

# ROMANIA Schizophrenia

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## 12 Acts of Demolition

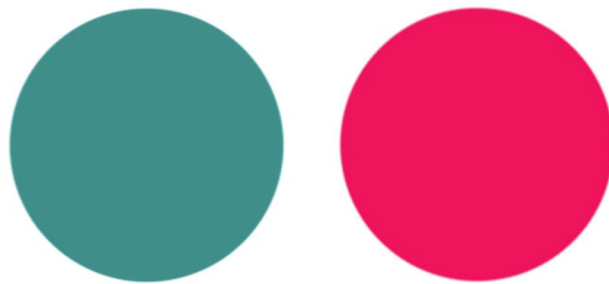
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The following content embodies an interview with the most influential people of specific epochs when major changes had taken place in order to bring Romania a step forward towards its evolution. Under political motivation or out of purely rational reasons, these characters had visions, initiatives and answers for architectural, urbanistic and social issues.

## CHARACTERS

They come from different backgrounds, from different periods of time but they all shared the wish for drastic changes in which, with no exception, demolition represents the first essential move.



Interview Team  
(1991)

Two architecture students in Bucharest, Romania.



Carol the I of Romania  
(1839-1914)

Prince Karl of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen was the ruler of Romania from 1866 to 1914. He was elected Ruling Prince (Domnitor) of the Romanian United Principalities on 20 April 1866.

Although he was quite frail and not very tall, prince Karl was reported to be the perfect soldier, healthy and disciplined, and also a very good politician with liberal ideas.

He ruled 48 years during which he gained the independence for the country, he redressed the economy, created the basis of a dynasty and brought a series of modern institutions in Romania .



Horia Creanga  
(1892-1943)

He is the grandson of Ion Creanga, famous Romanian writer known for the most beautiful authentic stories.

Born and raised at the countryside, he was trained as architect at Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux Arts in Paris. After he finished the studies he came back in order to implement the modern ideals.



Ernest Doneaud  
(1879–1959)

He was the child of the French couple Josef Emile Edouard Doneaud and Louise Manoël. Ernest spent his childhood in Bucharest and studied architecture at Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts. After his training was complete he returned to Romania and designed some of the iconic constructions for the inter-war capital.



Nicolae Ceausescu  
(1918-1989)

Romanian Communist politician.

He was General Secretary of the Romanian Communist Party from 1965 to 1989, and as such was the country's second and last Communist leader. He was also the country's head of state from 1967 to 1989.

He is world wide known as a remorseless tiran.



Anca Petrescu  
(1949-2013)

She was the architect in charge for the House of Parliament. Winner of the national architecture competition, with only 28 she was Ceausescu's favorite building planner. After the revolution in 1989 she went abroad and became famous for her projects around the world.





Sorin Oprea  
(1951)

Mayor of Bucharest since 2008.

He is a complex person, trained as a doctor but with strong political beliefs. Unfortunately, not much is to be said about him.



The Contemporary Architect  
(1970)

He is the contemporary voice of the profession.  
DD embodies multiple personalities, a compilation of several interviews taken in order to depict rural Romanian countryside.

He quotes:

- architects: Dan Dinoiu, Mario Kuibus and Robert Marin
- architect / historian: Augustin Ioan
- philosopher: Stefan Vianu



Mos Cotros  
(1948)

Proud House Owner, father of an other Proud House Owner. He lived both the communist and post-communist times and has a vast experience in changing homes and construction techniques.

He spent a considerable amount of years in the suburbs of Bucharest and Paris but now he is enjoying a peaceful life in Certeze, an eclectic village in Northern Romania.

# INTERVIEW

The scenery is idyllic and connects individuals from the 19th century to present times. We will start interviewing our guests chronologically as we want to follow the logical narrative line of Romanian history.

I.T. : Your Majesty, during your regency major sanitarian and infra-structural changes have been made in underdeveloped Romania. Bucharest became the capital in 1861 but urban life wasn't much different than from a rural area. In the 1890es a major structural axis was drawn in the city, could you tell us the aim of the project?

C.I.R. : Despite its political, economic and cultural importance, Bucharest was a gathering of insalubrious slums with no identity besides the commercial functions. The aim was to give it a Western *flaire*. Therefore the old houses and churches were replaced by the new institutions which would have represented the spirit of our times. In the 1890es Carol Boulevard cuts through the old urban fabric and a major East-West axis rises proudly to facilitate the journey from downtown to the royal family residence.

