* was encompassed by a multitude of urban elements. Firstly, a number of day-to-day matters, such as things related to behaviour or knowledge on the city were very often introduced in the discussion with phrases such as “one says”, “one does”, suggesting taken for granted ways of ‘being’ and understanding the city.

Adjacently to that, information taken from the surrounding environment was without fail translated by means of personal interpretation before the interviewees granted any *meaning* to everyday elements. *Physical settings* and *activities* went hand in hand in people’s answers as to lay the description of things which were said to hold particular meanings for the interviewees. It became clear that *places* anchored their *meaning* in their physical qualities only to gain further value in people’s words once associated with a certain ‘something’. What this ‘something’ could be varied greatly from one individual to another.

Thus, 'The Writers' Café' for example was concomitantly a *"place for artists and intellectuals"*, a location which did not *"emanate neither the intimacy, neither the ... I don't know how to put this ... the rather original spirit of the writers"*, somewhere where *"Cristi was saying: <Here is where all the failed writers come together>"*, *"a place where to skip school and have a beer"* and a reminder of *"Silviu and Arde"*. Alternatively, 'Gara de Nord' was a *"place which holds a significance for Bucharest... it is a referential place"*, *"a place which, with all its majestic columns makes me think of an immense passing gate in-between worlds, all the arrivals and departures with the people going up and down and with Time unfolding continuously"*, a place which when thought of *"makes me imagine some little old lady in a large fur coat, all beautiful and elegant, as if from another era"*, *"the first place in Bucharest I saw as I child the day our teacher brought us in the city to take us to the Operetta"* and the place where *"I spent half of my University years; the wonderful wind from 'Gara de Nord'"*.

The same processes of multiple signification was just as valid for all the remaining six film-locations, as well as for Bucharest at large. Furthermore, **symbolism** and **image of self** were often intertwined so as to form the backbone of specific **memories** and even elements of urban **legibility** and **imageability**. It became easily noticeable in the interviews that places were associated to a diversity of elements. Such elements which emerged during the interview were: urban icons and landmarks, reference points for inner-city orientation, periods from collective (city) history, events from personal history, habits of use (although not always defined by frequency, but rather by a form of repetition in time), states of mind/spirit inter-related with multi-sensual experiences, other individuals and image of self. The latter includes references to the Other, as well as interior reflections on the 'who' and 'what' of the self, on values and preferences, as well as segments of an alternative urban image, such as the above quoted contemplations on 'Gara de Nord's' *"majestic columns"* and *"little old lady in a large fur coat"*.

*"I like to stroll down streets
I've never been before, look at
the houses and wonder about
the people who live there,
their lives and their stories."*

It was interesting to observe how a very small sub-group working in the fields of construction and landscape architecture, referred predominantly to the photographic film-locations as *spaces* and both described and analysed them in terms of their architectural and urban qualities. Thoughts, feelings and even meaning regarding particular places in Bucharest took the form of brief design studies.

Although these studies did indeed reflect preferences for one place or another, their expressed value

had more professional connotations than personal. In consequences, in these few exceptional cases, *meaning* was constructed through an evaluation of character and successfulness of the design in terms of function, security, attractiveness and relation with the nearby architectural and urban elements.

Visitors

The group of visitors taking part in the interviews showed themselves to be even increasingly reluctant when assigning *meaning* to either individual film city-locations or Bucharest at large. Most often this was done by determining the relation interviewee – site. Thus, Bucharest was a destination reached either *“as a tourist”* or *“to visit my family”*. Outside such credentials the city was often said not to mean *“anything else”*. Nevertheless, answers do include information on Bucharest as an eastern-European capital for instance or a large, rather grey, city. This does not apply to inner-city locations which, in lack of personal knowledge, were very often dismissed after a few considerations on the physical setting as transpiring from the interview photographs.

In discussions on locations in Bucharest with which the *visitors* were acquainted with, different elements of the physical environment were, once again, mentioned: This section of the interviews included statements such as: *“I enjoyed the park. Reminds me of that sort of English park, you know?”*, *“beautiful avenue, full of trees and good shades during the summer, but very few people using the parts on the sides of the avenue”* and *“this place tells me something: it’s the first and only restaurant in Bucharest in which I’ve been... to me it doesn’t mean anything, but if you ask people to recommend you a restaurant in Bucharest, almost everyone will answer “Caru’ cu bere”, so it means something.”*

” I think it’s a beautiful city... I’d even like to live there. I’d like to! ... At least to try! ”

On the other side, the thought of the city did bring forward into discussions different lived-in experiences during the visit of the city. Such an example was an interviewee’s note on *“a nice thing: to talk in Portuguese/Spanish/Italian trying to speak Romanian with the second hand book seller in the street. I bought too books in Romania”*. In the discussions, these experiences were translated more in terms of events and activities in the case of the (non)Romanian interviewees, coming as tourists. If unknown, certain locations had the potential of evoking experiences lived in similar

locations in Bucharest. As a result, the interviewees included frequently in their answers elements of urban *imageability/legibility*.

Furthermore, this sub-group referenced often in its answers to states of mind/spirit experienced during their visit, such as discomfort or pleasure. Although these states were intimately inter-related with the *semiotic modes*, the different bodily senses were mentioned only seldom in the discussions. In consequence, the states of the psyche were expressed mostly by reference to emotions generated by the characteristics of physical environment.

On the other hand, the sub-group of Romanian visitors explained their visits to Bucharest based on family-type relations tying them to the city. I consider this to be a significant factor worth mentioning. The reason for this is that I believe it to justify the scarcity of references to personal *symbolism, semiotic modes* and even *image of self*. It was noticeable that interviewees belonging to this sub-group centred their description of places and city-experience around an Other (in this case, a family member), thus inter-relating to a considerable extent the memory of event with that of the company held at that particular time.

A common trait emerged in this section of the interviews, namely that when asked about the particular (unfamiliar to the interviewee) city-locations, individuals often related images of the various location with (memorable) places known to them from outside their Bucharest experience. In other words, in the case of locations which strongly resembled or simply evoked secondary sites, interviewees resorted to their personal background and history in order to describe considerations and sometimes even emotions brought up by the image of certain locations. Such an example is a Romanian interviewee's note when shown the photograph picturing 'Miguel de Cervantes' High School: *"This place give me a feeling of joy because high school was one of the most beautiful periods of my life – not this high school, obviously, but the idea of high school makes you think about a beautiful time in life."*

Strangers

Among the group of strangers the same mechanisms of linking unknown city-images to personal background and history was noticeable.

In describing Bucharest, due to their mediated contact with the city, the interviewees in this section resorted to knowledge gathered from secondary sources. These sources varied greatly from forms of information media (television, radio, newspapers), books, songs and hearsay. As a reflection of a relative lack of interest in the city, be it as a geographical point or as a future tourist destination, the information and knowledge on the city, as expressed by the interviewees, was often fragmented and contained numerous question marks regarding the validity and correctness of the answers.

"I'm curious about old USSR cities and eastern-European countries in general."

For most of the interviewees the identity of Bucharest was equivalent with its status of an eastern-European city, belonging to the former Communist bloc. The image of the city overlaps that of many of the other capital cities characterised by those very same geographical-historico-political markers. The large-scale grim architecture, the bleak peripheries and a 'certain' in-place culture were taken for granted *truths* on the city, defining it above anything else.

For one interviewee, having travelled to Romania before, the image of the city resurrected the memory of the first time having crossed the Romanian border: *"When we crossed the border from Hungary to Romania I thought: Wow, I'm in a 3rd world country"*. This is, once again, an illustrative example of how personal history plays a role in building the image of a city.

