

## EVOLUTION OF PRIVATE AREAS IN THE NORTH SIDE OF HERĂSTRĂU PARK

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### Abstract

This paper aims at discussing about the evolution, throughout the years of private areas in the North side of Herăstrău Park in order to highlight the changes brought by urbanization and housing in this area. This paper will focus on the quantitative aspect of the problems derived from these aspects. The World Health Organization recommended 50 m<sup>2</sup> of green space per capita, whereas the Government Emergency Ordinance no.114/2007 implies that the local authorities have the obligation to ensure at least 26 m<sup>2</sup>/capita. These numbers are not achieved in Bucharest due to different factors, one of them being the conversion of public spaces from parks into private spaces (Tudora et al., 2018, p.120). One of such affected parks is Herăstrău, the largest park of Bucharest, listed in The National List of Cultural Heritage (code 47 B-I-s-B-17874). Even though the park is officially acknowledged as heritage, the park has suffered a decline of its surface due to the extension of private buildings and built areas. These are due to numerous causes that go from unfollowed regulations to misinterpretations of the law and more (Mexi et al., 2018, p.3).

**Keywords:** public parks, cultural heritage, urbanization, Herăstrău Park, Romania.

### INTRODUCTION

According to European Directive Habitats, each European Member State is committed to ensure the maintenance or restoration of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora of Community interest in a favourable conservation status, to help maintain biodiversity. (European Council Directive 92/43 EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora). After joining the European Union in 2007, Romania has committed to maintain a favourable conservation status of terrestrial and marine species and habitats of national and European importance, as provided in the Government Emergency Ordinance no.57/2007 (Badea et al., 2015, p. 2).

Also, The World Health Organization recommended the availability of a minimum of 9 m<sup>2</sup> of green space per individual with an ideal UGS (urban green space) value of 50 m<sup>2</sup>/capita. Whereas the Government Emergency Ordinance no. 114/2007 announced the obligation of local authorities to ensure each inhabitant with at least 26 m<sup>2</sup> of green space within the urban area. These numbers are

not achieved in Bucharest due to different factors, one of them being the loss of urban green space because of their conversion into built ones.

Looking at the qualitative side of this case, recent medical studies (Barton et al., 2017; Irvine et al., 2013) are showing that a low quantity of planted spaces is affecting the health of wellbeing of the citizen living in these kinds of urban conditions.

Regarding its environmental performance, Bucharest is situated on the 28th place, below the European average, as shown in the chart below (Figure 1).



Figure 1. European Green City Index for 2018  
(source: [https://www.siemens.com/entry/cc/features/green-city-index-international/all/en/pdf/report\\_en.pdf](https://www.siemens.com/entry/cc/features/green-city-index-international/all/en/pdf/report_en.pdf))

Although numerous examples can be given when discussing about the topic of public green spaces transformed into built areas (see, for example, the case of Tineretului Park – Colesca et al., 2011; Circului Park –Kelcey et al., 2011; Mogoșoaia Estate–Răducan et al., 2014; and many other similar ones), we will focus on the way how the historical park Herăstrău was affected by such improper interventions, thus reducing both its surface, damaging its overall image and also, extensively, reducing its landscaping and cultural value.

During the 1930s, important interventions were made on the site where the Herăstrău exists nowadays as to cover the marsh and eliminate mosquitos and other insects that were causing health and sanitary problems in Bucharest (Donescu et al., 1936). Also, the riverbed that used to water the marsh was reorganized and landscaping works were begun.

Herăstrău was initially conceived along the Kiseleff road and later included in the green barrier of the capital, planned to be developed along the Colentina chain of lakes (Popescu-Criveanu et. al., 2018). In a 1935 regulatory plan, Herăstrău is one of the parks of Colentina river along with Băneasa, Floreasca, Tei and Plumbuita. Being the largest park of the Capital with a total surface of 187 ha, its lake having 77 ha, Herăstrău is now facing a reduction in its planted space which was never planned.

The Herăstrău Park was built in three stages. The first one consisted in planning the West side for the Bucharest Month Festival held in 1936 and the second one in designing the South side for the Bucharest Month held in 1939. The third stage consisted in planning the East side for a Sports Festival for Communist countries organized in 1953. The West and South sides were designed for restfulness and culture, whereas the East side was associated with water sports (Tudora et al., 2018).