I.T. : Ever since, Bucharest has been facing a period of continuous changes but none of them as significant as those in the inter-war period. Intellectuals studied abroad and then returned to their home country with revolutionary ideas. Professional desire overwhelms political vision. Therefore, architects are those who would change again the face of the city. Mr. Horia Creanga, Magheru Boulevard is considered as modern as 5th Avenue and its buildings as daring as Le Corbusier's. What did this project mean to the capital?

H.C. : The 1920es and 30es bring the first planning rules to Bucharest. A promising capital with a large cultural and ethnic variety had to reach the modern ideals which revolutionized Europe. We needed an icon, a boulevard which traverses the city from North to South. The two story house is replaced with 10 story blocks along both sides of the boulevard, cinemas and stores border the ground level and concrete allows for daring geometry. My proposal for ARO building depicts Corbusier's ideals. Decoration is left behind, the design of the façade is free and horizontal windows become a key point.

I.T. : Mr. Doneaud, you are well known for several projects in Bucharest, especially for Hotel Lido. What inspired you for the design?

E.D. : After graduating Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts, in Paris, I have returned with vast knowledge in new technologies and modern principles of architecture. I don't stay for Le Corbusier, I would rather go into art-deco. Bucharest needs to be unique among European capitals, therefore new has to replace the old. I don't mind the demolition, evolution has to take its natural course. The hotel imposes through height and composition. Once inside, you will discover luxury at its finest. On the roof people enjoy the only pool with artificial waves in Europe, since only delirious Americans have these facilities.

I.T. : As we have understood so far, demolition was an act of sanitation, modernization and actual evolution. Mister Ceausescu, how do you perceive demolition in 1980?

N.C. : Romanian citizens are equal, we have the same goal and this is the wealth of our beautiful country. Of course we need a civic center to glorify our dignity, enviable industry and productive agriculture. Rich and poor are all the same, faithful workers and moral citizens. It's for the sake of our citizens' well being to move into the cities, have old rural houses demolished and hectares of forests be converted into arable land. The new civic house has to take the place of the church at the countryside or in town. For Bucharest I have glorious plans, far more attractive and grandiose than Kim Il-Sung in Korea.

I.T. : What do you mean by glorious plans?

N.C. : In order to repair the damages of the earthquake in 1977 we need to replace 500 ha of the traditional urban fabric in Bucharest. A boulevard wider than Champs Elysees and extending longer than 3 km should embody the functions of the socialist politics. 40.000 people would have to move out, the stadium, the national archives, the hospital, everything has to be replaced. We need an administrative house, a national library, an opera house and collective housing. Everything has to be renewed in a record amount of time and with local materials.

I.T. : The national architecture competition for the today's House of Parliament took more than 4 years but none of the projects were ambitious enough for the socialist dream. Finally, Miss Anca Petrescu, at the age of 28 was named the lead architect in charge of the new Parliament House. What was the plan for the project?

A.P. : Firstly, we had to clean up the site. Uranus Hill, the only land-form of the city had to be flattened, the houses and the church demolished. The new construction was placed at the end of the new boulevard, on top of the former hill. It doesn't shape itself to the context, but the context is built for the house. Visible from far away, higher than any construction in town, The People's Parliament should be the largest in the world.

D.D. : How is it possible that such a young architect can be in control of such an apocalyptic project? I wonder who was the actual designer, the commander or the architect?

N.C. : Miss Petrescu was young, powerful and full of innovative ideas. She understood the need of the people and gave the country a reason of pride. We got along very well as she began the design as her dissertation and then we adjusted it together here and there. I expressed my wishes, and then she built some models from which I could choose from.

I.T. : Let's take a look at contemporary Romania. The countryside stays out of the political interest, but shy attempts seem to come to light in the city. As Bucharest remains the vital pole of the country, it is here where we can still see some changes. It is already become clear that in this city of scars, a new transversal axis is to be drawn in the radial concentrically-shaped structure of Bucharest. Mister Oprescu, as the mayor of Bucharest, can you tell us more about the plan?

S.M. : The aim is to have a new boulevard in order to clear traffic. Some demolition works had been made, some new buildings arose, but the Monument Protection specialists keep holding back our plans. Since Ceausescu has abandoned his ambitions, the urbanization rate decreased from 10% to 0.6%.