When discussing the eight film-locations it became obvious that the interviewees were relying on the same mechanisms of appealing to personal history in the case of those images which strongly evoked places previously granted meaning in the individuals' memory. Thus, 'The Writers' Café' reminded of home to one interviewee and of a particular type of cafes in Rome to another. In other cases, individuals resorted to their knowledge in describing and, even more, understanding certain locations. Statements such as: *"an intellectual/poet old café – Wien café"*, *" looks very fancy, like the old French restaurants"*, *"looks like some areas in Berlin"*, *"reminds me a bit of Berlin inner-city airport"*, *"a mix between Luxembourg Gardens and Sherwood"* and *"is that a restaurant or a gothic church?"* are all illustrative for people's reactions when attempting to pin-point atmosphere and function of film-locations in terms of

"This (Kisselef Boulevard) is exactly the kind of city highway that I hate to walk on - as much as I understand that they are necessary."

personal referencing systems.

Throughout their answers, interviewees un-familiarised with Bucharest and its inner settings showed even greater reluctance in expressing emotions suggested by the photographic images of the city and even more so in attaching any type of meaning to them. Very often, the locations were said not 'say' too much to the individuals and feelings were deeply related with the transpiring atmosphere. Thus, most answers on sentiments alternated between not feeling anything to feeling "cold", "depressive"

"Don't feel anything. Seems very empty."

or "sad". Such remarks illustrated individual preferences (in this case dislike) and values. Positive reactions to the image of certain locations, such as 'Caru' cu bere' Restaurant in one of the cases, were expressed in phrases which denoted the appealing character of the place, such as: "feel like having a warm coffee".

The great majority of the interviewees in this section agreed on the fact that there their general impression on the photographic film-locations was very likely to be influenced by ephemera, namely the particular time when the photographs were taken by the researcher. The same type of reflections emerged during some of the discussions with the group of city visitors and in a much smaller degree in the interviews with the city inhabitants. Here, the most frequent comment on the photographic character of the image was that "this picture doesn't capture this place very well".

Reactions to watching "Filantropica"

For the greatest majority of the interviewees, reactions after watching "Filantropica" differed within the same answer when it came to expressing feelings on "the film itself" and on "what happens in there".

Having watched "Filantropica" took on different meanings for those among the city's inhabitants. With a couple of exceptions: "I thought this to be a bad film. I didn't like it and I'm surprised that most people think about it that it's a good film", the greatest number of individuals taking part in the interviews spoke positively about "Filantropica" as "a film".

"After first watching the film I remember thinking: how occidental are both Romania and Bucharest portrayed!"

People said they “liked” the film, in some cases “very much”.: *“The film... I liked it! Very, very, very much! Because I think that it draws its idea exactly from what’s happening in our Bucharest”* or, in another interviewee’s words: *“I hadn’t seen this film and I liked it very much ...mm, but I can’t separate my opinion here from the actors... These are great actors”*.

For a relatively small number of the interviewees the image of the city and their reports to it were said to have remained unaltered since “Filantropica” *“remains, of course, just a film”*. Nonetheless, this was not the case for most of the interviewed individuals who added to this understanding of the film as an artistic production a secondary meaning, one which applied directly to their everyday life in the city.

Both the film plot and its characters were regarded as being representative for their day-to-day “reality”. A few interviewees received the film’s message very understanding of the layers of irony and humour present in “Filantropica”. In these cases, the first reaction was literally a bitter laugh in front of the reality of a society which *“is the way it is”*: *“I loved the film. This is the reality that we live in and it’s represented great!”*.

Answers in this section included overall considerations on Bucharest’s society. One interviewee stated: *“I think this is a documentary! I think that abroad many people talk about countries of beggars and they are all Romanians, no?! There can be no question about our fantasising or that, look, this is and artistic creation. No! It’s reality! No, my frustration comes precisely from here! Of course, you see helpless people and you’re thinking that: ‘My God, give something to this person!’ On the other hand, of you give him something, my sickened mind goes further and thinks: ‘Okay, but he won’t buy bread for himself, he’ll buy tuica (Romanian traditional alcohol). So I didn’t do him any good, I did him harm! What do I do in the end? I give him, I don’t give him? And like that, instead of*

“I don’t care about all of this. It’s a film although much like reality. When I give charity to beggars, I give bearing in mind the souls of those I lost, such as my father.”

strolling peacefully I start having conscience problems of to give him or not.”, while another one said that *“I used to think that this or that other person needed money; for food, for medicine or I don’t know what and I used to give money. Yes! But now I sit and wonder whether that person isn’t also controlled by some gangster. I never saw such a gangster stand next to a beggar and taking his money. I never saw something like this, but the film convinces me that this is what happens. And now I don’t feel like giving money*

anymore. Maybe if I take that person by the hand and ask: 'Ok, what do you need? Food? medicine? Come with me!' and you take him by the hand and go and buy it for him. But giving money like that? No." or "I was left with a bitter taste. And if before I used to give money to beggars, I would always give a helpful hand, from now onwards I will never give charity, except to those whom I really see that are physically challenged".

What did actually change, in the interviewees' words, was "the way I looked at this whole society of ours." A large number of the interviewed *inhabitants* stated that the film changed the way they dealt with beggars in Bucharest: "I didn't really use to give money to beggars before this film either, but after watching it, I'm definitely not going to give anything to anyone anymore.", "I never saw something like this, but the film convinces me that this is what happens.

"What life lessons I drew from this film: they were talking about professions and to me there were professions and professions. So there was this quote in the film: 'there are three professions in the world: wealth, poverty and sex' so... this stuck with me. These were the professions, you know, and if you come to think about it, they were very right about this."

For others, instead, the bitterness replaced the laughter with disappointment, frustration and even anger. Most of the interviewees referred to "Filantropica"'s industry of charity and its network of beggars and the rich people hiding behind them as a very likely form of underground business. The general meaning drawn from it was that they, the interviewees, as members of Bucharest's society, were being manipulated and, even more than that, they were being cheated and taken advantage of based on their feeling of pity. In this way, "Filantropica" was a reflection of an ill society in which corruption and materialism wove their web deep into the everyday life of the city. Beggars acting to get a penny for free, wealthy gangsters of the underground city making their money out of pity stories which 'sold', spoiled and ignorant students, teachers without vocation, petty quests to make

an easy buck and shallow feelings were all elements which were referred to times and again in the interviews.

"I felt like screaming! I mean, when you see these beggars on the streets, you think how needy they are, they have nothing to eat, nowhere to live, and in fact there is all this industry behind them."

Some of the most frequently expressed emotions were "anger", "disgust" and "surprise". Other emotions they mentioned in discussions were "grief", "disapproval" and even "hatred" towards, according to them, an industry based on false and manipulation and towards a faulty

governmental system: *“My first reaction was disgust. I was left with a bitter taste”*, stated one interviewee, while another one said that: *“I always thought that there was much more to this thing with all the beggars, but when you see them on film things become even more painful.”*

For a couple of the interviewees the film led even further the issue of a faulty society to contemplations on human value and the self. These contemplations mostly had a negative nature, with the one exception of an interviewee who stated that *“this idea in the film, that people in the city can be connected somehow is rather reassuring. It’s like a network”*.

