



The diploma project in architecture is a special, long-awaited moment – the culmination of six years of studies, but it is also charged with a large spectrum of emotions due to its complexity. The process of developing the diploma project is quite demanding since it assumes working with much more independence and, in most cases for the first time, the responsibility of choosing one's own site, programme and theme. The depth expected, from decoding the context to the narrative, is also much greater. A diploma project must convincingly demonstrate the overlap of various substrata in a coherent discourse.

All the projects presented in the following subchapters proved their consistent qualities by being substantiated through research and responding to the fundamental objectives outlined in the five volumes of this series. Thus, they remain good examples even for the themes of the forthcoming volumes. Yet given the focus of this volume, the authors were asked to frame their projects by emphasizing the role played by context and its deciphering in the course of their research process. These projects, quite different in nature, showcase how decoding a context translated into the design in different manners, shaping distinctive approaches and grounding well-formed arguments.

[7] DIPLOMA RESEARCH



[7.2] THE CREATIVE POTENTIAL OF URBAN INTERSTITIAL SPACES

Patricia STAN

This paper argues that interstitial spaces can be considered a positive element with development potential for the urban structure, which can be activated through creative use based on the recovery of urban memory and traces of the past. The proposed approach highlights the multiple values of urban interstitial spaces, considering them analytically for innovative architectural interventions so as to maximise and capitalise on their ability to reinterpret the context and the urban past.

Starting from observations on the old urban fabric in the central area of Bucharest, which possesses numerous examples of spaces resulting from the various historical transformations of urban form, the study presents a method for identifying interstices and discusses their creative valorisation through the integration of educational and cultural functions.

My project – the Art and Design Education Centre – shows how the potential of interstitial spaces is taken up in the design process through the step-by-step decoding of the elements of the urban context.

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INTRODUCTION

As the city becomes more complex in its composition, architectural and urban interventions address urban spaces that have an atypical character, are the result of various transformation processes and often have an interstitial nature, thereby provoking a creative response which reflects their own ambivalence.

This paper aims to establish a concise method for identifying urban interstices, using a set of analytical levels and criteria to differentiate them from other existing types within an old fabric given the wide variety of spaces resulting from amalgamations, fragmentations, ruptures and intercalations of the plot, streets, buildings and open spaces. The analysis sheds light on the urban interstice as a distinct and architecturally interesting element and details its role and potential for the purpose of creative valorisation.

The study is based on the research carried out in preparation for the diploma project entitled Art and Design Education Centre on 7-13 Luterană Street, Bucharest, which was defended in July 2024 at the Faculty of Architecture of the "Ion Mincu" University of Architecture and Urban Planning, Bucharest.

The aim of this paper is to highlight the potential of interstitial spaces resulting from multiple historical transformations, with a view to revitalising the city based on the recovery of urban memory and of the interstitial character of old urban fabric. Through suggestive examples, this study shows that the contribution of creative industries is desirable if urban revitalisation operations are to succeed in such areas, especially in the case of atypical, ambiguous urban fabric that are difficult to address with classic planning and design tools.

The study process led to the achievement of objectives such as:

- _the conceptual identification of the interstice;
- _the typological differentiation of urban interstitial spaces in relation to different configurations of urban form;
- _highlighting the link between the interstitiality of an urban fabric and creativity as a resource involved in architecture.

The research took as a starting point the concept of interstitial space, referring to works that address a variety of related notions: "vague terrain" (de Solà-Morales, 1996), "urban void" (Secchi, 1993, Ioniță, 2020), "other space" (Foucault, 2001, de Certeau, 1980/2002), "non-lieux" (Augé, 1995), "in-between spaces" (Brighenti, 2013). The nature of these spaces is paradoxical in their posture, always situated between different instances of city evolution; most often, they are categorised as urban remnants, residual spaces, wounds or traumatic points, requiring a certain type of intervention in the sense of healing. At the same time, imprints from previous eras which are poorly integrated into a harmonious urban structure are also seen as elements of tension or contradiction that indicate a potential for architectural and urbanistic intervention that relies on the specificity of the context (Gregotti, 1996). However, rather than adopt any of these established labels – which often emphasize absence, stasis or residue – the term "interstitial"

was chosen to highlight the processual and creative potential of spaces that emerge between consolidated urban elements.

Interstice comes from the Latin term *interstitium*, composed from *inter* (between) and *sisto* (to stand), designating an intermediate position and specific particularisations of the state of being “between” (Stan, 2012). Moreover, the urban interstice refers to a category of spaces with specific features of areas developed without a predetermined plan, “a consequence of uncertain belonging (...) a type of unconsecrated space, lacking its own limits and status, and thus indefinable by itself” (my trans., Stan, 2012, p. 54).