Despite being national heritage and listed since 1992 in The National List of Cultural Heritage (<http://www.cultura.ro/sites/default/files/inline-files/LMI-B.pdf>), Herăstrău had suffered numerous significant changes throughout the years. These changes are represented by inappropriate insertions of vegetal decorations, blocked perspectives, the absence of boat traffic on the lake to name a few.

Besides all of the mentioned, one of the main problems which the park is facing nowadays is the growth of built areas within its limits. Restaurants, terraces, clubs, tennis fields, kiosks are some examples of buildings which occupy historical green spaces –intrinsic and indissociable components of the historical listed monuments. Besides the diminishing of the cultural, landscaping and historical value of the park, the reduction of its planted spaces – be them lawns or small arboretums - the constant loss of greens paces over built ones is contributing to furthering back the Capital from the goals set by international and European standards and regulations.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

This research regarding the evolution of private areas in the North side of The Herăstrău Park and the implicit decrease of its green territories was undertaken out of scientific curiosity and it is based on bibliographical and archival references, in situ observations, historical map comparison and visual analysis of satellite plans. Because of poor access to some of the areas, the calculation of surfaces presented in this paper is sometimes estimated. This research is aimed at emphasizing some of the preliminary results of a wider research regarding public (heritage) parks. The final results will be published by the end of the research.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

The history of the site emphasizes the fact that private spaces were never meant to extend. Initially a few private areas existed, but they were an integrated part of the park.

It is also important to mention that around 1940, four sport facilities were built: The Aviation's Club", The Royal Romanian Yacht Club", Bucharest Yacht Club" and Metropola". These clubs were grouped and were not interrupting the general state of the park. Before 1990, the only private spaces added to the sport clubs were "Herăstrău Hotel" and "Dinamo Club" (Tudora et. al., 2018). This fact emphasizes a moderate and well management of the built spaces which is no longer practiced.

Private built areas appeared after the 90's on the west and south of the peninsula, disrupting the original landscape relationship between the lake and the shore (Figure 2). The sport fields (mainly tennis and football fields) which exist nowadays are not a historical characteristic of the Herăstrău Park. Initially, the east side was designed for water sports such as yachting, canoeing and boating.

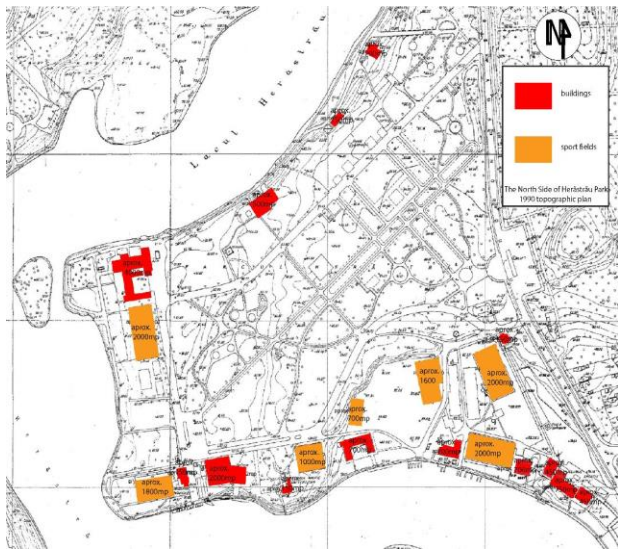


Figure 2. Refined aerial view of the private areas from the North Side of Herăstrău Park - 1990 topographic plan

Legend: red – buildings; orange – sport fields. Nowadays, 10 hectares from North-East Side are no longer administrated by the Administration of Lakes, Parks and Recreation of Bucharest (A.L.P.A.B.) (Popescu - Criveanu et. al., 2018). Most of the pontoons from the east side of the peninsula have been transformed into private terraces. These private constructions tend to be as close to water as they can, in order to manage a small business by preventing people's access to the water (Figure 3). Thus, a significant amount of public space is lost due to the constant growth of built areas.