Nevertheless, it became clearly noticeable in the collected data that what the film challenged was not the image of Bucharest as a physical environment, but as a societal *reality*. The film-locations and Bucharest in general did not change their previous meanings. As I noted earlier, settings were not even recognized throughout most of the film and, with the notable exception of the park near ‘Gara de Nord’, none of the film settings’ everyday equivalent was re-interpreted based on the film. Those who had watched “Filantropica” previously to the interviews stated that the film did not come into their minds when using one city setting or another afterwards. The reason why the film image of the park near ‘Gara de Nord’ had such a strong reaction among the interviewees might be related with three things: the powerful screen shots in the film, a limited familiarity with the space in its everyday form and a general idea of suspicion and insecurity held by most of the city’s inhabitants as far as this particular site was concerned: *“I thought it was bad and I was never there, but after this film I’m definitely not passing by. Ever!”*, *“I didn’t realise it was quite like that, but this film changed all that.”* or *“I never liked that park and with this film, I’m not going there anymore.”*

The meaning of the film as ‘portrayal’ of the city for those outside Romanian border emerged only in a very small number of the interviews. In the cases when it did, it gave voice to the curiosity and sometimes even concern as to what *“others watching this film might think”*.

The reactions among the group of city visitors were more in the lines of valuing “Filantropica” as a cinematographic creation. The same plot and character elements that raised so many subjects for discussions in the group of inhabitants were regarded by their visiting Romanian counterparts as matters which were very likely representative for the entire country. Even so, there was very little if no debate on the in-

“It doesn’t change what I thought about Bucharest; this could happen all over the country. But now I do associate Bucharest with this film.”

film societal values which were illustrative for a general state of things. Nevertheless, their image on Bucharest as a city was said to remain unaltered since, in one interviewee's words *"there is a small chance that I change my opinion about certain places for the simple reason that I see them in some film."*

Although also agreeing that having watched "Filantropica" did not change their view on Bucharest, keywords such as "sad" and "unsettling" did appear during the interviews. Non-Romanian visitors stated that the film had led them to grasp better the city's society and even to understand some of its in-place cultures. In one of the cases was said that the film drew the Romanian culture closer due to the emergence of common cultural elements, such as the *"similarity with my country: the art to screw the other over"*. Thus, "Filantropica" became the portrait of a number of socio-geographical strata and was regarded as a source of information and knowledge on both city and national culture. Moreover, the film was associated at one point in the interviews with pieces of literature such as the work of Pirandello. As a result, the film was used as a medium to contemplate, in the manner of a few of Bucharest's inhabitants, on society and the self.

Furthermore, watching the film did reintroduce into the discussions past experiences of the visitors during their stay in Bucharest with statements such as *"I remember that place from when I was there"* and *"reminded me a restaurant I had lunch; but it was empty; also reminded me partying with local people in a club"*. Thus, scenes from the film were used as memory triggers very much in the manner of Proust's madeleine.

"This film is obviously an exaggeration of reality... and it looks much older than the year in which it was made."

The strangers to the city shared the duality of reactions to the film with the other two interviewed groups. "Filantropica" was, first of all, received as a well realized and performed cinematographic production. Although a depiction of Bucharest, the film was generally said to be an "obvious" exaggeration of "reality".

Secondary to this, similarly to the case of the non-Romanian visitors, the film was regarded as a source of information and knowledge on Bucharest. All the more, the common aspects found in the un-screen culture led in a very few cases to a sense of familiarity with Bucharest and its society as the following statements illustrate: *"The film made me think of Gattopardo... much closer to Italian than what I thought."*, *"(on the scene in the film) That's Italy!"*

Considerations on the film were linked occasionally to things from the interviewees' everyday lives, leading to reflections such as: *"I know a guy who used to lend a Porsche to go to the Disco"* and *"I had the feeling that there were lots of shallow feelings... And sometimes with Eastern-European people I also feel a little bit the same. Not with everybody, but sometimes I do so I'm a little bit curious: is that reality or..."*.

Nonetheless, as I noted earlier in this chapter, most of the reactions in this section were phrased in the form of questions on both city character and societal values and morals. In their responses individuals argued that their image of the city did not change ulterior to watching *"Filantropica"*. In this situation it could be said that the film illustrated a physical Bucharest which did not contradict previous expectations on the city, although, as other interview answers supported, the city and its film-locations as represented in the photographs were thought sometimes slightly different than the film came to depict.

On the other hand, it does become clear from the discussions that the image of the city at a societal level was, in fact, challenged by the film and in a number of cases it was ultimately altered. Keywords such as *"untrustworthiness"*, *"broken people"*, *"shallow feelings"* and *"materialist girls"* illustrate a particular outline of an emerging constructed city image.

6. Discussion and conclusion

“the city ... it is a performance – of individual and collective values, desires, memories and aspirations.”

(Makeham, 2005, p. 157)

As it became obvious throughout the field data processing, individuals employ a variety of mechanisms in producing what I called previously their personal image of place and lived-in reality. These two discursive productions are results of processes often common to a majority of the interviewees, as we will come to see again later on. Cultural constructs and devices of personal (lived-in) experiences are permuted in wide range of combinations in order for individuals to articulate what to them constitutes ‘truth’ and ‘real’. It is this very particularity of a combination, as well as those elements of personal background creating identity, that I had in mind earlier in this paper when stating that discourses on reality are each unique in their overall structure.

The present chapter places the field data analysis in the larger theoretical framework of the present study. The purpose here is to point out those mechanisms used to engage with the surrounding environment in order to subsequently produce discourses on reality. Moreover, the relations constructed between individuals and the two city representations – one photographic and the other cinematographic – will serve to study in more depth the means by which ‘reality’ is constantly (re)shaped.

6.1 Reality in motion

‘Reality’ as we know and refer to it is dynamic, in a permanent process of becoming something else. This is not only reflected in the fact that general notions of ‘truth’ and ‘real’ in a structuralist understanding are annulled due to the emergence of what I previously called ‘personal realities’ when discussing the work of J. Butler (1990), H. Lefebvre (1991) or that of U. Eco (1979). ‘Personal realities’ themselves, better yet, individual understandings and interpretations of the surrounding environment, as well as appreciations of *what* and *how* ‘reality’ is are notions that constantly change within everyday discourses as (lived-in) experiences alter our image of the physicality of the city and the object of day-to-day existence. By means of cultural construction and perception we continuously redefine our world.

Throughout the two phases of field data collection and subsequent analysis of the findings, individuals appeared to interchange concepts and (re)interpret things so as to produce their discourses on reality. The three conceptual dimensions ('physical setting', 'activity' and 'meaning') which I adopted for this study are not as clearly outlined in the interviewees' phrasings as scientific theory would have it (Carmona, 2003). Throughout discussions, the theoretical concepts that I started with were attached different understandings by the interviewees. The consequence of this was that, instead of having pin-pointed theories and concepts as designed based on the theoretical framework, I could observe during the interviews how the same concepts migrated from one class to another in order to construct what R. Vitiello and M. Willcocks (2008) referred to as an urban lexicon. Individuals created both a vocabulary and a structure to look upon and define their environment. Whether these notions were common to a number of interviewees or specific to one alone, the mechanisms employed to discursively produce 'reality' were very often based on similar processes as we will come to see further on.

For the reasons above, although the field data was gathered and structured based on the literature review, it was analysed in terms of concepts as they were understood and used by the individuals whom I have 'observed' in the interviews phase.

As I mentioned previously, one of the inferences based on the field findings is that concepts within the 'physical setting', 'activity' and 'meaning' very often intertwine and influence each other's understanding and definition in the interviewees' words. This becomes clear as we follow the discussions on the different conceptual categories throughout the interviews.

To start with, in the early part of the dialogues, as the interviewees stated their preferences for one place or another, the physical setting revealed itself to be highly dependable on sentiment, values and preferences. Thus, the physical setting was predominantly described through the lens of projected emotions. As a result, people expressed their '*love*', '*sadness*', '*contempt*' or '*desolation*' in rapport to one setting or another. Elements of 'aesthetics', for example, appeared to be placed in a much broader context of signifiers. Aesthetic categories were no longer describing pure materiality. A place was said to be '*sad*', '*happy*' or '*boring*' depending on one's (un)mediated experience of it. In the case of those unfamiliar with the site itself, it became clear that the depicted (transpiring) atmosphere from the photographs and subsequently from the film was a dominant factor in determining the positive or negative value of the physical setting in the eyes of the interviewees. It was very interesting at the stage to observe how the values attributed to the physical setting were

taken to hold a degree of absolute truth – a place was catalogued to be *'ugly'* or *'beautiful'* as if these were intrinsic values. Thus, personal interpretation was lifted from its subjective level to that of a generally valid truth.