In addition, the interstice is part of the phenomenon of the discontinuity of urban form, of its structural porosity as discussed by Bernardo Secchi (1993), and also part of the diffuse city (Kostof, 2005) determined by multiple processes of socio-economic transformation that are present discreetly but have evident spatial effects (Secchi, 1993; Ioniță, 2020). From a phenomenological perspective, the urban interstice is an element that can slide from the generic to the specific: an initially banal space, resulting or residual from the evolution of the city or from acts of planning/design, may be transformed creatively through a sensitive intervention and become a specific place, part of the identity of the area, loaded with the subjective attributes of individual perceptions (Norberg-Schulz, 1979).

The study primarily employed:

- _field research, through physical and virtual exploration of various types of urban fabric in Bucharest;
- _morphological identification, utilising the elements of perceptual identification of an urban space, according to Kevin Lynch’s (1960/2012) method exposed in *Imaginea oraşului* (*The Image of the City*);
- _bibliographic research, specifying the most relevant theories and theoretical concepts necessary to understand the current condition of the urban interstice;
- _historical cartographic analysis, using old plans of Bucharest.

To structure the research process, three research questions were defined: 1. How can urban interstitial spaces be identified and differentiated in a historically formed urban fabric? 2. What is the connection between urban interstitial spaces and creativity and how can they mutually enhance each other for the benefit of urban revitalisation? 3. How can the educational component of art and design be integrated into the processes of urban revitalisation of interstitial spaces? These research questions led to the formulation of hypotheses, verified both theoretically and through the examples presented. The conclusions formed the argumentative basis for the proposed architectural project, used as a tool for testing the validity of the findings on a site at no. 7-13, Luterană Street in Bucharest, Romania.

LEVELS OF IDENTIFICATION OF URBAN INTERSTITIAL SPACES

Due to their ambiguous nature and partial overlap with related concepts that also lack precise definition, the identification of urban interstices requires an applied, sequential approach in order to understand and subsequently capitalise on the specificity they represent and can bring to urban revitalisation processes. This identification can be carried out on several levels, starting from the perceptual one.

I discovered interstitiality first through perception. I was drawn to these neglected and almost unseen spaces (Fig. 1), situated in between other more powerful, more firmly present ones. I became aware of their appeal to a type of architectural thinking that can capitalise on them without destroying them, intervening subtly and preserving their discreet and diffuse presence in the urban fabric.

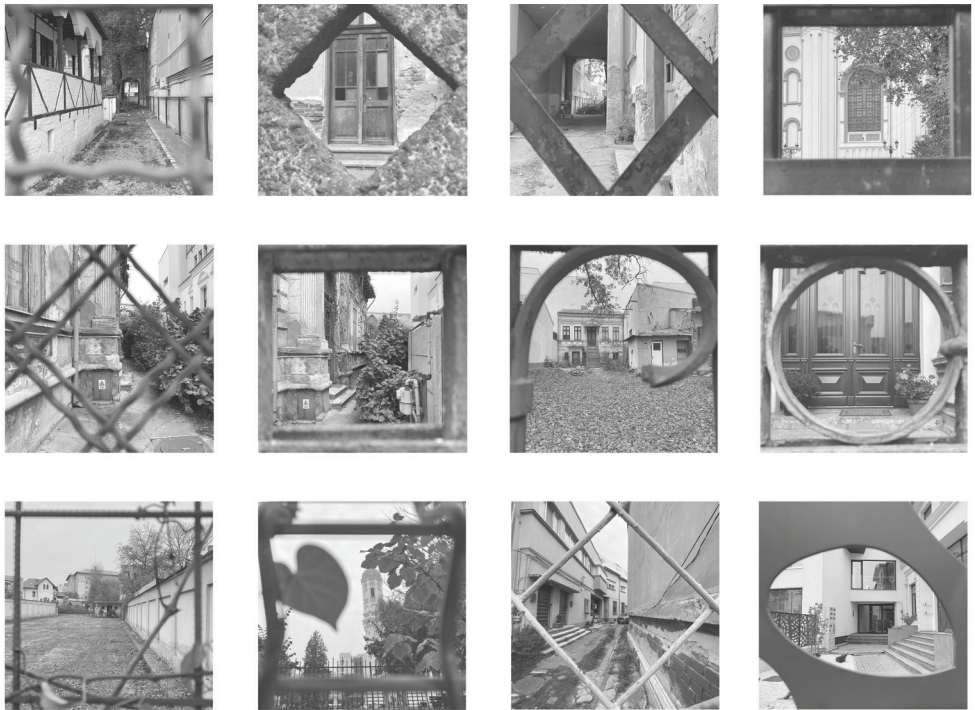


Figure 1. Looking (to the) in-between: inter-seen spaces, a preliminary condition in identifying the interstitiality of urban space.

Source: the author.

The Luterană area is part of the city's Creative Quarter, as it was named a few years ago following events organised by The Institute (<https://institute.ro>), a space designated for culturally driven urban regeneration. The Institute supports

the contribution of creative industries to the city's development and the opening up of design and arts to the general public. The area between General Bertholt, Luterană, Spiru Haret and Știrbei Vodă streets encompasses a morphological and architectural amalgam that can be considered representative of Bucharest (Fig. 2). This specificity does not reside only in the combination of strangely juxtaposed architectural styles but especially in what results from this diffuse character of interstitiality. At the same time, the abandonment noticeable in this area has become a routine which transforms voids and inter-spaces into paradoxical places: attractive precisely because they are neglected within a fabric that nevertheless remains alive.