D.D. : While we focus on the city, the countryside disappears from our view. Forced collectivization and the nationalization by the state of all land upset the moral compass and values of the traditional rural settlements. [1]

I.T. : Better ask Mr. Cotros for his opinion as he is an actual rural inhabitant. How did political decisions affect your life?

M.C. : We didn't have a choice. We had to move out. My wife and I got a place in the suburbs of Bucharest, no lightning, no heating, no windows, no doors, no nothing. It was scandalous. We were just two simple workers out of the 10.000 at "Republica" factory. It got even worse after the communist regime toppled. We lost our jobs but one hectare of land was given back to us by the state.

D.D. : Paradoxically, the downfall of the countryside is largely happening in the post communist era. The consequences are indirectly felt: communism meant unsettlement, and the effects are to be observed today when the meaning of freedom is misunderstood by citizens and beyond. [2]

I.T. : Mos Cotros, did you return to the countryside?

M.C. : We went back but we couldn't find our way to the countryside either. As we were free to travel abroad, we moved to France, Paris. My wife found a job as a house keeper and I started working in constructions. It was hard at the beginning but then we got used to it. Now we earn 2500 Euro per month, 500 for living expenses and the rest we put aside.

I.T. : Is this how you built the new house?

M.C. : Yes, and we are not the only ones. You will never make money if you start going to restaurants and discos. You will never make it! Mark my word! If you start indulging yourself you will never save up a dime. As the French say: "Jamais".

D.D. : There are multiple examples of people of the rural area that had left to work abroad and came back with new ideas and started to build concrete houses in a classical style. Take a look at Certeze! [3]

.T. : As a specialist, what is your opinion about these “improvements” of architecture style?

D.D.: Architecture is a local statement of the social and what we see now is a kind of transformation... Some improvements are welcomed...The village nowadays is like melting pot of ideas... I believe that it is too soon to draw a conclusion... meanwhile [...] life in the countryside isn't trained well enough to build something strong, local, to stand on its own feet...[4]

I.T. : What is the main reason for these changes?

D.D. : Modernity and the lack of vision... the village didn't succeed in reinventing itself in the modern era. [5]

Thistransformations are perceived by its agents as “progress”. What we see is an arbitrary implementation of a misunderstood attempt of “modernity” in a historical frozen environment. For the outside observers precisely the historical suspended aspect of the traditional Romanian rural world makes it extraordinary. Thru the cyclic way in which old ideologies resurface we can appreciate again the value of natural food, of living in harmony with nature, the physical engaging of rural life style. But for the new generation from the interior all this things are oppressive signs of a primitive past which lacks in entertainment and status. [6]

I.T. : How would you define in one word the phenomena which takes place at the countryside?



The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters - Francisco Goya 1797 [7]

I.T. : How do you envision the village's future?

D.D. : The emotion associated with this construction is pride. This makes the trend almost unstoppable since in the Romanian countryside pride is sometimes more important even than love. [8]

Changes will accelerate with the financing... there is no way back... it's hard to predict the direction towards which it heads, the process involving the village is no longer local but global. [9]

I.T. : A question for all the guests, is there any "good" solution for the countryside?

C.I.R. : Education! In city or not, education is the only hope.

N.C. : Bold visions as we had 30 years ago.

H.C. : As our fellow said, "Less is more".

D.D. : What we need is *Farmacon*. [10] The medicine that is helpful in small doses and harmful in large amounts. I don't believe in false scenographic images, "butaforia", depicting the Romanian countryside. I do believe in several values that can smartly assume some archetypal or rural action in an actual context of eco activation. [11]

I.T. : Mos Cotros, how do you see the countryside in the future?

M.C. : Well, money is for no use if it is not visible. It is a constant change, as in Paris. Three or four paintings on the wall, new furniture, one new house story, it depends on the neighbours. If they build something new, you build after something bigger.

D.D. : This new construction is not in themselves the end of rural life, they are the symptoms of a much deeper crisis from which this malign concrete extravaganza is just a visible sign. [12]

I.T. : As we understand, political interest is to be seen in the cities, especially Bucharest. Our ignorance for the countryside led to a phenomenon that we can't comprehend and it seems that it will not stop any sooner.

The Romanian farmer was the victim of political changes but now he is the only responsible for his own acts. Forced to constant changes, now he is searching for his own identity even though it means to erase his backgrounds and build something new instead.