Whether an individual did in fact *'like'* / *'love'* or not a place reflected very often the nature and quality of experiences lived in-place or in similar settings. In this way, the mechanisms used by those familiar with the place and those who were strangers to it did not differ very much. If the first group used its unmediated lived-in experience, the latter made use of external associations. These associations were built either on mediated experience of those places (previous to or post watching *'Filantropica'*) or on recollections from personal history. In other words, the qualities attributed to the physical setting play on both the impression and even the constructed memory of a particular place. Unlike the group of inhabitants, for whom very often location-image was deeply inter-related with memorable markers (personas, events, habits), the group of visitors referred to the materiality of places more in terms of states of mind and emotion experienced during their visit.

'(Historical) character' and *'security'* were very much dependent on sentiment and preferences as was *'aesthetics'*. On the other hand, the *'relation between architectural and urban elements'* was not expressed so much in terms of *'semiotic modes'* and *'memory'*, but of the *'imageability/legibility'* of the living environment.

An interesting issue came out during discussions on *'function'*; raising most often the question of the appropriateness of *what* happens there and not so much of other aspects related to a place's function. It became obvious throughout most of the interviews that what individuals considered to be an *'appropriate function'* reflected in fact both culturally constructed and personal *'symbolism'*, as well as a certain *'image of self'*. The examples of *'The Writers' Café'* or that of *'Carul cu bere'* restaurant were highly relevant in this respect. The aesthetics and character of place and its use were intimately related in people's words. A place for those with artistic inclinations to gather was thought to need prerequisite characteristics which were challenged by the architecture in place. In the same way, the use of a setting with specific architectural and historical values met with expectations on the part of the interviewees.

Such discussions led to considerations on predefined images of place in which the quality of the physical setting, activities and symbolism interrelated. Similarly, for the interviewee who saw the entrance columns of *'Gara de Nord'* train station or the interviewee who envisaged well-dressed old ladies, belonging to past times, making their ghostly apparition on the station's platforms, the place

took a positive value due to a partly fabricated reality. Thus, we could say that the image of place was produced not only by means of cultural construction and perception, but also through engagement with the personal imaginary. We can easily conclude from here that notions of 'meaning' were found to influence to a high extent discourses on the image of the city as a physical setting.

Not only that. Concepts within 'activity' are also affected by 'meaning' and alter in return the image of the material city. 'Rhythm' and 'street life' were presented again through the filter of sentiment. (Dis)like of one or another was manifested in discussions on the physical setting and reflected personal preferences. As could have been expected, the 'habit of use' followed closely the preference of one place over another. This was due to a gained familiarity with the place whether by direct contact (such as was the case for most of Bucharest's group of inhabitants and some of its visitors) or by association with experiences belonging to personal history (such as was the case with the majority of the strangers group).

'In-place culture' and 'local traditions/ past times' also acted as coagulators between 'meaning' and 'physical setting' in process of producing images of place. Individuals very often resorted to notions of (un)mediated memory and symbolism of place when engaging with aspects of in-place culture and local traditions. In this way, activities were often accompanied of appreciations on the image of self. Doing specific things in a specific setting in a specific way in order to be in-place was a recurring element in discussions with Bucharest's inhabitants. This is, in fact, a manifestation of performativity on the part of those living in the city. At this very level of *being* in the city is where the images of Self and the Other are formed. For one of Bucharest's inhabitants, for example, being part of the city and being considered a local lied in details such as to know from where to buy a train ticket in 'Gara de Nord'. The same process of mirroring Self/Other could be noticed in the reactions after watching 'Filantropica', when the group of 'strangers' raised questions such as *'these people are broken' 'is it really like this?'*

By resorting to the three theoretical dimensions ('physical setting', 'activity' and 'image/memory'), individuals use various mechanisms in order to create relations between concepts. The result is a network of inter-correlations on which the understanding and interpretation of the surrounding environment is constructed. Thus, discourses on the world are being produced and reality is interweaved.

6.2 (Re)building Bucharest through discourse

The city itself was an interesting element to study throughout the interviews analysis stage. Findings on the field have come to support the theory in that images of the city are constructed by means of discourse. Nevertheless, Bucharest itself often played distinct roles, from one interviewee to another, in recorded (lived-in) experiences in the city. Thus, specific mechanisms which changed the importance of the city could be observed. The urban environment appeared to shift in the interviewees' words in-between background and foreground. For some, the city remains a stage on which everyday life unfolds, while for others the city itself is a character worth discovering and understanding. In the latter case, the level of self-consciousness when interacting and being in the city is very high.

The experiment of watching 'Filantropica' brought up an interesting issue – the film's action and characters were very often found to be blocking the background. Individuals otherwise very familiar with certain locations, failed to recognise them and even notice them within the film.

The contrary happened with other settings, such as the park facing 'Gara de Nord'. The latter, although very little known by the interviewees, if at all, made a very strong impression due to the cinematic plot and the instruments used to create a certain in-film atmosphere. Thus, we could observe how place as in-film scene played between the visible and the invisible. Familiar places lost their recognisable features, overtaken by the on-screen events, while less familiar place, rarely previously noted, became visible and acquired a relatively strong identity.

Another noticeable interplay mechanism is that transferring the city-setting in-between film and everyday realities. Interestingly enough, the interview discussions refer to the film as a reality in-place. Individuals relate to the specific sites through the film. As a result, the boundaries between on-screen and lived-in realities become blurred.

When talking about the film, Bucharest's inhabitants very often drew a clear distinction between the day-to-day locations, as they knew them and their equivalent on the screen. Thus, the film itself interfered insignificantly with the image of the physical city already in-place. I would like to draw the attention here on the duplication of this physical environment. The on-screen events made a strong impression on most of the interviewees and appeared to affect in various degrees the individual discourses on the social reality of the city, by challenging previous understandings of the city as a lived place. This alteration was neatly demarcated from discourses on reality as a physically inhabited

space. Personal understandings and interpretations of place remained unchanged, in spite of the overall image of the city having been mutated.

A similar mechanism could be observed in the case of those unfamiliar with Bucharest. Anterior images of the material city were said to have been the same previous and post-watching 'Filantropica', although, as it became clear from the interviews, the understanding of particular locations was in fact different at the end of the discussions. What remains stable throughout the dialogues is the overall atmosphere of the 'sad', rather typical in the interviewees' words, eastern-European city. The discourses on Bucharest's society and culture are the ones which suffer as a result of the exposure to the cinematographic production. The result is a shift in the image of the city as a whole, which no longer takes into account the fact that the perceived reality was one in-film and not the everyday.

6.3 Conclusions

Based on the interview analysis we can conclude that theory-based concepts, with the way in which they are pin-pointed and defined in the related scientific literature, have no absolute value of truth as such. Conceptual categories and their scientifically assumed characteristics become subjects to the personal understanding and interpretation of the interviewees. Individuals make use of cultural constructs and everyday signifiers by drawing relations which cannot always be patterned. What and how reality *is*, is based on these fabricated discursive networks.

Furthermore, individuals engage differently with in-film realities. To some, these are mere representations of the 'real' which place the film in the sphere of the non-real, the fantasy. But where does fantasy end and reality begin it is difficult to say. Let us remember the example of 'Gara de Nord' with its time gate-like colonnade and fantastic presence of old women of another time. The personal imaginary acts when building individual discourses on reality and what is 'real' is what people perceive as being real.