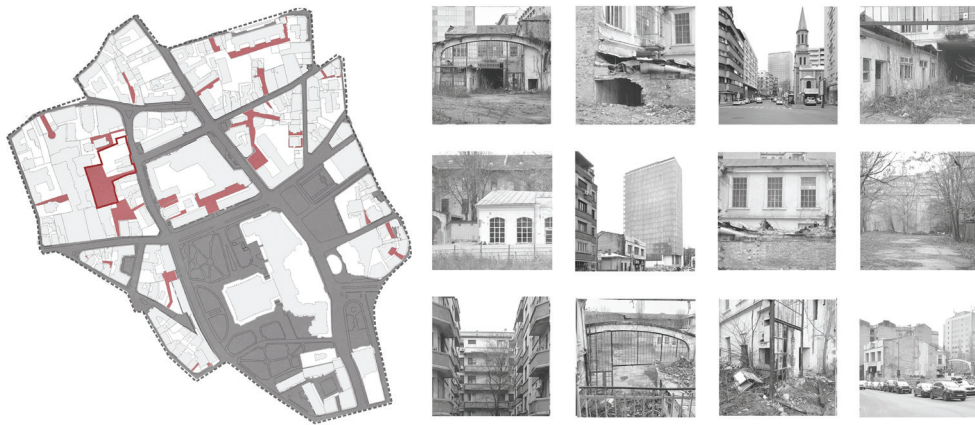


Figure 2. Interstitial spaces integrated in the fabric of the urban structure. A sample of the local specificity of Bucharest, in the area between General Bertholt, Știrbei Vodă, Luterană and Spiru Haret streets.

Source: the author; excerpt from the diploma project.

The Historical Level. The Role of Memory

The various historical stages of evolution of the urban fabric in the central areas of cities have involved multiple interventions, some planned, others spontaneous. Both the parcelling and the street network have evolved through interventions that have shaped their limits and surfaces, in some cases involving completely contradictory or abusive urban operations in relation to the past.

From a historical standpoint, the interstice can be present as an element resulting from the complex dynamics between parcelling, the street network and the built environment, in the process of constituting public space. Revealed in successive stages, the interstitial space also represents a testament to how property and land use have changed over time, reflecting the adaptation of the city to the economic and social needs of different periods as well as the development policies of the city and society as adopted by local or central authorities. Moreover, interstitial space is often a witness to the traumas and destructions that have marked the city's history (earthquakes, fires, demolitions, etc.).

The evolution of Bucharest involves a succession of stages corresponding to major changes in the city's structure, simultaneously attracting changes in the urban fabric. If we look at this evolution from the mid-18th century to the present (Fig. 3), we observe that the city has undergone a transformation process from:

- _a relatively compact and coherent structure typical of the traditional city, where interstitial spaces are punctual and dispersed within a branched fabric (the traditional city); to
- _ a structure in which there are extensive transformations of urban modernisation, with major restructuring of the street network and the appearance of urban regulations, with interstitial spaces resulting from such operations (remnants); to
- _a period at the beginning of the communist era, with the imprint of collective housing estates and where interstitial spaces are predominantly delimiting the new zones; to
- _a disastrous stage of radical discontinuous transformation through demolition (mutilation) of a large part of the centre and the insertion of foreign fragments, resulting in interstitial spaces of fracture between the new and the old; and to
- _the post-1990 stage, when interstitial spaces result from the fragmentation of the city's limits and its expansion into peripheral areas, but also from the abandonment of properties or demolitions dictated by real estate pressures.