To the existing restaurants are added private car parks, which also reduce the public green surface of the site. The phenomenon of losing green public space not only has an impact over the way the park is being used for by the people, but also it breaks the laws which protect this site.

In an Urban Zoning Plan (P.U.Z) conducted in 2001 (<http://regver.pmb.ro>), Herăstrău was marked as the 83rd protected area from

Bucharest with a maximum coefficient of protection needed. This document forbids any constructions that are not relatable to the conservation and restauration of the site.



Figure 3. Refined aerial view of the private areas from the North Side of Herăstrău Park - 2019

(source: authors – analysis over satellite images from Google Maps)

Legend: red – buildings; orange – sport filed; light purple – private playground; dark purple – area not administrated by A.L.P.A.B.

The fact that private buildings continued to be built in this park is due to the use of derogatory P.U.Z.s" by the contractors. Because of this, changes such as expansion of already built spaces or for building new ones were permitted.

Having taken all of these factors into consideration, we calculated the total of private surface which exist in Herăstrău to show how much green public space have been lost. The estimative results are based on historical map comparison and AutoCAD measuring of satellite plans and are shown in the charts below.

From the 1990 topographic plan, we calculated 22.000 m<sup>2</sup> of private area which existed at that time in the North Side of Herăstrău, representing only 2% of the total surface of the park (Figure 4). In 2019, by using refined plans from Google Maps, we estimated 128.000 m<sup>2</sup> of private area in the North Side, translated into 10% of the total surface of the park. The Law no. 24/2007 referring to green spaces, limits the private built area at a maximum of 10% of the park's surface. Taking into account that the West Side and South Side of the park are also abundant of private built areas, it is obvious that this law is being broken.

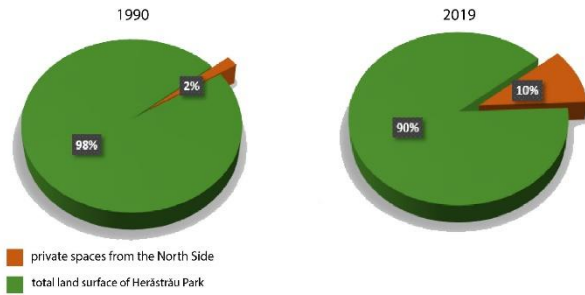


Figure 4. Comparison between the percentage of private areas in 1990 and 2019

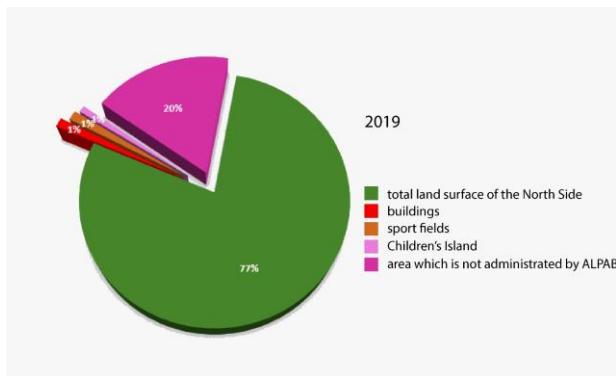


Figure 5. The actual state of the North Side of Herăstrău (source: authors)

Referring only to the North Side of Herăstrău, we translated the private built area into 23% of its total surface (Figure 5). Almost a quarter of this zone is represented by built areas, sport fields and private playgrounds. The private enclave which is no longer administrated by A.L.P.A.B remains the most significant amount of lost land surface.

## CONCLUSIONS

Herăstrău Park, as well as other heritage or non-heritage parks and gardens are facing many threats and that of the reduction of their planted space in favour of urbanization, housing or other is one of them. For Herăstrău

and others alike, more research on this topic and other complementary ones must be done in order to create quality strategies for their protection. Researches such as this, more detailed and focusing on complementary issues and threats should and have to be done in order to lead to good quality restoration projects. Few such researches have been done for some parks (Tudora et. al., 2018; Popescu - Criveanu et. al., 2018), including Herăstrău, but so far have not lead to any visible result. Also, most probably, a restoration plan for Herăstrău and for other similar heritage parks should be made, but this is a topic to be discussed in another paper.

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