To others, the on-screen reality and that of the everyday intersect, overlapping to different degrees. As a result, they both discourses on film and the day-to-day reshape each other. Whether individuals reject, silently accept or revolt against events and characters in the film, the dynamics between the two realities influences human-city rapports and challenges issues of *being* in place and sense of belonging. The people's knowledge and understanding of their environment alters the perception of

what they see and hear on the screen, while, in return, the film affects the sense they make of the world. The questions and challenges raised by 'Filantropica' among the interviewees are highly illustrative in this way.

Last, but not least, there are those which pull the film's reality into their everyday one to the point of inclusion. The cinematographic piece is so relevant for their own image of the city that it becomes a depiction of their own discourse on Bucharest's reality. Thus, their understanding of the film is immersed in their understanding of the city. In this case, there can be no discussion about two realities, but one alone out of which a fragment was cut out and represented on-screen.

Going back to 'Filantropica' as a cinematographic production and to its director, it is perhaps worth remembering his mentor's, F. Daniel, words: *"Don't try to have style. Copy the reality. The style will emerge naturally from your invariably erroneous vision of reality"* (Film Menu, 2011). What is this simulacrum of *"reality"* if not a cinematographic variation of the everyday? And what is the *"invariably erroneous vision of reality"* if not the subjectivity of the constructed discourse on the 'real', a subjectivity which claims value of absolute truth?

In negotiating the 'real' of the film and that of the city, people reconsider their discourse on the reality of the city, a discourse so necessary in order to make sense of their surrounding environment and *be* in it. The mechanisms engaged for this are multiple and complex, very often reinterpreting concepts in ways that the related scientific theory does not account for. As we could see, individuals operate with cultural constructs, sentiment, values, preferences and even an element of personal 'fantasy' at places. All this denotes a highly dynamic network of signs and signifiers which, although some may have pre-set encodings, acquire personalised meanings due to the parts they play in individual (lived-in) experiences.

Drawbacks

As I briefly mentioned previously in this chapter, in studying the mechanisms behind the production of 'place' and 'reality', findings often challenged notions from the related scientific literature. Not only that, but a large number of the theory-based categories which I used to structure the interviews since they did not appear to be as clearly delineated in the interviewees' understanding and everyday speech. For this reason, I consider the differentiation found between defining concepts in

the scientific theory and in practice, where they become subject to individual interpretation, to be a drawback for this study.

One such obstacle appeared in the early development of the project's methodology, when I had to opt for specific spaces to be looked upon and I chose K. Lynch's (1960) five elements of urban legibility. Thus, what according to the theory could be classified in paths, edges, districts, landmarks and nodes appeared to take on different understandings for the interviewees. Not only did individuals mix-up the categories, but they did not agree on these differences either. As a result, the selection of the 8 photographs of in-film locations was made purely for methodological reasons.

Similarly, although the three categories ('thoughts', 'feelings', 'meaning') are not mutually exclusive, it became clear throughout the interviews that people attached distinct understandings to each category and having them all inside this study meant more informative and in-depth answers.

Questions of terminology appeared frequently as this study developed. Among those inhabitants of Bucharest taking part in the interviews, answers concerning physical settings were developed mostly based on un-mediated encounters with the city in general and the chosen interview film-locations in particular. In this context, it was interesting to note the fact that interviewees referred to all the film-locations as *places*. Although in the related scientific literature, referring and reporting oneself to 'space' creates 'place' by definition, the term was used slightly different in the interviews. *Places* were locations with which individuals were either directly acquainted with or which simply reminded of other sites outside Bucharest, familiar to the interviewees. Other types of spaces were referred to either based on their urban function such as "*a park*", "*an avenue*" or in more general terms, such as: "*an area*" or "*a part of the city*".

The above same mechanism of referring to spaces based on their functional typologies was employed by those less familiar or unacquainted with the city. At the opposite corner were those few working in the construction, urban planning and landscape architecture practices which, when talking about physical settings, invariably referred to them as 'spaces'. For the purpose of this paper, I used throughout this study a literature based terminology, as detailed in Chapter 2, "Theoretical framework".

A second class of drawbacks is somewhat of a pitfall, namely the photographs and the film chosen for this study. The photographs were taken in early March 2012 at a time when winter was still present in the city. With the snow still high in some places and melting into muddy patches in others, with

trees still bare of leaves and the streets quite empty, the overall atmosphere captured by the photographs was, admittedly, somewhat gloomy.

Secondly, 'Filantropica' as a cinematographic piece depicts a particular social class with a particular way of living in particular settings. I chose this film precisely because the effective way in which the camera surprises these particularities and because of the socio-cultural and economic issues that the film rises. Nevertheless, as one of the interviewees inspired pointed out, "*if this were a film about teenagers in summer*" the overall results of this study may well have been different in terms of content. I do believe, though, that with an appropriate methodology I succeeded in outlining mechanisms of producing discourses on reality which remain just as valid, independently of the film chosen for this experiment.

Recommendations

The results of the present study are important for theoretical and more practical disciplines alike.

The first category includes disciplines belonging to the social sciences, but also those related to tourism, urban and even media studies. To start with, a poststructuralist approach to theories of semiotics and performativity in the context of the living environments and the rapports created between sites and people, opens a study path for discourse analysis which has been until now insufficiently explored. A broader understanding of existing discourses on reality has the potential of unravelling in-place mechanisms for the production of the 'real', of the 'self' and of 'place'. A better grasp of these concepts will add knowledge to related theories of place-making, sense of place and belonging. It is this same knowledge which adds to urban studies. As the example of K. Lynch's elements of urban legibility illustrates, urban theory still lacks a comprehensive understanding of how physical space is read and cognitively processed.

In the larger context of media studies, the present project is applied namely on the cinema, although throughout the interviews it came out that music, radio and TV shows, as well as newspapers had contributed to the production of discourses on reality. We could observe throughout the study that individuals interact in numerous ways with the film at different levels of complexity. Thus, the film took multiple roles: a piece of entertainment, an interference with the everyday reality, a means for socio-cultural documentation on a specific setting, a trigger of introspection and reflection on personal values. The role of films and other forms of media has to be yet further researched in order

to explore the diverse palette of public engagement, dynamics and structure of the information and knowledge flows, as well as effects on the day-to-day existence.

Furthermore, such an approach becomes an asset for urban design, landscape architecture and planning studies. The ultimate purpose of these disciplines is to create inclusive spaces for people, keeping at heart notions such as 'sense of community', 'identity', 'plurality' or 'diversity' (Madanipour, 2006). In this context, understanding processes of place-making comes to support high quality design and planning for spaces which can be appropriated by their users, spaces which become successful by becoming places and working for and with the people. Not only that, but further studies on how forms of media such as the cinema alter perceptions and experiences of place are very likely to add to new design and planning solutions which address societal challenges. By combining this aspect of urban studies with tourism related theories, different paths can be developed in order to attract economic growth and strengthen local identity in certain areas.

What makes this project and others similar to it fascinating studies is their overall anthropological quality. By means of literature review and on-field interviews, the present study is, at the end of the day, a colourful collection of personal stories, fragments of discourses on contemporary Bucharest. To a certain extent, this paper conveys a brief view, although fragmented, of a city in which multiple realities collide or converge in order to ultimately merge together into the city as a product of all these discourses and many others which have remained yet untold.