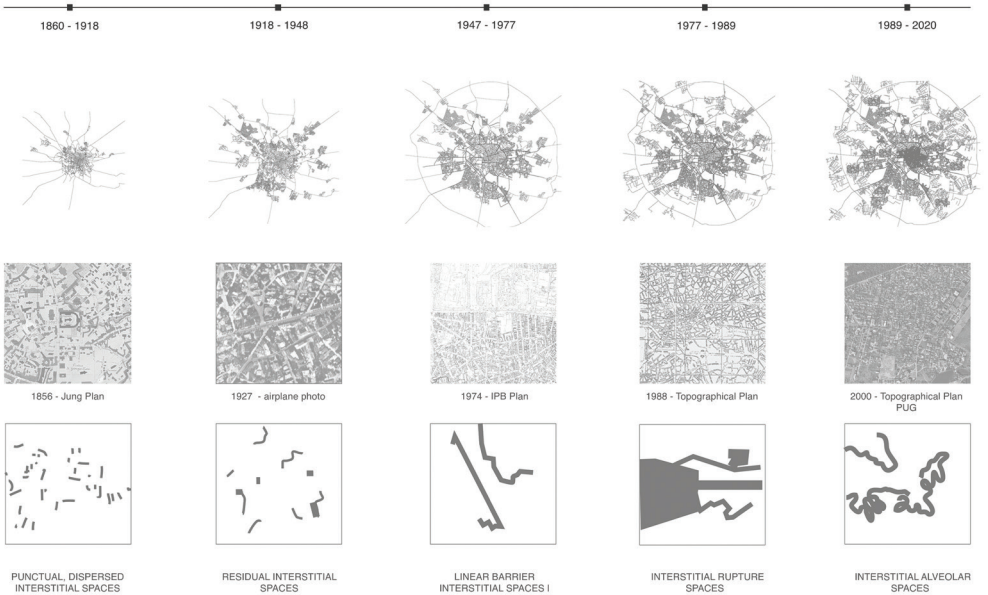


Figure 3. A table of the historical evolution of interstitial spaces in Bucharest along with the evolution of the city between 1850 and the present.

Source: the author; excerpt from the diploma project.

Over the course of these transformations, the interstice can also be understood as a fragment of de-structured urban fabric (which has lost the connection of coherence with the urban structure). At the same time, different urban fragments coexist and demand to be rewoven into a language of the present, generating meaning together. The coexistence of these fragments from different eras, tributary to the contexts that produced them, gives the city a complex texture, of a palimpsest waiting to be deciphered and creatively reinterpreted, in a dialogue between the past, present and future. Interstices become key spaces in affirming this language of the city's contemporaneity, congruent with itself but open to innovation, serving as bridges between periods, styles and generations.

The Morphogenetic Level: The Value of Diversity

The various types of interstices that we distinguish within the urban fabric owe their characteristics, in particular, to the way in which the city has evolved and to the main source of local transformations. According to this criterion, of the way they were formed, we identify:

_interstices that have appeared through a rupture between two different tissues/zones, following large-scale interventions, creating a hiatus between stable entities and highlighting their contrast;

_interstices resulting from demolition/non-construction (urban voids), spaces undeveloped for various reasons or left after the demolition of buildings for a project that remains unrealised;

_interstices that have appeared as a result of the tracing/piercing of circulation arteries – as an accidental result of inconsistencies in the design/redesign of areas –, or as a result of decommissioning of circulations or major infrastructure elements (railways, stations, etc.) in the process of transforming/modernising/adapting the street network. Decommissioning of former industrial areas can also lead to the appearance of new interstitial spaces.

The Structural Level: The Balancing Role

Seen as a witness to the city's heterogeneity, the interstice is vital in the urban structure plan. As a distinct morphological feature, the interstice appears only where there is a certain density of buildings and therefore the most frequent interstices are noted (at least in the case of Bucharest) in the central area. The density in the vicinity ensures the delimitation of the interstice and conditions its presence; hence its intermediate position, serving to bind fragments of the urban fabric whose stability it ensures through the balance of parts within the ensemble.

From this point of view, the interstice can be identified either as:

_a void (absence of structure) in abandoned, ruined or demolished sites/waiting lands/urban voids/urban gaps;

_as a rupture (of the structure) in fractured, residual, unusable, vulnerable sites (Stan, 2012), which appear where there is a very strong boundary separating two tissues;

_or as a buffer (between two or more clearly defined structures), ensuring a connection or transition between them.

The Social Level: The Importance of Resident Participation

The interstice has a clearly ambivalent nature: it is seen as a negative element, of degradation and loss of local identity and value, but also as a provocative, fertile element, opportune for alternative, flexible social activities and in contrast with institutionalised ones (Schumacher, 1996). Interstitial spaces are often valued starting from the expressed needs of local residents or artists interested in enhancing urban creativity (visual artists, performers, small traders, non-governmental organisations, etc.). Tactical urbanism and current methods of urban acupuncture (Wong, 2023) give special consideration to this category of spaces, insisting on the need to capitalise on the city's internal spatial resources by using urban density as intelligently as possible, taking into account any existing land resources and enlisting the active contribution of residents so that the unsustainable trend of urban expansion and construction of new infrastructures is discouraged.

PRINCIPLES AND CREATIVE INTERPRETATIONS OF THE URBAN INTERSTICE

In the sense of creatively valuing interstitiality, a series of principles can be mentioned that refer to the positioning of interstitial spaces in several major configurations. I have deduced a series of spatial typologies of urban interstices starting from the five elements highlighted by Kevin Lynch (1960/2012) in *Imaginea oraşului* (*The Image of the City*): nodes, paths, edges, districts and landmarks.

Nodal Interstices

Generally, interstitial spaces are not located in advantageous positions within the urban structure, as focal points/centres of public interest. On the contrary, due to their hidden, ambiguously positioned nature within the fabric, they do not directly benefit from the quality of being immediately recognisable and attracting interest. However, through certain interventions, they can become points of interest through the activities they host and through exceptional architectural or artistic expressions, thereby contributing to increased interest in the respective areas or to the rediscovery of an identity.