Changes in rural behavior are notable all over the world. "The countryside is an amalgamation of tendencies that are outside our overview and outside our awareness. Our current obsession with only the city is highly irresponsible because you cannot understand the city without understanding the countryside." [13]

Numbers are alarming, but people are proud of their achievements. Specialists don't have a solution because, fortunately, there is not only one universal answer for all of it. "A world formerly dictated by the seasons and the organization of agriculture is now a toxic mix of genetic experiment, [...] more volatile than the most accelerated city." [14]

## NOTES

1. Robert Marin answering the question: "How did communism affect rural life?"
2. Stefan Vianu answering the question: "How did communism affect rural life?"
3. Mario Kuibus answering the question: "Do you know people who built a house according to western principles after working a long period abroad?"
4. Dan Dinoiu answering the question: "What is your opinion on the architectural changes in the rural space? Do they mean an end of rural life?"
5. Dan Dinoiu answering the question: "Which is the main reason in your opinion for any kind of rural changes?"
6. Robert Marin answering the question: "Which is the main reason in your opinion for any kind of rural changes?"
7. Robert Marin answering the question: "How would you name in one word the phenomena happening now in rural Romania?"
8. Robert Marin answering the question: "How will constructions develop? Will their importance increase or decrease?"
9. Dan Dinoiu answering the question: "How will constructions develop? Will their importance increase or decrease?"
10. Augustin Ioan - about a solution for rural Romania.
11. Mario Kuibus answering the question: "What draws you to rural Romania?"
12. Robert Marin answering the question: "What is your opinion on the architectural changes in the rural space? Do they mean an end of rural life?"
13. Rem Koolhaas about rural life. Icon Magazine, 23.09.14. ,  
Rem Koolhaas in the country.  
<http://www.iconeye.com/architecture/features/item/11031-rem-koolhaas-in-the-country>
14. Rem Koolhaas about rural life. Icon Magazine, 23.09.14. ,  
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# FACTS



The rural Romania today is faced with many changes in behavior and aspect, as poverty seems to be the only religion and politics goes blind when it comes to countryside. Although, people still find their happiness and reason to stay or return to their home land.

Only 11% of Romania's inhabitants are urban dwellers, the rest being divided between rural areas, 45% and the zones in between, 44%. By rural we understand 150 inhabitants / sqm, so we are dealing with a number of 9.136.333 people living in the countryside out of a total of 19.697.436.

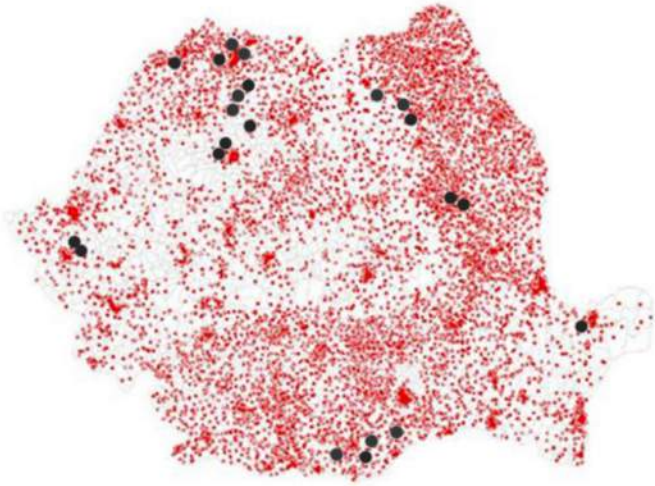
rural population  
urban population



The living conditions are not comparable to other EU countries where people benefit from normal health services and accessible utilities. Out of 13.000 villages which sum up about four million individual properties, over 2.000 don't have electricity, 98% use stove heating, 96% do not have sewage, 87.5% do not have in-door plumbing, 83% do not have a real shower, 66% don't have access to drinkable water and over 25% aren't accessible in bad weather conditions.

new villages

each red dot represents 400 people  
leaving below the poverty limit



People lack work, farming is not an option, while sewage and infrastructure are a dream that haven't come true yet. Paradoxically in the past years a growing tendency in demolition and construction has been observed. The trend began in Tara Oasului, in a village named Certeze. There is no traditional fabric to be recognized, the wooden house is replaced by concrete and the carriage has disappeared in order to make way for modern cars.

What we are dealing with is an act of utter removal, where people voluntarily reject their roots and values and look for the new special "something" to become their representation icon. In order to understand the background of this metamorphosis we looked back to uncover how changes had been made throughout history, the way they affected the common memory and to what extent demolition represented a tool for evolution.