For further research, the present study could be developed into several paths focused on subjects such as exploring a specific mechanism of discursive production of reality, theorise on the reality-fantasy interrelation in both everyday life and film or understanding place-making in the example of Bucharest's users. Personally, the latter theme would be particularly interesting. As I already explained in the "Methodology" chapter, I considered it irrelevant for the purpose of this paper to apply directly Relph's (1976, cited in Carmona et al., 2003) seven existential modes (see Appendix I) to the field data analysis, although the three interviewees groups that I used ('inhabitants', 'visitors' and 'strangers') do relate to a certain degree with Relph's categories of 'insideness' and 'outsideness'. At this point of the study, with specific discursive mechanisms in-place having been identified, the human-city relations in the context of existing discourses on reality would make an interesting research to undertake.

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Appendices

Appendix I. Relph's seven existential modes

TABLE 2: RELPH'S (1976, CITED IN CARMONA ET AL., 2003, P. 121) SEVEN EXISTENTIAL MODES

Existential insideness	Place is lived and dynamic, full with known meanings and experienced without reflection.
Empathetic insideness	Place records and expresses the cultural values and experiences of those who create and live in it.
Behavioural insideness	Place is ambient environment, possessing qualities of landscape or townscape that constitute a primary basis for public or consensus knowledge of that place.
Incidental outsidersness	The selected functions of a place are what is important, and its identity is little more than the background for those functions.
Objective outsider	Place is reduced either to the single dimension of location, or to a space of located objects and activities.
Mass identity of place	An identity is provided more or less ready-made by the mass media, and remote from direct experience. It is a superficial and manipulated identity, which undermines both individual experiences and the symbolic properties of the identities of places.
Existential outsidersness	Where identity of place represents a lost and now unattainable involvement; places are all and always incidental, for existence itself is incidental.

Appendix II. Selected (study) film locations



"Filantropica" scene

FIGURE 15: CITY NODE - 'THE WRITERS' CAFE'



Personal photo



"Filantropica" scene

FIGURE 16: CITY NODE: 'MIGUEL DE CERVANTES' HIGH SCHOOL



Personal photo



"Filantropica" scene

FIGURE 17: CITY LANDMARK - 'CARU' CU BERE' RESTAURANT



Personal photo



"Filantropica" scene

FIGURE 18: CITY LANDMARK - 'GARA DE NORD' CENTRAL TRAIN STATION



Personal photo



"Filantropica" scene

FIGURE 19: CITY DISTRICT - 'HERASTRAU' PARK



Personal photo



"Filantropica" scene

FIGURE 20: THE PARK NEAR 'GARA DE NORD'



Personal photo



"Filantropica" scene

FIGURE 21: CITY PATH - 'HUMANITAS' LIBRARY'S WALKWAY



Personal photo



"Filantropica" scene

FIGURE 22: CITY PATH - 'KISSELEF' BOULEVARD



Personal photo

Appendix III. Interviewees (photographic) list

 <p>Anica, Baneasa/Bucharest, Romania</p>	 <p>Dario, Italy</p>	 <p>Gica, Rediu/Bucharest, Romania</p>	 <p>Anda, Bucharest, Romania</p>
 <p>Costel, Lehliu/Bucharest, Romania</p>	 <p>Mariana, Rediu/Bucharest, Romania</p>	 <p>Rodica, Bucharest, Romania</p>	 <p>Irina, Campulung- Moldovenesc/Bucharest, Romania</p>
 <p>Ana, Bucharest, Romania</p>	 <p>Karin, Medgidia/Bucharest, Romania</p>	 <p>Gruia, Medgidia/Bucharest, Romania</p>	 <p>Petru, Bacau/Bucharest, Romania</p>



Vasilica, Baneasa/Galati,
Romania



Liviu, Galati, Romania



Adrian, Campulung-
Moldovenesc/Bucharest,
Romania



Roxana, Panciu/Bucharest,
Romania



Ioana, Cluj-Napoca, Romania



Lucia, Italy



Taicia, Brazil



Jan, Czech Republic



Cynthia, Lebanon



Roxana, Brasov, Romania



Imanol, Basque Country



Stefano, Italy

Appendix IV. Interview protocol and questions

Make a list of possible interviewees made up from friends, family, acquaintances and acquaintances of acquaintances. Contact individuals on the list and explain the nature and structure of the interview, enquiring if they would be willing to allocate this amount of time to an interview. Arrange meetings with potential interviewers in advance to insure they have the time to watch the film in-between the two parts of the interview.

“Good afternoon! It’s Elisabeta (Ilie)! How are you? (small chit-chat) The reason I am calling regards my final Master thesis project. I am conducting a study on how experiences and images of the city are formed. At the moment I am in the field data collection phase and what I am basically doing is gathering personal stories on Bucharest and consequently look into what happens to these stories once you watch „Filantropica”. In order to do this, I need to take to interviews, one taking up to 30 minutes and the second taking up to 20 minutes and I ask people to watch the film I mentioned earlier in-between. What I wanted to enquire is whether you think you would have the time to take part in my interviews and, more important, if you would like to do that. (waiting for reply and if positive) All right, perfect! Thank you very much! When would it be the best time for you to meet and have the first interview?

(once interview time comes)

Ok, here we are! As I told you on the phone, in this first part of the interview I am collecting personal views on Bucharest. I will ask you a set of 14 open questions to which you can answer freely and talk as much or as little as you would like to. There is no right or wrong answer and everything you say will remain between me and you. If I ask for your details in the beginning is simply to help me categorise and analyse the data later on. Is everything clear to you? Is there anything you would like to ask before we start?

All right! Let us start then!

I

1. *What is your name?*
2. *How old are you?*
3. *What do you do for a living?*

4. *Where are you from?*
5. *Are you familiar with the city of Bucharest?*
6. *For how long and in which context did you become familiar with the city?*
7. *Which are your thoughts on this city?*
8. *Which are your feelings on this city?*
9. *What does this city mean to you?*
10. *Which are the places that you like/dislike in this city? (option for people residing/having been to Bucharest)*
- 10'. *Is it a city that you would like to visit? (option for those who never visited Bucharest)*

Now I will show you 8 images of several locations in this city and I will ask you to answer to answer to 4 questions for each one of them:

11. *Does the place in this image say anything to you?*
12. *What does it make you think about?*
13. *What sort of feelings does it bring up in you?*
14. *Does this place mean anything to you?*

II

As I told you in the beginning this second part of the interview is related to your having seen the film „Filantropica” and it includes 7 questions. So, my first question is:

1. *What was your first reaction to this film?*
2. *Are there things/situations/characters in the film with which you resonated?*
3. *Are there things/situations/characters in the film with which you didn't resonate at all?*
4. *We spoke during our first interview about 8 images representing places in Bucharest. They were all locations in the film. Did you recognise any of them?*
5. *Did the image you had about those particular places change in any way after seeing this film?*
6. *Was your overall image of Bucharest affected in any way after seeing this film?*
7. *Have your feelings for Bucharest change in any way after seeing this film? (option for people residing/having been to Bucharest)*
- 7'. *(If did in the past) Would you still like to visit Bucharest? (option for those who never visited Bucharest)*

Appendix V. Interview codebook

TABEL 1: CODING SYSTEM

Code name	Code corresponding font type
Code 1	Times New Roman
Code 2	<i>Monotype Corsiva</i>
Code 3	Century Gothic
Code 4	Arial Narrow
Code 5	<i>CountryBlueprint</i>

Physical setting:

- Aesthetics
- *(Historical)character*
- Function
- Relation between architectural and urban elements
- *Security*

Activity

- Rhythm
- *Street life*
- In-place culture
- Local traditions/ past times
- *Habit of use*

Image/meaning

- Imageability/legibility
- *Symbolism*
- Memory
- Semiotic modes
- *Image of self*

Appendix VI. Coding example

I

1. *What is your name?*

My name is Rodica D****.

2. *How old are you?*

I'm 56 years old.