Relational Interstices

As a link between nodes/centres/zones of interest, the linearly developed interstice is inserted into a wider network of paths that may contain, in addition to classic sidewalks and landscaped promenades, shortcut routes that people prefer, thus thwarting the official planning with e.g. commercial pedestrian areas. The need to integrate them into the flow of slow public circulations comes from a higher understanding of urban mobility, which presupposes diversifying the public-private relationship and integrating circulation routes in the most harmonious way. The challenging aspect sometimes derives precisely from the formal/geometric difficulty of these spaces and from their nature as a neglected element within the context (especially in the case of former industrial sites, railways, etc.).

Boundary Interstices

When coinciding with a spatial boundary that requires acting differently on one side or the other, the interstitial space presents a potential for intervention through the very treatment of that boundary in relation to the adjacent tissue, re-imposing a certain structure. Boundaries (which can be strong or weak/permeable, continuous or discontinuous, built or unbuilt, vegetal or mineral, etc.) can generate an interstitial space through the differences they create in the vicinity. At the same time, boundaries, when very strong, impose conditions and firm closures, protections, gates or barriers that reduce the fluidity of urban space, diminishing its value within the city, both in terms of perception and of mobility. Architectural interventions and the redesign of interstitial spaces, aimed at increasing the permeability of public space and reducing the segregating impact of boundaries, contribute to the democratisation of the city, bringing it closer to its users.

Articulation Interstices

By facilitating certain connections between different zones or creating a junction of interests, the interstitial space as an articulation can be defined as a distinct, punctual or areal, element that has the merit of redistributing the lines of force within an urban perimeter or that can support a gradual transition between various parts/zones of the urban structure. Through solutions of re-weaving and/or adaptive integration, connecting to the character of the neighbouring areas, the interstice can play a crucial role in addressing the lack of coherence and homogeneity of the urban fabric, local density discrepancies or scale ruptures.

Landmark Interstices

When a banal interstitial space is transformed through creative interventions that capitalise on some of its attributes (spatial, positional, memory-related, etc.), it

becomes recognisable. In some situations, minimal interventions take advantage of the very diffuse or less visible/camouflaged aspect of interstitial spaces (Lévesque, 1999) and can transform them into their opposite: from marginal, they become landmarks, sometimes through urban art or urban acupuncture, which can decisively change people's perception of their presence in the space and on their mental maps.

APPLICATION: THE ART AND DESIGN EDUCATION CENTRE

The analysis presented above highlights the capacity of interstitial spaces to act as catalysts in redefining and revitalising the contemporary urban landscape. The conscious valorisation of these spaces allows both the preservation of the connection with the past and the opportunity to reconfigure the urban narrative in ways that reflect the contemporary context, generating new meanings and enriching the dialogue between different historical epochs. Collective memory, which preserves these superimposed and imbricated layers, functions as a link between the community and the territory, maintaining an active form of attachment and identification that goes beyond simple use: through architectural and artistic reinvestment, interstices can become crucibles of memory, reference points in an ever-changing urban landscape of maximum fluidity.

It is important for contemporary architecture to recognise the value of interstices as an integral part of the city's collective palimpsest, a testament to its memory. This implies an approach that reconsiders how urban spaces are designed and valued, with respect for historical layers and fragments and the preservation of harmonious coexistence between the old and the new. The theoretical aspects and principles outlined above have been tested and applied in the case of a site in the protected historical area of Bucharest, an abandoned plot of land currently containing a ruined element, a witness to the past – the former Luterană Commercial Galleries.

This project highlights the fact that urban interstitial spaces are an important presence in the city and that they can be the object of creative architectural reinvestment. Their identification and the recognition of their potential contribute to the diversity and complexity of the urban experience. The analysis has revealed a series of distinctive features that define the character of the urban interstice and demonstrate the need for its creative and culturally contextualised reinterpretation, both for the purpose of preserving urban memory as a witness to transformations and as a means of redefining local identity.

Project Aim

The purpose of the project is the recovery and enhancement of an important urban land resource located in the central area of Bucharest, near Calea Victoriei, based on recognising its spatial and cultural identity qualities.

The intervention focuses on the complexity of the urban fabric and calls for the remembrance of elements related to the city's past (Luterană Garages), aiming

to reweave the new into the discontinuous urban texture, thus generating a new spatiality and added public attractiveness. The garages on Luterană Street belonged to the famous Leonida family of industrialists, the representatives of General Motors in Romania during the interwar period and the owners of several garages, factories, and of the Leonida block on Magheru Boulevard, all nationalised after 1953.

Through the proposed functional mix and adaptation to the spatial context in which it is inserted, the project aims to improve the infrastructure of modern spaces dedicated to education in the field of design and visual arts, linking them in a coherent system at the level of the entire area. By combining educational, cultural and recreational activities open to the public, the proposed centre could represent an urban attractor for artists, students, pupils and entrepreneurs from the creative industries already present in the area, facilitating better connections between them.