CHRONOLOGIE



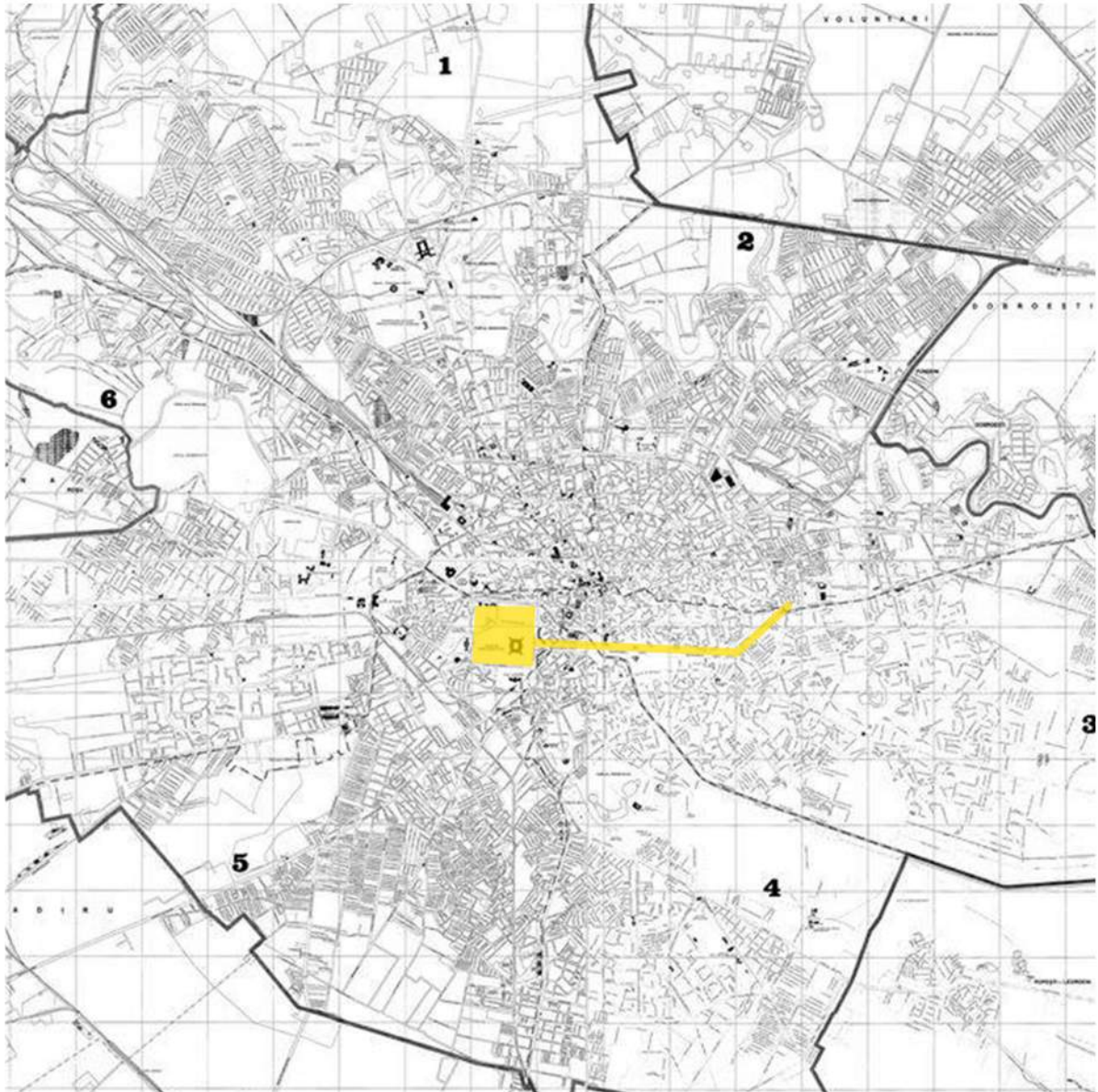
*Length of the boulevard*

Carol Boulevard-1890

Magheru Boulevard-1925

Unirii Boulevard-1980

Berzei Boulevard-2010



SOCIALIST VICTORY - BUCHAREST





PEOPLE'S PALACE - BUCHAREST



CONTEMPORARY FARMERS



OLD FASHIONED FARMERS





CONTEMPORARY VILLAGE



OLD FASHIONED VILLAGE