3. *What do you do for a living?*

I am a University academic.

4. *Where are you from?*

Bucharest.

5. *Are you familiar with the city of Bucharest?*

Yes, I am familiar with some parts of Bucharest; *with others I am not*, large neighbourhoods, *and I do not want to be familiarised* because I think they are *empty areas, without architectonic value, without style without elegance, without anything. They are all the same and I don't find them pleasant.*

6. *For how long and in which context did you become familiar with the city?*

I was born in this city. I grew up here and lived here ever since.

7. *Which are your thoughts on this city?*

I would not move to another city... in this country (laughs). There are very few things which make Bucharest a *pleasant city*. Rather, unfortunately, in my opinion Bucharest is a *kitsch city, an architectonic mix which doesn't take into account any harmony. It is a sordid city, a messy city, a city in which people are grim, ugly, where you meet all kinds of beggars all over the place, in which you are, in one way or another assaulted by people who talk loud, who talk vulgar, people whom you have to stand talking like that to each other, you are assaulted by posters, you are assaulted by presences which are offensive without having to say one word, you are, whatever, assaulted in general and you have to be very inwardly balanced not to take notice and to survive a walk in Bucharest.*

8. *Which are your feelings on this city?*

It's my home... and, as I was saying there are good things and bad things to it.

9. *What does this city mean to you?*

*Of course there are things which tie me to this city! It means something to me because I was born here and after this portrait of a 'pleasant' place which I just assigned to *it does not mean that after 7-10 days of being away from here I am not longing to come back.* Now, of course, probably there is a 'catch' here. I am not coming back necessarily for Bucharest itself, but for my house and for this island of harmony and tranquillity which I have built here and where I feel good. So it's probably a sort of 'home, sweet home!' and not*

necessarily of yearning for Bucharest, you know.. Because, anyhow, Bucharest is filled with traps and ugly people, as I was saying, unfortunately.

10. Which are the places that you like/dislike in this city? (option for people residing/having been to Bucharest)

.. But, of course, it has also a few bright areas, where it's pleasant walking, which you have to recognise as such (laughs) in order to appreciate them. You know the saying: 'Romania, what a beautiful country, too bad it's inhabited!' (laughs). It's the same here, there are some beautiful areas, a shame that there also you can find all sort of characters.

Now I will show you 8 images of several locations in this city and I will ask you to answer to answer to 4 questions for each one of them:

11. Does the place in this image say anything to you?

1. This one, I don't know. Where is it?

It seems to me unfit to its purpose, with its interior design. It looks like a hall and I don't know what this is, an inner pillar and with this lowered ceiling ... it doesn't emanate neither the intimacy, neither the ... I don't know how to put this ... the rather original spirit of the writers, neither ... It doesn't look like it has anything special. It feels like a common place where a lot of people could dine. I dislike the interior and no, it does not appeal to me at all. And I don't see it populated by writers. To me writers are special characters which deserve more exceptional interiors, at least in terms of originality if not something else. This one seems ordinary, common, a sort of public dining hall.

2. I don't know where this is. (receives answer) Ah, on Plevnei street. As a high school, it's a building like any other. It doesn't tell me much. This building next to it looks like something interesting, architecturally speaking, but I don't know what it is. It's a house, isn't it?! No, I don't have any particular feeling when seeing this area. It's a high school like any other. It could've been anything else.

3. Oh, here we are at 'Caru' cu bere!' 'Caru' cu bere' is a VERY (original emphasis) interesting building. It is a building in which I enjoy going, a building in which I had a good time quite a few number of time, a building in which you can listen to interesting music sometimes. It's a very interesting building (pause)... very interesting, how should I say this, interestingly decorated, with a very interesting interior architecture. In some regards it looks like a building with a number of architectonic claims which are not made justice to by the actual function of the place. By looking at it it's like, you don't think that inside one eats sausages and drinks beer (laughs), no matter the quality of the sausages or the that of the beer. To me, it creates a sort of antithesis, a sort of discomfort between elegance, style and the prosaic level of filling one's belly with sausages and beer. It is a small contradiction, but this doesn't keep me from going back there times and again with pleasure. At least for this probably; because it's too embellished for what's happening there.

4. I like Gara de Nord. Gara de Nord is a place which holds a significance for Bucharest and besides the fact that it's dirty, that it is populated by all sort of strange characters, which should not be there if there was some or

der in this Bucharest and if the law where law and so on. But Gara de Nord is a referential place, it is a place which I look upon with pleasure. This is a photography which feels to me warm and harmonious.

5. Herastrau. The Herastrau with little boats. To me Herastrau is a place to unwind. There were many a time when I tried to make a full detour of Herastrau walking and it was very pleasant. I mean, in summer, like this, walking alongside the lake all around could mean 2 hours if not more. If you put your mind to it and you really want to come back from where you left, it can take even longer than that. And it's a pleasant place.

It's a place to which ... how should I say this ... I am tied emotionally by some delightful memories and it is a place to which I return happily. I mean, I would never say 'pass' to an invitation in Herastrau. Of course, there were also times when I didn't have a good time there. When it was heavily populated, when it was invaded even on the grass areas by all sort of strange characters which were sunbathing half naked, of course I didn't like it then, but this doesn't minimise in the least its value to me. It is a pleasant place in Bucharest.

6. The Gara de Nord station's park. Aham! I don't know it. I'm not familiar with it. I never passed by. I never had the time or the intent to walk through it and even less to stay there (laughs). Aaa ... it's a good thing that it exists! It's a good thing that there is another park in Bucharest, it's good that it hasn't been eaten up by I don't know what ramshackle buildings or huts or I don't know what. As it is near the train station I suspect that it is not really a place where you can sit and enjoy your self.

7. The Humanitas walkway. Yes, look, in this library I haven't been for quite some time, but this is Kretzulescu church and this is yet another pleasant place. This is a place which brings you nearer to the palace and it has a certain presence. It has a particular vibration, it has a style, it shows that the Bucharest from in-between the two wars had, in some places of course because there were also hovel-like places, but at least in the center, the city had style. It had style and it had elegance. Well, of course, everyone called it 'The small Paris' more or less rightfully, but this is an area which reminds that in this city lived elites and not some self-entitled elites, but people of real ... how should I say... educated; people with value, with real value and who let themselves be surrounded by an architecture which would vibrate in concordance with their value. It is a place which is worth seeing from time to time. It's a place where it's worth being from time to time and appreciate it because it is a beautiful place. With me, personally, it doesn't resonate much. It couldn't as I haven't lived there I don't know what sort of experience, but it is a place with a historical resonance because in this area lived people who contributed in making Romanian history and this left... it impregnated it emotionally somehow and when I'm there it gives me a sort of feeling of pride. Pride that it exists, that it is beautiful, that it was the way it was.

8. Aviatorilor is again a beautiful area. An open area with many trees which blossom beautifully. It is an area in which an openness can be felt, in which you have a perspective. Here it feels like not everything is blocked and that it can develop in any direction, in any way. You feel that you are breathing. There it is pleasant because you don't feel like you're limited because you can evolve almost anywhere almost... you feel free. There is a feeling of freedom of independence. It gives you the sensation that that place allows for you to be yourself independently of

whichever obligations that you would think that others can call on you. There, there is freedom, there is breath, there is openness. There you can be yourself.