Site Conditions and Constraints

The studied site is located in the centre of Bucharest, at the boundary of two protected built areas (Știrbei and Victoriei), with an opening towards Luterană Street, within the influence zone of Calea Victoriei, a main artery of historical significance in the city's development. The plot is thus situated in an area with a strong central character, highly urbanised, heavily trafficked and very accessible, both for pedestrians and vehicles, with a mixed profile predominantly oriented towards culture, education and food commerce.

The site, including the existing construction, has an irregular shape, placed between several party walls, with an opening to Luterană Street including the front of the existing construction (Fig. 4). The site results from the merging of several plots and is adjacent to the following landmark buildings: Cathedral Plaza Tower (north), "Sf. Sava" National College (west) and the interwar residential building on Luterană Street no. 5 (south). Additionally, the land is accessible only from Luterană Street, developed in the north-south direction, with a 16-metre opening between the plot alignments.

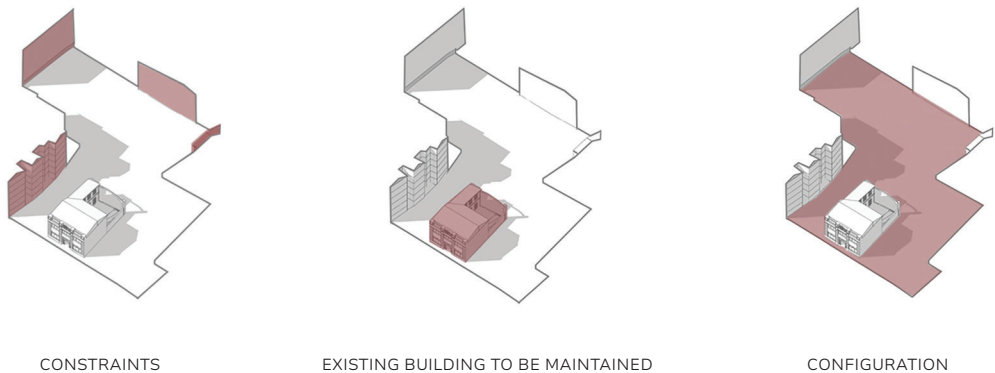


Figure 4. The key elements of the site's condition.
Source: the author; excerpt from the diploma project.

Premises and Arguments

Starting from the observation of the typology of the urban fabric and the neighbouring buildings, the project highlights the predominantly historic morphology of the analysed area, characterised by interstitial spaces that are irregular in shape and articulated through intermediate elements such as courtyards, alleys and porticoes.

The urban context significantly influences the characteristics of the place, which in turn has a hidden story that deserves to be retold. Together, the context and the memory of the past enhance this site by framing a better understanding of the specific interstitial character of Bucharest's old fabric, which still preserves urban voids and irregularities resulting from multiple consolidations, demolitions and fragmentations of parcels (Fig. 5).

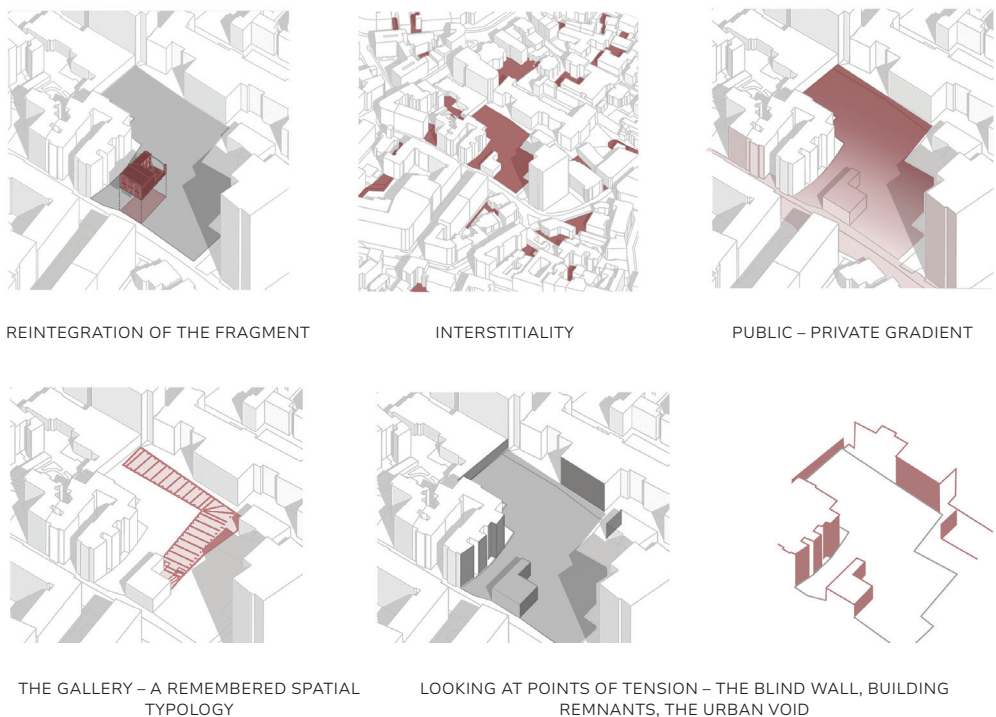


Figure 5. Spatial premises of the intervention, taking into account the interstitial character of the plot and the role of the past (former Luterană Galleries) in reactivating urban memory.

Source: the author; excerpt from the diploma project

The presence of the controversial Cathedral Plaza office tower in the immediate vicinity, currently abandoned and unused, poses a risk of degradation and loss of the area's identity, thus demanding a more significant intervention for preservation and recovery.

Moreover, the proposed project considers the historically defined functional profile of the area, which is predominantly educational and cultural due to the proximity of institutions specialised in visual arts, architecture and design (National University of Arts, "Nicolae Tonitza" Fine Arts High School, "Ion Mincu"

University of Architecture and Urban Planning) and of several schools ("Sf. Sava" National College, "Vasile Alecsandri" School, etc.), alongside religious edifices that also play an educational role and preserve identity ("Sf. Iosif" Cathedral, the Lutheran Church).

Basic Principles of the Intervention

The Art and Design Education Centre proposes a complex composition of built and unbuilt spaces. It seeks connection and integration with the urban context (Fig. 6) by:

- _revitalising the interstitial character through the alternation of built and unbuilt spaces (courtyards);
- _creatively using constraints, residual geometries and site irregularities;
- _establishing a gradual transition from the public realm of Luterană Street to the more private spaces within the site;
- _reinterpreting the "gallery" and "podium" typologies, drawing on the site's history and on collective memory;
- _creating an interior pathway, using porticoes, passages and pocket courtyards to connect spaces;
- _activating exterior public spaces by incorporating courtyards and walkable/green terraces to enhance public engagement.



Figure 6. Ground floor plan.

Source: the author; excerpt from the diploma project.

Intervention Scenario

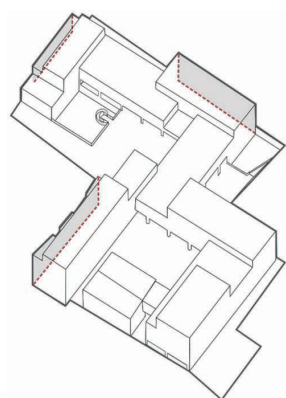
The Art and Design Education Centre proposes a complex of mixed functions dominated by spaces dedicated to university and pre-university education, specifically in design fields: graphic design, fashion design, jewellery design, decorative design and small furniture, interior design and textile arts. Additionally, it includes cultural spaces (exhibition/showroom, conferences, festivals), public spaces for the sale of design products, food establishments (cafe, restaurant), and leisure (urban square, pocket garden).

The programme aims to fill the gaps in the current traditional university spaces in the vicinity by creating flexible, multifunctional spaces that are designed for new generations and equipped for innovative research and experimentation, as well as dynamic exhibition spaces that seamlessly integrate interior and exterior areas, extending and enriching the gallery concept, reclaimed from the site's history. The field of design can play a crucial role in the education cycle for a sustainable and creative urban environment that is dynamic and innovative and benefits society as a whole.

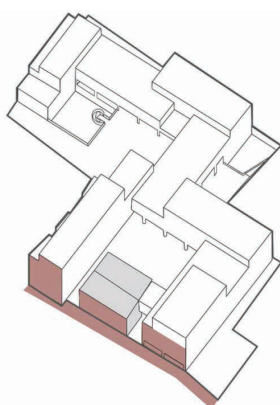
The direct beneficiaries of these spaces are young people (aged between 17 and 27), at a crucial stage in their lives and in the shaping of a generation, when the development of individual taste and knowledge as well as experimentation, openness to society and the city are fundamental. Besides the direct beneficiaries of educational programmes, teaching staff, researchers, artists, entrepreneurs and the general public as consumers of experimental art and design products are also involved.

The proposal for the new complex attempts to combine all the types of intermediate spaces identified as specific to this historical area of the city (Fig. 7). As a nodal interstice, the space created starts from the old, vestigial element by integrating it and developing a compact cluster. The relational aspect of the interstice finds its correspondence in the presence of porticoes and interior and exterior podium-type spaces, and the circulations they generate between the different bodies of the composition.

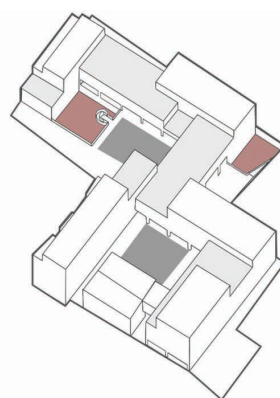
Because the site is strongly constrained by the plot boundaries (blind walls on the perimeter), the chosen architectural solution was to integrate these boundaries through an alternation of solids (built volumes) and voids (courts with different ambiances), gradually transitioning from public space with unlimited access to public space with limited access and to interior space reserved for a specific category of users (teaching staff, researchers). Thus, the volume defines an articulation in relation to its boundaries and in relation to the dominant and aggressive element situated in the immediate vicinity (the office tower). It does not attempt to compete with the existing vertical landmarks but to logically conclude on a sequence of the western front of Luterană Street, creating an appropriate density for this central zone and carving out in the depth of the plot a possibility of integration.