12. *What does it make you think about?*

13. *What sort of feelings does it bring up in you?*

14. *Does this place mean anything to you?*

II

As I told you in the beginning this second part of the interview is related to your having seen the film „Filantropica” and it includes 7 questions. So, my first question is:

1. *What was your first reaction to this film?*

To me, the film didn't appeal. I mean, my opinion, first of all, on the actors, I can't say it's a bad opinion, but they are actors who never appealed to me. None of them ever vibrated on the same wavelength as me. I would've never gone to see this film by myself, knowing that the main part is played by Dinicu. Not because I hold something against him, no, he's a perfectly ok guy! He just doesn't tell me anything as an actor, which doesn't mean that he plays badly. On the contrary, look, I was at the theatre and I saw him in a play in which he played absolutely great, but he's not the kind of actor that I would follow with pleasure on the screen. The theatre is something else! Dinicu, Dinicu is monumental, but he has a sharpness, a sort of hostility, this how I perceive it, a sort of hostility in his behaviour, he has a vocal vibration which annoys me. Dinicu is monumental, but he is not one of my favourite actors. Dinicu has that scene in which he dances and sings which has become referential, no!? He sings at some point towards the end of the film, he has an orchestra and I don't know what. And, once again, he is monumental, but he's not one of my favourites, it gives me no pleasure watching him.

How should I put this, life seen through the eyes of these characters is so sordid and the plot of the film and the idea of the film is that there is no limit to falling down. There is no limit to falling. Or, the idea of no limit to falling is extremely familiar to me and I can accept it, but I don't like to see it! I don't like to realise that there are people which go down this road, a road on which probably I went down myself, but I don't like to see it! Nothing would attract me in such a film! I don't want to be the spectator, to witness such a process of degradation. Of course, in every falling such as this, monumental, limitless, there is a huge potential, at least to the same degree, of ascending. Aa... of course that a man who falls so much, who descends so low, who gives up all traces of dignity and self-respect has a huge potential to rise up and to see the light because, of course, there are these two extremes at work; the more you fall into the darkness, the more chances you have to see, if you see, but there is the possibility that you would see at some point, the light; the more intense, true light. You are not in a warm area: ah I took a wrong step, I made a small mistake, it's ok I'll rectify it, I'll lighten up a little! No! Here, you have fallen freely, you're in an abyss...and only once you've reached down into the abyss you want to and if you can rise up. Thus, through its potential, the film is colossal, it is huge! It takes you into a situation, into a state, in which, if you resonate with the character, you reach a situation of maximum potential. But I didn't like it! I mean, this world which is so unsettled that values can be turned upside down and normality can have become an oddity, a world in which to trust in somebody is ridiculous and

funny, is a proof of a naivety with, who can I put this, with clear nuances of stupidity. I mean, it's like it's written on your forehead that you are an idiot if you have feelings towards someone, if you keep your word, if you want to have dignity, if you try not to lie and not to make a fool of others. This world is horrible! I don't mean that it is not true, that it doesn't have, unfortunately, deep roots into reality. I am saying that I don't like it, that I wouldn't have wanted to witness it and that I wouldn't have done it deliberately if I could choose. Clearly, I remembered, once the film started, a few scenes which probably means that at some point, most probably only partially, I saw it. What I don't remember now, but I suspect that this is what happened, I started watching it and I left (laughs) because I didn't like it. Now, there are scenes which I remembered, that are clear! I didn't remember how it finishes and most certainly I never tried to contemplate on it because it brings sentiments which I don't like .. You can take it as a life experience. Now if this were real, and surely there are people who had experiences of this kind, then yes, sure, they are real experiences. All the moral which you can take from here is 'what do you do with the experiences which you have lived? How do you take them further? How do you valorise them? If you managed to fall so low, what do you do afterwards?' What do you do with your experience and everything that you lived throughout this process of falling? How do you overcome it? What does your life mean from here onwards? Does it mean to accept that you have a wife, as a lie? Does it mean to accept that your name is Popescu, as a lie? Does it mean...? What does it mean? Where are you in your life? How can you regain yourself once you have fallen into such a pile of lies? The film remains totally open! It leaves you in a point from where you can imagine a sequel according to your own capacities and nature, according to your own psyche ... It exposes a situation and it leaves you afterwards to construct possible developments.

2. Are there things/situations/characters in the film with which you resonated?

I think this is a documentary! I think that abroad many people talk about countries of beggars and they are all Romanians, no?! There can be no question about our fantasising or that, look, this is an artistic creation. No! It's reality!

No, my frustration comes precisely from here! Of course, you see helpless people and you're thinking to: 'My God, give something to this person!'. On the other hand, if you give him something, my sickened mind goes forward and I think: 'Okay, but he won't buy bread for himself, he'll buy tuica (Romanian traditional alcohol). So I didn't cause him good, I caused him harm! What do I do in the end? I give him, I don't give him? And like that, instead of strolling peacefully I start having problems of conscience (laughs) if to give him or not. Well, of course you can't give them all, because if you walk for half an hour and you encounter four of them every day it means that you become.. no! It can't be like that! But the fact that there is this possibility, that there is such a lack of order in this city that these people can have direct contact with you anytime.. the fact that you can meet them anywhere.. this is what I find to be revolting! That there is no order! They should be directed somehow, helped with some housing, I don't know what the solution would be, I have no idea, but I'm sure that there are solutions. In theory there are, it's in practice where solutions don't exist. No, this I don't think is right! In the same way like I don't like to see stranded dogs on the street! I have nothing against dogs, absolutely nothing, they are living things, but I can't accept them being in the street and being likely to bite me. I mean, HOW (original emphasis) come? I favour the dog to the ill-being of man? There are so many c

children which were bitten! It's unacceptable! There's nothing civilised in this attitude! I'm revolted! I'm revolted that they can still go around and that it suffices for two or three animal loving associations to scan and everyone takes seven steps backwards and .. no, no, it's not possible like that! I don't understand how others can do it, how they discovered the wheel and we can't even copy the wheel discovered by others! It's amazing! I don't know if it's because we can't, but ... it's not that our minds don't work or that we don't understand. It's just that there are certain interests which let things unfold in this way and this is upsetting. It is most upsetting!

3. Are there things/situations/characters in the film with which you didn't resonate at all?

No! I recognised them! I didn't like them, but I recognised them.

4. We spoke during our first interview about 8 images representing places in Bucharest. They were all locations in the film. Did you recognise any of them?

No, the locations didn't tell me much! I didn't even recognise them, to tell you the truth! I had no idea where they were! No! No!

5. Did the image you had about those particular places change in any way after seeing this film?

No, no, it couldn't have!

6. Was your overall image of Bucharest affected in any way after seeing this film?

The Bucharest full of beggars and full of aurolac addicts, yes, it's a Bucharest I can recognise. It's a repulsion generator; no one can like something like this! And when this happens in the city of your birth, it's not pleasant at all! If it would happen in other parts, it would be something, but because it is here and because to me, personally, it happened that I meet during a 20 – 30 minutes trip (in the city) at least three that ask me for money, I find it very sad. I find it pathetic! It creates a poor state of mind! I mean, if I give them money, I have the feeling that I gave them and that it wasn't enough, so I didn't solve anything, and if I don't give them money, I pass by just as unhappy, thinking that: 'look, maybe I should've given something to this one because perhaps he doesn't have anything to eat... But I can't distinguish, is it false, fake, no, no .. It puts me in a situation where I have no good way out. As a result, any contact of this sort, all it does is to charge me with negative emotions. No, no .. I don't like this sort of encounters! I don't understand why I have to be forced while walking down the street to have such emotional encounters which would upset me.

7. Have your feelings for Bucharest change in any way after seeing this film? (option for people residing/having been to Bucharest)

No! No! But, of course, this (living in Bucharest) is for all of us a challenge! Us, the ones who are bothered, it means that we have a problem (laughs) and we might just as well sort it out to ourselves and once we overcome that, we can go ahead and walk calmly in this city, no matter how sordid, no matter how dirty and we will feel WON-DER-FUL (original emphasis). Wonderful! (laughs). That's it!