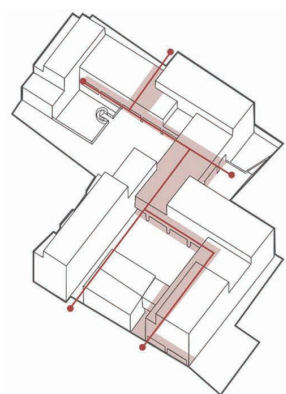
CONNECTION TO THE PRESENT
BUILT SPACE



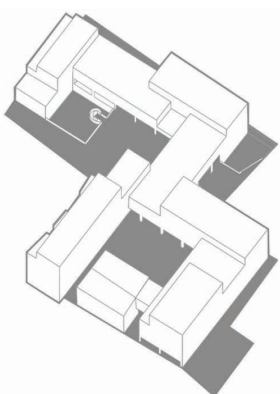
RECALLING – FRAGMENT/FRONT



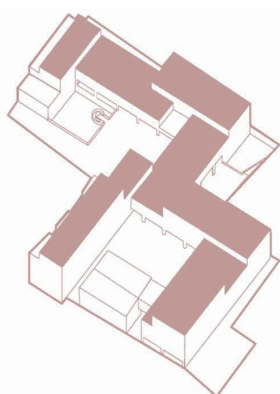
ACTIVATION – COURTYARDS,
TERRACES, INTERIOR – EXTERIOR



INTERMEDIATE SPACES – PORTICO,
PASSAGEWAYS



INTERLACING – ALTERNATION OF
SOLID AND VOID



GALLERY/PODIUM – RECALLED
SPATIAL TYPOLOGIES

Figure 7. Illustration of the main principles of intervention related to the spatial premises discovered through analysis. The role of the past (former Luterană Galleries) in reactivating urban memory.

Source: the author; excerpt from the diploma project.

Architectural Composition and Functions

The proposed spatial solution leads to several results: maintaining a controlled public-private gradient (opening public functions towards the street), taking over the boundaries (party walls) and transposing them into the volumetric cut, articulating the Art and Design Education Centre as a new cluster immersed in the urban fabric and not competing with the major landmarks of the area. To these results are added the gesture of preserving the memory of the place by reintegrating the built fragment (the remnants of the former Luterană Galleries), re-interpreting the spatial typology of the galleries and the urban void through the organisation of the four interior courtyards.

On the ground floor plan, the articulation of the courtyards is noticeable through an interior street (the portico) that leads to several points of interest. Each courtyard takes on its own character – the one facing the street is welcoming, open, inviting you to walk through it, then the interior street leads to a market-like courtyard with skylights and seating areas. The exterior paths direct to the sunken courtyards, which take on a more intimate character (Fig. 8). The sunken courtyards are also articulated by an interior route, a circulation that leads to the large events hall, the model-making and prototyping workshop areas, as well as the rooms intended for photo development and film projection rooms.



Figure 8. Image from one of the courtyards.

Source: the author; excerpt from the diploma project.

CONCLUSIONS

The intricate urban fabric is often punctuated by interstitial spaces, those in-between, all too often overlooked areas that hold significant potential for urban revitalisation. This research has delved into the conceptual framework and theoretical perspectives on interstices, as well as into their specific characteristics and potential, thus revealing their significance in shaping urban identity.

Through a comprehensive analysis of various typological examples, focusing on the urban fabric of Bucharest, I have demonstrated that interstitial spaces are not mere remnants of urban development but rather dynamic elements that can be reinterpreted and repurposed. By examining their historical context, morphological characteristics and social implications, I have identified a range of typologies and potential uses for these spaces.

By preserving and reinterpreting these spaces, I foster a deeper connection between citizens and their urban heritage. As a matter of fact, architects can play a crucial role in highlighting the potential of these types of spaces. Through innovative design interventions that consider various manifestations of their presence within the city, they can be transformed into vibrant hubs of cultural exchange, promoting social cohesion and enhancing the overall quality of urban life.

The proposed construction illustrates the fundamental principles of the intervention, following the characteristics of the urban interstices specific to the area and responding both to its nodal and relational character, through the proposed permeability. The bordering character is addressed through the integration of the lateral limits into the logic of the new building, creating an articulation at the level of urban fabric. With its spatial and functional aspects, dedicated to creativity and the arts, the proposed centre manages to spatially conclude the street frontage sequence of Luterană Street and at the same time positively particularise a space dominated by the aggressive vertical accent of the office tower.

It is envisaged that The Art and Design Education Centre, together with The National University of Arts, "Nicolae Tonitza" Fine Arts High School, the "Ion Mincu" University of Architecture and Urban Planning and other active institutions and organisations from the area, will participate in the integrated development of design education and improve the connection to the local creative community. At the same time, the proposed design affirms both a connection to the memory of the place and the valorisation of features related to the past as well as an open attitude towards the present and future through inserting spaces dedicated especially to young people and their education in artistic fields.

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